

# THE PROMISED LAND

## A SERMON

Preached on Sunday Morning September 17<sup>th</sup>, 1865

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“Behold, I have set the land before you go in and possess the land which the Lord swore unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them.” Deuteronomy 1:8

THE land of Canaan, when it arrived at that glory which it reached in Solomon’s days, seems to have become a faint shadow, as far as earthly things can, of that eternal glory which the saints are to have when time shall be no more. Indeed, it is customary with us, and a very good custom too, to speak of the land of Canaan as a kind of typical land, as typical of that land that, in the higher and better sense, flows with milk and honey, that land of rest, that land of plenty, into which the soul shall forever enter. But still this is not exactly the view we shall take this morning. You will observe that the language of the text itself will apply to you as a congregation under your present circumstances. The Lord has blessed you prospectively with a land temporally to enter upon; and here is a command for you to enter upon the same, and the order after which it is to be done. But, of course, it would not be a good use of your time for us to dwell upon mere circumstance; that circumstance will come in as we go along. Therefore, I shall notice the land this morning as the land of gospel liberty; that is the land into which the people of God are brought while in this world, or, to use another figure, another mode of expression, the land of gospel settlement. They were to be settled down in that land; and the Lord said, “I will settle you after your old estates,” and the apostle Peter, when touching upon this, said, “Now the God of all grace establish and settle you in the truth;” but notice the apostle, he will not have them settle down, as it were, too soon, that is, he would have them so suffer as to appreciate the value of the promised land, the value of gospel rest, and gospel planting, and gospel blessedness; when they had thus sufficiently suffered they became rooted, and grounded, and settled in the truth, and could not ever be again removed away from the hope of the gospel. I will therefore take, as hastily as I can, a threefold view of our text this morning. First, *how the Lord has set this land before them*, “I have set the land before you;” secondly, *how they are to possess it*; thirdly and lastly, *how they are to retain it after then do possess it*.

First then I notice *how the Lord has set this land before them*. He set this land before them first, and there I think we ought to begin, by a great salvation, and they were, and it is a remarkable thing to take that salvation with them; they were not to lose sight of the great salvation. That was

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the first thing in connection with the promised land the Lord set before them. And this salvation, we know, from Egypt was a type of the salvation of Jesus Christ. The first thing the people needed was salvation from thralldom; the first thing the sinner needs is deliverance from his sin, and guilt, and thralldom, and that must be by the Lamb of God, by the power of God, by the presence of God. And they were to take that salvation, as it were, with them, that is, they were to take the testimony of what God did with them; and thereby there would be some in the wilderness that would gain possession of the land; but those that left that salvation behind, and which I shall presently show, as far as I can, and did not take it with them, they never reached the promised land, they fell in the wilderness; but those that did take that salvation with them they were safe in the wilderness, and possessed the promised land. Here, then, was the salvation from Egypt. But before I notice the scriptures needful to be noticed here, I may just say that the salvation Jesus Christ wrought at Calvary's cross is the antitypical salvation; and that salvation we are to take with us. But then we must be careful what kind of salvation it was. Now there is not one of you, whatever your sect or party, or whatever your sentiments, I should hope, at least there is not one of you but would admit that the salvation from Egypt, I say nothing about after circumstances in the wilderness, but the salvation from Egypt itself was as complete as anything well could be. Was not every Egyptian enemy drowned, not a dog able to move his tongue against one of the children of Israel? I think, therefore, that the completeness of the salvation from Egypt is a point set forth too clearly even to be disputed, and it then becomes a beautiful type of the salvation wrought by Jesus Christ. His blood cleanses from all sin, his redemption redeems from all iniquity, his salvation saves from everything. Hence stands the declaration, "They shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation." Now then, we are to take this with us, that is, we are to take the perfect work of Christ with us. The holy prophets never felt safe without taking with them the testimony of the coming Messiah; what he should do; the holy apostles went forth and took with them what the Lord had done; they never gave up the Savior in the perfection of his work; that was, and is now, and ever will be, the meeting-place of God and man; and the apostles well knew that they could overcome all their adversaries, and gain possession of the land only by this perfect work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now then, the Lord did set the land of Canaan before the Israelites first, and chiefly, too, by the salvation from Egypt; so, the Lord sets the land not only of gospel settlement here, but the land of eternal glory before us, by what Jesus Christ has done. And who will undertake to explore or explain one millionth part contained in those words so suited to ruined man. "He that believes shall be saved." Why, what a mighty grasp is that! He that believes in what Christ has done shall be saved. Why the word *saved* there means everything that the Scripture promised, means everything that is embodied in Christ, and everything that goes to make up our eternal welfare. Now let us look at this. Moses set the land forth in this way: "You in your mercy has led forth the people which you have redeemed;" just so now, the Lord in his mercy found us out, and made us acquainted with the redemption that is in Christ; "you have guided them in your strength unto your holy habitation," that is the place where the Lord was pleased to dwell; as he guides his people now. Now they were to take this with them; they were not to lose sight of this complete deliverance from Egypt. And if they took this with them, then we go on to what would result, namely, "The people shall hear, and be afraid; sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina. Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away;" that is, the people by faith taking with them the testimony of what God had done, and thereby taking the Lord with them; but the moment they departed with what the Lord had done, and set up the golden calf, or anything in the place of that, they demonstrated their ignorance and their unbelief, and so they fell in the

