

# Saints Gathered to the Lord

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*"Gather My saints together unto Me, those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice." (Psalm 50:5)*

The Lord has made two remarkable appearances upon the earth. Not only two appearances but two that stand out above all others, are more remarkable than all others. The first of the two is the one He made on that terrible Mount Sinai, which smokes at His presence and trembled under the thunder of His power. That appearance was such that it made those from whom it was hidden tremble and made them understand they needed a Mediator, that the immediate presence of God was intolerable. It made them say to Moses: "Speak thou with us and we will hear; but let not God speak with us lest we die." Now that same presence on the same mountain in the spirit, every elect person has some sight of sooner or later; and it is a vain thing to talk about knowing the gospel if you know nothing of the law. It is a vain thing to talk about the Mediator if the presence of God has never slain your own power to deal immediately with God. But if you have seen Him so as to lose your power or ability to deal immediately with God, if you have so seen him as to feel unless there be a Daysman between you, you can never look at Him, never speak to Him, never bear Him to speak to you because it would utterly slay you and that for ever, then you are a blessed person. Not in your feelings, but in the issue of your feelings your present painful experience will prove to you that God, whose naked presence you cannot bear, whose gloomy justice has utterly slain all your hopes so that your brightness has withered and your strength has gone; that God has in an act of amazing grace and love pitched upon a way of manifesting Himself that is bearable to you and honouring to Him, that removes your death, takes away your wretched guilt, shuts the gates of hell against you and opens the gates of heaven to you.

This makes a way for the second appearance of God, which is on Mount Zion: "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined," (Ps. 50:2). Was there not a perfection of beauty on Mount Sinai? Yes there was. There is nothing imperfect in God and nothing imperfect in any of His ways. But the perfection on Mount Sinai was a perfection that dealt, and could only deal destruction to sinners, perfect justice, perfect goodness in justice. But on Mount Zion there was the perfection which could dwell with such everlasting burnings, such naked perfection and beauty. Not another God, not a different measure or kind of justice, not another brightness, but the same God, the same justice, the same brightness on Mount Zion clothed with love, veiled with our nature. Ah and we can bear that! I have seen that, I believe, and all who have seen it love God there. On Mount Sinai He is a terror, on Mount Zion an attraction; on Mount Sinai He deals death in justice to sinners, on Mount Zion He communicates life to the dead; on Mount Sinai He declares the sinner's righteousness has not profited him, on Mount Zion He reveals the

righteousness of God and imputes it to the sinner, clothes the naked, and shows that by Him there is a fountain of blood open for sin and uncleanness into which He mercifully plunges the filthy, purges away their guilt, and by that act that purges away their guilt destroys the power of their sins. O I like Toplady's words:

"Let the water and the blood,  
From thy riven side that flowed,  
Be of sin the double cure,  
Cleanse me from its guilt and power!"

If ever you are cleansed from the one, you will be from the other. It is the glory of the law to forbid sin but not to assist any person to overcome it. It is the glory of the gospel to remove sin, break its power, overturn its dominion, and form Christ in the heart the hope of glory. God shines here.

Now what a mercy to have seen Him here, ever to have had even the most distant glimpse of God in Christ! It is to this place, out of which He shines, that He commands His saints to be gathered, and there it is they want to be gathered. Respecting all other places and people the saints can say, "Gather not my soul with sinners," and looking to the Lord they can say, regarding Him as that precious living Vine that He is spoken of as being and that He declares Himself to be, they can say:

"O let a lasting union join  
My soul to Christ the living Vine!"

Gather My saints together and bring them to My footstool.

Now you look at this, sinner, with all the dismal fears, all the heavy doubts, all the distracting guilt, all the confusing ignorance you feel concerning your state and your future, you look at this, which way is your heart bent? Now everyone under the teaching of the Spirit finds this in himself sooner or later, more or less distinctly, he wants to know Christ for himself and to be found in union with all interested in His Person and work. And if there is any sound, before he is fully delivered, that can make a sinner hope or give him any sensation of gladness, it is the sound of the free gospel, the free, pure, unmerited grace of God in Christ. And if there is any sight that attracts the soul Godward and puts the love of other things out, it is the sight of God's well pleased face in Jesus Christ. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, (2 Cor. 4:6).

