

A PLACE OF SAFETY

A SERMON

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“They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, says the Lord.” Isaiah
65:25

FOR the understanding of the preceding parts of the verse, those who were not here last Lord's Day morning must read the sermon we then had. I may just observe, before I enter upon this part, that there are more respects in which the words are true, relative to the serpent, that “dust shall be the serpent's meat.” Of course, by the serpent we here mean Satan. If we take the serpent to represent, or Satan to represent his servants, then it is expressive of perishable things being their all and in all. And hence Satan destroyed all the perishable property of Job, but he could not touch Job's imperishable property. Job had in his soul an imperishable seed, that lives and abides forever; Satan could not touch that. And Job had a Redeemer on high; Satan could not touch him there. Job had a life, and a destiny, and a blessedness in the Lord that Satan could not touch. But Satan's servants have nothing but perishable things. If we take dust to represent that which is perishable, then all those people that are servants of Satan, that is, that are not born of God, that are not brought to know Jesus Christ, living, and dying in that state, they have nothing but dust for their portion; that is to say, perishable things. Silver and gold are but white and yellow dust, and the poet is not far wrong when he calls it “sordid dust.” And everything, then, mortal is the serpent's chief delight; that is to say, it is the chief delight of the carnal mind to put this world as much as possible into a position that shall hide from men the light of a better world. Hence, “If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” It is therefore no small mercy to be delivered from these powers of darkness, so that Satan no longer has our souls under his delusion; it is no small mercy to be delivered from his power, and to be delivered from this present evil world, and to have a standing before God in that liberty which the dear Savior has established.

Now, we have this morning to dwell chiefly upon the indestructibility of the things of God and of the people of God. “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, says the Lord.” Some have supposed that the time will come when our text will be realized. Why, my hearer, this text

was realized in the beginning. The dear Savior founded a kingdom, and that kingdom is here called a holy mountain; and Satan has not been able, from that day to this, nor have the adversaries, from that day to this, been able, in the sense here intended, either to hurt or to destroy. First, then, that *the kingdom itself cannot either be hurt or destroyed*. Secondly, *there is a provision which the Lord has for his people, that cannot be hurt or destroyed*; and third, that *the people themselves cannot be hurt or destroyed*. First, *as to the kingdom of Christ*.

It is here called a holy mountain; called a mountain because of its elevation. Sin is our degradation; sin has brought us down under death, and under wrath; but Jesus Christ having put an end to sin, we are hereby brought up into fellowship with God. So that our standing is represented as a mountain and represented as a holy mountain because it is the end of sin. And as the adversary *cannot hurt*, so the friend *will not hurt*; those that love the Lord would not hurt, if they could, anything pertaining to Sion; and those that hate the Lord cannot; so that in either case it is safe. Hence, relative to those that belong to this mountain, this kingdom of Christ, it is said in the 11th chapter of this same book. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." This is generally taken to mean that the time will come when the whole population of the globe will be Christians; I say, this is the interpretation that is generally given. But that interpretation certainly has never yet been proved; for even if we take, which I am not inclined to do, the thousand years spoken of in the Revelation, as a thousand years of remarkable prosperity yet in the future, yet even during that thousand years there is a Gog and a Magog, whose number is as the sand of the sea, during all that time; so that during that time there is no such thing as a universal or unexceptionable knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, or universal conversion. If then, the Scriptures nowhere authorize that interpretation, that the time will ever come when the whole population of the globe shall know Jesus Christ, let us see if we can get an interpretation. We are so misled by the word earth; because it says, "the earth," we are apt to think it means this earth, forgetting that there is a new heaven and a new earth, and every person in that new heaven and new earth shall know the Lord. So that all the true inhabitants of the new earth, or land of promise, they shall know the Lord; they shall not hurt nor destroy, for they shall all be reconciled to God, they shall all be of one mind, they shall all stand out decided for God; so that there is not one among them that would consent to the counsel and deed of them that would crucify Jesus Christ. Now, to show that I am right in this confining the word earth there to the new earth, that is, to the kingdom of Christ, called in our text the holy mountain, if you just notice the 31st of Jeremiah, and a great many other scriptures like it, where you have these words: "Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; and they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know you Jehovah, for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Thus, then, the time is still current, and the work still going on, of taking out of the world, out of all nations, a people for the Lord; so that all his covenant people, and all who become true inhabitants of this new earth, they shall all know him, from the least to the greatest. I will not now stop to prove that interpretation, but I believe with all my soul that the Scriptures nowhere authorize any other interpretation but that which accords with that covenant which is ordered in all things and sure. Now, then let us look at this holy mountain, this Mount Zion, this kingdom of Christ. It is only just to see where the mountain is, and you will see at once that it is indestructible, and that it cannot be injured; you will see from the very nature and position of it that those words a little further back in this book have been, still are, and will

