



The Redeemed in the Wilderness

A Sermon By George Müller of Bristol

An Address delivered by George Müller at a Conference of Christians of various denominations, held at Clifton on Wednesday, October 1st, 1873

"Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?" Song of Solomon viii, 5

Our subject, beloved Christian friends, as you all know, is "The redeemed in the wilderness." Now the first point is, Do we know that we are among the number of the redeemed in the wilderness? Possibly there may be some hearts here present this evening saying, How can I find out that I belong to the redeemed in the wilderness? This is to be settled thus: If we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of our souls, - if we trust in Him alone for salvation, - if we look away entirely from our own merit and worthiness, - if we are convinced that we are sinners by nature, and put our trust alone in the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of our souls, - if we look to Him alone as our Substitute, and find in His precious blood alone the power to cleanse away all our numberless transgressions, in deed, word, thought, desire, feeling, and purpose, - then are our sins forgiven, then are we renewed - born again - regenerated through this faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; then have we become children of God through this faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; then have we been delivered from the bondage of Satan, the world, and our own evil and corrupt nature. We are thus delivered out of the mystical Egypt, and are brought into the wilderness

Now we have before God to answer this - Do I trust alone in Jesus for the salvation of my soul? Do I look away from everything but Jesus as the ground of acceptance, and depend upon Him, and trust in Him? Then are my sins forgiven; and though I am but a poor weak believer, and little instructed as yet, nevertheless, if I am really and truly hanging upon Christ for salvation, all is right before God, - we are accepted by Him, we are dear to His heart; He looks upon us as clean and spotless ones for Christ's sake, though we are vile, worthless, and sinful in ourselves. And then, having thus, by the grace of God, been delivered out of the world of Egypt, and brought into the wilderness, - what then? To answer this question we refer to one passage, and only one, brought into the programme before us; it is the last passage referred to.

In the eighth chapter and fifth verse of the Song of Solomon, we read thus: "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" As we saw last evening again and again by the Beloved we are to understand the Lord Jesus Christ; and by that one who in her weakness, feebleness, and nothingness, leans upon her Beloved - the Church of Christ, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ; because by the power of the Holy Ghost they have been taught to know their weakness and nothingness. This is just what we have to do: having, by the grace of God, been redeemed out of the world, out of the mystical Egypt, - having, by the grace of God, been brought into the wilderness, - now we have to own increasingly our weakness, helplessness) and ignorance; and, under the consciousness of this betake ourselves to the Beloved One - the Lord Jesus Christ - to lean upon the arm which can never tire, that arm which created the world, which sustains and upholds the world. This is what we have to do; and I ask, beloved in Christ, what is our position? Are we leaning upon the Beloved? Just answer the question before God, What is your habit of soul? Trusting in yourself, your intellect, your physical strength, your money, your experience in business, your skilfulness in your profession, or even the experience you have had in the divine life, your knowledge of the Word of God, - do you trust in any of these things? If so, allow me affectionately to tell you, that you are not "leaning upon the Beloved." And this will prove your weakness, and will

make you feel that you are in a wrong state, and not doing as you should do. When I walked about in my garden, an hour or two ago, and thought upon this passage, I said, "Lord Jesus, I am one of Thy weak ones, and I desire to lean upon Thee. If I should be asked to speak this evening, oh! what can Thy poor servant do? but he looks to Thee, he desires to lean upon Thee. Now, Lord Jesus, instruct Thou Thy poor servant, who cannot speak as he ought to the profit of the hearers; but in his weakness he will lean upon Thee, and look to Thee: now help Thou Thy servant." Well; just as under these circumstances we look to Him, so in the education of our children, in the carrying on our business, in the hour of depression, under the consciousness of our manifold failings, under the temptations that continually befall us day by day, we have to look to the Lord Jesus Christ, and, by faith, draw out of the fullness which is treasured up in Him. He is a power for good to His Church, - of infinite wisdom, and full of pity and compassion; and by prayer, and the exercise of faith, we may draw into our souls from His blessed attributes that strength which we so much need. Now of this weak one it is said, "She is coming up from the wilderness leaning upon her Beloved," This suggests to us at once that her destiny is not to remain in the wilderness; and this is just the blessed position of the Church of Christ. We have most abundant reason to thank God that we are in the wilderness. I have been in the wilderness forty-eight years, and I well remember the time when I was not in the wilderness, - when I was of the world, when I loved this world; and it was to me a delight and desire. I well remember the time when I should have laughed at the very thought of coming out of the wilderness, and hearing anything about this Beloved One; but now, by the grace of God, it is different. And so with regard to all the believers here present; though we are in the wilderness, yet we shall not remain there. The prospects are bright and blessed for all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who are not nominal but real Christians, - children of God, partakers of the Divine nature; and though the manifestation of the sons of God has not yet taken place, it will take place: wait, wait for it, and as assuredly as we now trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, so assuredly everyone of us - before the whole universe - will be manifested "in the day of Christ's appearing," as the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, and as the children of God. Oh, bright prospect, - the manifestation of the sons of God! And just in proportion as the child of God is enabled to enter into it, and to say, "The day is coming when I shall be manifested as a child of God," so this world is let go, with its lusts and vanities and pleasures and wealth and rank; we let it all go, as we are enabled to realize that we are the children of God, and are looking forward to that day when the children of God shall be manifested. This is the great point, and allow me affectionately to press it upon you, as one who has had some little share of experience in these things. Just in proportion as you are enabled to lay hold on heavenly realities, - to look forward to the day of the manifestation of the sons of God, and the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ, when you shall share the kingdom with Jesus, when you will be forever separated from the world, received into the Father's house, completely conformed to the image of God's dear Son, not only as to the body, but perfectly holy - as that blessed One is - will your heart be lifted up out of the world into heaven. There is no more blessed a lever to separate us from this world, and lift our hearts right into heaven, than considering what we have been redeemed from, and unto what we are in Christ Jesus now, and shall be hereafter. Oh! the soul entering into it cannot but rejoice in the Lord. It is a bright and blessed prospect, - we are not to remain here, we are to "come up from the wilderness." But do not misunderstand me; as if I were altogether so sick of the world that I wished any moment to be taken out of it: not so. If the Lord were only to give me grace, I am willing to serve Him fifty years longer, and more if it were His will. But yet with all this, on account of the conflict and difficulties of the way, on account of the evil corrupt nature within me, on account of Satan not being bound yet, and the separation between the Church and the world not having taken place, and most of all, because Jesus is not yet manifested in His glory - the children of God rejoice in the prospect that the wilderness state will come to an end: because it will be the day of blessedness for the universal Church of Christ; and the day for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, - therefore we cannot but rejoice in the prospect that the wilderness state will come to an end.

