

MERCIES MEMORIAL

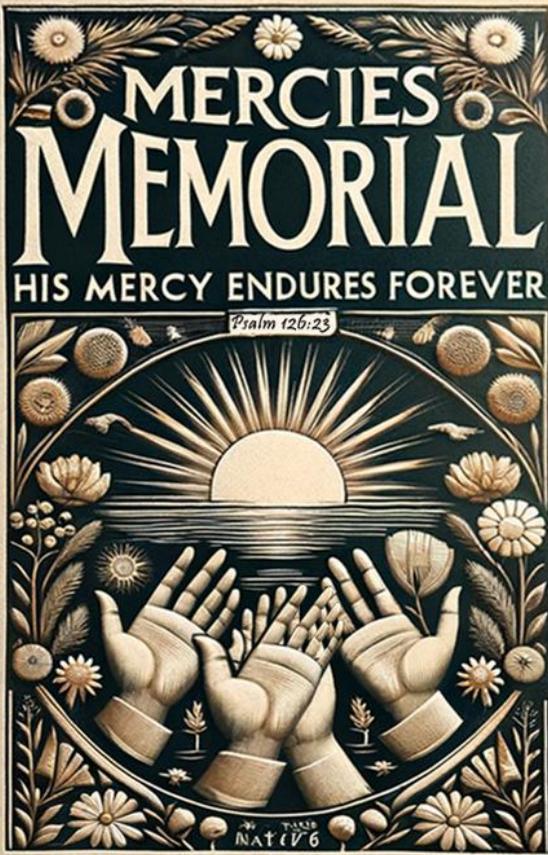
HIS MERCY ENDURES FOREVER

Psalm 126:23



THE
NATIVE

RALPH VENNING



RALPH VENNING

Mercies Memorial:

OR, Israel's Thankful Remembrance of God in Their High Estate, for
His Merciful Remembering of Them in Their Low Estate.

In a Sermon before the Right Honorable the LORD MAYOR, the
Right Worshipful the ALDERMEN, and the COMPANIES of the City
of LONDON, on the 5th of November, 1656.

BY RALPH VENNING.

Psal. 107:8.

"Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his
wonderful works to the children of men."

LONDON, Printed for John Rothwell, at the Fountain in Goldsmiths-
row in Cheapside. 1657.

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To the Right Honorable Sir ROBERT TICHBORN,

LORD MAYOR, and the Right Worshipful the ALDERMEN of the
City of LONDON.

Honorable and Honoured,

When I had received your Order for the Printing of this Sermon, I procured the best Copy I could. By this and the best memory I had of what I delivered, I have endeavored to present it to your view, not without a little addition to some heads which then I could not enlarge.

The rest of this address, My Lord and Gentlemen, is not to compliment and flatter you but earnestly, yet humbly, to beseech you that you would (as Mordecai said to Esther) seriously and studiously consider wherefore God hath brought you to this high estate. Hear the place and (as the Prophet said of the rod) him that hath appointed it. Be pleased to know and account that doing your duty in your place is the greatest honor of your place; whereas else it will be said that your places honored you, but you honored not your places.

Indeed, 'tis the fashion of this world to seek great things for themselves; 'tis their devotion to sacrifice to their own nets, 'tis their ambition to lord it. They are passionately enamored with the delights and delicacies of this life, which the heavenly St. John calls the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. 'It is all but lust, and the lust of the world, which world and which lust (saith he) passeth away. And which the wise Solomon, on sad and dear-bought experience, calls vanity of vanities and vexation of spirit; yet after all these things do the Gentiles seek. But saith our blessed Lord and Savior, it shall not be so with you. You are not your own, and therefore shall not seek your own, but are Christ's; and therefore seek the things of Christ and endeavor to do great things for God. Oh, be not led away with the error and example of this world's admirers, to be fond of a poor and miserable because but temporary and perishing greatness. 'It is a mere pageant which is but a show, and a show that passeth away, as you know.

'Twas David's praise, and 'twill be yours if you tread in his steps, that he served not only his generation but the will of God in his generation, or his generation according to the will of God. Consider then what is the good and perfect and acceptable will of God, that you may be in readiness to every good word and work, walking worthy of God to all well-pleasing.

Indeed (to speak as the thing is), you have none to please, none to serve but God. You may not be the servants of men, and you must not be the servants of sin. Only sanctify the Lord in your hearts, love him, serve him, let him be your fear, and your dread. Fear to displease the God you love, and love to please the God you fear; lest you be found (which God forbid) among them that had a name to live but were dead; that had been professors of Christ, but practitioners for self, and for the world.

If the world frown and accuse you for non-conformity, let it be to you a small thing (as it was to the good as well as great Apostle) to be judged by man's day, seeing your judgment is with the Lord. And give me leave to tell you, let the world look as big and as sour as it can, you may safely and honorably avow it; that the best way to please all, or displease any with the least danger, is to please him who is all in all.

Remember with all that you must one day give an account of your stewardship to the great God of Heaven and Earth, who will not judge according to appearance, but he (searching hearts) will judge righteous judgment and give to every man according to his works. Now, I wish with my soul that you may do so well in this your day, as that in that great and terrible day of the Lord, you may hear the joyful sound, of "Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into your master's joy."

I shall add no more but my desire to God for a blessing on this Sermon, that as your ears by what you heard, so your eyes by what you see, may affect your heart to live, for that is, to give thanks to God in your high estate, who remembered us in our low estate.

So prays, Right Honorable and Right Worshipful, Your humble Servant in the service of Christ Jesus, RALPH VENNING.

December 1656.

MERCIES MEMORIAL:

OR, Israel's Thankful Remembrance of God in Their High Estate; For His Merciful Remembering of Them in Their Low Estate;

From PSALM 136:23. "Who remembered us in our low estate; for his mercy endureth forever."

