

A HARP OF TEN STRINGS

“And Mary said, My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.”

Luke 1:46, 47

IT is very clear that Mary was not beginning a new thing, for she speaks in the present tense, and in a tense which seems to have been present for a long time, “My soul does magnify the Lord.” Ever since she had received the wonderful tidings of the choice which God had made of her for her high position, she had begun to magnify the Lord. And when once a soul has a deep sense of God’s mercy and begins magnifying Him, there is no end to it. This grows by what it feeds upon—the more you magnify God, the more you can magnify Him. The higher you rise, the more you can see. Your view of God is increased in extent and, whereas you praised Him somewhat at the bottom of the hill, when you get nearer and nearer to the top of His exceeding goodness, you lift up the strain still more loudly and your soul does more fully and exultantly magnify the Lord!

“My soul does magnify the Lord.” What does it mean? The usual meaning of the word, “magnify,” is to make great, or to make to appear great. We say, when we use the microscope, that it magnifies so many times. The insect is the same small and tiny thing, but it is increased to our apprehension. The word is very suitable in this connection. We cannot make God greater than He is. Nor can we have any conception of His actual greatness. He is infinitely above our highest thoughts! When we meditate upon His attributes—

*“Imagination’s utmost stretch
In wonder dies away.”*

But we magnify Him by having higher, larger, truer conceptions of Him, by making known His mighty acts and praising His glorious name so that others, too, may exalt Him in their thoughts. This is what Mary was doing—she was a woman who was given, in later life, to pondering. Those who heard what the shepherds said concerning the Holy Child Jesus, wondered, but, “Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.” They wondered—Mary pondered. It is only the change of a letter, but it makes a great difference in the attitude of the soul—a change from a vague flash of interest to a deep attention of heart. She pondered. She weighed the matter. She turned it over in her mind. She thought about it. She estimated its value and result. She was like that other Mary, a meditative woman who could quietly wait at her Lord’s feet to hear gracious words and drink them in with yearning faith.

It is no idle occupation, then, to get alone and in your own hearts to magnify the Lord—to make Him great to your mind, to your affections—great in your memory, great in your expectations. It is one of the grandest exercises of the renewed nature! You need not, at such a time, think of the deep questions of Scripture. You may leave the abstruse doctrines to wiser heads, if you will, but if your very soul is bent on making God great to your own apprehension, you will be spending time in one of the most profitable ways possible to a child of God. Depend upon it, there are countless holy influences which flow from the habitual maintenance of great thoughts of God—just as there are incalculable mischiefs which flow from our small thoughts of Him! The root of false theology is belittling God and the essence of true Divinity is greatening God, magnifying Him and enlarging our conceptions of His majesty and His Glory to the utmost degree.

But Mary did not mean, by magnifying the Lord, merely to extol Him in her own thoughts. Being a true poetess, she intended to magnify the Lord by her words. No, I must correct myself—she did not intend to do it—she had been doing it all along! She was doing it when she came, panting and breathless, into her cousin Elizabeth’s house. She said, “My soul does magnify the Lord. I am now in such a favored condition that I cannot open my mouth to talk to you, Elizabeth, without

speaking of my Lord. My soul now seems filled with thoughts of Him. I must speak, first of all, about Him and say such things of His Grace and power as may help even you, my goodly elder sister, still to think grander thoughts of God than you have ever before enjoyed. My soul does magnify the Lord.”

We must recall the fact that Mary was highly distinguished and honored. No other woman was ever blessed as she was. Perhaps no other could have borne the honor that was put upon her—to be the mother of the Human Nature of our Savior. It was the highest possible honor that could be put upon mortal and the Lord knew, at the appointed time, where to find a guileless, lowly woman who could be entrusted with such a gift and yet not seek to filch away His Glory. She is not proud. No, it is a false heart that steals the revenues of God and buys the intoxicating cup of self-congratulation. The more God gives to a true heart, the more it gives to Him. Like Peter’s boat, which sank into the waters the more deeply, the more fully it was laden with fish, God’s true children sink in their own esteem as they are honored by their Lord! God’s gifts, when He gives Grace with them, do not puff us up—they build us up. A humble and lowly estimate of ourselves is added to a greater esteem of Him. The more God gives you, the more do you magnify Him and not yourself. Be this your rule—“He must increase and I must decrease.” Be you less and less. Be you the Lord’s humble handmaid, yet bold and confident in your praise of Him who has done for you great things! From now on and forever, let this be the one description of your life—“My soul does magnify the Lord; I have nothing else to do any more but to magnify Him and to rejoice in God my Savior.”