wilderness. And so now, the very moment we became severed from Christ, for “except the branch (that is another figure, meaning the same thing in substance) except the branch abide in the vine, it cannot live, much less bring forth fruit;” so the very moment we give up the perfection of what Christ has done, that very moment we give up all our power over the adversary, because we give up the great truth of God being on our side. Now then, those that held fast this testimony of what the Lord had done, what were the Amalekites in the wilderness to such? Why, a mere nothing; they melted away. What were the dukes of Edom, that had threatened them, and denied them a passage through their territories? and what were the mighty men of Moab, that hired Balaam against them, and the Lord turned the curse into a blessing? and what were all the inhabitants of Canaan, and what were the walls of Jericho, to those that took with them what God had done? The right-minded Israelite said, Never shall I forget the paschal lamb; never shall I forget the divided sea; never shall I forget the luminous path of salvation through that sea; never shall I forget the completeness of the victory; never shall I forget the power of God; never shall I forget what he has done, what he has done is a proof of what he will do, and there is not anything too hard for him. Now, then, “now then we that did cleave unto the Lord your God are alive unto this day.” We are, in the order of God’s providence, to go into a larger house. I trust we are, all of us, really and truly, as dying men and women in the sight of God, earnest in taking with us the perfect work of Jesus, in taking with us his dear name, his lovely promises, his holy precepts, his righteous ordinances, and all that we conscientiously and solemnly believe belongs unto him. And if we take Jesus in this way with us, God is with us; and if God be for us, then we shall do, instrumentally, a great deal of good to our fellow-creatures, and shall rejoice in seeing the glorious gospel progress, and gather up one and another to bring them into that land eternally flowing with milk and honey, where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest. There was, as you observe, a constant tendency to give up the salvation from Egypt. They saw the work, but did not understand it: “They saw my work, but they did always err in their hearts; they have seen my work, but they could not understand it.” But those who were spiritually taught, they did understand the work of the Lord. Now there is a twofold knowledge of Christ now. There is a mere historical knowledge; you read that he came into the world, that he lived. that he died, that he rose again; you may have that knowledge without at the same time having that knowledge essential to your eternal welfare. But if your knowledge of Christ be right, it will be an experimental acquaintance with him in the saving character that he bears, that he came into the world to save sinners. You will not be content to understand that merely as a Bible testimony; you will not be content to know that merely; you will feel, that is, if you are taught of God, that you are a sinner, a lost sinner, a hell-deserving sinner, a poor, helpless sinner; and your hope will rest upon what he has done, and what he has done will become dearer to you than mortal life, and you will, by what he has done, realize that mercy that shall endear the blessed God, and preserve you from that apostasy wherein is nothing but death and hell, a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation that shall devour the adversaries. Thus, the land was set before them by the salvation of God wrought from Egypt; so now the land of gospel settlement and the land of eternal glory are set before us by what Jesus Christ has done; he himself said, “I am the way, the truth and the life.” And then let us look at their entering into this land; see how beautifully that is represented. Moses puts the salvation from Egypt, and the ultimate possession of the promised land, he puts these two inseparably together. But mind one thing, that while Moses puts the salvation from Egypt, and the subjugation of all the intervening obstacles, and the casting out of all the enemies, while Moses puts these inseparably together, such a blessedness belonged to none but those that understood it, believed in it, and abode by it. And just so now; the gospel puts the salvation Christ has wrought, the subjugation of all

