

CHARLES
SPURGEON



ON JOY
AND REDEMPTION

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AND REDEMPTION



WHITAKER
HOUSE

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CHARLES SPURGEON ON JOY AND REDEMPTION

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CONTENTS

| | |
|-------------------------------|-----|
| 1. God's Grace to You | 7 |
| 2. Key to Holiness | 105 |
| 3. Joy in Praising God | 161 |
| 4. Joy in Your Life | 255 |
| 5. Soulwinner | 359 |
| 6. When Christ Returns | 555 |
| 7. How to Have Real Joy | 649 |
| 8. The Fullness of Joy | 759 |
| About the Author | 863 |

GOD'S GRACE TO YOU

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| 1. The Wondrous Covenant | 11 |
| 2. God in the Covenant | 24 |
| 3. Christ in the Covenant..... | 40 |
| 4. The Holy Spirit in the Covenant | 55 |
| 5. The Blood of the Covenant..... | 72 |
| 6. Pleading the Covenant of Grace | 91 |

THE WONDROUS COVENANT

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.

—Hebrews 8:10

The doctrine of the divine covenant lies at the root of all true theology. It has been said that the person who understands the distinction between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace is a master of divinity. I am persuaded that most of the mistakes that men make concerning the doctrines of Scripture are based upon fundamental errors with regard to the covenants of law and of grace. May God grant me the power to impart instruction on this vital subject, and may He give you the grace to receive it.

In the order of history, so far as this world is concerned, the human race first stood in subjection to God under the covenant of works. Adam was the representative man. A certain law was given to him. If he kept it, he and all his posterity would be blessed as the result of obedience. If he broke it, he would incur the curse himself and subject all those represented by him to the same curse. Our first father broke that covenant. He fell; he failed to fulfill his obligations.

In his fall, Adam involved us all, for all people descended from him and all were physically present in his seed, just as Levi “*payed tithes in Abraham, for he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him*” (Hebrews 7:9–10). The first Adam thus represented us before God in the Fall. Our ruin, then, was complete before we were ever born. We were ruined by the failure of the first Adam, who stood as our first representative. To be saved by the works of the law is now impossible, for under that covenant we are already lost. If we are to be saved at all, it must be according to quite a different plan, not under the plan of doing and being rewarded for it. That has been tried, and the representative man upon whom it was tried has failed for us all. We have all failed in his failure; it is hopeless, therefore, to expect to win divine favor by anything that we can do or to merit divine blessing by way of reward.

However, divine mercy has intervened and provided a plan of salvation from the Fall. That plan is another covenant, a covenant God the Father made with His Son Jesus Christ, who is appropriately called the Second Adam because He also stood as the representative of men.

As far as Christ was concerned, the second covenant was quite as much a covenant of works as the first one was. The plan went something like this: Christ was to come into the world and perfectly obey the divine law. Inasmuch as the first Adam had broken the law, He was also to suffer the penalty of sin. If He would do both of these, then all whom He represented would be blessed in His blessedness and saved because of His merit. Do you see that, until our Lord lived and died on this earth, it was a covenant of works on His part? He had certain works to perform; upon condition of His performance, certain blessings would be given to us.

Our Lord has kept that covenant. His part of it has been fulfilled to the last letter. There is no commandment that He has not honored; there is no penalty of the broken law that He has not endured. He became a servant and was “*obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*” (Philippians 2:8). He has thus done what the first Adam could not accomplish, and He has retrieved what the first Adam forfeited by his transgressions. He has established the covenant, and now it ceases to be a covenant of works, for the works have all been completed.

Jesus did them, did them all,
Long, long ago.

And now, what remains to be fulfilled of the covenant? On His part, God has solemnly pledged Himself to give undeserved favor to everyone whom Jesus represented on the cross. For all whom the Savior died, there are stored up bountiful blessings that will be given to them, not through their works, but as the sovereign gift of the grace of God, according to His covenant promise by which they are saved.

