

TWO “I WILLS” IN ISAIAH 41

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“I will open rivers in high places, and a fountain in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.” — Isaiah 41:18.

YOU notice that, in this verse, the Lord twice says, “I will”; and in that respect this verse is in harmony with the rest of the chapter. Will the children, when they are at home, find out how many times in this chapter God says, “I will,” or “Thou shalt,” which is to much the same effect?

How greatly I prize a portion of Scripture which is filled with God’s shalls and wills! Everything he says is precious; but his “I wills” are peculiarly precious. There are the “I wills” of the Psalms, a long list of them; and the “I wills” of Christ, a good company. When we come to the “I wills” of God, then we get among the precious things, the deep things, the things which minister comfort and strength to the people of God.

We sometimes say “I will”; but it is in a feeble fashion compared with the way in which God says it. People say, “ ‘Must’ is for the king.” so, “I will,” is for the King of kings. It is his prerogative to will. It is his sovereign right to say, “I will.” When we get a chapter like the one that we have been reading, which is full of the “I wills” of God, it is worth while to pause for a few moments, and just think of what Jehovah’s “I will,” must mean.

It is an "I will," *uttered with deliberation*. James said, "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." We say, "I will," in a hurry; and then we take time to repent of it. We are under excitement, persuasion, or compulsion, and we say, "I will," and we are very sorry afterwards, and perhaps we are so unfaithful as not to keep our word; but God never speaks under compulsion; he is almighty. God never speaks in a hurry; he is infinite leisure. God never speaks under excitement or persuasion; that were not like a God. His purpose is of old, and his decree is from everlasting; and the "I will," which is the mouth of the decree, is a word that is spoken with wisdom and prudence. Now, when a man speaks a thing prudently and wisely, you believe that he will carry it out, if he can. You may have much more confidence with regard to what the Lord says, for he has not spoken without due deliberation; therefore, whenever God says, "I will," you may be sure that he will perform it.

Next, when God says, "I will," his resolution is *supported by omnipotence*. you say, "I will," but you cannot do what you have promised. You will is good enough; but you fail because of lack of the means. you say, "I will, yes, I will;" but afterwards you have meekly to say, "I pray thee, take this will for the deed; for I find that I have overshot the mark. I have promised what I am unable to perform." Now, that can never happen with God. Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Is anything too hard for the Lord, especially anything he promised to perform? Come, then, dear friends, if God be omnipotent, and we know that he is, when he says, "I will," we dare not doubt it; for eternal power goes forth with the word of his wisdom; and it must, yea, it shall be done. Whatever doubts we might have had, if it were not God's "I will," vanish when we come to remember that all things are possible with him.

Furthermore, when God says, "I will," we should remember that it is *sealed with immutability*. We change, we are always changing. Made of dust and ashes, we are made of material that continues to change. Hence, we say to-day, "I will," and we must mean it; but to-morrow we wish that we had never said, "I will," and the next day we say, "I will not." Ah! me, the suicides that have come through resting on the word of a man who was false, and proved a traitor to his friend. But God never changes; he is the same yesterday, today, and for ever. The thing that has gone out of his mouth shall never be reversed. When he once says, "I will," depend on this, he still says, "I will"; and till heaven and earth shall pass away, it will still be, "I will." He is too perfect to change; for being perfect, he cannot

change. A changeable being either changes from a worse to a better, in which case he was not perfect before; or else he changes from a better to a worse, in which case he will not be perfect afterwards; but God being always perfect, is always the same, never withdrawing his word, or altering his purpose. Will you not, therefore, believe the unfailing word of an unchanging God? Can you not hang upon it; and when he says, "I will," depend on it that it shall be even so?

