

# **ELECTION—ITS DEFENSES AND EVIDENCES NO. 2920**

**A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 26, 1905.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
IN THE YEAR 1862.**

***“Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance...And you became followers of us, and of the Lord having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit.”  
1 Thessalonians 1:4-6.***

AT the very announcement of the text, some will be ready to say, “Why preach upon so profound a Doctrine as Election?” I answer, because it is in God’s Word, and whatever is in the Word of God is to be preached! “But some Truths of God ought to be kept back from the people,” you will say, “lest they should make an ill use of them.” That is Popish doctrine! It was upon that very theory that the priests kept back the Bible from the people—they did not give it to them lest they should misuse it. “But are not some Doctrines dangerous?” Not if they are true and rightly handled. The Truth of God is never dangerous—it is error and reticence that are fraught with peril! “But do not men abuse the Doctrines of Grace?” I grant you that they do! But if we destroyed everything that men misuse, we would have nothing left! Are there to be no ropes because some fools will hang themselves? And must cutlery be discarded and denounced because there are some who will use dangerous weapons for the destruction of their adversaries? Decidedly not! Besides all this, remember that men read the Scriptures and think about these Doctrines and, therefore, often make mistakes about them. Who, then, shall set them right if we who preach the Word hold our tongues about the matter?

I know that some men who have embraced the Doctrine of Election have become Antinomians. Such men would probably have found other excuses for their misdeeds if they had not sheltered themselves under the shadow of this Doctrine. The sun will ripen the noxious weed as well as the fruitful plant, but that is not the fault of the sun, but of the nature of the weed, itself! We believe, however, that more persons are made Antinomians through those who deny the Doctrine than through those who preach it. One evidence of this is that in Scotland. You will scarcely find a congregation of Hyper-Calvinists—the simple reason being that the Church in Scotland holds entire the whole Doctrine upon this matter and her ministers, as a rule, are not ashamed to preach it fearlessly and boldly—and in connection with the rest of the faith.

Take any Doctrine and preach upon it exclusively, and you distort it. The fairest face in the world, with the most comely features, would soon become unseemly if one feature were permitted to expand while the rest were kept in their usual form. Proportion, I take it, is beauty—and to preach every Truth of God in its fair proportion, neither keeping back any nor giving undue prominence to any, is to preach the whole Truth as Christ would have it preached! On a Gospel thus entire and harmonious, we may expect to have the blessing of the Most High. So much by way of preface, not by way of apology. It is not my custom to offer any apology for speaking the Truth of God!

**I. WHAT IS THIS DOCTRINE OF ELECTION?** Let us try to understand it as spoken of in the text—“Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.”

*There is such a thing as election.* Any man who should deny that man is a free agent might well be thought unreasonable, but *free will* is a different thing from free agency. Luther denounced free will when he said that “free will is the name for nothing.” And President Edwards demolished the idea in his masterly treatise. God is the universal Agent and does as He wills—and His will is supremely good. He is the superlative Agent and man, acting according to the devices of his own heart, is nevertheless overruled by that Sovereign and wise legislation which causes the wrath of man (that agency in which the creature cannot govern himself) to praise Him and the remainder thereof He restrains. How these two things are true I cannot tell. It is not necessary for our good, either in this life or the next, that we should have the skill to solve such problems. I am not sure that in Heaven we shall be able to know where the free agency of man and the Sovereignty of God meet, but both are great Truths. God has predestinated everything, yet man is responsible, for he acts freely and no constraint is put upon him even when he sins and wantonly and wickedly disobeys the will of God! But so many as are saved, you will say, are saved because they believe. Certainly it is so! It is most true—God forbid I should deny it—but why do they believe? They believe as the result of the working of the Grace of God in their hearts. Since every man who is saved confesses this, since every true Believer in the world acknowledges that something special has been done for him more than for the impenitent, the fact is established that God does make a difference. No one ever heard it laid as an impeachment against the Lord that He has made such a difference, so I cannot see why He should be impeached for intending to make that difference—which is the Doctrine of Election! I am saved, but I know it is not because of any goodness in me. And if you are saved, you will freely confess that it is the distinguishing love of God that has made you to differ. The Doctrine of Election is simply God’s intention to make the difference between people which you know exists. While He gives mercy to all, He gives more mercy to some so that the mercy already received shall be made effectual to their eternal salvation.

*This Election of God is Sovereign.* He chooses as He wills. Who shall call Him to account? “Can I not do as I will with My own?” is His answer to every quibbler. “No, but, O man, who are you that replies against

God?” is the solemn utterance that silences everyone who would impugn the Justice of the Most High. He has a right, seeing we are all criminals, to punish whom He will. As King of the universe, He doubtless acts with discretion, but still according to His Sovereignty. Wisely, not wantonly, He rules, but always according to the counsel of His own will. Election, then, is Sovereign.

Again, *Election is free*. Whatever may be God’s reason for choosing a man, certainly it is not because of any good thing in that man! He is chosen because God will do so. We can get no further. We get as far as those words of Christ, “Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Your sight,” and there we stop—for beyond that no philosophy and no Scripture can take us.

As it is Sovereign and free, so *Election is irreversible*. Having chosen His people, He does not cast them away nor call back the word that is gone from His lips, for it is written, “He hates putting away.” He is of one mind and who can turn Him?

Once more, *Election is effectual*. For “whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified.”

And this *Election is personal*, for He calls out His children one by one by their names. He calls them even as He leads out the stars and so He brings them, every one, to the Father’s House above.

We have thus given a statement as to what this Doctrine is. There we will leave it. Our present objective is not so much to expound the Doctrine as to strike a blow or two at certain errors which are very common and which spring out of it. I know, dear Friends, there are some who are so afraid of this Doctrine that the mention of it produces alarm. If they were to meet a lion in their way, they would not be more terrified than they are when they see this Doctrine in Scripture or hear it from the pulpit!

**II.** Therefore, secondly, we will NOTICE WHAT ARE THE DEFENSES OF THIS DOCTRINE and try, if we can, should you be laboring under any distress of mind about it, to remove your difficulties.

Will you please remember, then, that *this is not a point which you can understand at the commencement of spiritual and religious life?* You would not teach your children, I suppose, to say their prayers backwards and begin at, “Amen.” And you are beginning at the wrong end when you want, first of all, to know your election instead of commencing with repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ! Election is a lesson for the more advanced students. Faith and hope must be learned, first of all, in the infant class to which we all must go if we would be wise unto salvation.

Now, if a child should have a book of algebra put into his hand and should puzzle himself and say, “I shall never get an education, for I cannot understand this.” And then take down some ancient classic and say, “I cannot comprehend this, either,” you would say, “Dear Child, you have nothing to do with these yet! Here is a sampler book for you—a primer. Here you have A, B, C—learn this, first, and then, step by step,

you shall attain to the rest.” Even so it is with us. Simple trust in Christ is the first thing you have to understand. After that you shall know the high, the sublime and the glorious Doctrine of God’s Decrees—but do not *begin* with these! You will mystify and ruin yourself—you will lose your way in a fog and get no good thereby.

Again, it is very certain that whatever this Doctrine may be—and we will have no dispute about it just now—*this Doctrine cannot possibly be inconsistent with certain plain promises in God’s Word*. Such promises as these—“Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” “He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.” Why, I might quote by the hour together some of these promises which are as wide as the poles—invitations that must not be narrowed, exhortations which are addressed to every man and woman under Heaven—in which every one of them is bidden to hear and live. “Ho, everyone that thirsts, come to the waters.” You know the class of promises to which I allude. Now these are the Words of God which are for you—get hold of them—come to Jesus Christ with them in your hands and rest assured the Doctrine of Election, instead of pushing you back, shall stand like the servants about your father’s table to make music while your whole being shall dance to the glorious tune! It shall be like a dish upon the table at the feast of the returning prodigal, of which you shall eat to the very full! It shall by no means repulse you or show anything to you which may keep you from hoping in Christ.

Once more, it is quite certain that whatever it may be, *this Doctrine of Election does not deliver you from your duty*. Now what is your duty? “This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent.” So much is this your absolute duty that, “He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed.” This, more than anything else is the reason of men’s condemnation! The Scripture says this is the one great sin. Of the Spirit of Truth we read that “when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin—of sin because they believe not on Me.” Very well, then—in as much as God has so put it, that He commands you this day to trust Christ and to believe on Him—that is what you have to see to—and you may rest perfectly sure that falling back on the Doctrine of Election in order to exonerate you from what God commands you to perform is but a pitiful pretense! You are *commanded* to believe and what God commands, no Doctrine may teach that it is unfit for you to do! May God help you to believe, for this Doctrine comes not to excuse you. The Gospel *commands* you and Election through the Holy Spirit *enables* you. It is your duty to believe, but no man ever was saved as a matter of duty, for that which saves is the gift of God. But your business now is with Christ, only, and not with the Decrees of the Father which are all in the keeping of Christ and shall presently be revealed to you. You have to go to Christ, first, and to His Father afterwards, for He says, “No man comes unto the Father but by Me.” You must go to the Cross to get to the Decree—you must go round by Redemption to get to Election—there is no other way.

**III.** In the third place let us see WHAT ARE THE EVIDENCES OF ELECTION. Our text says, very plainly too, that the Apostle knew the election of the Thessalonians. How did he know it? The way by which the Apostle knew it must be the method by which you and I are to know our election of God, too.

We have known more than once in our day of some men who pretended to know their election by their impudence. They had got into their head the presumption that they were elected and though they lived on in sin and still did as they liked, they imagined they were God's chosen. This is what I call presuming upon election by sheer impudence.

We know of others, alas, who have imagined themselves to be elect because of the visions that they have seen when they have been asleep or when they have been awake—for men have waking dreams—and they have brought these as evidences of their election. These are of as much value as cobwebs would be for a garment! They will be of as much service to you at the Day of Judgment as a thief's convictions would be to him if he were in need of a character to commend him to mercy. You may dream long enough before you dream yourself into Heaven—and you may have as many stupid notions in your head as there are romances in your circulating libraries—but because they are in your head they are not, therefore, in God's Book. We need a more sure word of testimony than this and if we have it not, God forbid that we should indulge our vain heart with the dainty thought that we are chosen of God!

I have heard of one who said in an alehouse that he could say more than any of the rest, that he was one of God's children. Meanwhile he drank deeper into intoxication than the rest. Surely he might have said, with an emphasis, that he was one of the *devil's* children—and he would have been correct. When immoral men and women who live constantly in sin, prate about being God's children, we discern them at once. Just as we know a crab tree when we see the fruit hanging upon it, we understand what spirit these people are of when we see their walk and conversation. Oh, it is detestable—loathsome above all loathsomeness—to hear men whose characters in secret are infamous, and whose lives are destitute of every Christian virtue, boasting as though they had the keys of Heaven and could set up whomever they would, and pull down whomever they might please! Blessed be God, we are not under their domination, for a more terrific set of tyrants than they are, the world has never known! And a more frightful reign of vice than they would inaugurate if they had their way, I am sure villainy, itself, cannot conceive! “Be not deceived, God is not mocked.” “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” If Divine Grace does not make us holy, teaching us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, it is not worth the having! Brothers and Sisters, if we are God's elect we must have some substantial evidence to attest it!

According to our text, what are these evidences? They seem to be four. *The first evidence appears to be the Word of God coming home with power.* If you will turn to the verse, you will soon see how the Apostle says, “Our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power and in the

Holy Spirit.” The Gospel is preached in the ears of all—it only comes with power to some. The power that is in the Gospel does not lie in the eloquence of the preacher, otherwise *men would be the converters of souls*. Nor does it lie in the preacher’s learning, otherwise *it would consist in the wisdom of man*. The power which converts souls does not even lie in the preacher’s simplicity or adaptation to his work—that is a secondary agency, but not the cause. Again, the power which converts souls does not even lie in the pathos which the speaker may employ. Men may weep to the tragic muse in a theater as well as to prophetic strains in a chapel! Their creature passions may be impressed through the acting on the stage as well as by the utterance of God’s own servants! No, there is something more than this needed and where it is absent, all preaching is nothing! We might preach till our tongues rotted, till we should exhaust our lungs and die, but never a soul would be converted unless there were the mysterious power of the Holy Spirit going with it, changing the will of man!

O Sirs! We might as well preach to stone walls as preach to humanity unless the Holy Spirit is with the Word to give it power to convert the soul! We are reminded of Mr. Rowland Hill, who once met a man in the street at night, not quite drunk, but almost so. The man said, “Mr. Hill, I am one of your converts.” “Yes,” he said, “I dare say you are one of *mine*—but if you were one of *God’s*, you would not be in the state in which you now are.” Our converts are worth nothing. If they are converted by man they can be unconverted by man! If some charm or power of one preacher can bring them to Christ, some charm or power of another preacher can take them from Christ. True conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit and of the Holy Spirit alone!

Well, then, my Hearers, did you ever, when listening to the Word, feel a Divine Power coming with it? Never mind where you were, whether in Westminster Abbey, St. Paul’s Cathedral, in this Tabernacle, or at some special service at one of the theaters—the place matters nothing. “Well,” perhaps you will say, “I have felt some impression.” Ah, but that may be wiped away! Have you ever felt something coming with the Word which you could not understand. Which, while it wooed you and won your heart, smote you as though a sword had gone through you and that not with a flesh wound, but with a wound that divides between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow, as if the Truth of God were, as indeed it is, a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the hearts?

Those who are really God’s elect can tell a tale something like this. “There was a time when the Word was to me like a great ten thonged-whip—my shoulders were stripped bare and every time the Word was preached it seemed to make a gash within my soul! I trembled. I saw God in arms against me. I understood that I was in debt to His Justice and could not pay—that I was involved in a controversy against my Maker and could not conquer. I saw myself stripped naked to my shame, leprous from head to foot, a bankrupt and a felon ready to be given over to a traitor’s doom.” Truly the Word came with power to your soul. “And,” you continue, “I remember, too, when the Truth of God came home to my heart and made me leap for very joy, for it took all my load away—it

showed me Christ's power to save! I had known the Truth before, but now I felt it! I had understood that Christ could save, but now that fact came home to me! I went to Jesus just as I was—I touched the hem of His garment and I was made whole! I found now that the Word was not a fiction—that it was the one reality. I had listened scores of times and he that spoke was as one that played a tune upon an instrument—but now he seemed to be dealing with *me*, putting his hand right into my heart and getting hold of *me*. He brought me first to God's Judgment Seat and there I stood and heard the thunders roll! Then he brought me to the Mercy Seat and I saw the blood sprinkled on it, and I went home triumphing because my sin was washed away." Oh, again I ask you, did the Word ever come home with this power to your souls?

Since the day of your conversion has the Word ever rebuked you? Has it sometimes cut down your hopes? Do you sometimes, after hearing a sermon, feel as if it had been like a great hurricane bearing right through the forest of your thoughts, cleaving its own course, and leaving many a dead thing that you thought alive swept down to the ground? Do you feel, too, when you go home from the sanctuary, as if God Himself had been there? You did not know what else it could be. It could not have been the speaker nor the words he uttered, but the very God came and looked into your eyes and searched the thoughts of your mind—and turned your heart upside down and then filled it full again with His love and with His light, with His truth and with His joy, with His peace and with His desire after holiness? Is it so with you? Where the Word is not with power to your souls, you lack the proof of Election.

Remember, I do not say that it will always be so. You must not expect that God will speak with you every time—in fact, the preacher himself fails often and is painfully conscious of it. How shall one man always speak without sometimes feeling that he, himself, is not in a fit frame to be God's mouthpiece? But though it be a clown from the country, if he preaches God's Word, the Spirit will go with it! It is not the clown, nor yet the archbishop that does the work—it is the Word of God that is quick and powerful! Your evidence of Election is blotted and blurred unless the Word has come to you with demonstration of the Spirit and with His Power. People come and hear sermons in this place and then they go out and say, "How did you like it"—as if that meant anything to anybody—"How did you like it?" And one says, "Oh, very well." And another says, "Oh, not at all." Do you think we live on the breath of your nostrils? Do you believe that God's servants, if they are really His, care for what you think of them? No, verily, but if you should reply, "I enjoyed the sermon," they are inclined to say, "Then we must have been unfaithful or else you would have been angry—we must surely have slurred over something or else the Word would have cut your conscience as with the jagged edges of a knife! You would have said, 'I did not think how I liked it—I was thinking how I liked myself and about my own state before God. That was the matter that exercised me, not whether he preached well, but whether I stood accepted in Christ, or whether I was a castaway.'" My dear Hearers, are you learning to hear like that? If you are not, if going to

church and to chapel are to you like going to a play, or like listening to some orator who speaks upon temporal matters, then you lack the evidence of Election—the Word has not come to your souls with power.

But there is yet a second evidence of Election. *Those whom God has chosen receive the Word “in much assurance.”* They do not all receive it with full assurance—that is a Grace they get afterwards—but they receive it with *much* assurance. There are some professors who go upon very strange principles. It is indeed somewhat difficult to know what principles are enforced and acknowledged in this age, for there are persons whose principles allow them to say black and white are the same thing! And there are certain persons whose religious principles are not much unlike this. They put a hymn book in their pockets when they are going to a meeting. They put a comic song book in their pockets when they are going somewhere else. They can hold with the hare and run with the hounds. Such people as these never have any very great confidence in their religion—and it is very proper that they should not—for their religion is not worth the time they spend in making a profession of it!

But the true Christian, when he gets hold of principles, keeps them and there is no mistake about the grip with which he maintains his hold of them. “Ah,” he says, “that Word which I have heard with my ears is the very Truth of God and it is true to me, real and substantial to me—and here I clasp it with both hands—with a clasp that neither time, nor tribulation, nor death shall ever cause me to let go.” To a Christian his religion is a part of himself—he believes the Truth of God not because he has been told it or taught it by mother or friend, but because it is true to him in his inmost soul. He is like the servant girl who, when she could not answer her infidel master, said, “Sir, I cannot answer you, but I have a something in here that would if it could speak.” There is “much assurance.”

Sinners who have once felt their need of a Savior feel very much assurance about His preciousness. And saints that have once found Him precious have very much assurance about His Divinity, about His Atonement, about His everlasting Love, about His immortal dignity as a Prophet, a Priest and a King. They are sure of it. I know some persons who say if a man speaks positively, he is dogmatic. Glorious old dogmatism, when will you come back to earth? It is these, “ifs,” and “buts,” and qualifications—these, “perhapses,” and “maybe sos” that have ruined our pulpits! Look at Luther when he stood up for the glory of his God—was there ever such a dogmatist? “I believe it,” he said, “and therefore I speak it.” From that day, when on Pilate’s staircase, he was trying to creep up and down the stairs to win Heaven, when the sentence out of the musty folio came before him, “Justified by faith we have peace with God,” that man was as sure that works could *not* save him as he was of his own existence! Now, if he had come out and said, “Gentlemen, I have a theory to propound that may be correct. Excuse my doing so,” and so on, the Papacy would have been dominant to this day! But he knew God had said it and he felt that that was God’s own way to his own soul—and he could not help being dogmatic with that glorious force of secession which soon laid his foes prostrate at his feet!



Now have *you* received the Gospel “with much assurance”? If you have and you can say, “Christ is mine. I trust in Him and though I may sometimes have doubts about my own interest in Him, yet I do know by experience in my soul that He is a precious Christ—I know not by ‘*Paley’s Evidences*’ nor by ‘*Butler’s Analogy*,’ but I know by my heart’s inward evidence. I know by the analogy of my own soul’s experience that the Truth of God which I have received is no cunningly devised fable, but something that came from God to draw my soul up to God”—that is another evidence of Election! If you have that, never mind the rest! I hardly care whether you believe the Doctrine of Election or not—you are elect. As I have sometimes told a Brother who has denied the Doctrine of Final Perseverance, when I have seen his holy life, “Never mind, my Brother, you will persevere to the end and you will prove the Doctrine that you do not believe! You may not be able to receive the Doctrine I now preach, but if such has been your experience, when you get to Heaven you will wake up and say, ‘Well, I am one of the elect! I made a deal of fuss about it while on the earth, but I will make a deal of music about it now that I have got to Heaven. And I will sing more sweetly and loudly than all the rest, ‘Unto Him that has loved me and washed me from my sins in His blood, unto Him be glory forever and ever!’”

But there is a third evidence. *Those who are chosen of the Lord desire to be like Him.* “You became followers of us and of the Lord,” the Apostle says in the text—by which he does not mean that they said, “I am of Paul, I am of Silas, I am of Timothy”—but that they imitated Paul so far as he imitated Christ. Thomas a Kempis wrote a book about the imitation of Christ and a blessed book in some respects it is. But I would like the Holy Spirit to write in your hearts the imitation of Christ. It shall be to you a sweet proof that you are chosen of God. Are you Christlike or do you want to be? Can you forgive your enemy and can you love him and do him good? Can you say tonight, “I am no more any man’s enemy than is the baby that is just born”? And do you now desire to live unselfishly, to live for others, to live for God? Are you prayerful? Do you come to God in prayer as Jesus did? Are you careful of your words and of your acts as Christ was? I do not ask you if you are perfect, but I do ask whether you follow the Perfect One! We are to be followers of Christ, if not with equal steps, still with steps that would be equal if they could! If we follow Christ, that will be to others one of the surest proofs of our election, though perhaps to ourselves, if we are humble-minded, it will be no proof, since we shall rather see our blemishes than our virtues and mourn over our sins more than we rejoice in our Graces. If a man follows not Christ, those who look on may be safe enough in concluding that, whatever he may say about election, and however much he may prate about it, he is not the Lord’s. On that point I shall not say anything more because I have already enlarged upon it in a former part of the discourse.

In the last place I will say *the fourth evidence is the existence of spiritual joy in spiritual service.* If you look further, it seems that those of whose election the Apostle was sure, received the Word of God “in much affliction,” but, “with joy in the Holy Spirit.” What do you say about this,

you whose religion consists of a slavish attendance upon forms that you detest? Look how many there are who go to a place of worship just because it is not respectable to stay away, but who often wish it were! And when many of your Christians get to the Continent, where is the Sabbath with them, then? Where is then their care for God's House? See, too, with what misery some people at home go up to the House of the Lord. Why? Because they have come to regard it as a place where they ought to be very solemn. It is not a home to them—it is a prison. How different it is with your children when they come home for their holidays! How do they come into their father's house? Dull, demure, as if they could not speak? No, bless their little hearts, they come running up to their father's knees, so glad to be there, so glad to be home! That is how a man whose religion is his delight comes up to the House of the Lord. He feels that it is his Father's House. He would be reverent, for his Father is God, but he must be happy, for God is his Father!

See again the Christian when he goes to his closet to pray. Ungodly persons will not go there at all. Or, if they do, it is because they want to win Heaven by it. But look, they go through their dreary prayers—and what a dreary thing it must be for a man to pray when he never expects to be heard and when he has no spirit of prayer! It is like a horse going round a mill grinding for somebody else and never getting any farther—doing the same tomorrow, the same the day after, and ever on and on. Sometimes as the little church bells sound in the morning in certain churches to fetch people out—Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday there are some persons to be found there for early prayers—and they go to evening prayers, too, and a very good thing this would be if those who attend went there with holy joy! But there is the sexton and he says it is a great trouble to be always opening the doors like that when nobody comes except three old women that have got almshouses and two that expect them and are, therefore, there. Do you think that an acceptable service to God? But they who go because they would not stay away if they could—they who worship God because it is an *instinct* and a pleasure, a holy thing and honorable—these are men and women who delight in God's Word and they give the best evidence of being chosen of God!

Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, who make your faces miserable that you may appear unto men to fast! Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that reads the heart asks not that your head may hang down like a bulrush, but that you may do deeds of mercy and walk humbly with your God! And you who can delight yourselves in your God shall have the desires of your heart! You that rejoice in the Lord, always, and triumph in His name shall go from strength to strength, and going at last to Glory, you shall find that you are there as the result of His Divine Purpose and Decree—and you shall give Him all the praise!

But now, I think I hear some say, "Oh, I want to know whether I am elect. I cannot say that the Word ever came to me with power. I cannot say I received it in much assurance. I cannot say I am a follower of Christ. I cannot say I have received the Word with joy." Well, dear Beloved, then leave that question alone! Instead of that, let me ask

another, “Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? Will you now trust Christ to save your souls?” He will do it, if, just as you are, whoever you may be, you will come to Christ and give yourself up to Him to save you, to have you, to hold you for better, for worse, in life and through death. The moment you believe, you are saved! That act of faith, through the precious blood of Christ, will put away your every sin! You will not begin to be saved—you *are* saved. You will not be put into a salvable condition, but you shall be saved the moment you believe—completely and perfectly saved! “Oh,” says one, “I would I could trust Christ.” Say you so? “Whoever will, let him take,” let him *trust* Christ. God help you now to do it! Trust Jesus and you are saved! This is addressed to every one of you without exception, for, “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” The Lord help you to trust Jesus and then you may go on your way with joy, “knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.”

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
1 CORINTHIANS 9:22-27.**

The Apostle Paul is here giving a description of the way in which he made everything help toward the fulfillment of his desire to be a faithful minister of Jesus Christ. He longed to be the means of winning souls. He desired that at the last his Master might be able to say to him, “Well done, you good and faithful servant.” And, therefore, everything with which he had to do was made to bend in that direction.

**22-24.** *I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the Gospel’s sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you. Know you not that they which run in a race all run, but one receives the prize?* No matter if 20 or a hundred had entered the race, “but one receives the prize.” Alas, out of these who appear to be running in the Christian ministry, how many will be prize-takers at the last? And out of those who seem to be running the race of the Christian life, how many will win the prize? Ah, Lord, You know!

**24.** *So run that you may obtain.* Do not speculate about what others will do, or not do, but see to your own running—“So run that you may obtain.” Salvation is all of Grace, but when a man is saved, he still has to run the Christian race and to be a runner as long as he lives.”

**25.** *And every man that strives for the mastery is temperate in all things.* Here Paul is alluding to the athletic games and pugilistic encounters of the time. It was a matter of common notoriety that every man who was going to fight, or wrestle, or run, had to get himself into proper condition—to “go into training,” as we say in similar cases nowadays.

**25.** *Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we for an incorruptible crown.* The athletes who completed in the Grecian games passed through great self-denials and mortifications of the flesh in order that every part of their bodily frame might be tough and strong when they came forward to wrestle, or to run, or to fight. “Now,” says Paul, “if they do all that to gain a crown of parsley”—which was generally the

crown given—truly, “a corruptible crown”—“how much more ought we to do in order to win a crown that fades not away—‘an incorruptible crown’”!

**26.** *I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beats the air.* He would not leave a stone unturned, as it were, that he might gain the prize. He put out all his strength in the name of the Lord.

**27.** *But I keep under my body and bring it into subjection.* The Greek word, according to some, implies getting his body into the same position as a man does when, in a sport encounter, he gets his adversary’s head under his arm and smites him with all his might. So Paul says concerning his body, “I bring it into subjection and take care that it feels the full force of my will.” According to other interpreters, the verse may be read, “I drag my body off as a slave”—just as in some of those ancient fights, the victors dragged away their antagonists as slaves, Paul accounted his body to be as a slave to his soul and dragged it behind him in chains.

**27.** *Lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.* The Greek word which is translated, “a castaway,” is, “*adokimos*.” It might better have been rendered, “disapproved.” It certainly has no such meaning as that which has been generally given to it. Paul was not afraid of being cast away by God at the last! What he aimed at was this—as he had entered the lists, as a Christian minister, to fight for Christ, to wrestle against principalities and powers, to seek to win souls for Christ, he must keep his bodily powers and passions so in subjection that, at the last, when the prizes were distributed, he would be found to have won his. This is quite another matter from being “a castaway” from salvation and eternal life! Paul was saved and he knew it—and some of us know, to a certainty, that we are saved—but we also know that there is another crown to be won which the Lord will give to His servants who win in the great fight with sin. To win this crown is our high ambition and we long to hear the Master say to each one of us, in that day, “Well done, you good and faithful servant, you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things: enter you into the joy of your Lord.”

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON  
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

# DEGREES OF POWER ATTENDING THE GOSPEL

## NO. 648

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 3, 1865,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

***“For our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance; as you know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.”***  
***1 Thessalonians 1:5.***

PAUL here claimed two things which are absolutely necessary to success in the Christian ministry. He could call the Gospel, “our Gospel,” and this is a foremost essential in a sent servant of Jesus Christ. Paul, Silas and Timothy, here speaking at once, declare the word which they had preached to be their own in a peculiar sense—every true minister must be able to do the same—we must, ourselves, have been saved before we preach salvation. “I believed, therefore have I spoken,” says the Psalmist. “We also believe, and therefore speak,” say the whole college of the Apostles. Without faith, the religious teacher is a mere pretender unworthy of respect.

The Christian *minister* must, however, not only believe the truth of what he asserts, but he must experimentally enjoy it. The farmer that labors must, himself, also first be a partaker of the fruit. Before Ezekiel delivered to the people the prophecies which were written in the roll, the voice came to him, “Son of man, eat this roll.” And he did not only take it into his mouth, where it was like honey for sweetness, but it descended even into his bowels and mingled with his innermost self. We must, ourselves, feel the weight of that burden of the Lord which we proclaim to others, or we shall not be ministers of the Apostolic sort, but rather shall be descendants of the hypocritical Pharisees who bound heavy burdens, grievous to be borne, upon other men’s shoulders but were not willing to touch them with so much as one of their fingers.

The Apostle Paul could, with peculiar propriety, call the Gospel his own. On the road to Damascus he had singularly experienced its mighty power. And afterwards—in many trials, in many difficulties, in varied experiences, in furious temptations—he had made each Truth of Scripture his own by having tasted its sweetness, handled its strength, proved its comfort and tried its power! Do not think of preaching, young man, until you have the Truth of God written on your very soul! As well think of steering the Great Eastern across the ocean without knowing the first principles of navigation! As well think of setting up as an ambassador without your country’s sanction as to dare to intrude yourself into the Christian ministry unless the Gospel is first your own.

No amount of training at Oxford, or Cambridge, or anywhere else—no extent of classical or mathematical teaching can ever make you a minister of Jesus Christ—if you lack the first qualification, namely a personal interest in salvation by Jesus Christ. What? Will you profess to be a physi-

cian while the leprosy is on your own brow? Will you attempt to stand between the living and the dead when you are, yourself, devoid of spiritual life? The priests of old were touched with the blood upon their thumb, toe and ear to show that they were consecrated everywhere. And none among us must dare to exercise any office for God among His people till first of all we know the cleansing, quickening, refining and sanctifying power of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ!

It must be *our* Gospel before we may so much as *think* of aspiring to the high and holy office of the Gospel ministry. But this alone is not sufficient. The Christian minister, if he would imitate Paul, must be very careful of his manner of life among the people. He must be able to say without blushing, "You know what manner of men we were among you for your sake." Unselfishness must be our prominent attribute—all must be done for our people's sake. And then we must, in our lives, show the truthfulness of our unselfish professions. O God, how much of Grace is needed that Your servants may be clear of the blood of all men and make full proof of their ministry!

We are not appointed to stand as motionless way-posts to point the way with lifeless accuracy and unsympathizing coldness—this many have done, and while showing the road have never moved one inch in it themselves—such men shall have terrible judgment at the last. We are appointed to be guides to the pilgrims over the hills of life and we are bound to attend their footsteps and tread the road ourselves! Clambering up every Hill of Difficulty and descending every Valley of Humiliation, we are to be crying to the pilgrim band, "Be followers of us even as we are followers of Christ Jesus."

It is not for us to say, "Go!" but, "Come!" We are not to bid you do anything without first doing it ourselves. It is an ill time with the preacher when he is compelled to say, "Do as I say and not as I do." Evil practice will drown the best of preaching! Holy living, intense earnestness, passionate longing for souls, vehement importunity in prayer, humility and sincerity must so blend together in our walk and conversation, that having the Gospel to be our own, we may be fully fitted for the work of the Christian ministry—"for your sake"—that you who bear us may not find us unprofitable in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Having said this much upon the ministry itself, we observe that our text deals mainly with the *hearers*, and therefore has a voice for you. We shall use the text for two purposes—first, by way of discrimination. And, secondly, for instruction.

**I.** The text suggests and very strongly, too, a thoroughly heart-searching DISCRIMINATION—a mode of testing ourselves by which our *election* may be proven, or our unregeneracy discovered. The Gospel comes to all who hear it. In our own land, especially among you who constantly attend places of worship, it comes to you all. If I understand Scripture aright, it is the same Gospel which comes to the unregenerate as to the regenerate. And though in some it is "a savor of death unto death," and in others, "a savor of life unto life," yet the distinction is not in the *Gospel* but in the way in which it is *received* or *rejected*.

Some of our Brethren—who are very anxious to carry out the decrees of God—instead of believing that God can carry them out Himself, always try to make distinctions in their preaching. They preach one Gospel to one set

of sinners and another to a different class! They are very unlike the old sowers, who, when they went out to sow, sowed among thorns and on stony places and by the wayside. These Brethren, with profound wisdom, endeavor to find out which is the good ground. They insist upon it that not so much as a single handful of invitations may be cast anywhere but on the prepared soil.

They are much too wise to preach the Gospel in Ezekiel's fashion to the dry bones in the valley while they are yet dead. They withhold any Word of the Gospel till there is a little quivering of life among the bones! And then they commence operations. They do not think it to be their duty to go into the highways and hedges and bid all, as many as they find, to come to the supper. Oh, no! They are too orthodox to obey the Master's will! They desire to understand, first, *who* are appointed to come to the supper and *then* they will invite them! That is to say they will do what there is no necessity to do. They have not faith enough, or enough subjugation of will to the supreme commands of the great Master to do that which only faith dares do—namely, tell the dry bones to live—bid the man with the withered hand stretch out his arm and speak to him that is sick of the palsy and tell him to take up his bed and walk!

It strikes me that refusing to set forth Jesus to *all* men of every character and refraining from inviting them to come to Him is a great mistake. I do not find David suiting his counsels to the ability of men. David gives commands to ungodly men—"Be wise, therefore, O you kings; be instructed you judges of the earth. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish from the way, while His wrath is kindled but a little." He did not withhold his exhortation because they were such rebels that they would not, and could not, kiss the king. No! He told them to do it whether they could or not!

So with the Prophets. They boldly say, "Wash you! Make you clean! Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well." One of them absolutely cries, "Make you a new heart and a new spirit," (Ezek. 18:31). And yet, I doubt not, that he was perfectly agreed with that other Prophet who taught the powerlessness of man in those two memorable questions, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" These men did not think that they were to judge of what they were to preach by the degree of power in the *hearers*—they judged by the power which dwells in their God to make the Word effectual!

As it was with Prophets, so was it with Apostles! Peter cried to the crowd who gathered about the Beautiful Gate of the temple, "Repent you, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." They delivered the Gospel, the same Gospel, to the dead as to the living—the same Gospel to the non-elect as to the elect. The point of distinction is not in the Gospel, but in its being applied by the Holy Spirit, or left to be rejected of man. The same Gospel, it strikes me in the text, came to all! And the point of distinction was farther on, namely, in the operation of that Gospel upon the heart.

**1.** It appears, then, in the first place, that to some the Gospel comes only in words. Even here there are different levels. To some it only comes in words in a fashion that they scarcely know what it is all about. Some of you go to a place of worship because it is the right thing to do. You sit down on the seats and sit out an hour-and-a-half or so of penance. When

that is done you feel you have performed a very proper act—but you have no idea what the talk was all about. It may be said of you that hearing you do not hear for your ears are dull and heavy.

You know no more of the Divine mind than the men who were with Saul on the road to Damascus who heard a voice but saw no man. I believe a very large majority of church goers know no more of what the preaching is about than did Jonathan's lad when he ran after the arrows. Their flight David well understood, "but the lad knew nothing of the matter." Too many are merely the stolid, unthinking, slumbering worshippers of an unknown God. In others the Word comes in a little better sense, but still in words only. They hear it and they understand it in theory, and probably are much pleased with it, especially if it is delivered in a manner which suits their taste, or which commends itself to their understanding. They hear and they do not quite forget.

They remember and are gratified with illustrations, doctrinal truths, and so on—but when you have said that, you have said it all. The Gospel remains in them as certain potent drugs remain in the chemist's bottles—they are there but they produce no effect. The Gospel comes to them as an unloaded cannon rumbles into its shed, or as a barrel of gunpowder is rolled into the magazine—there is no force in it because the fire of God's Spirit is absent. The preacher lashes the air and whips the water. He woos the wind and invites the cloud when he preaches to such as these. They hear, but hear in vain—insensible as steel.

To others it comes in a preferable manner but still only in words. They are really affected by it—the tears stream down their cheeks! They scarcely know how to sit. They resolve, if they once get home, they will *pray*. They think of amending their lives—past follies and present dangers come before them and they are somewhat alarmed. But the morning cloud is not more fleeing, and the early dew vanishes not sooner than these good things of theirs! They look at their natural face in the glass of the Word, but they go away and forget what manner of men they are—because the emotion felt is produced by the *words* and not by the Spirit and Life of the Truth of God.

Why, Brothers and Sisters, men weep at a theater! And weep far more there than they do in many places of worship! Therefore, merely to weep under a sermon is no sign of having derived profit from it. Some of my Brethren are very great hands at unearthing the dead. They conduct you to the funeral urns of your parents, or remind you of your departed little ones, and possibly they may be the means of introducing better feelings by this kind of working upon your emotions! But I am not convinced of it—I am afraid that much of the holy water which is spilt from human eyes in our places of worship is not much more valuable than the holy water at the doors of the Catholic chapels! It is mere eye water, after all, and not *heart sorrow*.

Mere excitement produced by oratory is the world's weapon in attaining its end. We want something more than that for *spiritual* purposes. If we could "speak with the tongues of men and of angels" and stir you up to as great an enthusiasm as ever Demosthenes worked in the Greeks of old—all that would avail nothing if it were only the effect of the preacher's impassioned language and telling manner—the Gospel would have come to



you “in word only.” And that which is born of the flesh is flesh and nothing more.

At this point I may very solemnly ask whether it is not true of some who compose the present congregation that you know the truth only in word? There is a certain class of persons, and some of them are present this morning, who are professional sermon hearers! You go one Sunday to hear Mr. A. And then another Sunday to hear Mr. B. And you carry with you our sacchraometers—instruments for measuring the quantity of sweetness in each sermon! And you take a gauge of the style and manner of the preacher. You estimate what blunders he makes and how he could be improved. And you compare or contrast him with somebody else, as if you were tea tasters tasting Souchong and Bohea, or cheese mongers trying Cheddar and American!

Some individuals of this order are little better than spiritual vagabonds without settled habitation or occupation! They go about from place to place, listening to this and to that and getting no good whatever. And as to *doing* good, the thought never enters their brain. You cannot expect that the Gospel will come to you in anything else but as a killing letter, for you go to *hear* it as merely words. You do not look for fruit—if you see leaves you are quite satisfied. You do not desire a blessing! If you did, you would receive it. It is at once one of the most wicked and one of the most foolish habits to waste our time in constantly criticizing God’s Word and God’s ministers.

Well said George Herbert, “Judge not the preacher, he is *your* judge.” What have you to do to say of God’s ambassador? That his words were not well mouthed? If God speaks *by* him, God knows who is best to speak *for* Him. And if his Master sent the man, beware lest you ill-treat him, or you may suffer like they of old who ill-treated the ambassadors of David and drove him to proclaim war against them.

**2.** According to the text, there are others to whom the Word comes with three accompaniments. The Apostle speaks of “power,” and “the Holy Spirit,” and “much assurance.” I do not think that the Word of God comes to many people with all these three things. It comes to a very numerous class with “power.” To a smaller number with “power and the Holy Spirit.” And to an inner circle of select ones “in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance.” If I have the meaning of this passage, and I am not so certain about it as to dogmatize, it strikes me that there are three degrees of effect produced by the Gospel.

At any rate, we shall not be wrong in saying that there is sometimes an effect produced by the Gospel which may be called “power,” but which, nevertheless, is not the power which saves. To many of you, my dear Hearers, the word of our Gospel has come with power upon your understandings. You have heard it, weighed it, judged it, and received it as being true and of Divine authority. Your understanding has assented to the various propositions which we have proclaimed as doctrines of Christ. You feel that you could not well do otherwise. These Truths of God agree so well and are so adapted at once to the ruin of your nature and to its best aspirations, that you do not kick, as some do, against it. You have been convinced of the authenticity and authority of the Gospel by the Gospel.

Perhaps you have never read “Paley’s Evidences,” and never studied “Butler’s Analogy,” but the Gospel itself has come to you with sufficient

power to be its own witness to you and your understanding joyfully acknowledges that this *is* the Word of God and you receive it as such. It has done more than that—it has come with power to the *conscience* of some of you. It has convicted you of sin. You feel now that self-righteousness on your part is folly, and though you may indulge in self-righteousness, it is with your eyes open. You do not sin now so cheaply as you once did, for you know a little of the sinfulness of sin.

Moreover, you have had some alarms with regard to the ultimate end of sin. The Gospel has made you know that the wages of sin will be death. You feel that you cannot dwell with everlasting burnings. Your heart is ill at ease when you think upon the wrath to come. Like Felix you tremble when you are reasoned with concerning “righteousness and judgment to come.” And though you have put it off as yet and have said, “Go your way till I have a more convenient season,” yet it has come to you so far with a degree of power.

More than this, it has had an effect upon your feelings as well as upon your conscience. Your desires have been awakened. You have sometimes said, “Oh that I were saved!” You have advanced as far, at any rate, as Balaam when he said, “Let me die the death of the righteous.” Your feelings of hope are excited—you hope that you may yet lay hold of eternal life and your fears are not altogether dead—you tremble when under the Word of God. Natural emotions, which look like spiritual ones, have been produced in you by the beaming of the Word—though as yet the Gospel has not come with the Holy Spirit. Beyond all this, the Gospel has come with power to some of you on your lives. I can look with anxious pleasure upon some of you because I know the Gospel has done you much good, though it has not saved you.

Alas, there are others to whom it has only been for a time as a bit and bridle. But they have afterwards turned aside from it. There are those here, who, like the dogs, have gone back to their vomit and, like the sow that was washed, to their wallowing in the mire. We had hope for you once, but we must almost cease to hope. Certain persons rush into drunkenness after seasons of abstinence—having known the evil of the sin—and having professed to hate it. The passion has been too strong for them and they have fallen again into that deep ditch in which so many of the abhorred of the Lord lie and rot.

Oh, may God, in His infinite mercy, bring the Gospel with something more than this common power to your souls! May it come with “the Holy Spirit” as well as with power! You see, we have come up by steps to some considerable height already, but we now come to a far nobler elevation and speak of *saving* Grace. To many in this house, as at Thessalonica, the Word has come “in the Holy Spirit.” Brothers and Sisters, I cannot describe to you how it is that the Holy Spirit operates by the Word. The work of the Spirit is figured forth by some such mysterious timing as a birth, or as the blowing of the wind. It is a great secret, and therefore not to be expounded.