Now sinner, you may often feel this attraction and hardly know what it is to your satisfaction. I know that delivered you will be, but there are many points and steps short of deliverance that people take, the nature of which they do not much realize, though sensible of the points and steps while under their influence. You may many times feel a sweet attraction Godward and yet not realize that the Spirit of God is at the bottom of it, yet He is. The Holy Spirit gathers, it is His work. He is Christ's minister now in the church. The dispensation in which we live today is the dispensation of the Spirit, and though there is a most grievous withholding of the Spirit yet every

good that is to be found in the church is to be found there, as the fruit and work of the eternal Spirit. Now you will be woefully disappointed in one thing; every child of God is. You will never get to God as you want, never as a good person, always as a sinner; and that will constantly nonplus you, and that terrible self-righteousness secretly working will move like this: "If I had a soft heart I could go, if I had a good feeling I could go to Him." Thus you stumble. A legal spirit in a poor child of God is one of his worst enemies. You will never get there as you expect, only get there as God expects, as a lost sinner, an empty naked beggar, as a filthy leper, an undone creature whose want can only fully be met by God, whose hunger He can satisfy, whose thirst He can quench, He whose tender mercy and sweet compassion are sufficient for the worst case.

"Gather My saints together unto Me." You may say at the very threshold, "It says saints and that cuts me off." My friend, you must notice this, it is God who speaks, not His people. This is His judgment. Now when He says, "saints," the people of whom He says it are saints, but between the name which is really theirs and the feeling they often want and lack, there is a dreadful distance sometimes. But a saint is a sinner, and if you, if I had the same grace we want and seek at the hands of God, what do you think would be the greatest strongest feeling in our hearts? We should be more than ever sorry for sin and more than ever oppose it. Don't you think, if you get grace in the measure you want, that you will have no trouble for sin. The greatest saint is the greatest sinner in his feelings; the greatest grace, the greatest conflict. This always is the case, and you have found it as far as you have gone like this. When did you have the deepest feeling of compunction for sin, most detest yourself, most wish you could never sin again? Was it when you were far off in a bad state? No; when at the Lord's dear feet, and love divine had come and healed your wounds. That will ever be the case. When a sinner is being gathered then he is being also opposed and pushed at.

There was one lad brought by his father to Christ of whom we read that as his father was bringing him, the devil threw him to the ground and tare him till he was nearly dead. When the Holy Spirit will bring a sinner, and is bringing a sinner to this dear Immanuel, this Saviour, this Friend, this Redeemer, then sin and Satan are the most active. It is as if Satan says, "My kingdom, my hour is short," and so he rages, storms, and works. Still the Lord gathers. It is a work He is at all the days of our life. When there is anything good going on within there is a gathering.

Now people who are gathered, are gathered for something, they are gathered to hear Christ's words. "They sat down at Thy feet, everyone shall receive of Thy words." You could not deny this, some of you, if you were to speak the truth of your own case; you could not deny that is what you want, could you? "O if He would speak!" How often that is your inward request! "O that I might hear the Son of God speak! O if that word in Hebrews might be fulfilled in me, "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son!" O how often we have prayed for that manifestation of the Son of God! What are Christ's words? What does He say to His people? Just what they want. He says, "Thy sins which are many are all forgiven thee." Is not that just what your aching heart wants to hear, poor sinner? Is not that what your afflicted conscience wants to hear? How often you have spread your case before His holy Majesty when secretly by the Spirit gathered to the throne of heavenly grace! Your eyes have been up to Him and you have lifted up

your hands in supplication and begged that whatever else He left unsaid, whatever else He might be silent in respect of, this one thing would He do for you: "Make this out, don't let me be short here. Let this sweet essential be mine, this sweet, free, full forgiveness of all my sins be spoken into my soul."