Once more, when God says, "I will," it will be *carried out in faithfulness*. He has fulfilled his threatenings. He never idly vapors, and utters words of terror without intending to carry them out; and when it comes to promises, rest you sure that God never flatters the ear, and then deceives the man. If he did not mean to do it, he would not say, "I will." Eternal faithfulness performs what eternal wisdom declares. Shall God lie? Is he a man as thou art? Will he deceive? Will he falsely promise, and then run from his word? That be far from him, and let it be far from us thus to blaspheme his name by such a thought. Come, then, child of God, thou who knowest him, if he has said, "I will help thee," he will help thee. If he says, "I will strengthen thee," he will strengthen thee. Believe God, without the trace of doubt; and "be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord."

Now, all this is meant to introduce my text, with its two glorious "I wills." Let us try and get something out of them. The Lord says, "I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water."

I propose to apply the text as a sort of general promise to many things; and, first, to apply it to THE TRIALS OF SAINTS.

Consider, first, *their temporal trials*. God's people may be hungry and thirsty; and their anxiety may be great. Your cupboard may be bare; the flocks may be cut off from the fold, and there may be not herd in the stall; but God can feed you. Though you seek water, and there is none, he can open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys. Do not distrust the God of providence. Many of his children have been brought to their last loaf, and yet they have not been starved. Remember her who had nothing left but a little meal and a little oil, when the prophet came to her, and yet the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail. Remember him who sat by the brook Cherith, and the ravens brought him bread, and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening.

Perhaps no miracle will be wrought for you; possibly God will feed you without a miracle; and so long as it is done, you will equally praise him whether the supply be providential or miraculous. Plead these promises: "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." "He shall dwell on high: his place of defense shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." What though there is nothing at present, perhaps by to-morrow morning the Lord may have opened rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys.

Certainly my text is true in *the spiritual experience of believers*. Do you know what it is, sometimes, when spiritual things are at a very low ebb, when you cannot find any joy, and scarcely any hope, when you look into your own heart, and all seems as dry as the earth is after a long autumn drought? You have now power, no strength, scarcely any desire. You sit down, and say, "I am afraid that I am no child of God; I am given up; I am spiritually dead." Yet have you never known, within an hour, the great water-floods to be let loose, and your soul to be full of feeling, full of faith, hope, joy, love? The chariot-wheels were taken off, and the chariot dragged very heavily; but now, or ever you were aware, your soul has made you like the chariots of Amminadib. You are leaping, you are laughing, for very joy. The Lord has turned your captivity; and filled your mouth with laughter, and your tongue with singing; and done it all of a sudden, too. God can do things for his people, even wonderful things which they looked not for.

I was noticing that there are in our text four words relating to water. Everything had been dry before, and there was no water for the thirsty to drink. Now, here you have rivers, fountains, a pool, and springs of water. There is a difference in the four words. The first is "rivers." "I will open rivers in high places." There shall come directly from God a rush of mighty grace, like the streams of flowing rivers, Your poor, dead, dry heart shall suddenly feel that the waters of life have come directly from the throne of God to you. There shall be "waters to swim in." You shall have an abundance where before you had nothing.

The next word is "fountains", which may be rendered "wells." Now, wells are places to which people regularly go for water. They represent the means of grace. "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." Well, now, perhaps you have been to the means of grace, and yet obtained no comfort. You have not blamed the preacher; but you have

blamed yourself very much. But, on a sudden, God appears, and opens wells in the midst of the valley. Now the service is all full of refreshment. Now are you glad, and you no more go home saying, "I thirsted, but I went to the house of the Lord in vain; for I received no comfort." See what God can do; he can make rivers of grace flow directly from his throne, and he can open wells in the customary use of the means of grace.

But there is a third word, "I will make the wilderness a pool of water." Here you have the idea of overflowing abundance. God can give you so much joy that you will not know how to hold it all; and you will have to let it be like a pool that overflows its banks. God can give you so much earnestness that you can hardly employ it all in the work that you have to do. He can give you so much nearness to himself, that your heart shall scarcely be able to contain your delight. God promises to make the wilderness "a pool of water." he does not give you just a drop of grace now and then; but he fills up the dry places till they become standing pools.

The fourth word is "springs." It seems to indicate a perpetual freshness; always something new — new thoughts of Christ, new delights in holy service, new prospects of the world to come, new communion with God. He can make the dry land "springs of water." He has promised to do so; trust his gracious word, and it shall be fulfilled in your experience even now.

