

THE WAY-WORN PILGRIM'S HIDING PLACE

A Sermon Preached on Lord's Day Morning, July 31, 1853, at Eden Street Chapel, Hampstead Road

"And a man shall be as a hiding place from the wind and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken." Isaiah 32:2, 3

What striking figures has the blessed Spirit here employed to bring heavenly realities before our eyes with greater distinctness and vividness, and to impress them with deeper power upon our hearts! There are some men, good men too, who are opposed to the use of figures in preaching, as marring, in their opinion, the simplicity of divine truth. I grant that the injudicious use of comparisons does mar the dignity of God's word, and that low, ill-chosen, or inapplicable figures may vulgarize, or obscure, or even pervert the sacred truth of God, and pollute as it were the oracles of the Most High. But we must not argue against the use of a thing from its abuse, and condemn the thing instead of condemning the men. Figures are like cutting instruments. Wrongly handled, they may cut the fingers of the user or mangle truth; rightly handled, they may be the sword of the Spirit and give to truth greater force and keener edge. How figurative is the language of Scripture! In fact, strong feelings almost unavoidably burst forth in figures. Take, for instance, the language **of love**, as we see it more especially developed in the Song of Solomon. How the Bride seems to bring forward figure after figure and to heap comparison upon comparison to set forth the beauty of her Beloved. "His head is as the most fine gold; his locks are bushy and black as a raven; his eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of

waters, washed with milk and fitly set; his cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers; his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh." Every word here is a figure, as if her heart, burning with love, went out of itself to seek for objects in creation wherewith to express its ardent feelings. So again the language of **deep affliction** is usually eminently figurative. Look at Job lying under the afflicting hand of God. How he pours forth the distress of his soul in figure after figure: "For the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me. Doth the wild ass bray when he hath grass? or loweth the ox over his fodder? Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt? or is there any taste in the white of an egg?" **Job 6:4-6** "Is my strength the strength of stones? or is my flesh of brass? Is not my help in me and is wisdom driven quite from me? To him that is afflicted pity should be shewed from his friend; but he forsaketh the fear of the Almighty. My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook, and as a stream of brooks they pass away;" **Job 6:12-15** "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope." **Job 7:6** And again, "I was at ease, but he hath broken me asunder: he hath also taken me by my neck, and shaken me to pieces, and set me up for his mark. His archers compass me round about, he cleaveth my reins asunder, and doth not spare; he poureth out my gall upon the ground." **Job 16:12,13** Take again the language of strong **prophetic denunciation** as we find it in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. How these inspired prophets pour forth in emblem and figure their warnings and reproofs! "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores." Again, "The daughter of Zion is as a cottage in a vineyard, a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city" three figures in the compass of one short verse. When we come to the

language of **instruction** we find the most striking lessons still conveyed by figures. The Proverbs are full of them; and He who spake as never man spake conveyed his blessed instruction—how? In **parables**, in other words, in figures. Figures leave a definite impression behind them, convey with them a peculiar light, explain difficult points, and are often remembered for years. Rightly used they singularly facilitate comprehension, and many who cannot understand an argument readily catch the same truth when conveyed by a figure. They are indeed greatly subject to abuse, and may be enlisted in the cause of error; but such a misapplication is soon detected.

How full of striking and beautiful figures is our text! "And a man shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken." But these numerous figures are all employed to point out one grand Object—the Lord Jesus Christ. The rays which these mirrors reflect, all converge to once focus—**the Man**, the wondrous Man, the only Mediator between God and men. The same figures, too, by implication, distinctly point out the **persons** for whom the man who is God's fellow sustains these blessed offices; and these are represented as travelling in a wilderness, amid wind and storm, heat and weariness.

In opening up the words of the text, I shall therefore attempt to show

I. Who **the travellers** are on their heavenward march, and the dangers and difficulties which beset their path.

II. **The hiding place and covert**, the refreshment and shade which the Lord has provided for these travellers in the Son of his love.