intervening obstacles and enemies, between what he has done and eternal glory, all is made secure; even the last enemy itself, namely, death, is swallowed up in victory; but then this blessedness belongs only to those that understand it, and believe it, and hope, in the Lord. I hope I am understood in this. Being understood in this, let us look for a moment here at the blessedness of holding fast that salvation by which alone we can enter the land. And now, if we take Jordan, which we do sometimes, as a kind of figure of death, it is said there of the enemy that "fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of your arm they shall be still as a stone;" so you see, the same great power that brought them out of Egypt was to bring them into the land; for "they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them; but your right hand, and your arm, and the light of your countenance, because you had a favor unto them;" and the same great power that saved you, brought you to know Jesus Christ, that same power will take you safe to heaven. "By the greatness of your arm they shall be still as a stone;" and so they were; "Jericho was shortly shut up," and all were still and quiet, just as it was predicted forty years before in the 15th of Exodus, to which I am now referring. "They shall be as still as a stone; till your people pass over, O Lord, till the people pass over, which you have purchased;" and just as it was predicted, so it came to pass. God keep us firm in the faith; God give us grace to pray more earnestly; God enable us to realize more and more the spirit and meaning of the dear Savior's words when he said, "Have faith in God." Moses, though he was not to enter the temporal promised land, yet with what pleasure he turned to those who had carried with them the memory of God's great salvation, had kept the testimony, had believed this. Why, he says, "You that did cleave unto the Lord your God are alive this day, every one of you." Then let us see that while the adversary should be thus still as a stone, you and I have to cross presently a mystic Jordan; and for us to say, "I will fear no evil, for you are with me;" for the Lord to say to us in that solemn hour, in the language or import of our text, "Behold, I have set the land before you; go in and possess the land;" having an abundant entrance into that eternal inheritance which the Lord swore solemnly to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give unto them, and to their seed after them. And then let us again test their coming into the land. "You shall bring them in." Well, then, little faith, you have not to die, and thrust yourself into heaven if you can. No, no, no; "You shall bring them in." There is the mighty Jordan overflowing its banks; what is to be done? That flood cares nothing for man; but it shall care for the presence of the High Priest of our profession; it shall care for the ark of the covenant; it shall care the mercy-seat resting upon the ark of the covenant; it shall care for the presence of the great God; it shall care for the exercise of his omnipotence. "You shall bring them in." So, the poor dying Christian, he is outwardly the same as another man on his dying bed; there he is, a poor helpless creature; but God has the soul, dwells in the soul; God is with him, he is with God. And say to him, Have you a confidence in Christ's ability to save? Yes. Do you believe that there is an inseparable connection between the redemption he has wrought and everlasting glory? Yes, I do believe it; the Lord has revealed it to me, and made it comforting and precious to me many times. "You shall bring them in." "And plant them;" not left to plant themselves; and hence the twelve tribes were appointed their different localities. I will enter here into no curious speculation in relation to the order in which the saints of God shall enjoy eternal glory; but I do know that, while in this world, in their gospel settlements, they are settled down in all the variety of experience and state that the Lord has planted them in; and though the experience is various yet at the same time, the land is one; the gospel is one; the truth is one; they are all planted in the land of promise, though some in the hill country, some in the low country, some in one part, some in another. Hence were it not for taking up some minutes of your time, I would go through one of the previous verses, where you read of the mount, and the plain, and the vale, and so on. And just so