I want God's people to use the text in this way, as God's promise for your temporals and for your spirituals. Oh! you that are in the wilderness, and find the sand dry and waterless, go you to God, and plead his promise. He has said, "I will," and he has said it twice over. Lay hold of an "I will," with each one of your hands; and come not away from the throne of grace till you have received an answer of peace to your petition, "Lord, do as thou hast said!"

Now, secondly, I am going to use the text in another way, not for God's people who are passing through trials, but as it may be applied to THE EXPERIENCE OF CONVERTS. God will for you, my dear hearers, who have been lately converted, open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys. He will make your wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.

Who were these people to whom the Lord spoke? Well, they were *people who were poor and needy*. "When the poor and needy seek water." God

will not do much for spiritually rich people; I mean you who say you are rich in yourselves, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing; you who have all the grace that you want of your own making; you who trust in your own arm, and sacrifice to your own goodness. There is nothing for you in God. His grace is for the poor and needy. I think that I have some of them here to-night. They feel as if they had no right to be here; they almost wish that they could get under the seat, and hide away, they feel so very low, so broken down. It is for you, dear friends, that God will make rivers and open fountains.

When will he do it? When *they begin to ask him*. “When the poor and needy seek water.” Can you expect God to bless you if you do not seek him? Your desires must be wide awake; you must be longing after God; you must cry in your heart, “I will return unto my God; I will seek mercy at his hands; I will plead with him that I may be his child.” Then will the Lord begin to open fountains and rivers for you.

But the time is noted further still. It is not only when they begin to seek, but when *they begin silently to plead*. Notice the words, “When their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them.” But they could not speak; their tongue failed them because of their suffering from thirst. Yet says the lord, “I will hear them.” A glib tongue is bad at praying. When a man prays in his heart, he is often like Moses, slow of speech. A sinner under a sense of sin is scarcely able to speak a word. Frost of the mouth, but thaw of the soul, this is what we want. Their tongue failed them; but their heart was speaking. We know that it was; for God says, “I the Lord will hear them.” “I cannot pray,” says one. I am glad that you cannot. God will hear you now that your tongue fails you. You used to go upstairs, and pray for a quarter of an hour, perhaps, such prayer as it was; but now, when you kneel at your bedside, there is nothing but a broken groan or two, and a tear. God will hear you now. When your tongue fails, your heart begins to pray, and God hears you. “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”

But the time mentioned is more sorrowful still; *these people were in abject distress*. It is added, “When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none.” “My day of grace is past,” says one. I wonder whoever told you that lie. As long as you live, your day of grace is not past; do not believe any such thing, for —

***“While the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return.”***

“Ah, well!” says one, “I have gone to look for mercy, and there is none.” So you think. Now is *the time for divine interposition*. When you seek water, and find none, God will open rivers for you. You remember how Elijah’s servant went up to the top of Carmel, and look toward the sea, and he came back to the prophet, and said, “There is nothing.” But Elijah said, “Go again seven times.” And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man’s hand.” When man says, “There is nothing,” God comes in, and soon there is everything. he made the world out of nothing, and he makes new creatures out of nothing. When you get back to nothing, God has come to everything. The end of the creature is the beginning of the Creator. I may seem to be speaking these words very calmly to you to-night; but I have within myself the deep persuasion that I am picturing some here who have reached the lowest point in their experience. They are despairing; they feel the sentence of death in their members. Now is the time for God to interpose; for notice how my text breaks in: “When they seek water, there is none,” then God says, “I will. They cannot do anything; but I will open rivers in high places; I will make the wilderness a pool of water.” What you want is a divine interposition. You want God to rend the heavens, and come down, and save you; and he has come down in the person of his Son. Jesus Christ is that great interposition of God, and he has come to open the rivers of grace, and to dig the wells of salvation.

