

THE POOR RAISED UP OUT OF THE DUST, AND THE BEGGAR LIFTED UP FROM THE DUNGHILL

[1Sa 2:8](#)

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"He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's and he hath set the world upon them."- [1Sa 2:8](#)

MOST of you are probably familiar, not only with the name of the person who uttered these words, but also with the circumstances under which they were spoken by her. But lest any should not immediately recollect the passage, I will just observe that they are the words of Hannah, the mother of the prophet Samuel, and that the circumstances under which they were spoken, were when she brought her infant son, and presented him before the Lord, that he might be his for ever. Her heart, it appears, was then so enlarged, and her soul so comforted and strengthened by beholding her infant son as the manifested answer to her prayers, that she burst forth into that song of thanksgiving of which the text forms a portion.

But before I enter into the experimental meaning of the text, it may be desirable, with God's blessing, to trace out a few leading particulars of Hannah's case.

I believe, that, in Scripture, there are typical characters, as well as what are more properly called "types", or typical things; and Hannah appears to me to have been one of these typical characters. By typical characters, in this sense, I mean, not in the same way as Aaron, or Solomon, were types of Christ, but certain persons whose history and experience are typical or representative of God's dealings with his people, or of characters that should arise in the church. The history of Hannah affords us more than one instance of these typical characters. We read, for instance, [1Sa 1:1-2](#) that "Elkanah had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah; and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children." Elkanah seems to me to typify the Lord Jesus-I think we may fairly assume this without doing violence to the figure; and his two wives seem to represent the church, Peninnah the professing, and Hannah the possessing church. Let us see if the figure will bear us out in this interpretation. Peninnah, in type, represents the professing church. As having a form of godliness, and a name to live, she had a vast superiority outwardly over her rival, for she was fruitful, whilst Hannah was barren. This points out the superiority, in outward fruit, which many professors have over God's spiritually-taught children. But we may observe that in Peninnah's fruitfulness there was nothing manifested of a supernatural character. She had children in the common course of nature, as other married women have them; there was nothing peculiarly providential, nothing eminently striking, nothing miraculous; but all took place in the usual course.

Now this strikingly represents the way in which mere professors of religion bring forth their good works. The fruits they produce are not wrought in them by miracle; they do not spring out of a supernatural operation upon their consciences; but they are brought forth, from time to time, in the mere course of nature, without any galling disappointment on account of previous barrenness, without any earnest cry that the Lord would work powerfully in their soul, without any manifested answer to the prayer that he would make them fruitful in every good word and work. But these good works and religious performances, on which they pride themselves so highly, are brought forth by them in the usual course of nature, by the mere exertion of the creature, utterly independent of any work of the Holy Ghost upon their heart.

But this fruitfulness of Peninnah much galled and pained her barren rival, as the zeal, devotedness, piety and amiability, evident in many professors, often exceedingly gall the children of God. For they are spiritually what Hannah was naturally-barren. Thus they cannot bring forth good works in the usual process of nature. Barrenness, impotency, and helplessness, have so completely paralysed them, that they require a supernatural, and I might say, without going too far, a miraculous operation of the Holy Ghost upon their conscience, just as Hannah required, to speak with all delicacy, a miraculous operation upon her womb to bring forth fruit. They are then exceedingly pained and galled by seeing how fruitful mere professors of religion are, whilst they continue barren and fruitless. Thus fruitful Peninnahs can pray, whilst barren Hannahs cannot put up a single breath of spiritual prayer: the one can always believe, whilst the other cannot raise up a single grain of living faith in their heart; the former can hope, whilst the latter at times are ready to sink down well nigh into despair: the dead can be happy while the living are often overwhelmed in misery; the carnal can read the Bible, chapter after chapter, while the spiritual can scarcely open it at times on account of the temptations which assail them; and the graceless can walk in the path of religion with all the ease and comfort in the world, whilst the gracious, like Asaph, are plagued all the day long, and chastened every morning. As Peninnah, too, taunted her rival with her own fruitfulness and her barrenness, so the mere professors of religion often taunt God's people with their want of good works compared with their own superior and abundant religious performances. They sneer at those who profess spiritual religion as backward where they are forward; that they do not distribute tracts, support missionary societies, unite with other religious bodies, and make zealous efforts to convert the world. They therefore upbraid them, as Peninnah did Hannah, for their barrenness, and charge them with religious indifference, or, what they call, their Antinomian slothfulness; and with an inward satisfaction and wonderful self-complacency, compare their own abundant fruitfulness with their barrenness.

