

A FAR-REACHING PROMISE

NO. 2586

A SERMON

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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“For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”

Acts 2:39.

WE learn from the text a fact worth remembering, namely, that in the first stage of the Christian ministry, the thing to be aimed at is that men should be pricked in the heart. Then, in the second stage, the thing to be desired is that they should gladly receive the Word. Notice what is said in the 37th verse: “When they heard this, they were pricked in their heart;” then in the 41st verse: “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized.” Hence, in the beginning, the preacher’s business is not to convert men, but the very reverse. It is idle to attempt to heal those who are not wounded, to attempt to clothe those who have never been stripped, and to make those rich who have never realized their poverty. As long as the world stands, we shall need the Holy Spirit, not only as the Comforter, but also as the Convincer, who will “reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”

I am inclined to think that the large number of backsliders, who, after they have professed to be converted, turn back to the world, may be accounted for by the fact that they never seriously felt their guilt, and were never brought low by the work of the Holy Spirit convincing them of sin. Give me the old-fashioned form of conversion in which our fathers rejoiced. I have lived long enough to see people jump into what they call salvation, and jump out of it, as men plunge into a cold bath when they get up in the morning. Here is a person with a diseased leg; the doctor has looked at the limb, but he has not used his knife, he has not cut out the proud flesh; but he has applied a liniment and an ointment, and he has made a wonderful cure! Marvelous are the healing powers of the clever man, according to common report; he is in high repute everywhere around. Yes, so he may be; but that limb will never be right again; the surgeon has done a permanent injury to it under the pretense of having rendered its owner a great service. I believe that some men, who are said to have been converted many times, need to be converted now; and that multitudes of those who are trumpeted forth as having found the Savior do not yet know why they need a Savior, and have not really found Him, but have exercised presumption in the place of faith, and a belief in their own excited feelings instead of in the Lord Jesus Christ.

It must be so, I am sure, because we constantly see, on all hands, men who have been washed into deeper stains, and who are worse after their so-called conversion than they were before. There must be, dear friends, a probing of men’s hearts with the law before we can rightly bring to them the healing of the gospel. Old Robbie Flockhart’s simile was a good one. He said, “You may take a piece of silk thread, and try to sew with it as long as you like, but you will do nothing with it alone. You want a sharp, piercing needle to go first, and that will draw the silken thread after it. The needle of the law prepares the way for the thread of the gospel.” There must be birth-pangs, or there will be no child born. The old-fashioned grace of repentance is not to be dispensed with; there must be sorrow for sin; there must be “a broken and a contrite heart.” This, God will not despise; but a “conversion” which does not produce this result, God will not accept as genuine. So we shall still continue to preach the law; we shall thunder out the terrors of the Lord; we shall not be fashionable and popular, and prophesy smooth things, lest our labor should be declared to have been in vain when the Lord shall come. I charge all brethren, who are anxious for the true conversion of sinners, to be sometimes a little backward in dealing out comfort to them. Wait till you see that it is really needed; wait till you perceive that there is a

wound before you apply the healing balm. Until people are willing to confess their sins, you have no ground upon which you can comfort them. It is the man who “confesses and forsakes them” who “shall have mercy.” Christ is a sinner’s Savior; and if a man is not a sinner, Christ has no salvation for him. Until he will take the sinner’s place, and frankly own his guilt, what is the use of preaching to him? Remember Christ’s own words: “They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

Now I am going to try to preach as wide, plain, and open a gospel as I can, but I have no hope of its being accepted by anybody unless, first of all, he has been pricked in the heart. I am persuaded that even the wondrous illimitable liberality of God is a thing which is despised by men until they have a sense of their need of His bounty. When that sense of need is worked within them by the Holy Spirit, then they leap at the very sound of the gospel; but until then, their heart is gross, their ears are dull of hearing, and they care not for the free grace of God.

Now let us come to our text: “For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”

I. First, notice that the promise which God has made to man in Christ Jesus is A PROMISE WHICH EXACTLY MEETS THE NEED OF MANKIND. What is that promise?