Beloved, behold the hope of the sons of men. The hope of their saving themselves is forever crushed, for they are already lost. The hope of their being saved by works is a fallacious one, for they cannot keep the law; they have already broken it. Yet, there is a way of salvation opened that can be explained this way: whosoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ receives and partakes of the bliss that Christ has bought. All the blessings that belong to the covenant of grace through the work of Christ will belong to every soul who believes in Jesus. Whoever "*worketh not, but [rather] believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly*" (Romans 4:5), unto that person will the blessing of the new covenant of grace be undoubtedly given.

I hope that this explanation is clear enough. If Adam had kept the law, we would have been blessed by his keeping it. He broke it, and we have been cursed through him. Now the Second Adam, Christ Jesus, has kept the law. Therefore, if we are believers, we are represented in Christ and blessed with the results of the obedience of Jesus Christ to His Father's will. Through the ancient Scriptures Christ said, "*Lo, I come to do thy will, O God*" (Psalm 40:7-8). He has done that will, and the blessings of grace are now freely given to the sons of men.

Now, first we will reflect on the privileges of the covenant of grace as found in our wondrous text. Secondly, I will direct your attention to the parties concerned in the covenant. This will be quite enough for consideration in this chapter, I am sure, because of the depth of the subject at hand.

The Privileges of the Covenant of Grace

The first privilege is that illumination of their minds will be given to as many as are interested in receiving it. "*I will put my laws into their mind.*" By nature our minds are dark toward God's will. Conscience keeps up in us a sort of broken recollection of what God's will is. It is a monument of God's will, but it is often hardly legible. People do not care to read it; they are averse to what they read there. "*Their foolish heart was darkened*" (Romans 1:21) is the expression Scripture gives with regard to the mind of man.

However, the Holy Spirit is promised to those interested in the covenant. He will come upon their minds and shed light instead of darkness, illuminating them as to what the will of God is. The ungodly man has some degree of light, but it is merely intellectual. It is a light that he does not love. *“Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil”* (John 3:19). Nevertheless, where the Holy Spirit comes, He floods the soul with a divine luster in which the soul delights and desires to participate to the fullest degree.

Beloved, the renewed man, the man who is under the covenant of grace, does not need to resort constantly to his Bible to learn what he ought to do, nor does he have to go to some fellow Christian to ask instruction. For him, the law of God is no longer written just on a tablet of stone or on parchment or on paper; rather, the law is written upon his own mind and heart. There is now a divine, infallible Spirit dwelling within him who tells him right and wrong. By this Spirit, he speedily discerns between good and evil. No longer is he of those *“that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”* (Isaiah 5:20). His mind is enlightened as to the true holiness and the true purity that God requires.

Just watch the people to whom this light comes. By nature some of them are deeply depraved. All of them are depraved, but by practice some of them become still further dark. Is it not marvelous that a poor heathen, who scarcely seemed to recognize the distinction between right and wrong before the Spirit of God entered his mind, has afterward received at once the light of a responsive and tender conscience without needing to be taught all the precepts individually? This new mind has led him to know what is right and to love it, to recognize evil and to shun it.

If you want to civilize the world, it must be by preaching the gospel. If you want to have men well instructed as to right and wrong, it must be by this divine instruction that only the Spirit of God can impart. He says, *“I will put my laws into their mind.”* Then, how blessedly He does this when He takes a man, who previously had loved evil and called it good, and sheds a divine ray of light into his soul in such a way that, from that time, the man cannot be perverse or obstinate, but submits himself willingly to the divine will. That is one of the first blessings of the covenant—the illumination of the understanding.

The next blessing is *"I will write them in their hearts."* This is more than knowing the law—ininitely more. God is saying, "I Myself will write the law, not merely on their understandings, where it may guide them, but in their hearts, where it will lead them." Beloved, the Holy Spirit makes men love the will of God, delight in all in which God delights, and abhor what God abhors. It is well said in the text that God will do this, for certainly it is not what a man can do for himself. *"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil"* (Jeremiah 13:23). A minister cannot do this for a person; although he may preach to the ear, he cannot write God's law on the heart.