For the completing of the sense, you are to read it thus: "O give thanks unto the Lord, who remembered us in our low estate; for his mercy endureth forever."

I presume it cannot (I am sure it ought not to) be said of us this day, as it was said of them in Acts 19:32, "Some therefore cried one thing, and some another; for the assembly was confused, and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together." Who is such a stranger in this our English Israel, as not to have heard of the

Gunpowder Treason? Is there either Popish enemy or Protestant friend that knows not what a just right and lawful title the fifth of November hath to this observation and solemnity? If David would not have his soul forget all, that is, not any of all the benefits of God: much less such as have a remark upon them for being signal and transcendent. If personal mercies deserve their memorial, surely national mercies deserve a memorable celebration.

Of this then I may say as in the twelfth of Exodus, verse 42, only turning night into day, and Israel into England, "It is a day much to be observed unto the Lord, for bringing them out of the Land of Egypt; this is that day of the Lord to be observed of all the children of England in their generations." But not to preface away anymore of your time in a case so clear as this is; not only known by us, but acknowledged by our enemies; we need not ask, "Is there any cause?" for they themselves have confessed the cause.

This Psalm may be entitled as the 38th Psalm is, "A Psalm to Call to Remembrance," only with this difference, that that Psalm calls misery, and this Psalm calls mercy to remembrance; which is so much the sweeter to be remembered.

It was penned on an occasion, and to an end like this, for which we are met this day to make a thankful acknowledgment, and a pious commemoration of the mercies of God to the States of the Commonwealth, the vessel in which all our interests were embarked. Let us then give thanks to the Lord, who remembered us in our low estate, for his mercy endureth forever.

In the words (which may have for title, "Mercies Memorial") you have these three general parts:

First, here is their remembering, and an acknowledgment of God's remembering them, "who remembered us in our low estate." Wherein you may observe:

1. The mercy itself in this word, remembered.
2. The Author of this mercy, in this word, who; who is this who? The Lord in the first verse, the God of gods in the second verse, the Lord of lords in the third verse, who remembered us.
3. You have the objects of this act, or the receivers of this mercy, in this word us; who remembered us.
4. You have the season of this mercy, or the time when this God thus remembered this people; and that was, in their low estate; who remembered us in our low estate.

Secondly, you have an account here of the true reason and original of this mercy; and that is in these words, "for his mercy endureth forever." There is no reason to be given for grace but grace; there is no reason to be given for mercy but mercy; who remembered us, for his mercy endureth forever.

Thirdly, you have a duty inferred hereupon; and that is that which (as I told you before) is to run in common to every verse, "O give thanks unto the Lord, who remembered us in our low estate; for his mercy endureth forever."

From this analysis, or resolution of the words, you have these four observable propositions:

1. That God's Israel, God's own people, a people that are nearest and dearest to him, may yet be in a low estate; us in our low estate.

2. God remembers his people in their low estate (quoties premebatur, as one words it) as often as ever we were low; God remembered us whenever our estate was low, or whatever our low estate was; God remembered us in our low estate; who remembered us in our low estate.
3. The reason why God remembers his people in their low estate is because his mercy endures forever; he remembered us in our low estate, for his mercy endures forever.
4. God's remembering his people in their low estate lays an obligation upon them to give thanks to the Lord; O give thanks unto the Lord, who remembered us in our low estate; for his mercy endures forever.

The first two of these will take up the doctrinal discourse; the third of these will be the demonstration of the discourse; and the last, the application of the whole. Then we shall say, O give thanks unto the Lord, when we have proved that he remembers us in our low estate, and that because his mercy endures forever.

This then is the method which I shall observe:

First, I shall open and explain the terms, that we may understand this truth.

Secondly, prove the truth of the proposition, that we may believe it.
And

Thirdly, apply it, that we may improve it, which is the mercy of all our mercies.

For the explanation of the contents here, I shall propound only two questions.

1. When may a people be said to be in a low estate?
2. What it is for God to remember his people in their low estate?

First, when may a people be said to be in a low estate? Some read it, when we were dejected and cast down; as if he had said, when we were faithless through fear; when we were so overwhelmed that we knew not what to do; when we were hopeless and least of all looked for help, then God remembered us, and the things we feared came not upon us; God being merciful to us above all that we could ask or think. But I did not (nor shall) handle it in this sense; only let me say, that God's people are sometimes in this low estate, low in faith, low in hope, and yet God remembers them; so great is his goodness, and our thankfulness should be the more.

But a people may be said to be in a low estate, either 1. Actually; or 2. Potentially. First, actually; and that more generally when they are in affliction and misery; when they taste the wormwood and the gall, as Jeremiah pathetically expresses it in his Lamentations; when they are in want, when they are low in estate; or when, as 'tis said in Psalm 107:39, they are diminished and (from a high degree, from a wealthy estate, they are) brought low, through oppression, affliction, and sorrow; when a people are under all, or either of these, oppression, affliction, or sorrow, they may be said to be in a low estate.

But more especially, they are said to be low (with reference to the text) when they are in the enemy's hand; that is, when they are in the enemy's power, as we may gather from the following verse, "who hath redeemed us from our enemies."