First, it is *the promise of the Holy Spirit*. The apostle Peter quoted from the prophet Joel the promise which God had made that, in the latter days, He would pour out of His Spirit upon all flesh. That Holy Spirit is one of man’s most urgent needs. We are fallen, brethren—fallen through the agency of the evil spirit; and we need the help of the good Spirit that we may be raised again. Our nature is polluted at its very center; the old serpent has poured poison into the innermost fountain of our being; and, therefore, we need that the Holy Spirit should come, and pour life into us, renewing us in the spirit of our mind. We need the Holy Spirit to illuminate us, for we are both blind and in the dark. We need the Holy Spirit to instruct us, for, by nature, we are ignorance itself, and it is His office to teach men. We need the Holy Spirit to soften our heart. Naturally, it is harder than the nether millstone, which is always the harder of the two, as it has to bear the grinding of the upper stone. We need the Holy Spirit to quicken us; for, by nature, we are dead in trespasses and sins, and to all good things callous and indifferent. Brethren, we need the Holy Spirit that we should be regenerated, for it is written, “You must be born again,” and we can only be born again, born from above, through the operation of the Spirit of God. When we are born again, we still need the Holy Spirit that He may sanctify us, that He may preserve us, that He may perfect us, and make us fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Therefore, sinner, if you say, “I feel myself to be powerless, incapable, like one that is dead,” let not that stand in your way, for God gives the Holy Spirit on purpose to meet just such need as yours. Everything that is needful to be done, which you cannot do, the Spirit of God will help you to do; and that which you can do, in a measure, but which you do very badly and inefficiently, the Spirit of God is given to help you to do, for He helps our infirmity. There is no strength needed in you, sinner; He will be your strength. There is no good operation needed on your part; the Holy Spirit has come to work all your works in you. He works in us to will and to do according to His own good pleasure; and then we, in consequence thereof, work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. If you will but believe in Christ, you need not come to Him with a new heart; here is the Spirit of God to give you that new heart. You need not strive to make yourself tender and humble in spirit; here is the Spirit of God to make you tender and humble. There is nothing that you need endeavor to produce in yourself, for this Divine Being, who brooded over chaos, and brought order out of primeval confusion, is ready to come and brood over you—over your dark, disordered, chaotic soul. He can spread His dove-like wings over it, till you shall come to light, and love, and life, and liberty, and joy. Oh, is not this a mercy that, inasmuch as we are so weak and helpless, the promise of God is that He will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?

But this is not all that a man needs in order that he may be saved. He needs, secondly, *the remission of his sin*, and there is a promise that God will give to the penitent the remission of their sins. Hence Peter said, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Harken, guilty one, there is remission of sin even for you! You who have lain soaking in sin till you are crimsoned with it, till your sin is ingrained into your very nature, there is power with God to make that crimson white as snow, for “all manner of sin and

blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” Whenever I repeat those gracious words of our Lord, I feel as if I had said something far more sweet than the choicest poetry, something infinitely more deserving to be written in letters of gold than all the sayings of the wisest philosophers of old. Tell the guilty man that God has mercy reserved for him, and is prepared to forgive him—what better news can he ever hear? Tell him that it is not true, as some say, that everything we have ever done must necessarily remain upon us, to injure and to hurt us in this life and in the next, as long as we have any being; it is not so, there is a remedy provided by God for the disease of sin. Yes, God can remove the very scars which that disease has left behind when it is healed. Sin can be perfectly forgiven, and forever put away. Remember the Lord’s declaration: “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins.” Now, when a cloud is gone, the sky is none the darker, it is just as blue as it was before that cloud was formed. Another emblem of God’s grace is that, when He has washed us, we shall be whiter than snow. Snow, when it first falls, bears no trace of ever having been stained, it is so perfectly white; and God can wash you, poor sinner, though you are guiltiest of the guilty, till not a speck of sin remains. “You are clean every whit,” said Christ to His disciples. Oh, what a word was that, and it is true of all who trust Jesus! Being cleansed in His blood, no trace of sin remains.