III. **The opening of their eyes to see**, and of their ears to hearken to the blessings thus provided for them.

I. The way to heaven is often spoken of in scripture as a journey, and this by no flowery meadow or purling brook, through no over-arching bowers or verdant shade, but through a wilderness. This figure has not only in itself a beautiful appropriateness, but possessed to the children of Israel a historic truth. It was through the dreary wilderness, and a forty years sojourn therein, that their fathers came into the promised land. Besides which, as their males were all commanded to appear, three times a year, before the Lord, and had often to pass through wild desert tracts on their way to Jerusalem, it was a figure of which they had an actual, literal experience. Thus we find the Psalmist spiritualizing the pilgrimage to Jerusalem of the godly Israelite. "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them, who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools. They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God." **Ps 84:5,6,7** But we, in this cold, humid, Northern clime, must transport ourselves in imagination to an Eastern wilderness before we can see the beauty and appropriateness of the figure. In this climate, we have no idea of an almost tropical sun. An expression which I met with many years ago in Henry Martyn's Journal so struck my mind at the time that I have never forgotten it. He calls it "the **terrible** sun." This terrible sun, then, above, and the glowing sand beneath, want of food and water, of shade and shelter, with the exhausting nature of the journey, made a journey across the wilderness always a formidable and often

a perilous undertaking. These perils are alluded to in the text, and four are specifically mentioned; **pestilential winds; thunder storms, drought, weariness and tiresomeness** of the long and painful way. These perils have, of course, all of them a spiritual signification, which it will be my business, with God's blessing, this morning to open and to point out its bearing upon the difficulties, perils, trials, and temptations which beset the path of a child of God on his heavenward pilgrimage.

i. The first peril mentioned is **the Wind**. This is implied in the promise. "And a man shall be as a hiding place from **the wind**." By "the wind" here, I understand the pestilential wind, sometimes called the simoom, or samiel, which at certain seasons passes over the desert, blasting and withering all it touches, and carrying death in its train. Were the traveller fully exposed to this noxious blast, he would sink beneath its deadly breath. He therefore needs a hiding place to shield him from its pernicious effects, and save his very life. But what is there in the spiritual desert corresponding to this pestilential wind? **Sin. That** is the deadly wind, the pestilential simoom, which bears death and destruction in its breath. "For the wages of sin is death." "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." And as wind diffuses itself in every direction, and subjects all it encounters to its influence, so the deadly breath of sin has diffused itself all over the world, and blows its terrific blasts over the wilderness of our fallen nature, withering and destroying all good as it springs up, as the samiel blights all that seeks to grow in the desert. Assailed by this deadly wind, the traveller, if he escape with life, is often smitten with disease. So the pestilential breath of sin pollutes everything it touches.

Like the wind of the desert, it taints every living thing subject to its influence. Our prayers, our desires, our performances, our holiest seasons and most sacred employments, the closet, the pulpit, the Lord's table, the pew, are all exposed to the noxious blasts of this pestilential wind. Our thoughts in their lowest depths; our words, however cautiously uttered; our actions, however directed to the glory of God and the good of men, all lie open to its influence, and are tainted by it as they spring forth. This noxious wind is not indeed **fatal** to the Lord's family, for "their life is hid with Christ in God," and therefore beyond the reach of its mortal influence; but it weakens where it does not destroy. If the spiritual traveller smitten by the blast do not lay his bleached bones among the thousands which strew the desert, yet he feels its poisonous breath in every limb. His knees totter, his limbs tremble, his breath is short and feeble, his whole head is sick and his whole heart faint.

ii. The second peril in the wilderness is "**the Tempest.**" This is implied in the promise, that a man shall be "a covert from the tempest." This we may characterise as the **thunderstorm** which differs from the pestilential wind in being from above, not from beneath; violent, not subtle; destroying by lightning, not by poison. There must in grace be some antitype to "the tempest" here spoken of. And what so aptly corresponds to this as the manifested anger of God against sin? When God gave the law on Mount Sinai, it was in a storm and tempest, as visible emblems of his wrath against sin; and the Psalmist speaking of the terrible indignation of the Almighty against sinners, compares it to a horrible tempest. "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup." **Ps 11:6** But what makes the tempest so terrible in the wilderness is the absence of shelter. The pilgrim there stands exposed to the full violence of the storm.

Wherever he turns his eyes he sees but a trackless waste, without house or shelter. What an emblem of a poor guilty sinner without a manifested interest in Christ! And how sweet the promise, "And a man shall be a covert from the tempest."

