

SURREY TABERNACLE PULPIT.

A GOOD ANGEL.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 9TH, 1860, BY

MR. JAMES WELLS,

AT THE SURREY TABERNACLE, BOROUGH ROAD.

“Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel.”—Zechariah iii. 3.

JOSHUA is here presented as the high priest, and therefore he in this position represented the people in whose behalf he was a priest. Now this people had in times past forsaken God's covenant, God's order of things, and put something of their own into the place thereof; they had digged down God's altars, and put something else in the place thereof, as you read in Ezekiel viii; and they had slain the Lord's prophets. Joshua thus appears before the Lord, confessing, no doubt he did, all these things. And as many of the Psalms were written after the captivity—I think among the Psalms that were written after the captivity the 51st Psalm was one—and I am strongly inclined to think that that Psalm was written by Joshua the high priest; for if you take that Psalm, and apply its language first and last to the circumstances under which Joshua was, you will find that every sentence all through the Psalm applies there with much more force than to the circumstances to which it is generally applied. Joshua, we find, succeeded with the Lord. The Lord appeared to him, and took his filthy garments from him, and arrayed him in that priestly array, by which he should go on in the office of priest to walk in the ways of the Lord, and to keep the Lord's charge, and to keep the Lord's courts, and to judge the Lord's house; and to point out the one foundation stone, having seven eyes to denote its perfection; to denote also that Jesus Christ had that perfection of knowledge that he needed not to be taught by any man, for he knew all men, and knew what was in man. But while Joshua thus appears, our object this morning will be to treat our subject and to treat our text rather as expressive of what the sinner, the convinced sinner, is before God. Setting aside the official position of Joshua, we will take it as a personal matter; and in so doing I think there are four things fairly implied in the language of our text.

The first is that of *state*, indicated by his being clothed with filthy garments; the second is that of *position*, he stood before the angel; the third is that of *expectation*, he stood there with an expectation of something; and the fourth is that of *realization*, which we have set before us in this same chapter.

I. The first thing, I think, here indicated, is that of *STATE*. Joshua here appears in filthy garments. These garments no doubt were put on as a kind of symbol; it is a kindred idea to that of putting on sackcloth in time of mourning, in time of calamity; in times when they had occasion to mourn before God, and to seek God with all that humility, and with all that earnestness which is pleasing in the sight of the Lord. And there are two things which go together in this matter, which I think at the outset I had better mention. You observe here, that Joshua does not appear before the Lord in filthy garments as a matter of mere pretence. His state as a sinner was not a matter of mere pretence, or of mere theory. For him to appear before the Lord, and put on these filthy garments as a mere form, would have been an

insult to the Lord. On the other hand, to appear to mourn, and at the same time not feel any burden under which to mourn, would also be self-deception. Now in the work of the Holy Spirit there are two things go together; a conviction of our state by nature, and a groaning under that state, a sighing under that state; that state we are in by nature must become trouble enough to us to make us pray earnestly, to make us fear God, to make us seek his mercy, and to make us receive his truth. It is a bad sign when professors can speak of the vile propensities and blasphemies of their hearts as a matter of zeal, as a matter of almost delight; as though they would boast of the devilisms which they feel within them. This, my hearer, is a wrong spirit; the Holy Spirit is not the author of such kind of confessions as these. Our loathsome state by nature, if we transfer the idea for one moment to the body, here is the leper, with the deadly leprosy. Would that man make sport of that deadly disease? would he be charmed with it, delighted with it? would he make a boast of it? Would not he loathe himself in his own sight? would he not groan and sigh under his disease? and would he not at the same time long for some physician by whom he could be freed therefrom? Just so it is spiritually; where the work is real, where the conviction is real. Joshua, therefore, being convinced of his state as a sinner, he did not attempt to make the best of himself; he came before the Lord just as he was. Our subject this morning will have in it, I think, all through, something exceedingly encouraging to all of us that know something of the plague of our own heart, that know something of our own sore, and of our own grief. Joshua, I say, had not to make the best of himself, but to come before the Lord just as he was with filthy garments, indicative of the state he was in. And is not this one of the highest privileges that we have, that whatever sin we have we may come with that sin before the Lord; that whatever grief, or trouble, or weakness, or whatsoever loathsomeness in our nature or in our hearts, we may come before God with all that; not attempting for one moment to make the best of ourselves, but honestly, like the woman, and spiritually, as she did literally, when she fell down at his feet, and confessed that she had tried many physicians, had spent all that she had, even all her living, yet was nothing better but rather grew worse, and confessed that such was her loathsome state that she never realised healing until she could touch the garment of him who is almighty to save, and infinite in the efficacy of his touch, for one touch of the dear Redeemer will cause the most stubborn disease to fly from the soul, throw health into all its powers, and unite it to glorify God. But keeping to this our state; Joshua was thus brought before the angel of the Lord. It shews how real conviction works. It did not lead him to himself, it did not lead him to men, it brought him to God; and brought him to God after a gospel manner; it brought him before the angel of the Lord. Ah, my hearer, that is a good sign of the reality of thy knowledge of thy state, when it brings thee before this angel of the Lord, this messenger of the everlasting covenant, this angel of the new covenant; for there all transactions of mercy appear, and there everything that is wrong between us and God must be settled.

