

GLAD OF IT

A SERMON

Preached on Sunday Morning, May 9th, 1869

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At the New Surrey Tabernacle, Wansey Street

Volume 11 Number 548

“Because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek your good.” Psalm 122:9

THIS promise is made to the people, the citizens, of Jerusalem; but of course, we, as Christians, must understand the words to mean the Christian Jerusalem. The Jerusalem spoken of in this chapter, while it refers to the typical Jerusalem, means ultimately the new Jerusalem, that new state of things brought about by mediation, by regeneration, and which will be confirmed and established by the resurrection at the last day. There are four things fairly implied in the language of the text. First, *the citizens*, the persons on whose behalf the Lord will seek good. Secondly, *the way in which the Savior has sought the good of this city*, or this people. Thirdly, *how the Lord seeks their good in his dealings with them*; and, Fourthly, that *it is our highest honor and best employment to seek the good of this heavenly city, as well as to seek the city itself*.

First, *the citizens*; just a word to distinguish the citizens of this new Jerusalem from all others. I do not know any part of the gospel ministry, especially in our day, that is more important than that which describes the work of the Holy Spirit, and hereby distinguishing who are real Christians and who are not. For the time is not very long with the youngest of you when you will need your evidences; you will need some reason for the hope that is in you; you will need something to look back to in your experience as a reason that shall enable you to believe that the Lord has quickened you, that your soul is born again and is formed for God. I will therefore be as careful as I can upon this matter. There are beautiful experiences laid down in this Psalm which distinguish the people of God from all others, and I may define them in this way; The people of God are a people that are glad with the house of God, with the city of God. with the testimony of God, and with the peace of God. These are the four things presented in this Psalm that gladden the hearts of the citizens of Zion. First, they are glad with the house of God. I will take only one view of this part, namely, Jesus Christ; he is the house of the Lord, typified by the temple. There was in the temple a high priest, a sacrifice, a mercy-seat, and the presence of God by that priest, that sacrifice, and that mercy-seat. Just so in Christ Jesus he is the Priest, the Sacrifice, and, I had almost said, the Mercy-seat; he is the glorious throne, the way in which mercy comes, and there is in him the presence of the Lord. Now, said some enquirer, “I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.” Let us go to where the sacrifice is that will meet all the fire due to our sins; where we shall be kindly received, freely and fully pardoned, for none were ever turned away yet that came knowing their need of that sacrifice. Let us go to where the mercy-seat is, for we need mercy;

and even the poor publican, there and then convinced of what he was, breathed out the simple, but real prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner." And he was going away, I should imagine, in something like despair, but the Lord dropped a blessing into his soul; as soon as the prayer was out of his heart, mercy reached his soul, and he went down to his house a pardoned, sanctified, and justified sinner. Here, then, is the mercy-seat, and here is the presence of God in his entire approbation of all that come unto him by Jesus Christ; for Christ is "able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him." Therefore, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord;" which, if we alter the words a little for the sake of explanation, will merely mean this, I was glad when they said unto me, Let us look to God, let us pray to the Lord, let us seek the Lord, let us entreat the Lord; let us go into the house of the Lord, into the faith of God's elect; for there are promises that they shall return, and come to Zion, with their faces thitherward, showing they mean to go, they are sincere, and shall say, "Come, let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, that shall not be forgotten. I must stop here to acknowledge the grace of God towards you as well as myself, and towards thousands more. Oh, what a great thing it is when a proposition is made in favor of true godliness that your heart goes with it, that you feel glad there is such a house to go to, such a Christ to go to, such a God to go to, such mercy revealed, and such promises made. Nothing can gladden the heart like this; and there is not anything that I know of scarcely which makes the carnal heart sorrier. Ah, when you say to the carnal man, "Let us go into the house of the Lord," that does not make him glad. Perhaps he may from some good feeling towards you, comply, but he does not do it with gladness, as they do that come by the grace of God; they return and come to Zion with singing, they come with gladness, it makes them glad. Not so with the carnal man; he thinks the house of God is about the worst place in some respects that he can go to, because it takes away all his pleasure and comfort; whereas the real Christian feels it is the best place. "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." If national Israel had been uniform in this one thing, you never would have heard of their captivity; you never would have heard of plagues and pestilences among them; you never would have heard of thousands falling in the wilderness, and not being able to enter in because of unbelief; for all those of Israel that did abide by this proposition, and were glad to go up into the house of the Lord, they all were preserved. Well, bless the Lord, there is an Israel that shall be uniform in this; there is a new covenant Israel. The Lord said, "I will put my laws into their minds," the laws of faith, "and in their hearts will I write them;" thus shall they all know the Lord, and with one heart and one voice shall they be glad thus to go to the Lord. For myself I can truly say, and I know you that are Christians can say it too, that one of the greatest griefs, troubles, and sorrows of your existence is your want of access to God. When you are in trouble, no access to God, no promise, no testimony, no light, no life; look on the right hand and on the left, backward and forward, but, said Job, "I cannot see; he knows the way that I take,;" no access to God. Here is the mourning, here is the grief; and the Lord sees your mourning, and I had almost said rejoices in it, for he gathers his myrrh, the bitter, with his apices, the sweet