But what was the effect of these taunts, or, rather, what was the effect of the secret pangs produced in Hannah's soul by the sense of her barrenness? It was that she turned away from everything and went with her burden to the Lord. And there is one thing which I would not wish to omit, which is, that even her husband himself could not comfort her. Elkanah, indeed, said to her, "Am not I better to thee than ten sons?" Applying the type, Is not the Lord Jesus better to the souls of his people than all the good works in the world, or even than all the testimonies he might give them? Is not the Giver better than the gift? the Husband better than the wedding ring? Aye, indeed, he is; but then for want of the gift they often doubt their interest in the Giver, and the ring being missing, their title to the Bridegroom is called in question. Living souls cannot be satisfied with the bare knowledge that Christ is a Husband to his church, when they come short of a feeling testimony and a blessed witness, in their own consciences, that he is so to them. We cannot, indeed, fully carry the figure out, for Christ can comfort his people with a word, whilst Elkanah, with all his attempts and even double portion of gifts and love could not comfort his wife, because she was lacking in that one point on which she had so set her heart. But what was her resort and refuge? She went where every child of God will go-to the Lord, and she went to him in soul-trouble, as every child of God will sooner or later do.

It is not feeble prayers, customary prayers, what I may call regular prayers, that draw forth the Lord's manifested compassion, and bring down an answer of mercy and peace; but it is when the Spirit intercedes in the soul with groanings which cannot be uttered; when it walks in the steps of its great Covenant Head, of whom we read, that "being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly." [\[Lu 22:44\]](#) When the soul cries unto the Lord in the depth of soul trouble; it is then that the most High God bows down his ear and answers. Was it not so with Hannah? No sooner had she "poured out her soul before the Lord," and "spoken to him out of the abundance of her complaint and grief," than, though Eli at first mistook her case, the Lord spake a word by his lips to her soul, which wiped away the tears from her eyes, and sent her home in peace. And when her prayer was manifestly granted, and she came up with the answer in her arms, her infant son, "Samuel," which means "heard of God," when she held him up before the Lord as

the answer to her prayer; her soul was melted into thanksgiving, the voice of praise burst forth from her lips, and the Holy Ghost has recorded her song of triumph for our comfort and instruction.

Of this song of thanksgiving, the text forms a part. "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory; for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's and he hath set the world upon them."

As the passage is rather long, it may be desirable, for the sake of clearness, to break it up into smaller portions; and, though it may not be strictly according to academic rule, or I might say, according to parsonic method, yet, instead of beginning at the beginning, I shall take the liberty of commencing at the end, and looking at the last words of the text first.

1. "The pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them." By these "pillars" I understand the saints of God; for we read immediately after, "He will keep the feet of **his saints**," that word being introduced, I believe, as a key to the foregoing expression, as a clue to the mystery wrapped up in the words-"The pillars of the earth."

1. Two things are said of these saints, first, that they are "pillars of **the earth**," upon which God hath "**set the world**"; and, **secondly**, that they are the Lord's-"The pillars of the earth are **the Lord's**." The world is here represented as standing on pillars, they being its support, just as the pillars of the opposite gallery support it and those who now fill it from falling headlong. Thus the saints are represented as bearing up the earth, as supporting it from falling into ruin, and from being dashed into a thousand shivers by the rod of a justly offended God.