But to enter more definitely into this matter; let us look for one moment at the path, or that downward experience which the people of God of old had; and from that experience they would see that God was on their side; as though they would say, if the Lord intended to destroy us, he never would thus have shewn us our state. Let us hear their testimony; let us this morning honestly compare our own state with theirs, and see if we know anything of that with which they were acquainted. If so, we shall prize the same truths, and stand in the same relationship unto the blessed God. The sixty-fourth of Isaiah gives a description of the path in which the people of God walked as to their downward experience. They begin with confessing that 'we are all as an unclean thing.' I like that expression very much, it is so much like the apostle's testimony when he says, 'In my flesh dwelleth no good thing.' But oh how sweet to look at the counter testimony that is put upon

record, that, while we are altogether as an unclean thing, 'the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.' And if our conviction of our unholy state by nature be of the Holy Ghost, it will bring us to stand before this same angel of the Lord, and to hope in the same testimonies. 'And all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.' Here we get especially the interpretation of our text, that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. So much for creature righteousness. Do we see this and feel this; and consequently stand trembling before the Lord, and think to ourselves, well, if we are left to appear at the bar of God by our own righteousness, our very righteousness would witness against us; for our very righteousness, our best doings, as creatures considered, are but as filthy garments; and if our best doings should so bear testimony against us as to condemn us, what must our worst doings do? So that our best doings would shut our mouths at the bar of God, and our worst doings would come up after to seal, confirm, and augment our eternal condemnation. Oh, it is a great mercy to be thus brought to feel that we are unclean, and for that uncleanness to become a burden to us, so as to bring us before the angel of the Lord; that all our righteousnesses are but as filthy rags, and that that shall bring us gladly to submit to the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.—'And we all do fade as a leaf.' That is another expression I like very much, 'fade as a leaf.' Think of an autumnal leaf, think of your goodness being only like a leaf. See how little it takes to dry up a leaf, and yet it takes less, if possible, to dry up our creature goodness, and supposed holiness and strength. 'We do fade as a leaf.' Why, what poor creatures we are! Ah, when brought down to this, what will be the remedy? You read of an inheritance that fadeth not away. And, as we in the first Adam have thus altogether faded from what we were by creation, we have faded like a leaf; before the fall our leaf was green; but now, since the fall, we are as autumnal leaves; and the only remedy for this is that word that fadeth not—that word of our God that contrasts with the grass: 'the grass withereth, and the flower fadeth, but the word of our God endureth for ever.' Here, then, when this our state is brought to light, and we are learning this—all our days we are learning more and more of it as we go on; so that if some years ago we appeared to be as an unclean thing, if you are a child of God you will appear more so now to yourself. If some years ago all your righteousness appeared as filthy rags, they will appear more so now; if some years ago you looked upon yourself in these eternal matters as an autumnal leaf, you will see yourself more so now; and so far from this your state being a less trouble to you, it will be more trouble to you; only you have this very great advantage, which you had not formerly, namely, that you are so acquainted with the Lord Jesus Christ that although this your state is a greater trouble than it was formerly, yet in consequence of your being acquainted with the remedy, the sweet hope and confidence you have in him bears you up, and enables you to say with the apostle and with those with him, 'Thanks be to God, that causeth us always to triumph in Christ.' Such poor creatures can triumph nowhere else.—'And our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.' What an expression is this—how just, how true! Have carried us away into the powers of darkness, this—how just, how true! Have carried us away into the powers of darkness, carried us away into ignorance of God, into enmity against him. That is what our iniquities have done; such is our state. And yet the people of God in olden time appear to have taken this view of it,—well, if the Lord intended our destruction, he would not have shown us this our state, he would not have made this our state, he would not have made this our state a burden to us: he would have left us unacquainted with it. None but his own children are thus brought to feel their need of what he has provided for them. Therefore, said the people of God, on this very ground, seeing that the Lord never brought any others but his own to this real conviction of their state—mark their language, 'But now, O Lord, thou art our father.' What! claim relationship! such poor creatures as you are. What! after such a confession as you have made? Yes, because none but the Lord's children, none but those that are vessels of mercy, none but those that are ordained