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"Jesus is kind to our complaints,
And loves to hear our praise."

Then, on the other hand, when the Lord does give you access to him, and you feel you are near the Lord, and the word that is spoken to you becomes sweeter than the honey and the honeycomb, oh how you then realize the part of experience described by the proverb, it is a proverb, but then it is a divinely inspired proverb, and very descriptive, a proverb the truth of which I have realized a

great many times, and I trust most of you have too, where the wise man said, "Heaviness in the heart makes it stoop." Oh, how low we are brought down in our courage, in our faith. One was brought down so low as to say that his hope and his strength were perished from the Lord. "Heaviness in the heart makes it stoop" and who can hinder this heaviness? If God rolls a burden upon your heart and mind, God alone can take it away; and if he hides his face, who then can hinder him, whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only? "But a good word makes it glad." One word from the Lord will roll into your soul and melt your burden away, take all the heaviness away, and you seem all at once to be as buoyant as the eagle; you can rise, leave your burdens behind, and ere you are aware your soul is made like the chariots of Aminabib. Come then, can we say that we do know what it is to be gladdened by the thought that there is a way of access to God, that there is a sacrifice of infinite and eternal value for sin, that there is a mercy-seat, and that God is there, and that God's delights are with the sons of men, and that he delights in the very things that they need, for he delights in mercy. Therefore, says the Lord, "Let not the wise man," after the flesh, "glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glories glory in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth; for in these things I delight, says the Lord."

They are also glad with the city of God. "Our feet shall stand within your gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is built as a city that is compact together." I understand the feet standing within Jerusalem to mean two things: first, that you shall be brought to take your stand now, at this present time, by faith within the city of the new Jerusalem. Suppose, for instance, we speak of the truths of the gospel as being the gates that let us into the city. There stands the testimony, "Open you the gates, that the righteous nation, that keeps the truth," you see you get the truth in the first verse, so you do in every verse, but I am now trying to show how one thing comes in after the other, just suited to our necessities, "that the righteous nation, that keeps the truth;" so, if I am glad to go up into the house of the Lord, where those adapted mercies are that I have spoken of, then the Lord says, "Open you the gates," that these that thus receive and keep the truth may enter in. And what does that mean? It means freedom and safety. And so, we do now by faith enter into freedom. What a sweet thought it is when we can realize this, but how seldom we do realize it, to realize the truth that you are free from sin, as Christ is, I mean by faith in him; and that you stand as righteous before God as Christ is righteous, because you stand before God by Christ's righteousness; and that you stand as free from all law charges or law demands as Christ himself. The Jerusalem that is above is free. Secondly, it means safety. Hence, in the preceding Psalm, it says, "He will not suffer your foot to be moved." The foundations of the new Jerusalem can never be rooted up, its walls can never be scaled, there can be no breaking in there, no going out, no complaining in her streets. Happy is the people that is in such a case. Then again, this Jerusalem is "built compact together;" that is to say, it never can be severed or divided. In ancient times, when they made the safety of cities to consist chiefly in the strength and height of the walls and bulwarks, they all had a weak part somewhere. As you all know, the weak part of the earthly Jerusalem was the northern part; that the enemy always knew; they always attacked Jerusalem at the northern wall, That wall was thrown down many times; it was built up again, but every new warrior that came saw it had been thrown down. Well, he said, that is a weak part, and we will try that again. But here, in salvation, there is no weak part that the enemy can attack; for it is written, "Salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks;" and "as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people henceforth and forever." Therefore, you may go around about Zion, you