But many of you know it *experimentally*. The Holy Spirit, first of all, came to you as a great Quickener. How He made you live you do not know—but this you do know—that what you once had not, you now have! You know that there burns within you a vital spark of heavenly flame far different from that ordinary spark of life which had been there before! You

now have different feelings, different joys, different sorrows from any you were conscious of before! While you were listening to the letter which kills, the Spirit of God came with it and the quickening Spirit made you live with a new, higher and more blessed life!

You now have within you Jesus Christ, who is Life and Immortality! You have Heaven begun within your heart! You have passed from death unto life and shall never come into condemnation! To you the Word of God has come with the Holy Spirit in a quickening sense. Then it entered with an illuminating power. It enlightened you as to your sins. What blackness you discovered in your sins when the Holy Spirit once cast a light upon them! Brethren, you had no idea that you were such sinners as you turned out to be. The Holy Spirit startled and astonished you with revelations of that great and fathomless depth of depravity which you found to be surging within your souls!

You were alarmed, humbled, cast into the dust. You began, perhaps, to despair—but the same illumination of the Spirit came in to comfort you—for He then showed you Christ Jesus! He showed you the unbounded power of His blood to take away your unbounded sins! He revealed to you His willingness to receive you just as you were, His suitability to your case and to your circumstances. And as soon as you saw Jesus in the light of the Holy Spirit you looked unto Him and were lightened—and therefore your face has never been ashamed.

So the Spirit of God came to you as light to dispel your darkness and give you joy and peace! Since that time you have experienced the Holy Spirit as comforting you. Amidst darkest shades He has risen as the sunlight upon your souls. Your burdens have been removed by Him, the blessed Paraclete! He has brought Christ, and the things of Christ, to your remembrance. He has opened up to you precious promises. He has cracked the shell and given you to partake of the kernel of the privilege of the Covenant of Grace. He has broken the bone and satisfied you with marrow and fatness out of the deep things of God. His dove-like wings, whenever they brood over you, bring order out of confusion and yield kindly comfort in the midst of adversity.

You have also felt the Holy Spirit in His inflaming energies. He has rested on you when you have heard the Word, as the Spirit of burning—your sin has been consumed by the holy revenge which you felt against it. You have been led to great heights of love to Christ, till you could sing—

***“Had I ten thousand thousand tongues,  
Not one should be silent!  
Had I ten thousand thousand hearts,  
I’d give them all to You.”***

When the Holy Spirit has blessed the Word, your heart has been like the altar of incense with the flame always burning and a sweet perfume going up, acceptable to the Most High!

Beloved, you have also felt the Holy Spirit with the Word as a spirit of rejoicing! Oh, the bliss we have sometimes tasted! I am very frequently heavy in spirit, but oh, the raptures which my heart has known when the Holy Spirit has shown me my eternal election of God! My standing in Christ Jesus! My completeness and acceptance in the Beloved! My security through the faithfulness of the eternal God! What delights come streaming into the soul when you read of everlasting love, of faithfulness

never wavering, of affection never changing, of a purpose standing fast as pillars of brass and firm as the eternal hills!

And oh, Beloved, what extravagance I was about to say, of joy do we sometimes feel in anticipation of the glory to be revealed! Looking from Nebo's brow we see the landscape down below, but, better than Moses could do, we drink already of the rivers which flow with milk and honey and pluck ripe fruits from celestial trees. While in communion with Christ Jesus we get the best taste of the glory that remains. Now this it is to receive the Word, "in the Holy Spirit." Beloved, I hope we know what this means and you who do not know it, may a prayer go up from every living soul here, "Lord, let the Holy Spirit go with the preaching of Jesus Christ and let it be made effectual unto salvation."

Beloved, the highest point in the text is, "much assurance." If I understand the passage, it means this—first, that they were fully persuaded of its truthfulness and had no staggering or blinding doubts about it. And secondly, that they had the fullest possible conviction of their interest in the Truth delivered to them! They were saved, but better still they knew that they were so! They were clean, but better still they rejoiced in their purity! They were in Christ, but what is more joyous still, they *knew* that they were in Christ! They had no doubts, as some of you have, no dark suspicions. The Word had come with such blessed demonstration that it had swept every doubt clean out of their hearts!

According to Poole the Greek word used here has in it the idea of a ship at full sail, undisturbed by the waves which ripple in its way. A ship, when the wind is thoroughly favorable and its full sails are bearing it directly into harbor, is not held back by the surging billows. True, the vessel may rock, but it neither turns to the right hand, nor to the left. Let the billows be as they may, the wind is sufficiently powerful to overcome their contrary motion and the vessel goes straight ahead.

Some Christians get the Gospel in that way. They have not a shadow of a doubt about its being true. They have not even the *beginning* of a doubt about their interest in it, and therefore they have nothing to do, but with God's strong hand upon the tiller and the heavenly wind blowing right into the sail, to go straight on, doing the will of God and glorifying His name. May the Word come to you, dear Friends, as it does to so very few! May it come in "full assurance," as well as in "power," and in "the Holy Spirit!"

**3.** I shall leave this first head of the text when I observe that this is the way in which God's elect are known. The Apostle says, "Knowing, Brethren beloved, your election of God." Why? Knowing it not by making a *guess* about it—not by questioning you whether you are awakened sinners—whether you are sensible or insensible sinners! Not by waiting to preach the Gospel to you when you are prepared to receive the Gospel—but preaching the Gospel to you as you were and finding out who were the elect by this—that the elect of God received the Gospel as it came, "in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance." *This* is the test of election—the Holy Spirit blessing the Word!

And, dear Friends, if the Holy Spirit has blessed it to you, you need not turn over the mysterious pages of the Divine decrees—for your name is there! You have not *my* word for it, but God's Word for it. He would not have brought you to feel the indwelling life of the Holy Spirit if He had not,

from before all worlds, ordained you unto eternal life! But mark and observe from the ensuing context—you must give good proof that it is so, or we cannot say, and even the Apostle could not have said—“Knowing, Brethren beloved, your election of God.”

We cannot tell whether the Word has come to you in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance unless there are the corresponding *results*. Listen to these words—“And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the Word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit: so that you were examples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the Word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad, so that we need not to speak anything. For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God. And to wait for His Son from Heaven whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.”

So you see an imitation of Apostolic example, a faith which becomes so known as to sound abroad, a joy which affliction itself cannot dampen, and a perseverance which is not to be turned aside by difficulties. You see a conversion which gives up the dearest idols and binds us to Christ and makes us watch and wait for Him—all these are necessary as proofs of the Holy Spirit having been with the Word. O Beloved, I would have you, the members of this congregation, not only converted, but so converted that there should be no doubt about it! I would love to have you not only Christians, but such fruit-bearing Christians that there can be no doubt that you have received the Word “in much assurance.”

Then shall it be equally clear that you are the elect of God. May the Lord grant that the word here may ever be like a powerful magnet thrust into a heap of steel filings and of ashes which shall attract all the filings and bring them out. For that is what the Gospel is to do—it is to discern between the precious and the vile! It is to be God’s winnowing fan to separate His elect from those who are left in their ruin. And it only can do this by the way in which it is *received*, proving the election of those who receive it, “in the Holy Spirit.” Thus much by way of discrimination.

**II.** Have patience for a few minutes while we now use the text by way of PRACTICAL INSTRUCTION. It is clear from the text, by way of practical instruction, that it is not enough to preach the Gospel. Something more is needed for the conversion of souls than even that. I have stirred you up very often to assist me, dear Brethren, in training those of our young men who have been called to preach the Gospel—that they may be more efficient in their ministry—and you have kindly helped me.

But we must ever bear in mind that though God should privilege us to send out hundreds of His ministering servants, yet there will not be a solitary case of conversion worked by them, alone. We wish to do our best to erect fresh places of worship for this ever-increasing city and it is a happy day to me whenever I see the top stone brought out of a new House of Prayer! But not one single soul shall ever be made to rejoice in Christ Jesus by the mere fact of a place of worship being erected, or of worship being celebrated in it! We must have the energy of the Holy Spirit! There is the one all-important matter!

What is there practical about this? Why, then it becomes more and more imperatively necessary that we should be much in prayer to God that the Holy Spirit would come! We have the spirit of prayerfulness among us as a Church. Let me earnestly entreat you never to lose it. There are certain of my Brothers and Sisters here who are never absent from our great gathering on Monday evening, and whose prayers have brought down many blessings! But it is the part of fidelity for me to say that there are some of you who might be here if you would, but seldom favor us with your presence. Or, let me say, who seldom do yourselves the happiness of waiting up on God in Prayer Meetings. You are not the best of our members. You will never be the best of them if you stay away without having a justifiable excuse.

I do not say this to those who I know must be absent. And I do not say it to bring women out who ought to be seeing to their husbands, or to bring men out who ought to be attending to their shops. But I say it to some who might as well be here as not, and would bring no detriment to themselves whatever by being here. And I must qualify what I say with this—I have less to complain of in this respect than any man in Christendom, for there is no place that I ever knew or heard of where the Prayer Meeting bears so good and fair a proportion to the Sunday gathering as it does here.

But still, Brethren, we want you ALL to pray! I would I could see you all! Oh, it were a happy day if we could see this place full on Monday evening. I do not know why it should not be. It strikes me that if your hearts were once to get thoroughly warmed we should fill this house for prayer. And what a blessing we might expect to receive! Why, we have had such a blessing already that we have not room enough to receive it now! But still, as the cup begins to run over, let it run over and over. There are many churches in this neighborhood that can catch the spillover and may they be profited thereby!

Let us increase our praying as we increase our doing. I like that of Martin Luther, when he says, "I have so much business to do today that I shall not be able to get through it with less than three hours' prayer." Now most people would say, "I have so much business to do today that I must only have three *minutes*' prayer—I cannot afford the time." But Luther thought that the more he had to do the more he must pray, or else he could not get through it! That is a blessed kind of logic—may we understand it! "Praying and provender hinder no man's journey." If you have to stop and pray, it is no more an hindrance than when the rider has to stop at the farrier's to have his horse's shoe fastened, for if he went on without attending to that, it may be that before long he would come to a stop of a far more serious kind.

Let us learn from the text our own indebtedness to distinguishing and Sovereign Grace. You observe, Beloved, that the Gospel does not come with the power of the Holy Spirit to everybody. If, then, it has come to *us*, what shall we do but bless and praise the distinguishing Grace which made it come to us? You observe that the distinction was not in the persons themselves—it was in the *way* in which the Gospel *came*. The distinction was not even in the Gospel, but in the attendant Holy Spirit, making it effectual. If you have heard the Word with power, it was not, dear Brethren, because you were more ready, because you were less inclined to

sin, or more friendly towards God. You were an alien, a stranger, a foreigner, an enemy—you were “dead in trespasses and sins”—even as others were and are.

There was in you, whatever Papists may say, no Grace of congruity to meet with the Grace of Christ. They say that there is something in man congruous to the Grace of God, so that when saving Grace comes to those who have the Grace of congruity they are saved. In me I know everything was incongruous, everything contrary to God. There was darkness and Light came. There was death and Life entered. There was hatred and Love drove it out! There was the dominion of Satan and Christ overcame the traitor—

***“Then give all the glory to His holy name,  
To Him all the glory belongs.  
Be yours the high joy still to sound forth His name,  
And praise Him in each of your songs.”***

A third practical lesson we will but hint at, namely, we see that there are degrees of attainment even among those who have received the Word with the Holy Spirit. Let us seek for the very highest degree! You are not generally satisfied with the same qualities of life—you desire to possess its comforts and luxuries. I will commend you if you carry this into spiritual things. Do not be content merely to be saved, merely to be spiritually alive—ask to be valiant for the Truth of God! I should feel it a great honor, I hope, to be the most common soldier if called upon to defend my country. But I must confess I should not like to be in the ranks always. I should like, at least, to be made a corporal very soon and a sergeant as soon as possible. And I should grumble wonderfully much if I could not rise to rank among the commissioned officers!

I should like to be found doing my very best and I would reach to the most prominent position if I might better serve my country than in the ranks. So I think it should be with the Christian. He is not to seek for honor among *men*, but, if he can, by getting more Grace be more serviceable to his God and bring more honor to His name, why let him press forward! Ah, my dear Brethren, what business have you to be sitting still and saying, “It is enough.” The “rest-and-be-thankful” policy is not much approved of in politics—and in religion it will never do!

On! Forward! Upward! As the eagle takes for its motto, “Superior,” and still mounts higher and higher and higher till the young wing which first trembled at the height has grown into the strong pinion which makes him companion of the sun and playmate with the lightning, so let the Christian do! If he has learned to “run and not be weary,” let him seek to “mount up as on the wings of eagles.” Onward, fellow soldier! Be yet more valiant till your name is written among the first three.

To close, does not this text, as a last practical lesson, show us indirectly how a privilege may become a curse? The Word of God has come to you all. I suppose there is not one here who has not heard the story of the love of God in Christ Jesus. You have been told many times that though man has fallen and offended God, yet the Lord has set forth His suffering Son, Christ Jesus, to be a Propitiation for sin and that through faith in His name, “Whoever believes on Him shall never perish.”

You have been told that God waits to be gracious and that whoever looks to Christ shall live! Whoever calls upon the Lord shall be saved!

Now, having heard this, regardless of what some may tell you, we feel bound, as in the sight of God, to warn you that if this comes “in word only” to you, it will increase your condemnation! Certain preachers think that this Word is not “a savor of death unto death” to any, but it is, it is! Whatever their theories, whatever hyper-Calvinistic theology may say, it is God’s Word that it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the Day of Judgment than it shall be for cities like Capernaum and Bethsaida, which heard the Word and yet repented not!

You are not machines. You are not creatures merely to be acted *upon*—you are to *act* as well as to be moved. And every good word that reaches your ear is written down as a debt against you. There is no declaration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ which, if refused, does not leave you more disobedient than you were. Remember how the Apostle states it—“Unto them which are disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.”

Now they could not have been disobedient if it was not their duty to *obey*. No man is disobedient where there is no law. It is, therefore, the duty of every sinner hearing the Gospel to believe it! And if he does not, this same stone shall fall upon him and shall grind him to powder. Kiss the Son, therefore, lest He, lest He be angry and you perish from the way while His wrath is kindled but a little. The same Savior who blesses will be angry. He who loves His people, grows angry with those who reject Him.

And when His wrath is kindled but a little, woe unto the object of it! Blessed are all they that trust in Him and may we be found among that blessed number to the praise and glory of His Grace, wherein He makes us to differ according to the appointment of His own Divine will. May God bless this assembly for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307



# THE GOSPEL IN POWER

## NO. 3551

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 1917.

*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,*  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 28, 1872.

*“For our Gospel came not unto you in word only,”  
etc., [down to] “from the wrath to come”  
1 Thessalonians 1:5-10.*

A WORKMAN likes to see that he has been doing something. It is very dispiriting if he has spent much toil and can see no result. God's workmen by faith would continue still to labor, even if they saw nothing come of it, but it is much more comforting, much more easy for them to continue in service when they see that God is blessing them. Now it is not wrong for a Christian minister to speak about the conversions that have been worked under his ministry, for Paul says that he would have done so, only that others did it so constantly that there was no need of it. Paul, however, would not, under any circumstances, have done a wrong thing and, therefore, we gather that it is sometimes most allowable that we should see what has been done and should speak of it—and the more especially because if any good is done by any ministry, it is God that has done it—and all the glory is due to Him and to Him, alone!

Not to speak of what God has done would be ingratitude. It might have a semblance of humility, but in reality it would be disloyalty to the Most High. Paul, therefore, did not hesitate to speak of his converts at Thessalonica and of their good character—and of the good fruit which they had borne and the way in which they had spread abroad the Gospel. He did not boast—he gave God the glory of it, but he did speak of what had been done. And we think we may do the same in any measure in which God shall bless our work—any one of us may tell of it to the praise and glory of God and to the encouragement of our fellow laborers. Now the Apostle in this passage tells us what God had done at Thessalonica. We will proceed at once, for our text is long—we will proceed at once to the handling of it.

And you will note that he tells us, first, *what he had preached at Thessalonica*. Then *how it had come to the people*. And thirdly, *what had been the result of this to themselves*. And fourthly, *what had been the result of it to other people*. First, the Apostle tells us—

**I. WHAT WAS PREACHED AT THESSALONICA.** He says, “Our Gospel”—(note that word)—“Our Gospel came not unto you in word only.” Why does Paul call it, “our Gospel”? He did not invent it! He did not think it out and make it fresh every Sunday. No, it was *Christ’s Gospel* long before it was Paul’s Gospel. Yet he calls it our Gospel by way of distinction, for there were other gospels. There were those who came and said, “This is the Good News!” And others, on the other hand, who said, “*This* is the Good News,” but Paul says that there was another Gospel and he adds, “Yet not another, but there are some that trouble you.” He, therefore, put down his foot and he said, “Bring what gospels you like, each of you, but I have a Gospel which I preach, distinct from yours, and that Gospel it is which I have preached to the Thessalonians and which has not come to them in word only.” In these times, Beloved, there must be made a distinction between men’s gospel and God’s Gospel, for nowadays man’s gospel is popular enough. Somebody thinks until his head aches and he gets into nonsense—and then he comes and brings this forward as something fresh. Men go to the bottom of a subject until they stir the mud at the bottom and cannot see their own way, themselves, and nobody else can either—and then forthwith they come out with something marvelous! And, having used some words that are hard to pronounce and harder still to understand, they earn a cheap name for being great scholars and profound divines. Well, let such go their way—that is their gospel, but we have another Gospel from that—one which we have gained in another way and which we desire to propagate in another fashion! Paul said, “our Gospel,” then, by way of distinction.

But he also meant this—it was his Gospel because it had been committed to him. He had received it as a sacred deposit. He was, as it were, a steward for God—put into commission to preserve and keep alive the Truth of God in the world—and Paul did keep it unadulterated, so that when he closed his life he could say, “I have fought a good fight. I have kept the faith.” Whoever may have adulterated the Gospel, Paul did not. He gave it forth as Christ gave it to him. Oh, that each one of us who is called to preach the Gospel and, indeed, every church member would feel that the Truth of God is committed to us to keep it in the world! Our grandfathers kept it at the stake and on the cruel rack—and when they went in their chariots of fire to Heaven, they left the Truth to their sons to preserve. Handed down to us in the long line of martyrs and confessors, Covenanters and Puritans, what will we do with it now? Will we not feel that all the cost expended on it in the centuries past demands of us that we should spend the same—if there is a necessity for it—even our blood and that, while we live, it shall never be said that in our life, in our prayer, in our conversation, or in our preaching, the Gospel suffered anything at our hands? “I know whom I have believed,” said Paul, and, “I am

persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him.” Or rather, as some read it, “He is able to keep my deposit, that which He committed to me to keep. Christ also will keep and preserve the Gospel pure and clear, even until time’s latest hour.” The Lord grant it, for His name’s sake!

But I think the Apostle used the term, “our Gospel,” not only for distinction and because he felt it was committed to his trust, but because he had enjoyed it, himself, and had experienced it. What right has any man to preach that which he has not himself enjoyed and made his own? I have heard of a certain physician who usually tried his own medicines upon himself—and surely this should always be the practice of those who serve the heavenly Physician. How shall we come and preach of the Balm of Gilead, which is to heal all wounds, if our wounds are unhealed? What a wretched case must that man be in who talks of regeneration, but is not born-again! Who preaches faith, but has never believed! Who talks of pardon, but has never been washed in the precious blood! Who speaks of the righteousness of Christ, but is shivering in the nakedness of his own corruption! Ah, wretched man, to be a herald of good news while he, himself, partakes not therein! Ezekiel, before he had to go and speak of the message of God, had that message given to him, and what was said? “Son of man, eat this roll.” He had to take the message written on the roll and eat it—and when it was in his own body—then it was that he could tell it out with great power! It is a good old saying, “If your preaching is to go to the heart, it must come from the heart.” It must first have moved our souls before we can ever hope to move the souls of others!

The Lord is my witness that in preaching to you here, Beloved, these many years, I have preached to you what I have tasted and handled of the good Word of God. I have preached the Doctrine of human sin, for I have felt its power, felt its bitterness and shame, and lain in the dust before God, even in despair. I have preached to you the power of the precious blood to cleanse from sin, for I have looked to Christ’s dear wounds and found cleansing there. We have only spoken to you what we have, ourselves, known and felt, and proved to be true—and I would go to my chamber this night wretched, indeed, if I had no other assurance of the Truth of God of my message than that which I could find in the experience of other men! Now many of you are engaged in preaching Christ to others and in teaching Christ to the children in the schools. Always speak out of the fullness of your own hearts, for when you can say, “I have tried this. I am rejoicing in this,” then your words will be pretty sure to come with power to the hearts of those that hear you. The man who desires to bring others to Christ should imitate Elisha, the Prophet, who,

when he found the child dead in the bed and that it could not be raised to life by any other means, went and put his mouth upon the child's mouth, his hands upon the child's hands and his feet upon the child's feet—and then, by-and-by, the life was restored to the child. We must feel an inward sympathy with those whom we would bring to Christ! And then we must tell out from our own soul what we know about the Savior and it will be sure to come with freshness and with power, God, the Holy Spirit, blessing it! This, then, I think, was Paul's reason for calling it, "our Gospel"—the Gospel committed to him and the Gospel which he had tasted and handled personally. Now I shall want you to observe in the second place—

**II. HOW THE GOSPEL CAME TO THE THESSALONIANS.** He describes it as coming in four degrees. First, he says, "It came not in word only, but in power and in the Holy Spirit." And, fourthly, in much assurance. Now these four words enable me to divide the present audience. To all who have been here present, who have been sitting in these pews for any length of time, *our Gospel has certainly come in the Word of God.* They have all heard it—heard it, too, so as to understand the run, the gist of it. They have heard it in many forms and shapes commending itself to their attention. But, oh, it is to be feared that there are some to whom it has come in word only and it is, indeed, to the preacher (and more still it should be to those who are in such plight) sad that this life-giving Word should be only a word. There was the Gospel feast and the message was sent, but they who were invited came not to the feast. They heard the message—that was all. Here are sick men lying at Bethesda's pool—they see the water and that is all—but they step not in and are not healed. Oh, to lie sick, with healing within reach! To be hungry and bread hard by! To be thirsty, with the stream flowing at one's feet and not to drink! Remember dear Hearers, that if the Word of God comes to you as word only, today, it will one day be something more than that, for it is an undoubted Truth of Scripture that hearers are responsible for what they hear. "Take heed how you hear!" shall have to be answered for at the Day of Judgment. "You heard the Gospel, but you rejected it!"—shall be one of the charges brought against those who listened to it—and it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than it shall be for such an one! I would now like to divide the congregation upon this question, "How many are now here to whom the Gospel has come in word, only?" Let conscience speak! Let each man put his hand upon his heart and answer, "Is that my case?" If so, may it not be your case any longer, no, not a single day longer, but may the Word of God come to you in another way!

But there were, secondly, some to whom it came in power. Now there are hearers to whom the Gospel comes with an awakening power. They used to be careless, but they cannot be, now! They hear the words,

“Eternity! Eternity! Eternity,” ringing in their ears and it startles and awakens them. They cannot be at ease while they are at enmity with God! They feel that their nest is stirred up. It has come with power to them. More than that, there are some to whom the Word has come with crushing effect—it has struck them down! It has bruised their righteousness. It has dashed to shivers their hopes of themselves and though they have not looked to Christ for the true hope, yet they feel the power of the Gospel which lays all other hopes in the dust! Ah, I know some of you have felt the power of the Gospel, for you went home and prayed, perhaps dozens of times—after hearing the sermon! You have gone up to your chambers and you have begun to pray, but the next morning you have forgotten. Your goodness has been like the morning dew and has melted when the heat of the day’s cares have come upon it. Alas! Alas! Alas! In many a furrow we have sown in vain! We have cast the Seed on stony ground, we have thrown it on the highway side and we have lost our pains—nevertheless, we are to continue to preach the Gospel, for in some it will come with a greater power than this!

Again, I would entreat another division of the house. I know there are some who will come under this head. They are not saved, but still they cannot ridicule it—they cannot pass it off with indifference. It is like a sharp two-edged sword—it pierces, cuts and wounds. I pray God it may kill them spiritually, that they may yet be made alive!

Now the third degree of the coming of the Word to Thessalonica was that it came in the Holy Spirit. Ah, here is the blessed way, for if it shall come in any other power than this, it will come in vain! But if it comes in the Holy Spirit, oh, then—then its end is achieved, for the Holy Spirit quickens men by a mysterious operation which we cannot describe—but which some of us have felt! It comes upon men and creates in them a new life and whereas they were dead in sin, they begin to live as they never lived before! That same Spirit then enlightens them, showing them a thousand Truths of God in a light in which they never saw them before. They find they have entered into a new world. They have passed from darkness into marvelous light! Then the Spirit of God begins to purify them. He purges them from this sin and that and He refines and renews them. He is in them as a Spirit of burning—consuming sin—a cleansing Spirit purging them from unrighteousness! Then He comes as a consoling Spirit and gives them joy and peace, lifts them up above their cares, their temptations, their doubts and fills them with a preface of eternal bliss! Oh, blessed is that man to whom our Gospel comes with the Holy Spirit! Beloved, we do not wonder if persons sneer at the Gospel in itself, or if others hear it and are unaffected by it, for the Gospel, in itself, is like a sword without a warrior’s arm to wield it. But when the Spirit of

God comes, man is a doubter no longer! When He lays home the Truth of God, He cuts so to the dividing of soul and spirit, joint and marrow, so that men are convinced, converted, saved—and the Truth is to them, indeed a living thing! Pray, O beloved members of this Church, pray that the Word of God, even our Gospel, may come with the Holy Spirit!

But there was a fourth class to whom the Word came in a yet higher degree, for it is added, “and with much assurance.” To all Christians it comes with the Holy Spirit, but to some with a still greater degree of spiritual power! They believe the Gospel, but they do not believe it timidly—they accept it as a matter of firm, solid, indisputable fact! They grasp it as with an iron hand and their own interest in it does not remain a question. No, they know whom they believe and are persuaded that He is able to keep that which they have committed to Him. They believe in Christ with the faith of Abraham, which staggered not at the promise through unbelief. Clouds and darkness have gone away from their sky and they see the clear blue ether of God’s own Presence above them. They rejoice in the Lord always, and again they do rejoice. There are some such in this house. I bless God for every one of them. May there be many more, for you that possess full assurance are the men who are strong for service! Having the joy of the Lord in your souls, it becomes your strength as you go forth to fight the Master’s battles because you feel the Master’s Love! The Lord give us many, many such in the Church, to whom the Word of God shall come with the Holy Spirit and with much assurance! Now this is how the Word of God came to them. I must pass on to the third point, and that is—

### III. WHAT HAD BEEN THE RESULT OF THIS IN THEMSELVES?

You will kindly observe that the Apostle first says, “You became followers of us and of the Lord.” A man, when he is first converted, is not fit to be a leader—he has to be a *follower*. We do not take recruits and make them captains! They must be drilled. They must go into the rank and file a bit. So one of the first things that Divine Grace does is to make a man a disciple, that is, a learner—and then he sees in God’s Word what his life and conduct should be and, looking about him, he sees some whom God has blessed with His Grace whose life and conduct is according to the Word—and he follows God’s servants, but not slavishly. He draws a distinction between them and their Master and only follows them as long as they keep company with their Lord. “You became followers of us and of the Lord.” Brothers and Sisters, I know that many of you here present, when the Word of God came to you, became followers of holy men. If you heard of any good action, you desired to imitate it. If you read any biography that told of noble deeds, you aspired to emulate such deeds. And when you read the Character of your Lord and Master in the four Evangelists, you asked that you might have Grace to live a life of self-sacrifice,

of devotion to God and of philanthropy to men. Well, this is no mean work of Divine Grace when a man is brought to be a follower of that which is good.

At the same time he tells us that these people received the Word of God “*in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit.*” I know that there are some in this house who, when they received the Gospel, had to suffer for it, but they rejoiced to do so! From the day in which they publicly put on Christ, they were jeered—they became subjects of derision. Some have gone back from us because they could not bear the perpetual taunt, but others of you have been kept by the Grace of God and made able to bear any stigma or any sneer! And, indeed, is it not a small thing to bear the jests and jeers of men if the heart is right towards God? What do we care—what should we care though all men point the finger and should hiss because of it? Be true to God, Believer, and to your conscience, too, and you may well receive the Word “with joy of the Holy Spirit,” even “in much affliction”! This is one proof of every Christian minister’s ministry, when he can point to a people who have become followers of that which is good and have continued to follow when they have been made to suffer for it!

But it appears that these people at Thessalonica went farther. They grew out of being followers in some sense and, therefore, *became leaders*. “So that you were examples to all Believers in Macedonia and Achaia.” Now it is a very easy thing for a Christian to be an example to a sinner. He ought to be—and he is not a Christian if he is not. I won’t give two-pence for your religion if you do not set a fair example to the ungodly. But it is a higher degree of Divine Grace when a man becomes an example even to Christians—when he is such a Believer that others may look upon him as the typical Christian, for that is the word used here—may regard him as the type of what a Christian ought to be! Paul says that some of those degraded idolaters to whom he had preached the Gospel, first followed him and the Lord, and afterwards grew in Grace so that they stood in the front rank and became an example to Believers! Let me hold this up, Beloved, to your emulation. Let none of us be content to be according to the ordinary cold Christianity of this age! What cold, poor stuff it is! If the Lord, Himself, should come, would He find faith in the earth? Where is the zeal of the days gone by? Where is the ardor, where is the courage of the ages that have gone? If these things are found nowhere else, O my Brother, seek to have them in your own soul! Ask God, if you are compelled to see others decline, that you may not decline, for God’s Grace can make you an example to the rest of His people! There are such here tonight of whom I might speak—only the Lord bless them and keep them as they are—for I have seen Apostolic Christianity here! If

I have seen it nowhere else, I have seen it here among some of my Brothers and Sisters here present, whose service for the Lord shall be remembered in the Day of Account! They wish it not to be known here, nor will it be, but they have, with tears and prayers, devoted themselves to Christ and served Him well—and He will remember them in that Day.

Further, the Apostle goes on to tell us what was done by these Thessalonians—that they turned from idols. Oh, that God might turn all of us from every idol that we have! We do not worship gods of wood and stone, but how many professors are there still who worship learning? Let them seek it, but let them not worship it! There are some that worship fame, others that worship pleasure. This city is full of idolaters from end to end! When the Grace of God comes, it makes men worship the unseen God and leave their idols to those that choose them. Turning from idols, it appears that these people served the living God. They did not merely acknowledge that He was the living God, but they began to *serve* Him! They put forth their strength in His cause. So will it be among us wherever the Word has come with the Holy Spirit—we shall spend and be spent in the service of our Creator and Redeemer! And he adds that they waited for the coming of the Lord. Oh, this is a high mark of Grace, when the Christian expects his Lord to come—and lives like one that expects Him every moment! If you and I knew tonight that the Lord would come before this service was over, in what state of heart should we sit in these pews? In *that* state of heart we ought to be! If I knew that I would see my Lord before another sun should rise, how would I preach? I ought to preach just in that way as though He were sure to come at once and there could be no doubt about it! We would hold very loosely the things of this world if we knew that Christ was speedily coming—and so loose we ought to hold them! We would care but little for the discomforts of life if we knew that it would all be over and Christ would come very shortly—so little ought we to think of life's discomforts. Blessed is that man whose soul is always looking for the coming of the Lord! He may not study texts of Scripture to know the times and seasons, but if he is always expecting that his Lord may come at any time, and shall live under the feeling of that belief and in the power of it, he will be the holy man! "What manner of persons," says Peter, "ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" Such we desire to be by the power of the Holy Spirit! Thus we have noticed what the Grace of God did for the Thessalonians themselves. Now let us mark—

#### **IV. WHAT WAS THE RESULT OF THIS TO OTHERS?**

And here I wish to speak practically to the members of this Church. Thessalonica was a seaport. It was also a principal town in Macedonia. Therefore, whatever was done in Thessalonica was pretty sure to be known throughout Macedonia and the rest of Greece. If the Church at



Thessalonica had been a dull, sleepy Church, as some Christian Churches are, it would have lost a fine opportunity of doing good—but being a thoroughly awake Church, really full of God’s own power—from that Church was sounded forth the Word of God throughout all Greece! And when the ships left that port they carried the tidings to Asia Minor and to other lands, so that Thessalonica became the starting point for the heralds of the Cross. Now if there is any place in the world that ought to feel its responsibility, it is London. We are not egotistical, I think, when we say that it is the very heart of the world! Whatever is done here is sure to be known and an earnest Church in London is only what it should be! A Church in London of any prominence that is sleepy, dull, and cold will have a very heavy account to render when the great Master shall come! *The Church at Thessalonica sounded forth the Gospel involuntarily*, and also voluntarily. They did it involuntarily, for their very lives spoke! If they did not preach, they were so full of faith, good works and holiness, that other people talked about it. And the matter was known and the work of God in the hearts of the Church could be perceived in the lives of the members—and so it went out. Oh, how happy would any pastor be whose people should be so godly, so united, so generous, so persevering, so prayerful, so full of faith and of the Holy Spirit that everywhere they should be spoken of and through them, through their conduct, the Word of God should be sounded abroad! See to that, my Brothers and Sisters—see to it. God has placed us where we are observed by many. Give them something to observe worth seeing! With the eyes of a multitude of witnesses upon us, let us run with patience the race that is set before us!

But then the Church at Thessalonica *sent out the Word voluntarily*. I have no doubt that if they had any men among them that could preach the Gospel, they bade them go and preach it! And if any went on their travels, whether they were sea captains or merchants who went from place to place, or persons of influence, or whatever they might be—they said to them, “Wherever you go, keep up the propaganda. Preach the Gospel! Tell of Jesus Christ! Be, all of you, missionaries.” Now in this I can rejoice and will rejoice that it has been so among us. At this present moment I suppose that not less than 300 of our sons that have been borne upon our knees are preaching the Gospel while I am preaching here—I mean ministers of Christ preaching the Gospel! Besides that, all round these streets are our Evangelists preaching at street corners. There ought to be more of them. Some of you that come to hear me on Sunday nights ought not to come. If you have got the Grace of God in your heart, come and get enough spiritual meat to feed you, but remember that London is perishing for the lack of the Gospel! How dare you,

then, sit still to enjoy the Gospel while men are perishing? There are lodging houses that are accessible! There are halls, large and small! There are the street corners! There are all sorts of places where Jesus can be preached! Oh, let us labor with all our might to make Him known throughout the length and breadth of this great city!

At this moment we have our sons, the sons of this Church, preaching in Australia, in America—an abundance of them there, preaching the Gospel of Christ—in the islands of the Pacific—all through every portion of our Dominions. God be thanked that there are so many, but there ought to be many more. I propound as a theory, not that a Christian man ought to say, “Am I called to preach the Gospel?” but that he ought to say, “Am I excused from preaching the Gospel?” The old plan was for young men to preach before the Church to see if they could preach. I think we must bring them all up to make them prove that they *cannot preach*. Now Mr. Oncken has been blessed in Germany, as you knew, to the raising of many Baptist Churches, and he always works upon this theory—Every member of the church must say, when he comes in, what he can do. If he says he cannot do anything, and he is old, and infirm, and bed-ridden, very well, he can serve God by patiently suffering. But if he has any ability and says, “I cannot do anything,” then the reply is, “You cannot come into the Church.” We cannot have any drones—we must have all working bees in the hive. I think it would be a good resolution for the Tabernacle to expel every member that is not doing something or other for the Lord Jesus Christ. I am afraid some of you would have to go!

Well, we won't move that resolution, but we will move another—that every member who has been a drone up till now shall pray to be a bee! That everyone who has done nothing shall ask the Lord to help him to begin! That those who have done half as much as they could, will do the other half! And that those who are doing all they can will always try to do a little more, for it is always that point of doing more than you can do that, in the long run, is the best kind of doing—for then you have to lean upon God's strength when you have gone to the limit of your own—and there is the point where the results are pretty sure to follow! I ask the prayers of the dear Brothers and Sisters who have been with us—some of them 16 and 17 years in this service—that God would not stay His hand in our midst. That as He has multiplied us to an unexampled company of some 4,500 persons or thereabouts in membership, that He may give us unexampled Grace! That our zeal and earnestness, and enthusiasm may be in proportion to the number and that the success achieved for God may be commensurate with the responsibilities laid upon us. I sound the clarion again tonight! As God said, “Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward,” so would I speak to you. Forward in God's name! For-

ward! The world still lies in the Wicked One. Forward, you light-bearers! Scatter the darkness! Satan still laughs at God! Forward, with the invincible weapon of the Cross and put him to flight!

Now sound your trumpets around the walls of Jericho—continue still to compass it. Now let the trumpet sound and the wall shall fall flat to the ground by the power of the eternal God. Forward! I hear the angels say it! Forward! I seem to hear innumerable spirits say, beckoning us like the Man of Macedonia, who beckoned Paul across the sea, Forward! The very powers of Hell behind us might well drive us on. Forward! The love of Christ within us shall impel us and let each man and woman here that has been redeemed by blood, resolve tonight, in Jehovah's strength, to do for God and for His Truth something more than yet we have thought of—to the praise of the Glory of His Grace! God bless you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
1 THESSALONIANS 1.**

**Verse 1.** *Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the Church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.* Paul is very full of Christ. His heart is full of love to God our Father and, therefore, it is that twice over in as many lines he mentions both names. He uses no vain repetitions, as the heathen do—his inmost soul is taken up with communion with the Father and with the Son—and so in one single verse he twice gives us their names!

**2-4.** *We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father. Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.* Paul had a very high opinion of the Church in Thessalonica and no doubt it deserved it. See how he speaks of it—with such confidence. “Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.” Their character was such that he felt sure that he saw the mark of God's elect about them and he speaks most positively of them—perhaps more positively than he does of any other Church. Well, there were three grand signs. There was the work of faith, the labor of love and the patience of hope. And where we see three works of the Spirit, we may be fully persuaded that electing love is there.

**5.** *For our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit. And in much assurance; as you know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.* Paul never had a happier time in preaching, it would seem, than when he preached to these Thessalo-

nians! He felt a power resting upon him. He spoke the Gospel with great positiveness and assurance and, consequently, the people received it in power—and the assurance of the hearer made the assurance of the speaker! It is a great mercy when it is so.

**6.** *And you became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the Word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit.* Ah, dear Friends, we read of one that he was more honorable than his brethren because his mother bore him with sorrow. And so when faith is born in the heart in the midst of affliction, it is a very precious faith. It is faith, indeed. “Having received the Word in much affliction with joy.” I seem to see that joy of theirs floating, like Noah’s ark, above the floods of their affliction. It seems to be a contradiction that we can be in affliction and yet be full of joy. But many a Believer will tell you that there is no contradiction in it. He knows what it is to be sorrowful and yet to be always rejoicing!

**7.** *So that you were examples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.* Brothers and Sisters, let us not only be Christians, but let us be examples of Christians! They are sure to pick out the best for an example. Oh, that we might be such that if God, Himself, were to select Christians to show what they are like, He might select us to be examples!

**8-10.** *For from you the Word of the Lord has sounded out, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has spread abroad, so that we need not to speak anything. For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had unto you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God. And to wait for His Son from Heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come.* Paul here states that all the Churches abroad knew what a wonderful time he had had with the Thesalonians and with what alacrity they had received the Gospel—and how they had turned away from their idols in thorough earnest to become worshippers of the living God! This was a great comfort to Paul and he speaks about them here with great joy!

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON  
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

# **SOUNDING OUT THE WORD OF THE LORD**

## **NO. 2076**

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, MARCH 24, 1889,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“For from you sounded out the Word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak anything.”***  
***1 Thessalonians 1:8.***

PAUL went to Thessalonica from Philippi with a sore back but with a sound heart. He went resolved to spend and to be spent for his Lord in that city. On the first three Sabbaths he spoke to the Jews in the synagogue but he soon found that they were obstinately resolved to reject Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. Therefore he directed his attention to the heathen of Thessalonica and among them he had wonderful success. Large numbers of persons, some of honorable rank, turned from their idols to worship the living God and he soon gathered about him an enthusiastic people.

During his stay at Thessalonica he pretty nearly wore himself out—for he had determined that he would accept no help from the people who appeared to have been in great straits at that time. He toiled night and day at his trade of tent-making but even then could not earn sufficient income to survive. He might have failed to maintain his existence had not the Believers at Philippi sent once, and again, to assist him. Thus, being affectionately desirous of winning them to Jesus, the Apostle was willing to have given to them not the Gospel of God, only, but even his own life. The Lord accepted the cheerful sacrifice and gave the Apostle the reward he sought.

The Thessalonians not only received the Word with joy of the Holy Spirit but became zealous in making it known. Their intensity of faith helped to spread the Gospel, for their lives were notably affected by it. And for their earnestness and godliness they were everywhere talked of. Living in a trading town, to which many went and from which many came, their singular devotion to the faith of the Lord Jesus became the theme of conversation all over Greece. And thus enquiry was promoted and the Gospel was sounded out far and wide. In their case, learners speedily became teachers. The Lord Jesus had thus not only given them drink but He had made them into a well overflowing, to refresh the thirst of thousands.

They had heard the Gospel trumpet and now they had become trumpeters themselves! In their lives the echoes of Paul's preaching were preserved. This was a very happy circumstance for the tried Apostle and greatly cheered his spirit. These Thessalonians must have been especially gracious people for Paul to praise them so heartily. “As the fining-pot for silver and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise.” Many can bear

slander better than they could endure praise. Many, when commended, become puffed up. But the Thessalonians were in such a happy spiritual condition that Paul could safely speak of them as, “examples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.”

That praise was all the more precious because it was not indiscriminate—“not laid on with a trowel,” as the Proverb puts it. The Thessalonians had faulty ones among them. The best Church that ever existed has had in it imperfect members. And the very virtues of the Thessalonians carried them into certain faults. They were notable for their expectation of the coming of the Lord and certain of them became fanatical and ceased from work because of the speedy approach of the last day. The Apostle was obliged to talk to them about this in his two Epistles, and even to lay down the rule very strongly—“If any man will not work, neither let him eat.” Under whatever pretense men might cease from their daily callings they were not to be maintained by their Brethren. These good people were too ready to be deceived by idle rumors of coming wonders.

Even the Thessalonian Church had its spots. But, then, there are spots on the sun and yet we do not speak of it as a dark body since its light so much preponderates. Grave faults in the Thessalonian Church did not prevent our honest Apostle from awarding praise where praise was due. When a man is sound at heart, praise does not become an intoxicating wine, but an invigorating tonic. Feeling a modest fear that he does not deserve the warm commendation, the good man is anxious to live up to the character imputed to him. This will be the case, however, only with those whose spiritual life is vigorous.

I entreat you, dear Friends, to learn practically from these Thessalonians by being led to imitate them. May it be truly said of us also, “From you sounded out the Word of the Lord”! It is true even now in a measure—may it be far more so! The expression to which I would call your attention is this—“From you sounded out the Word of the Lord.” It reminds us of a trumpet and its far-sounding notes. Having heard the Gospel sounding within, they in return sounded it out.

