

THE CITY OF GOD: ITS PEACE AND PROSPERITY,
A SERMON

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Preached by Mr. HAZELTON,  
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AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CLADWELL STREET,
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“Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy
palaces.” — {Psalm. 122: 7}.

The God of heaven and earth has been sovereignly pleased to become a gracious and merciful God. As God, He is the only proper object of the worship of His creatures, and as a gracious and saving God, He is the only object of the spiritual worship of spiritual men and women. God, however, will be worshipped in His own way. He was worshipped so under the patriarchal dispensation, and under the ceremonial dispensation, and He is being worshipped in His own way by spiritual men and women under the Gospel dispensation. As for the future, we desire to leave that in the hands of our gracious God, who will be worshipped in heaven for ever by all His ransomed people in His own way, and according to the good pleasure of His will. Our views of heaven are necessarily imperfect, and in some respects unsatisfactory. We do not quite know how the saints in glory worship their glorious God, but we are taught to believe that the eyes

of their souls are steadily and perpetually fixed upon the great object of spiritual worship, and that all the glorified before the throne are engaged in singing the praises of God. We have some faint idea of what it is for souls to sing, but of course there can be no vocal music before the throne of God, when souls, and souls, only are worshippers there. I do not know whether there will be vocal music or not when our bodies are raised, and we are seated before God and the Lamb; perhaps these tongues of ours will for ever sing : but before the resurrection takes place our souls will be found in the presence of God, and we shall be there as worshippers. Our worship will be spiritual and heavenly, whatever its forms may be.

Under the ceremonial dispensation the worship of God was sometimes very peculiar as to its rules and forms. The males of the children of Israel were required to appear three times a year, before the Lord in Jerusalem, and never to come before Him empty. It must have been a wonderful sight; those that lived on the borders of the land started first, and they sang as they travelled; as they passed through villages and towns, their praise increased and multiplied; and onward they went, going "from strength to strength, until every one of them in Zion appeared before God." This was the case from the north, and south, and east, and west, and from every point between those four quarters; the whole country was astir, the women and children were left at home, and God had undertaken to preserve and protect them, and also the land, during the absence of the men. Thus, as they travelled towards Jerusalem they sang, and some of their psalms are recorded in the Word, and are called " Songs of Degrees,"

and one of them opens thus, " I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord." They entered a village and enquired of the men, Are you ready? We are on the way to Jerusalem, "Let us go into the house of the Lord and the inhabitants severally responded. " I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." They were waiting for the company, and when the first ranks of the travellers appeared, the people in the place which they were about to pass through were glad to join them on their pilgrim way. "Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is build as a city that is compact together, whither the tribes go up;" that is, the tribes of Israel. One company united in Jerusalem or the temple. So the church of God is one church, one family, one vast body, one great and glorious army; but that body is in some respects exceedingly diversified. There are some that are tried, others that are tempted, others that have never been led into liberty, others that are rejoicing in God their Saviour; there are some who are young in years, others who are more advanced in life and experience; then there are old believers. "Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord." Taking this view of the Psalm, and also of the other Psalms connected with it, we have a very interesting illustration of the manner in which God was worshipped under the ceremonial dispensation; and among other words on behalf of Jerusalem, the place and city of worship, was this, "Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces."

Now, if the Lord be pleased to give me strength for a few

minutes, I will do the best I can in directing your attention to some matters suggested by this interesting portion of the Word. In the first place, I should like to say a few words upon the city itself—Jerusalem. I suppose our brother who gives out the hymns, thought that I was about to preach on the church of God; for he gave out, immediately after I had read and prayed, that very beautiful and comprehensive hymn upon this subject. By the city here, literally, understand Jerusalem; but mystically and spiritually understand the church of God as described in the chapter I read at the commencement of the service. {Isaiah. 26}. "In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah: We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." While I was trying to meditate upon this portion of the word, I had some pleasing thoughts upon the condition of the church of God in this world. A city, divine and heavenly; a city of peace, and a city more or less prosperous in this stormy world. And only one city, and that the city of God; and concerning its condition your prayer and mine is, "Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces." Now we are told that the whole world lieth in wickedness, and in the midst of this wicked world, so to speak, there stands this glorious city, which will ever remain unlike the world, The world cannot change its own character, and the church cannot change its character, and there will be an everlasting difference between the two. There is nothing like this city of God in the world, and its contents, or its privileges and blessings are peculiar to itself. All round the city, hence the walls, are wickedness and slavery, misery and uncleanness, war and woe, devils and various

