

THE HEAVENLY SINGERS AND THEIR SONG.

NO. 2321

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

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“And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell aown before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”

Revelation 5:8-10.

THIS morning we had a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ appearing in heaven in his sacrificial character, being adored in that character, looking like a Lamb that had been slain, and being worshipped under that aspect in the very center of heaven. I tried, as far as ever I could, to insist upon it that we must never hide the atoning sacrifice, that Christ, as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, is always to be brought to the front, to be put foremost in our preaching and in our practice, too. In this verse, we go a step further. This blessed Lamb appears in heaven as the Mediator between God and men. At God's right hand was the book of his eternal purposes. None dared even to look upon it; it was hopeless that any

creature should be able to loose the seven seals thereof. But there came forward this glorious Lamb, who had the marks of his slaughter upon him, and he took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon, the throne. Thus he acted as Mediator, Interpreter, taking the will of God, and translating it to us, letting us know the meaning of that writing of the right hand of God which we could never have deciphered, but which, when Christ looses the seals, is made clear to us.

Jesus Christ, then, is seen as our sacrifice in the capacity of Mediator, and in that capacity he becomes the object of the adoration, first, of the Church, then of all the thousands and ten thousands of angels, and then of every creature that God has made. It would be too large a subject to take in all those hallelujahs; and, therefore, in speaking to-night I select only these three verses to set forth the song of the Church, the adoration of the Church of God, rendered to the bleeding Lamb as the Mediator between God and men.

I shall have only two divisions. First, behold the worshippers; and, secondly, hearken to their song.

I. First, BEHOLD THE WORSHIPPERS; for, remember, that we must be like them if we are to be with them. It is a well-known rule that heaven must be in us before we can be in heaven. We must be heavenly if we hope to sit in the heavenly places. We shall not be taken up to join the glorified choir unless we have learned their song, and can join their sacred harmony. Look, then, at the worshippers. You are not yet perfectly like them; but you will be, by-and-by, if you have already the main points of likeness wrought in you by the grace of God.

The first point about the worshippers is this, they are all full of life. I must confess that I should not like to dogmatize upon the meaning of the four living creatures; but still they do seem to me to be an emblem of the Church in its Godward standing, quickened by the life of God. At any rate, they are living creatures; and the elders themselves are living personages. Yet alas, alas, that it should be needful to say so trite a thing; but the dead cannot praise God! "The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day." Yet how many dead people there are in this great assembly to-night! If one, who had sufficient powers of penetration as to be able to detect the actions of the spiritual life of man, were to go round this crowd, "Ah! me," he would say, "take this one away, take that one away; these are dead souls in the midst of the living in Zion." I will not dwell upon this very

solemn thought; but I wish the conscience of some here to dwell upon it when the service is over; you are dead people in the midst of life; you joined in the song just now, but there was no living praise in your singing. Prayer was offered by my dear brother Hurditch very fervently; but there was no living prayer in you. Do you know that it is so? If so, then take your right place; and God grant you enough life to know the absence of life, lest he should say of you, "Bury my dead out of my sight," and you should be taken away to the house appointed to the dead, since you cannot be allowed to pollute the gathering of living saints! Those in heaven are all full of life; there is no dead worshipper there, no dull, cold heart that does not respond to the praise by which it is surrounded; they are all full of life.

And further note, that they are all of one mind. Whether they are four- and-twenty elders, or four living creatures, they all move simultaneously. With perfect unanimity they fall on their faces, or touch their harps, or uplift their golden vials full of sweet odours. I like unanimity in worship here. You remember the lines —

*“At once they sing, at once they pray;
They hear of heaven, and learn the way.”*

We used to sing that hymn when we were children; but is there always real unanimity in our assembly? While one is praising, is not another murmuring? While one is earnest, is not another indifferent? While one is believing, is not another an infidel? O God, grant to our assemblies here below the unanimity that comes of the One Spirit working in us the same result, for so we must be in heaven; and if we are not of one mind here below, we are not like the heavenly beings above! When little bickerings come in, when sectarian differences prevent our joining in the common adoration, it is a great pity. God heal his one Church of all her unhappy divisions, and any one church of any latent differences that there may be, that our unity on earth may be an anticipation of the unanimity of heaven!

