

JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH

NO. 536

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 BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Whereas the Lord was there.”
Ezekiel 35:10.

HEREIN lay the special security of the chosen land. The Edomites saw the whole country of Israel and Judah left desolate. Babylonians and Chaldeans had carried away the people and ravaged the land, therefore the proud inhabitants of the city in the rock said—“These two nations and these two countries shall be mine and we will possess it.” The dukes of Edom counted upon an easy conquest and such, indeed, the Holy Land would have proved, had there not been one great difficulty—quite unknown to them—“*The Lord was there.*”

Jehovah Himself was still in possession, even though His rebellious people had been carried into captivity. HE would never allow that the Idumea should hold Jehovah’s land in possession, and with despiteful hearts cast it out for a prey. From this one incident we gather that whatever may be the machinations and devices of the enemies of God’s people, though there is nothing else to thwart them, there is this as an effectual barrier—the saints are God’s heritage and the Lord is there, to guard and hold His own. The book of Ezekiel, if you will notice, concludes with these blessed words, as the name of the great city of the latter days. When all conflicts shall be ended, when the scattered shall be gathered, when the tabernacle of the Lord shall be among them. Then this which is Zion’s bulwark today, shall be her everlasting glory. JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH—“*The Lord was there.*”

As Palestine was preserved from the enmity of Mount Seir by the presence of the great Jehovah, so the Church and each separate member of it is constantly kept by the power of a present God, despite the rage of adversaries. In enlarging upon this cheering Truth of God, I shall invite you to notice *the Church as a despised people, constantly triumphant*. Next, we will observe *the Christian, in his opposed life, perpetually victorious*. Thirdly, *a desolate soul graciously delivered from Satan*. And lastly, *a ruined and depraved earth, resplendent with perfect beauty*—and all because “The Lord was there.”

I. Consider, then, A DESPISED PEOPLE CONSTANTLY TRIUMPHANT, BECAUSE “THE LORD WAS THERE.” “Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated.” Here election divides two races forever. Since that hour the rejected have always displayed a deadly hatred towards the elected. The seed of the profane Esau, who sold his birthright, have in all generations maintained perpetual strife against the children of the accepted Jacob, upon whom the Lord has looked with the eyes of discriminating Grace.

The Prophet Obadiah denounces a curse upon Edom for their violence to their brother Jacob—“In the day that you stood on the other side. In the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces and foreigners entered into his gates and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even you were as one of them. But you should not have looked on the day of your brother in the day that he became a stranger. Neither should you have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction. Neither should you have spoken proudly in the day of distress. Neither should you have stood in the crossway, to cut off those of his that did escape. Neither should you have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress.”

An eternal enmity is put between the serpent and the woman—between his seed and her seed. This was evidenced at the beginning of human history, in the case of Cain and Abel—and the story of the great battle of Armageddon, when Gog and Magog shall be utterly overthrown, will stand upon the last page of the world’s story as a sure proof that the old enmity is as hot as ever. The people of God have always been, in every age, a hated and despised people. This may be seen if you will notice a few facts.

1. *The adversaries of God’s Israel have often thought in their hearts that they would utterly destroy them.* When Israel dwelt in Egypt and the single household began to be a great nation, Pharaoh said unto His people, “Come on, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply.” Hard bondage, in mortar and in brick and in all manner of service in the field was

tried until their lives were made bitter. But the tyrant's purpose was not accomplished, for the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew.

Then spoke the king unto the midwives—"If it is a son, then you shall kill him. But if it is a daughter, then she shall live." O deep-laid scheme of a cruel and wily despot! Now he thinks that the work is surely done. The Nile will be covered with the dead bodies of Israel's sons and Egypt will know no fear from her bond slaves. Little did he dream that the midwives would violate his orders and far less that from the river which he worshipped would spring the man who would make the fields of Zoan mourn and avenge upon the first-born of Egypt the slaughter of Israel's sons.

As it was fabled of Hercules that while a babe in his cradle, he strangled with his infant hands the serpents which came to destroy him, so was it with the chosen nation. While yet feeble as a child in Egypt, it was more than a match for the craft and malice of the dragon, for "the Lord was there."