What a wonderful glance does this give us into the mysterious kingdom of grace-that the saints of God should be the temple, and that the world should be but the scaffolding, and that when the temple is completed in all its fair proportions, the scaffolding will be taken down, put into the fire and burnt. Contrast this Scriptural declaration with the opinion of carnal, unhumiliated man. Ask men generally what are the pillars of England. Would not their reply be, "It is our gallant army, our invincible navy, our Houses of Parliament, our noble aristocracy, the middle classes of the land, our ships, trade, and commerce, in a word, the wealth, capital, and property of the country?" Would not that or a similar one be the answer of nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand? But what does God say? That "the pillars of the earth," which keep England, and, with England, the whole inhabited globe from falling into a deserved hell, are not carnal props like these, but God's "saints," the poor despised people of Christ.

O, how revolting is this to nature! O, how humbling is it to the pride of man that some poor old man, or decrepit old woman, just kept from starving, should be one of the pillars which keep this country from falling into ruin! that not the queen, not the ministry, not the Houses of Parliament, not army and navy, hold up this country which we inhabit; but a poor despised set, whom the world would gladly sweep out of its path as the filth and offscouring of all things; that these disturbers, who are scarcely thought fit to live in the same world, to breathe the same air, to walk in the same streets, and to enjoy the same religious and civil privileges, that these despised Antinomians, as they are called, whom everybody well nigh wishes dead, and whom the world, religious and irreligious, would fairly sweep out of existence with a breath, if it had the power-that these alone keep the world and its inhabitants from falling this moment into a never-ending hell! And when the last pillar is removed, that instead of supporting the earth here, it may be "a pillar in the temple of God, to go no more out," the ungodly world will find the truth of this Scripture, that the pillars of the earth are the saints of God, and that upon them hath he set the world, that they might bear it up for a time until God's anger bursts forth upon it.

2. But these pillars are said to be "**the Lord's**." That is the only reason why the world stands upon them. They are "**the Lord's**." How much is contained in that expression! It implies that they are the Lord's

property, that they are his by gift and purchase, by whom he will be glorified, and in whom he will eternally take delight.

But the word "pillar" carries us back to their origin. For what is their primitive stock? The Lord says, by the prophet, "Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged." [Isa 51:1](#) As though he would turn our eyes to our native origin. And what is that? The same quarry out of which the other stones come. If you and I, by God's grace, are "living stones," we come out of the same quarry with the dead, unbelieving, unregenerate world; there is no difference in that respect. Nay, we are perhaps sunk lower in the quarry than some of those in whom God never has and never will put his grace. It is not the upper stratum, what is called "the capstone," of the quarry, which is taken to be hewn into a pillar; they go deep down into the pit to get at the marble which is to be chiselled into the ornamental column. So with God's saints. They do not lie at the top of the quarry; but the Lord has to go down very low, that he may bring up these stones out of the depths of the fall, and lift them, as it were, out of deeper degradation than those which lie nearer the surface.

I remember reading once an expression which a Portland quarryman used when he was asked a question with respect to the hard labour of getting out the stone. He said, "It is enough to heave our hearts out." The stone lay so deep, and required such severe bodily exertion, that the labourer was forced to throw not only all his weight, sinews, and muscles into the work, but his very heart also. So it is with the elect of God. They are sunk so low, in such awful depths of degradation, at such an infinite distance from God, so hidden and buried from everything good and godlike, that, so to speak, it required all the strength and power of Jehovah to lift them out of the pit. In raising them out of the quarry of nature, he spent, as it were, upon them all his heart; for wherein was the heart of God so manifested as in the incarnation of his only begotten Son, and in the work, righteousness, sufferings, blood, and death of the Lord Jesus Christ?

These pillars, then, are in themselves utterly unworthy to occupy a place in the temple above. But God has chosen them in Christ, fixed his love upon them, and for that reason he will have them eternally with him. But these pillars being destined to occupy a glorious place in the temple above, need a great deal of hewing out, a vast deal of chiselling into shape and form. God's people require many severe afflictions, harassing temptations, and many powerful exercises to hew them into anything like shape, to chisel them into any conformity to Christ's image. For they are not like the passive marble under the hands of the sculptor, which will submit without murmuring, and, indeed, without feeling, to have this corner chipped off, and that projecting angle rounded by the chisel; but God's people are living stones, and, therefore, feel every stroke. Instead, therefore, of lying passive, they too often resemble a refractory patient under the surgeon's hands, when he is undergoing some operation, which requires him to lie perfectly still. They writhe so under the keen knife, that they give the operator ten times more trouble than if they were dead bodies, which the anatomist or dissector could cut and hack at pleasure, without any feeling on their part at all.