Note, next, that as the heavenly worshippers are full of life, and full of unity, so they are all full of holy reverence. "When he had taken the book, the four living creatures and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb," all reverently fell down before the Lamb. And in the fourteenth verse, after their song was over, and after the angels and the whole creation had taken their turn in the celestial music, we read, "And the four living creatures said, Amen." It was all that they could say; they were overawed with the majestic presence of God and the Lamb. "And the four

and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever." They did not say anything then; they simply fell down and worshipped. It is a grand thing when, at last, we have broken the backs of words with the weight of our feelings, when expressive silence must come in to prove the praises which we cannot utter. It is glorious to be in this reverent state of mind. We are not always so; but they are so in heaven; they are all ready to fall down before the Lord. Do you not think that we often come into our places of worship with a great deal of carelessness? And while the service is going on, are we not thinking of a thousand things? Or if we are attentive, is there enough lowly worship about us? In heaven, they fall down before the Lamb; brothers, sisters, should not we serve God better if we did more of this falling down to worship the Lamb?

Note, next, that while they are all full of reverence, they are all in a praising condition: "Having every one of them harps." They did not pass one harp round, and take turns in playing it; nor was there one who had to sit still because he had forgotten his harp; but they had, every one of them, his harp. I am afraid those words do not describe all God's people here to-night. My dear sister, where is your harp? It is gone to be repaired, is it not? My dear brother, where is your harp? You have left it on the willow-tree, by the waters of Babylon, so you have not one here. I must confess that sometimes I have not a harp; I could preach a solemn sermon, but I could not so well render the praise. Our dear friend Hurditch seemed to have brought his harp with him to-night; I am glad he praised the Lord so many times for so many mercies. We do not always have our harps with us; but the living creatures and the elders had, all of them, the apparatus for the expression of their holy joy, "having every one of them harps." Try to be like the spirits above.

But this is not all; they are all ready for prayer. In heaven there is prayer, we must correct the common mistake about that matter; and there is something to pray for. Although we do not ask the intercession of saints and angels, — that were far from Scriptural, — still, we believe, that the saints do pray. Are they not crying, "O Lord, how long?" Why should they not pray, Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, in earth, as it is in heaven? They would understand that prayer better than we do. We know how God's will is not done on earth, but they know how it is done in heaven; and they could pray, "Thy kingdom come, for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever, Amen." How sweetly could their lips move over such words as those! Well, they, all of them, had "golden vials full of

odours.” Are we always furnished and prepared for prayer? This ought to be more easy than always to have a harp; but I am afraid that we have not always our golden vials full of odours; I do not know that they are golden vials at all, I am afraid that ours are of the earth, earthy. But in heaven they have golden vials, pure and precious, and they are full of odours. Sometimes, when you look into your prayer-box, my brother, you have to scrape the bottom to find enough perfume to make even a little incense; but to have our vials full of sweet odours, this is the state of mind in which we should be always. God bring us to that! We shall be getting near heaven, when we can always pray, and certainly near heaven when we can always praise.

*“Prayer and praise, with sins forgiven,
Bring to earth the bliss of heaven,”*

and make us ready to go up and share that bliss.

Now you see something of what these worshippers were. I do but pause a moment to ask whether we are prepared to go there, whether we are like those who are there. Remember that there is but one place for us besides; if we do not enter heaven, to praise with those perfect spirits, we must be driven from the divine presence to suffer with the condemned. You are not willing to go to hell; will you not be in earnest to go to heaven? You recoil at the idea of “Depart, ye cursed!” Oh, why not even now accept” Come, ye blessed,” while Jesus repeats his gracious invitation, “Come unto me all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”? I wish that I were able to press this invitation upon you; but I do put it before you. In the name of Jesus, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world, I invite you to trust in him, and find your Sins forgiven; and so doing, you shall be prepared to meet the Lamb who sits upon the throne, and there for ever to adore his sacrifice, while you enjoy the blessings that flow from it. May we all meet in heaven! It would be a dreadful thing if we could know the destiny of everybody here, and find, among other things, that some here will never see the gate of pearl except from an awful distance, with a great gulf fixed, of which gulf it is said, “They which would pass from hence to you, cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.” May we be on the right side of that gulf! Be on the right side of it to-night, for Jesus’ sake!