In after years a Pharaoh of like spirit grievously oppressed the people until Jehovah brought them forth with a high hand and with an outstretched arm. They had scarcely been free more than a few hours—they had gone but a few furlongs from Egypt, when the heart of Pharaoh was hardened and he said, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil—my lust shall be satisfied upon them." Behold the hosts of Israel—they are entangled in the land—the wilderness has shut them in. The Red Sea rolls before them. Now Pharaoh, now may you destroy them at a blow! How is the prey snatched from the hand of the mighty! How gloriously is captivity led captive! The sea divides, the waters stand upright like an heap and the chosen people of God are led through the deep as through a wilderness, for "the Lord was there."

After-years present us with numberless occasions in which the people who bore the oracles of God were in imminent peril and were miraculously preserved by her great King. Well did the Psalmist sing, "God is in the midst of her. She shall not be moved: God shall help her and that right early. The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: He uttered His voice, the earth melted. The Lord of Hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our refuge."

To single out one case among many, let us remember the boastings and the shame of Sennacherib. The great king has taken the defended cities of Judah and sent his foul-mouthed servant, Rabshakeh, to demand the surrender of Jerusalem, that he may carry away all the people of the land. Hezekiah comforts the minds of the people, saying, "The Lord will deliver us." Rabshakeh writes a blasphemous letter and cries to the people on the wall, "Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, the Lord will deliver us. Has any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hands of the king of Assyria?"

"Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim? And have they delivered Samaria out of my hands? Who are they among all the gods of these lands that have delivered their land out of my hands, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hands?" Thus he boasts against the living God and counts upon the ready possession of the Holy City. And what happens? He had calculated that his ferocious troops would cut to pieces the insignificant armies of Hezekiah. He looked upon Jerusalem as a cauldron, and all the inhabitants thereof as the pieces of flesh that are boiled therein—but he forgot that *the Lord was there*. He knew not Jehovah-Shammah.

He little dreamed of the secret reason why the virgin daughter of Zion despised him and laughed him to scorn. But when the hook was in his nose, when the thousands of his troops had fallen like leaves in autumn, and when he himself was smitten by his own sons in the house of Nisroch, his god, then all the nations knew that God was great and greatly to be feared in the mountain of His holiness. Had not the Lord been on Judah's side, she would have been as stubble to the fire. But the Lord was there, and her foe could not prevail.

Fly on still in your vision of the Lord's marvelous works, till you come to the Church of God properly called. How easy it seemed to Herod to destroy once and for all the followers of Jesus! They are but a handful. He will take James to begin with and Peter shall follow. The Apostles shall be the first fruits of the bloody harvest which he means to reap. Aha! Aha! Foolish Herod, a greater Herod than you are sought to destroy Him who was King of the Jews. In his blind fury he smote all the young children of Bethlehem, but the newborn Prince escaped the murderous sword and so shall this young child, the new-formed Church, escape out of your wolfish fangs.

She shall fly to the uttermost ends of the earth and shall be free. Her Word shall go forth throughout every land and people. Need I say that you have but to change name and circumstances and this story may be repeated thousands of times? During the first centuries, the dragon incessantly persecuted the woman—"The serpent cast out of his mouth wa-

ter as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.” One of the Roman emperors set up a monument, “In the memory of a destroyed superstition called Christianity.” But was our holy religion destroyed?

Could the dragon prevail against the remnant which kept the Commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ? Behold the multitudes who this day bow the knees at the name of Jesus of Nazareth! Diocletian dyed the earth red with the blood of saints, and if it had not been that *the Lord was there*, certainly the Roman sword must have cut off forever the woman’s seed. But why do I linger here? All ages and all lands witness to the same struggle. Our own country, at the Reformation, is a clear instance. Mary hunted out the saints of God. As the bloodhound tracks the fugitive slave, so she tracked the faithful wherever they were hidden.

But the stakes of Smithfield and the dungeons of the Lollards’ Tower were not sufficient to destroy the people of God. And Elizabeth, equally bloody against those who followed the Lord fully, having set up a semi-papal hierarchy, sought to parry Puritans out of the land. Her successors followed in her steps, but neither the hangman’s rope, nor loathsome dungeons, nor the dragoons of Claverhouse, nor fines, nor banishment, nor death could destroy the separated Church of God—for her God was her refuge and high tower. How came it, let us ask, that all the regal and priestly power was foiled and could not stand against the people scattered and peeled?