But the storm teaches the value of the shelter; and the first mutterings of the approaching tempest warn the traveller to do as David speaks, "I flee unto thee to hide me." The heavenly traveller hears the distant roll of thunder in the sky, and marks the first arge drops that fall at his feet. He has light to see and life to eel that those tokens imply a coming storm; and therefore flees for refuge to the hope set before him in the gospel. But those who see no oming storm, whose eyes are not opened to discern the first symptoms the approaching tempest, take no heed, are overtaken, overcome, and destroyed. "A prudent man forseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished." **Pr 22:3** Noah, warned of God, prepared an ark to the saving of his house. Lot, admonished by the angels, fled out of Sodom. So there is a fleeing from the wrath to come. How careless, how secure, and unconcerned are we till quickened with spiritual life! Solomon speaks of those who sleep on the top of a mast, where one jerk of the wave, or one turn of the sleeper may precipitate him into the boiling ocean. God's anger is gathering against a wicked world. Who will escape this fearful storm of eternal unmitigated wrath? Those who flee to Jesus. Who flee to Jesus? Those only who feel their need of him. How are they made to feel their need of him? By the flashes of God's anger. Whence issue these flashes? Out of the thundercloud of God's holy law—the revelation which he has made of his anger against transgressors. How necessary then to feel the application of the law to the conscience, to experience what Job calls, "the terrors of God," that the "covert from the tempest" may be

seen and fled unto! It is like the warning given in Egypt of the grievous hail: "He that feared the word of the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses, and he that regarded not the word of the Lord left his servants and his cattle in the field."

Ex 9:20,21 Faith credits what unbelief derides. As is their nature and operation, so is their end. Faith ends in salvation; unbelief in perdition.

iii. But there is a third peril in the wilderness—one in a measure peculiar to it, and rarely absent from it, **the want of water**, for the wondrous man here spoken of is promised to be "**as rivers of water in a dry place** ." The wilderness is especially dry. One of its most marked and distinguishing features is the absence of water. It is this which makes it a wilderness, for in those burning climes where no water is, all is desert. To be without this necessary of life is the greatest peril of the wilderness, and we may add, the greatest source of suffering. It is said by those who have experienced it in the desert, that of all painful sensations the most painful is continued thirst. The parched throat, the dried up mouth, the feverish tongue, the tottering frame, each vein, nerve, muscle, and artery of which is calling for water to relieve the burning fever, all tell of deadly suffering. Famine may be borne; but not thirst. Men have lived days without food, but not without water.

What an expressive emblem then is thirst of the desire of the soul after Christ. "Give me water or I die," cries the traveller in the wilderness. "Give me Christ or else I die," is the corresponding cry of the spiritual pilgrim in the wilderness of sin and sorrow. David felt this, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" **Ps 42:1,2** And again, "O God, thou art

my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." **Ps 63:1,2** What a mercy for the church of God that there is a relief for this spiritual thirst. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." **Joh 7:37**

iv. The fourth and last peril of the wilderness here mentioned is **the Wearisomeness of the way**. This is beautifully expressed in the words "as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." What poetry and beauty there are in the expression, "a **weary** land!" as if the land itself were weary, weary of its own wearisomeness, weary of being such an uncultivated waste, and of wearing out the lives of so many travellers. We may stand in imagination on some lofty mountain on the edge of this wilderness and strain our eye across its weary wastes. What a sense of desolation creeps over the mind! Sand and sun—these are its items. Day after day, league after league, still the same Sand and sun. How wearisome to the eye; but how much more wearisome to the limb! How dreary in prospect; how much more dreary in experience! It is this unintermitting march, this sustaining of daily toil and daily thirst, which wears out the traveller. To begin is one thing; to hold on is another. Not Christian. to sink under trial and temptation, but to persevere to the end and be saved—this marks the Christian.

One main, perhaps the chief element of the wearisomeness of the desert is the unclouded sun, ever darting his beams down upon it. I have quoted the expression of a traveller, "The terrible sun." This expression seems strained to us in this damp Northern clime, where every ray of the sun is hailed with gladness. But many, yearly, in hot climates, die