forms of death and danger. Think for just a moment,—forgive me for adverting to it,—of what is about to take place in the course of this day; of the disorder and confusion in our streets. How strange are the motives and tastes of the people! And yet in the midst of all that commotion there is a city, the church of the living God, a body of men and women that belong to heaven; they are interested in the Saviour, and by the will of God there is a measure of peace and prosperity there. The waves of persecution and hatred roll against the walls, and the devil is looking on and attempting to enter. Within are hundreds and thousands of saints; men and women who have been born again, and separated from the world, breathing this petition before the God of heaven and earth, “ Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces.”

Now the people of God are social creatures, and the grace of God was never intended to destroy the social feeling in our nature; and therefore when a company of people have been called by grace divine they seek each other's society, they love one another for the Lord's sake, and are banded together upon the principles of eternal truth; and as they travel on towards heaven, others, and yet others say, “ We will go with you ; for we have heard that God is with you.” The people of God, though living in the world are not of it; they are finding their way though the storms and vicissitudes, trials and troubles of life. Our God has made a beautiful and very important provision for His people. There is a city of peace in this world of war; there is a city of purity in this world of sin; there is a home here for the dear people of God, and hence we sometimes sing with holy feeling:

*“Jesus, away from earth I fly,
And with Thy church unite;
Thy saints shall be my company,
Thy presence my delight.”*

When grace enters the heart of a sinner it renews his mind, changes his tastes, and awakens a thousand new desires in his soul, and he wants kindred minds. How odious in the estimation of a grace-saved child of God are the ways and customs of the world! Oh my friend, you could not very well have a deeper or darker hell, than that of being bound hand and foot, the whole of your persons, all the days of your life with the ungodly and the abominable. Grace saves the soul from this present evil world, and brings the saved mind into connection with kindred spirits, and such are found only in the city of the living God.

*“Saviour, if of Zion's city
I through grace a member am,
Let the world deride or pity,
I will glory in Thy name.”*

It is a mercy to belong to the church. I do not mean, to have our names enrolled in the church-book merely, that too is a favor, but that is not all. I mean it is a mercy to be one with God's people; to be one with them as God's people ; to see as they see; to feel as they feel; to walk where they walk; to work as they work; to lean upon that upon which they are leaning ; to live upon that upon which they are living ; to drink of the stream which they drink of from day by day; and to be able to say, a Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.”

This city is walled, and is thus a well protected city: "Peace be within thy walls." Now with what are the churches walled? Let me give you a few views of the walls. In the first place, God says, "For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her, a wall of fire round about her, and will be the glory in the midst of her." We know what a brick wall, a garden wall, and other kinds of walls are, but we do not know anything, literally or naturally so, about a wall of fire. Here, however, round about the church of God we have a fiery wall. And what is it? It is God Himself with the fire of His grace, of His holiness, of His mercy, and His power, and that must be a daring foe who would attempt to place a ladder against this wall which is round about the church, separating it from the world; and yet we are told in the day in which we live, that there ought to be no separating wall between the two, that there ought to be no fences around the church of God. No, without are enemies, and within are the citizens of Zion, the children of the living God. God is a wall of fire round about His people, to consume the enemy, to burn up all their plans; to visit them, year by year, and day by day, with bitter disappointment, and a fire to warm and purify the city itself. And our God is not ashamed of His city on the earth; for a city generally speaking is more or less visible from a distance; but if a city could be supposed to exist having a wall of fire, it would be a most conspicuous object, and be visible for miles, and more conspicuous, if possible, in the night than in the day. Jehovah Himself is, as to His perfections and attributes, a wall of fire round about the city of Jerusalem. And again, "we have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." Not Acts of Parliament, nor