You shall find that this is reckoned to be their low estate in 2 Chronicles 28:18-19. "The Philistines also had invaded the cities of the low country, and of the south of Judah, and had taken Bethshemesh, and Ajalon, and Gederoth, and Shocho, with the villages thereof, and Timnah with the villages thereof, Gimzo also with the villages thereof, and they dwelt there; for the Lord brought Judah low, because of Ahaz King of Israel." The Lord brought Judah low, and this was the lowness of their condition, that they were in the enemy's hands; their enemies had dominion over them and took possession of their possessions. Thus, you have it also in Psalm 79:7-8, "For they have devoured Jacob, and laid waste his dwelling places; O remember not against us former iniquities; let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us, for we are brought very low." This was the lowness of their condition, that their enemies had devoured Jacob and laid waste his dwelling places. But this was not our case through mercy; this was not our low estate. Yet again, therefore,

Secondly, a people are said to be low potentially when they are in the way to be low; when they are designed and destined to a low condition by the craft and cunning malice of wicked men, who (woe unto them) dig deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and whose works are in the dark, saying, "Who sees us? and who knows us?" They sit in the lurking places, secretly to murder the innocent; their eyes are privily set against the poor, who lie in wait secretly as a lion in his den to catch the poor, as if there were no help in their God, and He were not able to deliver them out of their hand. Thus they plot and design a people to an estate as low as death; and upon this account, we are said to be slain, though but appointed to be slain. In Romans 8:36, "As it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." In this, we are low when we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter; so that though a people are not actually in their enemy's power, though they are not

actually in misery, affliction, and sorrow, yet they are said to be low when they might have been so, had not God prevented; to be killed all the day long, when they are appointed to it; "For thy sake, we are killed all the day long," being appointed as sheep for the slaughter. And this was our low estate out of which God delivered us, as we remember this day. We were accounted as sheep for the slaughter; we were killed all the day long in our enemies' account. And this shall briefly suffice for the state wherein they were, and we were; He remembered us in our low estate.

Secondly, what is implied in this, that God remembered them in their low estate? The word is a pregnant word; it bears twins thrice told, it's big of a sixfold sense, as so many degrees of mercy in it.

1. To remember signifies to think upon, in opposition to forgetfulness; thus the word is rendered. In Genesis 40:14, Joseph says to the Butler, "think on me"; in the Hebrew, it's "remember me"; yet in verse 23, the Butler did not remember Joseph but forgot him; that is, he did not think on him. So it is used also in Genesis 8:1, "And God remembered Noah, and every living thing." It might have been thought that when the Ark lay floating on the face of the waters and ran adrift for a hundred and fifty days, that God had forgotten Noah and every living thing. But the text says, "God remembered Noah"; God did not forget Noah; God thought on Noah. And in this sense, God remembered us in our low estate; God had us in his thoughts; he had not forgotten us, which is no small mercy not to be forgotten of God. We may dwell in man's thoughts and not be the better for it, but we cannot be in God's remembering thoughts but we shall be the better for it. Therefore,

2. To remember (as the second degree of the mercy) signifies to take notice of a thing, in opposition to neglect; so it is used in Exodus 20:8, "Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day," take notice, that is, neglect it not. Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day. So God remembered us in our low estate; how? He did not barely think upon us, but he did observe and take notice of us and considered what our case was. But,
3. It signifies (as the third degree of mercy) to lay to heart, to pity, and compassionate persons in such a case; what am I the better for anybody thinking of me if he does not take notice of me so as to pity me in my low estate? So God does, as in Jeremiah 31:20, "Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still;" or, as the Hebrew reads it, "remembering I will remember him"; therefore, my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, says the Lord. This earnest remembrance was the earnest of the mercy. But again,
4. To remember signifies yet more (as the fourth degree of mercy) to be well pleased with a person in such a case, to accept of a person in such a case; so the word is used in Psalm 20:3, "The Lord remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt sacrifice." Remember, that is, accept. Why now, thus God remembered us in our low estate; we were acceptable to him and well pleasing in his eye at that time when, by our enemies, we were appointed as sheep for the slaughter. So, you may see it in Acts 10:4, "And when Cornelius looked on the angel, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God." That is, they are as a sweet-smelling savor, as a sacrifice well pleasing to God.

Thus did the Lord remember us; that is, he accepted us, he took pleasure in us, in our low estate. But again,

5. To remember signifies (as the fifth degree of mercy) to hear, and to grant a request; so it is used in 1 Samuel 1:19-20, "And they rose up in the morning early and worshipped before the Lord, and returned, and came to their house, to Ramah, and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the Lord remembered her." Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about, after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son and called his name Samuel, saying, "Because I have asked him of the Lord." God remembered Hannah; and the next word is, he gave her what she asked. So here, God remembered us; how? Not only think of us, or take notice of us, or did he lay it to heart, and pity and compassionate us, and was well pleased with us? No, not only so, but God did hear and grant the desires and prayers of his people; thus, God remembered us. But again,
6. To remember signifies (as the sixth degree of mercy) to help and succor, or to redeem and deliver from that which we were appointed to, from the low estate; and so it is in Galatians 2:10, "Only they would that we should remember the poor, the same which I also was forward to do." Remembering the poor is not barely a thought but a relieving thought; therefore, he says in the following verse, "who hath redeemed us from our enemies." This was the remembrance of God, redemption from enemies. When Paul was, if not forgotten, yet forsaken of all, then God remembered him and stood by him; so that though the sentence of death was passed, yet God delivered from so great a death. Now then, you see what it is for God to remember a people in their low estate; it is to think upon them, in opposition to forgetfulness; it is to take notice of them, in opposition to

neglect; it is to lay their case and estate to heart, to pity and compassionate them, and to be well pleased with them, to hear and to grant their requests, to help and succor, to redeem and deliver them from the hand of their enemies.

But now for the proof of this point, that it is a truth that God remembers, and thus remembers his people in their low estate; there are some truths so clear that merely naming them is sufficient evidence for them. As they say of some errors, they are so palpable and gross that to repeat them is to refute them; similarly, some truths are so evident that merely naming them clarifies them, especially when it is such a truth that experience must speak to, as here it is: "Who remembered us in our low estate."