I have marveled at the expression used in the text: *"I will write them in their hearts."* To write *on* a heart must be difficult work, but to write *in* a heart, in the very center of the heart—who could do this but God? A man may cut his name in the bark of a tree, and there it will stand, the letters growing with the tree. But, to cut his name in the heart of the tree—how could he accomplish this? And yet, God divinely engraves His will and His law in the very heart and nature of man!

The notion the world has about Christian people is that we do not conform to certain customs because we are afraid of God's punishment; they think we would like to revel in the vanities of the world, but we do not do so because we might encounter the harsh penalties that the Almighty could justly impose on us. Sons of this age, you do not comprehend the mysterious work of the Spirit! He does nothing of this sort. He does not make the children of God to be slaves in fear of bondage, but He so changes the nature of men that they do not love what they once loved. They turn away with loathing from the things they once delighted in; they can no more indulge in the sins that were once pleasurable to them than an angel could plunge himself down and wallow in the mire with the swine. This is a gracious work of God, and this is a blessed covenant in which it is promised that we will be taught what is right, to know and love what is right, and to do what is right with willing minds and hearts.

I may be addressing someone reading this who has been saying, "I wish I could be saved." What do you mean by that? Do you mean that you wish you might escape from hell? I would rather you had another wish, namely, "Oh, that I could escape from sin! Oh, that I could be made pure! Oh, that my passions

could be bridled! Oh, that my longings and my lusts could be changed!" If that is your wish, what a glorious gospel I have to present to you. I do not come and command you, "Do this, but do not do that." Moses gave the commandments in that way, and the legalistic preacher speaks in that fashion. However, as an ambassador of Christ who is unveiling the covenant of grace, I write to you that Jesus Christ has done such a work for sinners that God now comes to them for Christ's sake, makes them see what is right, and by a divine work upon them and in them makes them love holiness and follow after righteousness.

I consider this one of the greatest blessings that I could ever address. I would sooner be holy than happy, if the two things could be divorced. Were it possible for a man always to sorrow and yet to be pure, I would choose the sorrow if I might win purity. Beloved, to be free from the power of sin, to be made to love holiness, is true happiness. A man who is holy is at peace with the creation, and he is in harmony with God. It is impossible for that man to suffer for long. He may for a while endure suffering for his lasting good; but as certainly as God is happy, the person who is holy must be happy. This world is not so constituted that in the long run holiness goes with sorrow. In eternity God will show that to be pure is to be blessed, to be obedient to the divine will is to be eternally glorified. In writing to you, then, about these two blessings of the covenant, I have essentially presented to you the open kingdom of heaven, open to all whom God's grace looks upon with an eye of mercy.

The next blessing of the covenant is "*I will be to them a God.*" If anyone should ask me what this means, I might reply, "Give me a month to consider it." When I had considered the text for a month, I would ask for another month; when I had waited a year, I would ask for another; and when I had waited until I grew gray, I would still ask the postponement of any attempt to fully explain it until eternity.

"*I will be to them a God.*" Now, please understand that where the Spirit of God has come to teach you the divine will and make you love the divine will, what does God become to you? A father? Yes, a loving, tender Father. A shepherd? Yes, a watchful Guardian of His flock. A friend? Yes, "*a friend that sticketh closer than a brother*" (Proverbs 18:24). A rock? A hedge? A fortress? A high tower? A castle of defense? A home? A heaven? Yes, all of these and more. When the Lord said, "*I will be their God*" (Jeremiah 32:38), He said more than all of these put together, for "*I will be to them a God*" encompasses all gracious titles, all blessed promises, and all divine privileges.