A week might be profitably employed were I to attempt to preach upon each part of Mary’s song, but with quite another purpose in view I am going to present it to you as a whole. As I put before you this instrument of ten strings, I will ask you, just for a minute or two, to place your fingers on each of them as they shall be indicated and see whether you cannot wake some melody to the praise of the great King, some harmony in His honor—whether you cannot, at this good hour, magnify the Lord and rejoice in God your Savior! Luther used to say that the glory of Scripture was to be found in the pronouns and it is certainly true of the text. Look at the personal touch of them, how it comes over and over again! “My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.”

At one of our Orphanage Festivals, I put before our many friends who were gathered together, several reasons why everybody should contribute to the support of the children. Indeed, I said, nobody ought to go off the ground without giving something. I was struck with one Brother who had no money with him, but who brought me his watch and chain. “Oh,” I said, “do not give me these, these things sell for so little compared with their value.” But he insisted upon my keeping them and said, “I will redeem them tomorrow, but I cannot go away without giving something now.” How glad I would be if every child of God here would be as earnest in adoration and say, “I am going to give some praise to God at this service—out of some of those strings I will get music—perhaps out of them all. I will endeavor with my whole heart to say, at some portion of the sermon, and from some point of view, ‘My soul does magnify the Lord!’” Do I hear you whisper, “My soul is very heavy.” Lift it up, then, by praising the Lord! Begin a Psalm, even if at first the tune must be in a minor key! The strain will soon change and the “Miserere” will become a “Hallelujah Chorus.”

1. The first string which Mary seems to touch and which, I trust, we, too, may reach with the hand of faith, is that of THE GREAT JOY WHICH THERE IS IN THE LORD. “My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.” Let us bless God that our religion is not one of gloom! I do not know of any command anywhere in Scripture, “Groan in the Lord always, and again, I say, Groan.” From the conduct of some people we might almost imagine that they must have altered their New Testament in that particular passage and thus woefully changed the glory of the original verse, “Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice.” The first I ever knew of Christ, my Master, truly, was when I found myself at the foot of His Cross with the great burden that had crushed me, effectually gone. I looked round for it, wondering where it could be and, behold, it was tumbling down into His sepulcher! I have never seen it since, blessed

be His name, nor do I ever want to see it again! Well do I remember the leaps I gave for joy when first I found that all my burden of guilt had been borne by Him and was now buried in the depths of His grave—

*“Many days have passed since then;
Many changes I have seen.”*

I have been to a great many wells to draw water, but when I have drawn it, and tasted it, it has been brackish as the waters of Marah. But whenever I have gone to this well—“my God, my Savior”—I have never drawn one drop that was not sweet and refreshing! He who truly knows God must be glad in Him—to abide in His house is to be still praising Him—yes, we may exalt in Him all day long! A very notable Word of God is that which is found in the mouth of David—“God, my exceeding joy.” Other things may give us pleasure. We may be happy in the gifts of God and in His creatures, but God, Himself, the spring of all our joys, is greater than them all! Therefore, “Delight yourself, also, in the Lord.” This is His command—is it not a lovely one? Let no one say that the faith of the Christian is not to be exultant! It is to be a delight and so greatly does God desire us to rejoice in Him, that to the command is added a promise, “And He shall give you the desires of your heart.”

What a religion is ours, in which delight becomes a duty—in which to be happy is to be obedient to a command! Heathen religions exact not only self-denials of a proper kind, but tortures which men invent to accustom themselves to misery. But in our holy faith, if we keep close to Christ, while it is true that we bear the cross, it is also true that the cross ceases to be a torture! In fact, it often bears us as we bear it—we discover in the service of our Master that “His yoke is easy and His burden is light,” and, strange to say—His burden gives us rest and His yoke gives us liberty! We have never had anything from our Master but it has ultimately tended to our joy. Even when His rod has made us smart, He has intended it to work for our good and so it has! Praise Him, then, for such goodness!