And indeed, to which of the Saints shall we turn? Who can say of all the Sons of Jacob that God has forgotten them? Did not God remember Joseph in his low estate? Did not God remember Israel in their low estate? And did not God remember David in his low estate? Nay, to speak of all at once, did not God remember Christ in his low estate? And this day speaks for us, that God has remembered us in our low estate.

And indeed, my beloved, we may take up that song, and sing it, from the 124th Psalm: "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may England say, 'If it had not been the Lord who was on our side when men rose up against us, then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us; then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul, then the proud waters had gone over our soul; Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth; our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken, and we are escaped; our help is in the Name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.'"

This may we say, thus may we sing. Is it not so? Is there a contradiction to be made against this truth? Nay, my beloved, the case was such that if God had not been on our side, we had been swallowed up quick; and our not being so shows God was on our side, that God remembered us in our low estate.

I shall therefore proceed to the third thing, which is the reason why God remembers his people in their low estate; that is, as in the text, "for his mercy endures forever." He harps only on this string, he reckons up a long catalogue of many mercies; and the reason of all these is mercy, only mercy. The reason for one is the reason for all, as I told you before. There is no reason for mercy but mercy; no reason for grace but grace. "Who is gracious? Why? Because He wills to be, and to whom He wills He is gracious." So, you see that mercy in God is all the reason for mercy from God to man in his low estate; it is not man's merit but God's mercy, it is not man's due but God's gift, it is not man's demand (nor was it in this case man's desire) but God's grant, who many times answers before they call, and when they are yet speaking, He is hearing. It was not man's measure but God's allowance; it was not after the manner of men, who use to go over where the style is low. This was not because man could make God a requital, but because God would act like Himself; it was not God's profit but man's necessity; it was not that God needed man, but man needed God. Therefore, grace still is as free after it is received as it was before it was given; it was not deserved, and cannot be requited. God, therefore, gave as looking for nothing again; that is, nothing that can requite it. And you shall have for this a double witness: God speaks it, and Saints speak it, that God shows not mercy to man because man pleases Him, but because mercy pleases Him. Indeed, one end that God has in showing mercy is that man should please Him; but that is not the main motive. For in truth, to put man's will before God's is such an inversion that, if I may use so homely an

expression in so solemn a case, it is to put the cart before the horse. You shall find God speaking in Ezekiel 36:21-23, "But I had pity for my holy Name...I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake..." It is a doctrine unpalatable to flesh and blood, to think it must be beholding for all to grace; shame and confusion belong to man, mercy belongs to God. Man makes work for shame and for sorrow; God works mercy as never obliged to it, but for His holy Name's sake. And Jeremiah, in his Lamentations, makes this acknowledgment, thereby confirming the witness of God in Lamentations 3:21-22: "This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope; it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not." If it is by the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed and brought to utter desolation, surely then that we are remembered and delivered is for no other reason but because his compassions fail not, but his mercy endures forever. Thus, I have given you the doctrinal part, with what brevity I could; I come now to the application.

First, it will afford us information.

Secondly, some exhortations.

The information is this:

Does God remember His people in their low estate? Oh, how happy are they then that are the people of this God! That have the Lord for their God; it is not every man in general that is thus remembered. No, God has His peculiars, for whom He has His peculiar favors. Indeed, His mercy is over all His works; He is good and does good to all, but there is a specialty to the household of faith. And God, who commands us to do good to all, especially to the household of faith, does but command us that which He patterns us. Therefore, David

makes his prayer in Psalm 106:4-5, "Remember me, O Lord, with the favor that thou bearest unto thy people; O visit me with thy salvation, that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance. O Lord, favor me with the favors, etc." The good of God's chosen is a choice good. And so he goes on, "O remember me with the favors wherewith thou rememberest thy people." It is an expression in Psalm 146:5, "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God." Why the God of Jacob? Because God, though He be everybody's God and God of the whole Earth, yet He is Jacob's God in a more peculiar manner. He is the God of all the world, by the opening of His hands and filling them with such blessings; and He is Jacob's God by opening His heart and filling him with those blessings. And so far as the heart is above the hand, so far are heart-mercies above hand-mercies, and so far are God's people more happy than other people. David has a saying in Psalm 144:15, "Happy are the people that are in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord." Happy is that people whose God is the Lord. There were persons named before who were so vain as to say, happy were the people that were in such a case, viz. that had their barns full, and their tables full, and their purses full in the world. But David says, "Happy is the people that hath the Lord for their God." If a man had all the world and had not the Lord for his God, he is less happy than he that has the Lord for his God and not all of the world. God always remembers His people, either to deliver them from evil or to turn their evil into good; either to supply them with the things they want, or to let them know that it is good for them that they should want it.

My beloved, this should engage all of you to look after having God for your God. It is a commendation that passes among you when you see young men entering the stage of the world; you say he is likely to do