We are so tender-skinned that we cannot bear a thread of trouble to lie upon us, we shrink from even the touch of the probe. To be hewed then, and squared, and chiselled by the hand of God into such shapes and forms as please him, O, what painful work it is! But could the pillar know, could it tell what the sculptor was doing, would it not see that not a single stroke was made in vain? The sculptor, we know, must not make a single hair's breadth stroke too little or too much in some parts of the marble, or he will spoil the statue. He knows perfectly well where to place the chisel, and in what direction, and with what force to strike it with the mallet. And does not God, who fixes the spiritual pillars each in their destined spot, that they may be "as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace," [Ps 144:12](#) know where to inflict the stroke, what carnal projection to chip off, and how to chisel the whole column, from the base to the capital, so that it shall wear just the very shape and the very same proportion which he designs that it should wear?

If the Lord, then, is at work upon our souls, we have not had, we are not now having, we shall never have, one stroke too much, one stroke too little, one stroke in the wrong direction, but there shall be just sufficient to work in us that which is pleasing in God's sight, and to make us that which he would have us to be. My friends, what a deal of trouble should we be spared if we could only patiently submit to the afflicting stroke, and have no will but his.

These pillars, then, are "the Lord's." And do you not think that he will take good care of them? He will not suffer them, like the pillars of the heathen temples, or the columns and arches of our ancient abbeys, to fall into ruin; but he will preserve them from injury here until he removes them into their eternal abode, which the glory of God shall lighten, and the Lamb shall be the light thereof. This is their future destiny, but its glorious nature is at present hid under an impenetrable veil. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be," says John [1Jo 3:2](#) and, therefore, the Lord, in the text, speaks more of what the saints are **now**, than what they will be hereafter. "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory."

II. The same saints, then, who are called "pillars" in the end of the verse, are called "poor" and "beggars" in the beginning. They are the same persons, but different terms are employed to present them to us in different points of view.

1. They are called, then, "**poor.**" But what is it to be poor, and who are they that are designated by that term? By "the poor," literally, we generally understand those who are completely destitute of all that the world esteems to be riches. A poor man, therefore, spiritually, is one made to feel destitute of the true riches, of gospel substance, of the fruits and graces of the blessed Spirit, in a word, of everything which God and his people consider the only precious and enduring treasure. But into this state of felt destitution and poverty no man can sink by any power or will of nature. This is the Lord's work upon the conscience; as we read in the preceding verse, "The Lord maketh poor." A man may, indeed, try to make himself poor from the force of some convictions in the conscience, as the Papist puts on the hair-shirt; but, I believe, what he throws away with one hand, he will gather up with the other. Poverty naturally is a most painful and trying thing to the flesh; but poverty spiritually is far more trying and painful to the spirit. For natural poverty can last, at the most, but for a few years, but spiritual poverty, if unrelieved, (**though the Lord never leaves it unrelieved**) threatens to be but the commencement of death eternal. So that spiritual poverty, is far more oppressive, trying, and distressing to a man's spirit than natural poverty can be to any man's flesh.

To be poor, then, is to be feelingly destitute of everything spiritually good. The Lord anoints the eyes of his quickened family to see what true religion is. He shews them that true riches, without which all is poverty and want, consist in the manifested favour of God, in the work of the Spirit upon the heart revealing the love and blood of Jesus, in the personal possession of the fruits and graces of the Holy Ghost's inspiring, and in the manifested enjoyment of everything which can make a man holy, blessed, and happy.