Our religion is one of holy joy, especially with regard to our Savior. The more we understand that glorious word, “Savior,” the more are we ready to dance with delight. “My spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.” The good tidings of great joy have reached us and as we, by His Grace, have believed them, He has saved us from sin, death and Hell! He has not simply promised to do it some day, but He has done it—we have been saved! What is more, we have, many of us, entered into rest by faith in Him. Salvation is to us a present experience at this hour, though we still wait for the fullness of it to be revealed in the world to come.

Oh, come, let us joy in our Savior! Let us thank Him that we have so much for which to thank Him! Let us praise Him that there is so much that we may rejoice in! No, so much that we must rejoice in! Let us adore His dear name that He has so arranged the whole plan of salvation—that it is calculated to bring Heaven to us while we are here—and to bring us who are here, into Heaven hereafter! Thus we lift up our hearts because of the great joy there is laid up for us in God. This is the first string. Touch it. Think of all the joy you have had in God. Praise Him for all the holy mirth He has given you in His House—the bliss of communion with Him at His table—the delights of fellowship with Him in secret. Sing to Him with a grateful heart, saying, “My soul does magnify the Lord.”

II. The second string we would desire to lay our fingers on is THE GODHEAD OF OUR SAVIOR. “My soul does magnify the Lord.” I have not a little Lord. “And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.” I know that my Savior is a Man and rejoice in His Humanity, but we will contend to the death for this—that He is more than Man—He is our Savior! One human being could not redeem another, or give to God a ransom for his brother. An angel’s arm could not bear the tremendous load of the disaster of the Fall, but Christ’s arm is more than angelic! He whom we magnify as our Savior counted it not robbery to be equal with God. And when He undertook the wondrous task of our redemption, He brought the Godhead with Him to sustain Him in the more than Herculean labor. Our trust is in Jesus Christ, very God of very God! We shall never cease, not only to believe in Him, but to speak of Him, rejoice in Him and sing of Him as the Incarnate Deity. What a frozen religion that is which has not the Godhead of Christ in it! Surely, they must be men of a very

sanguine and imaginative temperament who can pretend to receive any comfort out of a Christianity which has not the Divine Savior as its very center. I would as soon think of going to an iceberg to warm myself, as to a faith of that kind to find comfort! Nobody can ever praise up Christ too much for you and for me—they can never say too much of His wisdom, or of His power. Every Divine attribute ascribed to Christ makes us lift up a new song unto Him, for, whatever He may be to others, He is to us God over all, blessed forever! Amen.

I wish that I could sing instead of speaking to you of Him who was with the Father before all worlds began, whose delights, even then, were with the sons of men in prospect of their creation. I wish that I could tell the wonderful story of how He entered into Covenant with God on the behalf of His people and pledged Himself to pay the debts of those His Father gave to Him. He undertook to gather into one fold, all the sheep whom He pledged Himself to purchase with His precious blood. He engaged to bring them back from all their wanderings and fold them on the hilltops of the Delectable Mountains at His Father's feet. This He vowed to do and He has gone about His task with a zeal that clothed Him as a cloak—and He will achieve the Divine purpose before He delivers up the Kingdom to God, even the Father. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged."

It is our delight to hear this Son of God, this Son of Mary, this wondrous Being in His complex Nature as our Mediator, exalted and extolled, and made very high. Have you not sometimes felt that if the minister preached more about Jesus Christ, you would be very glad to hear him? I hope that is your inclination, yet I am afraid that we talk a great deal about many things rather than about our Master. Come, let me hear of Him! Sing to me or talk to me of Jesus, whose name is honey in the mouth, music in the ear and Heaven in the heart! Oh, for more praise to His holy name! Yes, some of us can touch this string and say with Mary, "My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior."