First, let us carefully look at the trumpeters. What sort of men are these who make God’s Word to sound out? When we have talked about the men we will look at their trumpets and see how it is that they give forth so telling a sound. Next, we will speak of the need of such a trumpet blast just now. And close by enquiring whether we are not called to give forth that trumpet sound.

**I.** We begin by looking at THE TRUMPETERS. Who are these by whom the Word of the Lord is sounded out? I shall hastily give you a picture of these Thessalonians drawn from Paul’s letters to them.

Observe at the outset that they were a people whom the three cardinal Graces were conspicuous. Kindly look at the third verse—“Remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope.” The three Divine sisters—Faith, Hope, Love—linked hands in their lives. These were with them in their best condition—faith working, love laboring, hope enduring. Faith without works is dead. Faith performing her work

with energy is healthy and alive. Paul saw the Thessalonian Believers to be fulfilling the lifework of a true faith.

Nor was faith left to work alone—at her right hand was love, sweetening and brightening all. Their love did not consist in words or in mere amiability of temper. But it worked with a *will*. They threw their whole hearts into the cause of God—they loved Jesus and rapturously waited for His appearing. They loved one another and shared the sufferings of their leaders in the time of persecution. They exhibited a labor of love—it was not work, only, but in intensity it deserved to be called “labor.”

As for hope—that bright-eyed Grace which looks within the veil and realizes things not seen as yet—it was peculiarly their endowment. This enabled them to bear with patience their suffering for Christ—whether it lay in false accusation, or in the spoiling of their goods. Of them it could be said, “Now abides faith, hope, charity, these three.” Brethren, it is of no use for us to attempt to sound out the Word of the Lord if we have not the spiritual power which lies in those three Divine Graces.

These are of first importance. Those precious Truths of God which faith believes, which love delights in, which hope relies upon—these are the Truths of God we shall diligently make known. We believe, and therefore speak. We love, and therefore testify. We hope, and therefore make known.

Next I note these Thessalonian Believers were a people whose election was clear. Read the fourth verse—“Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.” Paul said the same of them in the second Epistle (2:13)—“We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” They were not ashamed to believe the doctrine of election as some professors are. They rejoiced in having been chosen of God from the beginning. They saw the practical nature of election for they perceived that they were chosen unto *sanctification*.

Their lives were such as to prove that they were the Lord’s chosen people for they became choice Brethren. They gave evidence of the secret choice of God by their holy lives. I hope this is true of us as a people—we are old-fashioned enough to rejoice in the electing love of God and Free Grace has a sweet sound to our ears. If it is so, we ought to bring forth fruits worthy of it. Gratitude for Sovereign Grace and eternal love should operate upon us mightily. Let the slaves of Law go to their tasks with a lash at their backs—the chosen of God will serve Him with delight and do ten times more from love than others from hope of wages. None can show forth the praises of God like those who taste His especial love and know the unutterable sweetness of it.

These trumpeters had received the Word of God themselves in much assurance and with much power. Note the fifth verse—“For our Gospel came not unto you in word, only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance.” The Apostle also says, in the thirteenth verse of the second chapter, “For this cause, also, we thank God without ceasing,

because, when you received the Word of God which you heard of us, you received it not as the word of men but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which effectually works also in you that believe.”

Beloved, it is a poor thing to receive the Gospel in word only. You then say, “Yes, it is true, I believe it.” And there the matter ends. It is a far different matter to *feel* the power of the Word as it comes from the Omnipotent Lord so as to have your heart broken by it and then healed by it. To receive the Gospel as indisputable, infallible and Divine is to receive it, indeed. To receive it not because you think a certain way but because it carries conviction with it and bears you away by its irresistible force—that is to receive it in its *power*.

Beloved, I do not believe a man will spend his life in spreading a doctrine which has never mastered his spirit. But when the Truth of God takes possession of a man and holds him by force as a strong man armed keeps his own house, then will he run up his flag and openly acknowledge the Mighty One who reigns within. He who believes, and is sure, is the man who will propagate the faith and desire that others should accept it. What a difference there is between the man who has felt the Omnipotence of Truth and another who merely professes to entertain sound opinions!

If the almighty Word has carried you captive you will hold it fast and nothing will persuade you either to surrender it or to stifle it. The Thessalonians were a people whose constancy was proven. They received the Word “with much affliction.” The Apostle says, “For you, Brethren, became followers of the Churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus: for you also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews.” The assault by the mob, recorded in Acts 17, was, doubtless, only one of their many trials. They remained steadfast and enthusiastic under all their tribulations. And therefore the Gospel was sounded out by them.

Cowards hold their tongues—but brave men are not to be put down. Having already borne slander, reproach and misrepresentation of every kind, we are not abashed but rather are hardened to endurance and publish our belief more unreservedly than ever. We have nothing to conceal, nothing to fear. Slander can say no more. Therefore we, the more boldly sound forth the Word of God. Brethren, unless you can hold on in rough weather and bear up under opposition you will do little in sounding out the Word of God. Trumpets must be made of hard metal and trumpeters must have something of the soldier about them, or little will come of it.

Again—these people really and lovingly served God. Look at the ninth verse—“For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.” I have no doubt many of these folks had been great devotees of their idols for it is amazing what idolaters will do for their deities! At this day the gifts of Hindus to idol shrines put to shame the offerings given by Christians to their Lord. Have you not heard how they were likely to throw their very lives away beneath the wheels of the chariot of their



demon god? Shall hideous deities of wood and stone command a zeal which is not shown in the service of the living God?

I doubt not that these Thessalonians became as earnest worshippers of the living Jehovah as they had once been earnest votaries of their idols. They turned from idols but they turned to serve God. They were not turned in opinion, only, but in a practical manner. What a pity it is that to many Christian professors, religion is opinion, and conversion a feeling! Do not many live as if God were a myth and the service of God a sham? If God is God, serve Him—service is the right of Godhead. Does not the Lord Himself say, “If then I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear?”

Oh, that to us the service of the Lord may be a delight—and then it will be as natural to us to sound out the Word of the Lord as it is for birds to sing! For one thing the Thessalonians were peculiarly notable—they were enthusiastic expectants of the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul says of them in the tenth verse that they waited for the Son of God from Heaven. They really expected Christ to come and to come speedily. They even carried this expectation beyond its proper bounds—they grew impatient of the Lord’s apparent delay. Some of their number died and they laid it to heart as though in their case their hope had failed.

Paul wrote to them concerning this—“But I would not have you to be ignorant, Brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that you sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.” They were not losers by their death. Those who remained alive till the advent would have no preference over those who slept. In their case there was no need to write “of the times and the seasons,” for they well knew that the Lord would come as a thief in the night. They came to expect the immediate coming of the Lord as to fall into unhealthy excitement about it. And it was needful for Paul, to prevent their becoming fanatical, to say, “Now we beseech you, Brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and by our gathering together unto Him, that you be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.”

Paul delighted to see them waiting for the coming of Christ. But he also prayed, “The Lord direct your hearts into the patient waiting for Christ.” He wishes rest to the troubled—but this unrest was a virtue carried to excess. We are not, many of us, in danger of exaggeration in that direction. I fear that we are more likely to forget the Lord’s coming, or to treat it as an unpractical speculation. If any Truth of God should arouse us this should do it—yet even the wise virgins, as well as the foolish, are all too apt to slumber and sleep because the Bridegroom delays His coming.

Hear you not the midnight cry? Does not this startle you? “Behold, the Bridegroom comes; go out to meet Him.” If you hearken to that call you will be the men to sound out the Word of the Lord in every place. If we, as a Church and people are more and more influenced by the expectation of our Lord’s appearing, we shall be more eager to spread His Gospel. Remember that He may come at once. Those things of which Paul spoke as

hindering His coming have now come and gone. Eighteen centuries and more have passed away since Paul wrote that the Lord comes quickly. Stir up yourselves then, to use all diligence. Proclaim His Word and according to your ability go forth into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. You that look for your Lord—you are the men who should herald His coming by a clear testimony to His name in every place.

Thus I have given you hints as to what kind of men are likely to sound forth the Word of God. Judge, my Brethren, whether you yourselves have these qualifications. It is my sincere impression that they are to be found in many of you.

**II.** Secondly, let us notice THEIR TRUMPETS. “From you sounded out the Word of the Lord.” Their testimony was distinct, clear, resonant and far-sounding. We may find an illustration in the silver trumpets of the sanctuary which were sounded to gather the people together. Let your trumpets ring out the call to assemble to our Lord Jesus, the true Shiloh—unto whom shall the gathering of the people be. We may further think of the Jubilee trumpet which early in the morning proclaimed clearance of debts, release from bondage and restoration to lost heritages. Such are the glad announcements of the Gospel. Let us hasten to make them.

Trumpets are also blown in time of war—many are the allusions to this in Scripture. Oh, that the Church of God may boldly sound the war trumpet, at this time, against impurity, intemperance, false doctrine and loose living! Our Lord has come to send a sword upon earth in these matters. Oh that from each one of us the war blast may be sounded without fear or hesitation! Gladly would we also earn the name given to the Apostles, “They that turn the world upside down.” For at present it is wrong side up. A trumpet is also used simply for musical purposes and the testimony of the Church to her Lord Jesus should be the most melodious sound the ears of man have ever heard—

***“How sweet the name of Jesus sounds!”***

Oh, to sound forth the glorious name “with trumpet and sound of cornet,” that multitudes might be compelled to hear it! Oh, to make all earth and Heaven ring with that dear name! Somebody writing upon this verse compares the sounding forth to the voices of Church bells. I will suppose that you are sojourning among the hills and have almost lost reckoning of the days. How clearly are you told that it is the Sabbath morning when you hear the sweet voices of the bells from yonder tower far away! The call comes through the wood and over the moor and it seems to say, “Come here and worship, for the day of rest has come.”

Each Church should find in its living members its best peal of bells. Every individual, great and little, should give forth his sound—no one should be dumb, Oh that it were always so—that everyone would constantly show forth the praises of the Lord! The Lord of Hosts is with us. Let us lift up the shout of a King. He is All in All to us. Let us make Him known. God grant us to realize that we may give a loud fanfare upon the silver trumpets to our coming Prince!

What was the means by which these excellent people made the Gospel to sound out? It was made known by the remarkable conversions which happened among them. These men had been idolaters and had fallen into many lusts common in those times. Paul's preaching had made a change which none could have looked for. They had been brought to worship the true God and to look for His Son from Heaven and to walk worthy of their high calling. Everybody asked, "Why, what has happened to these Thessalonians? These people have broken their idols—they worship the one God. They trust in Jesus. They are no longer drunken, dishonest, impure, contentious."

Everybody talked of what had taken place among these converted people. Oh, for conversions plentiful, clear, singular and manifest—so the Word of God may sound out! Our converts are our best advertisements and arguments. Have you not known a whole town startled by the conversion of one great sinner? A distinct, clear-cut conversion will often astound an entire parish and compel the crowd to say, "What is this Word of the Lord?" Brothers and Sisters, may your own conversions and those of many around you proclaim aloud the power of the Word of God and the efficacy of faith in the precious blood of Jesus.

The attention commanded by their conversion was further secured by their unmistakable, unquestionable character. They became such godly, honest, upright, sober, saintly people that all who observed them took note of their excellence. They were Christians, indeed, for they were Christians in their deeds. Their whole lives were affected by their faith—both at home and abroad. They were so admirable in character that they had become examples to those who were already saved. Notice in the seventh verse the remarkable expression, "You were examples to all that believe." It is not so difficult to become an example to the ungodly, for their level is a low one. But it is a high attainment to become an example to those who fear God.

This requires Divine Grace. If even saints may copy from you, you had need write a good hand. The Thessalonians had attained to this, and it was by this that they were able to give such voice to the Gospel. Holy living is a grand pulpit. A godly character has a louder voice in it than the most eloquent tongue. Character is our Chrysostom—holiness has a golden mouth. The Apostle says that their lives were so complete a publication of the Gospel that he did not need to call attention thereto. He writes, "We need not to speak anything"—as much as to say, "We have only to point to you." Shall I ever feel that I have little need to preach in words since my people preach far better by their lives? Yes, there are many cases among you concerning which I might say—"There, watch that friend's life and see what the Gospel is—there is no need for me to tell you."

Nobody stands on a summer day and points upward, saying, "There is the sun." No, the great light sheds its radiance everywhere and nobody mistakes him for the moon or a star. Oh, that all of us were of such a character that none should mistake us! Till we have more grace in our

hearts and more holiness in our lives, we shall lack the greatest means of making the Gospel known. We must shine by our works if men are to see our light. Oh, what a sounding forth of the Word will your holy lives be! Without these, all is vain. If the life contradicts the voice, it will be as when a trumpet is stopped up and blow as you may, no sound is heard.

I have no doubt that the Thessalonians added to their character many earnest efforts for the spread of the Truth of God. They went about telling what they had heard, believed and enjoyed. Some of them became preachers of the Word at home and others went abroad to publish the glad tidings. Jesus would be made known to the poor in the back slums of Thessalonica and talked of to the sailors on board the vessels and to the merchants on the wharfs. Are you, Beloved, all of you, making Jesus known? Are there any of you silent? Have we not among us some who should now be working in foreign lands? Have we not in these pews many whose voices should be heard in our streets? We shall never be as we ought to be till every talent is utilized. We must be all at it, always at it, and at it with all our might. We have not come to this yet. May the love of Christ constrain us thereto!

Meanwhile, it was by their faith that their teaching was made so clear and forcible. They were intense Believers, so that Paul says, "Your faith to God-ward is spread abroad." They did not half-heartedly teach what they half-heartedly believed. They accepted the teaching of the Apostle as being not the word of man but the Word of God. And so they spoke with the accent of conviction. Those who heard them felt that they were enfeebled by no doubts but were filled with full assurance of the eternal verities. Their goods were spoiled—they were themselves brought before magistrates and yet they stood fast in the faith and had no secret mistrust. There was no moving them, although the philosophers sneered at them and the superstitious persecuted them. They stood like rocks amid raging seas. This was a trumpet for the Gospel blasting loudly.

When holy constancy is to the front under reproach and ridicule, the Gospel is sounded as with a bugle note and men are compelled to hear it. Brothers and Sisters, you possess this confidence. Have it more and more! May we have among us remarkable conversions, unquestionable character, earnest effort and intense faith. And these will be to us all the trumpet that we need. We need not blow our own trumpets nor borrow the whistles of politics or amusement. But the Word of the Lord will by these sound forth all around us. I cannot keep you long upon these points—my aim is not to fill up the time but to fill you with an eager desire to sound out the Truth of God.

**III.** Oh that the Holy Spirit would put fire into my sermon—that its live coals may touch your hearts while I say that **THERE IS NEED, AT THE PRESENT TIME, FOR A TRUMPET BLAST OF THIS KIND.**

Brethren, the Word of the Lord ought to be sounded out because it is the Word of God. If it is the word of man let *him* spread it as he can. We are not concerned to help him. The word of man comes from a dying source and it will return to it. But the Word of the Lord endures forever—

***“Float, float, you winds, His story!  
And you, you waters, roll,  
Till, like a sea of glory,  
It spreads from pole to pole.”***

The Word of the Lord is so all-important that it should have a free course, run and be glorified. When He gives the word, great should be the company of them that publish it. If you believe the Gospel to be the Divine Word you dare not withhold it. The stones would cry out if you were silent.

With many of us this is a matter of solemn obligation. The Word of God has been to us life from the dead, deliverance out of bondage, food for our hunger, strength for our weakness, comfort for our sorrow and satisfaction for our hearts. Spread it then—

***“Can you, whose souls are lighted  
With wisdom from on high,  
Can you, to men unenlightened,  
The lamp of life deny?”***

Seeing that God’s Word has come to you with power and has saved you from all evil, you *must* sound it abroad.

Remember too, that this is salvation to the perishing. Did not one dear Brother and deacon on Monday night pray to the Lord with great fervor, reiterating these words, “They are perishing, they are perishing, they are perishing, Lord, save them!”? You believe that men are diseased with sin and that Christ is the only remedy—will you not tell them the remedy? You see men dying without hope—will you not tell them where there is hope as to the hereafter? You tremblingly feel that for souls to die without accepting the Savior is eternal woe—will you not pray for them, in Christ’s place, to be reconciled to God? O Sirs, by everything that is terrible in the doom of those who die in unbelief, I charge you, sound out the Word of the Lord! As you will shortly appear before the judgment seat of Christ, be clear of the blood of all men. The Gospel has power to save today and to save forever—sound it out!

This is a time in which the Word of the Lord is much abused. Many venture to say that it has lost its power and has proved unsuitable to the age. They tell us that we need something more advanced than it. O you that love it, avenge this insult by manifesting its power in your lives and by sounding out the old Gospel with new vigor! By your holy characters, and by your incessant labors, force men to see the power of the Divine Word. Let its secret power be embodied in your practical consecration and proclaimed in your incessant witness-bearing. When I wish to speak best, my tongue fails me. I am a poor advocate. But oh, I pray you, by the glory of the Ever Blessed—which is tarnished by the foul mouths of ungodly men—seek with sevenfold energy to make known Christ Crucified and the way of salvation by faith in Him!

If you have slept until now, “Awake, awake! Put on strength!” for the enemy is at the gate. I beseech you, now that Christ’s crown and Throne are assailed by His adversaries, put on your armor, grasp the sword and stand up for the sacred cause.

At this time many other voices are clamoring to be heard. The air is full of din. Men have devised new methods by which to elevate the race and loud are the voices that proclaim the man-invented nostrums. "Shall we be heard?" cries one, "if we lift up our voices?" Yes, if you take the Gospel trumpet you will enforce a hearing. It chanced one evening, when there was a large gathering of friends at the Orphanage that our boys were sweetly discoursing a hymn tune upon their bells. An American organ was being played as an accompaniment and all the gathered company were singing at their best, making a rushing flood of music.

Just then I quietly hinted to our friend, Mr. Manton Smith, to put in a few notes from his silver cornet. And when he placed it to his lips and threw his soul into it, the lone man was heard above us all. Bells, organ, voices—everything seemed to yield before that one clear blast of trumpet music! So will it be with the Gospel. Only sound it out as God's own Word and let the power of the Holy Spirit go with it, and it will drown all music but its own. At any rate, you will have done your part and will be no longer responsible, even if men do not hear it, if from your very soul you sound out the Word of the Lord.

Need I say more to show you how needful it is that we now should put a tongue into the heavenly doctrine and let it proclaim salvation to all lands?

**V.** I want, during my last few minutes, to hint to the members of this Church and to those many friends far and near who have so generously associated with me in holy enterprises that **WE ARE THE PEOPLE TO GIVE FORTH THIS SOUND.**

It is our duty, first of all, because of our position. Thessalonica was a well-chosen center because it was a place of great resort. Ships were always coming into that port and going out again. Whatever was done at Thessalonica would soon be known in all quarters. We are placed in a central position in London. Who does not know the Tabernacle? Here the tribes come up and here the multitudes continually assemble. Friends from the country flock to this spot. And on any summer Sabbath, persons from all countries are in these pews and aisles. I state the simple truth when I speak of this house as known to some of all nations, and therefore what is done here, is done in the heart of England and in the center of the world.

If you, as a Church, can sound forth by your character and exertions the Word of God, you are in the most fit place for it. The position demands it of you—act not unworthily. Providence has forced us into prominence. We have not desired it, but we are known and observed by multitudes. If, Beloved, we keep the fire burning here it will be a beacon seen afar. If we are consecrated men and women we have a great opportunity. If my helpers will see to it that nothing fails in this place, we shall encourage many. But we shall dispirit thousands unless we carry on the work here with great vigor, the Lord being our helper.

Nor can I forget our numbers. There may have been Churches of larger numbers than ours but I have never heard of them. In this I do not glory

but I dare not conceal from you the anxiety which it causes me. If little is done by such an assembly it will be a great disgrace to us all. I am overwhelmed with the thought of more than five thousand souls united here in Church fellowship. Large numbers may be our weakness. We may become a mere horde of men without discipline, without unity, without power. But I trust in the great Lord that it shall not be so. If God has caused us to be as large as almost any other ten Churches put together, does He not call upon us to exert ourselves with tenfold energy to spread abroad the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ?

I am sorely burdened with this great host—will you allow it to be a burden? Will you not make it a joy? Will all these professed Believers make up a crowded hospital? Shall not this house rather be a barrack of soldiers? Shall not our voice be louder for our Lord than if we were but five hundred instead of five thousand? How would I plead with you if I knew how! Do not make this community a gigantic failure. God grant that, remembering our numbers, we may not be satisfied with a thin and feeble voice for Jesus. Our voice should be as the noise of many waters. Is it so? Is it as much so as it ought to be? Oh, for the Spirit of God among us as a rushing mighty wind!

Through our agencies we ought to sound out the Word of the Lord very loudly. At this moment you have, by the College, sent out more than seven hundred preachers of the Word into all countries. Oh, that they were all as faithful as some are! Many are the Churches presided over by those trained in your school of the Prophets—pray that the Lord may be with them. Your orphan children are growing up—oh, that they may be a seed to serve the Lord! Your peddlers are going from door to door with holy literature. Oh for the power of God with their laborious efforts! Your Evangelists are heard by tens of thousands—implore the unction from on high for them.

The sermons preached in this place are not only printed in our own tongue but many of them are translated into other languages and are widely read. This is no mean agency for good. All this, and much more which I will not speak upon, I mention not to boast, but that we may be humbled under our responsibilities and may cry to God for His power. All this, if the Holy Spirit is with us, must accomplish great results. But without Him—and we shall be without Him unless we are a holy, godly, earnest, Christ-loving people—nothing will be accomplished. Our agencies will become burdens to us until that which should be the armor of our warfare will become the sepulcher of our life. I feel this more than anyone else since the very finding and using of funds for so great a work would crush me if the Lord were not my helper.

Beloved, I press home upon you the duty of sounding out the Word of God because of your prayers. If there is a people under Heaven that constantly meets in large numbers to pray, we are that people. However some of you are lax on this point, but I am bound to say that I rejoice in your gatherings for prayer. In this you are my joy and crown. God be praised for it! But if any cry to God and then do not work for Him, what hypocrisy

it is! What if we ask Him to save souls and never lift a finger to spread the Gospel? Is this truthful? Dare we hang the trumpet on the wall and then pray, "Lord, let it be blown"? No. By the honesty of your hearts set that trumpet to your lips if you desire its sound to go forth. Give it your very life's breath. Lift up your voice with strength—lift it up! Be not afraid.

Once more—you have stood with me in solemn protest against the declensions of the age. He who knows all things knows what this has cost me. But your love has been a great relief to me in the bitter sorrow. We will have no complicity with error—we will not aid the Philistines in shearing away the locks of the Gospel's strength. Having protested, we must justify our position by our lives. We shall be dishonored unless we have the power of God especially resting upon us—that may be a small thing—but the Truth of God itself will be dishonored. And this we cannot bear.

If the Gospel is indeed true—and we have no doubt about it—we beseech the God of Truth to grant us the sign and seal from Heaven by barring His holy arm in our midst. Today, again, I lay the sacrifice upon the altar by reasserting the old Gospel against the down-grade of the times. The God that answers by fire let Him be God! May the tongues of fire descend and rest on you. May you who are with me, whether in London or in the utmost parts of the earth, be inflamed with zeal and fired with love. May the water in the trenches be licked up by the flame and the whole sacrifice be consumed with Heaven's own fire till the people, once deluded by Baal, shall be forced to cry, "Jehovah, He is the God! Jehovah, He is the God!"

May the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ triumph in the midst of the earth and become, as it always has been, the Truth by which the Glory of the Lord shall be revealed! The Lord grant it. Labor, all of you to secure it.

I have not preached to sinners. I leave that, for once, to you. I lay on you this burden—that you each one make the Word of the Lord to sound out "so that we need not to speak anything." God grant it may be so, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307



# **A SUMMARY OF EXPERIENCE AND A BODY OF DIVINITY NO. 1806**

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 26, 1884,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“For they themselves show of us what manner of entering  
in we had unto you, and how you turned to God from  
idols to serve the living and true God; and to  
wait for His Son from Heaven, whom He raised from the dead,  
even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come.”  
1 Thessalonians 1:9, 10.***

IN Thessalonica the conversions to the faith were remarkable. Paul came there without prestige, without friends and when he was in the very lowest condition, for he had just been beaten and imprisoned at Philippi, and had fled from that city. Yet it mattered not in what condition the ambassador might be—God, who works mighty things by weak instruments, blessed the word of His servant, Paul! No doubt when the Apostle went into the synagogue to address his own countrymen, he had great hopes that, by reasoning with them out of their own Scriptures, he might convince them that Jesus was the Christ. He soon found that only a few would search the Scriptures and form a judgment on the point. The bulk of them refused, for we read of the Jews of Berea, to whom Paul fled from Thessalonica, “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”

Paul must have felt disappointed with his own countrymen. Indeed, he often had cause to do so. His heart was affectionately warm toward them, but their hearts were very bitter towards him, reckoning him to be a pervert and an apostate. But if he seemed to fail with the Jews, it is evident that he was abundantly successful with the Gentiles! These turned from their idols to serve the living God and their turning was so remarkable that the Jews charged Paul and Silas with turning the world upside down! In those days there was a good deal of practical atheism abroad and, therefore, the wonder was not so much that men left their idols, as that they turned unto the living God. It became a matter of talk all over the city and the Jews, in their violence, helped to make the matter more notorious, for the mobs in the street and the attack upon the house of Jason all stirred the thousand tongues of rumor.

Everybody spoke of the sudden appearance of three poor Jews, of their remarkable teaching in the synagogue, the conversion of a great multitude of devout Greeks and of the chief women not a few. It was no small thing that so many had come straight away from the worship of Jupiter and

Mercury to worship the unknown God—who could not be seen, nor imaged—and to enter the kingdom of one Jesus who had been crucified! It set all Macedonia and Achaia wondering and, as with a trumpet blast, it awakened all the dwellers in those regions. Every ship that sailed from Thessalonica carried the news of the strange ferment which was moving the city—men were caring for *religion* and were quitting old beliefs for a new and better faith.

Thessalonica, situated on one of the great Roman roads, the center of a large trade, thus became a center for the Gospel. Wherever there are true conversions, there will be more or less of this kind of sounding forth of the Gospel. It was especially so at Thessalonica, but it is truly so in every Church where the Spirit of God is lifting up men from the dregs of evil, delivering them from drunkenness, dishonesty, uncleanness, worldliness and making them to become holy and earnest in the cause of the great Lord! There is sure to be a talk when Grace triumphs! This talk is a great aid to the Gospel. It is no small thing that men should have their attention attracted to it by its *effects*—for it is both natural and just that thoughtful men should judge of doctrines by their *results*—and if the most beneficial results follow from the preaching of the Word of God, prejudice is disarmed and the most violent objectors are silenced.

You will notice that in this general talk the converts and the preachers were greatly mixed up—“For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you.” I do not know that it is possible for the preacher to keep himself distinct from those who profess to be converted by him. He is gladly one with them in love to their souls, but he would have it remembered that he cannot be responsible for all their actions. Those who profess to have been converted under any ministry have it in their power to damage that ministry far more than any adversaries can do. “There!” says the world when it detects a false professor, “*this* is what comes of such preaching!” They judge unfairly, I know, but most men are in a great hurry and will not examine the logic of their opponents—while many others are so eager to judge unfavorably that a very little truth, or only a bare report, suffices to condemn both the minister and his doctrine. Every man that lives unto God with purity of life brings honor to the Gospel which converted him, to the community to which he belongs and to the preaching by which he was brought to the knowledge of the Truth of God.

But the reverse is equally true in the case of unworthy adherents. Members of Churches, will you kindly think of this? Your ministers share the blame of your ill conduct if ever you disgrace yourselves. I feel sure that none of you wish to bring shame and trouble upon your pastors, however careless you may be about your own reputations. Oh, that we could be freed from those of whom Paul says, “Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.” When these are in a Church, they are its curse! The Thessalonians were not such—they were such a people that Paul did not blush to have himself implicated in what they did. He was glad to say that the outsiders “show of us

what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from Heaven.”

Quitting this line of thought, I would observe that these two verses struck me as being singularly full. Oceans of teaching are to be found in them. A father of the Church in the first ages was apt to cry, “I adore the infinity of Holy Scripture.” That remark constantly rises from my lips when I am studying the sacred Word! This Book is more than a book—it is the mother of books, a mine of truth, a mountain of meaning! It was an ill-advised opinion which is imputed to the Muslims at the destruction of the Alexandrian Library, when they argued that everything that was good in it was already in the Koran and, therefore, it might as well be destroyed.

Yet it is true with regard to the inspired Word of God, that it contains everything which appertains to eternal life. It is a Revelation of which no man can measure! It compasses Heaven and earth, time and eternity! The best evidence of its being written by an Infinite mind is its own infinity. Within a few of its words there lie hidden immeasurable meanings, even as perfume enough to sweeten leagues of space may be condensed into a few drops of oil of roses. The first part of my text contains *a summary of Christian experience*. The second part contains *a body of divinity*. Here is ample room and verge enough. It is not possible to exhaust such a theme!

I. The first part of the text contains A SUMMARY OF EXPERIENCE—“What manner of entering in we had unto you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from Heaven.” Here we have, in miniature, the biography of a Christian man. It begins, first, with *the entering in of the Word*—“What manner of entering in we had unto you.” When we preach the Word, you listen and, so far, the Word is received. This is a very hopeful circumstance. Still, the hearing with the outward ear is comparatively a small matter or, at least, only great because of what may follow from it. The preacher feels, even with some who listen with attention, that he is outside the door. He is knocking and he hopes that he is heard within—but the Truth of God is not yet received—the door remains shut, an entrance is not granted and in no case can he be content to speak with the person outside the door. He desires an *entrance* for the Word.

All is fruitless until Christ enters into the heart. I have seen the following—the door has been a little opened and the man inside has come to look at the messenger and, more distinctly, to hear what he may have to say. But he has taken care to secure the chain on the door, or hold it with his hand, for he is not yet ready to admit the guest who is so desirous of entering. The King’s messenger has sometimes tried to put his foot in when the door has stood a little open, but he has not always been successful and has not even escaped from a painful hurt when the door has been forced back with angry violence. We have called again and again with our message, but we have been as men who besieged a walled city and were driven from the gates! Yet we had our reward, for when the Holy Spirit sweetly moved the hard heart, the city gates have opened of their own accord and we have been received joyfully!

We have heard the hearty cry, "Let the Truth of God come in! Let the Gospel come in! Let Christ come in! Whatever there is in Him, we are willing to receive! Whatever He demands, we are willing to give! Whatever He offers us we are glad to accept! Come and welcome! The guest chamber is prepared. Come and abide in our house forever!" The Truth has its own ways of entrance, but in general it first affects the *understanding*. The man says, "I see it! I see how God is just, and yet the Justifier of him that believes in Jesus! I see sin laid on Christ that it may not be laid on me and I perceive that if I believe in Jesus Christ my sins are put away by His Atonement." To many, all that is needed is that they should understand this fundamental Truth of God, for their minds are prepared of God to receive it. Only make it plain and they catch at it as a hungry man at a piece of bread! They discover, in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus, the very thing for which they have been looking for years—and so the Truth of God enters by the door of the understanding.

Then it usually commences to work upon the conscience, conscience being the understanding exercised upon moral truth. The man sees himself a sinner, discovering guilt that he was not aware of—and he is thus made ready to receive Christ's pardoning Grace. He sees that to have lived without thinking of God, without loving God, without serving God was a great and grievous crime. He feels the offensiveness of this neglect. He trembles, he consents unto the Law, that it is good, and he acknowledges that if the Law condemns him, he is worthy to be condemned.

When it has thus entered into the understanding and affected the conscience, the Word of God usually awakens the *emotions*. Fear is awakened and hope is excited. The man begins to feel as he never felt before. His whole manhood is brought under the heavenly spell! His very flesh creeps in harmony with the amazement of his soul. He wonders and dreads, weeps and quivers, hopes and doubts. No emotion is asleep—life is in all! When a tear rises to his eye, he brushes it away, but it is soon succeeded by another. Repentance calls forth! The proud man is broken down; the hard man is softened. The love of God, in providing a Savior; the unsearchable riches of Divine Grace, in passing by transgression, iniquity and sin—these things amaze and overwhelm the penitent! He finds himself suddenly dissolved, where before he was hard as adamant, for the Word is entering into him and exercising its softening power.

By-and-by the entrance is complete, for the Truth of God carries the central castle of Mansoul and captures his heart. He who once hated the Gospel now loves it! At first he loves it, hoping that it may be his, though fearing the reverse—yet admitting that if it brought no blessing to him, yet it was a lovable and desirable thing. By-and-by the man ventures to grasp it, encouraged by the Word that bids him lay hold on eternal life. One who in digging his land finds a treasure, first looks about for fear lest someone else should claim it. But soon he dares to examine his prize more carefully and, at length, he bears it in his bosom to his own home. So it is with the Gospel—when a man finds it by the understanding, he soon embraces it with his heart and, believe me, if it once gets into the heart, the arch-enemy, himself, will never get it out again! Oh, that such an entrance with

the Gospel might commence the spiritual life of all here present who are as yet unsaved!

What comes next? Well, the second stage is *conversion*. “They themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how *you turned* from idols to serve the living and true God.” There came a *turning*, a decided turning. The man has come so far in carelessness, so far in sin and unbelief, but now he pauses and he deliberately turns around and faces in that direction to which, up to now, he had turned his back. Conversion is the turning of a man *completely* around—to hate what he loved and to love what he hated! Conversion is to turn to God decidedly and distinctly by an act and deed of the mind and will. In some senses we are *turned*, but in others, like these Thessalonians, we *turn*. It is not conversion to think that you *will* turn, or to *promise* that you will turn, or *resolve* that you will turn—but *actually* and in very deed to *turn*—because the Word of God has had a true entrance into your heart. You must not be content with a reformation! There must be a revolution—old thrones must fall and a new king must reign. Is it so with you?

These Thessalonians turned from their idols. Do you tell me that you have no idols? Think again and you will not be quite so sure. The streets of London are full of fetish worship and almost every dwelling is a temple crammed with idols. Why, multitudes of men are worshipping not calves of gold, but gold in a more portable shape! Small circular idols of gold and silver are much sought after. They are very devoutly worshipped by some and great things are said concerning their power. I have heard the epithet of “almighty” ascribed to an American form of these idols! Those who do not worship gold may yet worship rank, name, pleasure, or honor. Most worship *self*—and I do not know that there is a more degrading form of worship than for a man to put himself on a pedestal and bow down thereto and worship himself! You might just as well adore cats and crocodiles with the ancient Egyptians as pay your life’s homage to yourselves. No wooden image set up by the most savage tribe can be more ugly or degrading than our idol when we adore ourselves!

Men still worship Bacchus. Do not tell me they do not! Why, there is a temple to him at every street corner. While every other trade is content with a shop or a warehouse, this fiend has his palaces in which plentiful libations are poured forth in his honor. The gods of unchastity and vice are yet among us. It would be a shame, even, to speak of the things which are done for them in secret. The lusts of the flesh are served even by many who would not like to have it known. We have many gods and many lords in this land! God grant that we may see, through the preaching of the Gospel, many turning from such idols! If you love *anything* better than God, you are idolaters! If there is anything you would not give up for God, it is your idol! If there is anything that you seek with greater fervor than you seek the Glory of God, that is your idol—and conversion means a turning from *every* idol!

But then that is not enough, for some men turn from one idol to another. If they do not worship Bacchus, they become teetotalers and possibly they worship the golden calf and become covetous. When men quit covetousness, they sometimes turn to profligacy. A change of false gods is

not the change that will *save*—we must turn unto God—to trust, love and honor Him, and Him alone! After conversion comes *service*. True conversion causes us “to serve the living and true God.” To serve Him means to worship Him, to obey Him, to consecrate one’s entire being to His honor and Glory and to be His devoted servant. We are, dear Friends, to serve the “living” God.

Many men still have a dead God. They do not feel that He hears their prayers. They do not feel the power of His Spirit moving upon their hearts and lives. They never take the Lord into their calculations. He never fills them with joy, nor even depresses them with fear. God is unreal and inactive to them. But the true convert turns to the *living* God, who is everywhere and whose Presence affects him at every point of his being. This God he is to worship, obey and serve.

Then it is added, to serve the *true* God—and there is no serving a true God with falsehood. Many evidently serve a false god, for they utter words of prayer without their hearts—and that is false prayer, unfit for the true God who must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. When men’s lives are false and artificial, they are not a fit service for the God of Truth. A life is false when it is not the true outcome of the soul—when it is fashioned by custom, ruled by observation, restrained by selfish motives and governed by the love of human approbation. What a man does against his will is not, in truth, done by himself at all. If the will is not changed, the man is not converted and his religious life is not true. He that serves the true God acceptably does it with delight. To him, sin is misery, and holiness is happiness. This is the sort of service which we desire our converts to render—we long to see rebels become *sons*. Oh the sacred alchemy of the Holy Spirit who can turn men from being the slaves of sin to become servants of righteousness!

Carefully notice the order of life’s progress. The *entering* in of the Word of God produces *conversion* and this produces *service*. Do not put those things out of their places. If you are converts without the Word entering into you, you are unconverted. And if professing to receive the Word, you are not turned by it, you have not received it! If you claim to be converted and yet do not serve God, you are not converted. And if you boast of serving God without being converted, you are not serving God! The three things are links which draw on each other.

A fourth matter follows to complete this Christian biography, namely, *waiting*—“To wait for His Son from Heaven.” That conversion which is not followed up by waiting is a false conversion and will come to nothing. We wait, dear Brothers and Sisters, in the holy perseverance of faith. Having begun with Christ Jesus our Lord, we abide in Him—we trust and then we wait. We do not look upon salvation as a thing which requires a few minutes of faith and then all is over—salvation is the business of our *lives*! We receive salvation in an instant, but we work it out with fear and trembling all our days. He that is saved continues to be saved and goes on to be saved from day to day, from every sin and from every form of evil! We must wait upon the Lord and renew the strength of the life which He has imparted. As a servant waits on her mistress, or a courtier upon his king, so must we wait upon the Lord.

This waiting also takes the shape of living in the future. A man who waits is not rising on the wages of today, but on the recompenses of a time which is yet to come—and this is the mark of the Christian—that his life is spent in eternity rather than in time! And his citizenship is not of earth but of Heaven! He has received a believing expectancy which makes him both watch and wait. He expects that the Lord Jesus will come a second time and that, speedily. He has read of His going up into Heaven and he believes it! And he knows that He will come back in like manner as He went up into Heaven. He looks for the Second Advent with calm hope. He does not know when it may be, but he keeps himself on the watch as a servant who waits his Lord's return. He hopes it may be today. He would not be amazed if it were tomorrow, for he is always looking for and hasting unto the coming of the Son of God.

The coming of the Lord is his expected reward! He does not expect to be rewarded by men, or even to be rewarded of God with temporal things in this life, for he has set his affection upon things yet to be revealed, things eternal and infinite. In the day when the Christ shall come and the heavens which have received Him shall restore Him to our earth, He shall judge the world in righteousness and His people with His truth—and then shall our day break and our shadows flee away! The true Believer lives in this near future. His hopes are with Jesus on His Throne and with Jesus crowned before an assembled universe! The convert who has come to this condition is assured of his salvation. See how he has been rising from the time when he first held the door ajar! He is assured of his salvation, for Paul describes him as one who is delivered from the wrath to come and, therefore, he looks with holy delight to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Once he was afraid of this, for he feared that Jesus would come to condemn him. But now he knows that when the Lord appears, his justification will be made plain to the eyes of all men. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father." And so he cries, "Even so, come Lord Jesus!" He would *hasten* rather than delay the appearing of the Lord! He groans in sympathy with travailing creation for the manifestation of the sons of God! He cries with all the redeemed host for the day of the Savior's Glory! He could not do this were he not abundantly assured that the day would not seal his destruction, but reveal his full salvation.

Here, then, you have the story of the Christian man briefly summed up, and I think you will not find a passage of merely human writing which contains so much in so small a compass. It has unspeakable wealth packed away into a narrow casket. Do you understand it? Is this the outline of *your* life? If it is not, the Lord grant that His Word may have an entrance into you this morning—that you may now believe in Jesus Christ and then wait for His glorious appearing.

**II.** I shall need you to be patient with me while I very briefly unfold the second half of this great roll. Here, even to a greater degree, we have *multum in parvo*—much in little. A BODY OF DIVINITY packed away in a nutshell! "To wait for His Son from Heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come." To begin my body

of divinity, I see here, first, *the Deity of Christ*. “To wait for His Son.” “His Son.” God has but one Son in the highest sense. The Lord Jesus Christ has given to all Believers power to become the *sons of God*, but not in the sense in which He, and He, alone, is the Son of God. “Unto which of the angels said He at any time, You are My Son, this day have I begotten you?” “When He brings in the First-Begotten into the world, He says, Let all the angels of God worship Him.”

The Eternal Sonship is a mystery into which it is better for us never to pry. Believe it. But how it is, or how it could be—it is certainly not for you or for me to attempt to explain. There is one “Son of the Highest,” who is “God—of the substance of the Father, begotten before all worlds,” whom we, with all our souls, adore, and acknowledge to be most truly God—doing so, especially, every time in the benediction we associate Him with the Father and with the Holy Spirit as the one God of blessing.

Side by side with this in this text of mine is *His humanity*. “His Son whom He raised from the dead.” It is for *man* to die. God, absolutely considered, dies not. He, therefore, took upon Himself our mortal frame and was made in fashion as a Man. Then willingly, for our sakes, He underwent the pangs of death and, being crucified, was dead and so was buried, even as the rest of the dead. He was truly Man, “of a reasonable soul, and human flesh subsisting”—of that we are confident. There has been no discussion upon that point in these modern times, but there was much questioning thereon in years long gone—for what is there so clear that men will not doubt it or mystify it? With us there is no question either as to His Deity, which fills us with reverence, or His Manhood, which inspires us with joy! He is the Son of God and the Son of Mary. He, as God, is, “immortal, invisible.” And yet, for our sakes, He was seen of men and angels—and in mortal agony yielded up the ghost. He suffered for our salvation, died upon the Cross and was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea, being verily and truly Man.

Notice a third doctrine which is here, and that is *the unity of the Divine Person of the Lord*, for while the Apostle speaks of Christ as God’s Son from Heaven, and as One who had died, he adds, “even Jesus.” That is to say, one *known*, undivided Person! Although He is God and Man, yet He is not two, but one Christ! There is but one Person of our blessed and adorable Lord—“one altogether; not by confusion of substance, but by unity of Person.” He is God. He is Man—perfect God and perfect Man—and, as such, Jesus Christ, the one Mediator between God and man. There have been mistakes about this made in the Church, though I trust not by any one of us here present. We worship the Lord Jesus Christ in the unity of His Divine Person as the one Savior of men.