may tell her towers, consider her palaces, and mark well her bulwarks, and rest in the sweet assurance that this God is our God for ever and ever, and will be our guide even unto death. Thus, there is freedom and safety in Christ. And as to the Lord's loving-kindness, if you read what we call Luther's Psalm, the 46th, see the majestic interpositions of the Most High there recorded on behalf of his people; and our God is the same now. Are you under some particular trouble, entanglement, or trial, or something or another perhaps that you would not tell to any of your fellow-creatures, but that you may tell to God? Oh, if you are a believer in Christ, and love the Lord in the sense I have stated, and love this city, rejoice in its foundations as far as you can, and in its jasper salvation walls, and in the city that needs not the light of the sun nor the moon, because the glory of God does lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof; see, I say in the 46th Psalm the wonderful interpositions of the blessed God. There is one verse in that Psalm I shall never forget while I live in this world, and I suppose not afterwards; that verse has been a great comfort to my mind, and a great help to me in confidence, in prayer, and in a variety of ways. The whole Psalm, as you are aware, is beautifully descriptive of the interposition of the Lord on behalf of his people. The verse is this, "The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved; he uttered his voice, the earth melted;" all came to nothing; it matters not whether Amalekites, Amorites, Canaanites; whatever the power may be, he utters his voice, and the earth melts. Ah, what a city is this in which to live; what a God is this to know, to understand his truth, and to feel that he is, in all his dealings with us, seeking our good.

Thirdly, they are glad also of the testimony of the Lord. "Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel." What shall I say to this part? I could dwell here till the sun goes down tonight. I can only give you a small sample; and we must take the first verse with us, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." Understand, that all the after parts of the Psalm describe the things that support and gladden the heart. I will give a twofold sample of the testimony of Israel; first, the light in which the Lord holds them; secondly, how they will get possession finally of their inheritance. Now the man that belongs to God will be glad of such a testimony. First, the light in which he views them; and it stands like this, that God has made certain promises, undertaken certain things, and has wrought salvation; and by his promises and the salvation he has wrought he views his people in a certain light; so that if we are brought to receive those promises and the testimony of that salvation, as the ancients did, then he will view us in the same light. And it stands like this. We have first in this matter his immutability; what a good foundation is that. What would any gospel testimony be without divine immutability? What a poor, changing, dying world is this! but with our God there is no variableness; therefore, it is said, "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent; has he said, and shall he not do it? or has he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" Now comes the light in which he views his people by the salvation wrought. "He has not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither has he seen perverseness in Israel." I think such a testimony as that is infinitely more wonderful than language can ever in detail describe. Is there one among us all that believes it? Do we really believe that Jesus Christ has wrought such a victory and brought his people thereby into such a state that God has not beheld, as they stand in Christ, and never will behold, iniquity in Jacob, nor see perverseness in Israel? Oh, for the Lord thus to pass by my innumerable iniquities, and to lose sight of and cast behind his back by the salvation of his dear Son my innumerable rebellions, and my perverseness, when he might any moment cut me off and send me to the lowest hell; but precious faith unites my poor, rebellious, guilty soul to Christ; he has ascended up on high, and has received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among