Now when a man's eyes are enlightened to see in what true riches consist, the feeling that he wants them, and is in a state of thorough destitution without them, raises up in his conscience the conviction of his own poverty. But why should God's people be the only poor people spiritually? For this reason, because they are the only people who know what true riches are. I have read, in boyish days, a tale of a man who was imposed upon by a magician, to whom he sold his goods, and who, in return, gave him what appeared to be newly coined pieces of gold, which the merchant carefully hoarded in his chest; but, one day, looking into it to take a survey of his treasures, he found in it nothing but stones. The magician had so bewitched his eye-sight that he mistook rubbish for gold. I have sometimes thought that the Eastern tale would bear a religious application. Satan, that mighty juggler, that wonderful magician, so bewitches the minds of people according to those words, "Who hath bewitched you?" [Ga 3:1](#) that they mistake

shells and stones for precious jewels and coin fresh from the mint; and they hoard up these counterfeits as so much valuable treasure. Thus they accumulate a store of creature faith, and believe it to be the faith of God's elect; they lay up in their chest a large stock of the hypocrite's hope, and think it to be a "good hope through grace;" and they store in their strong box a vast amount of evidences which, when laid in the balance of the sanctuary, are altogether lighter than vanity. But, when in trouble they run to their strong box for evidences of their faith, their hope, their love, and their good deeds, they find nothing but dirt and rubbish in their place. Now God's people cannot be imposed upon fully and finally (**though they may be deceived for a time**) by Satan's jugglery; for they have "an unction from the Holy One," an "anointing which teacheth them of all things, and is truth, and no lie" [1Jo 2:20,27](#) and in the light and life of this divine teaching they discern the reality from the counterfeit. As, therefore, they cannot, by any exercise of their natural powers, or by any industry of the flesh, obtain the true riches, they feel themselves pressed down into the depths of poverty.

Professors of religion, destitute of the power, have no objection to pilfer. They do not act up to the exposition of the eighth commandment in the Catechism, "To keep my hands from picking and stealing." No; they pick and steal their religion from books, from ministers, or from one another, without any anxious inquiry or painful suspicion whence they obtained their hope of eternal life; whether they got it from God or man, from the work of the Spirit, or the mere excitement of the flesh. But God's honest people cannot act thus. If the Lord himself, by a special work upon their conscience, and by a special manifestation of his mercy, love, and favour, do not pour into their hearts the true riches, they feel themselves totally and thoroughly destitute. They have an inward and deep-wrought conviction that without Christ they can do nothing; that their souls are by nature as helpless to come forth into the light of God's countenance as the dead body of Lazarus was to come forth from the tomb.

But this very soul-beggary brings them to the spot mentioned in the text, "He raiseth up the poor **out of the dust.**" A sense of their deep spiritual poverty brings them into the dust. I think there is one text of Scripture which throws a peculiar light on the expression. It is in [La 3:29](#), "He putteth his mouth **in the dust**, if so be there may be hope." Look at the expression, "He putteth his mouth in the dust." It appears to have been the Jewish custom, in times of great calamity and humiliation, to put dust upon the head. It was so with Job's friends when they saw the calamitous state in which he was: "They sprinkled dust upon their heads." So the messenger who came to announce the taking of the ark had "earth upon his head," as a mark of calamity [1Sa 4:12](#) and Tamar, when she had been humbled by Amnon, put "ashes on her head." [2Sa 13:19](#) Thus to put the mouth in the dust is feelingly to sink down into a sense of self-degradation, self-humiliation, and complete prostration of soul before God.

We read of the Pharisee in the temple, that he **stood** praying. His mouth was as high as it could be. And I should not be surprised if the contemplation of his numerous good deeds, and the complacent thought of the tithes he had paid, lifted him up fairly upon his toes, so that he stood about two or three inches higher than when he came into the temple. His mouth was not as low, but as high as it could be. But the mouth of the gospel penitent is "in the dust," that is, it is as low as it can possibly fall. We cannot get lower than the dust. When, then, the mouth is in the dust, it implies the lowest spot of humiliation, degradation, self-abhorrence, self-loathing, and prostration before the throne of the Most High that the soul can get into. But it is a sense of poverty that brings a man there. When our Queen steps on board her yacht she has a carpet to walk upon from the shore; her royal feet must not even touch the dust. But what think you of not merely the feet touching it, but the mouth kissing it? O, what a stoop of degradation is that! Not like the woman spoken of, [De 28:56](#) who "would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness;" but to bring the lips so completely into it, and to be so choked with the dust of our corruptions flying all around us, through the blasts of Satan and the temptations of our carnal minds, as not to be able to get our mouth from the ground, nor lift it a single inch above the earth.