well, for he minds the main chance, he takes care to look after his shop and his trade, and you say such a one is likely to thrive. If ever you mean to thrive, to go from a low to a high estate, from a poor to a rich estate, from a miserable to a happy condition, look after this: having God for your God. What is God to you if He is not your God? Tolle meum & tolle Deum, as he said; it's cold comfort to me while I live, and when I die, that there is a God, but alas! not my God. You see then that nothing concerns you so much as this; nay indeed, to speak as properly as positively, nothing but this. This is your only interest, and this only. Oh, what an engagement should this be to every person living, to go to the Father by the Son? For this is the main chance, the one thing necessary, that you might have a portion with the Son and the Father. Beloved, who would not live in God's thoughts? Who would not have God take notice of them? Who would not have God lay their cause to heart, to pity and compassionate them? Who would not have God be well pleased with them? Who would not have God hear and grant their requests? Who would not have God help and succor them, to redeem and deliver them? Oh, who would not be the Lord's people? It is the sum of all the Covenant, "I will make with them a new Covenant, I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Oh, what a sad case are they in, that come not under the new Covenant! Whatever good we have from communion, it flows from union; all that comes savingly to us, it all comes from this, that God is our God. Therefore, I beseech you to mind this more, look after an interest in God. Oh, what will you do in your low estate else? In your evil days else? When death and sickness shall bring you low, what will you do if God is not your God? If you have not a God to think of you, a God to take notice of you, a God to lay to heart and to pity and compassionate you, and a God to grant your requests and to deliver and redeem you, what will you do? Oh, therefore, I beseech you to look after this, to have God for your God; for they, they only are happy, and they are thrice happy, yea terque

quaterque beati, altogether and always, in all estates happy, who have the Lord for their God. But for the exhortations, and that thus.

First, does God remember His people in their low estate? Let us trust God then when we meet with future straits. Our God is a God that we shall need forever. And why do we not record the years of the right hand of the Most High? And the wonderful things that God hath wrought for us in ages past? That the God that hath been our help may be our hope. Are any of you in a low condition? Do any of you that are the Lord's people fear you may be brought low in any condition whatsoever? Oh, remember this, God remembers His people in their low estate, and heretofore-mercies are grounds to look for hereafter-mercies; mercies past are grounds to look for mercies to come, as the Apostle says in 2 Corinthians 1:10, "Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us." Oh, my beloved, read over your experiences, look over God's dealings with you, and remember how God dealt with you in such and such and the other low estate; and then raise up your hopes, surely that God that did, the same God will remember me in my low estate. Why? For His mercy endures forever. God's stock is not spent; His riches are unsearchable; there is no fathoming of His goodness. If David thought the experience of others a good ground to build his hope and expectation upon, as he pleads it in Psalm 22:4-5, "Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded." Much more his own experience, as he urges it in verses 9-11, "Thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly." And he adds as if he had said, therefore, be not far from me now trouble (new trouble) is near. And

this was so successful that before the Psalm is ended, he praises and calls on others to praise God; for, saith he in verse 24, "God hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; but when he cried unto him, he heard."

Secondly, be like God. Does God remember His people in their low estate? Be like God then, and remember them that are in a low estate. Godliness, what is it but godlikeness? What is it to be godly but to be like a God? The life of godliness is called in the Scripture, the life of God, not in this respect only, that we have this life from God, or in this, that we live this life to God, but in this, that it's such a life as God lives. God lives the life of love, and God lives the life of mercy. And shall we not now be like God, to live a life of love, and a life of mercy, and good works? You may please to observe that we cannot be in anything said to be more like God than in this of mercy; his name when it is proclaimed, what is it but the Lord gracious and merciful? Now, when are we like God but when gracious and merciful? When we are exhorted to be perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect, it is as another Evangelist has it, to be merciful as our heavenly Father is merciful. And so, when Moses in Exodus 33:16 asked God to show him His glory, God said, "I will cause all my goodness, that is, my glory, that is, my name wherein I glory, to pass before thee."

First, does God remember His people in their low estate? Let us then trust God when we meet with future straits. Our God is a God that we shall need forever. Why do we not record the years of the right hand of the Most High and the wonderful things that God hath wrought for us in ages past? That the God that hath been our help may be our hope. Are any of you in a low condition? Do any of you that are the Lord's people fear you may be brought low in any condition whatsoever? Oh, remember this: God remembers His people in their

low estate. Heretofore-mercies are grounds to look for hereafter-mercies; mercies past are grounds to look for mercies to come, as the Apostle says in 2 Corinthians 1:10, "Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us." Oh, my beloved, read over your experiences, look over God's dealings with you, and remember how God dealt with you in such and such and the other low estate; and then raise up your hopes. Surely, that God that did, the same God will remember me in my low estate. Why? For His mercy endures forever. God's stock is not spent; His riches are unsearchable; there is no fathoming His goodness. If David thought the experience of others a good ground to build his hope and expectation upon, as he pleads in Psalm 22:4-5, "Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded." Much more his own experience, as he urges in verses 9-11, "Thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly." And he adds, as if he had said, therefore, be not far from me now that trouble (new trouble) is near. And this was so successful that before the Psalm is ended, he praises and calls on others to praise God; for, saith he in verse 24, "God hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; but when he cried unto him, he heard."

Secondly, be like God. Does God remember His people in their low estate? Be like God then, and remember those who are in a low estate. Godliness, what is it but godlikeness? What is it to be godly but to be like a God? The life of godliness is called in Scripture, the life of God, not in this respect only, that we have this life from God, or that we live this life to God, but in this, that it's such a life as God lives. God lives the life of love, and God lives the life of mercy. Shall we not now be like God, to live a life of love, and a life of mercy, and

good works? You may please to observe that we cannot be said to be more like God than in this of mercy; His name, when it is proclaimed, what is it but the Lord, gracious and merciful? Now, when are we like God but when gracious and merciful? When we are exhorted to be perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect, it is, as another Evangelist has it, to be merciful as our heavenly Father is merciful. And so, when Moses in Exodus 33:16 asked God to show him His glory, God said, "I will cause all my goodness, that is, my glory, that is, my name wherein I glory, to pass before thee."