II. Now, having thus spoken of the worshippers, I want you to HEARKEN TO THEIR SONGS. We must hearken our best in the short time that we have

left. "They sang a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."

It is rather an unusual thing to take a hymn, and treat it doctrinally but, for your instruction, I must take away the poetry for a moment, and just deal with the doctrines of this heavenly hymn.

The first doctrine is, Christ is put in the front, the deity of Christ, as I hold. They sing, "Thou art worthy, thou art worthy." A strong-winged angel sped his way o'er earth and heaven, and down the deep places of the universe, crying with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book?" but no answer came, for no creature was worthy. Then came One, of whom the Church cries in its song, "Thou art worthy, thou art worthy." Yes, beloved, he is worthy of all the praise and honor that we can bring to him. He is worthy to be called equal with God, nay, he is himself God, very God of very God; and no man can sing this song, or ever will sing it, unless he believes Christ to be divine, and accepts him as his Lord and God.

Next, the doctrine of this hymn is that the whole Church delights in the mediation of Christ. Notice, it was when he had taken the book that they said, "Thou art worthy to take the book." To have Christ standing between God and man, is the joy of every believing heart. We could never reach up to God; but Christ has come to bridge the distance between us. He places one hand on man and the other upon God; he is the Daysman, who can lay his hand upon both; and the Church greatly rejoices in this. Remember that even the working of providence is not apart from the mediation of Christ. I rejoice in this, that if the thunders be let loose, if plagues and deaths around us fly, the child of God is still under the Mediator's protection, and no harm shall happen to the chosen, for Jesus guards us evermore. All power is given unto him in heaven and in earth, and the Church rejoices in his mediatorship.

But now, notice, in the Church's song, what is her reason for believing that Christ is worthy to be a Mediator. She says, "Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain." Ah, beloved, when Christ undertook to be her Mediator, this was the extreme point to which suretyship could carry him, to be slain! And he has gone to the extreme point, and he has paid life for life. In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," was the sentence

pronounced upon Adam. The second Adam has died; he has bowed his head to the sentence, he has vindicated the law of God, he has gone to the extreme length of all that his mediatorship could possibly demand of him, and this makes the redeemed lift up the song higher and higher and higher: "Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain." Jesus is never more glorious than in his death; his propitiation is the culmination of his glory, after all, as it was the very utmost depth of his shame, Beloved, we rejoice in our Mediator because he died.

Well then, notice, that they sing of the redemption which his death effected, and they do not sing of the redemption of the world. No, not at all: "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." I am not going into a doctrinal discussion to-night. I believe in the infinite value of the atoning sacrifice; I believe that, if God had ordained it to be effectual for the salvation of many more, it was quite sufficient for the divine purpose; but those whom Christ redeemed unto God by his blood are not all mankind. All mankind will not sing this song; all mankind will not be made kings and priests unto God; and all mankind are not redeemed in the sense in which this song is lifted up to God. I want to know, not so much about general redemption, of which you may believe what you like, but about particular redemption, personal redemption: "Thou hast redeemed us." "Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it." "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." My dear hearer, can you join in this song? It is all very well to say, "Oh, yes! we are all sinners; we are all redeemed." Stop, stop; are you a sinner? Do you know it? Sinners are very scarce in London. "Why, there are millions of them!" say you? Yes, yes, yes; nominally, they will say so; but the bond fide sinner, who knows his guilt, is a scarce article.