The promise in the text also relates to *those who are in various positions*. There are some who are in very high places. You run up to the very tops of the mountains, and you fancy that God cannot reach you there; but he says, “I will open rivers in high places,” A river on the top of a mountain is a wonderful thing; but God can make it so. However high you have gone, he can reach you. Others of you are ordinary sinners down in the valleys. “Well,” says the Lord, “I will open fountains in the midst of the valleys.” You shall find water when you are on the hill-top; you shall not have to come down to the valley for it; and if you are in the valley, you shall not have to go up to the mountain for it, it will come just where you are. I do like that thought. There are some people who seem to think that we have to go a long way to find Christ; but, indeed, Christ has come to us just where we are. To use an old illustration of mine, our railways companies generally make the station from a half a mile to two or three miles from the

town, so that you must have a cab or an omnibus in order to get to it; but our Lord Jesus Christ has made a station just where the sinner is. Step into the train now; the first-class carriage is right before you. You need not run for half an hour to try to get a ticket, for on this line there is “nothing to pay.” “Whosoever will, let him take the waters of life freely,” for it flows at his feet, whether his is on the mountains or in the valleys.

Yes, and to vary the promise still more, the Lord says, “I will make the wilderness a pool of water.” Have you seen a wilderness, a large extent of flat country covered with sand and stones? I have crossed such a wilderness on a small scale, where there was no herbage, nothing green, just a wild waste, without anything growing upon it. As for a stream of water, there is nothing of the kind, not a drop anywhere. God pictures you as being like that barren, dried-up land, and he says that he will turn you into a pool of water. Whatever you are, however barren, however worthless, God can transform you by his grace into the very opposite; and “the dry land”, long dry, and always likely to be dry, shall be “springs of water.” God can make springs of grace in you, which shall begin to rise and bubble up at once, and shall never cease to flow till you reach the throne of glory.

In a word, no condition can be so bad but God can change it. No sin can be so great but God can forgive it. No garment of our life can be so stained but Christ can make it white. How I love to tell you these things! How much more happy should I be if every sinner here believed them, and came to Jesus just as he is, and trusted Christ to be everything to him! I cannot stay longer to-night on that point, precious as it is, because I want to stir up the people of God by one other observation.

Beloved friends, this text is true with reference to THE LABORS OR WORKERS FOR GOD. God can change the condition of the plot of ground on which you are at work.

I may be speaking to one here who says, “Mine is a very bad place to work in, for I cannot get the people to come and hear the gospel; there seems to be no *spirit of hearing*.” That is largely true at the present time. Somehow, the people come here, and always have come here; but look at many of our churches and chapels. Why, in many of them there are more pews than people, more spiders than immortal souls! It is a wretched business. One says to me, “You know, sir, we have had addresses to working-men.” Another says, “We have had Pleasant Sunday Afternoons.” Another has

had a batch of fiddlers at play; but the people do not come for all that. Some who like cheap music and Sunday concerts may be attracted by such means; but people will not be drawn thus to worship God. Of course not; can they not do their own fiddling if they want that kind of music? There is nothing in that style of thing to get people to come to a place of worship. There is just now a kind of hardening come over our population; the people do not care to go to a place of worship. But do not give up preaching, my friend; do not give up working, you who long for souls to be saved, for God can suddenly give a love for his house, and an eagerness to hear the gospel. He can make the dry land springs of water, and open rivers in high places. Only let all ministers preach the old gospel, preach it earnestly, and preach it simply, and the people will come back again. God will bring them to hear; he has always done so, and why should he not do so again?