You may say, "How can a man be a saint if he is not forgiven?" I tell you, it is God who speaks; this is His judgment and decision. He is a saint who has got a heavenly nature. That heavenly nature moving in the heart of one who is by birth and practice a sinner, must ever oppose his sinfulness and bring to light what he is. Let us look at the case or cases where forgiveness has been enjoyed. "But He being full of compassion forgave their iniquity and destroyed them not. Yea, many a time turned He His anger away and did not stir up all His wrath." Does not this state the case respecting some of us? O cannot some of us at times look back to that blessed time here and there, where God has done it for us? Yes, many times. How He has multiplied pardons in our souls! I do not mean to say you have had many times over the word forgiveness distinctly spoken, but O how often you have had a smile that has taken away all your guilt and drawn your soul to the blessed footstool of the Lamb of God! There you have gazed, there you have bathed and enjoyed His eternal goodness. "Gathered," to hear this forgiveness of sins. You who have never attained to this rich grace, you look at this if you can. God has free forgiveness and free mercy to give, and He has never set a saint to this business to help himself in the least. If you are right, I will tell you how you will be right and know it. It will be by passively receiving the forgiveness of all your sins; and I do wish you may remain in bondage till God sets you free, till God does it for you; that your wounds may never be slightly healed. For if they are it means this, the Holy Spirit tearing open those wounds again and cleansing the place, and that is dreadful work.

When gathered to Shiloh it was to hear the law from Him. Our heavenly Shiloh keeps the law of truth and kindness, and so when the Spirit gathers our souls from time to time to Him, it is to hear something He has got to say. Did you ever thank God that He is a speaking God, that He speaks to cases? You know the Israelites did not go on a pilgrimage by themselves, they did not go hither and thither as they would. The Lord spoke to them thus, when the cloud rested they rested, when it moved they moved, whether for a day, a week, a month, or a year. That is how the Lord speaks still in His Word, Spirit, and providence, and when He brings His poor people to His holy footstool and gathers them there, when He sets His eyes on them and opens their ear to hear instruction, then it is that He graciously says something. Two things often unite in the experience of God's people and by them both the Lord speaks to them, namely by providences, external matters; and by grace, heavenly teachings in their souls. And he who is blessed with a spirit of observation and precious faith will, in his case from time to time, hear what God the Lord will speak to His children.

Now it is this that keeps religion sweet, the conscience tender, and faith and the fear of God moving, and preserves from that stagnant condition into which some of us have fallen from time to time. You may depend upon it, the more the Lord deals with the conscience, the more exercise there is. If you are at liberty to go hither and thither, do as you like without seriously considering the Lord's mind and will, if you are one of His your soul is in a bad state. If the Spirit is with you and working in your heart from time to time, this will be your cry: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life,

to behold the beauty of the Lord and to enquire in His temple." "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" They do want the Lord to show them what to do.

Then there is this point, they are gathered to the Lord for what they need, to receive strength. You will never be strong away from God. It was when the Lord, the Angel of Jehovah, came and touched Daniel and spoke to him that he had strength. There are some things that make us fall flat in weakness and corruption, some of God's dealings that weaken and bring people into such a state of felt corruption that they have nothing to say. They are in their spirit just like Daniel was, on his face. There is no moving in them till God moves to them. Then when He comes and touches them, there is a moving. Daniel came to his hands and knees; another touch set him on his feet; then a word took away his trembling and he said: "Let my Lord speak, for Thou hast strengthened me." What strength the Lord imparts to take the cross up, do His will, walk in a difficult way, hang about the atonement, and wait for the fulfilment of promises!

"Gather my saints together unto Me." There is something said about these saints" "Those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice." There is a covenant made by God; it is a covenant of grace ordered in all things and sure. It is represented by the sheet containing all manner of creeping things. There they were in that sheet held, bound together. It is an eternal covenant, a covenant of grace which procures and provides for every necessity for time and eternity. Now when this takes effect in the heart of a sinful, elected, redeemed person there is a work of grace, a blessed work of grace, which is effectual in bringing the subject of it from the things in which he was born, in which he lived; and in this there is made by every subject of effectual grace a covenant. A covenant by sacrifice is a dividing of things. A covenant in the Old Testament dispensation was made, as you know when God made a covenant with Abraham, with beasts slain and divided, and then in between the pieces as put one against the other, there went a smoking furnace, which indicates the trial to which Abraham was to be subjected: then a burning lamp, which shows the deliverance that should eventually be wrought for him and for his seed by the Lord.

Now when the Lord works in His people He brings them to sacrifice, something is spilt, something is done away with. What is that? I will tell you in one or two particulars. If you have never hated your own life and lost it, as yet you have not made this sacrifice. If grace has wrought effectually by the Holy Ghost in you, there has been this in measure, a real hating of your life, which means a denial of self, a taking up the cross, a following the Lord. God knows, and some of you know, in what particulars.