How did this anvil break so many hammers? How could this earthwork stand against the fire of such well-manned batteries? Was there any human force in the Church capable of resisting these bloody persecutions? Brethren, there was none but this—*Jehovah-Shammah*, “the Lord was there.” The Lord being there, immortality, no, *eternity* was in the Church. God is eternal, He is in the Church and His Church is immortal, too. Who shall quench immortality? Where is the sword that can snap the links of eternity? When God the Immortal shall bow His head to weakness. When age shall palsy His arm and death shall send His terrible shaft into His heart, then may the Church of God be destroyed. But not till then, because “the Lord was there.”

2. The enemies of the Church have frequently shown their scorn of her by *the ridicule which they have cast upon her attacks*. When the Church defies the world, the proud servants of Satan are filled with derision. Even as Midian rested in unguarded security, fearless of Gideon and his three hundred men, comparing him to a poor barley-cake which they could eat at once if it were not unworthy of their notice, so the ungodly despise the zeal of the godly. But as the cake of barley-bread fell upon the tent of Midian and smote it that it lay along, even so the Church is more than conqueror.

How loudly did Goliath mock at David! How he cursed him by his gods—“Come to me and I will give your flesh unto the fowls of heaven and to the beasts of the field.” But Goliath falls like a tottering tower headlong upon the ground. His own sword slays him and the despised David bears the monster’s head triumphantly in his hand. So, doubtless, in Apostolic times, the world ridiculed the armies of the Lord. “These poor men!” said kings and princes—and they smiled in royal scorn of the mendicant band, “what kingdom can they set up?”

“Unlearned and ignorant men!” muttered the philosophers, as they cast their mantles about them and mocked at the strange doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. “This handful of weaklings,” said the commander of the legions of Rome. “This handful! A miserable eleven, what can they do against innumerable priests and worshippers supported by the eagles of an universal empire?” “Aha! Aha!” said the world, “was anything ever so despicable, so fanatical, so foolish! Eleven fishermen!

“Get back to your nets and to your boats! Go back to the lake of Gennesaret! Transform the fishes into men and then come back and think to turn us from the ancient gods of our fathers into worshippers of the crucified Man of Nazareth.” Yet for all their wisdom, their laughter was ill-spent, for *the Lord was there* and therefore the attacks of the brave eleven were followed by speedy victory. Wherever they marched they cast down the idols’ temples. No, they hurled the gods themselves to the moles and to the bats and the few, the ignorant, the poor, the weak—in the course of a few score years had cast the pomps of priesthood, the pride of philosophy, and even the might of kings—from the abodes of their glory and trod them like mire in the streets, because *Jehovah-Shammah*, “the Lord was there.”

How constantly has the world ridiculed the Church in every effort she has put forth for her own enlargement? “What of these feeble Jews,” said Sanballat and Tobiah—“will they fortify themselves, will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish? Even that which they build, if a fox goes up, he shall break down their stone wall.” But they built the wall and the timbers were fixed in their places. How vexed must Tobiah and Sanballat have been when they saw the city rising upon its heap.

The same has been the case in all time. To quote a modern instance of what has ever been the case—Sydney Smith said when Carey talked of evangelizing India, that a consecrated cobbler was going out to preach the Gospel to educated and enlightened Hindus. But the consecrated cobbler took his post and dug in India a well of which thousands shall yet drink. That man of God has placed the battering ram of the Gospel in such a position, that before long the hoary bastions of idolatry will tremble and the world shall see that the weakness of God is stronger than man.

It is really an absurd thing for us to talk about overcoming the world and converting the heathen and comforting God's people and enlarging the borders of the Church. It is, I say, an absurd thing if we talk so in our *own* strength, but it is not absurd when this little word comes in—"Whereas the Lord was there." Then we have Omnipotence in our midst. If God is there, the Church has God's Omnipotence. And little do our enemies know our might. Omnipotence walks forth, in the youthful David to fight Goliath. Omnipotence goes forth in the consecrated cobbler to fight with Jugger-naut and the gods of the heathen. And feeble though the Church may be to this day, unlearned and to a great extent still made up of the poor of this world, yet the day shall come when the earth shall know that the Church is mightier than the mightiest of her foes, because Jehovah-Shammah, "the Lord was there."

3. Let me again remind you that the world's estimation of the Church has frequently been seen in the way in which *it will mock at all her teachings*. The wise men of this world have always something far superior to anything that the Bible can reveal. Even bishops make great discoveries and find out that perfect wisdom has made very many blunders in the book of Exodus. New theologians are every now and then starting most remarkable schemes of doctrine—their own wood, hay and stubble, being, in their own opinion, infinitely superior to the gold and the silver and precious stones of God's Inspiration.