"I will be to them a God" includes—and now I hesitate, for what I am writing about here is infinite, and the infinite embodies all blessings. Do you want provision? The cattle on a thousand hills are His. (See Psalm 50:10.) It is nothing for Him to give; it will not impoverish Him; He will give to you like a God. Do you want comfort? He is the God of all consolation (see 2 Corinthians 1:3); He will comfort you like a God. Do you want guidance? There is infinite wisdom waiting at your beck and call: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5). Do you want strength? There is eternal power, the same that upholds the everlasting hills, waiting to strengthen you. (See Philippians 4:13.) Do you want grace? He "delighteth in mercy" (Micah 7:18), and all His mercy is yours.

Every attribute of God belongs to His people who are in covenant with Him. All that God is or can be (and what is not included in that?); all that you can imagine; all that the angels have; all that heaven is; all that is in Christ, even the boundless fullness of the Godhead (see Colossians 2:9)—all this belongs to you, if you are in covenant with God through Jesus Christ. How rich, how blessed, how majestic, how noble are those who are in covenant with God! You who are allied with heaven, infinity belongs to you! Lift up your head, O child of God, and rejoice in a promise that I cannot expound and you cannot explore. There I must leave it; it is too deep to comprehend; we strive in vain to fathom it.

Notice the next blessing: "And they shall be to me a people." All flesh belongs to God in a certain sense. All men are his by rights of creation, and He has an infinite sovereignty over them. But He looks down upon the sons of men, selects some, and says, "These are Mine; these will be My special people."

When the hymnwriter set to music the historic battle of the king of Navarre, who was fighting for his throne, he penned these lyrics:

He looked upon the foemen,
 And his glance was stern and high;
 He looked upon his people,
 And the tear was in his eye.

And when the king saw some of the French in arms against him,

Then out spoke gentle Henry,
 "No Frenchman is my foe;

Down, down, with every foreigner,
But let your brethren go.”

The king took care of his people even if they were in rebellion against him. He had different thoughts toward them than he had toward others. “Let them go,” he seemed to say, “because they are my people.” Therefore, take note that in the great battles and strife of this world, when God lets loose the terrifying artillery of heaven, His glance is stern toward His enemies, but a tear is in His eye for His people. He is always tender toward them. “Spare My people,” He says, and the angels intervene, lest any of His chosen should “dash [his] foot against a stone” (Psalm 91:12).

People have their treasures—their pearls, their jewels, their rubies, their diamonds—these are their special valuables. Likewise, all who are in the covenant of grace are “a peculiar treasure” (Exodus 19:5) of God. He values them above all other beings. In fact, He keeps the world spinning for them. The world exists only to serve as a scaffold for His church. He will send creation packing once His children no longer live on earth. Sun, moon, and stars will pass away like worn-out rags once He has gathered together His own elect and enclosed them forever within the safety of the walls of heaven. Time goes on for the sake of the elect; for them the world exists. He measures the nations according to their number, and He makes the very stars of heaven fight against their enemies and defend them against their foes.

“They shall be to me a people.” The favor that is contained in such love cannot be expressed in earthly language. Perhaps on some of those quiet resting places prepared for the saints in heaven, a part of our eternal enjoyment will be to contemplate that love. May we “be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height” (Ephesians 3:18) of these precious, golden thoughts.

The Beneficiaries of the Covenant

Just now, I have a practical consideration to discuss, which is to inquire, For whom has God made this covenant? I have already stated that He made it with Christ, but He made it with Christ as the Representative of His people. Each one of us must answer for himself certain questions, which are: Do I have a personal

interest or a share in “*the inheritance of the saints in light*” (Colossians 1:12)? Did Christ Jesus specifically represent me in fulfilling the covenant?

Now, if I were to say that Christ is the Representative of the whole world, you would not find any substantial advantage in that. Since the great proportion of mankind is lost, whatever interest they may have in Christ is certainly of no beneficial value to them as to their eternal salvation.

The question I ask is, Do I have such a special interest in Christ that this covenant holds good toward me, so that I will have, or so that I now have, an enlightened mind and sanctified affections, and so that I possess God as my own God? Be not deceived, my friends, not one of us can turn over the pages of the book of destiny. It is impossible for us to force our way into the council chamber of the Eternal. I hope you are not deluded by superstitious ideas that a special revelation has been given to you, or that you have had some unique dream that makes you think that you are a Christian.