Another says, "I get the people to hear, but *there is no feeling*." Well, I too know what it is to have preached in places that have been like ice-wells. When I have talked to the people, they have looked like so many images; there has been no stirring them, no moving them. Regular hearers are all to apt to turn into stone, and to be unmoved; but oh! you who are trying to do good, never cease from it because people seem to be turned to stone; go on with your work all the same. If the gospel hammer does not break the rock to-day, hammer away until it does. When the old St. Paul's Cathedral had to be taken down for the present one to be built, Sir Christopher Wren had to remove some massive walls that had stood for hundreds of years; so he had a battering-ram, with a great mass of people, working away to break down the walls. I think that for four-and-twenty hours they kept right on, and there seemed to be no sign of giving way, the walls were so well built, very different from our modern walls. The structure was like a rock, it could not be stirred; but the battering-ram kept on and on and on, blow after blow, stroke after stroke, and at last the whole mass began to quiver, like a jelly, and by-and-by over went the massive walls. You have only to keep on long enough, and the same thing will happen in your work. The first blows upon the wall were not wasted; they were preparing for the others; and getting the whole structure into a condition of disintegration; and when that was done, down it came, and great was the fall thereof. Work away, brothers, work away, feeling sure that God will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the

valleys. He will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry lands springs of water.

“Well,” says one, “what we want in our place is for *the ministry itself to be supplied*.” Yes, that is what we want everywhere. If the minister himself is dry, what is to be done? Find fault with him, and leave him? No, dear friend, if he is a man of God, pray for him, and never rest till the Lord makes the dry land springs of water. We poor mortals, whom God has called to be preachers, are desperately dependent upon our congregations. I do not say that we rest on you first, our chief dependence must be upon God; but a praying; loving, earnest, wakeful people will keep the minister awake; and when the people decline, and there is no life in them, it sometimes happens that the minister gets dry, too. I remember that, when Mr. Matthew Wilks was comparing preachers to pens, he said that some of them spluttered, and others did not make any mark at all. “What is to be done with them?” said he, and then he answered his own question, ‘Pray the Lord to dip them in the ink.’ I think that we must pray for all the pens that God would dip them in the ink again. Oh, for another baptism of the Holy Spirit, to put more divine power upon them! Then, when we begin to speak, God will open rivers in high places, and make the wilderness a pool of water.

But what is wanted, too, is *the same blessing upon the helpers*. What is the preacher to do, what is the church to do, if the workers are half asleep? Sunday-school teachers going through their duty with great regularity and no spirituality; people going about with their tracts when they might almost as well go about with Sunday newspapers, for they have no love to the souls of the people! What is the result is we have deacons and church-officers going about without any life or spiritual power? Well do I remember preaching in a certain place, where I was told that there was a great spiritual dearth. I preached my best; and when I went down from the pulpit afterwards, there were two deacons standing against the door of the vestry, with their arms folded, and leaning back in a most comfortable attitude. I asked them if they were deacons, and they said, “Yes.” Then I said, “There is no good doing here, I suppose?” They said, “No, none.” I said, “I think I know the cause of it.” “Do you know the cause of it?” they asked. “Yes,” I replied, “I look to the right, and I look to the left, and I see it.” I do not think that the brethren liked my remark; but, at the same time, I know that it was an arrow that went home to their hearts, for they became very different men afterwards, and woke up, and God blessed the

place. One sleepy Christian in a church may do much mischief. In some businesses, the whole thing is so arranged that, if one person goes to sleep, all the machinery goes wrong; and I believe that it is very much so in the church of God. You have seen a number of men, standing in a long line, pitching bricks to one another. Suppose that one of them goes to sleep. There will be a great accumulation of bricks around him; but none of them will get to the other end of the line. Sometimes we get a member of the church asleep. I would like to hurl half a brick at him; but I suppose that I must not do that, although he makes the whole work stop. No good is done because he is asleep. One says, "I know that brother." Who is he? Would you mind just giving him a jog? Put your arm this way, and nudge him so [describing man striking himself], and you will hit the right man, I should not wonder. If you awake, perhaps it might be the waking up of one of the most sleepy people in the church. At any rate, it is always better to take these things to ourselves than to pass them on to anybody else. It is never well to listen for other people; the Scriptural injunction is, "Take heed unto thyself."