unto eternal life, are brought experimentally. They may come, theoretically, as some professors do, and as some ministers evidently do, and are as hollow in their testimony, I was going to say, as an egg without yolk. But that does not alter the fact that none but the Lord's own people are brought experimentally into this state. Hence, then, 'thou art our father.' Then mark something else. God Almighty, if it be his pleasure, make what I am going to say now a word of instruction to some of you that are, perhaps, half halting as to some points of God's truth. Now mark the testimony of the church of God in the sixty fourth of Isaiah. 'When ye pray, say our Father;' and they had the spirit of prayer, something to pray about. Now mark the submission that this experience of which we have spoken will bring a man to; it will bring him to submit to God's sovereignty. 'We are the clay, and thou our potter.' There is submission to the great truth that he will have mercy upon whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth; that it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. This will bring a man before the angel of the Lord; it will bring him before the angel of the covenant. And it will bring him before the angel of the Lord in another sense. Ministers are called angels, because they are messengers. And I heard several ministers when I was convinced of my state, and thought they were angels of God; but they never found out my real state; they never described to me the bitterness, the gall, the wormwood, the travail, the trembling, the fearing, the darkness and helplessness that I felt. But I say if your experience be real, it will bring you away from false ministers, and it will bring you to angels of God, ministers of God; men that have the same downward experience; men that have groaned and do groan, under the same burden, men that have the same convictions; and men that have been led to realize eternal mercy; so as to bring out of the good treasure of their hearts those good things by which the soul shall be fed; and God glorified. This experience brings, therefore, into new covenant relationship. 'Thou art our Father;' we are thy people; see, we are all thy people; all of us that are thus brought to feel we are as an unclean thing; all of us that are thus brought to feel that our righteousnesses are as an autumnal leaf, and that our iniquities, like the wind, have carried us away; and we never could get back again, because there stands between us and God his eternal law, like a mountain of brass; or his wrath, like an eternal blast, through which we never could penetrate, never could get back. But in comes a voice, the voice of the angel of the new covenant, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life;' there we have hope; there we lose our troubles and our burdens. It brings, then, into this new covenant order of things; and into submission to the sovereignty of God.

II. Now THE POSITION. 'He stood before the angel of the Lord.' I will not go out of the book of Zechariah to set forth the second part of my subject; the character of the angel before whom Joshua stood—nor need I use any more Scriptures than I have already referred to; nor any arguments to prove that the angel of our text is not a literal angel, but a divine angel, a divine person—and who was an angel in appearance, who was an angel in office: that is, as the messenger of the Lord. And personally we know it was none but that person spoken of in the 1st of John; 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' And this same Divine Word appeared in the Old Testament age sometimes in human form; thus in form he was man, and in the fulness of time he became man. An angel of the Lord, an angel, that is a messenger; but personally he was God. Hence the Old Testament saints when they had seen an angel, that is, this same angel, they were convinced that they had seen the Divine Person, that is, had seen God. But there is a three-fold aspect of this angel that must have been encouraging to Joshua; and being encouraging to him, must be encouraging to us. First he appears as a defending angel, second, as an interceding angel, and third, as a reconciling angel. First he appears as a defending angel. You will find that the same person who is called a