Now put those two things together, the Holy Spirit working in us a change of heart, and Jesus Christ working for us, and preparing pardon for sin, and in those two things you have the supply of man’s great need, which, put in a word, is *salvation*. In verse twenty-one, you can see the promise about that matter: “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” He shall be *saved*; that is, perfectly and completely saved both from the guilt of sin and from the power of sin. He shall not be half-saved, or saved in one particular form of salvation, but he shall be *saved*. Whosoever, then, repenting, trusts in Christ, and confesses his faith according to Christ’s own rule, shall be saved: “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” This is the glorious promise which, in its wide sweep, comprises all that a sinner needs—the Holy Spirit, the remission of sin, and salvation.

II. Now, secondly, let us inquire—TO WHOM IS THIS PROMISE MADE? According to my text, “the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”

I never like to accuse my brethren of being tricky; but have you ever heard this text quoted as far as this, “For the promise is unto you and to your children”? And then a full stop is put in, to prove, not that an infant ought to be baptized, but that an infant ought to be sprinkled? The argument used by many ministers is that the blessings of the covenant are for believers and their children; and some of you may sometimes have thought that the argument is rather difficult to answer. I do not like to think that there has been any dishonesty in such a matter; still, one cannot approve of a brother chopping a text in the middle like that, and trying to make it say exactly the opposite of what it really does say. Instead of this passage teaching that there is some special blessing for Christian people and their children, it teaches nothing of the sort; Peter declares that there is no limit of that kind to the range of this promise. Listen: “The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” Suppose that I were to try and argue thus: “The promise is unto you, and to your children, therefore your children ought to be baptized.” Go on with the text: “and to all that are afar off,” therefore all that are afar off ought to be baptized. That would be the same kind of reasoning; but it would be the drivel of an idiot, with no reasoning in it. But the passage, instead of speaking of anything being a privilege to certain people and their children, expressly declares that, while it is their privilege, and their children’s privilege, it is equally the privilege of all that are afar off, “as many as the Lord our God shall call.” That is to say, that great covenant promise, “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved,” is meant for you, is meant for your children, is meant for Hottentots, is meant for Hindus, is meant for Greenlanders, is meant for everybody to whom the Lord’s call is addressed. Our commission is, “Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.” There is not any person in this place who does not come within the sweep of my text. The promise is to you if you are a Jew, it is to you if you are the child of a Jew, or if you are the child of a godly man, but it is also to you if you are afar off. If any are afar off, because of sin, having gone into the far country away from God, or if they are afar off, literally, living in distant foreign lands, to them is the word of this salvation sent.

The promise is for all to whom the message comes; and, in its innermost and special sense, it is for all whom God shall effectually call by His Spirit, whether they are Jews or Gentiles, bond or free. That is the very glory of the text, and upon that I want to reflect while I pass on to the next point.

III. That next point is this; inasmuch as everything that a sinner needs for his salvation is made a matter of promise, and that promise is made to all that hear the gospel, then, brethren, **THIS IS A CAUSE FOR VERY GREAT ENCOURAGEMENT.**

I hope that I am addressing some who are pierced in the heart, and who therefore want to find Christ. Well, see what a promise you have to come upon, *and many have come to the Lord with far less encouragement.* When Jonah went to Nineveh, to utter his mournful and monotonous message, “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown,” the king believed it, and his people believed it, and they humbled themselves before God; yet what had they to go upon? Only this, “Who can tell?” They said, “Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger that we perish not?” So they came to God with no other encouragement but, “Who can tell?” Take heed, you who hear the gospel that the men of Nineveh do not rise up in judgment against you to condemn you. Take another case. There was the prodigal who came back to his father. Had he any promise from his father that he would receive him? No, nothing of the sort; it was only the prodigal’s belief in his father’s goodness that brought him back, and his father did receive him. Take another case; that of the importunate widow who went to the judge, crying, “Avenge me of my adversary.” Had she a promise that the judge would relieve her? Not at all; he was one who feared not God, nor regarded man; yet she kept on pleading with him, and, though he even told her no, perhaps scores of times, yet she pressed on with her suit till, at last, her importunity won the case.