*"A sinner is a sacred thing,
The Holy Ghost hath made him so."*

If there is a real sinner in this house to-night, she will be weeping at my Master's feet, washing those blessed feet with her tears. But as for your sham sinners — they are sinners enough, God knows; but they do not really believe that they are sinners. They have never done anything very wrong, nothing very particular, nothing very important, nothing to break their hearts about. Oh! you — why, you cannot even claim to come in among the sinners, you are a sham even there! But as for redemption, that

redemption that redeemed everybody will not do you any good, for it redeemed Judas, it redeemed the myriads that are now in hell. A poor redemption that! The redemption that you want is the redemption that would fetch you right out from your fellow-sinners, so that you would be separated unto God, according to that word, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters."

A thing that is redeemed belonged originally to the person who redeems it; and the redeemed of the Lord always were his: "Thine they were," saith Christ, "and thou gavest them me." They always were God's. You cannot go and redeem a thing that does not belong to you. You may buy it, but you cannot redeem it. Now, that which belonged originally to God came under a mortgage through sin. We, having sinned, came under the curse of the Law; and though God still held to it that we were his, yet we were under this embargo, sin had a lien upon us. Christ came, and saw his own, and he knew that they were his own. He asked what there was to pay to redeem them, to take them out of pawn. It was his heart's blood, his life, himself, that was required; he paid the price, and redeemed them; and we to-night sing, "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." He has, by redeeming us, separated us to himself, and made us a peculiar people, bought with blood in a special sense out of all the rest of mankind.

I could tell you a great deal about the universal bearings of Christ's redemption, in which I believe, and in the infinite value of that redemption, in which I believe; but I also say that there was, in the design of God, and in the work of Christ, a peculiar form of redemption, which was only for his own people, even as his intercession is, for he says, "I pray for them, I pray not for the world: but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine." Whatever some may think about it, there is a speciality and peculiarity about the redemption of Christ; and this makes the very highest note of the song of heaven, "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

So much about the heavenly hymn doctrinally.

Now about it experimentally: "Thou hast redeemed us to God." I have said, dear friends, that you cannot sing this song unless you know something of it now. Have you been redeemed? Has the embargo that was

on you through sin been taken off you? Do you believe in Jesus Christ? For, every man who believeth in Jesus Christ has the evidence of his eternal redemption. Thou hast been bought back with a countless price if thou believest that Jesus is the Christ, and thou art trusting alone in him. That was their experience: "Thou hast redeemed us." They felt free; they remembered when they wore their fetters, but they saw them all broken by Christ. Have you been set free? Have you had your fetters broken? Ask the question, and then let us pass on.

This redemption is the ground of their distinction: "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." I heard one, the other day, say of a certain minister, "Oh! we want another minister, we are tired of this man; he is always talking so much about the blood." In the last great day, God will be tired of the man who made that speech. God never wearies of the precious blood, nor will his people who know where their salvation lies. They do not, even in heaven, say that it is a dreadful word to mention. "Oh, but I do not like the word!" says some delicate gentleman. Your lordship will not be bothered with it, for you will not go to heaven. Do not trouble yourself; you shall not go where they sing about the blood. But, mark you, if you ever do go there, you will hear it over and over and over again: "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." How they will ring it out! "Thou, thou, thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." How they will emphasize that pronoun, "Thou," and address the praise wholly to Jesus, and sound out that word with the full music of their harps, "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." They are not ashamed of the blood of Jesus up there.

It is this redemption that has made them kings. We cannot realize our kingship to the full here below; though we do in a measure. There is a poor man here, who has but one room to live in; he has no money in his pocket to-night, yet he is a king in the sight of God. There is one here, perhaps, who used to be a drunkard. He could not overcome the evil anyhow; he signed the pledge, wore the blue ribbon, and so on; but still he went back to the drink. By the grace of God he has got his foot upon it now, for he has a new heart and a right spirit. That man is a king; he is a king over his drunken habits. There is one here who used to have a very fierce temper. It was hard to live with him; but Christ has made him a changed man, and now he is a king, ruling over his temper. It is a grand thing to be made a king over yourself. There are some, who have dominion over millions of others, who have never ruled themselves. Poor creatures! Poor creatures! Thank God, if he has given you the mastery of your own nature; that is a

glorious conquest; yet this is only the beginning of what is in this song of heaven.