That was the spot of the Jewish church, [La 3](#) when God brought upon her such humbling dispensations. When she could no longer walk she had to kneel; when she knelt she had to fall down on her hands; and when her hands were struck from her; she had to sink lower still, and to fall flat upon her face. Now that is just the precise place to which the Lord brings his people. He finds them standing; he knocks their legs from under them, and brings them to their knees. He then strikes their hands from under them; their knees no longer support them, and they fall prostrate before Him in the dust. Until they get there there is no promise for them.

There are many of God's elect who have never yet lost their fleshly standing; never had the sinews of their self-righteousness cut; never, in the despondency of their sinking minds, either in body or soul, fallen down into the dust before God. But there is no use their talking about "a blessed Jesus" unless they have been there; there is no use their extolling the blood and righteousness of Christ, and heaven and glory, and all such beautiful things. These eternal realities are completely out of place; they have not got them in the right way. Therefore, all the beautiful expressions, and the glowing descriptions of Christ, and of his glorious Person and offices, which many eloquent preachers set before the people, are thrown away upon them. It is like talking Arabic to people who only understand English. They do not understand the language; it is all foreign to them. They may be much pleased with the pronunciation of the foreign tongue, with the melodious sounds of the language of Canaan, but they are as ignorant of its real meaning, of any one testimony of God in their consciences, or of any one ray of Christ's glory in their hearts, as you or I should be of the dialect of the centre of Africa.

Now the process that so cuts up self-righteousness, root and branch, in the soul, is the only process to bring it into the sweet enjoyment of gospel blessings. Many people do so mistake the road. If, this morning, instead of coming to the west, to Eden-street, I had gone to the east, to Zoar Chapel, I should certainly not now have been here. In like manner, a man can never reach heaven unless he travels heavenwards, Zion-wards, in the way that God has marked out for his people to walk in. It is a delusion to think that we are going to heaven unless we know something of divine teaching in the soul.

But if we know anything of divine teaching, we know what it is to be poor and needy, we know what it is, more or less, to have our mouth in the dust. But I said that people mistake the way to heaven. The ordinary way is to set up a ladder to reach from earth to heaven, and progressively clambering up the different rounds, at last to climb up into the abode of God. But that is not the way of God's people. They have to go down, down, down, that they may be raised up. It is not with them first "up, up, up," to scale the battlements of heaven. Every such step upwards in self is in reality only a step downwards; but, on the other hand, every step downwards in self, downwards into the depths of poverty, downwards into felt misery, downwards into soul-trouble and the real groanings of a broken heart-every such step downwards in self is, in fact, a step upwards in Christ. Until we get to the very bottom there is no promise. "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust." But how? He does it in a moment. The Lord does not raise up his people round by round, enabling them to clamber and crawl with their hands and feet to him. But, when he lifts up the poor out of the dust, he gives them a smile which reaches, so to speak, to the very bottom of their hearts; and that smile has such a miraculous power, such a drawing efficacy, that it lifts them in a moment out of the dust into the very bosom of God. When, therefore, the Lord raises up the poor out of the dust, he does not lift them up by a gradual process, step by step, as they went down. They were, perhaps, many years going down; but they are raised up in a moment. The God of all grace, by one word, or by one smile, lifts them up in a moment out of the lowest depths of felt degradation, "sets them among princes, and makes them inherit the throne of glory."

But we pass on to consider another portion of the text, where the saint is compared to a beggar; "and lifteth up the **beggar** from the dunghill." "The beggar," naturally viewed, is in a lower condition than "the poor". It is, as it were, the **ne plus ultra**, the furthest extreme of pauperism. Poverty can go no lower than the condition of a mendicant. There are many "poor" people who have never come down so low as

beggary. Yet every child of God must not only go down into soul-poverty, he must sink also into the lowest extreme of it; he must fall into beggary and mendicancy before he can be raised up to inherit the throne of glory. To be a beggar naturally is to gain one's daily bread by hourly petitioning, to have scarcely a rag to call one's own; to possess neither house nor home, neither cupboard nor pantry, but to live day to day on the compassion and bounty of others. Take this idea into spiritual things. A man is not a spiritual beggar who has a single penny of merit locked up at home, who has a single good thing in the strong chest of his own heart.