Furthermore, in our text we perceive a doctrine about *ourselves* very plainly implied, namely, that *men by nature are guilty*, for otherwise they would not have needed Jesus, a Savior. They were lost and so He who came from Heaven to earth bore the name of Jesus, “for He shall save His people from their sins.” It is clear, my Brothers and Sisters, that we were under the Divine wrath, otherwise it could not be said, “He has delivered us from the wrath to come.” We who are now delivered were once “children of wrath, even as others.” And when we are delivered, it is a meet



song to sing, “O Lord, I will praise You: though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comforted me.” We were guilty, otherwise we had not needed a propitiation by the Savior’s death! We were lost, otherwise we had not needed One who should seek and save that which is lost! And we were hopelessly lost, otherwise God Himself would not have shared our nature to work the mighty work of our redemption. That Truth is in the text—and a great deal more than I can mention just now.

But the next doctrine, which is one of the fundamentals of the Gospel, is that *the Lord Jesus Christ died for these fallen men*. He could not have been raised from the dead if He had not died. That death was painful and ignominious—and it was also *substitutionary*—“for the transgression of My people was He stricken.” In the death of Christ lay the essence of our redemption. I would not have you dissociate His life from His death—it comes into His death as an integral part of it—for as the moment we begin to live, we, in a sense, begin to die, so the Man of Sorrows lived a dying life which was all preparatory to His passion. He lived to die, panting for the baptism with which He was to be baptized, and reaching forward to it. But it was especially, though not only, by His death upon the Cross that Jesus put away our sin. Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. Not even the tears of Christ, nor the labors of Christ could have redeemed us if He had not given Himself for us as an Offering and a Sacrifice.

“He die, or justice must,” or man must die. It was His bowing His head and giving up of the ghost which finished the whole work. “It is finished” could not have been uttered except by a bleeding, dying Christ! His death is our life. Let us always dwell upon that central Truth of God and when we are preaching Christ risen, Christ reigning, or Christ coming, let us never so preach any of them as to overshadow Christ crucified! “We preach Christ Crucified.” Some have put up as their ensign, “We preach Christ glorified,” and we, also, preach the same. But yet, to us it seems that the *first* and foremost view of Jesus by the sinner is as the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world. Therefore do we preach, first, Christ Crucified, while at the same time we do not forget that blessed hope of the child of God—namely, Christ in Glory soon to descend from Heaven.

The next doctrine I see in my text is *the acceptance of the death of Christ by the Father*. “Where is that?” you ask. Look! “Whom He raised from the dead.” Not only did Jesus rise from the dead, but the Father had a distinct hand therein. God as God gave the token of His acceptance of Christ’s Sacrifice by raising Him from the dead. It is true, as we sometimes sing—

**“If Jesus had not paid the debt,  
He never had been at freedom set.”**

The Surety would have been held in prison to this day if He had not discharged His suretyship engagements and wiped out all the liabilities of His people. Therefore it is written, “He was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.” In His glorious rising from the dead lies the assurance that we are accepted, accepted in the Beloved—the Beloved being Himself certainly accepted because God brought Him again from the dead!

Further on we have another doctrine, among many more. We have here the doctrine of *our Lord's Resurrection*, of which we spoke when we mentioned the acceptance of His offering. Christ is risen from the dead. I pray you, do not think of the Lord Jesus Christ as though He were now dead. It is well to dwell upon Gethsemane, Golgotha and Gabbatha, but remember the empty tomb, Emmaus, Galilee and Olivet! It is not well to think of Jesus as forever on the Cross or in the tomb. "He is not here, but He is risen." You may "come and see the place where the Lord lay," but He lies there no longer! He has burst the bands of death by which He could not be held, for it was not possible that God's Holy One could see corruption! The rising of Jesus from the dead is that fact of facts which establishes Christianity upon an historical basis and, at the same time, *guarantees* to all Believers their *own* resurrection from the dead! He is the first fruits and we are the harvest.

Further, there is here the doctrine of *His Ascension*—"to wait for His Son from Heaven." It is clear that Jesus is in Heaven or He could not come *from* it. He has gone before us as our Forerunner. He has gone to His rest and reward. A cloud received Him out of sight. He has entered into His Glory. I doubt not our poet is right when he says of the angels—

**"They brought His chariot from on high,  
To bear Him to His Throne.  
Clapped their triumphant wings and cried,  
'The glorious work is done!'"**

That ascension of His brought us the Holy Spirit. He "led captivity captive, and received gifts for men." And He gave the Holy Spirit as the largess of His joyous entry to His Father's courts, that man on earth might share in the joy of the Conqueror returning from the battle! "Lift up your heads, O you gates; and be you lift up, you everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in," was the song of that bright day!

But the text tells us more—not only that He has gone into Heaven, but that *He remains there*, for these Thessalonians were expecting Him to come "from Heaven" and, therefore, He was there. What is He doing? "I go to prepare a place for you." What is He doing? He is interceding with authority before the Throne of God. What is He doing? He is from yonder hilltop looking upon His Church, which is as a ship upon the sea buffeted by many a storm. In the middle watch you shall see Him walking on the waters, for He perceives the straining of the oars, the leakage of the timbers, the rending of the sails, the dismay of the pilot, the trembling of the crew—and He will come to us and save us! He is sending heavenly succors to His weary ones! He is ruling all things for the salvation of His elect and the accomplishment of His purposes. Glory be to His blessed name!

*Jesus is in Heaven with saving power, too*, and that, also, is in the text. "His Son from Heaven, even Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come." I alter the translation, for it is a present participle in the case of each verb, and should run, "Even Jesus, delivering us from the coming wrath." He is, at this moment, delivering! "Therefore He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." He is away in Heaven, but He is not divided from us—He is working here the better because He is there! He has not separated Himself from the service and the conflict here below. He has

taken the post from which He can best observe and aid. Like some great commander who, in the day of battle, commands a view of the field and continues watching, directing and so winning the fight, so is Jesus in the best place for helping us! Jesus is the master of legions, bidding His angels fly here and there, where their spiritual help is needed. My faith sees Him securing victory in the midst of the earth. My God, my King, You are working all things gloriously from Your vantage ground and, before long, the groans and strifes of battle shall end in Hallelujahs unto the Lord God Omnipotent! Christ's residence in the heavens is clearly in the text.

Here is conspicuously set forth *the Second Coming*, a subject which might well have occupied all our time—"To wait for His Son from Heaven." Every chapter of this Epistle closes with the Second Advent. Do not deceive yourselves, oh you ungodly men who think little of Jesus of Nazareth! The day will come when you will change your minds about Him. As surely as He died, He lives! And as surely as He lives, He will come again to this earth! With an innumerable company of angels, with blast of trumpet that shall strike dismay into the heart of all His enemies, Jesus comes! And when He comes, there shall be a time of judgment and the rising, again, of the dead. And "Every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him." He may come tomorrow! We know not the times and the seasons—these things are in the Father's keeping—but that He comes is certain! And that He will come as a thief in the night to the ungodly is certain, too! Lay no flattering unction to your souls as though when He was crucified there was an end of Him—it is but the *beginning* of His dealings with you, though you reject Him. "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him."

A further doctrine in the text is that *Christ is a deliverer*—"Jesus delivering us from the coming wrath." What a blessed name is this! Deliverer! Press the cheering title to your breast. He delivers by Himself—bearing the punishment of sin. He *has* delivered! He *is* delivering! He *always will* deliver them that put their trust in Him. But there was something to be delivered *from*, and that is, *the coming wrath*, which is mentioned here. "Oh," says one, "that is a long way off, that wrath to come!" If it were a long way off, it were wise for you to prepare for it. He is unsafe who will be destroyed most certainly, however distant that destruction may be! A wise man should not be content with looking as an ox does, as far as his eyes can carry him, for there is so much beyond which is as sure as that which is seen!

But it is not far-off wrath which is here mentioned. The text says, "who delivers us from the coming wrath." That is, the wrath which is now coming, for wrath is even now upon the unbelieving. As for those Jews who had rejected Christ, the Apostle says of them in the 16<sup>th</sup> verse of the next chapter, "Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins always: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." The siege of Jerusalem and the blindness of Israel are a terrible comment upon these words. "Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that does evil, of the Jew first, and also of

the Gentile.” It is said of everyone that believes not in Christ Jesus that, “the wrath of God abides on him.” “God is angry with the wicked every day.” This wrath abides upon some of you. It is the joy of Believers that they are delivered from this wrath which is daily coming upon unbelievers—and would come upon themselves if they had not been delivered from it by the atoning Sacrifice.

There is evidently in the text the doctrine of a *great division* between men and men. “He has delivered *us*.” All men have not faith and, therefore, all men are not delivered from wrath. Today there is such a division—the “condemned already” and the “justified” are living side by side. But before long the separation shall be more apparent. While some will go away into everlasting punishment, the people of God will be found pardoned and absolved—and so will be glorified forever!

Lastly, there is here the doctrine of *Assurance*. Some say, “How are you to know that you are saved?” It can be known! It *ought* to be known. “Surely,” cries one, “it is *presumption* to say that you are sure.” It is presumption to live without knowing that you are delivered from wrath! Here the Apostle speaks of it as a thing well known, that, “Jesus delivers us from the coming wrath.” He does not say, “if,” or, “perhaps,” but he writes that it is so and, therefore, he knew it, and we may know it! My Brothers and Sisters, you may know that you are saved! “That would make me inexpressibly happy,” cries one! Just so, and that is one of the reasons why we would have you know it this day. God says, “He that believes in Him has *everlasting* life” and, therefore, the Believer may be sure that he has it! Our message is, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believes not shall be damned.”

God make you to escape that dreadful doom! May you be delivered from the wrath which is coming for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—  
Acts 17:1-10; 1 Thessalonians 1.  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—485, 483, 484.**

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

# THREE SIGHTS WORTH SEEING

## NO. 1979

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING MARCH 24, 1887,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“For this cause we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the Word of God which you heard from us, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God which also works effectually in you that believe. For you, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews.”*  
*1 Thessalonians 2:13, 14.*

PAUL seems very much at home when he is writing to the Church at Thessalonica. In his letters to that favored people he unveils his inmost feelings. He is rather apt to do so when he feels himself quite at ease, for Paul is by no means a man shut up within himself who is never at home to anyone. When he is battling with an ungrateful people, he keeps himself to sharp words and strong arguments, but when he is writing to a loving, attached, affectionate Church, he lets them have the key of his heart and he lays bare before them his secret emotions. I feel as if we were interviewing Paul to-night—as if we were all sitting in a room with him, Silas and Timothy—and were hearing their private conversation. We have come to a roundtable conference with them and we are listening to their talk about the ministry which God had committed to them. Even in these two verses we hear of how these holy preachers loved the Gospel, told out the Gospel and saw that Gospel take hold of their hearers' hearts.

They were not obliged to be reticent about their own conduct, or their experience with the Thessalonian friends—they were able to tell the story of their transactions with the Church of Thessalonica from the very beginning. It is a happy thing to be the pastor of a Church where one may wear his heart upon his sleeve. In certain positions, prudence demands that we keep ourselves to ourselves until we know more of the character of those who surround us. This is by no means pleasant. Indeed, it is a painful thing to go through life like a man in armor who scarcely dares to move a single plate of steel lest somebody should wound him in an unguarded place! One is glad to know that on the face of this earth there is a Church where the minister feels himself as much at home as a brother among his brothers and sisters and as safe as a father among his sons, since he is not afraid of being misunderstood. It is my joy that for many years I have found such a place of peace, so that I can say with the Shunammite, “I dwell among my own people.”

But to return to our text—we find the Apostle at home, telling out his thoughts in the freest manner. Indeed, he seems to me to show us three sights of the most interesting kind, which it will be pleasing and profitable for us to consider with care. I shall try to speak upon these three things, one after the other.

The first is, *ministers giving thanks*. “For this cause we also thank God without ceasing.” Then we have the cause of it, which brings up a second beautiful sight, namely, *hearers receiving the Word of God*. Paul speaks of them thus—“When you received the Word of God which you heard from us, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which also works effectually in you that believe.” In these words we find a window into the heart of the Thessalonian Christians and what we see is like a vault of jewels! Then we have a third thing which is exceedingly interesting, namely, *new converts exhibiting the family likeness*, turning out to be very much like the Believers of older Churches. Born many miles away from Judea, with a sea dividing them from the first country where the Gospel was preached, yet these Thessalonian Gentiles, when converted, looked wonderfully like the converts from among the Jews—“For you, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews.”

I. To begin, then, we are asked out to a little social party. We are placed in a corner of a cozy room where we have license and favor to gaze upon **MINISTERS GIVING THANKS**.

Paul, Silas and Timothy make up a little meeting. No doubt the Lord is with them, for they form what He has made a quorum. They are within the number to which the promise is made—“Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.” These three godly ministers are holding what, if I use a Greek word, I may call a holy eucharistical service—a service of thanksgiving. “For this cause, we also thank God without ceasing.” It is a pleasant sight to see *anybody* thanking God, for the air is heavy with the hum of murmuring and the roads are dusty with complaints and lamentations. It is a delightful vision to see hard-working, earnest ministers of Christ met together and occupying their time with thanksgiving, for many waste their hours in speculations, doubts and discussions. Let us turn aside and look into their smiling faces! It will do us good to see who these good men were and how they came to be in this thankful condition.

And, first, I would remark that *this thankfulness of theirs followed upon sore travail*. It is of no use for you to say, “I shall thank God for a harvest,” if you neither plow nor sow. You will have no harvest without labor and patience. “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy,” but if there is no sowing and no tears, there is no promise of any kind of reaping. I have known young preachers envy those who have had many converts and I do not wonder that they should. But if they, themselves, desire to be greatly useful and successful, they must go the same way to work that others have done. In the cause and Kingdom of Christ, although the race is not to the swift, it certainly is not to the sluggish—and although salvation is not of him that wills nor of him that runs, it certainly is not of him that does not

will and does not run! We may sit and sigh as long as we like, but we shall see no result from lethargy! Dead bees make no honey either in the land of Grace or of Nature. Neither is anything worked by merely rolling up your sleeves and making a brave show. We may plot and we may plan. We may propose and we may expect, but expectations and proposals will fall to the ground like apple-blossoms that have never knit unless we stir ourselves up in the name of God and throw all the strength we have into the work of faith and labor of love!

We shall fail unless we cry for much more strength than Nature will yield us. With a vehemence that will not take a denial, we must plead with the Lord until we prevail, for in this matter, “the Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.” Yes, Paul, Silas and Timothy, you would not be sitting together thanking God if you had not, for many a day, put your shoulders to the wheel! If you had not labored night and day; if you had not exercised much labor and travail and been willing to impart to the people not only the Gospel, but even your own lives, you would never have rejoiced together in the way you have described. Ministers giving thanks to God are ministers who have worked!

*And this work of theirs had been backed by holy living*, for the Apostle is bold to declare, “You are witnesses, and God, also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you that believe.” Brothers, we shall not win success unless we hunt for it by careful lives. You wish to see your Sunday school class converted. You are anxious to be blessed in your tract-district. You want to see that little Mission Hall crowded and souls converted. Begin by looking to your own life! As the man is, depend upon it, so will his life-work be! There will not come *out* of any one of us that which is not *in* us. You must fill the pitcher or you cannot go round and fill the cups of those who thirstily ask you for water. That which you would impart of Grace or life must be in yourself, first, and when God has worked it in you, then it shall be yours to work out! The Water of Life must be placed in you to be a well of Living Water, springing up—and then the Word of God shall be fulfilled in you—“Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” Personal piety is the backbone of success in the service of God! You can be sure of that. Our mistakes and blunders in the work itself usually originate in faults in the closet, faults in the family, faults in our own souls. If we were better, our works would be better. If we walk contrary to God, He will walk contrary to us.

We cannot be too careful of our conduct if we aspire to be used of the Lord. Though the Lord is jealous of all His servants, He is especially jealous of those whom *He honors in service*. “Be you clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord.” That which He might have passed over in one of His common servants, He will not wink at in those whom He largely blesses. Therefore, dear Friends, let us remember that *rejoicing* servants of God must be *holy* servants of God. They shall not give thanks for the purity of their people unless they, themselves, have set a holy example. This renders all work for Christ a very solemn thing. May we always think it so and never go to it in a trifling spirit, but with many cries to the Holy One of Israel that He would make and keep us clean and bright as vessels fit for the Master’s use!

You see, dear Friends, that these three Brothers who met together and were thanking God, were men who had worked and who had lived holily. But further notice that when they congratulated each other, *this mode of expressing their joy by thankfulness prevented their falling into anything like self-laudation*. Neither Paul, nor Silas, nor Timothy had any reason to glory—and they did not meet together for self-glorification, or for mutual admiration! They glorified God and thanked Him without ceasing. Let us copy the example of these holy men. Brother, be much in thanking the Lord. If you have had one soul converted by your teaching, thank God! If in your class in the Sunday school, or if in your own family at home you have had one conversion, thank God! I am afraid that we fail in thankfulness. We pray for blessings and forget to praise for them. We are not grateful enough.

I was chiding myself last Tuesday. I think that I selected 28 persons whom I could venture to propose for Church fellowship out of many who came. What a number it was! I felt, when the day was over, very weary with the blessed service, and then I chided myself that I had permitted weariness to come in when I should rather have been praising and blessing God. I could not help my weakness and yet I thought my gratitude ought to have borne me above it. Oh, I remember the day when I would have given my eyes—yes, given my *head*—for 28 converts! I feel that I would sacrifice my all for such a blessing even now! To think that God should send so many in one week and give me evidence that there are plenty more to follow! Was not this a delight? They still keep coming to confess Christ in great numbers! We ought to be very joyful for this. The whole Church should bless God for so many and pray for more. If it were one soul saved by 20 years' work, we ought to feel that we could dance for joy and count the service to be as nothing. But hundreds added to the Church should carry us up to the third Heaven of delight! As Jacob forgot all his toils when at last he could call the beloved Rachel his own, so should we count nothing hard, laborious, or trying, so long as souls are saved! Oh, to bring souls to God! Whenever we think of it, or see it done, let us say, like these three holy men, "For this cause we also thank God without ceasing."

Notice that *this thankfulness was of a social kind*. "We thank God." They all joined in it. Why, if there is a soul saved anywhere, we ought to *all* thank God for it! I hope that over at Walworth Road this week there may be some brought to Christ by their special meetings. And if they are so brought, glory be to God! What does it matter which Church they join? We hear of God blessing Mr. Moody or somebody else right away in America. Glory be to God for it! The success of any Church is our success. It is all in the family! Let us praise God for it. But some are accustomed to look with a rather jealous eye at God's blessing other denominations, or other preachers. Let us fight against this spirit! O Brothers, those of us who have had the most of God's blessing, what a mercy it would be if we were cut out altogether by better and more useful men! Let our star cease to shine if brighter stars will but shine and more souls see the blessed Light of God! Do not, those of you whom God has blessed, feel that you would gladly get out of the way and leave a clear road for somebody else if the



Lord would use them more than you? If you do *not* feel so, I am afraid that the Master will put you out of the way because you are not completely absorbed in His Glory. When we are up to the neck in consecration, we are willing to be made nothing of if God can be glorified thereby! When we cannot be content to see Christ glorified by others and ourselves laid on the shelf, there is a little bit of *self* left and we must try to get rid of it.

At any rate, let us rejoice with those that do rejoice and triumph in the success of our Brothers. Be it ours to make joint-stock in praising God for all that He works by us all! What a sweet thing it would be if we more often met together, when God blessed us, and said, "For this cause we thank God"! We ought all to join in the hallelujahs of the Church over souls saved by Grace. We must not waste our time in allotting the success to this man, or to that man. Let us at once give all the glory to God! One cries, "It was Timothy that did it." "Oh, no!" says another, "Silas is the man that brought *me* to Christ." "Ah!" says another, "but I like to hear Paul. He is the master preacher. That young Timothy—why, he is nothing and Silas is nowhere by the side of Paul." Such comparisons are odious. This kind of talk is evil! All God's servants belong to you all and you must get all the good you can out of them. But to *compare* and to contrast them is to trifle! Let ministers discourage such vain talk among their people by their hearty love to each other. It is good for God's servants to get together and to make a common heap of their spoils—and send up a joint thanksgiving for the joint results of their joint labor. "For this cause *we* thank God without ceasing." Yes, and we do, my Brothers! I can see some here tonight who I know join with me in thanksgiving, as I join heartily with them whenever I think of them. I will bless and praise God for His exceeding mercy in saving souls by them, by me and by all His workers!

One thing more is to be noticed: *this was a continual thanksgiving day*, for the Apostle says, "For this cause we also thank God *without ceasing*." Our gratitude to God should be as lasting as life, as constant as the bounty to which it bears witness. Our American friends have one Thanksgiving Day in the year, but it was Thanksgiving Day all the year round with Paul and Silas and Timothy when they thought of the Thessalonians! They felt as it they never could leave off thanking God for the Thessalonians, for they knew, by sad experience, that all Churches were not of the same happy kind. There were those Corinthians, forever quarrelling and thus grieving the Apostle. "Never mind," he says, "we will thank God for the Thessalonians." Oh, but there are those Galatians! They have gone off the line, bewitched by Judaizing teachers. They have wandered into "modern thought" and left the old orthodox faith. "Yes," says the Apostle, "those Galatians are a burden to me but, then, blessed be God for the Thessalonians!" So I think we ought to bless God for those that are kept, for those that are true and for those that are faithful—and when our harp is made to hang upon the willows because part of the work is barren and unfruitful, yet let us not cease to praise and bless the Lord our God for that part of the work which prospers! Let us magnify Him for those that are brought to know His name. "For this cause we also thank God without ceasing because you received the Word of God."

*This spirit of thanksgiving tends to make us stronger and stronger for labor in days to come.* Yes, let us sing unto the Lord instead of sighing unto ourselves! Let us not rob Him of His revenue of praise even in our most desponding moments. “Although my house is not so with God, yet has He made with me an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure.” What if Satan does not appear to fall from Heaven? What if the devils do not seem to be subject unto us? Yet let us rather rejoice because our names are written in Heaven! O child of God, fall back upon what the Lord has done and this shall make you encounter every difficulty with a brave heart! What the Lord has done is but a token of what He is going to do! Let us hold the fort and look for better times. Never let us dream of fainting or retreating! Do not say, “I will give it up because of the Galatians.” No, but go at it again because of the Thessalonians. Do not say, “I am worried and wearied with the Corinthians.” No, but with your heart full of joy, persevere in your Master’s service because many Thessalonians have received the Word, not as the word of man, but as the Word of God! Hallelujah, there is still something to sing about! Bring out the trumpets—we are not yet silenced, nor shall we be while the Lord lives! The walls of Jericho will be more likely to fall before our trumpets than our trembling.

So I have painted for you an ancient interior—you can see those three good men singing together to the praise of God as they think of their Thessalonian converts.

Ah, my Hearers, you could make some of us very happy! If you gave your hearts to the Lord, how you would cheer and comfort us! And some of you that do love the Lord would do us a world of good if you would come and tell us what the Lord has done for your souls. If you have been blessed, do not hide it! If you do, you will rob us of our wages, for our wages come to us very much through our knowing that God has blessed our ministry. Think of this and treat us fairly and kindly, even as we have sought your good. I, for one, have had such weary times of wolf hunting that I should be heartily glad to have the quiet joy of watching the young lambs and noting the growth of the sheep.

Now we leave the ministers, and think of the people.

**II.** The second sight which we have to look at is HEARERS RECEIVING THE WORD. Let us keep close to the text. “When you received the Word of God which you heard from us, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God which also works effectually in you that believe.”

Notice, first, *these people received the Word of God.* They were willing to hear it; they were anxious to hear it; they heard it and they were attentive in the hearing of it! They lent a willing ear and a ready mind. They did not quibble, dispute and question, but they *received* the Word of God. Happy preacher who has such people to deal with! If we have them not, let us work on till we gather them. Whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, let us tell the people our Lord’s message. But if God favors us with receptive hearers, let us be instant in season and out of season! A good bit of soil like that ought to be most diligently plowed and sown. Thank God, there are, I trust, many here who have received the Word of God so far that they are willing to learn and anxious to know its meaning

and feel its power! Among you our labor is lightened by hope and cheered with expectation.

But next, *these people had doubly received the Word of God*. At least the Word is twice mentioned in our version. "When you received the Word of God which you heard of us, you received it." In the Greek those are two different words altogether. The second, "received," might, perhaps, better be read, "accepted." I do not think that I should be straining a point if I read it, "You *welcomed* it." They first received it by eagerly hearing it. They wanted to know what it was all about. They were attentive to it and wanted to understand it. When they had heard it, they rejoiced, and said, "Oh, yes, yes, yes, this is the very thing we need!" They embraced it. That word will do—they *embraced* it! They put their arms around it and would not let it go. They were hospitable to the Gospel and said, "Come in, you blessed of the Lord. Come and live in our hearts!" They assented and they consented to the Word of the Lord. They first appreciated the Gospel and then they apprehended it by faith. They were like the man that was hungry in a foreign land and he could not make the people quite understand. But as soon as they brought an article of food which he liked he fell to, directly, and made them comprehend that he would be glad for more of that sort of thing. By his hearty reception of what they brought, the hungry man said plainly, "Bring some more of that."

So we have a people about us, thank God, that are looking out for the Gospel! They are always willing to hear it if men will but preach it! And when they do get it, they mean business and feed upon the Word with hearty appetite. How glad I am to feed men that will eat! It is a pleasure, indeed. The spiritually hungry welcome heavenly food—they take it into themselves and receive it as the bread their soul craves! Oh, what a mercy it is when sermons are preached which feed souls and souls hear so as to feed thereon! It is a happy day when a full Christ and empty sinners meet!

Now, I am persuaded, dear Friends, that if any of you do not know the Gospel—*really* do not know it—and yet are heavy of spirit and cannot rest and are unhappy, it will be a very blessed thing for you to find out what the Gospel is. I am pretty sure that many of you are in such a condition that as soon as you really know that the doctrine proclaimed to you is God's Gospel, you will receive it into your very souls and say, "There is none like it. That is the very thing we have been looking for all our lives." I think I hear one of you say, "I have been hunting after this for years. I did not know that there was anything like it, but it suits me to a turn! It fits me as a key fits a lock—it enters every ward of the lock of my soul as if it were made for me."

Brothers and Sisters, I bear witness that when I received the Gospel of Jesus Christ, it seemed to me as if Jesus Christ had made the Gospel on purpose for me and for me only! If there had been nobody else in the world and Jesus had made a Gospel for me only, it could not have been more adapted for me! His Gospel exactly suited that poor sinner who, on one snowy morning, looked to Him and was lightened! My dear Hearer, you will find Jesus the very Savior for you. "But I am an out-of-the-way sinner," cries one. Have you never heard of Him who can have compassion on the ignorant and on those that are out of the way? What a wonderful

text that is for you—you out-of-the-way ones! He can have compassion on those that are out of the way! There is a remedy in the Gospel for your disease. For the particular shape your malady has taken, the Lord has a special eye. His Son, Jesus, has a plaster suited for your peculiar sore—a medicine adapted to your peculiar need. May the Holy Spirit bring you to receive it as these Thessalonians did!

And then, if I may trouble you to look at the text again, you will notice that the word, “*it*” is in italics. And so is the word, “*as*.” Let me read the text again—“When you received the Word of God which you heard from us, you received not the word of men.” You see I have left out the, “*it*,” and the, “*as*,” because they are not really there, though they are correctly added by the translators as giving the meaning of the Apostle. Verbally they are not in the text. I take the sentence out of its connection and say that *these Thessalonians received not the word of men*. And I like them for that! Oh, but there were very learned men in those days! When Paul was on the earth and a little before his day, some of the greatest natural minds that ever existed were in Greece teaching the people. Yet the Thessalonians were in such a state that they received not the word of men! They did not listen to Plato, or accept Socrates, for there was a something about them which made them hunger for more than the philosophers could bring them. God’s elect are of that mind. You may know the Lord’s sheep by the fact that “a stranger they will not follow: for they know not the voice of strangers.” They will not receive the word of man! It is too light, too chaffy, too frothy for them. You may put it before them in the daintiest guise, illustrate it with poetry and prove it by the fictions of science—but they will not feed on such wind! They receive not the word of men! They will not have it! They want something more substantial.

To come back to our translation—*they received not the Gospel as the word of men*. In these days there are some who receive the Gospel, but they receive it as the word of men. This is their spirit—“Yes, I know that such is the view that is held by Mr. Black. But there is another view held by Dr. White and another view is upheld by Professor Gray. All these different ‘views’ are supposed to be very much upon a par.” Beloved Friends, this is not our way! There is the Truth of God and there is a lie! And I want you always to feel that there is a solemn difference between the true and the false—and that no lie is of the Truth of God. “Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God.” If one says, “Yes,” and the other says, “No,” it cannot be that they are both true! Salvation is of Grace—or of works—it cannot be of both! Salvation is the work of God or else of man—it cannot be a joint-stock-company affair! There is the Truth of God and there is error—and these are opposite to each other. Do not indulge yourselves in the folly with which so many are duped—that the Truth of God may be error, and error may be the Truth of God—that black is white, and white is black, and that there is a whitey-brown that goes in between, which is, perhaps, the best of the whole lot!

There is an essential difference between man’s word and God’s Word—and it is fatal to mistake the one for the other. If you receive even the Gospel as the word of man you cannot get the blessing out of it, for the sweetness of the Gospel lies in the confidence of our heart that this is the

Word of God. You fall back upon Holy Scripture in the grief of an aching heart, but you cannot rest, however soft the pillow of the promise may seem to be, till you can surely say, "I know that it is of God." If you have even a shadow of a doubt about it, comfort oozes out. The life of comfort flies before doubt, even as love is said to fly out the window when want comes in the door. Prick the heart—yes, with but a needle's point—and life will go! And prick the heart of faith—yes, even with the smallest doubt—and the life of joy is gone! The joy of faith and the strength of faith, yes, and the *life* of faith, are *gone* when you distrust the Word of the Lord!

Are we, then, infallible? No, but the Book is! Do we infallibly understand the Book? No, but the Spirit of God will teach us what He, Himself, means—and of those Truths which He teaches us we get so firm a grip that we say, "No, no; I am never going to argue about this any more! This is proved to my heart and soul beyond all further question. It is woven into my experience. It has stamped itself on my consciousness. It has done that for me which no lie could do. This is the Revelation of God and I will die sooner than I will ever, by any action of mine, permit a doubt to be cast upon it." Brothers and Sisters, do you accept the Word of God as Infallible? Thus have I learned the Gospel of Christ. Have you learned it in this fashion? Then you have received the Gospel aright, but not else.

To receive the Gospel as the word of man is not to receive the Gospel! But to receive it as a Revelation from God—true, sure, Infallible, so as to risk your whole soul on it and to feel that there is no risk—this is to receive the Gospel in truth! After this manner we receive it with the deepest reverence—not as a thing that I am to judge, but as that which judges me! Not as a matter of opinion, but as a sure Truth with which I must make my opinion agree! It makes all the difference whether we rule the truth or the Truth of God rules us! The reverent obedience of the understanding to the Word of the Lord is a great part of sanctification.

To receive the Gospel as the Word of God is to receive it with strong assurance. Other things *may be* true, but this *must be* true. Other things may be questioned, but this must be implicitly believed. This Gospel of Jesus Christ is of God as surely as you live—and you have not received it at all if you do not know it to be the Word of God.

It is to receive it with obedience, because it comes with authority—to say, "This I must yield to. Other truths I may be master of, but this is master of me. Other truths I may or may not hold—they may not be of sufficient importance for me to bow before them. But this Truth has God Himself enshrined within it and, therefore, I cannot be disobedient to the heavenly vision." With man's statements we are men, but before God's Truth we are converted into little children. Is this so with you?

This Gospel, if it is received as the Word of God, comes with power. Do not let us be misunderstood—the power we mean is by no means a common thing! It is not the force of persuasion, nor the energy of rhetoric. It is Divine Power—the finger of God! There is still in the world a miraculous force—the Divine energy of the Holy Spirit. It does not have us speak with tongues, neither do we hear it in rushing, mighty wind. But it is as unmistakable to those who have it as if it did come with such extraordinary signs! Sometimes a Truth of God has been borne in upon my soul—and I

doubt not you can say the same—with an inward evidence which is beyond all argument for force and certainty. Though it is not logical, we are more sure than if conquered by reasoning! We prefer it to the demonstrations of mathematics so far as our own assurance is concerned. In my own case, I could not see, but I did *more* than see—my inner soul without eyes beheld the essential principle of the Truth of God! I did not touch it and yet my inner soul handled it, tasted it, fed on it. It went into the secret spring-head and well-spring of my being and became one of its first principles.

If any man said that the Lord Jesus was not able to save and that His Gospel was not true, I snapped my fingers at him! I could not stop to answer him because he seemed to be willfully denying self-evident fact—and there is no answering such folly! For a man to tell me that the Gospel is not true, when the Spirit seals it on my heart, is all in vain! He might as well tell me that there was no light when I stood gazing on a landscape in the brightness of the sun, or assure me that there was no such thing as air when the strong north wind was on my cheeks. He might as well tell me that there was no nutriment in food when I had just lost my hunger and felt refreshed by what I had eaten. There are some things that we have no patience to argue about—we have done with discussion concerning them!

If you do not know spiritual things, ask God to let you know them. But you are out of court as a witness—you cannot prove a negative, nor can your negative disprove our positive! We cannot argue with you who are dead in sin and have not received, as yet, spiritual senses. What can you know? Why should we dispute with the blind concerning colors? How can we discuss music with the deaf?

“Oh,” says one, “but I do not believe in your spiritual experience!” I did not say you did! On the contrary, I expected you *not* to believe in it. But what does that prove? Why, only that you have no spiritual perception! It is true that you have not perceived spiritual things, but it is no proof that there are none to perceive! The whole case is like that of the Irishman who tried to upset evidence by non-evidence. Four witnesses saw him commit a murder. He pleaded that he was not guilty and wished to establish his innocence by producing 40 persons who did *not* see him do it. Of what use would that have been? So, if 40 people declare that there is no power of the Holy Spirit going with the Word of God, this only proves that the 40 people do not know what others *do* know. If there are four of us that know it—well, we shall not cease our witness. We receive God’s Word as the Word of God because it comes to us with that power which effectually works in them that believe. It works in us a horror of sin, a detestation of self-confidence and an aspiration after holy and heavenly things. It works in us love to God and good-will to men. It works in us aspirations after the Divine. It works in us victory over evil from day to day and, while it does that, the proof of it is within us! The witness and seal of the Truth of the Gospel are within our own character and being and we cannot, therefore, give up our confidence.

People who have come to this pass make their ministers glad! Paul, Silas, and Timothy are all happy men when surrounded by hearers who have received the Gospel in all its Divine authority and power!

**III.** Now my time has gone, otherwise my third point would have been a very interesting one. These three men are rejoicing in CONVERTS WHO ARE EXHIBITING A FAMILY LIKENESS.

I only call your attention to the fact that the Apostle says, "You, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus." Here are people converted in Judea and they are of a strongly Jewish type. Quite another set of people over at Thessalonica become converted to Christ—and though they are thoroughly of the Greek type—they are very much like the converts in Judea! They know nothing about the Law of Moses. They have been *heathens*—worshipping idols—and yet, when they are converted, the strange thing is that they are exceedingly like those Jews over yonder, to whom idolatry was an abomination!

Greek Believers are like Hebrew Believers! They have never spoken to one another and nobody has been there to tell them the peculiarities of Christians and yet a family likeness is distinctly visible! Were you never startled with this, that if, in the preaching of the Gospel today, we were to bring to the Lord Jesus a person of high rank and another of the very lowest extraction, they have the same experience—and upon the greatest of subjects they talk in the same way? "Oh, but," you say, "they pick up certain phrases." No, no! They differ in speech! The likeness is in *heart* and *character*. I frequently meet with converts who have not attended this place of worship more than half-a-dozen times, but they have been converted—and when they come to tell the story of their inner life you would suppose that they had been born and bred among us, and had learned all our ways, for, though they do not use the phrases which we use, yet they say the same things! The fact is, we are all alike—lost and ruined—and we are born again in the same way. And we find the Savior in the same way. And we rejoice in Him when we do find Him, after much the same fashion, and express ourselves very much after the same style. Believers differ in many things and yet they are alike in the main things. There are no two exactly alike in all the family of God—and yet the likeness to the Elder Brother is to be seen more or less in each one!

It is to me one of the evidences of the Truth of God and Divine Nature of the work of Grace in the heart, that if you take a Hottentot in his kraal—and he is converted—and you take a university man who has won all the degrees of learning, and he is converted, yet you would not know Sambo from the Doctor when they begin to talk about the things of God! The Hottentot's English may be broken, but his theology is sound! The uneducated man's words may limp, but his heart will leap! Ruin, redemption and regeneration are the chief subjects in every case.

When I am talking, sometimes, with young converts and they put their statements oddly and ignorantly, I am reminded of Brother Taylor, when he was getting old. The old man sometimes lost the thread of his discourse and whenever he did so, he used to say, "There, I cannot find the end of that sentence, but I am bound for the Kingdom! Brethren, I am bound for the Kingdom!" Off he went to something else, for though he

could not complete the paragraph, he was bound for the Kingdom! Some Brothers and Sisters cannot see to the end of their own experience, but they are bound for the Kingdom! They cannot put this and that together to make it ship-shape—but you can see that they are bound for the Kingdom! There is the same tear of repentance, the same glance of faith, the same thrill of joy, the same song of confidence—each one, according to his measure, enjoys the same life if he is, indeed, bound for the Kingdom! The babe is like the man and the man reminds you of the babe. We are one spirit in Christ Jesus!

I will not enlarge except to say that it makes us sing for joy when we can see in ourselves a likeness to the children of God. We, too, resemble the early saints in our experiences. Opposition and tribulation come to us in our measure as they did to them. There are the same afflictions, the same persecutions, the same trials wherever the work of Christ goes on—but there is the same mighty God to carry on the work of Grace and the same promises of Grace to be fulfilled to every Believer!

Dear Friends, are you believers in the Lord Jesus Christ? If you are, joy and rejoice with me! But if you are not, oh, how I wish you were! Whatever comforts of life you enjoy, you are missing the only thing that makes life worth having. If you are not yet resting on Christ Jesus, you have not yet found out the kernel of the nut. You are boring away at the hard shell of life and unless you turn to Christ you will die worrying and wearying over the shell—and you will never taste the sweet kernel. If you did but know our Lord Jesus. If you did but trust Him. If you did but find salvation in Him, then you would find that if earth cannot be Heaven, it can become marvelously like it! The earnest of our everlasting inheritance may be enjoyed even here. Would God you would seek my Lord and Master, for if you seek Him, He will be found of you! What a pleasure it would be if everyone at this time would receive the Gospel as the Word of God! Spirit of God, grant that it may be so, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—  
1 Thessalonians 1.  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—433, 483, 331.**

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# **SATANIC HINDRANCES**

## **NO. 657**

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 29, 1865,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Satan hindered us.”  
1 Thessalonians 2:18.***

PAUL, Silas and Timothy were very desirous to visit the Church at Thessalonica, but they were unable to do so for the singular reason announced in the text, namely, “Satan hindered us.” It was not from want of will, for they had a very great attachment to the Thessalonian Brethren and they longed to look them in the face again. They said of the Thessalonians, “We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers: remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of God and our Father.”

Their will was overruled as to visiting the Church together, but being anxious for its welfare, they sent Timothy alone to minister for a time in its midst. It was not want of will which hindered them, but want of power. They were not prevented by God’s special Providence. We find on certain occasions that Paul was not allowed to go precisely where his heart would have led him. “They assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.”

“They were forbidden of the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia,” but their course was directed towards Troas that they might preach in Europe the unsearchable riches of Christ. They could not, however, trace their absence from Thessalonica to any Divine interposition. It appeared, to them, to proceed from the great adversary—“Satan hindered them.” How Satan did so it would be useless to affirm dogmatically, but we may form a reasonable conjecture. I find in the margin of my pulpit Bible by Bagster, this note, which may probably be correct: “Satan hindered Paul by raising such a storm of persecution against him at Berea and other places, that it was deemed prudent to delay his visit till the storm was somewhat allayed.”

Yet I can hardly allow this to have been the only hindrance, for Paul was very courageous, and having a strong desire to visit Thessalonica, no fear of opposition would have kept him away. He did not shun the hottest part of the battle, but like a truly valiant champion, delighted most to be found in the thick of his foes. Possibly the antagonism of the various philosophers whom he met with at Athens and the heresies at Corinth, from which it seems that this Epistle was written, may have called for his presence on the scene of action. He felt that he could not leave struggling churches to their enemies—he must contend with the grievous wolves and unmask the evil ones who wore the garb of angels of light.

Satan had moved the enemies of the Truth of God to industrious opposition and thus the Apostle and his companions were hindered from going to Thessalonica. Or it may be that Satan had excited dissensions and discords in the churches which Paul was visiting and therefore he was obliged to stop first in one, and then in another, to settle their differences—to bring to bear the weight of his own spiritual influence upon the various divided sections of the Church to restore them to unity.

Well, whether persecution, or philosophic heresy, or the divisions of the Church were the outward instruments we cannot tell, but Satan was assuredly the prime mover. You will, perhaps, wonder why the devil should care so much about Paul and his whereabouts. Why should he take so much interest in keeping these three men from that particular Church? This leads us to observe what wonderful importance is attached to the action of Christian ministers. Here is the master of all evil, the Prince of the Power of the Air, intently watching the journeying of three humble men. And apparently far more concerned about their movements than about the doings of Nero or Tiberius!

These despised heralds of mercy were his most dreaded foes. They preached that name which makes Hell tremble. They declared that righteousness against which Satanic hate always vents itself with its utmost power. With malicious glance the archenemy watched their daily path and with cunning hand hindered them at all points. It strikes us that Satan was desirous to keep these Apostolic men from the Church of Thessalonica because the Church was young and weak and he thought that if it was not fostered and succored by the preaching and presence of Paul he might yet slay the young Child.

Moreover, he has of old a fierce hatred of the preaching of the Gospel and possibly there had been no public declaration of the Truth throughout Thessalonica since Paul had gone and he was afraid lest the fire-brands of Gospel Truth should be again flung in among the masses and a gracious conflagration should take place. Besides, Satan always hates Christian fellowship—it is his policy to keep Christians apart. Anything which can divide saints from one another he delights in. He attaches far more importance to godly communion than we do. Since union is strength, he does his best to promote separation—and so he would keep Paul away from these Brethren who might have gladdened his heart and whose hearts he might have cheered.

He would hinder their fraternal communion that they might miss the strength which always flows from Christian communion and Christian sympathy. This is not the only occasion in which Satan has hindered good men—indeed, this has been his practice in all ages and we have selected this one particular incident that some who are hindered by Satan may draw comfort from it and that we may have an opportunity (if the Spirit of God shall enable us) of saying a good and forceful word to any who count it strange because this fiery trial has happened to them.