man, is also called an angel. Zechariah saw the people of God in the character of myrtle trees, and they were in the bottom, in the valley; alluding literally, perhaps, to the captivity of the Jews—spiritually alluding to that humility into which the people of God are brought; they are brought into the valley of humiliation. They are called myrtle trees. You know the last verse of the 55th of Isaiah explains this figure of the myrtle trees very beautifully. I do not know any Scripture that explains it more beautifully, where it is said, 'Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree.' The thorn, there is our state by nature; the fir tree, there is the transition, there is our state by grace. 'Instead of the brier, shall come up the myrtle tree;' the brier, there is our state by nature, enemies to Christ; the myrtle tree, there is our state by grace, our state of reconciliation, our state of transition. And this state of transition from nature to grace, from the first Adam to the second, from the law to the gospel, from that which is earthly to that which is heavenly, is said to be unto the Lord for a name; 'And it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign;' it is to continue for ever; 'an everlasting sign, that shall not be cut off.'

Now the people of God are planted together—it accords nicely; they were in the bottom, they were in the valley. And do you not read in the Bible of being planted together in the likeness of Christ's death? Shall I use the expression, the valley of his death. We, my hearers, are too proud to come down so low as that: to come down to such ground as that, as Christ's lowest humiliation; when a sinner is humbled down, he finds out that low as he may be humbled, Christ went down much lower, for he went beneath all your sins, and all the wrath due to you: he bowed his sacred head; he went down into these depths, and down into this valley. And when you are brought there, when you are planted together in the likeness of Christ's death, you say, Ah, what a sweet valley this is—how precious, how delightful, how tranquil to be here; for it conveys a paradisaical sort of idea. Here then Zechariah says, 'I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse;' that is Christ in his conflictive position, 'and he stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom,' defending them. 'And behind him were red horses, speckled and white.' These red and speckled horses, as I could easily prove if I had time, were the instruments and agents of God's judgments; but they were all kept behind Christ, they could not get before him, he will go first. He will have his Noahs first safely housed in the ark, he will have his Lots out of Sodom, he will have his Hebrews out of Egypt—he will have his disciples out of Jerusalem. These instruments of God's judgments, therefore, follow him, they cannot go before him: no, he stands first—and his language to them is, 'Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further.' Touch a myrtle tree if you dare—injure one of these myrtle trees if you dare; much less pluck one of them up: for they are planted there to dwell there for ever, and he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye. Joshua, therefore, seeing that it was by this angel that the defenceless myrtle tree was defended, so we see that it is by Christ Jesus, by his death we become trees of righteousness, bearing the fruit of love, and praise, and honor, and glory to our God; that it is in this way that the mercy of the Lord goes forth—and it is in this way that he is on our side, and we may then well be encouraged to stand before the angel of the Lord. And there is something very pleasing in the position. Here was Satan standing at Joshua's right hand: but what argument could Satan use against Joshua in comparison of the arguments that stood for him? If he used his sins as an argument against him, then Joshua could use the greatness of Christ as an argument for him. And if he used Joshua's helplessness as an argument against him, then he could use the great truth that Christ was able to defend him, to sustain him, to support him. The apostle Paul was nicely in this secret; the Lord knew what the apostle needed, and he knew what would make him a good minister and a great minister, and a useful minister, extensively so—he knew what

would do it; and therefore the Lord said, 'My grace is sufficient for thee: that let the apostle into the secret. 'Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.' That is the great point, the power of Christ; ah, when that comes, it subdues our foes, wins our affections, endears the everlasting God, and then we can walk in love, walk in God, rejoice in God, and stand amazed at the blessed truth that all our springs of eternal supply are in God himself—therefore they are springs that can never, no, never run dry. Second, he was also an intercessory angel. I am trying to shew the suitability of the angel to Joshua's position—to shew the suitability of Christ to our position. He was an intercessory angel, he interceded, and brought a gracious answer by that intercession.

