

Trust Ye in the Lord For Ever

BY T. KELLY.

"Trust ye in the Lord forever." His is everlasting strength: Weak and vain the foe's endeavour, Looking to prevail at length. They who in the Lord confide, Safe and happy shall abide.

"Trust ye in the Lord forever," His is love that changes not; Never will he leave, no never, Those whom he with blood has bought; He will keep them by his power, Keep them in the darkest hour.

"Trust ye in the Lord forever," He is wise—"the only wise," Fear ye not the grand deceiver, Father though he be of lies; Those he never can deceive Who in faith to Jesus cleave.

"Trust ye in the Lord forever," In the face of danger smile; Vain to hurt the foe's endeavour, Vain his force, and vain his guile, Wound he may—he cannot kill; God is with his people still.

"Trust ye in the Lord forever," Nothing is to him unknown; Neither force nor guile can sever From the love of Christ, his own. Trust in him, and nothing fear, Good he is, and always near.

"Trust ye in the Lord forever," Grace is his, and power and love; Trust in him who changes never, Him who reigns in heaven above, Sheltered by his mighty arm, Who or what can do us harm?

Visitor Pulpit.

THE MAN WITH THE MEASURING LINE.

Sermon by Rev. C. H. Spurgeon.

"I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand. Then said I, Whither goest thou? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof. And, behold, the angel that talked with me went forth, and another angel went out to meet him, and said unto him, Run, speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein: For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her."—Zech. ii: 1-5.

Dear friends, we may sometimes refresh our minds with a prospect of the kingdom which is soon to cover all lands, and make the sun and moon ashamed by its superior glory. We are not to indulge in prophesyings as some do, making them our spiritual food, or meat and drink; but still we may take them as choice morsels, and special delicacies set upon the table; they are condiments which may often give a sweeter taste, or, if you will, a greater pungency and savor to other doctrines; prophetic views light up the crown of Jesus with a superior splendor; they make his manhood appear illustrious as we see him still in connection with the earth: to have a kingdom here as well as there; to sit upon a throne here as well as in yonder skies; to subdue his adversaries even upon this Acedama, as in the realm of spirits; to make even this poor earth upon which the trail of the serpent is so manifest, a place where the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together.

I have selected the vision as a text merely to accommodate it to my own purpose; and though the accommodation may seem to be less historical and more suitable for Sabbath food to the people of God, yet remember God's sense stands first, and our sense is only to be regarded and respected as it stands in harmony with other portions of Holy Writ. My heart is so taken up with the present state of my church and congregation, that I feel moved to use my text in its application to us, and I think it may bear such an application. May God teach it and bless it to us.

First, dear friends, I want you to lift up your eyes with Zechariah and see the man with the measuring line; secondly, to open your ears and hear the voice of the prophesying angel; and then, thirdly, I want you to go your ways and publish abroad the commands of this angel.

I. First, then, LET US SEE THE MAN WITH THE MEASURING LINE IN HIS HAND.

All Zechariah's visions are remarkably simple. They are not like Isaiah's when he saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up; nor like Ezekiel's when he beheld living creatures with four faces, and wheels full of eyes. Zechariah had not imagination enough to be capable of beholding with due appreciation, vis-