Now see what vantage ground you stand upon compared with these people. You do not go to God with the question, “Who can tell?” You do not come to God merely with an inference drawn from the kindness of His nature. You do not come to God merely persuaded that He will hear importunate prayer; but if you come to Him, you come with a promise, for “the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off;” and this is the promise: “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Oh! I think you ought to come to God with joy on your face, for with such a sweet promise as this, you must, you shall prevail.

The second encouragement is that *God is always true.* It would be a dreadful supposition to imagine that God could lie; in fact, that would be sheer blasphemy. If a man is a righteous man, and he makes a promise, he will keep it if he can. A good man “swears to his own hurt and changes not;” much more is the good God faithful to every promise He has ever made. “Has He said, and shall He not do it?” Then, if God has promised that whosoever believes in His Son shall be saved, you may be sure that he will be; and whoever you may be, if you believe in Christ, you must be saved. “Lord, I know that You cannot lie.” You may plead in that fashion with Him. Take His promise in your hand, and say to him, “Do as You have said.”—

*“You have promised to forgive
All who on Your Son believe.”*

Plead that promise, and you shall find it certainly fulfilled, for God did never yet draw back from a promise which He had made, and He never will do so. Oh, how that ought to encourage you in prayer! “But,” one says, “may I grasp that promise, ‘Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved’?” Of course you may; and if the devil says that you must not claim that promise, tell him that Peter said, “The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off;” and as you are one of those that are a long way off Jerusalem—and, certainly, the British islands must have been esteemed very far off in Peter’s day—then you are one of those to whom that promise has come. Plead it, and you shall find that it will be fulfilled to you.

Further, take encouragement from the next point, which is, that *if God has made a promise, He certainly must be prepared to fulfill it.* I have known a great many very promising young men who never were performing young men. They promise to do this, and that, and the other; but they never do anything of the sort. I heard of one, the other day, who owed a great deal of money, and he got the bill for the debt renewed, and after that was done, he said to a friend, “Now that is all settled; how comfortable a fellow feels when he has no debts to trouble him!” He had not paid anything, he had not anything with

which he could pay, he had only renewed his promise to pay; yet he felt perfectly content. Some people are willing to enter into any kind of promise or bond, but it never seems to occur to them that they must fulfill the obligation into which they have entered. We put them down as bad men, and we do not want to trade with them, or associate with them. But God never made a promise unless He was quite prepared to fulfill it. Men sometimes make promises because it is not convenient, or in their power, to perform the promise at once, so they postpone its fulfillment; but when God makes a promise, He can fulfill it at once, and He will always be ready to fulfill it whenever He is called upon to do so. Friends, if God has promised to give the Holy Spirit, He can do it; the Holy Spirit waits to descend into men's hearts. If God has promised to give the pardon of sin, He can do it. The ransom price is paid; the Atonement has been presented and accepted—

*“There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins.”*

It has not to be filled. The sacrifice is not to be found or to be offered when found. “It is finished.” Everything that is required for your salvation is ready, and I am sent to you to say, “Hungry souls that want a feast of mercy, the oxen and fatlings are killed; all things are ready, come to the supper.” So that the Lord's promise ought to cheer you very much, since, God is ready at once to fulfill it.

Yet again, here is another word of good cheer to you. *God has put salvation upon the footing of promise*; not on the footing of merit—not on the footing of purchase—not on the footing of anything you can do, but on the footing of “He has promised it.” That is how the covenant of grace runs: “I will,” and “you shall.” It is not “You are to do this, to feel that, and to be the other;” but it is, “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments, and do them.” It is all promise, promise, promise, promise. When you call on a man for money, and he says to you, “On what ground do you ask for this sum?” and you say, “Why, sir, because you promised it,” that is a good ground to go upon, with one who is both able and willing to pay. If he said to you, “But I want to know whether you deserve this”—you are such an undeserving person that you would feel that you were out of court with him; but when your answer is simply this, “Whatever I may be, is not the question; I come because you promised,”—that makes grand pleading. That is the way to be enriched with heavenly mercy, simply to say, “O Lord, You have promised grace to all who trust Your Son, and here am I, empty, naked, poor, and undeserving; but I plead Your promise. For Your truth's sake, and for Your mercy's sake, fulfill that promise unto me.”