them. "He has not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither has he seen perverseness in Israel; the Lord his God is with him" in this blessed way, by the salvation Christ has wrought; "and the shout of a King is among them." The King well knows how welcome he is. Now you would not see Jesus Christ go into a Puseyite church; he does not go there. They threaten Jesus Christ; if he come they declare to him they will crucify him; for you will see the cross upon the top of the Puseyite or Catholic church; and that means, If that Jesus of Nazareth ever come here, we will crucify him again; we have got the cross ready, we have got the instrument of torture already; we can soon get the nails; therefore if he come here we will crucify him again; and we put up the cross as a sign that he does not dare come here. And if you were to go inside and see some of the fooleries, you would feel crucified too. But it is not so with the camp of the true Israel. The dear Savior knows that they have laid aside the cross as an instrument of torture; they have laid aside their enmity; they have laid aside all formalities and all human inventions; and there they are as poor sinners, dependent entirely upon Christ Jesus the Lord. "The shout of a king is among them," he knows how welcome he is to his people. But if we turn apostates, that is virtually to crucify to ourselves the Son of God afresh; though we ourselves, while kept in our right minds, would be crucified ten thousand times over rather than crucify him once. Bless the Lord, he has died once, he died no more, death has no more dominion over him.

Then one more testimony I name is this, that "they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them." Let the sword and the arm there represent earthly powers; and so, the Israelites were not to obtain the land by earthly powers but as there described; much less are we to gain the heavenly kingdom and eternal glory by earthly powers. No; "your right hand;" and if you want to see what is meant by his right hand, look at the Scripture, "His right hand, and his holy arm, has gotten him the victory." "And your arm," we must look to Calvary's Cross, there we see God's right hand put forth to cast the enemy out; there we see his mighty arm accomplishing salvation. "And the light of your countenance, because you had a favor unto them." They went up, then, unto the testimony of Israel. What do you and I say to this? Can we see this delightful testimony that we are to get to heaven by the right hand of his righteousness; "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last times;" and by the light of his countenance? Ah, when he grants us the light of his countenance all the mountains flow down, and we are happy. So, then, those who's good the Lord seeks are a people that are glad of the house of the Lord, of the city of the Lord, and of the testimony of the Lord. They are sometimes more glad than at others; not but that at all times in the sentiments of their hearts they are the same; but we are not the same at all times as to our enjoyment, and so by the set thrones (the authorities) of the house of David (the beloved) they are to be judged, as by the law of liberty.

And then, also, they are a people very glad of the peace of God. Peace is mentioned three times in the closing up of this Psalm. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love, you." Look at that, "they shall prosper that love you." Do I love this new Jerusalem that is from above, that is perfectly free, where all is safe and all is well? Pray for its peace, for "they shall prosper that love you." "Rejoice you with Jerusalem all you that love her; yes, rejoice you with Jerusalem all you that mourn for her, for as one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you, and you shall be comforted," in this new Jerusalem. You may be very much discomforted in the poor body, in your family, in circumstances, in the world, and a variety of ways; but in this new Jerusalem, where the sun never sets, where the Lord ever dwells, "the name of that city shall be, The Lord is

there,” You shall be comforted, “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem;” that is, that the citizens may be brought more and more into peace with God, and then there will be not much danger, but they will be in peace with one another. You may depend upon it, if we are favored with peace with God, that will make us peaceable with one another; for if we are reconciled to him, and brought under a sight and sense of his goodness, that peace with God will produce love to the brethren, and love works no ill will unto the neighbor, but implants in the heart the feeling described here; “Because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek your good.” It is a great privilege to seek this peace, and he that knows the value of it will seek it. I know I cannot be happy without it. When I am shut out, as I am sometimes, as David was when he said, “You did hide your face, and I was troubled.” I am tossed about, and cast down, and miserable. But as soon as ever the Lord gives me a little access to himself, it is astonishing what an alteration that makes. I can then look down at the winds and the waves, at the whirlwinds and the storms, at scorpions and serpents, at lions, or tigers, or bears, or whatever they are, and rest upon the sweet assurance, “Nothing shall by any means hurt you.” Then the dear Savior also expresses a desire that there should be peace, for he said, “Peace be within your walls, and prosperity within your palaces.” Prosperity is sure to follow peace. One reason of England having so much prosperity is because it has in itself enjoyed peace, and we hope and pray that it yet will. Just so spiritually, the more the minister comes with the tidings of peace, the more prosperity there is. And then the dear Savior said, “For my brethren,” there are the citizens, you see, “and companions’ sakes, I will now say, Peace be within you,” not peace merely round about, but peace in the city and peace in the heart. This was the first theme of the dear Savior when he reappeared to his disciples. He knew they were troubled; he knew they had been distressed, he knew they had been filled with sorrow, though they were disappointed, he said, “Peace be unto you.”