To be a beggar spiritually he must have nothing that he does not get by petitioning. But how humbling to nature, how crushing to the pride of man, that he cannot do anything by nature spiritually good, that he cannot create his own heart anew, that he cannot save his own soul, that he cannot believe, nor hope, nor love-in a word, that he cannot by any will or power of his own recommend himself to the favor of God! The beggar, you know, has nothing to work with or to trade upon. If he had but a bit of ground given him, he might till and cultivate it; if he had but a little money, he might buy and sell with it. But he has nothing to begin with, no point to start from; for "the destruction of the poor is their poverty." I am speaking, mark you, of a man reduced, say, by illness to beggary, not of street mendicants, who are generally imposters. So with God's people; if they could but work, if they could but cultivate nature's plot, and obtain a spiritual crop; or if they had but a little stock to begin with, which they might put out to interest and receive back with usury, why, then they would not be beggars. But to have everything so knocked out of their grasp, that they have not a single good thing, which they can call their own, and therefore are compelled to beg, and cry, and petition the Lord for everything spiritual and gracious, how humbling to the pride of man is this! Yet God's people know that they must walk in it.

Did you, did I, ever get anything but by begging? Have not God's ministers to beg for well nigh every sermon, to cry and groan for well nigh every text, for power to be felt in their souls, for thoughts to be inspired, and for words to be dictated? And have not the people of God, the hearers, to beg for every blessing at the footstool of mercy which they hope to receive, for every token for good, for every testimony, for every smile, for every evidence, every witness, that they are the Lord's? Have not God's people, with the utmost importunity, to besiege the throne of grace that they may receive those mercies as a free gift, without which they cannot live contented, nor die happy? If you are not a beggar, if you have a little stock yet in hand, a little field to till and cultivate of your own, you are not fit for the kingdom of God. Every penny of nature's stock must be spent before you can receive out of Christ's fulness grace for grace. Till you are a beggar, you have no manifested interest in gospel blessings.

But, having looked at the character of the spiritual beggar, we will accompany him to the spot where he is said to sit; for the beggar is to be lifted off "**the dunghill.**" In this spiritual portrait which the Holy Ghost has given of a saint, how he seems to have heightened the colouring with every stroke of the pencil. He first of all describes him as "poor," and in the "dust." But this is not strong enough; this does not convey a sufficient idea of what a saint is. He takes the pencil again, and, so to speak, gives another touch to heighten it, and to set it before our eyes more clearly and vividly. He brings before us not only a poor man, but a "beggar," a mendicant. But that is not enough; the brush must once more touch the painting in order to heighten the description, and bring forth the character in its true colours; he, therefore, gives us the "**the dunghill**" as the seat on which the beggar sits. Now could you for a moment figure this in your mind's eye upon canvas; could you depict to yourself a saint of God, as here described, you would see in one corner a representation of a poor man with his mouth in the dust, and a voice would say within you, "That is a saint." But the same voice would also say as to the prophet, "Turn again;" see another sight.

In another corner of the picture you would see a beggar clothed in rags, like Lazarus, with wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores, not sitting in a chair; no, nor even resting on the ground, but lying on a dunghill. What, you may ask, does that mean? Surely it represents the deep corruptions of our heart. But, Hannah! how could you ever drop such a word as that? Talk about the dunghill in polite company!