everlastingly be true, namely, "Violence shall no more be heard in your land, wasting nor destruction within your borders; but you shall call your wall Salvation and your gates Praise." And so, it then goes on to show the eternity of light in which these people shall dwell, the Lord being unto them their everlasting light, and their glory.

See what a contrast this forms to the first Paradise; see what a contrast it forms to the first covenant; see what a contrast it forms to the ultimate judgment of the lost. If you take those three, they will form a kind of dark ground, that will throw up the brilliant colors of mercy in eternal salvation more conspicuously; the one seems useful to notice by way of contrast in order to make the difference appear more conspicuous for who will undertake to describe the difference between the lost and the saved? There is an infinity and an eternity of difference between the two. But it is said of this holy mountain, that it is beautiful for situation: "Beautiful for situation is Mount Zion." What is it situated in because, wherever Mount Zion is situated, there the people are to be situated? Now, first, Mount Zion is situated in God's love for the Lord loves the very gates of Zion. Ah, it may well be called beautiful for situation; Mount Zion, that kingdom which Christ has founded, is situated in God's love, and where that Mount Zion is, there the people are in God's love. And:

"Where is the power shall reach them there?
Or what shall force them thence?"

And Mount Zion is situated also in God's choice: "The Lord has chosen Zion; he has desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it." The Lord has chosen his dear Son, and he has chosen that which Jesus Christ has wrought as the foundation, as I shall presently show, of this kingdom. It stands in God's choice, and so the people stand in God's choice. I recollect (and perhaps that is one secret of election being so particularly dear to my heart), I recollect, some years ago, I was very much cut up, very much cast down, so I have been many times since, but at that time I was very much tried about election; I was very wretched, and very miserable; I seemed to have no heart to pray, no heart to believe, no heart to look to God, and I wished I had never existed. And presently these words came with power, where the apostle says, "Even so then, at this present time also there is a remnant, according to the *election of grace*." It was the last part of the sentence that laid hold of my mind, "the election of grace," and I never, though I believed the doctrine before that, and knew it, and admired it, I never felt the sweetness of it so much before. It took away all my doubts and fears, and so endeared the Lord, in election. It is an election of grace. "My grace is sufficient for you." What, I said, Lord, sufficient to record my worthless name in your fair book of life? your grace sufficient to choose me in Christ, to give me to Christ, to make me one with Christ, to impute my sins to Christ, and to impute his work to me and to make me thus an heir of yourself, and a joint heir of your dear Son? Election of grace! that seemed engraved upon my soul; it melted down my heart, drove away my fears. And there is not a man under the sun who, if he were thus brought, and election made a blessing thus to his soul, to lift him thus out of the pit, and give him to see his interest in it, there is not a man under the sun that could realize this deliverance without blessing God for election, without speaking well of electing grace. So then, this mountain is beautiful for situation, inasmuch as it is in God's love and in God's choice. And then, third, it beautiful for situation, because of its foundation. "Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation; he that believes shall not be confounded." Why, there are ten thousand things to confound us; and yet, if I am simply brought to rest upon that foundation, and to honor that foundation with my