Well, they may go on and tell us that the Gospel is a vulgar thing and only fit for the poor. They may assure us that it will suit very well the uneducated masses, but the intellectual and enlightened few want something better. Ah, we can well endure their boasting, for the Doctrines of Grace are the loftiest of all philosophy and the most intellectual of all teachings—because Jehovah-Shammah, the Lord is in them. And where God is, there is perfect wisdom—where God is, there is incomprehensible knowledge.

The sum total of all human knowledge is but as a drop in the bucket compared with the wisdom of God. And the wisdom of God is in and with the teachings of His Church, wherever Jesus Christ is lifted up. *He* is the wisdom of God and the power of God, and therefore in answer to the world's railing against our folly, we reply, "Yes, but the foolishness of God is wiser than man," and, in Scripture, "Jehovah-Shammah," the Lord is there.

4. Do they not, also, very frequently *cast in our teeth our trials*? They will say of the Christian, "Where is He now?" When Israel's hills were desolate, then Edom said, "Where is their God?" The sons of Esau boasted and said, "Let us go up and take possession." It is ever the part of the ungodly, when they find a Christian in distress, to say, "Where is your God? God has forsaken him. Let us persecute and take him." Yes, and we should have been swallowed up quickly by our fierce foes, only that, in the worst moments of the Church, God is there.

If she is in prison, God is there. At the stakes where her martyrs burn, God is there. The silenced ministers may have to conceal themselves in the caves and dens of the earth, but God is there. Tried though the Christian is, God is with him in the furnace. Nebuchadnezzar can cast in but three, he cannot, however, cast out the Fourth! Where the Church shall be Christ shall walk the coals with His people and they shall come out of their trials triumphant—for God is there. Where God is, there is everlasting love. Where God abides, there is immutable affection. And, therefore, let this be our comfort, God is with you, Israel, passing through the fire.

Beloved, the world shows its disrespect of us by *the way in which it often treats the Christian*. It sees him poor and naked and miserable, and therefore pushes him about as though he were a beggar and not one of the royal blood. Little do they know that however poor the Christian may be, *the Lord is there*. The image of Jesus Christ is in every Christian's face, but especially in the face of a poor Believer. The Holy Spirit dwells in that body, however clothed with rags, however emaciated by hunger and disease.

You remember the other day that certain young men treated rudely a pale-faced person whom they saw sitting in the railway carriage—pushed him about, struck him and so forth and went to their homes, no doubt, boasting of the way in which they treated a poor fool who had not the spirit, as they would say, to defend himself. To their consternation it turned out to be a peer of the realm whom they had thus ill-treated. And then how small they seemed. What abject

apologies they offered. Ah, it was quite a different thing then. They would not have pushed *his grace*, his lordship, the duke. Oh if they had only known it—they thought him only some common man.

And so nowadays the world elbows the Christian, pushes him, strikes him. But when it finds out what a Christian is, then how small their mirth will seem—they would not have done it if they had known who it was. They knew not the Lord of Glory and if they knew not Him, how shall they know His people? Let it ever be remembered that wherever there is a true Christian, there is Glory, because God is there and God is never apart from His own Glory. The very honor and dignity and majesty of Deity itself guards every follower of the Savior, however much he may be despised among men.

O for a celestial tongue to set forth the honor and safety of the chosen people, an honor which streams from the Presence of God as light pours from the sun! You will see how it is. There was a little flock—a multitude of ravening wolves all hungry and athirst for blood came howling on. They rushed to the very edge of the fold. They were about to leap in and suck the blood of the sheep, but suddenly they started back like whipped curs. See how they turn tail and take to flight, for lo, a mysterious One lifts His hand over the fold. A voice cries, “Get you gone!” and back they go—they little dreamed that the Lord was there. Had they known it they would scarcely have attempted a task so impossible as the destruction of a people who had God in the midst of them and therefore could not be moved.

II. But I must leave this for want of time and introduce THE OPPOSED, AND YET A CONQUEROR. Moses saw at the back of the desert a bush burning. It was nothing but a bush. The fire was real. The fire was quite capable of consuming the bush in but the twinkling of an eye, and yet though the bush burned with fire, it was not consumed. It is such a sight as this that I bid you now look upon for a few moments, my Beloved.