under those beams which are so cheering to us. "The shadow of a great rock" implies shelter from the sun, and is put in the same class of benefits with the hiding place from the burning wind, the covert from the furious storm, and the rivers of water in a dry place—all which are deliverances from destruction. We must put, therefore, the sun in the same class of destructive agencies, or there would be inequality in the different figures of the text. What does the sun here then represent? **Temptation**. In this sense the bride uses the word,— "Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me." **So 1:6** It was the sun of temptation which had blackened the complexion of the bride. The heat of the sun acted on the juices of her skin as temptation acts on the evils of our heart—tanned and deformed her, and this made her cry out that she was "black as the tents of Kedar" that is, the Arab tents which were made of black camel's hair. Look at these elements of weariness—sand and sun, and see their counterparts—self and temptation. What a barren, interminable, sandy waste is self! What wearisomeness to be so much exposed to the sun of temptation! Are not you often weary of everything below the skies? Weary of the world, weary of the church, weary of sinners and saints, weary of the conflict with an evil heart, weary of sin, and above all, weary of self, miserable, miserable self? II. But having viewed the travellers in the wilderness, and their perils and difficulties, we pass on to the wondrous provision which God, of his infinite mercy and grace, has made for their relief. "And a man shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Who is this man? Need I ask the question? Is there not a response in every God-fearing breast? It is the man Christ Jesus—the man who is God's fellow. How sweetly and blessedly does the Holy Spirit, in the text, bring before our eyes, and impress upon our hearts, the

humanity of Jesus, "A **man** shall be as a hiding place from the wind!" And how blessed it is to have a scriptural and spiritual view of the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ, to see him not merely as God, truly essential God, one in essence, glory, and power with the Father and the blessed Spirit, but also man, made in all things like unto us, sin only excepted. And what a suitability there is in the humanity of the Lord Jesus, when we view it in union with this glorious Deity! As man he suffered, as man he bled, as man he died, as man he stands a mediator for his fellow men between God and man. As man, he has for human distress an affectionate, compassionate, sympathizing heart; as man, he obeyed the Law in every particular; as man, he bore all the sufferings of humanity, and thus became the brother born for adversity, flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone; yet perfectly pure, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and now exalted higher than the heavens.

This wondrous man, this Immanuel, God with us, is appointed of God, "a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest," and is made such to the spiritual travellers who are journeying onward through the waste howling wilderness. Let us then view this wondrous man under his various covenant offices and characters, as here set before our eyes.

i. "A **hiding place from the wind.**" This wind we have already explained as the pestilential breath of sin, that deadly simoom, that blighting samiel which sweeps over the desert of self. A hiding place is wanted lest it should destroy body and soul in hell. Where shall we find it? In the Law? That is going out of the wind into the storm. In self? That is the very thing we most want shelter from. Jesus is the hiding place, the only hiding place from sin and self. "Thou art my hiding place," said David of old. This was shown to Moses, in

figure, when the Lord put him into the cleft of a rock, which Toplady has so beautifully versified, to paint the longing desires of his soul:

"Rock of ages, cleft for me, Let me hide myself in thee."

It is the man, Christ Jesus, who is the sinner's hiding place. His pure spotless humanity, his pierced hands and feet, his wounded side—here is the hiding place from the blasts of sin.

But **three** things we must know and experience before we can enter into the beauty and blessedness of Jesus as a hiding place from the wind.

1. **First** and foremost, we must **feel our need** of such a shelter. This is an indispensable preliminary. All religion without this is but a notion and a name. This sense of need is produced by feeling what fearful havoc sin has made in us. Its hot pestilential blasts withering and destroying every green thing in the soul must be felt before a shelter from them can be sought

2. **Secondly**, We must be brought to **see** the hiding place which God has provided in the Son of his love. But what beauty, grace, glory, and suitability do we see in the man, Christ Jesus, till he is revealed to the soul by the Blessed Spirit? None. It is He who takes the humanity of Christ Jesus, and shows it to the eye of faith. And this humanity he shows not as mere humanity, but as in union with, though distinct from, his eternal Deity.

3. Then follows the **third** step—the **entering into** the hiding place; and this, too, by a divine constraining power. Moses did not put himself into the cleft. "I," said the Lord to him, "will put thee in a cleft of the rock." This third point is of

immense importance. Here many of the living family seem to come short. They feel their need of Jesus; they see his suitability; but they rest as it were at the mouth of the hiding place, without entering in. Being thus only partially sheltered, they are struck by the tail of the wind, and though safe, are not secure.