In all these sacrifices there is one requisite, namely salt. This means the grace of the Spirit's work. Hence Christ in the Gospel says, "Every sacrifice shall be salted with salt." If there is no Spirit's work within you, whatever you do, whatever you cut off, whatever religion you have, there is nothing acceptable to God in it. But if the Spirit's work is in your heart, and by this self is denied and the cross taken up, the salt of grace will make it acceptable.

Now if I may be helped, let me trace this out a little. Did the Lord ever enable you to say in any trial, loss, or cross, as those disciples did in the house of Philip when a prophet came down from Judea and bound his hands and feet with Paul's girdle and the disciples entreated Paul not to go, but he answered, "What mean ye to weep and to break my heart, for I am ready not to be bound

only but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus;" and when they saw his heart was bent on it and nothing could turn him aside they said, "The will of the Lord be done?"

Now, my friends, if the Lord has laid anything upon you that nature hates, winces under, cannot bear, or has taken from you anything that you would rather have kept and lost everything else, as in the case of Abraham when he had to give up Isaac and keep all his gold and silver; and you have been enabled to say, "The will of the Lord be done," what a sacrifice you have made, what a blessed sacrifice! The fire had been there, the salt had been there, and because the salt and fire were in the sacrifice, the work of the blessed Spirit, you found the Lord had accepted you. Now there is a sense of being accepted sometimes given you, is there not? You do not need anyone to tell you when you have got this experience in your soul. You say: "I am sure God accepted it; I knew it by His smile, by the repentance, softness, contrition, love, humility, and peace which flowed into my heart and spirit. I knew He had accepted me."

Now He says: "You gather that saint to Me. He has made this sacrifice, I won't be his debtor, I will pour something in that is better than anything he may have given up. I will give him something better. He has given up something of the flesh, something that is earthly, I will give him something that is heavenly:"

"And if our dearest comforts fall  
Before His sovereign will,  
He never takes away our all,  
Himself He gives us still."

And when He gathers you to His footstool and looks upon you and approves of that which His Spirit has wrought in you, accepts the sacrifice attended with the salt of His grace and gives you sweetly to feel He has done it in you and accepts it at your hands, gathers you to His blessed footstool to hold a little fellowship with you, you say: "If this is it, it is heaven for earth, it is God for a little bit of earth and O what a blessed exchange!" God will not be in your debt, my friends. You will always have to be in His debt, never He in yours. So He brings you to this place to see what He has got for you.

But here is where a poor child of God wants Him. I often have felt my stubborn will stands against me. There is a stiffness in man's will that nothing can bend but grace. Something may say, "It's bend or break." "Yes," you answer, "and I am more afraid of the breaking than I can express, but I have no power to bend." And this causes you to groan and sigh and say something like this: "O take this stiffness out of my will; give me grace to say, Thy will be done!" It may come very close to you, very close. You know the last thing a man will give up is his life. Paul and his fellow voyagers cast out first the tackling, then that which they could not do without, the wheat; but not their life. Then that had to go. It is very significant, is it not? Last of all, "they committed themselves unto the sea." Aye, that was the last. Sinner, you will never in your life here below reach a higher act of faith and grace by the Holy Ghost than this, to deny, forsake, and hate your own life; never make a bigger sacrifice. A man's righteousness is all his wealth, and as long as he has got a bit he will keep it till the Lord give him grace and mercy to let it go. You say, "We all know that." Yes, I have been learning it for years and only taken a few steps yet. Is it easy? Yes, to talk about, but to walk it out is different. To lie a lost, naked, empty, poor

beggar, one who has nothing of his own but sin and rags and ruin, and that at the end of thirty years' experience or perhaps more than that, still as dependent upon Christ as at the first, to fall at His feet:

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,  
On Thy kind arms I fall;  
Be Thou my strength and righteousness,  
My Jesus and my All."

This is a sacrifice, and I have been enabled to make it and say that in heart and conscience. O what a blessing! And then the Lord says, "Now gather these people to Me."

O my dear friends, life is ever so much nearer to death than we think, heaven is ever so much nearer to hell than we think as to experience, until the Lord bring us into the experience! Righteousness to full perfection must be brought. Then you have nothing of the sort to bring? No. Then your own rags have to go. What does the Lord gather them for? To hear the law. Then you say, "That will cut me off; if I am to be judged by the law I am undone." Wait a minute, sinner! What is it to be judged by the law? It is to have a sentence pronounced. What is the sentence to be pronounced upon the sinner who lies at the Lord's footstool hoping in His mercy, looking to the atonement, cleaving to the blood and righteousness of Christ? What is the sentence? "Thou art all fair, My love, there is no spot in thee." That is the judgment. "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan!"