Introduce such a vulgar expression into the word of God! What must our elegant preachers, and our refined ministers in their gowns and gold rings, think of you to talk about a dunghill? And what must those, who are always confident, think of such a corruption preacher as you, Hannah? For surely there is something about corruption here. Hannah, in her song of praise, had not forgotten the dunghill. But some, who profess to have been once grovelling there, have so entirely forgotten it, that they never even speak of dung-gate now; and as to ever casting a glance over their shoulders, or even thinking for a moment of the dunghill, or of those that are on it, that is as much out of their sight as though it had no existence. But Hannah remembered it; and felt as the church expresses herself, "Remembering my affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall; my soul hath these still in remembrance, and is humbled in me." ([La 3:19-20](#)) I shall not now, however, attempt to lay open the contents of this dunghill, which are better felt than described; though, I believe, I should offend some of your delicate nerves were I to bring forward some of the monsters which I have felt to lurk there, or even hint at some of the sights and smells which have disgusted me to the deepest self-loathing. Nor shall I dwell on what it is to be in it; but content myself with saying that "the dunghill" represents our corrupt nature; and that it must be spiritually opened up in a man's conscience to know what it is. For it is **out of it** that the beggar is to be lifted to inherit the throne of glory; and if a man has never been **in** it, he cannot be lifted **out** of it.

To be then in the dunghill is to know and feel something of the deep corruptions of our nature. And O, the suffocating sensations which a man has when there. It is no pleasant spot; the stench in the nostrils is so overcoming, the sights presented to the eye are so disgusting that I am sure if a man knows what corruption is, he will never want to be in corruption. It is a libel-I might even use a shorter and more expressive word-but it is a libel upon experimental preachers to say that they gloat over corruption, that they either love it, or love to feel it, or love to speak about it. They know too well the misery of it to love it; they feel too much the suffocating stench of it to be pleased either with it, or their abode in it. But God puts them there for wise purposes-that they may abhor themselves, and love him the more when, from time to time, he lifts them out of it. But you see there is no lifting out till a man gets in. God has for the most part connected his mercies with our miseries, his promises with our necessities; as, therefore, he has suited his displays of mercy and grace to certain spots and places, we must go into those spots and places to realize the promised mercies.

But, I venture to say, that if some of those who are continually aiming their arrows of contempt against those whom they term corruption preachers, were told that, in the filthiest alley in London, in the very dirtiest house in that alley, in the most noisome garret, in that house, and in the foulest corner of that garret, there was a bag of gold, and if they went there they might take it for their pains-I am inclined to think that some who have such nice and delicate feelings that they cannot bear to hear a word about corruption from the pulpit, would not mind grubbing up to their very elbows in this filthy corner if they could only thereby get hold of the bag. Now the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures has suited his promises of mercy and grace to the lowest depths of man's felt filth and misery; it is, therefore, in those spots that grace and mercy are found. But who likes the noisome garret, or who loves its filthy corner? Nobody surely who has any cleanly or tender feeling. But if he knows that he must go there, that he may find the precious promises of the blessed Bible, and receive the sweet enjoyments of God's favour, he is even reconciled to endure nature's filth and guilt, if the Lord is but pleased there to whisper a sweet testimony that he is eternally, unchangeably His.

The Lord, then, has adapted these promises to a certain state, and he brings his people into that state that he may give them the promises, and make them sweet, savoury, and unctuous. It is out of the dust and out of the dunghill that God lifts his saints, and "sets them among princes"-O, what a change!-"and makes them inherit the throne of glory." What is it but the depth of their degradation that makes their exaltation so great? It is the sin and guilt, felt ruin and misery, that so enhance the blessings when they come down from God. What a change was it for Joseph, to be taken out of the dungeon, where his beard was not shaved, nor his raiment changed, and made second to Pharaoh in all the land of Egypt? Did not the

dungeon make the honour all the greater? So, spiritually, it is bringing the soul out of the dust, and lifting the beggar out of the dunghill, that makes the promises so precious, it is this which, when he comes to "inherit the throne of glory," makes the change so blessed and so conspicuous.

This, then, is what God has told us about the saints; and happy are we, if we can trace in our hearts anything of God's work as here laid down, if we can discover anything of the teaching of the Spirit in our souls, so as to be either with our mouth in the dust, or on the dunghill, or sitting among the princes of God's people. To have the least spark or particle of divine teaching is an inestimable mercy, and a sure pledge and foretaste of eternal glory.