ions so complicated and mysterious. He was not the proper instrument of God for the revelation of these more mysterious matters; but the Lord had a place for him, and a vision for him too. How sweet to be a servant of God in any position! He sees simply a man, an ordinary architect, going forth with a measuring line to measure the city of Jerusalem—a very simple sight—and without any stretch of imagination you can all picture the man with his line. If this man in the text is to be viewed as an angel, commissioned by God to take measurements of that city, he would be sure to do it accurately, and his measurements would be instructive could he reveal them to us. Since they are hidden from our eyes, let it be enough for us to perceive that the city has measurements, has a settled length and breadth; that the measurements can be taken, and that we have divine authority for asserting that they have been taken. This leads us to contemplate the doctrine of predestinating love, with its line of grace, and its plans of wisdom. God's city of Jerusalem is not to be built at hap-hazard. The line marks out and measures how long the wall shall be, and where the corner shall be placed; and how far the other wall shall be carried, and where it shall come to an end. The towers are counted, the bulwarks are considered. Every single item and particular of the sacred architecture of the Church of God is written down in the decree of the Most High. Every man has his plan, and shall not the Most High? He is esteemed to be a simpleton who begins to erect a building with no sort of idea how it will look at the close; who is waiting till the top stone is brought out before he can conceive in his mind any sort of idea of what the building will be like. You would never employ such a person without foresight as an architect; and if a man were foolish enough to do this with his own building, all who heard thereof would make it the theme of laughter. It can not be supposed, therefore, to be so with God. Your belief in his wisdom supposes he has a plan, nay, necessitates that there should be a design in the divine mind. Moreover, you can not separate the thought of omniscience from God. If God be omniscient, he knows the end from the beginning. He sees its appointed place, not merely the corner-stone which he has laid in fair colours, in the blood of his dear Son, but he beholds in their ordained position each of the chosen stones taken out of the quarry of nature, and polished by his grace; he sees the whole from cornice to cornice, from base to roof, from foundation to pinnacle. He hath in his mind a clear knowledge of every stone which shall be laid in its prepared space, and how vast the edifice shall be, and when the top stone shall be brought forth with shoutings of "Grace! Grace! unto it." Deny the decree of election, and what see you? You see the work of grace without God's superintendence in it. What would creation be if God had not been absolutely present there? Can we conceive of a single creature formed without the creating purpose of God? Is there a fish in the sea, or a fowl in the air which was left to chance for its creation? Nay, in every bone, joint, muscle, sinew, gland and blood-vessel, you mark the presence of a God, working everything according to the design of infinite wisdom. Shall God be present in creation, ruling over all, and not in grace? Shall grace be left in a state of chaos while creation is ordered by the Most High? Look ye at Providence! Who knoweth not that not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your Father? Even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Every dark and bending line meets in the centre of thy love. It is our joy to believe that the measuring line is used in our trials and troubles.

It is just possible that the man in the text was nothing but a man. At any rate, we may often see apparitions of men with measuring lines; and while I have an intense reverence for the angel with the measuring-line, I must confess an entire dislike to the man with the measuring-line. How often, brethren, have we seen men with the measuring-line

endeavoring to estimate the length and breadth of God's true Church. Some of them take a very long line, and they begin to calculate how many Protestants, Roman Catholics and members of the Greek Church there may be throughout the world, and then they write down all these millions as being Christians. Now, we beg to differ from the estimate; we only wish we could agree with it; glad enough should we be to hope that these were true members of the Church of God; but when we remember the errors with which one section of the Church is polluted almost beyond hope, when we remark the absence of all spirituality in others, when we see how the mass of nominal Christians are living without God and without Christ, when we reflect upon the many criminals, harlots and open sinners who would, according to this rule, be called Christians, we beg to remind the man with the measuring line, "They are not all Israel which are of Israel;" and although they may all lie on the threshing floor, "What is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord." The field is the world, but among the wheat many tares are growing; multitudes are gathered here, not in the valley of decision, but in the plains of outward profession, and a separating day must come. If we were to measure in this way, we should certainly be deluded; we should find Christians whom we could not trust; Christians who do not know their creed; Christians who did not rejoice in the name of Christ; Christians without faith, without hope, and strangers to the commonwealth of Israel. Christians merely in name can not be Christians, for "Except a man be born again, he can not see the kingdom of God." "He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

Again, I very frequently see another man with a measuring-line. He is of a very sad countenance, and looks out upon the universe through blue spectacles. He will never fall into the error of the first man, but delights in the opposite extreme. "Oh!" he says, as he wrings his hands in a kind of delicious misery, "the people of God are a handful, a remnant, a child might write them." He likes right well that hymn—

"Dear Shepard, of Thy chosen few, Thy former mercies here renew."