In the Lord Jesus Christ a Christian man is constantly opposed and yet perpetually preserved because the Lord is there. The very moment that a Christian is born again, Satan seeks to destroy him. The early *convictions* of a newborn soul are always the subject of Satanic attack. Frequently the devil will employ our old companions to laugh us out of our fears—“Come along, old fellow,” they will say, “do not give way to this melancholy misery. There is a first-class play tonight—come and see it. We shall meet at the tavern—we will have merriment and a rare time of it.”

Satan hopes that with the laughs, the jeers, the jests and merriment, he will destroy utterly all convictions of sin. Little does he dream that *the Lord is there* and where God sends the arrow home, no devil can ever draw it out. Where the Lord convicts of sin, it is not possible that those convictions should be stanchied, except by a Savior’s wounds. If we should attempt to blow out a candle, since the candle was lit by human power, human power may put it out. But he were the greatest of fools who should try to blow out the sun. For He alone who kindled its matchless rays can ever quench them.

If, then, the convictions of sin are natural, and come from man, man may destroy them. But if the sunlight of God has risen in a human heart, no power—human or satanic—shall ever be able to destroy the glorious day which the day-star foretold. If I attempt to stop in its course a stone which has been slung from human hand, I may, perhaps, accomplish my purpose. But who is he that could interpose to stop a meteor as it flashes across the sky? Who shall cast a bridle about the neck of the planet as it flies in its tremendous pathway? Who shall bind it fast in its place, or thrust a bit into its jaws? If God is in the thing, it must traverse its destined pathway, in spite of all opposition. So, Beloved, where the Lord begins a true heart-breaking and real conviction of sin, it cannot be destroyed. Why? Because Jehovah-Shammah, the Lord is there.

Then, as the Fiend has tried to destroy conviction, he will next shoot his arrows against our *faith*. Poor, feeble Follower of Jesus, he will worry you. “Oh,” says he, “he is but a little one, I will encounter him in full fury, I will strike him to the ground and spill his soul.” But the faith which God gives to us overcomes the world—yes, and overcome the old dragon, too. It is a faith which lives under pressure and load—mountains may be piled upon it—but it still breathes under the terrific weight. It lives in the midst of death, swallowing up death in victory. It defies the power of Hell’s fiery darts. They are not only turned aside, but they are quenched upon the shield of faith.

Satan may throw all sorts of accusations in our pathway, but faith dies to the Advocate. He may strike us many a cowardly blow with fierce temptations such as suited our former state and the corruptions of our flesh, but if God is in our faith and He *is* in it if it is real and genuine, “more is He that is for us than all they that are against us.” There shall be this ever for our preservation—“the Lord is there.”

Beloved, have not you always found that not only your faith but all *your good works* are the subjects of Satan's attacks? I never yet had a virtue or possessed a Divine Grace but what it was sure to be the target for hellish bullets, whether it was hope, bright and sparkling, or love, warm and fervent, or patience, all enduring, or zeal, flaming like coals of fire. The old enemy of everything that is good has tried, if he could, to destroy or mar it. And why is it that anything virtuous or lovely survives in you? There can be no reason given except this, "God is there."

God dwells in His people. Every good thing which springs up in the human heart is an emanation from the indwelling Deity. And being such, the Destroyer may vent his malice upon it, but as the waves are broken against the rocks, so shall his cruel spite be broken against the power of the most high God—God is in it.

Note, Beloved, how sedulously Satan aims against *the perseverance* of God's people. "They will never hold on their way," says he. You and I have thought *we* never should. Sometimes we have sat down and become weary in well-doing—the troubles of the way, our non-successes, our frequent sorrows, perhaps the backsliding of our heart from God—all these have made us say, "I shall never reach my journey's end and see my God with acceptance." And yet you have not fallen away from Grace yet, not yet have you disgraced your character, not yet gone back to your old lusts.

Old Adam has given you many a grip in the side, as though he would tear the heart out of you, but you have held on your way despite all that he could do. How is this? Why, God was in you, and if He had not been there, then, indeed, had you been a prey unto your adversaries. I went last week into the lighthouse at Holyhead and marked the lights that warn the mariner crossing the sea, or guide him in time of storm into the haven. I noticed in the second story of the lighthouse many large vats filled with oil laid up in store that the lamps might be constantly trimmed for months to come. I compared that in my own mind to that gracious provision of Divine Grace which the Lord lays up in store for His people. The lamps would go out but Jehovah-Shammah, the Lord is there—we have the all-sufficiency of God laying up a store of oil so that our lights may be always trimmed.