You have been honorable, and why should I not hope you will be honorable still in good works? There are poor children here before your eyes that call upon you, saying, "Remember us in our low estate." There are many hospitals that call for this: remember us in our low estate. And mark, I beseech you, what has the name of pure religion (and what has the name, has the nature of it) in James 1:27. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unspotted from the world. This is the great spot of the world, that it is a cruel world, a world without bowels of pity and compassion, a world that remembers not those in a low estate. Mercy is the Church's grace and the Church's glory. And therefore, I beseech you that you will remember, as occasion offers, and when you are going out of these doors, forget not these words: Remember the poor. There is nothing more unbecoming a people that have received mercy than to be hard-hearted, not to have bowels of mercy. It is to put a blot on our own enjoyments and to be wanting to that which we proclaim with joy and triumph this day. Oh, love and pity those in a low estate, remembering that you yourselves were sometimes low. "Thou shalt," saith God in Deuteronomy 10:19, "love the stranger, for you were strangers in the house of Egypt, and ye know the heart of a stranger," Exodus 23:9. You have had experience of what a sad and

disconsolate heart attends a low estate. Let therefore the brother of low degree rejoice that he is exalted, James 1:9, yet so as to condescend to men of low estate, Romans 12:16. We seldom forget God or man in our high estate, but it may be said, as in Ezekiel 16:22, "in all thine abominations thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, when thou wast naked and bare, in a low estate." It was the brand that Gallio lay under when the saints were persecuted, that he cared not for these things. Oh, it is a sad brand, a very black character, when it may be said of men that they do not care for these things. But again,

Thirdly, does God remember His people in their low estate? Oh then, let His people remember Him in their high estate. He has set you on high, oh now remember Him in your high estate. It is but equal that if God remembers us when we are low, that we should remember God when we are high. To sin against the deliverances of God, and a God of deliverance too, is double iniquity. And yet, it is man's great vanity and unhappiness that he is seldom more apt to forget God at any time than then when he has most cause to remember Him; when he has mercy before his eye, yet then to forget God. See this in Deuteronomy 32:15, "Of the rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee." This was the sin of Jeshurun; he grew fat, how? Why, God fed him not with coarse fare, not with brown bread and water, but with dainties. He fed him with butter of kine and milk of sheep, with the fat of lambs and rams of the breed of Bashan, with goats, and with the fat of the kidneys of wheat, and for his drink, he had the pure blood of the grape. And what then? Why then he kicked and forsook the God that made him. God fed him, and then he forsook Him. Oh, strange! One would think that then he should have remembered Him. But he then forsook God and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation. And so, you shall see in Hosea 13:6, it is there laid to the charge of Ephraim, "They were

filled, and as they were filled, their hearts were exalted; therefore, they have forgotten me." Alas, therefore they forgot. What, because God filled them? No, but yet then they were exalted, and therefore they forgot God who filled their hand with good and their bellies with His hidden treasure. My beloved, you see, times of enjoyment, though most desirable to us, are most dangerous to us; times of fullness, though most pleasing to us, are too often made by us most displeasing to God. That should be the day of all days, is strange. Therefore, we have an exhortation given us in Deuteronomy 6:10-12, "And it shall be, when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, and houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full, then beware lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage." There is not such another time of danger as the full time. Hence it was that holy Job was jealous of his children, lest they were evil in a good day, lest at the time of feasting they should curse God. Man seldom turns his back more upon God than when he has the greatest obligations even before his eyes to keep him close to God. Oh, therefore, remember this: that mercies are not given only for us to use to our comfort, but they are given for us to improve for God's glory. The Greeks have two expressions to set out riches by, the one  χρηματα, things had, or things in possession, the other  χρησιμα, things used, or things improved. Now  χρησιμα they account the best, which is things used; it is the improvement of mercy that makes mercy a mercy indeed. Has God delivered us out of the hands of our enemies, that we should commit abomination? No, but that we should serve Him with holiness all the days of our lives. If not, what can we expect but that He should take

away our mercies from us and remember us no more? Oh, therefore, take heed that you do not (while you are eating and drinking in remembrance of God) forget God. It is but too common that eating and drinking takes away men's stomachs as to spiritual things. It is very sad that mercies which are given us to endear God to us, that we might love Him more and serve Him better, should be so abused by us as to love Him less and serve Him worse; that we should take the corn and the wine and the oil, the silver and gold which God gives us, and prepare them for Baal, as they did in Hosea 2:8, and they in Ezekiel 16:17-21. But now, what will you have us do? You will say. Why,

First, take notice not only of the mercies of God but of God in the mercies; not only of the deliverance but of God in the deliverance. For a deliverance is nothing so sweet as when the soul tastes God in it; mercies are never so savory as when they savor of a Savior. Study then not only the mercy but the God of mercy. This did Jacob when his brother Esau asked him, "Whose are all these?" Why, said he, "The children that the Lord hath graciously given thy servant," Genesis 33:5. Mark it, not only children or children which God hath given, but children which God hath graciously given. And so Samuel, you find him in 1 Samuel 7:12, not only taking notice of the mercy but of God in the mercy, "Hitherto the Lord hath helped." To have the help without God is to have help without a blessing; and they that do not see God in it, they have but half-mercy; they have but the body of mercy. To taste God in it, and to enjoy God in it, that is the mercy of the mercy. So that in Numbers 23:23, "Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel; according to this time, it shall be said of Jacob, and of Israel, What hath God wrought?" Jacob and Israel shall not say, "Lo, what is wrought?" but "What hath God wrought?" It's the Lord's doing and

therefore marvelous in our eyes. We shall not look upon mercy as marvelously sweet and precious unless we see it is the Lord's doing. God remembered us, says David. But again,