III. The third string has softer, sweeter music in it, and it may suit some of us better than the more sublime themes that we have already touched. Let us sing and magnify the LORD'S LOVING CONDESCENSION, for so the blessed virgin did when she went on to say, "for He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden." Here is something to sing about, for ours was not only a low estate, but perhaps some here would have had to say, like Gideon, "My family is poor, and I am the least in my father's house" and, like he, you would have been passed over by most of the people. Perhaps even in your own family you were counted as nobody. If there was a jest uttered, you were sure to be the butt of it, and generally you were misunderstood and your actions misinterpreted. This was a trying experience for you, but from this you have been gloriously delivered. It may have been that, like Joseph, you were a little dreamy and, perhaps, you were a trifle too fond of telling your dreams. Yet, though because of this you were much put upon, the Lord, at last, raised your head above those round about you. It may have been that your lot in life was cast among the very poorest and lowest of mankind, yet the Lord has looked upon you in infinite compassion and saved you! Will you not, then, magnify Him?

If Christ wanted a people, why did He not choose the kings, princes and nobles of the earth? Instead of that, He takes the poor and makes them to know the wonders of His dying love! And instead of selecting the wisest men in the world, He takes even the most foolish and instructs them in the things of the Kingdom of God—

"W

onders of Grace to God belong,

Repeat His mercies in your song."

All of us who have been saved by Grace must still strike a more tender note, for we were sinful as well as lowly. We went astray like lost sheep and, therefore, we magnify the Lord who bought us, sought us and brought us back to His fold. It may be painful to remember what we once were, but it is well, sometimes, to go back in our thoughts to the time past when we lived in sin, that we may

the better appreciate the favor of which we have been made partakers. When the Apostle Paul wrote out a catalog of those who shall not inherit the Kingdom of God, he added, "And such were some of you: but you are washed." Oh, let us bless the name of the Lord and magnify Him for this! Who else could have cleansed us from our sin, or in what other Fountain save that opened to the house of David could we have plunged to rid us of our awful defilement? He stoops very low, for some of God's elect were once the offscouring of all things—and even when converted, many of them remained so, in the estimate of the world which sneers at humble Christians.

If the professed followers of Christ happen to meet in some fine building and worship God with grand music and gorgeous rituals, then the people of the world put up with them! They may go even so far as to patronize them, though, even then, their respect is chiefly called forth, not on behalf of the people, but because of the building, the fine music and the carriages. The carriages are especially important, for without a certain number of them at the door, it is deemed impossible to have a proper display of cultured Christianity! But the more God's people cling to the Lord, the less likely are they to be esteemed by the vulgar judgment of unholy men. Yet the Lord has chosen such, blessed be His name! It is a great wonder to me that the Lord ever chose some of you—but it is a far greater wonder that He should ever have chosen me. I can somehow understand His love for you when I look at the gracious points in your character, though I am fully aware that they are only worked by Grace, but I cannot understand the love which He has displayed to me, who am the least of all the saints. "Oh!" you say, "that is what we were going to say about ourselves." Yes, I know. I am trying to put it into your mouths, so that we may all join in adoring gratitude! It is a miracle of mercy that He should have loved any of us, or stooped in His Grace to have raised such beggars from the dunghill to set us among the princes at His right hand—

*"Why was I made to hear Your voice,
And enter while there's room;
When thousands make a wretched choice,*

IV. The next string, however, is THE GREATNESS OF GOD'S GOODNESS, for Mary goes on to sing—"He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." Oh, the Lord has done great things for His people! "He that is mighty has done to me great things; and holy is His name." God has made you blessed. You were once under the curse, but for you there is now no condemnation, for you are in Christ Jesus. If the curse had withered you, like some lightning-blasted oak, you would not have wondered, but, instead thereof, the gracious Lord has planted you by the rivers of water and He makes you to bring forth your fruit in your season and your leaf does not wither. "The Lord has done great things for us; whereof we are glad." To be lifted up from that horrible pit is such a great thing that we cannot measure it—but to be set up on that Throne of Mercy exceeds our highest thought—who can measure that? Take your line and see if you can fathom the depth of such Grace, or measure the height of such mercy! Shall we be silent when we behold such marvelous loving kindness? God forbid it! Let us break forth in our hearts, now, with gladsome hallelujahs to Him who has done such wonderful things for us!