**I.** Let us open our discourse by observing that IT HAS BEEN SATAN'S PRACTICE OF OLD TO HINDER, WHEREVER HE COULD, THE WORK OF GOD. "Satan hindered us," is the testimony which all the saints in Heaven will bear against the arch enemy. This is the witness of all who have

written a holy line on the historic page, or carved a consecrated name on the rock of immortality—"Satan hindered us." In sacred Writ, we find Satan interfering to hinder the completeness of the personal character of individual saints. The man of Uz was perfect and upright before God and to all appearances would persevere in producing a finished picture of what the Believer in God should be.

Satan could find no fault with his actions and only dared to impute wrong motives to him. He had considered Job and he could find no mischief in him—but then he hinted to God, "Have You not made an hedge about him and about his house and about all that he has on every side?" Satan sought to turn the life-blessing which Job was given of God into a curse, and therefore he buffeted him sorely. He stripped him of all his substance. The evil messengers trod upon one another's heels—and their tidings of woe only ceased when his goods were all destroyed and his children had all perished.

The poor afflicted parent was then struck in his bone and in his flesh till he was made to sit upon a dunghill and scrape himself with a potsherd. Even then the picture had no blot of sin upon it—the pencil was held with a steady hand by the patient one. And therefore Satan made another attempt to hinder his retaining his holy character—he excited his wife to say, "Why do you hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die." This was a great and grievous hindrance to the completion of Job's marvelous career, but, glory be unto God, the man of patience not only overcame Satan, but he made him a steppingstone to a yet greater height of illustrious virtue!

You know the patience of Job and you would not have known it if Satan had not illuminated it with the blaze of flaming afflictions! Had not the vessel been burnt in the furnace, the bright colors had not been so fixed and abiding. The trial through which Job passed brought out the luster of his matchless endurance in submission and resignation to God! Now, just as the enemy of old waylaid and beset the Patriarch to hinder his perseverance in the fair path of excellence, so will he do with us. You may be congratulating yourself this morning, "I have up to now walked consistently. No man can challenge my integrity."

Beware of boasting! Your virtue will yet be tried! Satan will direct his engines against that very virtue for which you are the most famous. If you have been up to now a firm Believer, your faith will, before long, be attacked. If up till now you have been meek as Moses, expect to be tempted to speak unadvisedly with your lips. The birds will peck at your ripest fruit and the wild hoar will dash his tusks at your choicest vines. O that we had among us more eminence of piety, more generosity of character, more fidelity of behavior! In all these respects, I doubt not, many have set out with the highest aims and intentions, but alas, how often have they had to cry, "Satan hindered us!"

This is not the enemy's only business—he is very earnest in endeavoring to hinder the emancipation of the Lord's redeemed ones. You know the memorable story of Moses—when the children of Israel were in captivity in Egypt, God's servant stood before their haughty oppressor with his rod in his hand and in Jehovah's name he declared, "Thus says

the Lord, Let My people go, that they may serve Me.” A sign was required. The rod was cast upon the ground and it became a serpent. At this point, Satan hindered. Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses. We read that the magicians did so with their enchantments, whether by devilish arts or by sleight of hand, we need not now enquire—in either case they did the devil service and they did it well—for Pharaoh’s heart was hardened when he saw that the magicians worked, in appearance, the self-same miracles as Moses.

Brethren, take this as a type of Satan’s hindrances to the Word of the Lord. Christ’s servants came forth to preach the Gospel. Their ministry was attended with signs and wonders. “My kingdom is shaken,” said the Prince of Evil, “I must bestir myself.” And straightway he sent magicians to work lying signs and wonders without number. Apocryphal wonders were and are as plentiful as the frogs of Egypt. Did the Apostles preach the sacrifice of Christ?—the devil’s Apostles preached the sacrifice of the “mass.” Did the saints uplift the Cross?—the devil’s servants upheld the crucifix! Did God’s ministers speak of Jesus as the one infallible Head of the Church?—the devil’s servants proclaimed the false priest of Rome as standing in the same place!

Romanism is a most ingenious imitation of the Gospel—it is the magicians, “doing so with their enchantments.” If you study well the spirit and genius of the great Antichrist, you will see that its great power lies in its being an exceedingly clever counterfeit of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. As far as tinsel could counterfeit gold, and paste could simulate the gem and candlelight could rival the sun in its glory and a drop in the bucket could imitate the sea in its strength, it has copied God’s great masterpiece, the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. And to this day, as God’s servants scatter the pure gold of the Truth of God, their worst enemies are those who utter base coin on which they have feloniously stamped the image and superscription of the King of kings.

You have another case farther on in history—and all Old Testament history is typical of what is going on around us now. God was about to give a most wonderful system of instruction to Israel and to the human race, by way of type and ceremony, in the wilderness. Aaron and his sons were selected to represent the great High Priest of our salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ. In every garment which they wore there was a symbolical significance—every vessel of that sanctuary in which they ministered taught a lesson—every single act of worship, whether it were the sprinkling of blood or the burning of incense, was made to teach precious and important Truths of God to the sons of men. What a noble roll was that volume of the Book which was unfolded in the wilderness at the foot of Sinai!

How God declared Himself and the Glory of the coming Messiah in the persons of Aaron and his sons! What then? With this Satan interfered. Moses and Aaron could say, “Satan hindered us.” Korah, Dathan and Abiram arrogantly claimed a right to the priesthood. And on a certain day they stood forth with bronze censers in their hands, thrusting themselves impertinently into the office which the Lord had assigned to Aaron and to his sons. The earth opened and swallowed them up alive—true prophecy

of what shall become of those who thrust themselves into the office of the priesthood where none but Jesus Christ can stand!

You may see the parallel this day. Christ Jesus is the only Priest who offers sacrifice of blood and He brings that sacrifice no more—for having once offered it He has perfected forever those who are set apart. “This Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God.” Paul, with the strongest force of logic, proves that Christ does not offer a continual sacrifice, but that, having offered it once and for all, His work is finished and He sits down at the right hand of the Father.

Now, this doctrine of a finished Atonement and a completed sacrifice seemed likely to overrun the world—it was such a gracious unfolding of the Divine mind that Satan could not look upon it without desiring to hinder it. And, therefore, look on every hand, and you can see Korah, Dathan and Abiram in those churches which are branches of Antichrist—I mean the Anglican *and* the Roman. Men to this very day call themselves, “priests,” and read prayers from a book in which the rubric runs, “Then shall the priest say”—these arrogate to themselves a priesthood other than that which is common to all the saints—some of them even claim to offer a daily “sacrifice,” to celebrate an unbloody sacrifice at the thing which they call an “altar”!

And they claim to have power to forgive sins, saying to sick and dying persons, “By authority committed unto me I absolve you from all your sins.” This in England! And this throughout Europe! This is the great hindrance to the propagation of the Gospel—the priestly pretensions of a set of men who are no priests of God, though they may be priests of Baal. Thus the ministers of Jesus are made to cry, “Satan hinders us.” Take another instance of Satanic hatred. When Joshua had led the tribes across the Jordan they were to attack the various cities which God had given them for a heritage and from Dan to Beersheba the whole land was to be theirs. After the taking of Jericho, the first contact into which they came with the heathen Canaanites ended in disastrous defeat to the servants of God.

“They fled,” it is written, “before the men of Ai.” Here, again, you hear the cry, “Satan hindered us.” Joshua might have gone from city to city exterminating the nations, as they justly deserved to be, but Achan had taken of the accursed thing and hidden it in his tent. Therefore no victory could be won by Israel till his theft and sacrilege had been put away. Beloved, this is symbolic of the Christian Church. We might go from victory to victory—our home mission operations might be successful and our foreign agencies might be crowned with triumph—if it were not that we have Achans in the camp at home!

When churches have no conversions it is more than probable that hypocrites concealed among them have turned away the Lord’s blessing. You who are inconsistent, who make the profession of religion the means of getting wealth! You who unite yourselves with God’s people, but at the same time covet the goodly Babylonian garment and the wedge of gold, *you* are they who cut the sinews of Zion’s strength! You prevent the Israel of God from going forth to victory! Ah, little do we know, Beloved, how

Satan has hindered us. We, as a Church, have had much reason to thank God, but how many more might within these walls have been added to the number of this Church if it had not been for the coldness of some, the indifference of others, the inconsistency of a few and the worldliness of many more? Satan hinders us not merely by direct opposition, but by sending Achans into the midst of our camp!

I will give you one more picture. View the building of Jerusalem after it had been destroyed by the Babylonians. When Ezra and Nehemiah were found to build, the devil was sure to stir up Sanballat and Tohiah to cast down. There was never a revival of religion without a revival of the old enmity. If ever the Church of God is to be built, it will be in troublous times. When God's servants are active, Satan is not without vigilant followers who seek to counteract their efforts. The history of the Old Testament Church is a history of Satan endeavoring to hinder the work of the Lord.

I am sure you will admit it has been the same since the days of the Lord Jesus Christ. When He was on earth Satan hindered Him. He dared to attack Him to His face! And when that failed, Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians and men of all sorts hindered Him. When the Apostles began their ministry, Herod and the Jews sought to hinder them. And when persecution availed not, then all sorts of heresies and schisms broke out in the Christian Church—Satan still hindered them. A very short time after the taking up of our Lord, the precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, had become like earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter. The glory had departed and the luster of Truth was gone, because by false doctrine, lukewarmness and worldliness, Satan hindered them.

When the Reformation dawned, if God raised up a Luther, the devil brought out an Ignatius Loyola to hinder him. Here in England, if God had his Latimers and his Wickcliffes, the devil had his Gardiners and Bonners. When in the modern reformation Whitfield and Wesley thundered like the voice of God, there were ordained reprobates found to hinder them, to hold them up to opprobrium and shame. Never, since the first hour struck in which goodness came into conflict with evil, has it ceased to be true that Satan has hindered us!

From all points of the compass, all along the line of battle—in the vanguard and in the rear—at the dawn of day and at midnight, Satan has hindered us. If we toil in the field he seeks to break the plowshare. If we build the walls he labors to cast down the stones. If we would serve God in suffering or in conflict—Satan hinders us everywhere.

**II.** We shall now, in the second place, INDICATE MANY WAYS IN WHICH SATAN HAS HINDERED US. The Prince of Evil is very busy in hindering those who are just coming to Jesus Christ. Here he spends the main part of his skill. Some of us who know the Savior recollect the fierce conflicts which we had with Satan when we first looked to the Cross and lived.

Others of you here this morning are just passing through that trying season—I will address myself to you. Beloved Friends, you long to be saved, but ever since you have given any attention to these eternal things you have been the victim of deep distress of mind. Do not marvel at this!

This is usual, so usual as to be almost universal! I should not wonder if you are perplexed with the doctrine of *election*. It will be suggested to you that you are not one of the chosen of God, although your common sense will teach you that it might just as well be suggested to you that you are, since you know neither the one nor the other, nor indeed *can* know until you have believed in Jesus.

Your present business is with the precept which is *revealed*, not with election which is *concealed*. Your business is with that exhortation, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." It is possible that the great battlefield between predestination and free will may be the dry and desert place in which your soul is wandering—now you will never find any comfort there! The wisest of men have despaired of ever solving the mystery of those two matters and it is not at all probable that you will find peace in puzzling yourself about it.

Your business is not with metaphysical difficulty, but with faith in the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is simple and plain enough. It is possible that your sins now come to your remembrance and though once you thought little enough of them, now it is hinted to you by Satanic malice that they are too great to be pardoned—to which, I pray you, give the lie, by telling Satan this Truth—"All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." It is very likely that the sin against the Holy Spirit much molests you. You read that whoever shall speak a word against the Holy Spirit it shall never be forgiven him.

In this, too, you may be greatly tried. And I wonder not that you are, for this is a most painfully difficult subject. One fact may cheer you—if you repent of your sins, you have not committed the unpardonable offense, since that sin necessitates hardness of heart *forever*. And so long as a man has any tenderness of conscience and any softness of spirit, he has not so renounced the Holy Spirit as to have lost His Presence. It may be that you are the victim of blasphemous thoughts. This very morning, since you have been sitting here, torrents of the filth of Hell have been pouring through your soul.

At this be not astonished, for there are some of us who delight in holiness and are pure in heart, who nevertheless, have been at times sorely tried with thoughts which were never born in our hearts, but which were injected into them—suggestions born in Hell, not in our spirits—to be hated and to be loathed, but cast into our minds that they might hinder and trouble us. Now, though Satan may hinder you as he did the child who was brought to Jesus, of whom we read that as he was, "coming, the devil threw him down and tore him," yet do you come notwithstanding! For though seven devils were in him, Jesus would not cast the coming sinner out. Even though you should feel a conviction that the unpardonable sin has fallen to your lot, yet dare to trust in Jesus! And, if you do do that, I warrant you there shall be a joy and a peace in believing which shall overcome him of whom we read, that he has "hindered us."

But I must not stop long on any one point where there are so many. Satan is sure to hinder Christians when they are earnest in prayer. Have you not frequently found, dear Friends, when you have been most earnest

in supplication, that something or other will start across your mind to make you cease from the exercise? It appears to me that we shake the tree and no fruit drops from it. And just when one more shake would bring down the luscious fruit, the devil touches us on the shoulder and tells us it is time to be gone! And so we miss the blessing we might have attained. I mean that just when prayer would be the most successful we are tempted to abstain from it.

When my spirit has sometimes laid hold upon the Angel, I have been painfully conscious of a counter influence urging me to cease from such importunity and let the Lord alone, for His will would be done. Or if the temptation did not come in that shape yet in some other, to cease to pray because prayer, after all, could not avail. O Brethren, I know if you are much in prayer you can sing Cowper's hymn—

***“What various hindrances we meet  
In coming to the Mercy Seat.”***

The same is true of Christians when under the promptings of the Spirit of God, or when planning any good work. You have been prompted, sometimes, to speak to such a one. “Run, speak to that young man,” has been the message in your ear. You have not done it—Satan has hindered you. You have been told on a certain occasion—you do not know how, (but believe me, we ought to pay great respect to these inward whispers), to visit such-and-such a person and help him. You have not done it—Satan hindered you. You have been sitting down by the fire one evening reading a missionary report concerning Hindustan, or some district destitute of the Truth of God and you have thought, “Now I have a little money which I might give to this object.” But then it has come across you that there is another way of spending it more profitably on your family—so Satan has hindered you.

Or you yourself thought of doing a little in a certain district by way of preaching and teaching, or commencing some new Ragged School, or some other form of Christian effort—but as sure as ever you began to plan it, something or other arose and Satan hindered you. If he possibly can, he will come upon God's people in those times when they are full of thought and ardor and ready for Christian effort that he may murder their infant plans and cast these suggestions of the Holy Spirit out of their minds.

How often, too, has Satan hindered us when we have entered into the work! In fact, Beloved, we never ought to expect a success unless we hear the devil making a noise. I have taken it as a certain sign that I am doing little good when the devil is quiet. It is generally a sign that Christ's kingdom is coming when men begin to lie against you and slander you and the world is in an uproar, casting out your name as evil. Oh, those blessed tempests! Do not give me calm weather when the air is still and heavy and when lethargy is creeping over one's spirit. Lord, send a hurricane, give us a little stormy weather! When the lightning flashes and the thunder rolls, then God's servants know that the Lord is abroad and that His right hand is no longer in His bosom—that the moral atmosphere will get clear—that God's kingdom will come and His will be done on earth, even as it is in Heaven!



“Peace, peace, peace!” That is the flap of the dragon’s wings! The stern voice which proclaims perpetual war is the voice of the Captain of our salvation. You say, how is this? “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father and the daughter against her mother and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.” Peace, physical, Christ makes. There is to be no strife with the fist, no blow with the sword, but *moral* peace and *spiritual* peace can never be in this world where Jesus Christ is, so long as *error* is there.

But, you know, Beloved, that you cannot do any good thing but what the devil will be sure to hinder you. What then? Up and at him! Cowardly looks and faint counsels are not for warriors of the Cross! Expect fights and you will not be disappointed. Whitfield used to say that some Divines would go from the first of January to the end of December with a perfectly whole skin. The devil never thought them worth while attacking! But, said he, let us begin to preach with all our might, and soul, and strength the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and men will soon put a fool’s cap on our heads and begin laughing at us and ridiculing us—but if so, so much the better!

We are not alarmed because Satan hinders us! Nor will he only hinder us in working—he will hinder us in seeking to unite with one another. We are about to make an effort, as Christian churches in London, to come closer together and I am happy to find indications of success. But I should not wonder but what Satan will hinder us and I would ask your prayers that Satan may be put to the rout in this matter, and that the union of our churches may be accomplished. As a Church ourselves, we have walked together in peace for a long time, but I should not marvel if Satan should try to thrust in the cloven foot to hinder our walking in love and peace and unity.

Satan will hinder us in our communion with Jesus Christ. When at His table we say to ourselves, “I shall have a sweet moment now,” but just then vanity intrudes. Like Abraham, you offer the sacrifice, but the unclean birds come down upon it and you have need to drive them away. “Satan hindered us.” He is not omnipresent, but by his numerous servants he works in all kinds of places and manages to distract the saints when they would serve the Lord.

**III.** In the third place THERE ARE TWO OR THREE RULES BY WHICH THESE HINDRANCES MAY BE DETECTED AS SATANIC. I think I heard somebody saying to himself this morning, “Yes, I should have risen in the world and have been a man of money now if it had not been that Satan hindered me.” Do not believe it, dear Friend! I do not believe that Satan generally hinders people from getting *rich*. He would just as soon that they should be rich as poor. He delights to see God’s servants set upon the pinnacle of the temple, for he knows the position to be dangerous.

High places and God’s praise do seldom agree. If you have been hindered in growing rich, I should rather set that down to the good Providence of God which would not place you where you could not have borne the temptation. “Yes,” said another, “I had intended to have lived in a certain district and done good and have not been able to go—perhaps

that is the devil.” Perhaps it was—perhaps it was not. God’s Providence will know best where to place us. We are not always choosers of our own locality—and so we are not always to conclude when we are hindered and disappointed in our own intentions that Satan has done it, for it may very often be the good Providence of God.

But how may I tell when Satan hinders me? I think you may tell first, by the *object*. Satan’s object in hindering us is to prevent our glorifying God. If anything has happened to you which has prevented your growing holy, useful, humble and sanctified, *then* you may trace that to Satan. If the distinct object of the interference to the general current of your life has been that you may be turned from righteousness into sin, then from the object you may guess the author. It is not God who does this, but Satan. Yet know that God does, sometimes, put apparent hindrances in the way of His own people—even in reference to their usefulness and growth in Grace—but then His object is still to be considered—it is to try His saints and so to strengthen them! While the object of Satan is to turn them out of the right road and make them take the crooked way.

You may tell the suggestions of Satan, again, by the *method* in which they come—God employs good motives, Satan bad ones. If that which has turned you away from your object has been a bad thought, a bad doctrine, bad teaching, a bad motive—that never came from *God*, that must be from Satan. Again, you may tell them from their *nature*. Whenever an impediment to usefulness is pleasing, gratifying to you—consider that it came from Satan. Satan never brushes the feathers of his birds the wrong way—he generally deals with us according to our tastes and likes. He flavors his bait to his fish. He knows exactly how to deal with each man and to put that motive which will fall in with the suggestions of poor carnal nature.

Now, if the difficulty in your way is rather contrary to yourself than for yourself, then it comes from God. But if that which now is a hindrance brings you gain, or pleasure, or emolument in any way, rest assured it came from Satan. We can tell the suggestions of Satan, once more, by their *season*. Hindrances to prayer, for instance, if they are Satanic, come out of the natural course and relation of human thoughts. It is a law of mental science that one thought suggests another and the next the next and so on—as the links of a chain draw one another.

But Satanic temptations do not come in the regular order of thinking. They dash upon the mind at odd times. My soul is in prayer—it would be unnatural that I should then blaspheme—yet then the blasphemy comes. Therefore it is clearly Satanic and not from my own mind. If I am set upon doing my Master’s will and presently an unfaithful thought assails me and—being apart from the natural run of my mind and thoughts—it may be at once ejected as not being mine and may be set down to the account of the devil, who is the true father of it.

By these means I think we may tell when Satan hinders and when it is our own heart, or when it is of God. We ought carefully to watch that we do not put the saddle on the wrong horse. Do not blame the devil when it is yourself. And on the other hand, when the Lord puts a bar in your way, do not say, “That is Satan,” and so go against the Providence of God. It

may be difficult at times to see the way of duty, but if you go to the Throne of God in prayer you will soon discover it. "Bring here the ephod," said David, when he was in difficulty. Say the same! Go to the great High Priest whose business it is to give forth the oracle! Lo, upon His breast hangs the Urim and Thummim and you shall, from Him, find direction in every time of difficulty and dilemma.

**IV.** Supposing that we have ascertained that hindrances in our way really come from Satan, WHAT THEN? I have but one piece of advice and that is—go on—hindrance or no hindrance, in the path of duty as God the Holy Spirit enables you. If Satan hinders you, I have already hinted that this opposition should cheer you. "I did not expect," said a Christian minister, "to be easy in this particular pastorate, or else I would not have come here. I always count it," he said, "to be my duty to show the devil that I am his enemy and if I do that, I expect that he will show me that he is mine."

If you are now opposed and you can trace that opposition distinctly to Satan, congratulate yourself upon it—do not sit down and fret! Why, it is a great thing that a poor creature like you can actually vex the great Prince of Darkness and win his hate! It makes the race of man the more noble that it comes in conflict with a race of spirits and stands foot to foot even with the Prince of Darkness himself. It is a dreadful thing, doubtless, that you should be hindered by such an adversary, but it is most hopeful—for if he were your *friend*—you might have cause to fear, indeed!

Stand out against him because you now have an opportunity of making a greater gain than you could have had, had he been quiet. You could never have had a victory over him if you had not engaged in conflict with him. The poor saint would go on his inglorious way to Heaven if he were unmolested. But being molested, every step of his pathway becomes glorious! Our position today is like that described by Bunyan, when from the top of the palace the song was heard—

**"Come in, come in,  
Eternal glory you shall win."**

Now merely to ascend the stairs of the palace, though safe work, would not have been very ennobling. But when the enemy crowded round the door and blocked up every stair and the hero came to the man with the ink-horn, who sat before the door and said, "Write my name down, Sir," then, to get from the lowest step to the top where the bright ones were singing—every inch was glorious! If devils did not oppose my path from earth to Heaven, I might travel joyously, peacefully, safely—but certainly without renown! But now, when every step is contested in winning our pathway to Glory, every single step is covered with immortal fame! Press on then, Christian! The more opposition, the more honor!

Be in earnest against these hindrances when you consider, again, what you lose if you do not resist him and overcome him. To allow Satan to overcome me would be eternal ruin to my soul. Certainly it would forever blast all hopes of my usefulness. If I retreat and turn my back in the day of battle what will the rest of God's servants say? What shouts of derision will ring over the battlefield? How will the banner of the Covenant be trailed in the mire! Why, we must not, we *dare* not, play the coward—we

dare not give way to the insinuation of Satan and turn from the Master—for the defeat were then too dreadful to be endured.

Beloved, let me feed your courage with the recollection that your Lord and Master has overcome. See Him there before you. He of the thorn-crown has fought the enemy and broken his head—Satan has been completely worsted by the Captain of your salvation! And that victory was representative—he fought and won it for *you!* You have to contend with a *defeated* foe and one who knows and feels his disgrace! And though he may fight with desperation, yet he fights not with true courage, for he is hopeless of ultimate victory. Strike, then, for Christ has destroyed him! Down with him, for Jesus has had him under His foot! You, weakest of all the host, you will be triumphant, for the Captain has triumphed before you!

Lastly, remember that you have a promise to make you gird up your loins and play the man this day—“Resist the devil and he shall flee from you.” Christian minister, resign not your situation! Do not think of sending in your resignation because the Church is divided and because the enemy is making headway! Resist the devil! Flee not, but make him flee! Young Christian men—you who have begun to preach in the street, or distribute tracts, or visit from house to house—though Satan hinders you very much I pray you, now, redouble your efforts! It is because Satan is afraid of you that he resists you, because he would rob you of the great blessing which is now descending on your head. Resist him and stand fast.

You Christians pleading in prayer—let not go your hold upon the Covenant Angel—for now that Satan hinders you it is because the blessing is descending! You who are seeking Christ, close not those eyes! Turn not away your face from Calvary’s streaming tree—now that Satan hinders you, it is because the night is almost over and the daystar begins to shine! Brethren, you who are most molested, most sorrowfully tried, most borne down, yours is the brighter hope—be courageous now—play the man for God, for Christ, for your own soul—and the day shall yet come when you, with your Master, shall ride triumphantly through the streets of the New Jerusalem!

Sin, death and Hell will be captive at your chariot wheels and you, with your Lord, will be crowned as victor, having overcome through the blood of the Lamb! May God bless dear Friends now present. I do not know to whom this sermon may be most suitable, but I believe it is sent especially to certain tried saints. The Lord enable them to find comfort in it! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Peter 4:12**

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

# **THE PASTOR'S LIFE WRAPPED UP WITH HIS PEOPLE'S STEADFASTNESS A PLEADING REMINDER FOR THE NEW YEAR NO. 1758**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord.”  
1 Thessalonians 3:8.***

MINISTERS who are really sent of God greatly rejoice in the spiritual prosperity of their people. If they see God's Word prosper, they prosper. If the Church of God is blessed, they are blessed. Their life is wrapped up in the spiritual life of their people. Never is the servant of God so full of delight as when he sees that the Holy Spirit is visiting his hearers, making them to know the Lord, and confirming them in that heavenly knowledge. On the other hand, if God does not bless the word of His servants, it is like death to them! To be preaching and to have no blessing makes them heavy of heart—the chariot wheels are taken off and they drag heavily along—they seem to have no power nor liberty. They get depressed and they go back to their Master with this complaint, “Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”

He revives and cheers them—and they come back to their service—but if they do not see a manifest blessing resting upon the people, they cry and sigh and are like dying men. If the Lord willed to do so, He might have made robots to preach and these would only need to be wound up and allowed to run down again! They would have known no feelings of joy or of sorrow and would have been invulnerable to the arrows of grief. We have heard of the Iron Duke. Iron preachers would have been enduring instruments and would never have been laid aside by mental depression. But the sympathy of the preacher is God's great instrument for blessing the hearer! If you read a sermon in a book it is good, but if you hear it preached fresh from the man's heart, it is far more effective. There is a living fellow-feeling about it, and that is the power which God has, in all ages, been pleased to use—the power of a spirit which He has made sensitive with affection—so sensitive that it rises to joy when its affectionate purpose is accomplished and sinks to depths of grief when that purpose fails.

This, I take it, is what the Apostle means when he says, “Now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord.” The people can make the pastor happy beyond expression by their being rich in Grace and happy in Christ! But they can make him miserable beyond all description if they are either un-

stable or insincere. Dearly Beloved, I have often rejoiced in God as I have seen the work of the Spirit among you. It is no small joy that for many years we have never been without an increase to the Church. With few exceptions we have never gathered at our monthly communions without receiving a considerable number into our membership.

During these years some have turned back, to our great sorrow, and some have flagged, to our solemn grief. But others have persistently carried on the work of God and have developed gifts and graces which have made them qualified for larger spheres. At this day those at home come behind in no gifts and those abroad do not forget the hallowed training of Zion. In every part of the earth some are engaged in holy service who have gone out from this Church. For all this, our heart must be grateful. But these are evil times. These are times, the like of which I have not seen before, in which the foundations are removed and "what shall the righteous do?" The winds are out. The tacklings are loosed. The mariners reel to and fro! Everything seems to be drifting. Men know not where they are!

Half the professing Christians of the present day do not know their heads from their heels and the half that *do* know seem inclined to take to their heels and run rather than stand steadfast in the faith and wait till evil days are over! It is time that we spoke to you concerning *steadfastness*—that you be not like idle boys that leap hedges and ditches after every nest that silly birds may choose to make—but that you keep to the King's Highway of holiness and truth and hold fast to the doctrines and the practices which are taught us in the Word of God. I say to you by this discourse, "Now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord."

It is a matter of life and death to us that you should be rooted, grounded, and settled. Notice first, that *some are not in the Lord*. Secondly, *some appear to be in the Lord, but they are not standing fast*. And thirdly, that *some in the Lord stand fast in the Lord* and these are our life—"Now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord."

**I. First, SOME ARE NOT IN THE LORD AT ALL.** A solid mass of infidelity and godlessness hems us in. Our heart is heavy because this great city is determined to shut its eyes to the Light of God. There are streets upon streets in which none attend the House of God and we have it on credible information that in certain districts if one man in a street is seen to go regularly to a place of worship, his neighbors mark him as a singular being. The home-born Londoner of the working classes, as a rule, has no care for a place of worship. If I were living in the country, I think I would be content with but half a wage sooner than to come and dwell in this ungodly place!

Our members try to bring up their children in God's fear, but they are often compelled to quit their homes because of the filthy conduct of those who defile our streets. Yet this is not my present theme. Our greater sorrow is that there are many who hear the Gospel and are not in the Lord! We are not sorry that they should come to hear the Word of God—would to God that all Christless souls would hear of Christ! But we are sorry that they have come month after month, year after year, and have received no *saving* benefit. I still meet, here and there, with those who tell

me, "I used to hear you in Park Street and Exeter Hall," and yet I gather from them that they are undecided. I have small hope for them if 30 years of ministry have not brought them to Christ!

At any rate, these many years add to the dreadful probability that they will continue to make the Word of God to be unto themselves a savor of death unto death. If I could pick out of this audience, tonight, by Infallible guidance, one man or one woman and could point to that person and say, "Such a one will certainly go down to Hell to endure the everlasting wrath of God"—and if you knew that I was speaking like a Prophet from God and that it was certainly so—you would turn round and look with deepest grief upon that doomed soul! You would shudder to be sitting in the same pew! And yet though, thank God, we may not speak with that certainty, the probability grows so great as almost to amount to a certainty concerning those upon whom entreaties have been wasted, upon whom expostulations have been wasted, by whom invitations have been refused, that they will continue to harden their hearts until at last they sink into the place where mercy never enters!

Ah, Lord, these are heavy tidings and Your saints feel them! I know I am speaking to many who deeply sympathize with me when I say that the thought of this is a worm that makes our joys decay. I mean the thought that some of you contribute to God's work and are, in many points, excellent—and yet you lack the one thing necessary—and after having joined with God's people in outward acts of devotion you will be driven from His Presence forever! O Infinite Mercy, grant that it may not be so, but may these men and women, even now, be led to believe in Jesus and be saved! We die when we think of those who are not in the Lord at all! How it would revive us if we could see them saved!

If there is a deadening influence about the thought that some few among us are not converted, think of what the effect must be upon a minister's mind if he shall have labored long and seen no fruit. There may be instances in which a man has been faithful, but not successful—places where, for a time, the dew falls not and the softening influences of the Spirit are not given. Then the soil breaks the plowshare and the weary ox is ready to faint. I began to preach while yet a youth, scarcely 16 years of age, but before I had preached half a dozen times I saw persons affected by those sermons. I pined to find some heart that had looked to Jesus while I had preached Him—and I have photographed upon my memory, at this very moment, a very humble clay-walled cottage which seemed to me to be a sacred spot, for I was told by a venerable deacon that it was the house of a poor woman who had sought and found the Savior through my ministry.

I did not let the week conclude till I had seen her, for I hungered for the joy of meeting with one whom I had brought to Christ! If I found one soul converted, I took heart and looked for more. Brothers, are you working for Jesus? Then you know what it is to feel the shadow of death when you do not win a soul! Does it not seem hard to be knocking for Christ against a door that never opens, but has fresh bolts put on it to keep it closed? Be not ashamed of yourself because you feel distressed—it proves your ca-

capacity for being used. By-and-by God will bless you and then you will understand the text, "Now we live." You will find that your pulse is quickened, your heart's blood warmed—you will be filled with a more Divine life as you rise nearer to the dignity of a savior of men and taste the unspeakable joys for which Christ laid down His life!

**II.** We notice, secondly, that THERE ARE SOME WHO PROFESS TO BE IN CHRIST, BUT THEY CERTAINLY ARE NOT STANDING FAST. This is a *Marah*—a bitter well. This is a source of heartbreak and of sore tribulation to the servant of God in whom the Spirit of God dwells, namely, that, first, there are many over whom we rejoice who, nevertheless, *altogether apostatize*. Use the best judgment that you can, there will be some added to a Church who are not really the Lord's people. They run well—"What hinders them that they should not obey the truth?" They appear to begin in the Spirit, yet, by-and-by, they attempt to be made perfect in the *flesh*.

Oh, foolish ones, "Who has bewitched you?" They seem to be all that we want them to be, for a time, but soon they are nothing that they should be. And this does not happen merely during the first six months or so, otherwise we might set them on probation, but, alas, it has happened to men that have grown gray in the Church—esteemed and honored—and yet they have fallen till their names cannot be mentioned without sorrow! We can never feel sufficiently grateful to our Lord for allowing a Judas to be among the 12, for thus, He, Himself, bore what has been to His servants the most crushing of grief! The man that went to the House of God in company with us has betrayed, not only us, but our Master, and the Truth of God. This has often happened in the history of the Church and, therefore, we may expect it. But whenever it comes, it is a stab to the very soul! Paul, I think, if he were here, would say, "Now we die, because these men do not stand fast in the Lord."

Happy am I to have been so largely spared this heart-wounding calamity! Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, we live, if you stand fast in the Lord! But it is as death to us if you turn aside! But there are other forms of instability. Many do not behave in such a way that we could remove their names from the Church roll, but they *decline in Grace*. Far too many grow worldly and it is especially the case when they grow wealthy. Well did one say to me the other day who has risen to riches, "I almost regret that I have ever changed my position, for I find my difficulties wonderfully increased—my difficulties especially with my family. They ask for things, now, in the form of amusements which they never would have thought of if I had not become wealthy."

When a man toils and moves to heap riches together, he is laboriously endeavoring to make it difficult for himself to be saved. Yet some think that the main objective of life is to load themselves so that they cannot easily follow after Christ. It is poor progress to grow rich in gold but poor in Grace. We see others whom we look upon as likely to be leaders and helpers, who, if not from this cause, yet from some other, *are diverted from the work of God*. We do not, now, expect to see them at Prayer Meeting—it would be rather astonishing if they came! We do not dare expect



them to conduct a tract society, or a lay-preaching association, or a Sunday school class, for they are careless as to the salvation of souls.

We know some who were once full of zeal, but now they are neither cold nor hot. These may seem trifles to the thoughtless, but they are not trifles to those who watch after their souls and will have to give an account! Whenever I have seen it, I have said to myself, "How much of this is due to *me*? How much must I blame myself for this?" And one cannot answer that question immediately. Many thoughts and searching considerations are needed, but, believe me, there is nothing which eats more like a sharp acid into a man's inmost soul to cause him a daily grief than when he sees those that profess to be servants of Christ not answering to the processes of Grace, but acting like worldly men!

There are some of whom I must speak even weeping because they vex our spirit by their neglect of their Master's business. In these days there are other forms of this lack of steadfastness and they come up in this way. Some are always *shifting their doctrinal opinions*. Within the last 10 years we have had the most remarkable selection of abominations in the way of new doctrines that ever cursed our human race! If all the heresies that have been put forth were true, I do not know whether there would remain either Heaven, or Hell, or earth, or God, or man—for all these have been removed by the foul finger of doubt! Some go in not so much for disbeliefs as for fanaticisms and, believing nothing one day, the world is to believe everything the next!

We have already miracles restored to us and a daring person has arisen who assumes the name of Christ! A bottomless pit of fanaticism is yawning. Hell from beneath is vomiting all manner of absurdities to vex the Church of God. Now is the time for steadfastness! It is a blessed thing for a man to know what he believes and to hold to it—to have no ear for novelty-mongers, but to say—"If it is new, it is not true. I have my colors nailed to the mast and I cannot take them down." We know some who are *not steadfast in their service of Christ*. When a man claims to be perfect, he is wholly useless to us—he is sure to leave his work. He needs all his time to admire his own perfections! It is not possible for him to be of any further service among such poor sinners as we are—and off he goes to stand by himself and say, "God, I thank you, that I am not as other men are." I would a great deal sooner remain imperfect and be of some use to God, than brag of my excellence and do nothing!

Brothers, stick to your work for God! If you preach, preach on! If called to teach in the Sunday school, at your peril leave your class! If God has bid you go from door to door with tracts, stick to it, and when the Lord Himself shall come, you cannot be found in a better position than in that of discharging the offices to which He has called you! He would not have us stand with our mouths wide open gazing into the air! The best position for a servant, when his Master comes, is to be found doing his Master's will. We live, if you stand fast in the Lord as to doctrine and as to holy service, and especially we live if the Lord keeps you, dear Brothers and Sisters, *true in the matter of holy conversation*. I call that holiness which minds its work at home. I call that holiness which makes a kind father, a

true brother, an obedient child and makes me mind my daily calling and see that I make others happy and so commend the Gospel to them.

See to it that your personal characters in secret before God, at home before your friends and outside in the world where eagle eyes watch to perceive your infirmities, are spotless and unblameable! For then we live! But when men can turn round and fling in our teeth, "These are your Christians, and they deal as others deal and talk as others talk," then down goes our spirit and we wish we could die! It is life to lead a band of earnest steadfast men who know the Truth of God and live the Truth of God and are ready to die for the Truth of God! This is an honor of which we feel we are unworthy, though we aspire to it. But to lead inconsistent, dubious, half-hearted, idle people onward to some imaginary goal is a doom compared with which death, itself, is delight.

Now, dear Brothers and Sisters, the reason why every true minister sinks in heart when those who seem to be in Christ do not stand fast is this—unless men are steadfast, *the Church is weakened*. The strength of any Church must be the aggregate of the strength of all the members put together. Therefore if you have a set of weak Brethren, you multiply the weakness of each one by the number of the membership. What a hospital is the result! If each Believer is strong, then the whole Church is strong. And that is our desire—we pine to see the Church of God vigorous in her holy calling! If Believers are steadfast, then God is glorified. Transient piety brings no glory to God! God is not honored by that religion which is taken up today and laid down tomorrow. It is only by perseverance—yes, and perseverance to the *end*, that glory is brought to God.

*The minister is disappointed* of his reasonable expectations when men do not stand fast. He is like a farmer who sees the seed grow and just when it is about to yield him a crop, he spies out black smut and his wheat is blighted. He may well weep over the fact that it went so far and yet so utterly failed! Judge, you mothers, what it is to nurse your children till they are near to manhood and then to see them sink into the grave. You have wished, perhaps, that you had been childless sooner than see your dear offspring taken from you. Very similar is the sorrow of the true pastor—when he expects that God will be glorified by his converts, they turn aside and his work is lost. Or if they do not turn aside unto perdition, yet if they are unstable, their joy is lessened and their usefulness is marred. And this is no small thing.

We live in your joy and if you miss it, we grieve for your incalculable loss, for believe me, there is no joy like the highest form of Christianity—and to lose this is a catastrophe! The beginnings of piety are often bitter—and difficult advances are often made through the sea and through the terrible wilderness—but the higher stage of piety is the Beulah land from which you look into the Paradise of God, yourself living on the borders of it! If any child of God should miss this highest joy, it is a most heavy grief to those who watch for their souls. Be you steadfast, for so we live.

**III.** Then THERE ARE SOME WHO ARE IN THE LORD AND WHO STAND FAST IN THE LORD—and these are our life! They are our life because their holy conduct fills us with living confidence. I tell you, Brothers

and Sisters, when I have seen the holy generosity of members of this Church making sacrifices to serve the Lord. When I have seen the holy courage of Brothers and Sisters standing up for Jesus and bearing reproach for the sake of principle—and speaking out the Truth of God in defiance of ridicule. When, in fact, I have seen many things that I will not mention now—I have said to myself, “These are fruits that could not have been produced except by the Truth and by the Spirit of God!”

Then have I felt very confident in the Gospel which has been so adorned by your actions. Certain of our Beloved elders and deacons passed away, to our deep sorrow, not very long ago, and when I came down from their death chambers, I did not require any further argument to prove the religion of the Lord Jesus—the Holy Spirit set His seal upon the Truth by their joyful departures. If infidels had met me as I left those choice deathbeds, I would not have argued with them for a single moment—I would have simply laughed them to scorn—for I would have felt like a man that has looked at the sun till he cannot bear the blaze of it any longer—and then hears a blind man swear that there is no sun! With what confidence we speak when holy lives and joyful deaths prove the Gospel!

Again, how often have I seen fears which have crept into my soul driven away by my dear people! This is a time of fear, when all Solomon's men that keep watch about his bed had need, each one, to carry his sword drawn because of fear in the night. Yet, when I have seen God's people steadfast, my fears have fled! Yes, I have said the Lord keeps the feet of His saints. He is as a wall of fire round about His own. If it were possible, the powers of evil would deceive the very elect—but it is not possible! The saints are steadfast and each steadfast one cheers his minister and helps him to lay aside his anxieties and to rejoice in the certainty that the Gospel will triumph!

The steadfast become our life by stimulating us to greater exertion. I believe that the steadfast help the minister to a high degree of usefulness. When the man of God sees his people living to God at a high rate of piety, he speaks many things which otherwise he never would have spoken. He glories in the work of God and with no bated breath or trace of hesitation, he points to his people and cries, “See what God has done!” He exults over his converts with a holy joy. He cries, “See what they used to be and what they are now! See how life has been made to spring up in the midst of death and how the Light of God shines, where before, darkness reigned.”

Take away the living evidences of Divine power from the Church and you lower the preacher's spirit at once—and deprive him of power to demonstrate his commission by the signs that follow it. I am sure, dear Friends, you would have a deadening influence on me if you were not steadfast in holiness. How can I preach up holiness if someone sitting in the gallery looks down and says, “Yonder is one of his members and a worse thief I do not know!” Can I preach up the glory of Grace when someone cries, “Fine talk, but I saw one of the members of his Church half drunk the other night! Is that what is meant by the free spirit?” If behind me there is a regiment of deceivers and hypocrites, my position is

horrible. Surely I had better give over the *preaching* of the Gospel when you give over the *living* of the Gospel! My task, in itself difficult, is rendered absolutely impossible if while I preach one thing, you live another!

Happily it has not been so among you and you will not permit it to be so in the future. May God of Infinite Mercy grant to me that I may live because Christ lives in *you*! That I may be strong because I can fall back upon *you* as my "living Epistles, known and read of all men!" Of godly established Christians, I may quote the words of David, "Happy is the man that has his quiver full of them: he shall speak with the enemies in the gate." The best answer to all the opponents of the old-fashioned Gospel is the godly zeal of an earnest Church. "Now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord." I had many things to say to you, but my time has gone. Only may God the Holy Spirit dwell with the preacher that he may preach the Lord Jesus and not himself. And may the Spirit of God dwell with *you*, dear members of this Church, that you may live under His influence and may bear His fruit unto the Glory of God!