“Because of the house of the Lord our God.” There is one point I must just name here, for I shall get scarcely half way through the subject. We have said that the house of God means sometimes the Lord Jesus Christ; for when he spoke of the destruction of the temple he spoke of the temple of his body; so that Christ is the house mystically. Now, if there were not this house of the Lord, that is, if there were not a High Priest that could take away sin, if there were not a sacrifice, if there were not a mercy-seat, if there were not the presence of God, if there were not promises, then it would be no use to seek; if there were nothing but Sinai between us and the great Judge of all, then it would be no use to seek. But because there is a High Priest, because there is a sacrifice, because there is a mercy-seat, because there are promises, and because there is the presence of God in Christ, therefore I may seek, and will seek, and must seek; “for you, Lord, have not forsaken them that seek you.” So that if we were to Christianize, as it were, the verse, it would simply read thus, “Because of our Lord Jesus Christ I will seek the good of my soul and the good of others.” But take Jesus Christ away, then there is no way in which any good can come to us. He is a High Priest of good things to come. Every good thing that comes, comes by him. Therefore, it is we need a knowledge of him, faith in him, decision for him and by him thus the blessings come. Can we say, then, that we are glad, that we have a heart to go to God? Can we say, amidst all our faults, infirmities, and drawbacks, that we are glad to be able to say that our desire is unto his name, and unto the remembrance of him? And can we say of the church in the words of a hymn a few verses of which we shall sing presently, in conclusion,

“I love her gates; I love the road;
The church adorned with grace,

Stands like a palace built for God,
To show his milder face.”

Can we say that we love the habitation of God’s house, the place where his honor dwells, that we love this free city? If so, it is the Lord that has brought you to this; and you will never be lost, you will never be shut out of the city. Ah, says one poor sinner, I am afraid I shall, because it says, “There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defiles, neither whatsoever works abomination, or makes a lie.” But then mark this, you, by faith in Christ, are washed from all your sins in the blood of Christ, and therefore you cannot defile, because you enter in by the blood of Christ; and you cannot work abomination, idolatry is there referred to, because you have no confidence but in Christ; and you can neither make nor love a lie in this matter, because you know it is all of grace from first to last, unless you do not believe that the blood of Jesus Christ cleans from all sin. Then again, are we glad of the testimony? Can we receive the testimony of that completeness that is in Christ? Can we receive the testimony of the blessed truth, that if we ever gain eternal glory it must be by being kept by the power of God, through faith; so that we get not eternal glory by anything we can do, but by the Lord’s right hand, his arm, the light of his countenance, because he has a favor unto us. And can we say we love this reconciliation to God, this sweet peace with God, that peace maintained by the daily intercession of Christ, for he abides a priest continually; that peace maintained by the innumerable mercies of God, not only keeping pace with our sins and our infirmities, but outnumbering and outrunning them; the mercies of God are more swift to save than sins and infirmities are to destroy. But let me say what I may, I shall not be able to preach all the unbelief out of you that you have in you; but our subject is so encouraging that I cannot help speaking after this manner.