I pray that all the members of the this church, if they have any of them been like dry land, may become springs of water. Then we may look for *a change throughout the whole congregation*. Men and women will cry out, "What must we do to be saved?" There will be plenty of people to be talked to about their souls. We shall have do difficulty in increasing the church, month by month, with such as shall be saved; and then *all the neighborhood will be transformed*. A living church, in which God has made living springs of grace to rise, will soon turn the desert in which it is situated into quite a different region. There is need for gracious work in all the neighbourhoods in which any of us live; and great need of it round this region, where it was once very much the reverse! And what part of London is there that might not make a Christian weep tears of blood? Can you pass through this great city without being distressed and alarmed by reason of its ever-increasing sin, and its decreasing fear of God? O friends, these things cannot go on as they are! Something bad will come of it if something good and great is not soon done by the great God of mercy. Let us cry to him in private and in public. Let us entreat the stretching out of his arm of grace, and with our prayers let us put forth earnest efforts, each one trying to bring another to Christ, and never resting —

*“Till all the chosen race
Shall meet around the throne,
To bless the conduct of his grace
And make his glories known.”
God bless you all, for Christ’s sake! Amen.*

EXPOSITION

ISAIAH 41:1-20

Verse 1. *Keeps silence before me, O islands; and let the people renew their strength: let them come near; then let them speak: let us come near together to judgment.*

God invites people to argue with him. He bids them first “listen” to him, and then speak to him. They had been worshipping idols, so the Lord shows them that the idols are nothing, and that all worship paid to them is a lie. He begins by asking a question:—

2. Who raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to his feet, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings? he gave them as the dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow. He pursued them, and passed safely; even by the way that he had not gone with his feet.

These words are supposed to allude to Cyrus, who came “from the east”, and conquered “the nations”, and then did good to the house of Israel. It was God who spoke to Cyrus long before he was born. What idol god has been able to utter any prophecy? Only the Most High who lives in heaven can foretell things to come. One of the best proofs of our holy religion is to be found in the prophecies which have been fulfilled to the letter in various countries, and at different periods. Now, when they dig up old stones, that have been hidden for hundreds of years from the eyes of men, they see the proofs of how God saw into the future, and bade his prophets foretell the things that should be hereafter.

4. Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I the LORD, the first, and with the last; I am he. The isles saw it, and feared; the ends of the earth were afraid, drew near, and came. They helped every one his neighbor; and ever one said to his brother, Be of good courage. So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that

smootheth with the hammer him that smote the anvil, saying, It is ready for the soldering: and he fastened it with nails, that it should not be moved.

A very graphic picture of the making of an idol. The people were afraid of Cyrus, so they began to appeal to their gods. A pretty god it must have been that had to be made by a carpenter! Then the wood had to be covered with gold plates by the goldsmith, and the god would not be complete without the help of a man smoothing with a hammer and a smith smiting upon an anvil. When it was made, they had to solder it to keep it together; and they had to get nails to fasten it in its place lest, like Dagon, it should fall down and be broken. This is nothing but literal truth; yet what sarcasm it is upon idolatry! What good can come of idols that are made by men, idols that cannot move, and must be fixed in their places with soldering irons?

8. But thou, Israel, art my servant,

You do not worship idols; you worship Jehovah, the living and true God.

8. Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend.

What a title for God to give to a man, "Abraham my friend"! Could not we also endeavor to get into God's friendship, where Abraham was; to trust and love God much; to talk with him much, and enjoy high and holy fellowship with him?

9. Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.

To many here this verse will come home very sweetly. God is your God. and you are God's servants. he has chosen you; he will never repent of his choice; his election is never changed. "I have Chosen thee, and not cast thee away;" and you have chosen him, and you will not cast him away. By his grace, you will never leave your God, nor forsake the ways of Christ. May his mercy keep you faithful, even to the end!

10. Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God:

Where God is, there is no cause for fear: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee." That is a grand argument. "Be not dismayed; for I am thy God." Everything we need lies within the compass of those words.

10. I will strengthen thee; yes, I will help thee; yes, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

Beloved believer, are you weak to-night? Claim this precious promise, “I will strengthen thee.” Have you something to do that is quite beyond your strength? Take hold of this comforting word, “I will help thee.” Are you ready to slip? Do you feel as if you must fall? Lean on this gracious message, “I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.” Do not let these precious pearls lie at your feet to be trodden on; pick them up, and wear them, and beautify the neck of your faith with them.