As for you that are members of other Churches, may the Lord make you to be to your own pastors, their joy and crown! It will be ill for you if, in the Day of Judgment, they have to give an ill account of you. We do not think enough about that trial which each man will have to undergo, or of that account which all under shepherds will have to render in the Last Great Day. It is written, "If the watchman warns them not, they shall perish, but their blood will I require at the watchman's hands." Oh, my Master, when You search my garments for the blood of souls, grant that I may be found clear of the blood of all men! What a Heaven this will be! Remember that other Word of God, "If the watchman warns them, and they take no heed of the warning, they shall perish; but he has delivered his soul."

May every one of us take care to deliver his soul! It is my highest prayer to be able to make full proof of my ministry, that in all of you I may have an unquestioned testimony to my lifelong fidelity to my Lord and to your souls. Pray for me daily and for yourselves, also, that by our steadfastness this favored Church may be made to live and flourish till our Lord Himself shall come!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Thessalonians 1;  
2:18 to 3:13.  
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—686, 667, 684.**

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

# DEATH—A SLEEP

## NO. 3077

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 30, 1908.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

***“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep, that you sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.”  
1 Thessalonians 4:13.***

[On January 31, 1892, the Beloved preacher, “after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep.” That verse was the text of the Sermon (#2243, Volume 38) published on the day of his funeral, to which Mrs. Spurgeon gave the title, “HIS OWN FUNERAL SERMON”—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>. Sixteen years have elapsed since his Home-going, but C. H. Spurgeon “yet speaks” by means of the printed page, and so many unpublished manuscripts still remain that the publication of the Sermons can still be continued for several years, by God’s Grace.]

THERE may be some few extraordinary cases “where ignorance is bliss” and where “’tis folly to be wise.” But for the most part, ignorance is the mother of misery—and if we had more knowledge, we would find it a tower of strength against many fears and alarms which beget sadness and sorrows in dark untutored minds. True it is that the utmost diligence of the student cannot shield his body or his mind from fatigue and distress. In guarding against one class of ills, we may become exposed to another—as Solomon testifies that “much study is a weariness of the flesh,” and again, “in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increases knowledge, increases sorrow.” Still, let it be remembered that “wisdom is a defense, and money is a defense”—in the increase of either we may augment our cares, yet in the increase of both we think there is a remunerative profit!

But I would commend to you a wisdom which springs not up from earth, but comes down from Heaven. He that is rich towards God knows that “the blessing of the Lord, it makes rich, and He adds no sorrow with it.” And he that is made wise unto salvation, has received that wisdom which “gives life to them that have it.” If we had more celestial wisdom, I believe we would have more of heavenly joy and less of carnal sorrow. Many a Doctrine of the Gospel becomes the means of sadness and misery to the heart simply because it is not understood. Ignorance of the Bible often troubles men’s hearts and consciences—and prevents them from finding that peace of God which a little more knowledge of it would be sure to give them. And I am certain that ignorance or forgetfulness of many of the exceedingly great and precious promises of God and of the marvelous things He has engaged to do for His people, often causes our eyes to flow with tears and our hearts to be overwhelmed with suffering. The more a Christian knows of his religion, the better for his peace and for his happiness! The Apostle says, “I would not have you to be ignorant,

brethren.” *He* knew that was an ill condition and we may well shun it. Depend upon this—the more thoroughly you understand the Gospel, the more you will find that the Gospel blesses you and makes you happy! Each word that Eternal Wisdom speaks is pure. Give heed, then, to the sure word of Scripture and so shall you journey as with chart in hand, escaping a thousand dangers to which benighted travelers are exposed—and enjoying a thousand delights which they cannot discern! But alas for those who walk in darkness! They have nothing to cheer or enliven, but everything to frighten and terrify them.

Leaving this preliminary point, for I trust you seek to avoid all ignorance and ask God to lead you into the knowledge of all Truth of God, I proceed now to the special application of my text, as the Holy Spirit has designed to place a lamp in the sepulcher where darkness was known to hold an undisputed sway. And here we have, first, *an affecting metaphor*—a metaphor for death—“those who are asleep.” Secondly, there is *a solemn distinction*. There are some that die without hope and there are others for whom we sorrow not as for them that are without hope. And then, thirdly, there is *a very gentle exhortation*—not to sorrow for those who sleep in Jesus, “even as others which have no hope.”

**I.** So, in the first place, here is A MOST AFFECTING SIMILE—“those who are asleep.”

Scripture continually uses the term, “sleep,” to express death. Our Savior did. He said, “Our friend Lazarus sleeps.” And so well, with such an evident and appropriate truthfulness, did He describe death as being a sleep, that His disciples mistook the sense of His words and said, “Lord, if he sleeps, he shall do well.” But Jesus spoke not of the transient sleep of the weary, but of the deep slumber of death. And very frequently, even in the Old Testament, you find it said that certain persons “slept with their fathers, and were buried in a sepulcher.” Nor did they count that sleep a hopeless end of life, but as David said, “I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Your likeness”—they expected to awake from that slumber into which they believed death did cast their bodies. In the New Testament the same emblem is continually used. And it is very pleasant to remember that in the old catacombs of Rome, where the bodies of many saints were buried, it is continually found inscribed on their graves, “She sleeps.” “He sleeps in Jesus.” “He shall wake up one day” and similar epitaphs which mark the firm belief of Christians that sleep was a very fine and beautiful *picture* of death!

Allow me to guard against an evil supposition that may spring up here. When death is called a sleep, it is not because the soul sleeps—that, we are told by Holy Scripture, rises at once to Heaven. The soul of the saint is found at once before the Throne of God. It is the *body* which is said to sleep. The soul sleeps not! Absent from the body, it is present with the Lord. It stretches its wings and flies away up to yonder realm of joy! And there, reveling in delight, bathing itself in bliss, it finds a rest from the turmoil of earth infinitely better than any rest in sleep. It is the body, then, that sleeps, and the body only. I will try and tell you why we think the metaphor is used for the sleep of the body.

In the first place, because *sleep is a suspension of the faculties, but not a destruction of the body*. When we see anyone naturally asleep, we believe that body will wake up again. We do not suppose that those eyes will be sealed up in perpetual darkness, that those bones and that flesh will lie dormant, never more to feel the consciousness of being, or stir with the impulse of life. No, we expect to see the functions of life resumed, the eyelids open to admit the cheering rays of light and the limbs to become again exercised with activity. So, when we bury our dead in their graves, we are taught to believe that they are asleep. Our faith, (which is warranted by the Word of God), discerns in the corruption of death a suspension of the powers of the body rather than an annihilation of the matter itself. The earthly house of this tabernacle must be dissolved, but it cannot be destroyed. Though the bones are scattered to the four winds of Heaven, yet at the call of the Lord God, they shall come together again, bone to bone. Though the eyes are first glazed and then devoured from their sockets, they shall be surely restored—that each saint in his own flesh may see God! In this confidence we deposit the body of each departed saint in the grave as in a bed. We doubt not that God will guard the dust of the precious sons and daughters of Zion. We believe that in the Resurrection there shall be a perfect identity of the body. You may call it unphilosophical if you please, but you cannot show me that it is unbiblical! Science cannot demonstrate it, you say. But then science cannot disprove it. Reason stands abashed while Revelation lifts her trumpet-tongue and exclaims, “Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet: for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible.”

Look not, then, on the corpse of your Brother or your Sister in Christ, Beloved, to take an eternal farewell. Say rather, “When I stretch myself on my couch at night, I *hope* to wake at the first call of the busy morn. But I not only hope, I *am sure* that this sleeping heir of immortality shall awake from the sound slumbers of his sepulchral repose at the dawn of the heavenly Bridegroom’s appearing.” “Ah,” says one, “’twas but an hour or two ago I was in the closed chamber where my little baby is laid out. I lifted the coffin lid and looked at its dear little placid face, and I can quite believe what you say—death is a sleep—it seemed just like it.” “No,” says another, “it was only yesterday that I was in a London graveyard, appalled with the sight of skulls and bare, disjointed bones, and I can never look upon death in the way you represent.” Now then, my Friends, mark this well, for I can give one reply to you both—it is not by the exercise of your *sense*, but by the exercise of your *faith* that you are to get this blessed hope! You might bitterly gaze on the face of the dead long enough before you would catch a symptom of returning life. You might grope about in the dark damp vault long enough before a ray of light would show you an avenue by which the captives can be liberated from their gloomy cells. No, no! You must visit the tomb of Jesus! You must go and “see the place where the Lord lay”—then you will soon perceive how

the stone is rolled away and how to rise again is made possible and certain, too!

Moreover, *the term, "sleep," is beautifully used to express the quiet of the body.* It rests from labor. Look on the sleeper. He has been weary. He has toiled all day long, but there is no weariness now. He breathes softly. Sometimes a dream may disturb him, but he is not weary—he is resting in the unconsciousness of slumber. It is often pleasing to look upon the face of a weary sleeper. Have you ever passed along a country lane and there, by the roadside, seen the harvestman as he is resting awhile from his toils, lying down upon the bank? What a heavy sleep he has and what a blessed smile there is on his countenance while he is enjoying that rest! Such is the natural sleep of the body, from which comes the metaphor of my text. And is not this sleep of death a resting after toil? The poor limbs are weary. They are now stretched in the grave and covered over with the green sod, that they may not hear the noise above their heads nor be disturbed by the busy din. They are put in their quiet abodes, down deep there in the earth, that none may alarm them. And now let the cannon roar over their tomb, let the thunder shake the sky, let the lightning flash—no sight nor sound can startle them, or cause them dreams! In such still chambers of retirement, their troubles are now over. "There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary are at rest." The body has gone through its battle. The warrior sleeps, the conqueror rests. His brow shall soon be decked with laurels—the very brow which now slumbers in the tomb awhile shall yet rise again to wear the crown of everlasting life! But now it rests awhile till the preparations are complete for the triumphant entry into the Kingdom of God when Christ shall come to receive body and soul into their everlasting resting place!

Note again, *sleep is used as a figure for death to show us the entire unconcern which the dead feel concerning anything which is going on below.* The sleeper knows nothing of what is going on. The thief may be in the house, but he knows it not. There is a storm, but he slumbers and knows no terror. There may happen a thousand accidents abroad, or even in the chamber where he rests, but as long as sleep can hold him fast, he shall be entirely unconcerned about them and shall not notice them! And such, Beloved, is the case with the dead. Their bodies, at least, are entirely free from concern. Empires may totter, kingdoms fall and mighty revolutions shake the world, but none of these things will—

***"Ever make their hearts ache, or  
Break the spell of their profound repose."***

There may be a falling away, a backsliding in the Church, but the minster in the grave knows it not. The tongue of Wickliffe shall not move with stern rebuke. The eyes of Knox shall not flash with indignation. Yes, and each bodily organ through which the mind was known to reveal itself is now closed. "So man lies down and rises not: till the heavens are no more they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep."

There is a yet sweeter view of this metaphor which I will now point out to you. Sleep, you know, is a means of refreshment by the recruiting of



our exhausted strength to fit us for a fresh exercise of our faculties when we awake. Such, too, is death. The sleep of death is requisite as a preparation for Heaven, so far as the body is concerned. The soul must be prepared by a blessed change worked upon it in this time-state. But the body awaits its full redemption until the Resurrection. Though I may not follow the metaphor in the process by which the change is worked, I can believe it will quite hold good in the result. The refreshing of the body is of course gradually brought about during the hours of sleep, just as changes are successively going on in the grain of wheat that falls into the ground and dies. The awaking of the one and the sprouting of the other, in health and vigor, result from causes that take place in the interval. But I am not prepared to say that it is exactly so with the sleeping dust of man's earthly tabernacle. The greedy worm that devours it, the general corruption that preys upon it and the foul earth with which it mingles may consume that which is corruptible. But these can have no power to refine the nature, or to produce the glorious likeness to be borne by the saints. You must always guard against straining a figure, especially when, by doing so, you would make it contradict the plain didactic teachings of the Scriptures. We do not look down into the grave as if it were a refining pot to purify our nature, or a bath in which the garments of mortality are to be cleansed—we look upward to Heaven, from whence the Savior shall come—"our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself."

Once more, there is a very precious word in connection with this sleep which we must not overlook. At the 14<sup>th</sup> verse it says that they "sleep in Jesus." Sweet thought! This teaches us that death does not dissolve the union which subsists between the Believer and Christ. When the body dies, it does not cease to be a part of Christ! "Know you not that your bodies are the members of Christ?" said the Apostle to those who were still living in the world. And now, as to those whose earthly course is done, our departed friends "sleep in Jesus"—they are as much in Christ now as they were when upon earth! And their bodies, which were precious to the Lord and preserved as the apple of His eye, are as precious to Him now as they ever were! It was once their delight to have communion with Jesus in His death and Resurrection, as knowing themselves one with Him when He died and rose again. And not less surely did Jesus hold fellowship with them in *their* death, making Himself known to them when they endured their last struggle. How often have we seen the eyes brighten up with an almost supernatural brilliance just before they were closed on all beneath the skies! How often have we seen the hand raised with the parting expression of triumph, and then laid motionless by the side! How often has the Presence of the Beloved sustained the frail tenement of the expiring Christian till he has defied death "to quench his immortality, or shake his trust in God!"

And mark how the saints in Jesus, when their bodies sleep in peace, have perpetual fellowship with Him—yes, better fellowship than we can

enjoy! We have but the transitory glimpse of His face—they gaze upon it every moment. We see Him “through a glass, darkly.” They behold Him “face to face.” We sip of the brook by the way—they plunge into the very ocean of unbounded love! We look up, sometimes, and see our Father smile. Look whenever they may, His face is always full of smiles for them. We get some drops of comfort, but they get the honeycomb itself. They have their cup filled with new wine, running over with perennial, unalloyed delights. They are full of peace and joy forever. They “sleep in Jesus!”

Beloved, such a description of death makes us wish to sleep too! O Lord, let us go to sleep with the departed! O happy hour when a clod of the valley shall be our pillow! Though it is so hard, we shall not be affected by it. Happy hour, when earth shall be our bed! Cold shall be the clay, but we shall not know it—we shall slumber and we shall rest. The worm shall hold carnival within our bones and corruption shall riot over our frame, but we shall not feel it. Corruption can but feed on the corruptible—mortality can but prey upon the mortal.

Oh, let me rest! Come, night, and let me slumber! Come, my last hour! Let me bow myself upon the bed! Come, Death, oh, come lightly to my couch! Yes, strike if you will, but your stroke is the loving touch that makes my body slumber! Happy, happy, they who die in the Lord!

## II. Now, secondly, here is A SOLEMN DISTINCTION.

All men die, but all men die not alike. There are two sorts of death. I speak not now of the inferior animals—of them we never read in Scripture that they sleep—I speak of MAN, concerning whom it is certain that “there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.” There is the death of the righteous, which is peaceful, happy and joyous beyond expression! In its future consequences there is, moreover, the death of the wicked, sad in itself, but doleful, indeed, in its inevitable results throughout a dread eternity! Come, then, Beloved, let us consider this distinction. There are some, we must infer from this text, for whom we can sorrow as those for whom we have no hope. While there are others for whom we are told we may not thus sorrow—concerning their death we have every hope and every joy.

Turning for a moment to the heathen nations, we do not wonder that there is a great deal of grief expressed at their funerals, that they hire women who pluck their hair, make hideous noises and distress their bodies with all kinds of unnatural contortions in order to express the utmost agony—while the relatives and friends cover themselves with sackcloth and ashes and spend their time in weeping and wailing and lamentations. We do not wonder that such customs should prevail and be handed down among those who have no knowledge of a resurrection! They suppose that when the body is consigned to the tomb, they shall never see it again, so we do not marvel that they should cry—

***“Weep for the dead, and bewail her!  
Weep for the dead, and bewail her!  
She is gone; she is gone!  
We shall see her no more—  
Weep for the dead, and bewail her!”***

You see, there is no hope in their case to mitigate their woe. But in a nominally Christian land, although we are persuaded that all men will have a resurrection, yet how many die of whom we have no hope! I mean to say, we have, in the first place, no hope of ever meeting them again. We frequently sing in our Sunday school—our little children sing—

*“Oh, that will be joyful,  
Joyful, joyful!  
When we meet to part no more!”*

But there is another side to that Truth of God—

*“Oh, that will be doleful,  
Doleful, doleful!  
When we part to meet no more!”*

When our wicked friends die, if we are righteous, we must remember that we shall never meet them again. We may behold them, but it will be a hideous sight. We may see them as Lazarus saw the rich man in Hell. We may behold them with the great gulf fixed between us—but remember that the last shake of the hand with an ungodly relative is an everlasting farewell! That last whisper of sympathy on the dying bed is indeed final—we shall never address them with another soft word of comfort, never again shall we call them friends—we are parted then, forever. Death, like some mighty earthquake, shakes two hearts apart which seemed to be indissolubly united—and a great gulf of fire and wrath shall separate them. One in Heaven and the other in Hell—they shall never meet again—there is no hope of it.

Some of you we could not bear to lose, yet, if you fall asleep, we shall with holy assurance consign you to your grave and say, “Lord, we thank You that it has pleased You to take to Yourself our beloved Brother.” Yet, alas, there are many here—oh, we pray God that they may not die, for we know we should never see them again in peace, and joy, and happiness! There are some of you, now within the reach of my voice—judge you of whom I speak—concerning whom, if you were now to depart, we might say, as David did, “O my son, my son, Absalom! Would God I had died for you, O Absalom, Absalom, my son, my son!” If you were now to depart, we might indeed take up a very bitter cry. We might ask the owl and the bittern, with their dismal hoots, to assist our lamentations. We would have need to weep for you, not because your bodies were dead, but because your *souls* were cast away into unutterable torment! O Sirs, if some of you were to die, it would be your mother’s grief, for she would bitterly reflect that you were gnashing your teeth in fell despair! She would recollect that you were beyond the reach of prayer, cast away from all hope and from all refuge—that she could never see you again—her destiny to be forever with her Lord in Heaven, but your doom to be forever shut out!

Young men and women, yes, and all of you who have had pious friends who have gone before, should you not like to meet them before the eternal Throne? Can you bear the dread thought that you are separated from some of them forever because you are not the Lord’s children, neither do you seek the things that belong to your peace? I

think you wish to meet them there, do you not? But you never shall unless you tread the steps they trod, and walk the road they loved. If your hearts are not towards Jesus. If your souls are not given to Him, how can you? For if your way is not the same, your end must differ. You shall not meet at the goal of Heaven unless you meet at the wicket gate on earth, enter in by the strait gate and go along the strait and narrow road! Oh, if some of you were about to die, your minister would have to go to your bedside and say, "Adieu, I shall never see you again." And were you to look up, and say, "what, Sir—no more?" He might answer, "I have seen you many a time in God's House. We have sung together, we have prayed together, we have worshipped together in the same sanctuary. But it is all over now. I shall never see you again!" "What, never, Minister? Never hear your voice again?" "No, never! Unless you are in Christ now, farewell forever!" O poor Soul, what a sorrowful thing to shake hands forever, to bid good-bye forever—one to descend to endless flames and the other to mount to realms of everlasting bliss! We may, indeed, sorrow for them, if we have no hope of ever meeting them again.

But we would not grieve so much about not meeting them again if we knew that they were happy, even though we should never see them. But, then, for those who die without Christ, we sorrow because we have no hope that they have any happiness. Or even if they were now in misery and we might cherish the thought that they would one day escape, we could not then sorrow for them as those that have no hope. But, alas, we recollect that our lost friends are lost forever! We recollect that there is no shadow of a hope for them! When the iron gate of Hell is once closed upon them, it shall never be unbarred to give them free exit! When once shut up within those walls of sweltering flame which girdle the fiery gulf, there is no possibility of flight! We recollect that they have, "forever," stamped upon their chains—"forever" carved in deep lines of despair upon their hearts! It is the Hell of Hell that everything there lasts forever! Here, time wears away our griefs and blunts the keen edge of sorrow, but there, time never mitigates the woe. Here, the sympathy of loving kindred, in the midst of sickness or suffering, can alleviate our pain, but there, the mutual upbraiding and reproaches of fellow sinners give fresh stings to torment too dreadful to be endured! Here, too, when Nature's last palliative shall fail, to die may be a happy release—a man can count the weary hours till death shall give him rest. But, oh, remember, there is no death in Hell! Death, which is a monster on earth, would be an angel in Hell! But the terrible reality is this, "Their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched."

Must we go one step further? It is terrible work to deliver these warnings, but it would be still more terrible to hide any Truth of God, however bitter. When we have uttered a pitiful lament for heathen nations and when we have spoken with deeper emotion of the profane, the profligate, and the despisers of God, we have not finished. These have not the semblance of peace in their own breasts. But alas, alas, there are many who die in the delusion of a false peace! What avails it that they uttered pious sentiments with their lips if their hearts were not changed?

What though they received “the bread and wine” in nature’s extremity? Will the sacramental opiate serve them instead of the inward witness of reconciliation to God? Oh, hear this, you that are at ease! Listen, all you whose religion stands in outward forms—“Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning.” I confess to you that the metaphor which charms me in the one case appalls me in the other, so great is the distinction among the sleepers! Look at the man who has sought to be justified by the works of the Law, or in some way perverted the Gospel of Christ. With a fatal lull of conscience he nestles down securely. “As when a hungry man dreams and, behold, he eats; but he awakes and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreams and behold, he drinks; but he awakes and, behold, he is faint and his soul has appetite.” He sleeps the deep sleep of death, prepared, as he supposes, to meet the Judge. When he awakes, the spell shall be dissolved. The terrible sentence, “Depart,” awaits him! O Beloved, I tremble to think that a man may go up with jaunty step to the threshold of Heaven only to be cast down to the nethermost pit! As you stand among the graves of your departed friends, I beseech you to examine yourselves! Only as you can say, “To me to live is Christ,” have you a right to add, “and to die is gain.”

But now there is the case of the Christian. Is it not matter for consolation and holy joy, with some of us, that concerning beloved friends of ours who now sleep quietly in their graves, we have not to sorrow as those who have no hope? The death of the saints is precious in the sight of the Lord! On their account we have cause rather to rejoice than to weep. And why? Because we hope that they are safely housed in Heaven. Yes, more—we have the firm persuasion that already their redeemed spirits have flown up to the eternal Throne! We believe that they are at this moment joining in the hallelujahs of Paradise, feasting on the fruits of the Tree of Life, and walking by the side of the river, the streams whereof make glad the heavenly city of our God! We know they are supremely blessed—we think of them as glorified spirits above who are “forever with the Lord.”

We have that hope and then we have another hope concerning those—we hope that though we have buried them, they shall rise again! In the verse following our text it is written, “Those also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.” We rejoice that not only do “they rest from their labors, and their works do follow them,” but that after they have rested a little while, their bodies shall rise again! We know that their Redeemer lives and we are certain that He will, at the latter day, stand upon the earth and that they shall stand on the earth with Him! We rejoice that the dead in Christ shall rise first—that they shall come on that day when, “with clouds descending,” “He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them who believe.” We look for a day when buried bodies shall be living frames once more! We expect that glazed eyes shall again be radiant with light! We believe that dumb lips

shall yet sing, that deaf ears shall yet hear and that lame feet shall yet leap like the hart!

We are looking for the time when we shall meet the saints in their very bodies and shall know them. It is our hope that they shall rise again and that we shall meet them and shall know them. I trust you all firmly believe that you will recognize your friends in Heaven. I consider the doctrine of the non-recognition of our friends in Heaven a marvelously absurd one! I cannot conceive how there can be any communion of saints in Heaven unless there is mutual recognition. We could not hold communion with unknown beings! If we knew not who they were, how could we be able to join their company? Moreover, we are told that we shall “sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” I suppose we shall know those blessed Patriarchs when we sit down with them. And if we know them, there is but one step to the supposition that we shall know all the general assembly! Moreover, there will be but very little difficulty in discovering them because every seed has its own body by which we are taught that everybody, being different from any other body when sown, will, when it rises in a spiritual fashion, be in like manner different from any other. And although the spiritual body may have none of the lineaments upon its face like we have, and no marks as we have, because it will be far more glorious and splendid, yet it will have so much identity that we, being instructed, shall be able to say of it, “This is the body that sprang from such a seed,” just as we recognize the different kinds of corn or flowers that spring from the different kinds of seed that are sown! Take away recognition and you have taken away, I think, one of the joys of Heaven. There seems to me a great deal of Heaven’s sweetness in the little verse (to quote another of the children’s hymns)—

***“Teachers, too, shall meet above.***

***And our pastors whom we love***

***Shall meet to part no more.”***

**III.** And now, in the third place, we HAVE A GENTLE EXHORTATION.

The exhortation here is delicately hinted at—that the sorrow of bereaved Christians for their Christian friends ought not to be at all like the sorrow of unconverted persons for their ungodly relatives. We are not forbidden to sorrow—“Jesus wept.” The Gospel does not teach us to be stoics—we ought to weep, for it was intended that the rod should be felt, otherwise we could not “hear the rod, and who has appointed it.” If we did not feel the stroke when our friends were taken away, we would prove ourselves worse than heathen men and publicans. God’s Grace does not take away our sensibilities, it only refines them and, in some degree, restrains the violence of their expression. Still, there ought to be some difference between the sorrow of the righteous and the sorrow of the wicked.

First, *there should be a difference in its vehemence.* It may be natural to the unbridled passions of an ungodly man, who has lost his wife, to tear his hair, to throw himself upon the bed, to clutch the body, to declare it shall not be buried, to rave through the house cursing God and saying all manner of hard things of His dispensations. But that would

not do for a Christian. He must not murmur. A Christian may stand and weep. He may kiss the dear cold hand for the last time and rain showers of tears on the lifeless body while “pity swells the tide of love.” But God and His religion demand that he should say, after doing this, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” He may weep—he ought to. He may sorrow—he ought to. He may wear the clothes of mourning—God forbid that we should ever believe in any religion which should proscribe our showing some outward signs of sorrow for our friends!—yet we may not, and we must not weep as others weep! We must not always carry the red and tearful eye. We must not always take with us the face that is downcast and distressed. If we do, the world will say of us that our conduct belies our profession and our feelings are at variance with our faith.

Again, there is another thing we must never allow to enter into our grief—*the least degree of repining*. A wicked man, when he sorrows for those who are gone without hope, not infrequently murmurs against God. But it is far otherwise with the Christian! He meekly bows his head, and says, “Your will, O God, be done.” The Christian must still acknowledge the same gracious hand of God, whether it is stretched forth to give or to take away. The language of his faith is, “Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him; though He should take all away, yet will I not repine.” I do not say that all Christians are able to maintain such a cheerful submission of spirit. I only say that they *ought to* and that such is the tendency of the Christian religion—had they more of the Spirit of God within their hearts, that would be their habitual disposition. We may sorrow, Beloved, but not with repining. There must be resignation mixed with the regret. There must be the yielding up, even with grateful acquiescence, that which God asks for—seeing we believe that He does but take what is His own.

And now, there is just one further observation. I believe that *when the Christian sorrows, he ought to be as glad as he is sorrowful*. Put your sadness in one scale and your gladness in the other scale—then see if the reasons for praise is not as weighty as the reasons for grief. Then you will say, “She is gone—here is a tear for her. She is in Heaven—here is a smile for her. Her body is with the worms. Weep, eyes. Her soul is with Jesus! Shout, lips! Yes, shout for joy! The cold sod has covered her, she is gone from my sight, she sleeps in the sad, sad grave—bring me the clothes of mourning. No, she is before the Throne of God and the Lamb—blessed forever! Lend me a harp and let me thank my God! She has joined the white-robed host on yonder blessed plains! O hearse and funeral, O shroud and garments of woe, you are most fitting for her! I have lost her and she, herself, with many a pang and struggle, has passed through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, but O joyous face! O songs of gladness! O shouts of rapture! You are equally becoming!—for when she passed through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, she feared no evil, for Your rod and Your staff did comfort her. Now, beyond the

reach of death's alarms, she does bathe her soul in seas of bliss—she is with her Lord.”

It is well to have a little singing as well as weeping at a funeral. It well becomes the burial of the saints. Angels never weep when saints die—they sing. You never heard a saint say, when he was dying, “There are angels in the room. Listen! You can hear them sobbing because I am dying.” No, but we have often heard a saint say, “There are angels in the room and I can hear them singing.” That is because angels are wiser than we are. We judge by the sight of our eyes and the hearing of our ears—but angels judge after another fashion. They “see and hear and know” the joys of the blessed and therefore they have no tears—but they have songs for them, and they sing loudly when the Christian is carried Home, like a shock of corn fully ripe.

And now, Beloved, we shall soon all of us die. In a few more years I shall have a gravestone above my grave. Some of you, I hope, will say, “There lies our minister who once gathered us together in the House of God and led us to the Mercy Seat and joined in our song. There lies one who was often despised and rejected of men, but whom God did nevertheless bless to the salvation of our souls and sealed His testimony in our hearts and consciences by the operation of the Holy Spirit.” Perhaps some of you will visit my tomb and will bring a few flowers to scatter on it, in glad and grateful remembrance of the happy hours we spent together. It is quite as probable that your tombs will be built as soon as mine. Ah, dear Friends! Shall we write on your tombstones, “She sleeps in Jesus”? “He rests in the bosom of his Master”? Or will we have to speak the honest truth, “He has gone to his own place”? Which shall it be? Ask yourselves, each one of you, where will your soul be? Shall it mount up there—

***“Where our best friends, our kindred, dwell,  
Where God our Savior reigns.”***

Or—

***“Shall devils plunge you down to Hell,  
In infinite despair?”***

You can ascertain which it will be! You can tell it by this—Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you love the Lord Jesus? Do you stand on Christ, the solid Rock? Have you built your hope of Heaven on Him alone? Have you, as a guilty sinner, cast yourself at His Mercy Seat, looking to His blood and righteousness, to be saved by them and by them alone? If so, fear not to die—you shall be safe, whenever the summons comes to you! But if not, tremble, tremble! You may die tomorrow—you must die one day. It will be a sad thing to die as to be lost beyond recovery. May God Almighty grant that we may be all saved at last, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON  
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**



# **“FOREVER WITH THE LORD”**

## **NO. 1374**

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 16, 1877,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“So shall we be forever with the Lord.”  
1 Thessalonians 4:17.*

WE know that these words are full of consolation, for the Apostle says in the next verse, “Therefore comfort one another with these words.” The very words, it appears, were dictated by the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to be repeated by the saints to each other with the view of removing sorrow from the minds of the distressed. The comfort is intended to give us hope in reference to those who have fallen asleep. Look over the list of those beloved in the Lord who have departed from you, to your utmost grief, and let the words of our text be a handkerchief for your tears.

Sorrow not as those that are without hope, for they are with the Lord though they are not with you and, by-and-by, you shall surely meet them where your Lord is the center of fellowship forever and ever. The separation will be very transient—the reunion will be everlasting! These words are, also, intended to comfort the saints with regard to themselves. And I pray that they may be a cordial to any who are sick with fear—a matchless medicine to charm away the heartache from all Believers. The fact that you bear about a dying body is very evident to some of you by your frequent and increasing infirmities and pains and this, it may be, is a source of depression of spirits.

You know that when a few years are gone you must go the way from where you shall not return, but be not dismayed, for you shall not go into a strange country alone and unattended. There is a Friend that sticks closer than a brother who will not fail you nor forsake you! And, moreover, you are going Home—your Lord will be with you while you are departing—and then you will be with Him forever. Therefore, though sickness warns you of the near approach of death, be not in the least dismayed! Though pain and weariness should make your heart and flesh fail, yet doubt not of your triumph through the Redeemer’s blood!

Though it should sometimes make your flesh tremble when you remember your many sins and the weakness of your faith, yet be of good cheer, for your sins and weakness of faith will soon be removed far from you—and you shall be in His Presence where there is fullness of joy—and at His right hand where there are pleasures forevermore! Comfort yourselves, then, both with regard to those who have gone before and in reference to the thought of your own departure.

Observe that the comfort which the Apostle here presents to us may be partly derived from the fact of the Resurrection, but not chiefly, for he

does not so much refer to the words, "The dead in Christ shall rise," as to these last—"so shall we be forever with the Lord." It is a great Truth of God that you will rise again. It is a sweeter Truth that you will be "forever with the Lord"! There is some consolation, also, in the fact that we shall meet our departed Brothers and Sisters when we shall all be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Blissful will be the general assembling of the redeemed, never again to be broken up—the joy of meeting, never to part, is a sweet remedy for the bitterness of separation.

There is great comfort in it, but the main stress of consolation does not lie even there. It is pleasant to think of the eternal fellowship of the godly above, but the best of all is the promised fellowship with our Lord—"So shall we be forever with the Lord." Whatever else you draw comfort from, neglect not this deep, clear and overflowing well of delight! There are other sources of good cheer in connection with the Glory to be revealed, for Heaven is a many-sided joy. But still, none can excel the glory of communion with Jesus Christ! We comfort one another, in the first place and most constantly with these words, "So shall we be forever with the Lord."

I shall view our text, in order to our comfort at this time, in three lights. I look upon it, first, as a continuance—we are with the Lord even now and we always shall be. Secondly, as an advancement—we shall, before long, be more fully with the Lord than we are now. And thirdly, as a coherence—for we both are and shall be with Him in a close and remarkable manner.

**I.** I regard the text as A CONTINUANCE of our present spiritual state—"So shall we be forever with the Lord." To my mind, and I think I am not incorrect in so expounding, the Apostle means that nothing shall prevent our continuing to be forever with the Lord. Death shall not separate us, nor the terrors of that tremendous day when the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God shall be heard. By Divine plan and arrangement, all shall be so ordained that, "So shall we be forever with the Lord." By being caught up into the clouds, or in one way or another, our abiding in Christ shall remain unbroken. As we have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so shall we walk in Him, whether in life or in death.

I understand the Apostle to mean that we are with the Lord now and that nothing shall separate us from Him. Even now, like Enoch, we walk with God and we shall not be deprived of Divine communion. Our fear might be that in the future state something might happen which would become a dividing gulf between us and Christ, but the Apostle assures us that it will not be so—there shall be such plans and methods used that, "so shall we be forever with the Lord." At any rate, I know that if this is not the Truth of God, here intended, it is a Truth worthy to be expounded and, therefore, I do not hesitate to enlarge upon it.

We are with the Lord in this life in a high spiritual sense. Read you not, in the Epistle to the Colossians, "for you are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God"? Were you not "buried with Him in Baptism wherein, also, you are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who has raised Him from the dead"? Do you not know what it is to be dead to the

world in Him and to be living a secret life with Him? Are you not risen with Christ? Yes, and do you not understand, in some measure, what it is to be raised up together and made to sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus? If you are not with Him, Brothers and Sisters, you are not Christians at all, for this is the mark of the Christian—that he follows *with* Christ.

It is essential to salvation to be a sheep of Christ’s fold—no, more—a partaker of Christ’s *life*, a member of His mystical body, a branch of the spiritual vine! Separated from Him we are spiritually dead. He Himself has said, “If a man abides not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered. And men gather them and cast them into the fire and they are burned.” Jesus is not far from any of His people—no, it is our *privilege* to follow Him wherever He goes—and His loving words to us are, “Abide in Me, and I in you.” May He enable us sweetly to realize this! We are, dear Brothers and Sisters, constantly with Christ in the sense of abiding union with Him, for we are joined unto the Lord and are one spirit.

Sometimes this union is very sweetly apparent to ourselves.” We know that we are in Him that is true,” and in consequence we feel an intense joy, even Christ’s own joy fulfilled in us! For the same reason we are at times bowed down with intense sorrow, for being in and with Christ, we have fellowship with Him in His *sufferings*, being made conformable with His death. This is such sweet sorrow that the more we experience it, the better—

**“Live or die, or work or suffer,  
Let my weary soul abide,  
In all changes whatever,  
Sure and steadfast by Your side.  
Nothing can delay my progress,  
Nothing can disturb my rest,  
If I shall, wherever I wander,  
Lean my spirit on Your breast.”**

This companionship is, we trust, made manifest to others by its fruits. It ought always to be so—the life of the Christian should be manifestly a life with Christ. Men should take knowledge of us, that we have been with Jesus and have learned of Him.

They should see that there is something in us which could not have been there if it were not for the Son of God—a temper, a spirit, a course of life which could not have come by Nature—but must have been worked in us through Grace which has been received from Him in whom dwells a fullness of Grace, even our Lord Jesus Christ. Brothers and Sisters, if we are what we ought to be, our life is spent in conscious communion growing out of continued union with the Lord Jesus Christ! And if it is so, we have that rich assurance which is written by the Beloved John, “If that which you have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, you, also, shall continue in the Son and in the Father.”

We are with Him, dear Friends, in this sense, too, that His unchanging love is always set upon us, and our love, feeble though it sometimes may be, never quite dies out. In both senses that challenge of the Apostle is

true, “Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?” We can say, “I am my Beloved’s and His desire is towards me.” And, on the other hand, we, also testify, “My Beloved is mine, and I am His.” He claims us and we claim Him! He loves us and we love Him! There is a union of *heart* between us. We are with Him, not against Him! We are in league with Him, enlisted beneath His banner, obedient to His Spirit. For us to live is Christ—we have no other aim!

He is with us by the continued indwelling of the Holy Spirit who is with us and shall be in us forever. His anointing abides on us and because of it we abide in Christ Jesus! He has sent us the Comforter to represent Himself and through that Divine Paraclete He continues to be with us—and so, even now we are forever with the Lord. Our Lord has, also, promised to be with us whenever we are engaged in His work. That is a grand word of encouragement, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” Think not, therefore, that it will be the first time of our being with Christ when we shall see Him in Glory, for even now He manifests Himself unto us as He does not unto the world.

Has He not often fulfilled His promise, “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them”? We have heard the sound of our Master’s feet behind us when we have been going on His errands. We have felt the touch of His hands when we have come to the forefront of the battle for His sake. And we have known that He dwells in us by His Spirit and is with us by the power with which He has attended our work, and the deeds which He has worked by the Gospel which we have proclaimed. The Lord Jesus is with His Church in her tribulation for His name’s sake and He will forever be so, for He forsakes not His saints. “Fear not, I am with you,” is as much a word of the Lord under the Gospel as in Old Testament times. By the power of His blessed Spirit Jesus abides with us and through this present dispensation He enables us to be “forever with the Lord.”

But, my Brethren, the time is coming when we shall die unless the Lord shall descend from Heaven with a shout in the meanwhile. Assuredly in the article of death we shall still be with the Lord—

***“Death may my soul divide  
From this abode of clay  
But love shall keep me near Your side  
Through all the gloomy way.”***

“Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me.” This makes dying such wonderful work to the people of God, for then, especially, is Jesus seen to be near! By death they escape from death—and from now on it is no more death for them to die! When Jesus meets His saints, there seems no iron gate to pass through, but in a moment they close their eyes on earth and open them in Glory!

Beloved, there should be no more bondage through fear of death since Christ attends His people even in their descent into the tomb and strengthens them upon the bed of languishing. This has been a great joy

to many departing saints. A dying Believer who was attended by an apothecary who was, also, a child of God, was observed to be whispering to himself while dying. His good attendant, wishing to know what were his last words, placed his ear against the dying man's lips and heard him repeating to himself, again and again, the words, "Forever with the Lord. Forever with the Lord." When heart and flesh were failing, the departing one knew that God was the strength of his life and his portion forever—and so he chose for his soft, low-whispered, dying song, "Forever with the Lord."

After death we shall abide, awhile, in the separate, disembodied state and we shall know as to our soul what it is to be still with the Lord, for what does the Apostle say? "Knowing that when we are absent from the body we are present with the Lord." The dying thief was to be, *that day*, with Christ in Paradise, and such shall be our lot as soon as our souls shall have passed out of this tenement of clay into that wondrous state of which we know so little. Our pure spirits shall "come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born which are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than that of Abel."

Who is dismayed when such a prospect opens up before him? Yes, and this body which shall fall asleep, though apparently it shall be destroyed, yet shall not be so, but shall only slumber awhile and then awake again and say, "When I awake I am still with You." Constantly death is described as sleeping in Jesus—that is the state of the saint's mortal frame through the interval between death and resurrection. The angels shall guard our bodies—all that is essential to complete the identity of our body shall be securely preserved so that the very seed which was put into the earth shall rise, again, in the beauty of efflorescence which becomes it. All, I say, that is essential, shall be preserved intact, because it is still with Christ.

It is a glorious doctrine which is stated by the Apostle in the first Epistle to the Thessalonians, the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter, at the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> verses, "For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him." In due time the last trumpet shall sound and Christ shall come and the saints shall be with Him. The infinite Providence has so arranged that Christ shall not come without His people, for, "Them, also, that sleep in Jesus shall God bring with Him." The saints shall be with Him in the Advent as they are now. Our souls shall hear the shout of victory and join in it! The voice of the archangel shall be actually heard by all His redeemed and the trumpet of God shall be sounded in the hearing of every one of His beloved, for we shall be with Jesus all through that glorious transaction.

Whatever the glory and splendor of the Second Advent, we shall be with Jesus in it! I am not going to give you glimpses of the revealed future, or offer any suggestion as to the sublime history which is yet to be written, but most certainly there is to be a last general Judgment and then we shall be with Christ, assessors with Him at that day. Being ourselves, first acquitted, we shall take our seat upon the Judgment Bench with Him. What does the Holy Spirit say by the Apostle—“Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world? Know you not that we shall judge angels?” The fallen angels, to their shame, shall, in part, receive the verdict of their condemnation from the lips of *men*—and thus vengeance shall be taken upon them for all the mischief they have done to the sons of men.

Oh, think of it! Amidst the terror of the tremendous Day you shall be at ease, resting in the love of God and beholding the Glory of Christ and, “so shall you forever be with the Lord.” There is, moreover, to be a reign of Christ. I cannot read the Scriptures without perceiving that there is to be a millennial reign, as I believe, upon the earth and that there shall be new heavens and new earth wherein dwells righteousness. Well, whatever that reign is to be, we shall reign also! “And he that overcomes and keeps My words unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations. And He shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers; even as I received of My Father.” “And have made us unto our God kings and priests and we shall reign on the earth.”

He shall reign, but it will be “before His ancients gloriously.” We shall be partakers in the splendors of the latter days, whatever they may be, and, “So shall we be forever with the Lord.” The particular incident of the text does not exhaust the words, but you may apply them to the whole story of God’s own children. From the first day of the spiritual birth of the Lord’s immortals until they are received up into the seventh Heaven to dwell with God, their history may be summed up in these words, “So shall we be forever with the Lord.” Whether caught up into the clouds or here below on this poor afflicted earth—whether in Paradise or in the renovated earth, in the grave or in Glory—we shall always be with the Lord!