And then they say, “Thou hast made us priests.” Oh, the poor creatures we have nowadays in the world, who cannot go to Christ except by a priest! They must go to a priest to confess their sins, and go to a priest to get absolution. We have priests not only in the Church of Rome, but elsewhere; we are sorry to see this accursed priestcraft coming in everywhere. Why, some of you people would like your minister to do all your religion for you, would you not? You take a sitting, and leave your religion to your minister. Christ has made every one of his people a priest, and every child of God is as much a priest as I am; and I am a priest certainly, a priest unto God to offer the spiritual sacrifice of prayer, and praise, and the ministry of the Word. But here is the peculiar joy of all Christians, that God has made them priests. If they do not use their priesthood here, I am afraid that they will never be able to use their priesthood before the throne of God with their fellow-priests. This is the melody of the heavenly song, “Washed in the precious blood, redeemed by that matchless price, we are now made unto our God kings and priests.” Even on earth each saint can sing, —

*“I would not change my blest estate,
For all that earth calls good or great;
And while my faith can keep her hold,
I envy not the sinner’s gold.”*

Thus have I spoken of the song doctrinally, and experimentally; now let me speak of it expectantly.

There is something to be expected: “And we shall reign on the earth.” When John heard that song, the resurrection-day had not yet come. These are the spirits before the throne, disembodied; they are expecting the day of the resurrection. When that day will come, who can tell? But when it comes, the dead in Christ shall rise first. Upstarting at the midnight cry, they shall quit their beds of dust and silent clay, and the saints that are alive and remain shall join them. I will not go into the details of that time; but then shall come a period of halcyon bliss. “The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.” Then shall be a time of the saints’ reigning upon the earth. Their life shall be regal; their delights, their joys, and their honors, shall be equal to those of kings and princes, nay, they shall far exceed them. Do you and I expect to reign upon the earth? It

will seem very odd to one who is very poor, obscure, perhaps ignorant, but who knows his Lord, to find that Christ has made him a priest and a king, and that he shall reign even on the earth with him, and then reign for ever with him in glory; but it would be more singular, it would be perfectly monstrous, if we were to assert of some persons, and of some here present, that they would reign on the earth. The man who lives for himself shall never reign on the earth. "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth;" not the men who, in their selfishness, trample clown everybody else with iron heel. You shall not reign OR the earth; you have lived here simply to heard money, or to make a name for yourself, or to indulge your passions, or to revenge yourselves upon your fellowmen. You reign, Sir? You? God's prison-house is the place for you, not a throne. But when he has made us meek, and humble, and lowly, and reverent, and pure, then we shall become fit to be promoted to this high calling of being priests and kings for Christ unto God in glory, and even here on earth in the day that is coming.

I wish that everybody here would take to searching himself as to whether he is likely to be of that blessed number. Do you with joy accept Christ as your Mediator? Do you see clearly how worthy he is to be the Mediator? Have you been redeemed from among men? Have you been taken away from old associations? Have you broken loose from habits that held you a slave amongst the Egyptians? Have you come into a new society? Has God brought you into a new heaven and a new earth? Has he given you any measure of reigning power over yourself? Do you live as a priest, serving God continually? If you are obliged to keep on saying, "No, no, no," to all these questions, then what shall I say but "Come to Christ"? May you come to him to-night! May he to-night begin in you that blessed process that shall make you meet to be partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

PSALM 136.

When the chorus was taken up by the whole of the people, accompanied by a blast of trumpets, this must have been a magnificent hymn of praise.

Verse 1. *O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

The Psalm begins with the august name, the incommunicable title of the one living and true God, Jah, Jehovah. For this name the Jews had a high respect, which degenerated into superstition, for they would not write it in their Bibles, and put another word instead, in which our translators have imitated them, not to the improvement of the version. Surely, if it is “Jehovah” in the original, we should have it “Jehovah” here. The name is a very wonderful one,” Je-ho-vah.” No man knows exactly how it should be pronounced; it is said to consist of a succession of breathings, therefore is it written, “Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord,” whose name is a breathing, and in whom dwells the life of all who breathe.