It is on sounder premises that I will try to help you a little. Have you already obtained any of these covenant blessings? Has your mind been enlightened? Do you now find that your spirit tells you what is right and what is wrong? Better still, do you have a love for what is good and a hatred for what is evil? (See Amos 5:15.) If so, since you have one covenant blessing, all the rest go with it.

Dear one, has your nature undergone a great change? Have you come to hate what you once loved and to love what you once hated? If you have, the covenant lies before you like Canaan before the enraptured eyes of Moses, as he stood on the mountaintop. Look now, for it is yours. It flows with milk and honey, and it belongs to you. You have inherited it.

However, if there has been no such change in you, I cannot hold out any congratulations to you, but I thank God I can do what may serve to bring about this change in your heart. I can hold out divine direction to you; the way to obtain an interest in this covenant and to secure your interest in it is simple. It is contained in just a few words. Pay attention to these three words: “Believe and live.” Whoever believes in Christ Jesus has everlasting life, which is the blessing of the covenant. The argument is obvious. Having the blessing of the covenant, you must be in the covenant; and being in the covenant, Christ evidently must have stood as your Representative or Sponsor.

“But,” someone asks, “what does it mean to believe in Christ?” There is another word that is a synonym for *believe*—it is *trust*. “How do I know whether Christ died

for me in particular?” Trust Him whether you know that or not. Jesus Christ is lifted up upon the cross of Calvary as the atonement for sin; and the proclamation has been given that everyone who looks upon Him will live. (See Numbers 21:8.) Whoever will cast away his self-righteousness, who will cast away everything upon which he now depends, and who will come and trust in the finished work of our exalted Savior, has in that very faith the indication that he is one of those who were in Christ when He went to the cross and obtained eternal redemption for His elect.

I do not believe that Christ died on the tree to render men salvable, but to save them, really to redeem them. He then and there gave Himself as a ransom. He there paid their debts, there “*cast all their sins into the depths of the sea*” (Micah 7:19), and there made a clean sweep of everything that could be laid to the charge of God’s elect. You are one of His elect if you believe. Christ died for you if you believe in Him, and your sins are all forgiven.

“But,” somebody says, “what about that change of nature that needs to come about?” It always comes with faith. It follows true faith. Wherever there is genuine faith in Christ, faith works in love. (See Galatians 5:6.) A sense of mercy breeds affection; affection for Christ breeds hatred of sin; hatred of sin purges the soul; and, the soul being purged, the life is changed.

The Work of the Covenant of Grace

You must not begin by trying to mend yourself externally. Rather, you must begin with receiving the new internal life, which is found only in this way: “*it is the gift of God*” (Ephesians 2:8) through simply believing in Jesus. That faith in Christ is given to you according to the working of the covenant of grace, for “*it is God which worketh [faith] in you*” (Philippians 2:13).

A man who had been for some time attending a certain place of worship had embraced the idea—and a very natural one, too—that he was saved because he had been baptized. He had been to one of those churches where they teach little children to repeat something like this: “In my baptism, wherein I was made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.” “Now,” said he, very simply and very plainly, according to what that catechism teaches (and a gross delusion it is), “I am saved because I have been baptized; that has made me a child of God.”

The good elder who sought to instruct him more soundly and scripturally could find no metaphor that would suit his intellect better than to take a black

inkwell and show it to him. “Now,” said the mature Christian, “I will wash it.” Having washed the outside of that ebony, ink-filled bottle, he invited the man to drink out of it because it was clean. “No,” said the man, “it is black, all black; it is not clean just because you have washed the outside.” “Oh,” came the elder’s reply, “and so it is with you; all that those drops of water could do, all that your baptism could do for you, was to wash the outside; but that does not make you clean, for the filth is all within.”