ii. But the same wondrous man is also "a **covert from the storm**," This we explained as referring to the law. How a shelter is needed from its condemnation and curse! Where is this refuge to be found? In Jesus. He has redeemed us from its curse, as the Apostle declares. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." **Ga 3:13** He fulfilled its demands and endured its penalty, and thus took it out of the way. "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." **Col 2:14** What is the happy consequence to the believer in Jesus? No condemnation. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." **Ro 8:1** All this he did as man; and therefore a man becomes to us a covert from the storm. O this blessed man!—this man of sorrows; this suffering, agonizing, crucified man. View him on the cross, bleeding for thy sins; and then lift up thine eyes and see him as the same man at the right hand of God. This was Stephen's dying sight just before he passed into his presence. "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." **Ac 7:56**

iii. From this springs the third character which Jesus sustains to the pilgrim in the wilderness, "**As rivers of water in a dry place**." How graciously does the blessed Spirit, by this figure, "rivers of water in a dry place," set forth the

suitability of the Lord Jesus Christ to travellers in the wilderness. Turn our eyes where we may, there is no water to drink; nothing to satisfy the boundless desires of an immortal soul. What is there in nature which can supply your wants, or fill up the aching void of a spirit longing after God? Are not death and disappointment stamped on all earthly things? Your business, your families, your dearest and tenderest ties, may occupy the mind, but cannot satisfy the spirit; may entangle the affections, but cannot relieve the heart. The children of men feel nothing of this thirst after God. They do not long after the Lord Jesus Christ, and seek earnestly after a manifestation of his gracious presence; nor do they deem one smile from him dearer than a thousand worlds. To the children of the world this is not a wilderness; it is to them a rich, wide-spread demesne, a noble estate, a well watered garden from which they reap an ample revenue of pleasure and profit. But to the living soul it is a wilderness, dried up, desolate, and barren.

The Lord Jesus is spoken of as "rivers of water." The very thing in the desert which we need. In the wilderness we do not want strong drink; **that** would only inflame the thirst, make the blood boil in the veins, and smite the frame with fever. As it toils through the desolate wastes of sand it is water that the fainting spirit wants. So in the things of God. It is water—the well of water springing up into everlasting life which the soul needs. This the man himself is, out of whose side the beloved disciple saw gush blood and water. Out of his suffering Manhood flow mercy, pardon, peace, salvation, love, joy, holiness and happiness, as a copious river watering the desolate wilderness. Hence the promise is, "Her peace shall flow like a river;" and, "at God's right hand **from the Man who sits there**, there are pleasures for evermore," called elsewhere, "the river of God's pleasures." The fulness of the Lord Jesus is not a rill, but a river; nay, more, not only

a river, but "rivers." "All my fresh springs **not a spring, but "springs,"** are in thee." Need any way-worn pilgrim die of thirst when there are rivers at hand—rivers of pardon, peace, holiness, and happiness? Why, then, are these rivers not at once found? This mystery is opened up by the Lord himself. "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 valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water." **Isa 41:17,18** Here we have the poor and needy seeking water and finding none till their tongue fails for thirst. Now the Lord says, "I will open rivers in high places and fountains in the midst of the valleys." Till the Lord himself opens them in the desert, they do not flow into the soul, and therefore are as if they were not.

iv. But the Lord Jesus is spoken of also as "the shadow of a great, rock in a weary land." He is a rock, "the rock of ages," on which God has built his church. As a rock, he is deep as well as high—so deep as to have under-bottomed the depths of the fall, so high as to be God's fellow, seated at his right hand. As a rock, too, he is broad as well as long—broad enough to bear millions of living stones built on him, and long enough to reach from eternity to eternity. The Apostle, therefore, prays that the church at Ephesus may comprehend with all saints, "what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge."

In our text, the Lord Jesus is spoken of as "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." The figure, as I have already hinted, is that of the "terrible" sun, when he darts his mid-day beams upon the head of the traveller, till his brain reels with the burning heat and his body is ready to sink under

weariness and exhaustion. But when just about to fall and die, he espies in the distance a vast, overhanging rock, and hastens as fast as he can to reach its cooling shade. Its over-arching recesses form, as is common in Palestine, a deep grotto, intercepting the piercing light and burning heat of the almost vertical sun. In these shady recesses he finds rest and shelter, and his throbbing brain and feverish pulse become cool and calm. What an emblem of the shade and shelter from the fiery sun of temptation which is found in the man Christ Jesus! He has been tempted in all points like as we are; but as the rock bears uninjured the beams of the hottest sun, and yet, by bearing them, shields in its recesses the way-worn pilgrim, so did Jesus, as man, bear the whole fury of Satanic temptations, and yet was as uninjured by them as the rock in the desert. And having borne them, he shields from their destructive power the tempted child of God who lies at his feet under the shadow of his embrace. How refreshing in the great and terrible wilderness is this sheltering rock where the wearied pilgrim may rest his limbs under the cool shade! In hot climates hundreds die every year under **coups de soleil**, sun-strokes. How many more, in a spiritual sense, die under the sun-stroke of temptation! Nor would any child of God come off with life were it not for the shadow of the great rock in the weary land. "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." There was the rock which saved Peter from the sun-stroke that destroyed Judas. The over-arching intercession of the man of sorrows shielded his faith from perishing to the root, and restored him to life after his temporary swoon.