confidence, to that foundation with my hope, and “other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Christ Jesus the Lord”, here I shall never be confounded. Thus, then, it is beautiful for situation, in God’s love, in God’s choice, and upon God’s mediatorial foundation. And then, it is beautiful for situation also, because it is situated in God’s blessing. Mount Zion, where “God has commanded the blessing, even life for evermore;” and “He dies no more; death has no more dominion over him.” And now, may the Lord give you at least a grain of faith, those of you that know and understand these things, to believe what the Savior says, in connection with this blessing of life for evermore. He says, “Because I live”, not because you are good, not because you can always pray well, not because you walk well, or talk well, or do well, but simply, “Because I live you shall live also.” Ah, bless his precious, precious name; if one of the sons of Jacob said of Jacob his life, relative to Benjamin, was bound up in the lad’s life, how much more is Christ’s life bound up in the lad’s life, how much more is Christ’s life bound up in our life, and our life bound up in his life? Why my hearer, you could not wish for a greater or more gracious declaration from the lips of the dear Savior than that; “Because I live, you shall live also.” Oh, sweet reason! I must live not because he lives. And the apostle catches up the thought: “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear”, we shall not lose it, there is no danger of dying here, for “when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory.” Here, then, this holy mountain, this kingdom of Christ, is “beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth.” What “whole earth”? Why, the new earth where it is situated; the joy of the whole earth where it is situated. Not the joy of this old earth; you know it is not: it never has been the joy of all the population of the globe, and it never will be, it is the grievance and annoyance and offence of the world at large. Why, the few ministers about the country now that preach the truth with any success, they are but few, they are everywhere spoken against, simply because they dwell in Mount Zion; simply because they go round about Zion; simply because they mark well her bulwarks; simply because they consider her palaces; simply because they tell the towers thereof; simply because they tell to their fellow-sinners how immoveable and impregnable and invulnerable and indestructible it is, that they may thus open the gates of Zion, and bring poor sinners to God, saying, “This God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide, even unto death.” I say it is not the joy of all this earth, but it is the joy of the new earth, it is the joy of the promised land. There is not an inhabitant of Zion that is not glad of God’s love; that is not glad of God’s electing grace; that is not glad of this sure foundation; that is not glad of this eternal blessing. And then, lastly, it is beautiful for situation because it is situated in the presence of the Lord. The Lord is there, and they shall see his face, and shall reign for ever and ever. No man could see God’s face and live, upon legal grounds, though it cost him his life to do so; and now, on gospel grounds, no man can see his face and die, for it is life to see God; “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” Here then is the holy mountain. And can you hurt it? Can you hurt God’s love? Is it not beyond the reach of creatures to injure? Can the electing grace of God be injured? Can the foundation Christ has laid in Zion be injured? Can the life that he is to his people be hurt? And can the presence of God be destroyed? No. Hence the declaration stands, “I will hide my face from them no more.” He hid his face from us in the first Adam, and in a broken covenant; but in Christ Jesus he hides his face no more. “We, with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” Here, then, my hearer, if we would be safe, where we cannot be hurt, it must be in God’s immutable love; it must be in God’s electing grace; it must be upon the mediatorial foundation God has laid in Zion; it must be in the blessing, even life for evermore, in contrast to the curse of death for evermore, the life meaning a life of association with the Eternal Three, and the second death meaning a state of banishment, not from being, but from

the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. Here, then, is that strong city. "Salvation has God appointed for walls and bulwarks."