now, the people of God are planted in gospel settlement, but some of them are almost always down. You meet with some Christians who are almost always mourning; well, they can't help it; let us bless the Lord they have any concern at all, that they are planted in the promised land at all. You shall meet other Christians, perhaps that dwell in the hill country that are almost always rejoicing; and they will, if they are ministers, preach from such texts as these, "Thanks be unto God, that always causes us to triumph in Christ;" and "In your righteousness shall they be exalted, and they shall walk in the light of your countenance;" and so the Lord plants them on high. But whether on the mountain or in the valley, they are all planted in the land of promise. "You shall bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of your inheritance," called a mountain because godliness exalts a nation; precious faith in God lifts us up from what we were, and we have objects above the world, and consequently it may well be said, planted in the mountain, "in the place, O Lord, which you have made for you to dwell in;" and I know what place that is; that place is twofold; Christ, we shall be right if we say Christ, is the place where God dwells, and we shall be right if we say eternal glory is the place where God dwells; "in the sanctuary," or holy place, to denote the holy delight of the saints of God, when:

"Their inbred foes shall all be slain,  
Nor Satan break their peace again,"

"in the sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established." And then notice how the whole of this is summed up; "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever." Now, then, apply all this in the Christian or spiritual sense; in the first place, that we are brought to receive, to understand, and abide by the work of the Lord Jesus Christ; second, that the Lord being with us by this work, it matters not what obstacles may stand in the way, he will make a way in the wilderness, he will be with you, he will not leave you, he will not forsake you; no, he is a faithful God; he will not lie unto David; faithful to his saints; he is faithful to his Son. And then, thirdly, see how this salvation from Egypt stands inseparably connected with two things more, namely, their settlement in the land, and the Lord's eternal reign; and is it not said of Christ, that while the people shall come into the kingdom prepared for them, that Jesus Christ shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end? Thus, then, I have gone through this part as carefully as I could, though not with the clearness that I could wish. I feel almost that I could recapitulate what I have said, because it is of such infinite importance that we should understand what Christ has done, and that we should abide by it; and though you may think you understand it you understand but very little of it yet, in comparison of what there is to be known. Now the apostle Paul was not a babe in grace, he was not a little child; he was not an ill instructed scribe in the things of God when he prayed this great prayer, great it is in the import and the embodiment of it; "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings being made conformable unto his death." Here, then, if ever you possess the land, it must be by precious faith in what the dear Savior has done. See what, a lovely way that was of representing it, was it not? And then one more thing, which has thrilled my heart many a time and done me good when everything else almost seemed to make me miserable: "These could not enter in because of unbelief." Ah, I have said blessed God, let their sins in other respects have been what they may, if they had had but a grain of faith in the truth of God, their sins would thereby have found a remedy; but not having faith, they continued in enmity and antipathy to God, and because of their unbelief could not enter in. But where there is faith, reconciliation takes place; the world and ungodliness are forsaken, so they become reconciled to God, and by that precious, precious, precious faith they

get rid of all that stood against them, and get full and final possession of everlasting life and everlasting rest, even the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