"Satan avaunt; stand off ye foes;  
In vain ye rail, in vain oppose;  
Your cancelled claim no more obtrude;  
He's mine, I bought him with My blood."

The Lord gathers His people that He may judge them. Hence David's prayer in one place was, "Save me, O God, by Thy name; judge me by Thy strength." What, is the sinner to be judged by His name? Yes. What is that name? "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." Poor sinner, art thou in thy soul willing to be judged in this name? Is there anything your soul wants so much? "O," you say, "if only I thought the Lord would look upon me in that name, it is all, I can truly say, all my soul desires." Well He says: "You gather My people together unto Me that I judge them."

Christ, the eternal Son of God, "was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead," (Rom. 1:3,4). That is, He was now to be openly shown, now to be manifested by this resurrection of His, to be the Son of God. What is His judgment? A declaration, a blessed declaration in the conscience. Ah, it is a good thing to have something that terminates in your conscience! That is where the judgment is. Christ said: "When I shall receive the congregation I will judge uprightly." When does He receive the congregation? When they are brought to Him. How are they brought? By the Spirit. When they are brought to Him. How are they brought? By the Spirit. When at His footstool begging for mercy, naked, guilty, tried, tempted by the devil, afraid how matters will fall out with them, then they think of Jesus, this Judge, this Son of God,

this Redeemer; He judges. There is the devil, the accuser of the brethren accusing them mightily. The poor child of God says: "What a life mine has been! What a poor unprofitable life! There never was a saint, if I am a saint, who had as little grace as I; never one walked more unprofitably than I, an unbelieving believer, if a believer at all; hard-hearted, unthankful, untender, ungracious. I have not been profitable to my brethren. I feel as if there is nothing about me but sin." There he is with his conscience condemning him, Satan at his right hand, many Scripture precepts seem to stand up against him, and he feels, "I know I have not walked in you."

There is one thing, he is not to be his own judge. O what a mercy! If I were my own judge I should not dare to stand up here. Some of you would not dare to come to His house, venture to His holy Majesty. You judge yourselves unworthy to creep under His notice. But He says to all these tremblers at His word who sit in judgment on themselves: "Thou art Mine; fear not, I have redeemed thee; yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee," (Jer. 31:3). "You are helpless, I will help thee; you are weak, I will strengthen thee." And I tell you what it is that a man feels when he gets this, that he can hardly hold it. It breaks him all to pieces. If he hated himself before, he hates himself a thousand times more now. What a wretch he is under the smile, the blessed judgment of the Saviour, and yet how happy he is! How sure he is that the words of Christ he has heard with power are true! He has got heavenly merry making in his heart now. He knows what the Apostle Paul meant in his measure: "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day," (2 Tim. 1:12). Ah my friends, if the Prince stands up for us we shall do. I like one thing when enabled to come to it, I like to leave off trying to prove myself right. "O," you say, "I wish I could prove myself right!" You might be wrong in your judgment. Suppose it pronounced you right and your judgment was wrong. But if you leave off judging yourselves right, that is best. Then you will have the judgment of Christ, and that is right, that is infallible.

"Gather My saints together unto Me, those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice." This covenant that His saints make, in the experience of it, brings them to this, you take hold of His strength. "Let him take hold of My strength that he may make peace with Me, and he shall make peace with Me." I tell you this friends, this is a real experience. "O," you say, "I am too weak." I tell you, God the Holy Ghost, if He is in you, will make that true to you one of these days. I remember to have read, and felt something in reading it years ago, a saying of Luther's. He said: "Lord, I will never detach myself from Thee." If you have got grace you can follow the man in his experience, though you may not dare to use the word, "detach." But you will find the same spirit in your heart. "If there is to be a separation it shall not be on my side. By the help of God I will cleave to Him. If He accept me, well. If He won't look at me," O it almost breaks your heart to think of it! Blessed be God, the goodwill of Him that dwelt in the bush is with all these poor people! The Lord grant His blessing to rest upon us, I need it, we all need it, even life for evermore, and may the Lord command His blessing. Amen