The work of the covenant of grace is not to wash the outside, not to cleanse the flesh, not to impose rites and ceremonies and the laying on of hands. Instead, it is to wash the inside, to purge the heart, to cleanse the inner being, to renew the soul. This is the only salvation that will ever enable a man to enter heaven. You may right now renounce all your outward vices, and I hope you will. You may go and practice all of the church rites and ceremonies, and if they are scriptural, I wish you would. However, they will do nothing for you, nothing whatever to enable you to enter heaven, if you miss one other essential thing—that is, obtaining the covenant blessing of the renewed nature, which can only be received as a gift of God through Jesus Christ and as the result of a simple faith in Him who died upon the tree.

I press the work of self-examination upon you. I earnestly urge any church member to apply yourself to this task. It is of no avail that you have joined a religious institution. It is of no avail that you have been baptized. It is of no avail that you take the sacrament of communion. Avail? Indeed, it will bring a greater responsibility and a curse upon you unless your heart has been made new by the Holy Spirit according to the covenant of promise. If you do not have a new heart, go to a quiet place, fall upon your knees, and cry to God for it. May the Holy Spirit constrain you so to do. While you are pleading, remember that the new heart comes from the bleeding heart, and the changed nature comes from the suffering nature. You must look to Jesus, and looking to Jesus, know this:

There is life in a look at the crucified One,
There is life at this moment for thee.

The Blessings of the Covenant of Grace

These blessings of the covenant seem to me to be a great consolation and inspiration. Their comfort comes in different ways to believers everywhere.

A Source of Consolation

The covenant blessings can be a great source of consolation for you. You are in the covenant, my dear friend, but you tell me you are very poor. God has said to you, “*I will be your God*” (Jeremiah 7:23). Why, then, you are very rich! A man may not have a penny to his name, but if he has a diamond, he is rich. Therefore, even though a man may have neither penny nor diamond, if he has his God, he has the “*one pearl of great price*” (Matthew 13:46), and he is rich beyond measure.

Yet, you tell me that your coat is threadbare, and you do not see where you are going to obtain the money to buy a new one.

Why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

(Matthew 6:28–29)

Remember, you have the same God as the lilies have:

Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

(Matthew 6:30–33)

Therefore, console yourself with the remembrance of these covenant blessings, but especially that “*my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 4:19).

A Source of Inspiration

I also stated that the covenant of grace should be a great source of inspiration for believers, and I think it is. The covenant is an inspiration for us all to work for Christ, because we are sure to have some results.

Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.

(Luke 10:2)

Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.

(John 4:35–36)

In due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

(Galatians 6:9)

I desire, indeed, I desire that the nations would be converted to Christ. I long for all of London to belong to my Lord and Master and every street to be inhabited by those who love His name. Yet, when I see sin abounding and the gospel often in retreat, I fall back upon this: “*Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his*” (2 Timothy 2:19).

Christ will have His own. The infernal powers of hell will not rob our Redeemer. “*He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied*” (Isaiah 53:11). Calvary does not mean defeat. Gethsemane, a defeat? Impossible! The mighty Man who went up to the cross to bleed and die for us, being also the Son of God, did not go down in defeat there, but achieved a victory. “*He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand*” (Isaiah 53:10).

If some are not saved, others will be. If, being invited, some do not consider themselves worthy to come to the feast, others will be brought in, even the blind and the deaf and the lame, and the supper will be furnished with guests. If they do not come from our great country, “*these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim*” (Isaiah 49:12). “*Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall [Christ] be glorious in the eyes of the LORD*” (Isaiah 49:5), for then the heathen will be gathered unto Him. Then Egypt will yield herself to the Redeemer, and Ethiopia will stretch out her arms to God (see Psalm 68:31); the desert nomad will bow the knee, and the far-off stranger will seek Christ.

Oh, no, beloved, the purposes of God are never frustrated; the eternal will of God is not defeated. Christ has died a glorious death, and He will have a full reward for all of His pain.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

(1 Corinthians 15:58)