military power; for the city of God requires no such protection as the material sword and worldly policy. Let the church of God stand where God has placed her. Let her be what God has made her: let her ever be satisfied with the protection which God has established for her. Let her not cringe beneath any earthly or temporal power; for "salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." And the foundation of these walls is deep, and the superstructure is exceedingly high, for it is God's salvation. And powerful enemies can never enter, though they come against the walls to beat them down. All hell has been aiming at them and beating against them ever since they were erected, but the walls still stand. The bulwarks are where and what they were.

*"O let my soul in Zion dwell;
Nor fear the wrath of Rome or hell."*

And then again, the perfections of our God, together with His providence, protect His Zion, the city of Jehovah. How sweet is the thought that all God's attributes, and all God's providence, even a special providence, are round about the church. Brethren, we have indeed a strong city. Let me just ask the question here, On which side of the walls are we? Are we inside or outside? Are we where all the peace is, or are we where there is no peace at all? For depend upon it, it is a truth, whether it be believed in or not, that there is peace nowhere but in the church of God. Sometimes the peace of churches is broken; but whether that be so or not, there is no peace to the wicked. There is no peace in the world. Go to the theatre. Peace is not to be found there. Pleasure for a few hours is perhaps enjoyed,

as people express themselves; but no solid peace can ever be found there, for it exists not outside the walls that surround the city of the living God. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee." Thus Zion is a walled city, and its walls are the perfections of God, His Divine providence, His precious promises, and the perpetual operations of His hand.

Now let me pass away from this, to notice in the second place, the privileges mentioned: peace and prosperity. These are two great blessings, and every spiritual member of the church of God, is praying, I am sure, for these favors. Now I am not to preach at this time, peace by the cross of Jesus Christ, or not that exclusively. I want just to remind you of the several things that are essential to peace. In the first place, there must be righteousness: "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance for ever." "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Nations sometimes come to an agreement between themselves, in connection with which peace is made, and apparently established; but often-times peace between nations is made upon false principles or upon no principles at all. And if national and political righteousness are ignored, there cannot be security against, war, or satisfactory assurance that it will not break out. Righteousness is the only foundation upon which peace can rest; the only root out of which it can grow. Let a church that has been divided come to an agreement, one yielding a little here, and another a little there; one giving up a doctrine here, and another giving up one there : soon such a peace

will be disturbed and destroyed—a patched up peace is never lasting.

Now the peace of Jerusalem for which we pray, is founded on eternal

Righteousness. That is not however, the principal idea; and therefore notice, secondly, that liberty is essential to peace, The city of Jerusalem might be paved with gold, its gates might be pearl, and its walls jasper, and the city wondrously rich, and its beauty and glory great; but if the inhabitants be slaves, the excellence and value of the city itself can never give peace to their hearts. Freedom is dear to men; and if there were not liberty in the city of Jerusalem, there would be no peace. God would be terrible; His worship under such circumstances would be bondage, and spiritual things would yield no pleasure. But to know not only that I am in Jerusalem, a citizen, but to know that I am free, that there is no legal bar between myself and God; that I am free to go up into the palace, and to kneel, and even sit before the mighty Monarch, free to open my lips before Him; free to ask Him for a loaf of bread for to-day, and for the pardon of all my sins at the same time, is a privilege indeed.

But that is not all, for safety is also essential to peace. There may be righteousness and liberty, but the person that is free may not be in safety. Many who are free, are in an insecure position, and although their cause is a righteous one, they have not peace, because everything shakes round about them. But it is not so here. The people are a righteous people, and a liberated people, for God has set them free. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. ' And they are also safe; for "as the mountains are

round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth, even for ever."