Now, is not all this encouraging? I do not say to you, “The *law* is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off;” but I say, with Peter, “The *promise* is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off.” The word of promise is preached unto you: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved;” “he that believes on Him is not condemned;” “he that believes on the Son has everlasting life;” or, putting it in Peter's words: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Now observe, in conclusion, that *no exception is possible in this case*. Let me repeat that expression; no exception is possible in this case. Addressing all the Jews, who were gathered around him, Peter said, “The promise is unto you.” Looking forward to all the future generations of Jews that were to be born, he added, “and to your children.” And then, lifting up his eyes to the far-off Gentile world, looking in vision as far as “The Pillars of Hercules,” and across “the silver streak” that separates these islands from the mainland, looking still further to Ireland as well, and then to the great continent which Columbus afterwards discovered, he seemed to see red men, and black men, and white men, and brown men—men of every race and clime and age, and he included them all by saying, “and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” Comprehending the vast population of the whole globe, throughout all time, Peter says, “This promise is to you all, ‘Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved.’” Therefore, that is a promise to *me*. Well do I recollect the time when I first laid hold of that truth. I was in great sorrow of soul, for I thought that there was no gospel for me; but I caught a ray of hope from that blessed word “whosoever”—oh, how I love that word “whosoever”—“whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” And there was another cheering message: “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” I read what John Bunyan said about that text:—“What, ‘him,’ is this?”

Why, it is any 'him that comes.' Any him, in all the world, that comes unto Christ, He will in no wise cast out." Perhaps you know how the blessed dreamer goes on about the rest of that verse: "'He will in no wise cast out.' Lord, I am a big sinner! 'I will in no wise cast out.' Lord, I have been a blasphemer! 'I will in no wise cast out.' Lord, I am an old sinner; I am eighty years old! 'I will in no wise cast out.' Lord, I have been an adulterer; I have been a fornicator; I have been a thief; I have been a murderer. 'I will in no wise cast out.'" So he goes over, and over, and over, and over with it to show that whoever comes to Christ, He cannot possibly cast him out, for if He did, it would make Christ a liar, and it would make a lie of hundreds of texts. "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out."

Look you, sirs; look you! *It is not for God's honor to cast out a soul that comes to Him.* Suppose that there should be cast out one soul that came to Christ; suppose that one sinner who trusted in Christ should perish. I know what men would do. They would publish all round the world directly, "God has broken His Word; the gospel has failed; for here is a soul lost that trusted in Christ." You do not suppose God will allow that, do you? In imagination, I see that poor soul going down to hell. He is no sooner there than the devil says to him, "Did you trust Christ?" "Yes, I did." "Did He refuse to save you?" "Yes, He did." "Do you mean to say that you fulfilled the Word, 'He that believes and is baptized'?" "Yes, I did." "And yet you are not saved!" Oh, what a roar of laughter would go all round the pit! How every fallen spirit, rising from his dungeon, would begin with unhallowed glee to shout and yell! How through the deep profound of pandemonium, where evil reigns supreme, there would go up their hisses and their hoots against a defeated Savior—against a conquered Christ—against a lying God—against one that said, and did not do, and that spoke, and was not true. "Aha, aha, Emmanuel, Diabolus has defeated You! Aha, aha, Jehovah, Your Word is forfeited!" Shall such a thing ever be? You shudder as I picture it. It never shall be. Heaven and earth shall pass away; and, as a moment's foam dissolves into the wave that bears it, and is lost forever, so shall the universe pass away, but never shall a sinner come and cast himself on Christ, and yet be allowed to perish. Try it on, sinner! Try it on! Try it now! God help you to try it, and to prove that, still, Christ receives sinners, and casts out none who trust Him! The Lord bless you, for His name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ACTS 2:1-42.