Now this weak one "cometh up from the wilderness leaning upon her beloved." What does this imply? - That as she took one step further she got nearer and nearer to the promised land. So with us: as the sun sets once more, we are a day nearer; as the week closes, we are a week nearer; as our Conference has again come round, we are one year nearer. Oh! one year nearer than we were last October, when we had those happy meetings. Oh! bright and blessed prospect, - getting nearer, and nearer, and nearer to whom? To Jesus. Do we delight in the prospect of being with Him? I do not speak about balls and theatres and some extraordinary parties and the prospect of joining them; nor about becoming rich in this world, nor getting a great name in this world, nor about any of these things, but the blessed prospect of being with Jesus. How many here present have any sympathy with such a statement as this? If you have no sympathy with it, let me tell you this, - it proves one of these two things: either you are "dead in trespasses and sins," and walking in the broad way which leads to destruction; or, at least for the time being, your heart is not alive to the things of God, and if a spiritual thermometer were applied to your heart, it would be seen that you are all but lifeless. This never ought to be the case with regard to the disciples of the Lord Jesus: their heart should be full of love to that blessed One who laid down His life for them, so that they rejoice when they hear that the day is coming when they shall be with that blessed One. This then is our great and blessed prospect, - that, though glad, if necessary, to labour and suffer here for the Lord's sake; though glad for a season, if necessary, to be separated from that blessed One, and from "the spirits of just men made perfect," with whom we shall be united for ever hereafter; nevertheless we have before us the prospect that the wilderness will not always be, but that we shall come out of it, and that, as days pass on, so we get nearer and nearer to our blessed home. And while we remain here, what have we to do? All of us have our various occupations, - not all as preachers of the gospel, not all as district visitors; but everyone of us, as a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, has some work to do; everyone of us has some difficulty to meet, some trial to go through, some affliction to endure; and everyone of us, day by day, is exposed to temptation. What have we to do under these circumstances? We have to "lean upon the Beloved;" to go to Jesus, to trust in Jesus, in the consciousness of our weakness and helplessness; - not to look to our own resources, for we have none; not to look to our brothers and sisters, or friends, for they are as weak as we are; but we are to look to the Lord Jesus. There is treasured up in Him inexhaustible fullness; and just as by prayer and faith we lay hold on the strength of the Lord, so shall we receive comfort according to our need, instruction in the hour of perplexity, help in the hour of depression, deliverance in the hour of difficulty, - difficulties in connection with family trials and business trials; under all circumstances there should not be a single trial that befalls us, but we should look forward calmly to it, and say, "Jesus is able to meet all these circumstances; Jesus can help me; He says, 'Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.' Let me open my mouth wide, and see how the blessed One is both able and willing to fill it,"

Try to lean upon the arm of that blessed One, and you will find it never grows weary, but able to bear you up, - it never will fail. Oh! do but try it, and you will see. And remember, Jesus does not simply "take" the arm: sometimes there are such cases as this, - a weakly husband, in the way of courtesy, offers his arm to his wife; but he is very feeble, and the wife knows it is only done in the way of politeness and love; really the truth is that her arm is ten times stronger than his - he has no strength to support her, and, therefore, while she gives her arm, she does, not lean upon it. It is not thus that we are to take, so to speak, the arm of the Lord Jesus, but really to lean upon it, and trust in it, and make but trial of it, and we shall find how strong it is, and how able to carry us through. If you have never tried it, let an elder brother now beseech you to try it, and you will find how strong that arm is, how able and ready to carry you all through, - it will never, never tire. Oh, bright prospect, to have such a Friend for ever and ever!

I look forward now to the year which is coming: there is every reason to believe that we shall not all meet again at another Conference; and our path may be varied, - we may have to meet trials and difficulties; but, beloved in Christ here present, with all this before us, are we dismayed or cast down, or overwhelmed in the prospect of what may possibly befall us before another year is over? No; for that arm will carry us through - the arm of our Friend "who sticketh closer than a brother," - He never will get tired of us; He upholds the "universe by His power and might, and He will "carry us through. And if the Lord permit us to see another year, and if we are again allowed to meet at these happy meetings, what reason shall we not have to bless and praise God for all His goodness; and amidst all other reasons, for this too, that we are one year nearer to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, - one year nearer the day when the wilderness course will be over for ever and ever.



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