I notice, secondly, *after what order this land is to be possessed*. I have already anticipated that, but I have not explored all the truth belonging to this matter. The next thing is as to the possession of this land; it is entirely by the sovereignty of God; you that are Christians, never make light of the sovereignty of God. Remember, if he has loved you, it was simply because he was pleased to love you; and remember, if he has chosen you, it was simply because he was pleased to choose you; he was under no obligation to do it; and if he has opened your blind eyes, it was because he was pleased to have mercy upon you; and if he has brought you into the knowledge of his truth, it was because he was pleased to do so; and if he has an inheritance for you, it was because he was pleased to choose that inheritance for you, and to choose you for that inheritance. Let us look at this matter then. "Go in and possess the land which the Lord swore unto your fathers." Here it was their ancestors literally, namely, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; but we, taking a spiritual view of it, we must take Abraham in his spiritual character, and Isaac in his spiritual character, and Jacob in his spiritual character; and then, if we are like them, then the land belongs to us, and we shall possess it by the salvation of God, by the good pleasure of God. Now let me dwell for a moment or two upon this part, because it is so important. Is it not patent to you all that God did sovereignly and effectually call Abraham alone, and bless him? Just so with you; if you know your lost condition, and are a believer in Jesus Christ, you are as much indebted, you must not be offended when I tell you so; I hope you will not, you are just as much indebted to the sovereignty, and grace, and mercy, and power, and goodness of God as was Abraham. And if you are sensible of this, then if you are going to die today, where would you be? I know where you would be; you would be sitting down with Abraham; yes, you would be in Abraham's bosom; you are already in some of the secrets of that sovereign grace by which he was distinguished from others. Ah, does one say, if I am to possess the land after this order, I will not have it? Then, if you are saying that, may you prove to be like the man in the parable, who said he would not go into the vineyard, afterwards repented of it. And so, if you have an antipathy now, may the Lord remove that antipathy, and give you to see that there is no evil in the doctrine of God's sovereignty; the evil is in the evil eye of man. "Is your eye evil because I am good? Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own?" Second, is it not clear to all that God, and God only, and it is essential to our welfare that our religion should be of God, that God, and God only, constituted Isaac what he was? Did not Abraham and Sarah for thirteen years think that Ishmael was the heir, was the child of promise? they treated him as such. Did not the Lord, when Ishmael was thirteen years old, step in and declare that such was not the case, but that Isaac should be the heir, Isaac the child of promise? If you say to Isaac, How is it that you have any hope in God? he would answer, He in his mercy constituted me an heir of promise, a child of promise, entirely of God. See how Abraham and Isaac will agree in this matter, each would feel and see that the promise made to him and the hope he had in that promise stood entirely upon the good pleasure of the great God. This is the order after which it is to be possessed. Exclude Christ, then you cannot get there; exclude the sovereignty of God, then you put that asunder which God has joined together, and reject that which is essential to your welfare. Third, come to Jacob, and you find the same truth. Here you will see how nicely these three patriarchs agree spiritually; and they all dwelt together, you will remember; for Jacob was, you can read the note for yourselves, Jacob was fifteen years old when Abraham died; Jacob was young, it is true; but they were three together. Now do we not see the sovereignty of God in the case of Jacob. "Jacob have I loved," there it is; but the Lord did not love Esau, was not pleased to love Esau as

he did Jacob. And just so it is with you if you are brought to know him, and to love him, it is because, as the Lord was pleased to love Jacob, he is pleased to love you, and you, if divinely taught, will feel as much indebted to the sovereignty of God's love as did Jacob. Well, now, these three together, see how they would agree; there was a little difference in manner, but there would be no difference in the truth. Abraham was conscious of how and after what order was his salvation. Isaac was conscious of the same; Jacob was conscious of the same. And so those who are of the same faith as Abraham, same faith as Isaac and Jacob, these are they that are called the seed of Abraham, the seed of Isaac, and the seed of Jacob. You will observe that this is just where the Jews stumbled; they took Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as their natural ancestors, and concluded, on that ground, that they must be the children of God; but the apostle in the 9th of the Romans cuts all that up; so that while they were the seed of Abraham literally, yet spiritually they were the seed of the wicked one; spiritually, oh! how tremendous, how awful the contrast! spiritually they were a generation of vipers, serpents that could not escape the damnation of hell. Here then they stumbled. And is it true, they tell me so, in this our favored isle, that some of our fellow-creatures dream (God wake up such from the dream) that if they are christened at church, and confirmed, and take the sacrament, and live a pretty tidy life, there is not much to fear. Now, friends, the so-called christening is purely a human invention. I will give any man £500 that will bring me one scripture that authorizes that kind of christening. Second, confirmation is purely a human invention; there is no such thing of that kind in all the Bible. No, my hearer, this is a delusion. All humanly devised religions, while they may have a good influence, perhaps, socially, better than nothing, still, if we look at them spiritually, they have a terrible tendency to delude the souls of men. And so the Jews, they stumbled terribly upon this, so that when John the Baptist laid the axe to the root of the tree, and cut down all their ancestral claims, cut away all their ancestral ground from under them, and showed that there was no ground for a sinner to stand upon but that foundation which God has laid in Zion, namely, Christ Jesus the Lord, they were in a rage, and the Savior himself, as you know, was reviled and slandered, and one hardly knows how to speak of it. What a life the Savior lived! humble, poor, perfection of purity, never uttered anything but pure truth for the good of men, went about doing all sorts of good, and never did any evil; and what was the world's return for it? "Crucify him! crucify him! away with him!" and put him to death in the most awful and degraded way that men could devise. So much for human nature; enough to make us ashamed of human nature, and enough to teach us what vile monsters by nature we are. Oh, then, if we who were once enemies are now friends; if we who once hated now love; if we who once cared naught for Jesus now adore him, and would give the last drop of our blood, God enabling us, rather than give up one particle of his blessed truth in any way, then not unto us, not unto us, but unto our God be all the glory. Thus, you see, then, in what way the land is represented, and you see here the good pleasure of God by which the land is to be possessed. Your good works are not the ground, in any shape or way, but his good pleasure. Do as many good works as you can the more the better, but let your own good works be only an expression of gratitude to him for what he has done for you.