And now, in the next place, I observe that *the provision cannot be destroyed, nor even hurt*. You see the first Zion was destroyed, the first kingdom was destroyed, and all the provision of that kingdom was destroyed. Famine, pestilence, war, sword, wild beasts, these judgments reached, overtook, and destroyed all they had. But here, in this Zion, the provision cannot even be injured. I will take a New Testament scripture or two, and then come back to the Old, upon this subject, in which, I must say, I do delight. Now, hear what the Savior said. He looks at the manna and contrasts himself with the manna in the wilderness. The manna was the provision by which the Lord sustained the people; but that provision came to an end. "Your fathers did eat manna and are dead." Now, the Lord appears wonderful in the typical provision, and I cannot forbear here making a remark or two upon the typical provision, the literal manna, in order to illustrate some of the excellencies of the antitypical provision that we have in this feast of fat things in this holy mountain, where the Lord abundantly blesses the provision, and satisfies the poor with bread. Now, as to the manna in the wilderness, it was a kind of complication of miraculous favors. In the first place, the manna came at the right time, came when they had nothing else to sustain them. Just so here, Jesus Christ came just at the right time. The Lord convinced us of our state; and our own bread of creature-doings was moldy and dry; and our shoes, and all the rest, were, spiritually, as the Gibeonites were literally, bottles broken, old shoes and clouted, our bread moldy and dry, we were all broken down together, just upon the eve of starvation: "I perish with hunger." But Jesus Christ is revealed. "He that eats the bread that I shall give him, shall never hunger." He became our sustenance; came just at the right time. We were just sinking into despair, but Jesus Christ was revealed, and he became our sustenance. And as the manna came at the right time, it came to the right place also; it came to just where the people were. They were in the wilderness; and so, we were in the wilderness of sin, and the wilderness of Sinai, and the wilderness of solitude, wilderness of desolation. We had left an ungodly world; we were desiring to be on our way to a better country, but we had nothing to help us along; and, by-and-by, the dear Savior was revealed; and by precious faith in him, we can rejoice in the prospect of going forward; We will not go back again to where we were before; we will not despair. Here is one that shall feed us all our journey through. And then the manna also came in sufficient quantity, not one was starved to death. And so not one, however little his faith shall be, shall perish. And then the manna came fresh and fresh every day. The people were not allowed to accumulate a stock, and so go away from the Lord; they must keep close to the Lord, because it must come fresh and fresh. Just so now. We have a little comfort today, and a little comfort tomorrow, but we can't say, "Well, I am very comfortable today, I will save some of these comforts till tomorrow, or till next week, or till next month. But, no; of necessity we enjoy all we can for the time being, and then where are we to get the next? Why, just where we got the last. The Lord says we must keep close to the cloud of truth, close to the High Priest, close to the tabernacle, close to the mercy-seat, close to the ark; and so, the Lord will sustain us. And when the sabbath was coming, there was twice as much on the Saturday, to provide for the next day. And so the Lord knows our exigencies, knows our circumstances, and will strengthen us accordingly.

But I find I must not enlarge here. Now the provision of Zion, then, cannot be hurt. The Lord Jesus Christ is that bread of life that cannot be hurt. That water of life that proceeds from the throne of God and the Lamb cannot be hurt, and much less destroyed. Why, it is a sweet thought that there