He wishes his minister to preach from, "Fear not, little flock," or this one, "Straight is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Sometimes despondency takes the shape of a man's fearing that he himself shall not enter; now there is something humble about that, and therefore it is bearable, but in frequent instances, Despondency is married to Pride, and then it is not Despondency about themselves, but about all the rest of the human family. They are, doubtless, the men, and "wisdom will die in them." They hear of backsliders, and they conclude that all professors will backslide. They have read a story of some famous minister who stained his character, and they believe that all ministers are mere pretenders. They hear of Mr. Liberal, who was noted for his generosity, and for his zeal in the cause of Christ, and yet he turned out to be generous with other men's money, and to be thought little better than a thief; and Despondency shakes her head, and says: "I told you so: all men are liars." "Lord, are there few who shall be saved?" is the constant question of Despondency; and every day she lives, she keeps making the measuring-line a little and a little shorter, till perhaps the day will come when Despondency shall prophesy the destruction of the Christian faith, the return of Papacy, and the outpouring of the vials, and say, "The faithful fall from among men; Zion is under a cloud." "A day of clouds and of thick darkness," is the only description of the present age which this spirit allows to be correct. Perhaps Despondency herself may die in the dark, believing that she is not included in the line of the covenant of grace. Well, now, I must confess I am thankful that God has not our

desponding brother to measure his Zion; I am grateful that he is pleased to keep that in his own hands, or it might be woe forever to many of the brightest of the Lord's people.

Notice that this vision soon departed. The prophet does not seem to have dwelt long upon it. Almost as soon as it appeared it disappeared. Perhaps it is not a good thing for the people of God at any time to be much engaged in numbering the people. It is a question that was the particular sin of David, numbering the people. I will not enter into it just now, but I do fear that it is hard for us to number the people at any time, without committing a sin: either the greatness of their number may lift us up and inflate us with pride, or the littleness of their number may make us despond and doubt the strength of God. The vision of the man with the measuring-line is only to be looked upon for a moment, and then it may depart. We, therefore, ask you to close your eyes to that, and open your ears to the voice of that covenant angel, who, interrupting the man, began to tell to Zechariah good things concerning times to come.

II. From my text it appears, dear friends, THAT WE ARE TO LOOK FOR A GREAT EXTENSION OF THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

I hope we are to look for it now. Jerusalem shall be inhabited "as towns without walls." There are those in this place who remember when, if you crossed Blackfriars bridge, you scarcely met with a house; as soon as ever you crossed that bridge from London you were in the country at once. They still survive among us to see how this great city has not only swollen to this district, but has gone right on for miles, and threatens to absorb mile after mile of the country. Such an extension we are to expect in Christ's Church. It began with twelve apostles; it was soon swollen to some 400 brethren; it was increased by 3,000 more on the day of Pentecost; there were added afterwards to the Church daily of such as should be saved. The gospel was preached throughout all regions. The children of God were found in Athens and Corinth; in Derbe and Lystra; from all parts of the earth the elect were gathered out. The kingdom was extended, the gospel was preached in Spain as well as Italy; it passed on to Gaul, it came to Great Britain. In these after days it still continues to spread. A new world has been discovered, the religion of Jesus has been carried there. The emigrants who are peopling great islands of the southern sea, bear with them the religion of Jesus Christ. Everywhere the kingdom grows. There is, as it were, a little core and centre of believers from among the Jewish people, but all around these there spreads a great multitude of whom I might almost say, that no man can number them.

It appears from the vision that the supply for all the number shall be as great as is required. "Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls, for the multitude of men and cattle therein." The cattle are the provisions for the population. What is to be done with so large a church? How are the converts to be seen after? How are the members to be fed with spiritual food? "As thy day, so shall thy strength be." Whatever provision the church shall want, God will give it. Jehovah-jireh is his name. This city of London has not overgrown its supplies: while we may be astonished at the population, we may be equally astonished at the provision. It shall be so in the kingdom of grace. God will raise up in the midst of any growing church the proper men to look after the converts and see to their spiritual health. We have no need to be under any alarm in this respect: "All needful grace will God bestow."