And when comes the end and God alone shall reign and the mediatorial kingdom shall cease, ages, ages and ages shall revolve, but “so shall we be forever with the Lord.” The saints immortal shall be with their Covenant Head, free from sorrow. All tendency to sin, all fear of change or death shall be gone! And their intimate communion will last on forever—

**“Blessed state! Beyond conception!  
Who its vast delights can tell?  
May it be my blissful portion,  
With my Savior there to dwell.”**

I think the text looks like a continuation of what is already begun, only rising to something higher and better. To be with Christ is life eternal—this we have already and shall continue to have and—“so shall we be forever with the Lord.”

**II.** Secondly, most assuredly, Brethren, the text is A GREAT ADVANCEMENT—“So shall we be forever with the Lord.” It is an advance-

ment upon this present state, for however spiritual-minded we may be and however in consequence, thereof, we may be very near unto our Lord Jesus, yet still we know that while we are present in the body we are absent from the Lord. This life, at its very best, is still comparatively an absence from the Lord, but in the world to come we shall be more perfectly at home. *Now*, we cannot, in the highest sense, be with Christ, for we must, according to the Apostle's phraseology, "depart, and be with Christ; which is far better." But there we shall be forever beholding His face unveiled. Earth is not Heaven, though the Believer begins the heavenly life while he is upon it. We are not with Christ as to place, nor as to actual sight—but in Glory we shall be!

And it is an advancement, in the next place, upon the present state of the departed, for though their souls are with the Lord, yet their bodies are subject to corruption. Still does the sepulcher contain the blessed dust of the fathers of our Israel. Though scattered to the four winds of Heaven, the martyr's ashes are still with us. The glorified saints are not as yet consciously "with the Lord" as to their complete manhood, but when the grand event shall occur of which Paul speaks, the body shall be reanimated. This is our glorious hope! We can say with the Patriarch Job—"For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself and my eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me."

Know you not, Brothers and Sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God? That is, as they are. But this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality—and then shall the entire manhood, the perfected manhood, the fully developed manhood, of which this manhood is, as it were, but a shriveled seed—be in the fullest and most Divine sense, forever with the Lord! This is an advancement, even, upon the present state of departed saints in Paradise!

And now let us consider this glorious condition to which we shall be advanced. We shall be with the Lord in the strongest possible meaning of that language. So with Him that we shall never mind earthly things again, shall have no more to go into city business, or into the workshop, or into the field. We shall have nothing to do but to be engaged forever with Him in such occupations as shall have no tendency to take us off from communion with Him. We shall be so with Him as to have no sin to becloud our view of Him! Our understanding will be delivered from all the injury which sin has worked in it and we shall know Him even as we are known. We shall see Him as a familiar Friend and sit with Him at His marriage feast. We shall be with Him so as to have no fear of His ever being grieved and hiding His face from us again.

We shall never again be made to cry out in bitterness of spirit, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him." We shall always know His love, always return it and always swim in the full stream of it, enjoying it to the fullest! There will be no lukewarmness to mar our fellowship. He shall never have to say to us, "I would you were either cold or hot." There shall

be no weariness to suspend our ceaseless bliss—we shall never have to cease from fellowship with Him because our physical frame is exhausted through the excessive joy of our heart—the vessel will be strengthened to hold the new wine. No doubts shall intrude into our rest, neither doctrinal doubts nor doubts about our interest in Him, for we shall be so consciously with Him as to have risen 10,000 leagues above that gloomy state.

We shall know that He is ours, for His left hand shall be under our head and His right hand shall embrace us and we shall be with Him beyond all hazard of ever losing Him. The chief blessedness seems, to me, to lie in this, that we will always be with Him and with Him always. Now we are with the Lord in conscious enjoyment, sometimes, but then we are away from Him. But there it will be constant, unwavering fellowship! No break shall ever occur in the intimate communion of the saints with Christ. Here we know that our high days and bright Sabbaths with their sweetest joys, must have their eventides and then come the work-days with the burden of the week upon them. But there the Sabbath is eternal, the worship endless, the praise unceasing, the bliss unbounded. “Forever with the Lord.”

Speak of a thousand years of reigning? What is that compared with, “forever with the Lord”? The millennium is little compared with “forever”—a millennium of millenniums would be nothing to it! There can come no end to us and no end to our bliss, since there can be no end to Him—“because I live, you shall live also.” “Forever with the Lord.” What will it mean? I remember a sermon upon this text by a notable preacher, of which the heads were as follows—“Forever life, forever light, forever love, forever peace, forever rest, forever joy.” What a chain of delights! What more can heart imagine or hope desire? Carry those things in your mind and you will get, if you can drink into them, some idea of the blessedness which is contained in being forever with the Lord!

But remember these are only the *fruits*—not the *root* of the joy. Jesus is better than all these! His company is more than the joy which comes out of it. I do not care so much for, “life forever,” nor for, “light forever,” as I do for, “forever with the Lord.” Oh, to be with Him! I ask no other bliss and cannot imagine anything more heavenly. Why, the touch of the hem of His *garment* healed the sick woman! The *sight* of Him was enough to give life to us when we were dead! What, then, must it be to be with Him *actually, consciously and always*? To be with Him no more by faith, but in very *deed* with Him forever? My soul is ready to swoon away with too much joy as she drinks in even her shallow measure into the meaning of this thought—and I dare not venture further.

I must leave you to muse your souls into it, for it needs quiet thought and room for free indulgence of holy imagination till you make your soul dream of this excess of joy. “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit.”—

**“O glorious hour! O blessed abode!”**



***I shall be near and like my God.  
And flesh and sin no more control  
The sacred pleasures of my soul.”***

We love to think of being with Jesus under the aspect which the text specially suggests to us. We are to be forever with the Redeemer, not only as Jesus the Savior, but as the Lord. Here we have seen Him on the Cross and lived thereby. We are with Him now in His Cross-bearing and shame and it is well—but our eternal companionship with Him will enable us to rejoice in Him as the Lord. What did our Master say in His blessed prayer? “I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory.”

It will be Heaven for us to be forever with Him as the Lord! Oh, how we shall delight to obey Him as our Lord! How we shall triumph as we see what a Lord He is over all the universe! And what a conqueror He is over all His enemies! He will be more and more the Lord to us as we see all things put under Him. We shall forever hail Him as King of kings and Lord of lords. How we will adore Him, there, when we see Him in His Glory! We worship Him, now, and are not ashamed to believe that the Man of Nazareth is, “very God of very God.” But oh, how His Deity will shine upon us with infinite brightness when we come to be near Him! Thanks be to His name, we shall be strengthened to endure the sight and we shall rejoice to see ourselves in the full blaze of His glory!

Then shall we see what our poet endeavored to describe when he said—

***“Adoring saints around Him stand,  
And thrones and powers before Him fall!  
The God shines gracious through the Man,  
And sheds sweet glories on them all.”***

We shall be forever with the Lord and His Lordship shall be most upon our minds! He has been raised into Glory and honor and is no more able to suffer shame!—

***“No more the bloody spear,  
The Cross and nails no more!  
For Hell itself shakes at His word,  
And all the heavens adore.”***

**III.** Now we come to our third point and shall consider what, for lack of a better word, I entitle A COHERENCE. Those who are acquainted with the Greek language know that the, “with,” here, is not *meta*, which signifies being in the same place with a person, but one which goes much further and implies a coherence—the two who are with each other are intimately connected. Let me show you what I mean.

We are to be forever with the Lord. Now, the Christian’s life is like the life of His Lord and so it is a life with Christ. He was in all things with His Brethren and Grace makes us to be with Him. Just hurriedly look at your spiritual experience and your Lord’s life and see the parallel. When you were newly born as a Christian, you were born as Jesus Christ was, for you were born of the Holy Spirit. What happened after that? The devil tried to destroy the new life in you, just as Herod tried to kill your Lord—you were with Christ in danger, early and imminent. You grew in stature

and in Grace and, while Grace was yet young, you staggered those who were about you with the things you said, did and felt, for they could not understand you! Even thus, when He went up to the Temple, our Lord amazed the doctors who gathered around Him.

The Spirit of God rested upon you, not in the same measure, but still, as a matter of fact, He did descend upon you as He did upon your Lord. You have been with Him in Jordan's stream and have received the Divine acknowledgment that you are, indeed, the child of God. Your Lord was led into the wilderness to be tempted—and you, too, have been tempted by the devil. You have been with the Lord all along, from the first day until now. If you have been, by Grace, enabled to live as you should, you have trod the separated path with Jesus! You have been in the world, but not of it, holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners. Therefore you have been despised—you have had to take your share of being unknown and misrepresented because you are even as He was in the world. "Therefore the world knows us not, because it knew Him not."

As He was here to serve, you have been with Him as a servant. You have carried His yoke and counted it an easy load. You have been crucified to the world with Him. You know the meaning of His Cross and delight to bear it after Him. You are dead to the world with Him and wish to be as one buried to it. You have already, in your measure, partaken of His Resurrection and are living in newness of life. Your life story is still to be like the life story of your Lord, only painted in miniature. The more you watch the life of Christ the more clearly you will see the life of a spiritual man depicted in it—and the more clearly will you see what the saints' future will be.

You have been with Christ in life and you will be with Him when you come to die. You will not die the expiatory death which fell to His lot, but you will die feeling that "it is finished" and you will breathe out your soul, saying, "Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit." Then our Lord went to Paradise and you will go there, too. You shall enjoy a sojourn where He spent His interval in the disembodied state. You shall be with Him and like He is and then like He, you shall rise when your third morning comes. "After two days will He revive us. On the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight." "Your dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise."

You shall also ascend as Christ did. Do you catch the thought? How did He ascend? In clouds. "A cloud received Him out of their sight" and a cloud shall receive *you*. You shall be caught up into the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so shall you be always with the Lord, in the sense of being like He, walking with Him in experience and passing through the same events. That likeness shall continue forever and forever. Our lives shall run parallel with that of our Lord! Think, then, Beloved—we are to be like Christ as to our character! We are to be with the Lord by sharing His moral and spiritual likeness! Conformed to His image, we shall be adorned with His beauty!

When the mother of Darius saw two persons entering her pavilion, she, being a prisoner, bowed to the one whom she supposed to be Alexander. It turned out to be Hyphestion, the King’s favorite. Upon discovering that it was Hyphestion the lady humbly begged Alexander’s pardon for paying obeisance to the wrong person, but Alexander answered, “You have not mistaken, Madam, for he, also, is Alexander,” meaning that he loved him so much that he regarded him as his other self. Our Lord looks on His Beloved as one with Himself and makes them like Himself. You remember, Brothers and Sisters, how John bowed down before one of his fellow servants, the prophets in Heaven? It was a great blunder to make, but I dare say you and I will be likely to make the same, for the saints are so like their Lord!

Don’t you know that “we shall be like He when we shall see Him as He is”? Christ will rejoice to see them all covered with the Glory which His Father has given Him! He will not be ashamed to call them Brethren. Those poor people of His who were so full of infirmity and mourned over it so much—they shall be so like He that they shall be at once seen to be His Brothers and Sisters! Where shall such favored ones be found? We shall be with Him in the sense that we shall be partakers of all the blessedness and Glory which our adorable Lord now enjoys. We shall be accepted together with Him. Is He the Beloved of the Lord? Does His Father’s heart delight in Him, as well it may?

Behold you, also, shall be called Hephzibah, for His delight shall be in you! You shall be beloved of the Father’s soul. Is He enriched with all manner of blessings beyond conception? So shall you be, for He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, according as He has chosen us in Him! Is Christ exalted? Oh, how loftily is He lifted up to sit upon a glorious high Throne forever! But *you* shall sit upon His Throne *with* Him and *share* His exaltation as you have shared His humiliation! Oh, the delight of thus being joint-heirs with Christ and with Him in the possession of all that He possesses!

What is Heaven? It is the place which His love suggested, which His genius invented, which His bounty provided, which His royalty has adorned, which His wisdom has prepared, which He, Himself, glorifies! In that Heaven you are to be with Him forever! You shall dwell in the King’s own palace! Its gates of pearl and streets of gold shall not be too good for you. You who love Him are to abide with Him forever—not near Him in a secondary place, as a servant lives at the lodge gate of His master’s mansion—but with Him in the same palace in the metropolis of the universe! In a word, Believers are to be identified with Christ forever!

That seems, to me, to be the very life and essence of the text—with Him forever—that is, identified with Him forever. Do they ask for the Shepherd? They cannot behold Him to perfection except as surrounded by His sheep! Will the King be illustrious? How can that be if His subjects are lost? Do they ask for the Bridegroom? They cannot imagine Him in the fullness of joy without His bride! Will the Head be blessed? It could not be if it were separated from the members. Will Christ be forever glorified?

How can He be if He shall lose His jewels? He is *the* Foundation and what would He be if all His people were not built upon Him into the similitude of a palace?

O Brothers and Sisters, there shall be no Christ without Christians! There shall be no Savior without the saved ones! There shall be no Elder Brother without the younger brethren! There shall be no Redeemer without His redeemed! We are His fullness and He *must* have us with Him. We are identified with Him forever! Nothing can ever divide us from Him. Oh, joy, joy forever! Hallelujah!—

**“Since Christ and we are one,  
Why should we doubt or fear?  
If He in Heaven has fixed His Throne,  
He’ll fix His members there.”**

Two or three practical sentences. One word is this—this, “with the Lord” must begin *now*. Do you wish to be forever with the Lord? You must be with Him by becoming His disciple in *this* life. None come to be with the Lord hereafter who are not with the Lord here in time. See to it, dear Hearers, see to it, lest this unspeakable privilege should never be yours. Next, every Christian should seek to be more and more with Christ, for the growth and glory of your life lies there. Do you want to have Heaven below? Be with Christ below! Do you want to know, at once, what eternal bliss is? Know it by living with the Lord *now*.

The next word is, how plainly, then, the way of life is to be with the Lord. If you want to be saved, Sinner, you must be “with the Lord.” There is no other way! Come near to Him and lay hold upon Him by faith. Life lies there. Come to Him by a humble, tearful faith. Come at once! And, lastly, what must it be to be without the Lord? What must it be to be against the Lord? For it comes to that, “He that is not with Me,” He says, “is against Me”—to be forever *without* the Lord, banished from His love, light, life, peace, rest and joy! What a loss this will be!

What must it be to be forever against the Lord! Think of it—forever hating Jesus, forever plotting against Him, forever gnashing your teeth against Him—this is Hell, this is time infinite of misery, to be against the Lord of Love and Life and Light. Turn from this fatal course! Believe on Him—“Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.” Amen.

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# SLEEP NOT

## NO. 1022

**A SERMON  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Let us not sleep, as do others.”  
1 Thessalonians 5:6.***

WE do not usually sleep towards the things of this world. We rise up early, and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness for Mammon's sake. In this age of competition, most men are wide enough awake for their temporal interests. But so is it, partly through our being in this body, and partly through our dwelling in a sinful world, that we are all of us very apt to sleep concerning the interests of our *souls*. We drive like Jehu for this present world, but loiter for the world to come. Nothing so much concerns us as eternity, and yet nothing so little affects us. We work for the present world, and we play with the world to come.

Quaint old Quarles long ago likened us to roebucks as to the earth, and snails as to the heart. And then he oddly enough rebuked this fault in rugged verse—

***“Lord, when we leave the world and come to You,  
How dull, how slur, are we!  
How backward! How preposterous is the motion  
Of our ungainly devotion!  
Our thoughts are millstones, and our souls are lead,  
And our desires are dead.  
Our vows are fairly promised, faintly paid,  
Or broken, or not made.  
Is the road fair, we loiter. Clogged with mire,  
We stick or else retire.  
A lamb appeals a lion, and we fear  
Each bush we see a bear.  
When our dull souls direct our thoughts to You,  
As slow as snails are we.  
But at the earth we dart our winged desire,  
We burn—we burn like fire!”***

A piece of news about a fire in another continent makes a sensation in all our homes, but the fire that never shall be quenched is heard of almost without emotion. The discovery of a gold-field will affect half the markets in the world, and send a thrill through the public pulse. But when we speak of that blessed City where the streets are of gold, how coolly men take it all, regarding it as though it were a pretty fiction, and as if only the things which are seen were worthy of their notice. We sleep when heavenly things and eternal things are before us. Alas, that it should be so.

Even those choice spirits which have been awakened by the Holy Spirit, and not only awakened into life, but aroused into ardor, have to complain that their fervor very frequently is chilled. I was recommended to try a pillow of hops to obtain sleep during my late illness, but I find now that I want a waking pillow rather than a sleeping pillow. And I am of the same

mired as that ancient saint who preferred a roaring devil to a sleepy devil. How earnest, how diligent, how watchful, how heavenly ought we to be, but how much are we the reverse of all this.

When in this respect we would do good, evil is present with us. We would have our hearts like a furnace for Christ, and, behold, the coals refuse to burn. We would be living pillars of light and fire, but we rather resemble smoke and mist. Alas, alas, alas that when we would mount highest, our wings are clipped, and when we would serve God best, the evil heart of unbelief mars the labor. I knew it would be seasonable—I hoped it might be profitable if I spoke a little to you tonight, and to myself in so doing, concerning the need that there is that we shake ourselves from slumber, and leave the sluggard's couch.

I intend to take the text in reference, first, *to those who are born again from the dead*, and secondly, in reference to *those who are still in the terrors slumber of their sin*. And I shall gather my illustrations tonight from no remote region, but from the same Word of God, from which I take the text. The text says, "Let Us not sleep, as do others." We will mention some "others," whose histories are recorded in Scripture, who have slept to their own injury, and I pray you let them be warnings to you.

**I.** First, to those of you who are THE PEOPLE OF GOD, let me say, "Let us not sleep, as do others."

**1.** First, let us not sleep as *those disciples did who went with their Lord to the garden* and fell a slumbering while He was agonizing. Let us not be as the eight who slept at a distance, nor as the highly-favored three who were admitted into the more secret chamber of our Lord's woes, and were allowed to tread the precincts of the most holy place where He poured out His soul, and sweat, as it were, great drops of blood. He found them sleeping, and though He awakened them, they slept again and again. "What, could you not watch with Me one hour?" was His gentle expostulation.

They were slumbering for sorrow. Though our Lord might in our case make an excuse for us as He did for them—"The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak"—let us endeavor, by His Grace, not to need such an apology by avoiding their fault. "Let us not sleep, as do others."

But, beloved fellow Christians, are not the most of us sleeping as the Apostles did? Behold our Master's zeal for the salvation of the sons of men! Throughout all His life, He seemed to have no rest. From the moment when His ministry began He was ever toiling, laboring, denying Himself. It was His meat and His drink to do the will of Him that sent Him. Truly He might have taken for His life's motto—"Know you not that I *must* be about My Father's business?" So intent was He on saving souls that He counted not His life dear unto Him. He would lay it down, and that amidst circumstances of the greatest pain and ignominy—anything and everything would He do to seek and to save that which was lost.

Zeal for His chosen Church, which was God's House, had eaten Him up—for His people's sakes He could bear all the reproaches of them that reproached God, and though that reproach broke His heart, He still persevered and ceased not till salvation's work was done. He was incessant in toil and suffering, but what are we? There is our Lord, our great Exemplar, before us now. Behold Him in Gethsemane! Imagination readily sees

Him amid the olives. I might say that His whole life was pictured in that agony in the garden, for in a certain sense it was *all* an agony. It was all a sweating, not such as distils from those who purchase the staff of life by the sweat of their face, but such as He must feel who purchased life itself with the agony of His heart.

The Savior, as I see him throughout the whole of His ministry, appears to me on His knees pleading, and before His God agonizing—laying out His life for the sons of men. But, Brethren, do I speak harshly when I say that the disciples asleep are a fit emblem of our usual life? As compared, or rather, contrasted with our Master, I fear it is so. Where is our zeal for God? Where is our compassion for men? Do we ever feel the weight of souls as we ought to feel it? Do we ever melt in the presence of the terrors of God which we know to be coming upon others? Have we realized the passing away of an immortal spirit to the judgment bar of God? Have we felt pangs and throes of sympathy when we have remembered that multitudes of our fellow creatures have received, as their eternal sentence, the words—“Depart you cursed into the everlasting fire in Hell, prepared for the devil and his angels”?

Why, if these thoughts really possessed us, we should scarcely sleep! If they became as real to us as they were to Him, we should wrestle with God for souls as He did and become willing to lay down our lives, if by any means we might save some. I see by the eye of faith, at this moment, Jesus pleading at the Mercy Seat. “For Zion’s sake,” He says, “I will not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest.” And yet, we around Him lie asleep, without self-denying activity, and almost without prayer—missing opportunities—or when opportunities for doing good have been seized, using them with but a slothful hand, and doing the work of the Lord, if not deceitfully, yet most sluggishly.

Brethren, “let us not sleep, as do others.” If it is true that the Christian Church is to a great extent asleep, the more reason why *we* should be awake. And if it is true, as I fear it is, that we have, ourselves, slumbered and slept, the more reason now that we should arise and trim our lamps and go forth to meet the Bridegroom! Let us, from this moment, begin to serve our Master and His Church more nearly after the example which He Himself has set us in His consecrated life and blessed death. Let us not sleep then, as did the disciples at Gethsemane—

***“O You, who in the garden’s shade,  
Did wake Your weary ones again,  
Who slumbered at that fearful hour,  
Forgetful of Your pain!  
Bend over us now, as over them  
And set our sleep-bound spirits free.  
Nor leave us slumbering in the watch  
Our souls should keep with you!”***

**2.** A second picture we select from that portion of the Inspired Pages which tell us of *Samson*. Let us not sleep as that ancient Hebrew hero did, who, while he slept, lost his locks, lost his strength and by-and-by lost his liberty, lost his eyes, and ultimately lost his life. I have spoken under the first head of our slumbering in respect to *others*, but here I come to *ourselves*. In our slumbering with respect to ourselves, Samson is the sad picture of many professors. We are about to sketch a portrait of one whom

we knew in years gone by. He was “strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.”

Years ago, the man we picture—and it is no fancy portrait for we have seen many such—when the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, did mighty things. And we looked on and wondered, yes, we *envied* him, and we said, “Would God we had an hour of such strength as has fallen upon him.” He was the leader among the weak, and often infused courage into faint hearts. But where is he now? All our Israel knew him, for his name was a tower of strength. And our enemies knew him, too, for he was a valiant man in battle.

Where is this hero now? We hear little of him now in the fields of service where once he glorified his God and smote the enemies of Israel. We do not meet him now at the Prayer Meeting, or in the Sunday school, or at the Evangelist station. We hear nothing of his seeking for souls. Surely he has gone to sleep! He thinks that he has much spiritual goods laid up for many years, and he is now taking his rest. He has had his share, he says, of labor, and the time has come now for him to take a little ease.

It is our loss and his peril that he has allowed himself to fall into such a drowsy condition. O that we could bestir him!—

**“Break his bonds of sleep asunder—  
Rouse him with a peal of thunder.”**

Alas, carnal security is always a Delilah. It gives us many a dainty kiss, and lulls us into tranquil slumbers which we imagine to be God’s own peace, whereas the peace of fascination and of satanic enchantment is upon us. Yes, we have seen the good man—we could not doubt that he had been both good and great—yet we have seen him lying asleep. And, perhaps, some of us who have never been so distinguished or done so much, though, nevertheless, in our own small way we have done something for God, and yet we, too, lie in Delilah’s lap.

Blessed be His name who has not suffered us to lead quite a useless life! But possibly we are degenerating and beginning, now, to take things more easily than we did. In our fancied wisdom we half rebuke what we call our “juvenile zeal.” We are prudent now and wise—would God we were not prudent and not wise—and were as foolish as we used to be when we loved our God with zeal so great that nothing was hard and nothing was difficult! If we were called upon to do it for His name’s sake, we gladly did it.

Now, what do I see in Samson while he lies asleep in Delilah’s lap? I see peril of the deadliest sort. The Philistines are not asleep. When the good man slumbers and ceases to watch, Satan does not slumber, and temptations do not cease to waylay him. There are the Philistines looking on while you see the razor softly stealing over the champion’s head. Those locks, bushy and black as a raven, fall thickly on the ground! One by one the razor shears them all away till the Nazarite has lost the hair of his consecration.

I am terribly fearful lest this should happen to ourselves. Our strength lies in our *faith*. That is our Samsonian lock. Take that away and we are as weak as other men, yes, and weaker still—for Samson was weaker than the weakest when his hair was gone—though before that stronger than the strongest. By degrees, it may be, Satan is stealing away all our spiri-



tual strength. Oh, if it is my case, I shall come up into this pulpit and I shall preach to you, and shake myself, as I have done before, and perhaps expect to see sinners saved, but there will be none! And, possibly, some of you, also, when you awake a little, will go forth to preach in the streets or to seek after men's souls as you have done before, but, alas, you will find the Philistines will bind you, and that your strength has passed away while you slept.

Your glory has gone—gone amidst the deluding dreams which lulled you—gone not to come back except with bitterest grief, with eyes, perhaps, put out forever. Many backsliders will die thanking God, if ever their strength returns to them, and perhaps it never may till their dying hour. Oh, Brethren, warned by what has happened, not to Samson only, but to many of the Lord's greatest champions, "Let us not sleep, as do others."

**3.** Now we change the picture again. It is the same subject under other forms. You remember our Savior's parable concerning *the tares and the wheat*? There was an enclosure which was reserved for wheat only, but while men slept, the enemy came and sowed tares among the good corn. Now you who are members of the Church of Christ need not that I should enter into a full explanation of the parable. Neither is this the time, but it will suffice to say that when false doctrines and unholy practices have crept into a Church, the secret cause of the mischief has usually been that the Church, itself, was asleep.

Those who ought to have been watchmen, and to have guarded the field, slept—and so the enemy had ample time to enter and scatter tares among the wheat. Now my last illustration spoke to you of your own dangers, this ought to appeal to you with equal force because it concerns dangers incident to that which is dearest to you, I hope, of anything upon earth—namely, the Church of the living God. An unwatchful Church will soon become an unholy Church. A Church which does not carefully guard the Truth of God as it is in Jesus will become an unsound Church, and, consequently, a degenerate Church. It will grieve the Holy Spirit and cause Him to remove His power from the ministry and His Presence from the ordinances.

It will open the door for Satan, and he is quite sure to avail himself of every opportunity of doing mischief. I believe that the only way, after all, in any Church to purge out heresy in it is by having more of the inner life. By this fire in Zion shall the chaff be burned up. When the constitution of a man is thoroughly sound, it throws out many of those diseases which otherwise would have lingered in his system. And good physicians sometimes do not attempt to touch the local disease but they do their best to strengthen the general constitution—and when that is right, then the cure is worked.

So, here and there, there may be a defalcation in the one point—that of doctrine, or in the other—as to an affair of practice. And so it may be necessary to deal with the disordered limb of doctrine, or you may have to cut out the cancer of an evil custom. But as a rule, the main cure of a Church comes by strengthening its inner life. When we live near to Jesus, when we drink from the Fountain Head of eternal Truth and purity, when we become personally true and pure, then our watchfulness is, under God,

our safeguard—and heresy, false doctrine, and unclean profession are kept far away.

Sleeping guards invite the enemy. He who leaves his door unlocked asks the thief to enter. Watchfulness is always profitable and slothfulness is always dangerous. Members of this Church, I speak to you in particular, and forget for the moment that any others are present. We have enjoyed these many years the abiding dew of God's Spirit, shall we lose it? God has been in our midst and thousands of souls—tens of thousands of souls have been brought to Jesus! God has never taken away His hand, but it has been stretched out still—shall we, by sinful slumber sin away this blessing? I am jealous over you with a holy jealousy. Trembling has taken hold on me lest you lose your first love. "Hold fast," O Church, "that which you have received that no man take your crown."

Our sins will grieve the Spirit! Our sleepiness will vex the Holy One of Israel. Unless we wake up to more earnest prayerfulness and to closer fellowship with Christ, it may be we shall hear the sound such as Josephus tells us was observed at the destruction of Jerusalem, when there was heard the rustling of wings and the voice that said "Let Us go from here." O Lord, though our sins deserve that You should forsake us, yet turn not away from us, for Your mercy's sake! Tarry, Jehovah, for the sake of the precious blood! Tarry with us still! Depart not from us. We deserve that You should withdraw, but, oh, forsake not the people whom You have chosen!

By all the love You have manifested towards us, continue Your loving kindness to Your unworthy servants. Is not that your prayer, you that love the Church of God? I know it is, not for this Church only, but for all others where the power and Presence of God have been felt. Pray continually for the Church, but remember this is the practical exhortation arising out of it all—"Let us not sleep, as do others," lest in our case, too, the enemy come and mar the harvest of our Master by sowing tares among the wheat.

**4.** Only one other picture, and a very solemn one, still addressing myself to God's people. We are told that while the bridegroom tarried, *the virgins* who had gone out to meet Him slumbered and slept. O virgin Hearts! "Let us not sleep, as do others." When the cry was heard—"Behold, the Bridegroom comes," they were all slumbering, wise and foolish alike. O you wise virgins who have oil in your vessels and lamps, "sleep not, as do others," lest the midnight cry come upon you unaware. The Lord Jesus may come in the night. He may come in the heavens with exceeding great power and glory before the rising of another sun.

Or He may tarry awhile, and yet though it should seem to us to be long, He will come quickly, for one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. Suppose, however, He were to come tonight? If now, instead of going along to your homes and seeing once more the streets busy with traffic, the sign of the Son of Man should be revealed in the air because the King had come in His Glory, and His holy angels with Him, would you be ready? I press home the question. The Lord may suddenly come—are you ready? Are you ready? You who profess to be His saints—are your loins girt up, and your lamps trimmed?

Could you go in with Him to the supper, as guests who have long expected Him, and say, "Welcome, Welcome Son of God"? Have you not much to set in order? Are there not still many things undone? Would you not be afraid to hear the midnight cry? Happy are those souls who live habitually with Jesus, who have given themselves up completely to the power of His indwelling Spirit—who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. "They shall walk with Him in white for they are worthy." Wise are they who live habitually beneath the influence of the Second Advent, looking for and hastening unto the coming of the Son of God.

We would have our window opened towards Jerusalem. We would sit as upon our watchtower whole nights. We would be ready to go out of this Egypt at a moment's warning. We would be of that host of God who shall go out harnessed, in the time appointed, when the signal is given. God grant us Grace to be found in that number in the day of His appearing, but, "Let us not sleep, as do others." I might say, let us not sleep as we have done ourselves. God forgive us and arouse us from this good hour. I feel as if I do not want to go on to the second part of my subject at all, but would be quite content to stand here and speak to you who love the Lord.

Brothers and Sisters, we must have an awakening among us. I feel within my soul that I must be awakened myself, and my own necessities are, I believe, a very accurate gauge of what is wanted by the most of you. Shall our season of triumph, our march of victory, come to an end? Will you turn back after all that God has done for you? Will you limit the Holy One of Israel? Will you cease from the importunities of prayer? Will you pause in the labors of zeal? Will you bring dishonor upon Christ and upon His Cross? By the living God who sleeps not, neither is weary in His deeds of love, I beseech you, slumber not, and be not weary nor faint in your mind. "Be you steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

**II.** But I must pass on to the second part of our subject. I have now to speak TO THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE NOT CONVERTED. And if I felt as I ought to feel, it would be sorrowful work even to remember that any of you are yet unsaved. I like to see these little children here. I pray God they may grow up to fear and love Him, and that their young hearts may be given to our dear Lord and Master while they are yet boys and girls. But I overlook them just now, and speak to some of you who have had many years of intelligent hearing of the Word of God, and are still unsaved. Piti-able objects!

You do not think so. But I repeat the word, Piti-able objects! The tears which flood my eyes almost prevent my seeing you. You fancy you are very merry and happy, but you are to be pitied, for "the wrath of God abides on you." "He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed on the Son of God." You will soon be where no pity can help you and where the Lord Himself will *not* help you. May God give you ears to hear the words of affectionate warning which I address to you now! "Let us not sleep, as do others."

I beg you not to sleep, as did *Jonah*. He was in the vessel, you remember, when it was tossed with the tempest, and all the rest in the vessel were praying, but *Jonah* was asleep. Every man called upon his god ex-

cept the man who had caused the storm. He was the most in danger, but he was the most careless. The ship captain and mate, and crew all prayed, every man to his god, but Jonah carelessly slept on. Now, do not some of you here live in houses where they all pray but you? You have a godly mother, but are yourself godless.

John, you have a Christian father, and brothers and sisters, too, whom Christ has looked upon in love, and they pray for you continually. But the strange thing is that your soul is the only one in the house which remains unblest, and yet you are the only one who feels no anxiety or fear about the matter! There are many of us in this house who can honestly say that we would give anything we have if we could save your soul! We do not know what we would *not* do, but we know we would do all in our power if we could but reach your conscience and your heart.

I stand often in this pulpit almost wishing that I had never been born because of the burden and distress it brings upon my soul to think of some of you who will die and be lost forever! Lost, though you love to listen to the preacher! Lost, though you sometimes resolve to be saved! We are praying for you daily, but you—you are asleep! What do you do, while we are preaching, but criticize our words? You act as if we discoursed to you as a piece of display, and did not mean to plead as for life and death with you that you would escape from the wrath to come.

Observations will be made by the frivolous among you during the most solemn words, about someone's dress or personal appearance. Vain minds will be gadding upon the mountains of folly, while those who are not, by far, so immediately concerned, are troubled and have deep searching of heart about those very souls. I believe God is going to send a revival into this place. I have that conviction growing upon me, but it may be that though the gracious wave may sweep over the congregation, it will miss *you*. It has missed you up to this hour.

Around you all the door is wet, but you, like Gideon's fleece, are dry, and you sleep though the blessing comes not upon you—sleep though sleep involves a certain and approaching curse. O slumbering Jonah, in the name of the Host on High, I would say to you, "Awake you that sleep, and call upon your God. Perhaps He shall deliver you, and this great tempest shall yet be stayed." Yes, I would put it above a *perhaps*, for they that seek the Lord shall find Him, if they seek Him with full purpose of heart.

Let us change the illustration now, and take another. You remember *Solomon's sluggard*? What did he do? It was morning, and the sun was up—yes, the dawning of the day had passed some hours, and he had not yet gone forth to labor. There was a knock at his door and he opened his eyes a little. He listened and he said, "Leave me alone." "But will you never get up?" "Yes, I will be up soon. But I want a little more sleep: only a little." Then came another knock, for his master would have him in the field at work. But he turned over again, and he grumbled within himself, and said, "A little more slumber."

He slept hour after hour. Yes, but he did not mean to sleep *hours*. All he intended was to sleep five minutes. But minutes fly rapidly to men who dream. If at the first onset he had known that if he fell asleep he would slumber till noon, he would have been shocked at such abominable laziness.

ness. But what harm could it be just to turn over once more? Who would deny him another wink or two? Surely there can be no fault found with one more delicious doze? Now, there are in this congregation persons who have said to themselves many times, "That appeal is right. My conscience gives assent to that Gospel demand. It shall be attended to very soon. I must, however, enjoy a little pleasure first—not much. I do not mean to risk my soul another twelve months, but we will stay till next Sunday. Then I shall have got over certain engagements which now stand in my way."

Well, Sirs, you know, some of you, that it has been Sunday after Sunday, and then it has grown to be year after year! And still you are saying a little more sleep and a little more slumber. I met one the other day—I do not see him here tonight but I generally see him on the Sunday. I think he heard the first sermon I preached in London—that is many years ago now. And that man loves me—I know he does. And I can say I love him. But if he dies as he is, he is a lost man. He knows it. He has told me so, and he has said, "Pray for me." But, oh, what is the benefit of my praying for him if he never prays for himself?

It is grievous to know that many of you are in the same dreadful way of procrastinating and putting off. You would do anything to help the Church, too. And if you knew that I needed anything you would be among the first to do it for me, such is your kindness. You are kind to your minister, but you are cruel to your souls. You have held your soul over Hell's mouth for these twenty years by your continual delays and indecisions. Yet you never meant it. No, you thought long ago that you would have given your heart to Christ. One of these days I shall have to bury you, and it will be with no hope of your future happiness, for it has always been, "A little more sleep, and a little more slumber, and a little more folding of the hands," till your "poverty shall come upon you as one that travels, and your want like an armed man."

Alas, it shall be eternal poverty, and the armed man shall be the arch-destroyer from whom none can escape! O young man and young woman, do not procrastinate! Delay is the devil's great net, and it is filled with exceeding great fishes. Yet does not the net break. Oh that you could break through it! May God help you to do it, for to you I would say, "Let us not," in this respect, "sleep, as do others."

Again, the picture changes. Do you remember the story in the Acts of the Apostles of the *young man* who sat in the third loft while Paul was preaching? It could not have been a dull sermon, I should think. But Paul preached till midnight. That was rather long. You do not allow me such liberal time. And when Paul preached on, Eutychus went to sleep until he fell from the third loft, and was taken up dead. It is true that Paul prayed, and he was restored to life by a miracle. But I have known many an Eutychus fall dead under the Word who were never known to live again. I do not mean that I have known many go to sleep in the House of God and fall from the third loft.

I mean this, that they have heard the Word, and heard the Word till they have been preached into sleep of the deepest kind, and at last preached into Hell. If we, by our preaching do not wake you, we rock your

cradles, and make you more insensible every time we warn you. The most startling preaching in a certain time ceases to arouse the hearers. You know the great boiler factories over here in Southwark. I am told that when a man goes inside the boiler to hold the hammer, when they are fixing rivets, the sound of the copper deafens him so that he cannot bear it, it is so horrible. But, after he has been a certain number of months in that employment, he hardly notices the hammering—he does not care about it.

It is just so under the Word. People go to sleep under that which once was like a thunderbolt to them. As the blacksmith's dog will lie under the anvil where the sparks fly into his face, and yet go to sleep, so will many sinners sleep while the sparks of damnation fly into their faces. Horrible that it should be so! It would need an earthquake and a hurricane to move some of you! I wish they would come if they would stir you. But even such terrors would be of no avail—only the trumpet which will arouse the dead will ever awaken you.

Oh, dear Hearers, remember that to perish under the Gospel ministry is to perish with a vengeance. If I must be lost, let it be as a Zulu Kaffir, or as a Red Indian who has never listened to the Truth of God. But it is dreadful to go down to the pit with this as an aggravation—"You knew your duty, but you did it not. You heard the warning, but you would not receive it. The medicine was put to your lips, but you preferred to be diseased. The Bread was placed before you, and the Living Water, but you would not take them. Your blood is on your own heads."

Oh, may this never be said of any of us! May we never sleep under the Word as do others, lest we die in our sins. And, as I told you the other Sunday night, I think that is one of the most dreadful words in the Bible where Christ said twice, one time after another—"If you believe not that I am He, *you shall die in your sins.*" To die on a dunghill, or in a ditch, or on the rack, or on the gallows is nothing compared with this—to *die in your sins!* To die in your sins! And yet this will be your lot if you continue much longer to sleep, as do others.

Another picture. Not to detain you too long. Do you remember in David's life when he went with one of his mighty men at night into *Saul's* camp and found the king and his guards all asleep? There were certain men of war who ought to have watched at Saul's bed to take care of their master who lay in the trench, but no one was awake at all. And David and his friend went all among the sleepers, treading gently and softly lest they should wake one of them. By-and-by they came to the center of the circle where lay the king, with a cruse of water at his bolster, and his spear stuck in the ground.

Little did he know, as he slept so calmly there, that Abishai was saying to David—"Let me strike him. It shall be but this once." How easily that strong hand with that sharp javelin would have pinned the king to the ground! Only one stroke, and it would be done—and David's enemy would pursue him no more forever. I think I see you, O you sleeping Sinners, lying in the same imminent peril. At this moment the evil one is saying—"Let me smite him. I will smite him but this once. Let me prevent his hearing the Gospel this night. Let me thrust the javelin of unbelief into his

soul but this once. And then the harvest will be past, the summer will be ended, and he will not be saved.”

Slumbering Sinner, I would gladly shout as the thunder of God if thereby I could arouse you. Man, the knife is at your throat, and can you sleep? The spear is ready to smite you, and will you still dream? I think I see the angel of justice who has long been pursuing the sinner who is rejecting Christ, and he cries—“Let me smite him! He has had time enough. Let me smite him!”

Or, as Christ puts it in the parable, there has come one into the vineyard who has looked at you, the barren tree, and seen no fruit. And he has come these three years, and now he is saying—“Cut it down! Why let it cumber the ground?” O Mercy, stay the axe! O God, bid the enemy put away the spear, and let the sleeper wake, not in Hell, but still on mercy’s plains, where there is a Christ to forgive him and a Spirit to sanctify him! Imploringly, I, your Brother, beseech you tonight to turn unto the living God! Even now in this your day, attend to the things which make for your peace—

***“Today, a pardoning God  
Will hear the suppliant pray.  
Today, a Savior’s cleansing blood  
Will wash your guilt away.  
But Grace so dearly bought  
If yet you will despise,  
Your fearful doom with vengeance fraught,  
Will fill you with surprise.”***

The last picture is this (may it never be seen in you)—there went once into a tent, which he thought to be friendly, a mighty man who had fought a battle and lost the day. Hot of foot and full of fear, Sisera came into the tent of Jael to ask for water, and she gave him milk. She brought forth butter in a lordly dish. He drank, and then, all weary, he threw himself along in the tent. He is a photograph of many ungodly men who have gone where they thought they had friends. For sinners think *sinner*s their friends, and think *sin* their friend—and they have asked for pleasure, and they have had it.

And, now, after having had their fill, and eaten butter in a lordly dish, they are tonight in contentment, sleeping in supposed security. They have gone into the house of the Evil One to find pleasure, and they are going there again tonight, and they will continue there, and try to find rest in the house of their enemies. Sometimes it is the house of the strange woman. Often it is the settle of the drunkard, or the chair of the scorner, where men think to rest in peace. Oh, hark you, Man, and beware! Fly from the ways of the destroyer—fly from the haunt of the strange woman—as for your very life!

Fly from every den of sin, for lo, she comes stealthily, the tent pin is in her left hand, and in her right hand the workman’s hammer. Many mighty has she slain before you, for she hunts for the precious life, and her chambers lead down to death. If you sleep on but another night, or even another hour, the destroyer may have done the deed, and you may be fastened to the earth forever—the victim of your own delusions. I may be in error, but I think I speak to some man tonight who must now immediately change his ways, or else the jaws of Hell will close upon him. I do not de-

sire to speak my own words, or my own thoughts, but to speak as the Divine wind blows through my soul.

And I think I am warning someone tonight of whom, if he turns not, it will soon be written, as of another in the Book of Proverbs, “He goes after her straightway, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks, till a dart strike through his liver. As a bird hastens to the snare, and knows not that it is for his life.” In the name of the Ever Blessed and Most Merciful, “turn! Sinner, turn ! Why will you die?” Your course is destruction, and is near its end. Awake! Why do you sleep? Sleep to others is dangerous. To you it is *damnable*. Awake, arise, or be forever ruined. May God’s Grace bestir you!