Let us take care that we never trifle with the name of God. I think that the common use of the word “Hallelujah,” or, “Praise ye the Lord,” is simply profane. Surely, this is not a word to be dragged in the mire; it should be pronounced with solemn awe and sacred joy.

2. *O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

If there be any other god, if there can be imagined to be any, our God is, infinitely above them all. The gods of the heathen are idols, but our God made the heavens. If there be any reverence due to magistrates, of whom we read in Psalm 82, “I have said, Ye are gods,” yet are they nothing at all compared with Jehovah, “the God of gods.”

3. *O give thanks to the Lord of lords: for his mercy endureth forever.*

Whatever there be of authority, or lordship, or kingship of any kind, in the world, it is all in subjection to him who is “the Lord of lords.” I think I bear the trumpets sounding it out, and all the people joining in chorus, “O give thanks to the Lord of lords: for his mercy endureth for ever.” It is ever the same strain, the enduring mercy of God, that bore the strain of Israel’s sin, and Israel’s need, and Israel’s wandering.

4. *To him who alone doeth great wonders: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

Nobody does wonders that can be compared with Jehovah’s wonders. Nobody helps him in the doing of his wonders; he asks no aid from any of his creatures.

5. *To him that by wisdom made the heavens: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

Every time you lift up your eyes to that one great arch which spans all mankind, praise the name of the great Builder who made that one enormous span, unbuttressed and unpropped. What a work it was! And it was made by mercy as well as by wisdom. If we go into the scientific account of the atmosphere, of the firmament, and of the stellar heavens, we see that the hand of mercy was at the back of wisdom in the making of it all: “for his mercy endureth for ever.”

6. *To him that stretched out the earth above the waters: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

We ought to praise him for the making of every country, especially, I think, we who dwell on these favored islands, because he has placed our lot in an island.

*“He bade the waters round thee flow;
Not bars of brass could guard thee so.”*

We might have been beneath the tyrant’s foot, if it had not been for “the silver streak” that gives us liberty. The whole earth, wherever men dwell, will afford some peculiar reason for their praise to Jehovah.

7-9. *To him that made great lights: for his mercy endureth for ever: the sun to rule by day: for his mercy endureth for ever: the moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

Why three verses about one thing? Because we are not wont to dwell upon God’s goodness as we should. We are therefore bidden, first, to remember light in general, and then the sun, the moon, the stars, each one in particular; and each time we do so, we may say, “His mercy endureth for ever.” We are not left in the daytime without the sun; and, when the day is over, the darkness of the night is cheered either by the moon or by the stars, which show us that, not only day unto day, but night unto night, he thinks upon us, “for his mercy endureth for ever.” Praise him, praise him, whether it be high noon or midnight, when the day is renewed or when the curtains of your rest are drawn, still praise him, “for his mercy endureth for ever.”

10. *To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn: for his mercy endureth for ever:*

It is not a common mercy of which we have to sing, but a peculiar theme for thanksgiving, he “smote Egypt in their firstborn.”

11. *And brought out Israel from among them: for his mercy endureth for ever:*

Sing of his goodness to his chosen, even though it involved a terrible stroke upon his proud adversary. There are some who cannot praise God’s left hand, but we can; not only the right hand that helps his people out, but the left hand that smites the Egyptians. We praise him still with unabated joy in him. What he doeth, must be right; and in his vengeance there is justice, and justice is mercy to mankind.

12. *With a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

In all God’s acts there is some peculiarity which commands especial attention. “He” brought out Israel,” praise him for that. He did it “with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm,” therefore again praise him, The ring is precious, but the brilliant in the ring is that to which in this verse you are bidden to look, namely, Jehovah’s strong hand, and stretched out arm.

13, 14. *To him which divided the Red sea into parts: for his mercy endureth for ever: and made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for his mercy endureth for ever:*

And when you, too, come to the Red Sea on your way to the heavenly Canaan, when your path is blocked, God will divide it for you; and as he gently leads you through the very deeps, he will have you sing, “His mercy endureth for ever.” No floods can drown his love, nor divide you from it. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” Jehovah will split seas in two to make a passage for his people, “for his mercy endureth for ever.”