A Christian is something like an express train. On some of our railroads you know there are express trains which do not stop to take water, the water lies in a trench in the middle between the rails and as the train runs it sucks up its own supply of cold water and so continues its course without a pause. Our God in Divine Grace has prepared in advance our needs. He prepares supplies for His own people so that without their stopping to seek the streams of creature-confidence—sometimes without the use of means—He is pleased to speed them on their pathway towards Heaven, fed by a Divine arrangement of Grace.

O it is blessed to think that if God is there, everything a Christian can want for his final persevering, for his eternal life, is ready at hand. I have no doubt, Beloved, we shall find that when we come to die, *our dying confidence* will be the object of the enmity of all the powers of Hell. Perhaps Jordan will overflow her banks and Satan will issue his command, "Come here, principalities and powers, here is the man that we could not overturn in life, let us at last overthrow him in death."

Perhaps like John Knox, you may have your blackest day at the last, but oh, thanks be unto God that gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! We have no fear for our dying confidence, for "God is there," even *there* where the billows are the most tempestuous and the water is most chill. We shall feel the bottom and know that it is good. Our feet shall stand upon the Rock of Ages even in our dying moments. Beloved, from the first of a Christian's life to the last, the only reason why he does not perish is because "*the Lord is there.*"

How often has the devil reckoned without his host? He has thought, "Surely I shall destroy and devour that lamb." So, indeed, he would have, if it had belonged to anybody else—but seeing it belonged to the Lord—the Lord was there to protect it, to pluck it out of the jaws of the lion and out of the paws of the bear and to preserve it even to the end. I think, my Soul, you have learned never to love anything of which you cannot say, "The Lord is there." If you have a grace, a virtue, a good work, a prayer—and the Lord is not in it—away with it! Away with it!

But if you have the feeblest prayer that ever was prayed and the faintest hope that ever gladdened a man, if God is in it, never give it up—for where there is God there is something firmer than adamant and the axes of your adversaries shall have their edges turned against it.

III. Now, with greater brevity still, I come to dwell upon the third point, which is this—A DESOLATE SOUL, NOT DESTROYED, BECAUSE GOD IS THERE. I wish I could convey, by my words, some little inkling of my own joy of heart while I was thinking over the third part of my subject. I thought of *the dead sinner*. But an elect sinner and the

devil, like the sons of Edom, said, "I shall have that dead sinner, I shall have him." "My purpose is," says Satan, "that he shall dwell forever with me, in extreme misery. I have laid hold upon him," says he, "and he has made a league with Hell. He is mine, he is mine forever."

But stop, stop, the Lord was there before the devil. Does the devil have a purpose? Ah, but God's *purpose* is older than the devil's purpose. Does the sinner make a covenant? Yes, but then, God's *Covenant* was made before that sinner was born! And what is the devil's purpose compared with God's purpose? You see God is there before him—"Whereas the Lord was there." "I have purposed says the Lord, to make that sinner My child, a new heart also will I give him and a right spirit will I put within him. I will sprinkle clean water upon him and he shall be clean. From all his filthiness will I cleanse him."

Satan, you are deceived, the purpose of God is before you. "Ah, but," said Satan, "he is mine, I will have him, I will go and take possession, he is mine." And so he is about to enter the vineyard and take possession of the vines of sour grapes, when lo, someone meets him on the threshold and says, "What are you doing here?" "I am come to take possession," says he. "Take possession," says Christ, "I have a *claim* upon this vineyard, I bought it and paid for it with drops of blood. What are you doing here? You say, 'I will possess this land,' whereas the Lord was there."

And He shows the Fiend the print of the nails and points him to His wounded side and says, "Whatever your claim may be, Mine is a higher claim. I bought, I paid for, I have the acceptance from the Divine hand and this vessel of mercy was Mine. Mine long before you could have any claim upon it." "Yes, yes," says the devil, "but I have been providing for this soul that it shall lie in Hell forever. I have determined to put such-and-such temptations in its pathway that it may go on step by step till it makes its bed in Hell."

"Ah," says the Lord, "I have been before you. If you have a providence so have I, and My *Providence* is older than yours. I have watched this man from the cradle even until now. And even when you have been leading him astray further and further from Me, I have overruled it all to bring him nearer and nearer to the predestined spot and to the appointed moment when the Eternal Council shall be fulfilled and that man shall be turned from darkness to light."