Secondly, do not only take notice of God in mercy, but as David does here, keep catalogues of the mercies of God. God's mercies are not to be forgotten. You will remember the kindnesses of your friend, all his favors and tokens. You will keep your books of account wherein all your debts shall be entered, that they may be remembered, and shall God be forgotten? Memory is a slippery thing and many times lets go quickly. Therefore, did God command Israel to write down their deliverances. They had not only a table for commands but a table for salvations also; for that which is written will abide, *littera scripta manet*. And records bring that to mind which else would not be thought upon by us, as Mordecai was remembered by Ahasuerus. God has a book of remembrance written for what you do, and will not you have a book of remembrance written for what He does? God has it on record; you have not a good thought, but God writes it down; you shed not a tear, but God bottles it up; you make not a prayer, but God puts it in his book of remembrance. Now, shall God do so for you (not that God has a weak memory, but it is for your consolation), and will not you write down His mercies? You know you dare not trust your memories for your debtors or your debts. Oh, my beloved, will you commit everything to book but God's dealings? You can by your book tell how much such a one owes you, and that such a one is so much in your debt, such a time so much, and such a time so much; but can you do so by God's dealings with you, that such a time, such a deliverance, and such a time, such a remarkable mercy? Oh, let a book of remembrance be written. But again,

Thirdly, lay to heart the mercy of God. If it is written in a book and not in the heart, it will have but little impression. And therefore, it's

commanded in the Scripture, Deuteronomy 4:9, "Take heed to thyself and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen; and (mark this) lest they depart from thine heart." As if he had said, let not thine heart forget; as if the best memory lay in the heart. Therefore, he says, let not thy heart forget. The sense of mercy is the best memory. And beloved, let me tell you this, mercy then works sweetly when it works inwardly; when it does not only affect the eye and the ear but the heart. Moreover, you will not be able to give glory to God if you do not lay mercies to heart. Malachi 2:2 says, "If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my Name," says the Lord of Hosts, "I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings; yea, I have cursed them already because you do not lay it to heart." All else will be nothing if you do not lay it to heart; you cannot give glory to God. But again,

Fourthly, give thanks unto the Lord, who remembered us in our low estate; this the very text calls upon us for. Let the redeemed of the Lord say and do so, whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy, Psalm 107:2. You may please to observe that in Scripture, God has these three titles: the Hope of Israel, the Savior of Israel, and the Glory of Israel. Pray, who was your Hope? Was it not God? Who was your Savior? Was it not God? Pray then, who shall be your Glory? Shall it not be God? If we have received our mercies from God, shall not God receive our thanks? The streams in this world, the rivers of water, all pay their tribute to the fountain; they come from the sea, and thither they return. The whole world teaches us to be true tributaries to God. Does not all come from God? By the same reason, all ought to return to Him; for, as the text says, "Of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things."

First then, let me beseech you to give Him the calves of your lips. Let your glory awake and give glory to God. The tongue of man is called his glory. "My heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth," says David in Psalm 16:9. And the Apostle, in Acts 2:26, echoes, "My heart is glad, and my tongue rejoiceth." What David calls glory, Peter (following the Septuagint) calls the tongue. So, in many places, the tongue of man is called his glory, and in what? In nothing but in glorifying God. In anything else, it is his shame, but in this, that it speaks to the praise of God, it is the glory of man. If man at any time says to God, "Open my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise," this is required from us in Hebrews 13:15, "By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name." God does not think the fruits of our lips small things. Why have you a tongue, but to speak to the praise of God? Why have you lips, but to give fruit to God? And then,

Secondly, give thanks to God by the fruit of your lives. The calves of your lips, if they go alone, are poor perishing calves; thanks-living is the best thanksgiving that can be. Therefore, you shall find in Hebrews 13:15-16, "By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name." And is that all? Is that enough? Oh no, "But to do good and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." As much as to say, the fruit of the lips, without the fruit of the hand and of the life, it is nothing. Pray remember it this day, and forever. "Herein," says Christ, "is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit." A little fruit does not suffice to glorify God. "Herein is My Father glorified, when you bring forth much fruit." A little is as none. "My Father is glorified when you bring forth much." And so, in Philippians 1:11, "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." Observe it, not only righteousness, and fruit of righteousness, but fruits of

righteousness, and filled with them too. So, you see, it is not a little that will suffice.

Pray remember this, that your good works may so shine before men, that you who do them may glorify God also. By your lips, He has but single, but by your works, He has double glory; for you who do them glorify God, and they who see them done will glorify God. Oh, therefore, give a glorious example. But let me add a few things more, I beseech you, that your obedience may be qualified towards God, as your mercy has been qualified from God towards you. How that is, I will tell you presently; only this of the present mercy.

It was a preventing mercy; to be prevented with the blessing of good is the greatest kind of mercy. Deliverance from evil is good, but to be delivered so as not to be in evil is much more good. Who will not reckon it a greater mercy always to be in health, than to be delivered from sickness? Though both are mercies, in this mercy we know not a mystery, in others we have; this is not like peace, the joyful daughter of a sorrowful mother; this is not like health after a pestilence; but this prevents all these. So much the greater mercy: it took away no good from us, it brought no evil upon us; and how great was this mercy? If this mercy had not been, for all that I know, many of us had not had a being; or else, which is worse, a being not worth having.

But now to the qualifications of your obedience. The first qualification of your mercy was this: it was free mercy, it came not upon constraint, it was not forced nor wrested out of the hands of God. Freely you have received, freely give; God loves to give cheerfully, and the same God loves a cheerful giver.

Secondly, your mercy was according to your own heart, every way grateful and acceptable to you. Let your obedience be so to God; be

like David, men after God's own heart.

Thirdly, it was seasonable mercy, it was in our low estate, it was when you knew not what to do; for you knew not the danger you were in. So let your obedience be seasonable, then it's beautiful.