Think, Brothers and Sisters, you were blind—He has made you see! You were lame—He has made you leap! Worse than that, you were dead—He has made you live! You were in prison—and He has made you free! Some of us were in the dungeon with our feet fast in the stocks. Can I not well remember when I did lie in that inner prison, moaning and groaning, without any voice to comfort me, or even a ray of light to cheer me in the darkness? And now that He has brought me out, shall I forget to utter my deep thanks? No! I will sing a song of deliverance that others may hear, and fear, and turn unto the Lord! But that is not all. He has not only taken us from the prison, He has raised us to the Throne of God—you and I could go in and out of Heaven tonight if God called us there—and every angel would treat us with respect! If we entered into Glory, even though we had come from the poorest home in London, we would find that the highest angels are only ministering servants to the chosen people of God! Oh, He has done wonders for us!

I am not so much attempting to preach as trying to wake up your memory, that you may think of the goodness of the Lord's Grace and say, "Oh, yes, it is so, and my soul does magnify the Lord!" Not one of the wonders of Divine Grace has been worked for us without deep necessity for its manifestation. If the very least Grace which may, perhaps, up to now have escaped your attention, were taken from you, where would you be? I often meet with people of God who used to be very happy and joyful, but who have fallen into despondency, and who now talk about the mercies of God's Covenant love in such a way as to make me blush. They say, "I thought I once had that blessing, Sir, and I am afraid I have not got it now, though there is nothing I long for more. Oh, what a precious thing it would be to be able to have access to God in prayer! I would give my eyes to be able to know that I am really a child of God."

Yet those of us who have those blessings do not half value them. No, Brothers and Sisters, we do not value them a thousandth part as much as we ought! Our constant song should be, "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loads us with benefits, even the God of our salvation." Instead of that, we often take the gifts thoughtlessly and unthankfully from His hands. When a man is in the ocean, he may have much water over his head and not feel it, but when He comes out, if you then put a little pail of water on his head, it becomes quite a burden as he carries it. So some of you are swimming in God's mercy—you are diving into it and you do not recognize the weight of the Glory which God has bestowed upon you. But if you should once get out of this ocean of joy and fall into a state of sadness of heart, you would begin to appreciate the weight of any one of the mercies which now do not seem to be of much consequence, or to make any claim upon your gratitude. Without waiting to lose the sense of God's Grace, in order that we may know the value of it, let us bless Him who has done such inconceivably great things for us, and say, "My soul does magnify the Lord."

1. The fifth string that I would touch is THE COMBINATION OF GRACE AND HOLINESS that there is in what God has done for us. "He that is mighty has done great things for me; and holy is His name." I may not even hint at the peculiar delicacy of Mary's case, but she knew that it was wholly holy and pure. Now, when the Lord has saved you and me, who did not deserve saving, He did a very wonderful act of Sovereign Grace in making us to differ, but the mercy is that He did it all justly. Nobody can say that it ought not to be done. At the Last Great Day, what God has done in His Grace will stand the test of justice, for He has never, in the splendor and lavishness of His love, violated the principles of eternal righteousness, even to save His own elect. "He that is mighty has done to me great things; and holy is His name."

Sin must be punished—it has been punished in the Person of our glorious Substitute. No man can enter into Heaven unless he is perfectly pure—they who are redeemed shall take no unclean thing within the gates. Every rule and mandate of the Divine empire shall be observed. The Law-Maker will not be the Law-Breaker even to save the sinner! But His Law shall be honored as surely as the sinner shall be saved. Sometimes I feel that I could play on this string for an hour or two. Here we have Justice magnified in Grace and holiness rejoicing in the salvation of sinners! The attributes of God are like the amazing crystal shining out with its clear white light, but which may be divided into all the colors of the prism, each different and all beautiful. The dazzling radiance of God is too glorious for our mortal eyes, but each Revelation teaches us more of His beauty and perfectness. In the ruby light of an atoning Sacrifice we are enabled to see how God is just and yet the Justifier of him that believes in Jesus. Glory be to His name for the power of Grace mingled with holiness! My soul does magnify the Lord for this wonderful salvation in which every attribute shall have its glory—justice as well as mercy, wisdom as well as might. "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Who could have invented such a plan and who could have carried it out when it was thought of? Only He who came "with dyed garments from Bozrah." "My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior."