Satan, no doubt, thinks he lays his plans very prettily. There is only this to deceive his calculations and baffle his designs—"Whereas the Lord was there." Perhaps the Evil One led you here this morning to ridicule the Gospel, but the Lord may be in it and you may be brought to His feet. I have known the devil lead men into sin and yet the very sin has been blessed of God to their conviction and conversion. I remember one whose life had been eminently moral before, who was self-righteous, but the devil led him into a trap and his fall opened his eyes to see the depravity of his heart. And so the devil had his head cut off with his own sword—he was taken in his own net.

Beloved, whatever Satan may do in Providence, God is the Master of Providence, and He is waiting to be gracious, still. But the devil will say, "Yes, but I have him—I have got him now. I have put into his thoughts and into his mind all manner of falsehood and he is mine." "No," says Christ, "the Lord is there. He knows *the Gospel*—today is the Gospel preached in his ears—"believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." "Yes," says the devil, "he may *know* it, but I have the power over him, I have my hand upon the bit and the bridle—I will manage and control him."

But I trust the Lord will say to elect souls who are here this morning—"No, but I have *the power* over you. The Spirit of God shall go with the Word, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan unto God." And then shall it be said once more, "The dead soul had almost gone to Hell, but it could not go, for the Lord was there in the road to stop him in his ruinous career."

Do I address a backslider—one who used to be a member of a Christian Church, but who has gone back to the world? Ah, poor Soul, if you ever were a child of God, you will come back, yet. You will never live at ease—you cannot live happily, I know. But by God's Grace you will not live to your life's end what you now are—if the Lord is in you. The devil may get you to give up the means of Divine Grace. He may lead you to attend the public house. He may tempt you to forget the Sabbath and to become as vile as other men. But if God is there, he will be cheated of his prey yet.

At the last moment, if never before, I pray that you may hear the voice that says, "Return, return." O that you would hear it this morning! Come, Backslider, God has not cast you away! Having loved you with an everlasting love, He has not forgotten you. Come to His feet. Confess your wanderings and offenses and now, again, enter into His family and rejoice with joy unspeakable and fullness of glory! You cannot be ruined, for "the Lord is there." You shall be saved, for "the Lord is there," and will not leave you nor forsake you.

IV. And now lastly—and this is but a hint. The same, dear Friends, is true with regard to THE ENTIRE WORLD. The world cannot be destroyed, because “Jehovah is there.” This world once shone, like its sister stars, bright and fair. But a sad shadow of eclipse was thrown upon it—it became swathed in the mists of sin and though the glory of the Lord has risen upon it, yet still much of the gloom and the thick darkness continues. Shall that darkness cover all the nation? Shall the light become dim forever?

No, no! “The whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now.” Shall its groans and travails end in nothing? No, no. The day comes when, “The glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.”

There are signs which we sometimes think portend the speedy coming of the Son of Man, “when He shall stand in the latter day” upon Mount Olivet and reign with all His ancients gloriously. Then shall it be seen that since God in all ages was in the world with Patriarchs and Prophets, with Christ and His Apostles and with His Church throughout all time, there always was a reason why the world should yet be saved—why there should be a new Heaven and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.

Despair not for the world, Beloved. Work on, hope on, pray on and expect every blessing, for God is in the earth still, and therefore it can never be the devil’s globe—it can never be wholly given up to the enemy of Jehovah-Shammah, “the Lord is there.” Now I do not know where the Great Master is about to conduct some of you. You are, perhaps, about to journey across the sea. You may have, some of you, to go to a bed of sickness, but remember I give you this for your cordial—“The Lord is there.” It may be, Brothers and Sisters, some of you are appointed unto death, you are come to the borders of the dark valley.

Or else, bereavement will befall you and you will have to visit and re-visit the grave with children and friends and relatives. Remember *the Lord is there*. Through floods and flames, if Jesus leads, I’ll follow where He goes. Anywhere with Jesus! Anywhere with Jesus! Nowhere would I be without Him. If He says, “I am with you,” then will I neither fear the floods nor the fires, nor death, nor life, nor things present, or things to come.

This shall be my joyous trust and boast—“The Lord is there.” God bless you. And in the school, the College and our beloved classes, may it be said, “the Lord is there.” Amen.

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