Now look at the characters which the Lord Jesus sustains to the way-worn pilgrim. Four perils assail the traveller Zionward—the pestilential blast of sin, the tempest of a condemning law, the drought and desolation of the wilderness, and the burning sun of temptation. To preserve

their life through these perils. God has provided a Man—the Man in whom his soul delighteth; and this once crucified but now glorified Man is "a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the storm, rivers of water in a dry place, and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

But now comes the great, the all-important question—how are these gracious realities seen, and how are these glorious tidings heard? The answer to which brings us to our third point,

III. The opening of the eyes to see and the unstopping of the ears to hearken to the blessings thus promised. "And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken."

Two gracious promises are here given. Let us examine them separately.

i. "The eyes of them that see shall not be dim." By nature all men are blind—blind to sin and blind to salvation; blind to malady and blind to remedy; blind to self and blind to Christ. This blindness is partly innate, and partly superadded. "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." **Eph 4:18** This is **innate** blindness—blindness of heart, as a consequence of the fall. But there is another cause of blindness. "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ who is the image of God should shine unto them." **2Co 4:4** This is **superadded** blindness—blindness produced by the special power of Satan.

But our text speaks rather of dimness than blindness. There is a difference between the two. The dead in sin are blind; the newly quickened into life are dim. We see this distinction in the case of the blind man whose eyes the Lord opened. When he first touched his eyes, light broke in but dimly and feebly. When asked, if he saw aught, "he looked up and said, I see men as trees walking." Before he saw nothing; now he sees certain objects, but the film still hanging over his eyes, he could not tell a man from a tree. The word here rendered "dim," means, literally, "besmeared," as if the newly opened eyes were bleared with water or matter, and therefore saw every thing through a mist or veil. How true is this of the wilderness pilgrim!

The breath of the pestilential wind, the thick clouds of the tempest, the hot and burning sand, and the glare of the mid-day sun, all blear and dim the eye. But the hiding place from the wind, the covert from the tempest, the rivers of water, and the shady rock heal the dimness, and then "the eyes of them that see shall not be dim. Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off." **Isa 33:17** Till the pilgrims reach the rock their eyes are dim; but then, according to the promise, their eyes see out of obscurity and out of darkness. They see the Person of Christ as God-man, his suitability, atoning blood, and justifying righteousness; and seeing Him of God made unto them wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, they have in him all their hearts can wish. ii. "And the ears of them that hear shall hearken." This promise, too, is closely connected with the preceding. The same fall in paradise which sealed the eyes in blindness, stopped the ears in deafness. Therefore the promise runs, "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped." **Isa 35:5**

But the persons spoken of in the text are not totally deaf, for they "hear." Yet there is a difference between hearing and hearkening—a difference almost analogous to that between the eyes being dim and seeing. The dim eye sees, but not distinctly; the hearing ear hears, but does not always hearken. To hearken implies faith and obedience. A disobedient son may hear his father speak, but does not hearken. Many under the word hear, but do not hearken, for they neither believe nor obey. But when the pilgrim in the wilderness reaches the hiding place from the wind, and the covert from the tempest; when he drinks of the rivers of water, and lies under the shadow of the great rock, he not only hears but hearkens—believes, loves, and obeys. It is thus that faith and obedience are wrought in the soul. This is hearkening to the word of God—to promise, and to precept. Necessity constrained him to hear the law; love constrains him to hear the gospel. His understanding, conscience, heart, and affections are all bound to the Man at the right hand of God; and thus he obeys not under the lash as a slave, but under the constraints of dying love as a son. Such are Zion's heavenward and homeward bound pilgrims. Happy are those who have any testimony that this is their character and experience; for of such we may safely say, theirs is the kingdom of heaven.