We cannot too often read the story of that wondrous outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost; and let us never read it without asking the Lord to manifest in our midst the fullness of the Spirit's power. We may not have a repetition of the miraculous gifts which were then bestowed upon the apostles and those who were with them; but we may have that gracious influence which shall convince and convert those who gather to hear the Word. Our success in preaching the Word is entirely dependent upon the presence and working of the Holy Spirit; therefore, let our prayer be—

*"Lord God, the Holy Spirit,
In this accepted hour,
As on the day of Pentecost,
Descend in all Your power.
The young, the old inspire
With wisdom from above;
And give us hearts and tongues of fire,
To pray, and praise, and love."*

Verses 1-13. *And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was heard abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak, Galileans? And how hear we every*

man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What does this mean? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.

The people who came together were greatly astonished to find the disciples of Christ speaking to them in their own tongues. Though all the speakers were Jews, and naturally knew no tongue but their own, yet they were able to talk in divers languages. Therefore some of their hearers, mocking, said, “These men are full of new wine.”

14-21. *But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, You men of Judaea, and all you that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: for these are not drunken, as you suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on My servants and on My handmaidens I will pour out in those days of My Spirit; and they shall prophesy: and I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: and it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

I did not detain you to speak about the moon turned into blood, or the sun darkened into midnight; those matters are of small consequence to you and to me compared with this sentence: “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” What a blessed door of hope is this! What a window, letting the light of heaven shine into the darkest despondency! Whosoever shall address himself to God by repentance, by faith, by prayer, shall be saved.

22, 23. *You men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as you yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:*

This was bold talking, for Peter was doubtless addressing many of the very people who had put the Lord to death, and he charges them with it. Observe how he declares that Christ’s death was in accordance with “the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God,” yet he expressly says that “by wicked hands” they had crucified and slain Him. It never occurred to Peter that the counsel of God deprived men of the responsibility and guilt of their actions. No; neither need it ever occur to you. If anyone shall ask you, “When anything is according to the foreknowledge and counsel of God, how can God blame the doer of it?” you may tell him that he has first to explain to you what he means; and if he says there is a difficulty in it, ask him to tell you what the difficulty is. Those who knew better than the objector could see none. The inspired apostle Peter could see none; but when he was most vehement in charging these men with guilt, yet, at the same time, he said that it was by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.

Surely he was a bad pleader to introduce into his argument anything that could be readily construed into an excuse for those he was accusing. But there is no real excuse in it; the free agency of man is as true as the predestination of God; the two truths stand fast forever. It is the folly of man to imagine that they disagree. If you do wrong, you are accountable for the wrong; and if there is a providence which ordains everything—as certainly there is—yet that providence takes not away from any man the full responsibility for anything that he does. So, truly did Peter say to these Jews concerning Christ, “Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.”

24-32. *Whom God has raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be held of it. For David speaks concerning Him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for He is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: because You will not leave my soul in Hades, nei-*

ther will You suffer Your Holy One to see corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; You shall make me full of joy with Your countenance. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in the abode of the dead, neither His flesh did see corruption. This Jesus has God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.

Here Peter appealed to the eleven, and to all the disciples then present who had seen Jesus after He had risen from the dead. It must have been a very impressive sight as they all stood up bearing witness that they had seen the Christ, who was crucified, alive after His death. It was a wonderful public attestation to that grandest of all facts, the raising again from the dead of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God.

33. *Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has shed forth this, which you now see and hear.*

Was not that enough to convince them? They saw and they heard the proofs of the working of the Spirit among them, and Peter told them that “this” was the gift of Christ, who had ascended up on high. It must have been a very striking thing, to have been there, and to have heard and seen these tokens of God setting His seal to the work of Jesus.

34-36. *For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he says himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit You on My right hand, until I make Your foes Your footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God has made that same Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ.*

What a climax to Peter’s sermon! How simple and yet how triumphant is the argument! We do not wonder that men were convinced by it.

37. *Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart,—*

There is a great distinction between being cut to the heart and being pricked in the heart. Those who were cut to the heart stoned the preacher; but they who are pricked in the heart yield a sweet obedience to the will of God: “They were pricked in their heart.”—

37-40. *And said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.*

Not, “save yourselves”; but “save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Come out from among them. They are guilty of the death of Christ; you will be found guilty of it, too, unless you now disown the people who committed that awful crime. Come right out from among them, and be altogether separated from them.

41, 42. *Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—488, 498, 499.

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