Secondly, just a word on *the way in which the Savior has sought the good of this city*. I scarcely need remind you that everything the Savior thought and did, in life and death, after his resurrection, and in his ascension, and in heaven now, is all carrying out this testimony, “I will seek your good;” because God delights to dwell with man, I will seek that scripture, when Zion said, “The Lord has forsaken me and forgotten me;” why, he said, “I have graven you upon the palms of my hands.” What does that mean? It means that he would not do anything without the church. If he were going to say anything, will this do my church good? If he were going to do anything, will this do my church any good? If I live a life of obedience to God’s law, as though the Savior should say will this do my church good? It will; it will bring her up to a noble standing, so that the name wherewith she shall be called shall be Jehovah our Righteousness. I am going to lay down my life; will this do my church good? yes it will; it will sanctify and cleanse her, and I will present her to myself a glorious church. Thirdly, *how the Lord seeks the good of his people in his dealings with them*. I am going to say something now that I can preach better than I can practice; never mind, we will have a perfect copy if we cannot perfectly copy it. Now, there is no affliction that the Lord suffers to overtake any one of his people, loss or cross, whether it be that of Job losing all, Jonah in the depths of the sea or whether it be to suffer martyrdom, reproach, or shame, whatever it may be, there is not a single affliction that ever will or can overtake the people of God without that affliction working their good; for if the Lord did not thereby intend to work their good, he would not let the affliction come. Ah, this is a great mystery, and I myself cannot believe it so easily as I can preach it; but still, it is a great comfort to remember that he has his way in the whirlwind and in the storm. Now, said Satan to himself. I should like to take all that property away from Job, and then I should like to afflict Job personally; and no doubt Satan’s meditations went farther than that. Well, the

Lord said, How shall I do Job good? Here is Job's family, all worshippers of me; I think they were, and though swept from this earth by temporal judgments, it strikes me their souls went to heaven, but I will not stop to prove that now. Now will this do Job good? So, the Lord thought over the matter, and said to Satan, "Hitherto you may go." Says Satan, that will do; for if I can go so far as that, surely I can go a third step; when I have taken his property and his health, surely I can take his life, and then I can take his soul, and he will be lost altogether. But Satan could not go any farther. So, Job went on and went on, by and by he had twice as much as he had before. The devil comes and peeps at Job's house, sees that he has double the amount of cattle, double the amount of gold and silver. Why, says the devil, I thought he was gone, body and soul, property, and everything, and now he is better off than ever. Well, he won't live long, that's one comfort. Oh yes, he will; he will live twice seventy years yet, he will live a hundred and forty years yet, Satan, to tease you. So then, "you have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." Thus, the Lord seeks our good. However painful things are, they would not occur if they were not meant for our good. But I must not say any more here. I had three or four scriptures in my own mind to illustrate this, namely that the Lord, in all his dealings with his people, seeks their good. I have no right that I know of to tell you about my experiences; but I should like some of you that think my position a very easy one to have my experience for a few months. You do not know what anxieties and cares I have. When I woke up this morning, if I had been going to be hanged, I could not have been more miserable. I am not preaching this morning what I meant to preach from. I had got a nice subject, but it ran away from me, and it ran faster than I could, so I could not overtake it. Then I had another, and that went away like the first. So, I thought, well, I must go and tell the people that I have nothing more to say, and now I must be off. I was so empty, so wretched, so miserable. There was I working on from half-past five till about half-past seven this morning. Ah, I said, I don't know what to do; there will be a chapel full of people, and nothing at all to say. Well, at last the words came into my mind, "Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good;" and the thought struck me, well, do seek their good, so I will go at any rate; and directly the whole psalm talked to me, and opened up to me in about a quarter of an hour as much as my mind could contain. Ah, I hardly ever know what an easy hour is, and I am obliged to tell you. it shows you all how bad I am, but sometimes, when I get into a nice train of thought, and one thing opens up after another, there will come some troublesome tax-gatherer, or someone or other, and interrupt me, and distract my attention altogether. I am outwardly civil, but it is hard work to be so. I think to myself, the devil sent you here to stop me just as I was getting on.