'And the angel said, O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem, and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years? And the Lord answered.' That is the difficult point in our experience. Some of us know what we are as sinners, and we know we have prayed, sought the Lord; and the great difficulty with us has been, has the Lord ever answered us? I have had a little comfort here, a little help there; but I have sometimes been afraid lest it was the enemy that whispered a suitable scripture in order to lull me off with false comfort; has the Lord ever answered me? That is a difficulty with the Christian; and how are we to distinguish? We can distinguish only by what is done. Satan may elate the mind, and instil a great deal of false comfort in the mind; but he cannot endear the Saviour. Satan never could have brought the woman to the Saviour's feet with the love in her heart she had to him. Therefore if the answer be from the Lord, it will endear the Saviour, make you love the Saviour; and you will come forth and bear that testimony, 'We love him because he first loved us.' It is sure to produce love to Christ; it is sure to endear him; and if it does not endear him, your comfort is not from God. The whole of the work of God the Spirit is to testify of Christ, to glorify Christ, to take of the things of Christ and shew them unto us. Now 'the Lord answered the angel with good words.' 'Ah,' says Joshua, 'that's it;' that did poor Joshua's heart good. If the Lord answer Jesus Christ with good words, I know those good words are for poor sinners; he does not want those words for himself; no. 'And comfortable words.' Look at Calvary's cross, and then look at the day of Pentecost, and see an amplification there as well as an amplification here upon that point, that the Lord answered with good words, with comfortable words. Oh, what a solemn question did the last dying groan of the dear Redeemer ask; Lord, I have laid down my life; shall sinners be gathered in? shall sinners be saved, or shall they not? The day of Pentecost comes; then come the good and comfortable words: thousands are pricked in their hearts, brought down into this valley, and brought to walk in the fear of God, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost; 'did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God;' as well they might. He answered with good words and comfortable words. Oh what a mercy when our mouths are stopped: we are, as we said this morning in the chapter, whispering out of the dust. But the Redeemer can speak well: he can always speak, and he is always heard. 'I thank thee,' saith Jesus, 'that thou always hearest me.' But shall I give you a sample of the good words and comfortable words wherewith the Lord answered this angel? 'Thus saith the Lord; I am returned to Jerusalem.' Ah, says the poor sinner, to condemn me, to send me about my business, to expose me, to cast me off, to prove I am only a hypocrite, to take from me what little hope I have, and there will be an end of my hope. No, stop; don't let us put that asunder which God hath joined together; he says, 'I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies.' What do you think of that? You may depend upon it they were not small mercies, but great mercies; and not few mercies, but many mercies; and not weak mercies, but mighty mercies, and not ephemeral mercies, but eternal mercies, and not creature mercies, but

Creator mercies; and not uncertain mercies, but the sure mercies of David. 'I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies.' Ah, Lord, that is what we want; our sins are innumerable, our sorrows are many, our griefs are many. Well then, I am come with mercies; come with mercies. What a suited position for Joshua, to stand thus before the angel of the Lord. All I am now saying amplifies the apostle's idea when he says, 'Looking unto Jesus,' amplifies another scripture which saith, 'Look unto me, and be ye saved.' As though he should say, you have been looking at God till you are condemned; you have been looking at God till you are lost; you have been looking at God till you are fallen into despair; you have seen his law, his wrath, his majesty, and his holiness; and in contrasting what you are with him, you have looked to God, and you are lost. Now 'look unto me and be ye saved.' Look unto the angel, unto Jesus, the messenger of the new covenant; 'look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth.' Ah, these two apprehensions of God! One makes a sinner feel he is lost; the other brings him into sweet acquaintance with salvation. Again, 'returned with mercies;' the Lord goes into detail; 'my house shall be built in it;' that is mercy the first. What does that mean? Why, it means, the church shall be built. But, Lord, some of the materials are very hard and very rough. Never mind; never too hard for him to soften, none too rough for him to square: he will manage them all. Zerubbabel's hands have laid the foundation; his hand shall lay the top stone; and the top stone shall be brought home with shoutings of grace, grace unto it. And a greater than Zerubbabel, alluding to the ultimate building, said, 'Upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' And I think in Joshua's position, if that hymn you sing sometimes had been written, he would have taken up that verse, and have said it, if he did not sing it,

'May I be found a living stone,
In Salem's courts above;
And help to sing before the throne
Free grace and dying love.'