is not anything can cut us off from this heavenly provision; There is not anything can cut off that provision from us. They may grind our bodies to power, that would neither cut us off from the provision, nor the provision from us. I have often thought how Satan must be mortified, and how persecutors, the Pope, and the priests, and the rest, must be mortified, when they witness how the people of God have been sustained under the heaviest burdens and greatest tortures, they could inflict upon them. Man shall not live by that which is temporal only, but every word that comes out of the mouth of the Lord. "They shall not hurt nor destroy." Ah! how easily, then, was the provision that the Jews had in the old covenant cut off, and they cut off from that! but here no one can cut us off from the faith or sever us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. Here is a provision; so that the righteous shall never be forsaken, and his seed shall never go begging bread. We shall have enough in our Father's house; never come to beggary, never come to vagrancy; we shall never be wanderers. No; we are brought to dwell in that kingdom where there is enough and to spare. And, like the lepers of old, when they found the Lord had wrought victory and made provision, they told their starving brethren of this provision; so the business of the gospel now is to quicken the dead, and to give them a hunger and a thirst after eternal things; and then to tell them that yet there is room; to tell them that there is bread enough, and to spare; to tell them that where sin has abounded, grace does much more abound. There is no blessedness anywhere, but the blessedness found in God and godliness. Provision is beautifully indicated in the 27th chapter of this book, and in the 6th of Revelation. Here is the dragon. "Ah!" he says, "that free-grace vineyard, I should like to destroy that. I see the promises are ripening; I see there will be all manner of pleasant fruit; I see there is the pure blood of the grape; and I see the people will be as happy as the days are long. I should like to put an end to it." Well, come, here is the Lord of the vineyard come, we will take him and kill him, and cast him out of the vineyard. Ah! But stop, Satan! You have cast him only out of the old-covenant vineyard, that's all you have done; you have not cast him out of the new-covenant vineyard. What! will he rise again? You may depend upon it he will. Will he take up his disciples again? You may depend upon it he will. Will he repeat the same gospel that he preached before he died? Depend upon it he will. Will he set out the same religion again, seeing he prospered so badly in this, that we crucified him? Depend upon it he will. Do you think they will go and talk about it to other people? Depend upon it they will. Do you think that many sinners will be brought to know their need of it, and live upon it? Depend upon it they will. Ah! Satan looks around, and he says, "Ah! I wish I had not meddled with him now. I forgot;" as though Satan should say that scripture, "In that day the Lord with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan, the piercing serpent," that pierced us through in the first Adam, "even leviathan, that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea." And when Jesus has thus destroyed him that had the power of death, and established a vineyard, and created a paradise that nothing could ever hurt or destroy, "In that day sing you unto her; A vineyard of red wine, I the Lord do keep it." And I want to know who shall destroy it? The Lord let the old covenant vineyard out to husbandmen; but he never let this one out, oh, no!

Mark the difference; in the 5th chapter of Isaiah, he let the vineyard out to husbandmen, and he looked that they should do their part, and keep the vineyard in order, and they failed. But he would not let this vineyard out to husbandmen. No, says Christ, "My Father is the husbandman;" he would not let it out. "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment;" there is no winter there, it bears fruit all the year round; "Lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain." Believer, you have a vineyard, you have a garden, whose trees bear fruit all the year round. There is no winter in Christ; there is no death in Christ; no

mildew in Christ; no blasting in Christ; no famine in Christ; no want there; "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, says the Lord." Here, then, is a safe kingdom, a safe city, a safe mountain; and here is the provision safe. Bless the Lord for such a gospel. Now, I am that poor creature. I feel so much my own wretchedness and misery, that I can live only upon such a gospel as this. If this be the gospel of God, I have hope. I can love him with all my heart, with all my mind, with all my soul; and the brethren, who love the same gospel as myself, I love them as I love myself. But take away any one of these and put it in a shape partly gospel, partly law, partly old covenant, partly new, partly flesh, partly spirit, then I am immediately confused, and I cannot understand there is anything for me to love. But let me have God in this new-covenant order of things, I am as happy with him as the days are long. I have no more desire to go away from any one part of Zion than I have to go to hell, for it is hell to depart from his truth, it is heaven to cleave to it.

"'Tis heaven to rest in his embrace.
And nowhere else but there."