But that is not all. These excellencies are not sufficient to constitute a perfect peace. There must also be plenty; for there may be safety, and yet want may exist. The free may not have bread enough to eat, or water, to drink, or raiment to wear; and if that be so, there can be no peace. But the people of God are blessed with an everlasting plenty. All the fullness of God is theirs. "For all things are your's ; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

Health, too, is necessary to peace. Those who are free and safe may be sick. The child of God, therefore, is blessed with that description of health that is peculiar to himself. "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity."

That is not all. In order to obtain blessed heavenly peace, there must be the communion of saints. The city may be full of citizens, all of them free, every one of them rich, all of them healthy and strong; and yet they may be comparative strangers to one another,—no communion between saint and saint, between one believer and another. Oh how sweet to meet together as saints, and unitedly and unanimously to take our seats at our heavenly Father's table in the royal palace, and to look upon all that is upon it, and to say to one another, It is all ours, it is provided for us. The poor man and the rich man are one here, all the fullness of grace is in Zion, and the poor come with the rich and commune together, in all the fullness of the grace of God.

That is not all; another excellency must be added, in order to the perfection of this peace; and that is, a cloudless prospect. The idea of losing it all by and by, the possibility of it would disturb our hearts, and render peace impossible; but our prospect is blessed. "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Thus the peace is a heavenly and brotherly one; not a political peace, not an earthly peace, not the peace of servants, but the peace which prevails in a family, between brethren and sisters in the Lord."

The second excellency is, "prosperity within thy palaces prosperity of soul; prosperity as to numbers; prosperity as to the preaching and progress of the Word. There may be large numbers in a church, the congregation may be great, and yet there may not be any soul prosperity. What I want now more than ever, if possible, is soul prosperity. What I am looking and praying for is that my soul may prosper, and if I have little or no knowledge in that direction, I cannot set forth soul prosperity before you. Well I think of the Psalmist's words elsewhere, "Whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." What am I doing? Sometimes I pray— do I prosper in prayer? Sometimes I am cold, and my prayers are so— at other times my heart is warm—my soul is all alive : I soar; I mount on high, and I enter into the sweet meaning of the very wonderful words, " Concerning My sons, and concerning the work of My hands, command ye Me." I cannot use that word command in connection with prayer very frequently; but God says, "Command ye Me." Sometimes, therefore, I can say with Jacob, "and Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good." Have we

prospered in prayer? Have we ever received anything from our heavenly Father in answer thereto? If we have ever received an answer from heaven, we know something of soul prosperity.

Let me say a word more upon prosperity as to the exercise of our graces. May the Lord be pleased to bless you with a growing faith; for your hearts will not prosper unless your faith is vigorous and strong. I would say a word to the young. Do not defile your minds with much of the general literature of the day. There is so much evil printed and published, that the young are ensnared everywhere. Many publications seem to take a pleasure in introducing matters which are exceedingly doubtful, and in connection with things which are free from mystery it is their desire to mystify them, so as to bring doubt into the minds of their readers. Come to the Bible; read the word upon the knee of prayer, if you would have your souls prosper with regard to faith; and my prayer is, as we have it in the text, "Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces." And then there is rising hope, which goes beyond the clouds, enters into a better world, and expects the crown that God has promised. Then there is love in the soul; the heart is warm therewith. Sometimes it breaks forth into a beautiful and glorious flame. There is a noise outside the avails, and we do not hear it; war and confusion outside, but we are not affected by them. The heart is warm, and filled with love, earnestness, and zeal.

Self-conquest is connected with soul prosperity. Oh, one says in the church, "I will, aye! That I will!" and the "I" there is a very tall one, and "I will" is spoken in a very forcible manner. Now in soul-prosperity self

is conquered. It is not, I will this, and I will that, and I will the other; self is lost before Christ, and in nearness to Him, and in sweet fellowship and communion with Him. Lord, I am willing to be anything or nothing; I am willing to do what Thou wilt. O for grace to enable all the members of the church, and of the churches, to overcome themselves! I must leave the subject, although I had other points to mention, but time forbids. May the Lord command, His blessing for Christ's sake. Amen.