VI. The sixth string is one which should be sweet in every way. Mary now goes on to touch the string of GOD'S MERCY. "And His mercy is on them that fear Him." The saints of old often touched this string in the Temple. They often sang it, lifting up the refrain again and again—"His mercy endures forever!"—

*“For His mercy shall endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure.”*

Mercy! Sinner, this is the silver bell for you—it is of the Lord’s mercies that you are not consumed—because His compassions fail not. Listen to the heavenly music that calls you to repent and live! God delights in mercy. He waits to be gracious. Mercy! Saint, this is the golden bell for you, for you still need mercy. Standing with your foot upon the jasper doorstep of Paradise, with the pearly gate just before you, you will still need mercy to help you over the last step. And when you enter the choir of the redeemed, mercy shall be your perpetual song! In Heaven you will chant the praises of the God of Grace whose mercy endures forever.

Do you mourn over your own backsliding? God will have mercy upon you, dear child, though you have wandered since you have known Him! Come back to Him this very hour! He would woo you again. He would press you to His bosom. Have you not often been restored? Have you not often had your iniquities put away from you in the years gone by? If so, again, this moment, touch this string—a child’s finger can make it bring forth its music—touch it now! Say, “Yes, concerning mercy, mercy to the very chief of sinners, my soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.”

VII. Time would fail us if we tried to dwell at any length upon these wondrous themes, so we pass to the next string, number seven, GOD’S IMMUTABILITY, because in the verse we have already touched upon, there are two notes. Mary said, “His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation.” He that had mercy in the days of Mary, has mercy today—“from generation to generation,” He is the same God. “I am the Lord, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.” You that once delighted in the Lord, do not suppose that He has changed! He still invites you to come and delight in Him! He is “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever.” What a poor foundation we would have for our hope if God could change! But He has confirmed His Word by an oath, “that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.”

The God of my grandfather, the God of my father, is my God this day—the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is the God of every Believer! He is the same God and is prepared to do the same—and to be the same to us as to them! Look back into your own experience. Have you not found God always the same? Come, protest against Him, if you have ever found Him to change! Is the Mercy Seat altered? Do the promises of God fail? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Will He no more be favorable? No, even “if we believe not, yet He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself!” And when all things melt away, this one eternal Rock abides! Therefore, “My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.” It is a blessed string to touch! If we had time, we would play upon it and evoke such harmonies as would make the angels want to join us in the chorus!

VIII. The next string which will awaken a responsive echo in your hearts is GOD’S POWER. “He has showed strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.” This string gives us deep bass music and requires a heavy hand to make it pour forth any melody. What wonders of power God has worked on the behalf of His people, from the days of Egypt, when the horse and his rider He cast into the Red Sea, even till now! How strong is His arm to defend His people!

In these days some of us have been driven to look to that power, for all other help has failed. You know how it was in the dark ages—it seemed as if the darkness of popery would never be removed—but how soon it was gone when God called forth His men to bear witness to His Son! What reason we have to rejoice that He “scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts”! They thought that they could readily burn up the heretics and put an end to this Gospel of theirs, but they could not do it. And today there is a dark conspiracy to stamp out the evangelical faith. First, on the part of some who go after their superstitions, they set up the crucifix to hide the Cross and point men to sacraments instead of to the Savior.

And then, worse than these, are those who undermine our faith in Holy Scripture—they tear from the Book this chapter and that, deny this great Truth of God and the other—and try to bring the inventions of man into the place that ought to be occupied by the Truth of God. But the Lord lives! Jehovah's arm has not waxed short! Depend upon it, before many years have passed, He will take up the quarrel of His Covenant and will bring the old banner to the front again! We shall yet rejoice to hear the Gospel preached in the most plain terms, accentuated by the Holy Spirit, Himself, upon the hearts of His people. Let us touch this string again! The Almighty God is not dead! "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear."