But, lastly, *how the land is to be retained*. They got the land in possession, but, alas! did not retain it. Now if we are brought into gospel settlement and hope of eternal glory, how is the land to be retained? Just a word or two in conclusion upon that question. And I am sure what I am going to say now will apply well to our new position. If we retain our new position with the same advantage as we have the old, we know how that must be done. If we retain our new position to the good, as I hope we shall, not merely of hundreds, but, before the ninety-nine years of that lease shall run

out, of thousands; if we retain our new position, to the good of souls and to the glory of our God. we know how that must be done. Let us hear the word of the Lord. 132nd Psalm. First, "If your children will keep my covenant;" it is not the Jewish covenant we are to keep,

"There is a nobler covenant sealed  
With David's greater Son."

Not to keep God's covenant? Oh, I think I see the Christian's heart move, and say, God's new covenant, a covenant ordered in all things and sure, an everlasting covenant, the sure mercies of David, the covenant wherein the Lord is merciful to our unrighteousness, and our sins and iniquities will he remember no more. Oh, says the Christian, keep it, keep it, keep it did you say? Why, it is all my salvation and all my desire. I believe as a people you will keep it, and I trust it will be kept as well when I am gone, perhaps better than it is now. "If your children will keep my covenant." Bless the Lord, we have kept it ever since we have known it. Thirty-two years we have been on this ground; we have unswervingly kept that covenant; it has been growing in its triumphs in our hearts; its wonders have revealed themselves from time to time; a new covenant God has gone forth here many times in various ways, so that we can say we have no desire to give up this covenant. Now said Elijah concerning the Jews, "They have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and slain your prophets," that preached that covenant, "with the sword," to get rid of them. If they had kept the covenant, they would have kept the altar or sacrificial service order; they would have kept the prophets, and so have retained the land and everything essential to their welfare in it. Oh, Christian, whenever I am taken from this church and congregation, God keep you faithful in keeping this covenant, and if you can keep that you will keep everything that belongs to it, and prosper you must, for that is a covenant that is ordered in all things and sure; it will never need one of its items to be suspended to make way for another. Whatever modifications God's law may undergo, the gospel will never need any modification whatever; it has in its own self a remedy for every possible contingency; there is no circumstance that can arise that can authorize a deviation from the truth as it is in Jesus. "If they will keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them that, "that I shall teach them." What testimony is that? The testimony of Christ; that we have already anticipated; the testimony of Christ is that it is finished, that the warfare is accomplished, that the iniquity is pardoned, that the church, in her covenant Head and then in her own happy experience, receives the pardon of all her sins and the sweet double grace now and glory hereafter.