To close up this point, let us observe that, doubtless, at such seasons, divine love shall be very sweetly enjoyed among all the members. For the eighth verse says—though I do not intend to push our investigation further than the text—"He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye." We never know so much of our nearness and dearness to God as when we, in common with the rest of

God's people, are visited with the joy of his presence. How differently things look in the sunshine from the way in which they appear without it. Ride along this land of ours when the rain is pouring down, or the mists have gathered, and what a dull, dreary wilderness it seems; and these London streets, what a settlement for convicts they appear in the midst of our thick fogs! but let the sun shine forth, as it did this morning, let the mists be scattered, and then even the leafless trees have a golden light upon them, and all nature rejoiceth, and the meanest and poorest landscape becomes, after its sort, sublime. So when our hearts are dull and heavy, and the Church of God is in the same state, how poor everything appears! but when the Lord shines forth, and the Sun of Righteousness arises with healing in his wings, then the doctrine of grace, how precious! then the ministry of the gospel, how effectual! then the means of grace, how dear! the people of God, how estimable! the things of God, how delightful! O that we may have this! We have a right to expect it! We do not deserve it, but God has promised it. Let us give him no rest until we have it! Stay your measurings, O Bigotry! Stay your censures, ye who cut off the people of God, and hearken while the angel prophesies that the kingdom of Christ shall grow and increase, till, like a city without walls, Jerusalem shall have for her glory the presence of the Lord, and for her boundary nothing but the will of the Most High.

III. I close with a few words on the third point, and but a few. Where is this increase to come from, this great increase? It is to come from two sources indicated in the sixth and seventh verses. Multitudes are to come out of the world. "Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the North, saith the Lord; for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of heaven, saith the Lord."

God's chosen people are scattered here and there. There are many of them in this assembly of whom we know nothing; but God knows them. The preaching of the gospel is a message to you to come forth; that message is this, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." It comes to every soul among you, with this commanding but most consoling word, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." My hearers, you know what believing means; it is simply trusting upon what Christ has done for sinners. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation;" if you now trust him your many sins shall be forgiven you; you are a child of God and an heir of heaven. Like prodigals you may have spent all your substance; spiritual hunger may have seized upon you; you would fain fill your belly with the vain pleasures of the world, but you can not; the Holy Spirit whispers in your heart, "Arise and go unto your Father." Obey that heavenly whisper, and though thou be as yet a great way off, yet thy Father seeth thee; he runs to meet thee as thou art; he falls upon thy neck and kisses thee, just as thou art, undeserving and sinful. He cries to his servants, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him." Wilt thou trust that Father's love? Wilt thou confide in it as it is set forth in the bleeding sacrifice of the Lord Jesus?

It is from you, O unconverted men and women, that we expect the greatest increase through the Spirit's power. We are looking for it and praying for it. I hope that the people of God, this morning, will be looking after you, and when this sermon is done, I hope they will speak with you, or if they can not do so, at least pray for you. "Ho, ho, come ye forth"—twice is the shout given, as if you were slumberers and needed to be awakened. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters;" here there are two "Ho's," as if you should be called with vehemence, with earnestness, with pleading—"Come ye forth."

There is another class from which the church is to get this increase, indicated in the next verse, "Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon." There is a large number of this second

class in this congregation. There are a number of you who do believe in Christ, but you dwell with the daughter of Babylon. If a census were taken of Christians according to the church-roll, and I do not know that it could be taken better by mortal man, then you must be put down as being of the world. When the Lord's Supper is spread and the Saviour says, "This do in remembrance of me," you go away, or stay in the galleries; you practically say to the Lord Jesus, "Lord, I will not do this in remembrance of thee; I feel myself justified in disobeying thy command; I believe I have a valid reason for not doing what thy loving lips request me to do." I do not know if I put it in that shape that you will quite agree with your own assertion; because how can a man really have a justifiable reason for not doing what the Lord Jesus Christ expressly tells him to do? That word "separation" needs to ring in the ears of Christians: "Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." Though this is to be done practically by your actions, yet first and foremost it should be done by a distinct avowal of your Lord Jesus Christ, and that avowal should be by baptism and union with the church. May God bless these remarks both to saints and sinners, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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