IX. The next string is one that some friends do not like. At least they do not say much about it—it is DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY. Listen to it. You know how God thunders it out. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." God's will is supreme! Whatever the wills of men may be, God will not be driven from His Throne, nor will His scepter be made to quiver in His hands! After all the rebellious acts of men and devils, He will still be eternal and supreme, with His Kingdom ruling over all. And thus the virgin sings, "He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent empty away." Who can speak the wonders of His Sovereign Grace? Was it not strange that He should ever have chosen you?—"What was there in you that could merit esteem, Or give the Creator delight?"

'Twas even so, Father, you must ever sing,

Because it seemed good in Your sight. "Is it not strange that the Lord should not take the Kings and mighty ones, but should so order it, that the poor have the Gospel preached to them? God is King of kings and Lord of lords—and He acts like a king. "He gives not account of any of His matters." But He lets us see right clearly that He has no respect to the greatness and fancied goodness of man—that He does as He pleases and that He pleases to give His mercy to them that fear Him and bow before Him! He dispenses His favors to those who tremble at His Presence, who come humbly to His feet and take His mercy as a free gift—who look to His dear Son because they have nothing else to look to and, as poor, guilty worms, find in Christ their life, their wisdom, their righteousness, their all! Oh, the splendor of this great King!

1. The tenth string is GOD'S FAITHFULNESS. "He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy; as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed forever." God remembers what He has said. Take those three words, "As He spoke." Whatever He said, though it was thousands of years ago, it stands fast forever and ever! God cannot lie. Beloved, are any of you in trouble? Search the Scriptures till you find a promise that suits your case. And when you get it, do not say, "I hope that this is true." That is an insult to your God! Believe it, believe it up to the hilt! Do as I have seen boys do in the swimming hole—take a header and go right into the stream of God's mercy! Dive as deeply as you can—there is no drowning here! These are "waters to swim in" and the more you can lose yourself in this blessed crystal flood of promised mercy, the better it shall be! You shall rise up out of it as the sheep come from the washing! You shall feel refreshed beyond measure in having cast yourself upon God!

When God's promises fail, let us know of it, for some of us have lived so long on those promises that we do not care to live on anything else! And if they can be proved to be false, we had better give up living altogether! But we delight to know that they are all absolutely true—what God said to our fathers stands good to their children—and will stand good even to the end of time and to all eternity.

If any of you have not been able to touch even one of these strings, I would bid you get to your knees and cry to God, and say, "Why is it that I cannot magnify You, O Lord?" I should not be surprised if you discovered the reason to be that you are so big, yourself. He never magnifies God who magnifies himself! Belittle yourself and magnify your God! Down with self to the lowest depths and up, higher and still higher, with your thoughts of God!

Poor Sinner, you that have not yet laid hold on God, there is sweet music even for you in the virgin's song. Perhaps you are saying, "I am nothing but a lump of sin and a heap of misery." Very well. Leave the lump of sin and the heap of misery and let Christ be your All-in-All! Give yourself up to Christ. He is a Savior—let Him do His own business. If a man sets up to be a lawyer and I have a case in court, I should not think of giving him the case and then, afterwards, go into court and begin to meddle with it for myself! If I did, he would say, "I must drop the case if you do not let it alone."

Sometimes the idea may come into your mind that you will do something towards saving yourself and have some share in the glory of your salvation. If you do not get rid of that idea, you will be lost! Surrender yourself to Christ and let Him save you! And then, afterwards, He will work in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure, while you shall make melody in your heart unto the Lord—and from this harp of ten strings shall proceed such delightful music that many shall listen with such rapture that they shall go to your Master and take lessons in this heavenly music for themselves!

The Lord bless you, Beloved, and send you away happy in Him! PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke 1:39-80. HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—152, 775, 245. MR. SPURGEON UPDATE: Mr. Spurgeon appeared to be rallying when the note for last week's sermon was being written and that rallying continued for three or four days. Towards the end of the week, however, the inability to take food and the consequent weakness once more returned. No progress can, therefore, be reported in his general condition—the serious malady from which he has been suffering remains much the same as it has been for many weeks. Readers of the sermons will see that the need for continued supplication is still as great as during any part of the past three months. Mr. and Mrs. Spurgeon are deeply grateful for the widespread sympathy and prayer on their behalf and they join in intercession for the many friends who have been remembering them at the Throne of Grace.