How suited to poor lost sinners this is; this great matter of mercy's building; mercy shall be built up for ever. Then another part of the answer is the demarcation of the boundaries of Jerusalem. 'A line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem,' and mark her boundaries. That is a line that now a-day people try to hide: oh, how hard men try to hide that now a-days. My hearer, a true citizen of God is marked by something that no other man is marked by. And the boundaries of Jerusalem, if I take the people first, and take the city afterwards, it will mean two things; the citizens and God's truth. The boundaries of Jerusalem are to be marked first, as to her citizens. Who are they? Hear me, my hearer, upon this solemn matter of boundary, 2nd of Ephesians, 'You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;' you know the line of things which the apostle there goes on to describe, and then comes to this conclusion; 'seeing you are thus quickened, seeing you are thus forgiven, seeing it was because God was rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved you, even when you were dead in sins; seeing you are thus raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; seeing that now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ; these are the marks and evidences that you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.' And we must not carry the line beyond that; these are the persons that mark the boundary. If I meet with a man not thus quickened, not thus conscious of his state, not thus raised up with Christ, not having nearness to God by the blood of Christ: that man is not a citizen; he is without the boundary line, not within it. Then there is another sense in which Jerusalem's boundary is to be marked, and that is God's truth; must not go beyond it—keep within it. Ah, that will not answer the devil's purpose; you will find in our day almost all men going beyond God's truth. A little of election is very well, they say, but not too

much of it. Where do you get that from? From your own deceitful heart, sir; not from God's word. A little of that Particular Redemption is very well, but not too much of it. Where do you get that from, sir? Why, it is the very life of the song in heaven; 'Thou art worthy to take the book for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of all kindreds, and nations, and peoples; and made us kings and priests unto God, and we shall reign for ever.' Do you think, sir, there is one among them all saying, a little of it is very well, but not too much of it? Not one, sir; and all the time you have that in your heart you never can go to heaven, never. I tell you what, if there be grace in your heart, however much you may be at present under the cloud, God will bring you to know that you cannot have too much of Christ, for Christ is to be all and in all; the creature brought to nought, and Christ everything.

I must advance only one more point, and then close. I shall not be able to finish the subject this morning. In the answer which the Lord gave to the angel, there are presented the powers that scattered Israel, Judah, and Jerusalem; and very significantly in that scattering it is said, 'No man did lift up his head.' I shall want to make use of that presently. This is the answer the Lord gave to the angel—not for the angel himself, but for Joshua, and for all convinced sinners like him. 'The Lord shewed me four carpenters.' The horns represented the powers that scattered Israel, Judah, and Jerusalem; and the four carpenters or builders represented the powers by which this people should be gathered in and taken care of. Now as to these four carpenters, there have been of course a great variety of opinions: some have thought that the four carpenters refer to Joshua the high priest, Zerubbabel, Haggai, and Zechariah; others to the two prophets, and to Nehemiah and Ezra; others have thought they mean the four evangelists. Well, they are all very well as passing opinions, but they do not appear to me to have any substance in them; I like something where I can have fact to establish it. I think the matter is as simple and plain as can be, if we will but allow the Bible to have its own way. Do you not perceive that the four indicates the four cardinal points of the heavens, east, west, north and south? Do you not see that the four horns indicate that Israel, Judah, and Jerusalem were compassed on every side, from all points, that there was no way of escape? And did they escape? They could not escape, the city was destroyed, the temple burnt with fire, and they expatriated, in spite of all their false prophets could say. They were compassed on every side. I think that is quite enough on that part. And now, 'No man did lift up his head.' Just so now, when God sets him against a sinner on every side, shuts him in all round; what does the sinner feel? He can see nothing but sin, and wrath, and darkness, and adversity; and he cannot lift up his head; hangs down his head; heaviness in his heart makes him stoop; he is a poor miserable creature.

But now come the four builders; four again; that just as they were besieged on every side, now they shall be protected on every side; that just as they were encompassed all round, and could not escape the judgment; just so they shall now be secured on every side, and shall not lose the mercy. Hence, it is written they that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, that cannot be removed, but abideth for ever; and as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people henceforth and for ever. Now then, when tyrannical powers surround us, despair seizes the soul, we cannot lift up our heads; but when God comes in with his holy prophets, their testimonies; and comes in with his holy apostles; comes in with the instruments that he is pleased to appoint, and compasses us in on every side, and shows us that he is with us, on our right hand; that he is both our forerunner and our reward, that he is round about us henceforth and for ever; then we begin to realise the blessedness of this position, standing before the angel of the Lord, and that the Lord answered the angel with good words and comfortable words.