11. Behold, all they that are incensed against thee shall be alarmed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish.

Your sins, your temptations, everything that would keep you out of heaven, and drive you away from God, the Lord will overcome all these enemies of yours, and deliver you.

12. Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, even them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought. For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee.

That is the second time that we have had that precious promise to forbid our fear; first in verse 10, and now in verse 13, “I will help thee.”

14. Fear not, thou worm Jacob,

You are earthly, grovelling, weak, like a worm; yet even you need not fear: “Fear not, thou worm Jacob.”

14. And ye men of Israel; I will help thee,

That is the third time that we have had that promise, “I will help thee.” “Ring that silver bell again,” says the Holy Spirit to Isaiah, “let it comfort my tired ones.” “I will help thee.”

14. Saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy one of Israel.

I was wonderstruck, as I looked at this verse, to find it put “Thou worm Jacob, I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Goel,” that is the Hebrew word which is translated “Redeemer”, “Thy next of kin.” Is the next of kin to a worm the Almighty God? Does he undertake to be our Brother, to pay

the redemption price for us, because he is our Kinsman? So the text says. Let us drink in the comfort of it: “Thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.” In order to become our Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel himself became “a worm, and no man.”

15. Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small. and thou shalt make the hills as chaff.

The Easterns drag a wooden machine over the corn to fetch out the grain from the ear. This is called a corn-drag, and they put teeth in it, similar to the teeth of a harrow. God said that he would turn his Church, his people, into a new corn-drag, with teeth sharp and tearing, and that they should go against their difficulties, which were like mountains, and against their trials, which were like hills, and they should thresh them small, and make them to be like chaff.

16. Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shalt rejoice in the LORD, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel.

All difficulty is gone, torn to pieces small as chaff, and then winnowed away, as the chaff is blown from among the heap on the threshing floor. What a promise this is! You who fear God, believe it, go and practice it, and see if God does not make your greatest difficulties utterly to disappear.

Now come two sweet verses:—

17. When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.

See what God can do. Men are thirsty, they have no water; and lo! on a sudden, behold rivers, fountains, springs, pools, floods; for God does nothing in halves. He is an all-sufficient, overflowing God. When he gives, he gives like a king. He does not measure his gifts of water by the pint and by the gallon; but here you have pools, and springs, and rivers. When he has given waters, he will give trees to grow by the waters. When God gives blessing, he makes other blessings to spring out of it.

19. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together.

Making a paradise of streams of water and lovely trees, evergreen trees of the most comely aspect, and of great variety. See what God can do. Where there is a wilderness, where there were hills and valleys, and all was dry and parched, he makes woods and forests, rivers and fountains. He can do all things. Oh, that we had faith in him! But we forget him: we turn not to him; we look everywhere but to God; we try every method except that of trusting in the living God. Have we a God? If so, why do we act as we sometimes do? Martin Luther was a very cheerful man, as a rule; but he had terrible fits of depression. he was at one time so depressed that his friends recommended him to go away for a change of air, to see if he could get relief. he went away; but he came home as miserable as ever; and when he went into the sitting-room, his wise wife Kate, Catherine von Bora, was sitting there, dressed in black, and her children round about her, all in black. “Oh, oh!” said Luther, “who is dead?” “Why,” said she, “doctor, have not you heard that God is dead? My husband, Martin Luther, would never be in such a state of mind if he had a living God to trust to.” Then he burst into a hearty laugh, and said, “Kate, thou art a wise woman. I have been acting as if God were dead, and I will do so no more. Go and take off thy black.” If God be alive, why are we discouraged? If we have a God to look to, why are we cast down? Let us rejoice and be glad together; for God will do all that he has promised, for this reason:—

20. That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.

God wants you to know that he is at work on your behalf. he wants you so to trust him as to see how his promises can be applied to your case, and what his right hand can accomplish even for you. Let us trust him to-night with all our hearts.

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