Again, in the 6th of Revelation there is a black horse, under the third seal: "And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, Come and see." It is a good thing for a minister when the people have that feeling. "Such a scripture I can't understand;" and they say to the Lord, "Lord, let our minister come and see, and let him tell us from the pulpit. Let his mind be led to it; that he may tell us what the meaning is." So that the living creature said to John, "Come and see." And John went and saw, and told the living creatures the meaning, in a way no doubt the living creatures could understand. "And I beheld, and lo, a black horse." Dr. Keith thinks that means Catholicism: perhaps it might. If it means an adverse power at all, it means some very dark power, whose motives are dark, and whose designs are dark, and whose master is dark, even the prince of darkness. "And he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand." That is a very badly balanced translation. Why our translators translated the Greek word *zugon* by the word "balances" I know not. I suppose they thought, for it is more of an interpretation than translation, I suppose they thought there was a connection between the instrument this rider had, and the measure of wheat and the measures of barley spoken of in connection. But here they have erred. The word they translated "balance" is everywhere else, both in the Septuagint, in the Old Testament Scriptures, and other parts of the New Testament Scriptures, translated "yoke." And so, the rider on the black horse has a yoke in his hand, to put upon the jaws of the people. This may seem strange to you, to speak of a yoke upon the jaws of the people, but in the 11th chapter of Hosea we read, "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love; and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them." And so, the Pope, and a great many other isms as well as Catholicism, they come forward with a yoke to gag us with, mustn't have this, and that, and the other. But mark, in contrast to this adverse power, in contrast to this yoke, "I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures," the tabernacle in the wilderness was placed in the center of the four square encampment of Israel; and the voice, therefore, from the midst was a voice from the mercy-seat, "A measure of wheat for a penny," A penny at that time, as you learn in the 20th of Matthew, was a man's daily pay; and, therefore, "A measure of wheat for a penny," means that, notwithstanding the attempt of this black horse and his rider to deprive us of our supply, we shall have our daily bread. So that you work every day spiritually, and there are your wages. "And three measures of barley for a penny" I would rather have three measures of wheat and one of barley. Barley is the bread of captivity; and I suppose most of you have more of this barley-bread of

bondage and trouble, and doubt, and fear, than you have of the finest of the wheat. "A measure of wheat for a penny" just a little enjoyment; then there are three measures of barley-bread. Say you? I shall be glad when my barley-bread is gone." Why, that is better than nothing; better have trouble than nothing; better have castings down than be dead; better be tossed about on life's tempestuous main than set in a dead calm. "By these things," said one who had a good deal of this barley-bread of captivity, "By these things men live and in all these things is the life of my spirit." And then, when the finest of the wheat comes again after this, how acceptable it will be. "And see you hurt not the oil." And what is the oil? God's grace; and especially in reference to the anointings of the Holy Spirit. The golden oil flowed through the golden pipes to keep the lamps from going out; so, the grace of God shall flow into our souls through the truths of his word, to keep our hope, and love, and faith, from dying out. "See you hurt not the oil;" can't hurt the grace of God. "See you hurt not the oil and the wine." Ah, the wine is the blood of the everlasting covenant; can't hurt it; no, it retains its efficacy; it will make our hearts glad, let the devil do what he may. When he shut Paul and Silas up in prison, this wine of the everlasting covenant cheered their hearts; they were so glad that they were exceeding joyful in all their tribulation and prayed and sang praises unto God. A person told me, the other day, he knew a man that could sing so loud that as he was singing one day, a glass was standing on the table, and he sang so loud that the vibration of his voice broke the glass all to pieces. He said, "Did you ever hear of such a singer as that?" I said, "Yes, I could bring an instance of more powerful singing than that. I can bring an instance of two men singing, and it actually tore up the foundations of a prison; it actually broke iron chains asunder; it actually threw all the doors open, frightened the jailer, yes, the vibrations were so powerful that they smote the chains off from the other prisoners, for everyone's bands were loosed." "Well," he said, that *was* singing." "Yes," I said, "it was." "Well," he said, "they must have had a drop." that they had; they certainly had, for that sweet wine dropped into their souls, made them strong in faith, and strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. And the jailer himself said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain." Here than is the kingdom that cannot be destroyed; here is the provision that will stand good to eternity, that shall make us stronger than all that can be against us. Little do we think what a God we have. Ah, how he delights in us, how he loves us; and what has he done for us? Employed every perfection of his nature for our eternal welfare.