15. *But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

This is the deep bass of the hymn, he “overthrew Pharaoh.” “The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.” We cannot give up that verse; we cannot refuse to sing the song of Moses; we must praise and bless God for all that he did at the Red Sea, even though terrible were his deeds of

righteousness, when the chivalry of Egypt sank to the bottom of the sea like a stone.

16. *To him which led his people through the wilderness: for his mercy endureth for ever,*

Here is another point where you can join with Israel. This world is a wilderness to you; but the Lord leads you through it. By his fiery-cloudy pillar, he conducts you all your journey through. By his manna, gently dropping from heaven, he feeds you still; and he will guide you till he brings you over “Jordan’s stormy banks” —

“To Canaan’s fair and happy land.”

17-20. *To him which smote great kings: for his mercy endureth for ever: and slew famous kings: for his mercy endureth for ever: Sihon king of the Amorites: for his mercy endureth for ever: and Og the king of Bashan: for his mercy endureth for ever:*

Here you have the repetitions of God. I have sometimes said that I like the tunes which allow us to repeat the line of a hymn; and, certainly, one likes a Psalm which turns over some great mercy of God, and makes us see the various facets of the wonderful jewel. The psalmist does not merely say that Jehovah smote great kings; but these kings were famous in battle, which rendered their greatness or power the more formidable; but whether men be great, or whether they be valorous, or both, they cannot prevent God’s mercy to his people. He will push a way for them against the horns

of their adversaries, and they shall be victorious. As if to show the depth of his gratitude, the psalmist gives the names of these kings, and of the countries over which they ruled; and he dwells with emphasis upon these points of the mercy of God to his people, in that he slew famous kings, Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og the king of Bashan.

21, 22. *And gave their land for an heritage: for his mercy endureth for ever: even an heritage unto Israel his servant: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

He gave them those countries which were beyond the land of promise, because these foes tried to stop their way. He did not limit Palestine; but, on the contrary, he stretched the ordained bounds of it, and enclosed the land of the Amorites and Bashan within the territory he gave to his people.

Now comes a soft sweet verse; I think I hear the harps leading the singing:

23. *Who remembered us in our low estate: for his mercy endureth for ever:*

Can you not sing this to-night? Some of you, who were very poor, very sad, despairing, abhorred of men, slandered, persecuted, very low, perhaps some here, who once were in the slums of this city, now can sing, "Who remembered us in our low estate." Spiritually, our estate was low enough; it had ebbed out, till we had no comfort nor hope left; but the Lord remembered us. That is a blessed prayer, "Lord, remember me." That prayer has been answered for many here; ay, even before we prayed it. He remembered us in our low estate, "for his mercy endureth for ever." Dear heart, are you in a very low estate to-night? Do you feel as if you were at death's dark door, and at hell's dread brink, by reason of the greatness and blackness of your sin? "His mercy endureth for ever." Catch at that rope. Drowning men clutch at straws; but this is no straw. Do cling to it; it will bear your weight. It has been a means of salvation to myriads before you. Trust God's mercy in Christ, and you are saved, "for his mercy endureth forever." "Who remembered us" — what next?

24. *And hath redeemed us*

This song is climbing up; it begins to ascend the heavenly ladder; it has already reached redemption.

24, 25. *From our enemies: for his mercy endureth for ever. Who giveth food to all flesh: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

God is the great Feeder of the world. What a commissariat is that of the universe! One cannot think of the wants of the five millions in London without shuddering lest, some day, there should not be food enough for them; but there always is. I will not trace it to the mere fact that trade and commerce supply us. No, there is an over-ruling power at the back of it all, depend upon it. All the world seems eager to supply our markets, and to make the loaf for the laborer; but it is God who has planned it all. Let us praise him "who giveth food to all flesh." As for spiritual meat, he will give us that; I trust we shall all have a portion of meat in due season to-night. If any shall be hungry at the end of the service, it shall be surely from want of willingness to be fed rather than lack of suitability in the Word of God to sustain the spirit, and bless the soul.

26. *O give thanks unto the God of heaven: for his mercy endureth for ever.*