Fourthly, it was a signal mercy; *digitus Dei*, the finger of God was here, the enemy being the judge. Signal mercies call for signal obedience; therefore, be sure to do some singular and signal things for God, to return to the Lord according to the benefits received. Oh say, what? What answerable thing shall I return the Lord for all His benefits? But again,

Fifthly, it is a continued mercy; we enjoy our mercies from that mercy to this day. It is not one mercy and no more, but a chain of mercy; not the mercy of a day or a year, but the mercy of ages. Well then, let us be continual in obedience, let us be Christians, not for a day or for a fit, but Christians throughout every day in the year; not only Christians here at Church, but at home in the closet, and in the shop. And then again, lastly,

Sixthly, we have superadded to this multitude of other mercies, heap upon heap, He loads us with His benefits every day; yea, many a time, many a time we may now say, has He saved us, He is the God of all our salvations and His mercy endures forever. Let us then multiply obedience and be always abounding in the work of the Lord. Shall mercies increase, and obedience decrease? God forbid.

Take a few provoking considerations, and I have done. I might draw considerations from the Author of the mercy, God; a God that was offended by us, a God that needed us not, and a God that gains nothing by us; and yet this God remembered us in our low estate. That should engage us. I might also draw obligations from the

Objects, and that is us, who were not only undeserving but ill-deserving, and are not a suitable returning People. I might draw arguments from the mercy, that God remembered us in all the senses spoken of before. And I might draw arguments from the season, in our low estate, and from the excellency of the duty of thanksgiving, which is a comely thing. It makes us like the Angels, whose whole employment and liturgy is to give and live praise to God. And from this also, I might enlarge on the obligations that His mercy endures forever. But only take these four arguments.

1. It is dangerous sinning after mercy received; and the greater the mercy, the more danger in sinning. The greater the mercy has been, the greater the danger of sinning will be. God was angry with Solomon because he turned his heart from the Lord God of Israel. But what was it that heightened this? It was this, that God had appeared to him twice. So, Ezra says, shall we again sin after such a mercy as this? Such a deliverance as this? What could we then expect but that God should be angry with us until He had consumed us, and there should be no remnant nor escaping? Ezra 9:14. Oh, sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto us. God knows how to fetch all His pennyworths out of us; He has plagues yet seven times more in store; if He gives them vent, woe to us. See Judges 10:11, 14. "And the Lord said unto the Children of Israel, Did not I deliver you from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites, from the Children of Ammon, and from the Philistines? Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods; Wherefore I will deliver you no more: go and cry unto the gods which you have chosen, let them save you in the time of your tribulation." Oh, this, this is a sad case. "I will deliver you no more." If we forsake God, and forget God after such remarkable salvation, let me tell you that we incur this, that God should say, "I will deliver you no more."

2. Our mercies, unless we make this answerable return to God, our mercies are not complete; our mercies are long in completing. A mercy is never complete to us until we have returned the glory of it to God. Mercies are not perfect mercies until praises are perfect praises. See that in Psalm 40 and the beginning. Mark the steps of the mercy. (1) He inclined, (2) He heard my cry, (3) He brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, (4) Set my feet upon a rock, (5) Established my going, and (6) As the crown of all, He put a new song into my mouth, Praise unto our God. The mercy was not complete, though he was set on a Rock, one would think past danger; no, that is not enough that he was set upon a Rock, or that he was brought up out of a horrible pit and out of the miry clay, and had his goings established; but there is this to make it up complete, he has put a new song into my mouth, even Praise to our God. Oh, my beloved, may it not be feared that you and I have many imperfect mercies? Why? Because our returns are so imperfect, we do not sing the new Song with such life and vigor as we ought to do. Oh, let us then look about us; our mercies are not perfect or complete until we make an answerable return to God for mercies received.

3. Remember this: this is all you can do for God, and this is less than God has done for you. You are not less than the least of mercies only before you have them, as to the matter of merit, but less than the least of mercies after you have received them, in respect of returns. You can never give God enough; your best is too bad, and your all is too little. When you have done all, you are unprofitable servants because you have done but what was your duty to do. For man is bound to serve God with the utmost of his soul and strength; his all is God's due. Man must, therefore, be an unprofitable servant. But oh, then, how unprofitable is the man who does not do his duty at all! Oh, my

beloved, let us do all that we can; for when we have done all, it is no more but what we ought. We give God but His own. Yet again,

4. Remember this: if this is not done, this day is in vain, and this day is lost. Shall we, beloved, reward evil to our own souls and turn our holy days and holy duties into iniquity? The day is lost; it is gone. Says God concerning the fasts, "Is this the fast that I have chosen, for a man to hang down his head for a day?" No, no, this is not it. So may God say, "Is this the feast which I have chosen? What, only to make a pompous show, and have a sermon to serve for state, is this it?" Do you think, beloved, that God cares for man's compliments? What is it to give God a parcel of good words and a parcel of bad works? What is it in words to confess Him, and in works to deny Him? What is this? Is this the way of praise? No, it is hypocrisy, and the way to undo all that we do. I will but borrow the expression of the Psalmist and so conclude, Psalm 50:16, "But unto the wicked, God says, 'What have you to do to declare My statutes, or that you should take My covenant in your mouth? Seeing you hate instruction and cast My words behind you.'" What, wicked, and yet declare My statutes! What, wicked, and take My covenant! What have you to do? Ah, what have you to do? "Consider this, you who forget God, lest He tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver."

But now, if you offer praise by a rightly ordered conversation, what then? Why, then says God, "Know assuredly, that he who offers praise honors Me, and to him that orders his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God." Oh, then I beseech you in the bowels of Christ Jesus, as you tender the honor of God and your own salvation,

that you thus give thanks to the Lord who remembered us in our low estate, for His mercy endures forever.

FINIS.

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