Some of you tonight are like Lot and his daughters in the burning city. You must flee. You must flee at once out of Sodom or you will perish in it. Behold, we would put our hand upon you tonight, and press you to flee, the Lord being merciful unto you. His servants and His Spirit constrain you to make haste. Linger not! Look not back! Hesitate not! To your knees! To your knees! “Seek you the Lord while He may be found! Call upon him while He is near.” To the Cross! To the Cross! *There* is your shelter—the mountain where the only refuge can be found from the vengeance of God.

Behold the wounds of Jesus, God’s Beloved Son given for the guilty, slaughtered for the sinful—

***“There is life in a look at the crucified One!  
There is life at this moment for you!”***

—and for all who look. But it may be that if this night you look not to Jesus, His Cross may never appear before your eyes again—for they will be sealed in death. Before long, Jael’s tent pin shall have passed through Sisera’s skull—the sin shall have destroyed the sinner—the sin that is unto death shall have shut up the spirit in despair. Oh, may God, who is mighty to save, turn you to Himself at this moment!

“Sound the trumpet in Zion: sound an alarm in My holy mountain,” seems to ring in my ears. And I would gladly sound that alarm to God’s saints, and to sinners, too. May He call many by His Grace, and awaken us all. And His shall be the glory forever and ever! Amen.

### **PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Thessalonians 5.**

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307



# **AWAKE! AWAKE!**

## **NO. 163**

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 15, 1857,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

*“Therefore let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober.”  
1 Thessalonians 5:6.*

WHAT sad things sin has done. This fair world of ours was once a glorious temple, every pillar of which reflected the goodness of God and every part of which was a symbol of good but sin has spoiled and marred all the metaphors and figures that might be drawn from earth. It has so deranged the Divine economy of nature that those things which were matchless pictures of virtue, goodness and Divine plenitude of blessing have now become the figures and representatives of sin.

’Tis strange to say but it is strangely true, that the very best gifts of God have by the sin of men become the worst pictures of man’s guilt. Behold the flood, breaking forth from its fountains—it rushes across the fields, bearing plenty on its bosom. It covers them awhile and then it does subside and leaves upon the plain a fertile deposit into which the farmer shall cast his seed and reap an abundant harvest. One would have called the breaking forth of water a fine picture of the plenitude of Providence, the magnificence of God’s goodness to the human race. But we find that sin has appropriated that figure to itself. The beginning of sin is like the breaking forth of waters.

See the fire—how kindly God has bestowed upon us that element to cheer us in the midst of winter’s frosts. Fresh from the snow and from the cold we rush to our household fire and there by our hearth we warm our hands and glad we are. Fire is a rich picture of the Divine influences of the Spirit, a holy emblem of the zeal of the Christian. But alas, sin has touched this and the tongue is called “a fire,” “it is set on fire of Hell,” we are told and it is evidently so often when it utters blasphemy and slanders. Jude lifts up his hand and exclaims, when he looks upon the evils caused by sin, “Behold how great a matter a little fire kindles.”

And then there is sleep, one of the sweetest of God’s gifts, fair sleep—

*“Tired nature’s sweet restorer, balmy sleep.”*

God has selected sleep as the very figure for the repose of the blessed. “They that sleep in Jesus,” says the Scripture. David puts it among the peculiar gifts of grace—“So He gives His Beloved sleep.” But alas, sin could not let even this alone. Sin did override even this celestial metaphor and though God Himself had employed sleep to express the excellence of the state of the Blessed, yet sin must have even this profaned, before itself can be expressed. Sleep is employed in our text as a picture of a sinful

condition. "Therefore let us not sleep as do others but let us watch and be sober."

With that introduction I shall proceed at once to the text. The "sleep" of the text is *an evil to be avoided*. In the second place, the word "therefore" is employed to show us that there are *certain reasons for the avoiding of this sleep*. And since the Apostle speaks of this sleep with sorrow, it is to teach us that there are some, whom he calls "others," *over whom it is our business to lament*, because they sleep and do not watch and are not sober.

I. We commence, then, in the first place, by endeavoring to point out the EVIL WHICH THE APOSTLE INTENDS TO DESCRIBE UNDER THE TERM SLEEP. The Apostle speaks of "others" who are asleep. If you turn to the original you will find that the word translated "others" has a more emphatic meaning. It might be rendered (and Horne so renders it), "the refuse"—"Let us not sleep as do *the refuse*"—the common herd, the ignoble spirits—those that have no mind above the troubles of earth.

"Let us not sleep as do the others," the base ignoble multitude who are not alive to the high and celestial calling of a Christian. "Let us not sleep as do the refuse of mankind." And you will find that the word "sleep," in the original, has also a more emphatic sense. It signifies a *deep* sleep, a profound slumber. And the Apostle intimates that the refuse of mankind are now in a profound slumber.

We will now try to explain what he meant by it. First the Apostle meant that the refuse of mankind *are in a state of deplorable ignorance*. They that sleep know nothing. There may be merriment in the house but the sluggard shares not in its gladness. There may be death in the family but no tear wets the cheek of the sleeper. Great events may have transpired in the world's history but he knows not of them. An earthquake may have tumbled a city from its greatness, or war may have devastated a nation, or the banner of triumph may be waving in the gale and the clarions of his country may be saluting us with victory—but he knows nothing—

***"Their labor and their love are lost  
Alike unknowing and unknown."***

The sleeper knows not anything. Behold how the refuse of mankind are alike in this! Of some things they know much but of spiritual things they know nothing. Of the Divine Person of the adorable Redeemer they have no idea. Of the sweet enjoyments of a life of piety they cannot even make a guess. Towards the high enthusiasms and the inward raptures of the Christian they cannot mount. Talk to them of Divine doctrines and they are to them a riddle. Tell them of sublime experiences and they seem to them to be enthusiastic fancies. They know nothing of the joys that are to come.

And alas, for they are oblivious of the evils which shall happen to them if they go on in their iniquity. The masses of mankind are ignorant. They know not—they have not—the knowledge of God. They have no fear of Jehovah before their eyes. Blindfolded by the ignorance of this world they march on through the paths of lust to that sure and dreadful end—the ev-

erlasting ruin of their souls. Brethren, if we are saints, let us not be ignorant as are others. Let us search the Scriptures, for in them we have eternal life, for they do testify of Jesus. Let us be diligent. Let not the Word depart out of our hearts. Let us meditate therein both day and night that we may be as the tree planted by the rivers of water. "Let us not sleep as do others."

Again, sleep pictures *a state of insensibility*. There may be much knowledge in the sleeper. But it is hidden, stored away in his mind. It might be well developed if he but could be awakened. But he has no sensibility, he knows nothing. The burglar has broken into the house—the gold and silver are both in the robber's hands. The child is being murdered by the cruelty of him that has broken in but the father slumbers. Though all the gold and silver that he has and his most precious child are in the hands of the destroyer he is unconscious. How can he feel, when sleep has utterly sealed his senses?

Lo, in the street there is mourning. A fire has just now burned down the habitation of the poor and houseless beggars are in the street. They are crying at his window and asking him for help. But he sleeps and what does he care though the night is cold and though the poor are shivering in the blast? He has no consciousness. He feels not for them. There, take the title deed of his estate and burn the document. There, set light to his farmyard! Burn up all that he has in the field, kill his horses and destroy his cattle. Let now the fire of God descend and burn up his sheep. Let the enemy fall upon all that he has and devour it. He sleeps as soundly as if he were guarded by the angel of the Lord.

Such are the refuse of mankind. But alas, that we should have to include in that word "refuse" the great bulk thereof! How few there are that feel *spiritually*! They feel acutely enough any injury to their body, or to their estate but alas, for their *spiritual* concerns they have no sensation whatever! They are standing on the brink of Hell but they tremble not. The anger of God is burning against them but they fear not. The sword of Jehovah is unsheathed but terror does not seize upon them. They proceed with the merry dance, they drink the bowl of intoxicating pleasure.

They revel and they riot—still do they sing the lascivious song—yes, they do more than this. In their vain dreams they do defy the Most High, whereas if they were once awakened to the consciousness of their state, the marrow of their bones would melt and their heart would dissolve like wax. They are asleep, indifferent and unconscious. Do what you may to them. Let everything be swept away that is hopeful—that might give them cheer when they come to die—they feel it not. For how should a sleeper feel anything? "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others but let us watch and be sober."

Again—the sleeper *cannot defend himself*. Behold yonder prince. He is a strong man, yes, and an armed strong man. He has entered into the tent. He is wearied. He has drunk the woman's milk. He has eaten her "butter in a lordly dish." He casts himself down upon the floor and he slumbers. And now she draws near. She has with her, her hammer and her nail.

Warrior! You could break her into atoms with one blow of your mighty arm but you cannot now defend yourself. The nail is at his ear, the woman's hand is on the hammer and the nail has pierced his skull. For when he slept he was defenseless. The banner of Sisera had waved victoriously over mighty foes. But now it is stained by a woman. Tell it, tell it, tell it! The man—who when he was awake made nations tremble—dies by the hand of a feeble woman when he sleeps.

Such are the refuse of mankind. They are asleep. They have no power to resist temptation. Their moral strength is departed, for God is departed from them. There is the temptation to lust. They are men of sound principle in business matters and nothing could make them swerve from honesty—but lasciviousness *destroys* them. They are taken like a bird in a snare, they are caught in a trap, they are utterly subdued. Or maybe it is another way that they are conquered. They are men that would not do an unchaste act, or even think a lascivious thought. They scorn it. But they have another weak point—they are entrapped by the glass. They are taken and they are destroyed by drunkenness.

Or, if they can resist these things and are inclined neither to looseness of fire nor to excess in living, yet maybe covetousness enters into them by the name of prudence. It slides into their hearts and they are led to grasp after treasure and to heap up gold. Even though that gold is wrung out of the veins of the poor and though they do suck the blood of the orphan. They seem to be unable to resist their passion. How many times have I been told by men, "I cannot help it, Sir, do what I may, I resolve, I re-resolve but I do the same. I am defenseless. I cannot resist the temptation!" Oh, of course you cannot while you are asleep. O Spirit of the living God, wake up the sleeper! Let sinful sloth and presumption both be startled, lest haply Moses should come their way and finding them asleep should hang them on the gallows of infamy forever!

Now, I come to give another meaning of the word "sleep." I hope there have been some of my congregation who have been tolerably easy while I have described the first three things, because they have thought that they were exempt in those matters. But sleep signifies also *inactivity*. The farmer cannot plow his field in his sleep, neither can he cast the grain into the furrows, nor watch the clouds, nor reap his harvest. The sailor cannot reef his sail, or direct his ship across the ocean while he slumbers. It is not possible that on the Exchange, or the mart, or in the house of business men should transact their affairs with their eyes fast closed in slumber.

It would be a singular thing to see a nation of sleepers. For that would be a nation of idle men. They must all starve. They would produce no wealth from the soil, they would have nothing for their backs, nothing for clothing and nothing for food. But how many we have in the world that are inactive through sleep! Yes, I say *inactive*. I mean by that, that they are active enough in one direction but they are inactive in the right. Oh, how many men there are that are totally inactive in anything that is for, or

for the welfare of their fellow creatures? For themselves, they can “rise up early and sit up *God’s glory* late and eat the bread of carefulness.”

For their children, which is an alias for themselves, they can toil until their fingers ache—they can weary themselves until their eyes are red in their sockets—till the brain whirls and they can do no more. But for God they can do nothing. Some say they have no time, others frankly confess that they have no will—for God’s Church they would not spend an hour—while for this world’s pleasure they could lay out a month. For the poor they cannot spend their time and their attention. They may haply have time to spare for themselves and for their own amusement but for holy works, for deeds of charity and for pious acts they declare they have no leisure. The truth is, they have no will.

Behold how many professing Christians there are that are asleep in this sense! They are inactive. Sinners are dying in the street by hundreds. Men are sinking into the flames of eternal wrath. But they fold their arms. They pity the poor perishing sinner but they do nothing to show that their pity is real. They go to their places of worship, they occupy their well-cushioned easy pew. They wish the minister to feed them every Sabbath. But there is never a child taught in the Sunday-School by them. There is never a tract distributed at the poor man’s house. There is never a deed done which might be the means of saving souls.

We call them good men, some of them we even elect to the office of deacons and no doubt good men they are. They are as good as Anthony meant to say that Brutus was honorable, when he said, “So are we all, all honorable men.” So are we all, all good, if they are good. But these are good and in some sense—good for nothing. For they just sit and eat the bread but they do not plow the field. They drink the wine but they will not raise the vine that does produce it. They think that they are to live unto themselves, forgetting that, “no man lives unto himself and no man dies unto himself.”

Oh, what a vast amount of sleeping we have in all our Churches and Chapels. For truly if our Churches were once awake—so far as material things are concerned—there are enough converted men and women and there is enough talent with them and enough money with them and enough time with them, God granting the abundance of His Holy Spirit, which He would be sure to do if they were all zealous—there is enough to preach the Gospel in every corner of the earth. The Church does not need to stop for want of instruments, or for want of agencies.

We have everything now except the will. We have all that we may expect God to give for the conversion of the world, except just a heart for the work and the Spirit of God poured out into our midst. Oh, Brethren, “let us not sleep as do others.” You will find the “others” in the Church and in the world—“the refuse” of both are sound asleep.

Before, however, I can dismiss this first point of explanation, it is necessary for me just to say that the Apostle himself furnishes us with part of an exposition. The second sentence, “let us watch and be sober,” implies that the reverse of these things is the sleep which he means. “Let us

watch.” There are many that never watch. They never watch against sin. They never watch against the temptations of the enemy. They do not watch against themselves, nor against “the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye and the pride of life.” They do not watch for opportunities to do good, they do not watch for opportunities to instruct the ignorant, to confirm the weak, to comfort the afflicted, to succor them that are in need.

They do not watch for opportunities of glorifying Jesus, or for times of communion. They do not watch for the Promises. They do not watch for answers to their prayers. They do not watch for the second coming of our Lord Jesus. These are the refuse of the world—they watch not, because they are asleep. But let us watch—so shall we prove that we are not slumberers.

Again—let us “*be sober.*” Albert Barnes says this most of all refers to abstinence, or temperance in eating and drinking. Calvin says not so—this refers more especially to the spirit of moderation in the things of the world. Both are right. It refers to both. There are many that are not sober. They sleep because they are not so. For insobriety leads to sleep. They are not sober—they are drunkards, they are gluttons. They are not sober—they cannot be content to do a little business—they want to do a great deal. They are not sober—they cannot carry on a trade that is sure—they must speculate. They are not sober—if they lose their property, their spirit is cast down within them and they are like men that are drunken with wormwood.

If on the other hand, they get rich, they are not sober—they so set their affections upon things on earth that they become intoxicated with pride, because of their riches. They become purse-proud and need to have the heavens lifted up higher, lest their heads should dash against the stars. How many people there are that are not sober! Oh, I might especially urge this precept upon you at this time, my dear Friends. We have hard times coming and the times are hard enough now. Let us be sober. The fearful panic in America has mainly arisen from disobedience to this command—“Be sober,” and if the professors of America had obeyed this Commandment and had been sober, the panic might at any rate have been mitigated, if not totally avoided.

Now, in a little time you who have any money laid by will be rushing to the bank to have it drawn out, because you fear that the bank is tottering. You will not be sober enough to have a little trust in your fellow men and help them through their difficulty and so be a blessing to the commonwealth. And you who think there is anything to be had by lending your money at usury will not be content with lending what you have got but you will be extorting and squeezing your poor debtors that you may get the more to lend. Men are seldom content to get rich slowly but he that hastens to be rich shall not be innocent.

Take care, my Brethren—if any hard times should come in London, if commercial houses should smash and banks be broken—take care to be sober. There is nothing will get us over a panic so well as everyone of us trying to keep our spirits up—just rising in the morning and saying,

“Times are very hard and today I may lose my all. But fretting will not help it, so just let me set a bold heart against hard sorrow and go to my business. The wheels of trade may stop. I bless God, my treasure is in Heaven. I cannot be bankrupt. I have set my affections on the things of God. I cannot lose those things. There is my jewel. There is my heart!”

Why, if all men could do that, it would tend to create public confidence. But the cause of the great ruin of many men is the covetousness of all men and the fear of some. If we could all go through the world with confidence and with boldness and with courage, there is nothing in the world that could avert the shock so well. I suppose the shock must come. And there are many men now present who are very respectable, who may expect to be beggars before long. Your business is so to put your trust in Jehovah that you may be able to say, “Though the earth be removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, God is my refuge and strength a very present help in trouble therefore will I not fear.”

And doing that, you will be creating more probabilities for the avoidance of your own destruction than by any other means which the wisdom of man can dictate to you. Let us not be intemperate in business, as are others. But let us be awake. “Let us not sleep”—not be carried away by the sleepwalking of the world, for what is it better than that—activity and greed in sleep? “But let us watch and be sober.” Oh, Holy Spirit help us to watch and be sober.

**II.** Thus I have occupied a great deal of time in explaining the first point—What was the sleep which the Apostle meant? And now you will notice that the word “therefore” implies that there are CERTAIN REASONS FOR THIS. I shall give you these reasons. And if I should cast them somewhat into a dramatic form, you must not wonder. They will the better, perhaps, be remembered.

“Therefore,” says the Apostle, “let us not sleep.” We shall first look at the chapter itself for our reasons. The first reason precedes the text. The Apostle tells us that, “we are all the children of *the light* and of the day. *Therefore* let us not sleep as do others. I marvel not when, as I walk through the streets after nightfall, I see every shop closed and every blind drawn. And I see the light in the upper room significant of retirement to rest. I wonder not that a half an hour later my footsteps startles me and I find none in the streets. Should I ascend the staircase and look into the sleepers’ placid countenances, I should not wonder.

For it is night, the proper time for sleep. But if some morning at eleven or twelve o’clock, I should walk down the streets and find myself alone and notice every shop closed and every house shut up and hearken to no noise, I should say, “‘Tis strange, ‘tis passing strange, ‘tis wonderful. What are these people at? ‘Tis daytime and yet they are all asleep.” I should be inclined to seize the first rapper I could find and give a double knock and rush to the next door and ring the bell and so all the way down the street. Or go to the police station and wake up what men I found there and bid them make a noise in the street.

Or go for the fire engine and bid the firemen rattle down the road and try to wake these people up. For I should say to myself, "There is some pestilence here, the angel of death must have flown through these streets during the night and killed all these people, or else they would have been sure to have been awake." Sleep in the daytime is utterly incongruous. "Well, now," says the Apostle Paul, "you people of God, it is daytime with you. The Sun of Righteousness has risen upon you with healing in His wings. The light of God's Spirit is in your conscience. You have been brought out of darkness into marvelous light. For you to be asleep, for a Church to slumber is like a city in bed in the day, like a whole town slumbering when the sun is shining. It is untimely and unseemly."

And now, if you look at the text again, you will find there is another argument. "Let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love." So, then, it seems, it is wartime. And therefore, again, it is unseemly to slumber. There is a fortress yonder, far away in India. A troop of those abominable Sepoys have surrounded it. Bloodthirsty Hellhounds. If they once gain admission they will rend the mother and her children and cut the strong man in pieces. They are at the gates—their cannons are loaded—their bayonets thirst for blood and their swords are hungry to slay.

Go through the fortress and the people are all asleep. There is the warden on the tower, nodding on his bayonet. There is the captain in his tent, with his pen in his hand and his dispatches before him, asleep at the table. There are soldiers lying down in their tents ready for the war but all slumbering. There is not a man to be seen keeping watch. There is not a sentry there. All are asleep. Why, my Friends, you would say, "Whatever is the matter here? What can it be? Has some great wizard been waving his wand and put a spell upon them all? Or are they all mad? Have their minds fled?"

"Surely, to be asleep in wartime is indeed outrageous, Here, take down that trumpet, go close up to the captain's ear and blow a blast and see if it does not awake him in a moment. Just take away that bayonet from the soldier that is asleep on the walls and give him a sharp prick with it and see if he does not awake." But surely, surely, nobody can have patience with people asleep when the enemy surround the walls and are thundering at the gates.

Now, Christians, this is your case. Your *life* is a life of warfare—the world, the flesh and the devil are a hellish trinity and your poor nature is wretched mud work behind which to be entrenched. Are you asleep? Asleep? When Satan has fireballs of lust to hurl into the windows of your eyes? When he has arrows of temptation to shoot into your heart? When he has snares into which to trap your feet? Asleep? When he has undermined your very existence and when he is about to apply the match with which to destroy you, unless Sovereign Grace prevents? Oh, sleep not, soldier of the Cross! To sleep in wartime is utterly inconsistent. Great Spirit of God forbid that we should slumber!



But now, leaving the chapter itself, I will give you one or two other reasons that will, I trust, move Christian people to awake out of their sleep. "*Bring out your dead! Bring out your dead! Bring out your dead!*" Then comes the ringing of a bell. What is this? Here is a door marked with a great white cross. Lord, have mercy upon us! All the houses down that street seem to be marked with that white death cross. What is this? Here is the grass growing in the streets. Here are Cornhill and Cheapside deserted! No one is found treading a solitary pavement. There is not a sound to be heard but those horse hoofs, like the hoofs of death's pale horse upon the stones, the ringing of that bell that sounds the death knell to many and the rumbling of the wheels of that cart and the dreadful cry, "Bring out your dead! Bring out your dead! Bring out your dead!"

Do you see that house? A physician lives there. He is a man who has great skill and God has lent him wisdom. A little while ago, while in his study, God was pleased to guide his mind and he discovered the secret of the plague. He was plague-smitten himself and ready to die but he lifted the blessed vial to his lips and he drank a draught and cured himself. Do you believe what I am about to tell you? Can you imagine it? That man has the prescription that will heal all these people. He has it in his pocket. He has the medicine which, if once distributed in those streets, would make the sick rejoice and put that dead man's bell away.

And he is asleep! He is asleep! He is asleep! O you Heavens! Why do you not fall and crush the wretch? O earth! How could you bear this demon upon your bosom? Why not swallow him up? He has the medicine! He is too lazy to go and proclaim the remedy. He has the cure and is too idle to go out and administer it to the sick and the dying! No, my Friends, such an inhuman wretch could not exist! But I can see him here today. There you are! You know the world is sick with the plague of sin and you yourself have been cured by the remedy which has been provided. You are asleep, inactive, loitering. You do not go forth to—

***"Tell to others round,  
What a dear Savior you have found."***

There is the precious Gospel—you do not go and put it to the lips of a sinner. There is the all-precious blood of Christ—you never go to tell the dying what they must do to be saved. The world is perishing with worse than plague—and you are idle! And you are a minister of the Gospel. And you have taken that holy office upon yourself. And you are content to preach twice on a Sunday and once on a weekday and there is no remonstrance within you. You never desire to attract the multitudes to hear you preach. You had rather keep your empty benches and study propriety, than you would once, at the risk of appearing over-zealous, draw the multitude and preach the Word to them.

You are a writer—you have great power in writing. You devote your talents alone to light literature, or to the production of other things which may furnish amusement but which cannot benefit the soul. You know the Truth but you do not tell it out. Yonder mother is a converted woman—you have children and you forget to instruct them in the way to Heaven.

You yonder are a young man, having nothing to do on the Sabbath-Day and there is the Sunday-School. You do not go to tell those children the sovereign remedy that God has provided for the care of sick souls. The death-bell is ringing even now.

Hell is crying out, howling with hunger for the souls of men. "Bring out the sinner! Bring out the sinner! Bring out the sinner! Let him die and be damned!" And there are you professing to be a Christian and doing nothing which might make you the instrument of saving souls—never putting out your hand to be the means in the hand of the Lord of plucking sinners as brands from the burning! Oh, may the blessing of God rest on you, to turn you from such an evil way that you may not sleep as do others but may watch and be sober. The world's imminent danger demands that we should be active and not be slumbering.

Hark how the mast creaks! See the sails there, rent to ribbons. Breakers ahead! She will be on the rocks directly. Where is the captain? Where is the boatswain? Where are the sailors? Ahoy there! Where are you? Here's a storm come on! Where are you? You are down in the cabin. And there is the captain in a soft sweet slumber. There is the man at the wheel, assound asleep as ever he can be. And there are all the sailors in their hammocks. What? And the breakers ahead? What? The lives of two hundred passengers in danger and here are these brutes asleep? Kick them out. What is the good of letting such men as these be sailors, especially in such a time as this?

Why, out with you! If you had gone to sleep in fine weather we might have forgiven you. Up with you, Captain! What have you been doing? Are you mad? But hark! The ship has struck—she will be down in a moment. Now you will work, will you? Now you will work when it is of no use and when the shrieks of drowning women shall toll you into Hell for your most accursed negligence in not having taken care of them. Well that is very much like a great many of us, in these times, too.

This proud ship of our commonwealth is reeling in a storm of sin. The very mast of this great nation is creaking under the hurricane of vice that sweeps across the noble vessel. Every timber is strained and God help the good ship, or alas, none can save her. And who are her captain and her sailors, but ministers of God, the professors of religion? These are they to whom God gives grace to steer the ship. "You are the salt of the earth." You preserve and keep it alive, O children of God. Are you asleep in the storm? Are you slumbering now? If there were no dens of vice, if there were no harlots, if there were no houses of profanity, if there were no murders and no crimes, oh, you that are the salt of the earth—you might sleep.

But today the sin of London cries in the ears of God. This behemoth city is covered with crime and God is vexed with her. And are we asleep, doing nothing? Then God forgive us! But surely, of all the sins He ever does forgive, this is the greatest, the sin of slumbering when a world is damning—the sin of being idle when Satan is busy, devouring the souls of

men. "Brethren let us not sleep" in such times as these. For if we do, a curse must fall upon us, horrible to bear.

There is a poor prisoner in a cell. His hair is all matted over his eyes. A few weeks ago the judge put on the black cap and commanded that he should be taken to the place from where he came and hung by the neck until dead. The poor wretch has his heart broken within him, while he thinks of the pinion, of the gallows and of the drop and of after-death. Oh, who can tell how his heart is rent and racked while he thinks of leaving all and going he knows not where? There is a man there, sound asleep upon a bed. He has been asleep there these two days and under his pillow he has that prisoner's free pardon. I would horsewhip that scoundrel, horsewhip him soundly, for making that poor man have two days of extra misery.

Why, if I had had that man's pardon, I would have been there. If I rode on the wings of lightning to get to him I should have thought the fastest train that ever run but slow, if I had so sweet a message to carry and such a poor heavy heart to carry it to. But that man, that brute, is sound asleep, with a free pardon under his pillow, while that poor wretch's heart is breaking with dismay! Ah, do not be too hard with him—he is here today. Side by side with you this morning there is sitting a poor penitent sinner. God has pardoned him and intends that you should tell him that good news. He sat by your side last Sunday and he wept all the sermon through, for he felt his guilt.

If you had spoken to him then, who can tell? He might have had comfort but there he is now—you do not tell him the good news. Do you leave that to me to do? Ah, Sirs, but you cannot serve God by proxy. What the minister does is nothing to you. You have your own personal duty to do and God has given you a precious Promise. It is now on your heart. Will you not turn round to your neighbor and tell him that Promise? Oh, there is many an aching heart that aches because of our idleness in telling the good news of this salvation. "Yes," says one of my members, who always comes to this place on a Sunday and looks out for young men and young women whom he has seen in tears the Sunday before and who brings many into the Church, "yes, I could tell you a story."

He looks a young man in the face and says, "Haven't I seen you here a great many times?" "Yes." "I think you take a deep interest in the service, do you not?" "Yes, I do—what makes you ask me that question?" "Because I looked at your face last Sunday and I thought there was something at work with you." "Oh, Sir," he says, "nobody has spoken to me ever since I have been here till now and I want to say a word to you. When I was at home with my mother, I used to think I had some idea of religion but I came away and was bound apprentice with an ungodly lot of youths and have done everything I ought not to have done. And now, Sir, I begin to weep, I begin to repent. I wish to God that I knew how I might be saved! I hear the word preached, Sir but I want something spoken personally to me by somebody."

And he turns round, he takes him by the hand and says, "My dear young Brother, I am so glad I spoke to you. It makes my poor old heart rejoice to think that the Lord is doing something here still. Now, do not be cast down. For you know, 'This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.'" The young man puts his handkerchief to his eyes and after a minute, he says, "I wish you would let me call and see you, Sir." "Oh, you may," he says. He talks with him, he leads him onward and at last by God's grace the happy youth comes forward and declares what God has done for his soul and owes his salvation as much to the humble instrumentality of the man that helped him as he could do to the preaching of the minister.

Beloved Brethren, the bridegroom comes! Awake! Awake! The earth must soon be dissolved and the Heavens must melt! Awake! Awake! O Holy Spirit arouse us all and keep us awake!

**III.** And now I have no time for the last point and therefore I shall not detain you, suffice me to say in warning, there is AN EVIL HERE LAMENTED.

There are some that are asleep and the Apostle mourns it. My fellow Sinner, you that are this day unconverted, let me say six or seven sentences to you and you shall depart. Unconverted man! Unconverted woman! You are asleep today, as they that sleep on the top of the mast in time of a storm. You are asleep as he that sleeps when the floods are out and when his house is undermined and being carried down the stream far out to sea. You are asleep as he who in the upper chamber, when his house is burning and his own locks are singeing in the fire—he knows not the devastation around him.

You are asleep—asleep as he that lies upon the edge of a precipice with death and destruction beneath him. One single start in his sleep would send him over but he knows it not. You are asleep this day. And the place where you sleep has so frail a support that when once it breaks you shall fall into Hell—and if you wake not till then, what a waking it will be!

"In Hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment." And he cried for a drop of water but it was denied him. "He that believes in the Lord Jesus Christ and is baptized, shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned." This is the Gospel. Believe in Jesus and you shall "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

# THE ENCHANTED GROUND

## NO. 64

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, FEBRUARY 3, 1856,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

***“Therefore let us not sleep, as do others. But let us watch and be sober.”  
1 Thessalonians 5:6.***

As the spiritual guide of the flock of God along the intricate mazes of experience, it is the duty of the Gospel minister to point out every turning of the road to Heaven, to speak concerning its dangers or its privileges, and to warn any whom he may suspect to be in a peculiarly perilous position. Now there is a portion of the road which leads from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City, which has in it, perhaps, more dangers than any other portion of the way. It does not abound with lions. There are no dragons in it. It has no dark woods and no deep pitfalls. Yet more pilgrims have been destroyed in that portion of the road than anywhere else! Not even Doubting Castle, with all its host of bones, can show as many who have been slain there. It is the part of the road called the Enchanted Ground. The great geographer, John Bunyan, well pictured it when he said—“I then saw in my dream, that they went on till they came into a certain country, whose air naturally tended to make one drowsy, if he came a stranger into it. And here Hopeful began to be very dull and heavy of sleep: therefore he said unto Christian, I do now begin to grow so drowsy that I can scarcely hold up my eyes. Let us lie down here and take a nap.

CHR. “By no means, said the other, lest sleeping, we never wake again.”

HOPE. “Why, my Brother? Sleep is sweet to the laboring man. We may be refreshed if we take a nap.”

CHR. “Do you not remember that one of the Shepherds bid us beware of the Enchanted Ground? He meant by that, that we should beware of sleeping. Therefore ‘let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober.’”

There is no doubt, many of us, Beloved, are passing over this plain and I fear that this is the condition of the majority of churches in the present day. They are lying down on the settles of Lukewarmness in the Arbors of the Enchanted Ground! There is not that activity and zeal we would wish to see among them. They are not, perhaps, notably hetero-

dox. They may not be invaded by the lion of persecution—they are somewhat worse than that—they are lying down to slumber, like Heedless and Too-Bold in the Arbor of Sloth! May God grant that His servants may be the means of awakening the Church from its lethargy and stirring it up from its slumbers, lest professors should sleep the sleep of death!

This morning I intend to show you *what is meant by the state of sleep into which Christians sometimes fall*. Secondly, I shall use some considerations, if possible, to *wake up such as are slumbering*. Thirdly, I shall mark *sundry times when the Christian is most liable to fall asleep*—and shall conclude by giving you some advice as to the mode in which you should conduct yourselves when you are passing over the Enchanted Ground and feel drowsiness weighing down your eyelids.

**I. First, WHAT IS THAT STATE OF SLEEP INTO WHICH THE CHRISTIAN MAY FALL?** It is not death. He was dead once, but he is now alive in Christ Jesus. And, therefore, he shall never die eternally. But though a living man shall not die, being quickened by an immortal life, yet that living man may sleep and that sleep is so nearly akin to death that I have known slumbering Christians mistaken for dead, carnal sinners! Come, Beloved, let me picture to you the state of the Christian while he is in a condition of sleep.

First, sleep is a state of *insensibility* and such is that state which too often is upon even the best children of God. When a man is asleep, he is insensible. The world goes on and he knows nothing about it. The watchman calls beneath his window and he sleeps on. A fire is in a neighboring street—his neighbor's house is burned to ashes—but he is asleep and knows it not! Persons are sick in the house but he is not awakened. They may die and he weeps not for them. A revolution may be raging in the streets of his city. A king may be losing his crown. But he that is asleep shares not in the turmoil of politics. A volcano may burst somewhere near him and he may be in imminent peril, but he escapes not. He is sound asleep, he is insensible! The winds are howling, the thunders are rolling across the sky and the lightning flashes at his window. But he that can sleep on, cares not for these and is insensible to them all. The sweetest music is passing through the street. But he sleeps and only in dreams does he hear the sweetness. The most terrific wailings may assail his ears. But sleep has sealed them with the wax of slumber and he hears not. Let the world break in sunder and the elements go to ruin—keep him asleep and he will not perceive it! Christian, behold your condition! Have you not sometimes been brought into a condition of insensibility? You wished you could feel, but all you felt was pain because you could not feel. You wished you could pray. It was not

that you felt prayerless, but it was because you did not feel at all! Once you sighed—you would give a world if you could sigh now! Once you used to groan—a groan, now, would be worth a golden star if you could buy it! As for songs, you can sing them, but then your heart does not go with them. You go to the House of God. But when “the multitude that keep the holy day” in the full tide of song send their music up to Heaven, you hear it, but your heart does not leap at the sound. Prayer goes solemnly like the evening sacrifice up to God’s Throne—once you could pray—but now, while your body is in the House of God, your heart is not there. You feel you have brought the chrysalis of your being but the fly is gone away from it—it is a dead lifeless case! You have become like a formalist. You feel that there is not that savor, that unction in the preaching, that there used to be. There is no difference in your minister, you know. The change is in *yourself*. The hymns and the prayers are just the same but you have fallen into a state of slumber! Once if you thought of a man’s being damned, you would weep your very soul out in tears. But now you could sit unmoved at the very brink of Hell and hear its wailings. Once the thought of restoring a sinner from the error of his ways would have made you start from your bed at midnight and you would have rushed through the cold air to help to rescue a sinner from his sins. Now, talk to you about perishing multitudes, and you hear it as an old, old tale. Tell you of thousands swept by the mighty flood of sin onwards to the precipice of destruction—you express your regret, you give your contribution—but your heart goes not with it! You must confess that you are insensible—not entirely, but too much so. You want to be awake, but you groan because you feel yourselves to be in this state of slumber.

Then again, he that sleeps is *subject to many illusions*. When we sleep, judgment goes from us and fancy holds carnival within our brain. When we sleep, dreams arise and fashion in our head strange things. Sometimes we are tossed on the stormy deep and another we revel in kings palaces. We gather up gold and silver as if they were but the pebbles of the shore. And another time we are poor and naked, shivering in the blast. What illusions deceive us! The beggar in his dreams becomes richer than Plutus. And the rich man as poor as Lazarus. The sick man is well, the healthy man has lost his limbs, or is dead. Yes, dreams make us descend to Hell, or even carry us to Heaven. Christian, if you are one of the sleepy brotherhood, you are subject to many illusions. Strange thoughts come to you which you never had before. Sometimes you doubt if there is a God, or if you exist, yourself! You tremble lest the Gospel should not be true. And the old Doctrine which once you held with a stern hand, you are almost inclined to let go! Vile heresies assail you. You think that the

Lord who bought you was not the Son of God! The devil tells you that you are none of the Lord's and you dream that you are cast away from the love of the Covenant. You cry—

***“I would, but cannot sing!  
I would, but cannot pray,”***

and you feel as if it were all in question whether you are one of the Lord's or not! Or perhaps your dreams are brighter and you dream that you are somebody, great and mighty, a special favorite of Heaven. Pride puffs you up. You dream that you are rich and have need of nothing, while you are naked, poor and miserable. Is this your state, O Christian? If so, may God wake you up from it!

Again, sleep is *a state of inaction*. No daily bread is earned by him that sleeps. The man who is stretched upon his couch neither writes books, nor tills the ground, nor plows the sea, nor does anything else. His hands hang down, his pulse beats and there is life, but he is positively dead as to activity. Oh, Beloved, here is the state of many of you. How many Christians are inactive! Once it was their delight to instruct the young in the Sunday school—but that is now given up. Once they attended the early Prayer Meeting—but not now. Once they would be hewers of wood and drawers of water—but, alas—they are now asleep! Am I talking of what *may* happen? Is it not too true almost universally? Are not the churches asleep? Where are the ministers who preach? We have men who read their manuscripts and talk essays—but is that preaching? We have men who can amuse an audience for 20 minutes—is that preaching? Where are the men who preach their hearts out and reveal their souls in every sentence? Where are the men who make it not a profession, but a vocation—the breath of their bodies, the marrow of their bones, the delight of their spirits? Where are the Whitfields and Wesleys, now? Are they not gone, gone, gone? Where are the Rowland Hills, now, who preached every day and three times a day and were not afraid of preaching everywhere, the unsearchable riches of Christ? Brothers, the church slumbers. It is not merely that the pulpit is a sentry box with the sentinel fast asleep, but the pews are affected! How are the Prayer Meetings almost universally neglected? Our own Church stands out like an almost solitary green islet in the midst of a dark, dark sea! By God's Grace we are one bright pearl in the depths of an ocean of discord and confusion! Look at neighboring churches. Step into the vestry and see a smaller band of people than you would like to think of, assembled round the pastor, whose heart is dull and heavy. Hear one Brother after another pour out the dull monotonous prayer that he has said by heart these 50 years and then go away and say, “Where is the spirit of prayer, where



is the life of devotion?" Is it not almost extinct? Are not our churches "fallen, fallen, fallen, from their high estate"? God wake them up and send them more earnest and praying men!

Once more—the man who is asleep is *in a state of insecurity*. The murderer smites him that sleeps. The midnight robber plunders his house that rests listlessly on his pillow. Jael smites a sleeping Sisera. Abner takes away the spear from the bolster of a slumbering Saul. A sleeping Eutychus falls from the third loft and is taken up dead. A sleeping Samson is shorn of his locks and the Philistines are upon him. Sleeping men are always in danger. They cannot ward off the blow of the enemy or strike another. Christian, if you are sleeping, you are in danger! Your life, I know, can never be taken from you—that is hid with Christ in God. But oh, you may lose your spear from your bolster! You may lose much of your faith. And your cruse of water wherewith you moisten your lips may be stolen by the prowling thief! Oh, you little know your danger! Even now the black-winged angel takes his spear and, standing at your head, he says to Jesus, (to David) "Shall I smite him? I will smite him but once." (David says) our Jesus whispers, "You shall not smite him. Take his spear and his cruse, but you shall not kill him." But oh, awake, you who slumber! Start up from the place where you now lie in your insecurity. This is not the sleep of Jacob, in which ladders unite Heaven and earth and angels tread their ascending rounds. But this is the sleep where ladders are raised from Hell and devils climb upward from the pit of Hell to molest your spirit!

**II.** This brings me to the second point, SOME CONSIDERATIONS TO WAKE UP SLEEPY CHRISTIANS. I remember once in my life having a sleepy congregation. They had been eating too much dinner and they came to the Chapel in the afternoon very sleepy, so I tried an old expedient to awaken them. I shouted with all my might, "Fire! Fire! Fire!" When starting from their seats, some of the congregation asked where it was and I told them it was in Hell for such sleepy sinners as they were! So, Beloved, I might cry, "Fire! Fire!" this morning to awaken sleepy Christians! But that would be a false cry, because the fire of Hell was never made for Christians at all—and they need never tremble at it! The honor of God is engaged to save the meanest sheep and whether that sheep is asleep or awake, it is perfectly safe, so far as *final salvation* is concerned. There are better reasons why I should stir up a Christian and I shall use a very few of them.

And first, O Christian, awake from your slumber, *because your Lord is coming*. That is the grand reason used in the text. The Apostle says, "You are all the children of light and the children of the day." You know per-

fectly well that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. You, Brothers and Sisters, are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief! O Christians, do you know that your Lord is coming? In such an hour as you think not, the Man who once hung quivering on Calvary will descend in Glory! “The Head that once was crowned with thorns” will soon be crowned with a diadem of brilliant jewels! He will come in the clouds of Heaven to His Church. Would you wish to be sleeping when your Lord comes? Do you want to be like the foolish virgins, who, while the bridegroom tarried, slumbered and slept, or like the wise ones? If our Master were to appear this morning, are there not half of us in such a state that we would be afraid to see Him? Why? You know, when a friend comes to your house, if he is some great man, what brushing and dusting there is! Every corner of the room has its cobwebs removed! Every carpet is turned up. And you make every effort to have the house clean for his coming. What? And will you have your house dusty and the spiders of neglect building the cobwebs of indolence in the corners of your house when your Lord may arrive tomorrow? And if we are to have an audience with the Queen, what dressing there is! How careful will men be that everything should be put on aright, that they should appear properly in court dress! Do you not know, servant of the Lord, that you are to appear before the King in His beauty and to see Him soon on earth? What? Will you be asleep when He comes? When He knocks at the door, shall He have for an answer, “The good man is asleep. He did not expect You”? Oh, no! Be like men who watch for their Lord, that at His coming He may find you ready! Ah, you carnal professors who attend plays and balls, would you like Christ to come and find you in the middle of your dance? Would you like Him to look you in the face in the opera? Ah, you carnal tradesmen, can you cheat and then pray after it? Would you like Christ to find you cheating? You devour widows’ houses and for a show make long prayers. You would not mind Him coming in the middle of your long prayer. But He will come just as that poor widows’ house is sticking in your throat, just as you are swallowing the lands of the poor oppressed one and putting in your own pocket, the wages of which you have defrauded the laborer! Then He will come and how terrible will He be to such as you! We have heard of the sailor, who, when his ship was sinking, rushed to the cabin to steal a bag of gold—and though warned that he could not swim with it tied it about his loins—he leaped into the sea with it and sank to rise no more! And I am afraid there are some rich men who know not how to use their money, who will sink to Hell, strangled by their gold, hanging like millstones round their necks! O

Christian, it shall not be so with you—but wake from your slumbers, for your Lord comes!

But again, Christian, you are benevolent. You love men's souls and I will speak to you of that which will touch your heart. Will you weep while *souls are being lost*? A Brother here, some time ago, rushed into a house which was burning and he saved a person from it. He then returned to his wife and what did she say to him? "Go back again, my husband and see if you cannot save another. We will not rest till all are delivered." I think that is what the Christian would say, "If I have been the means of saving one soul, I will not rest until I have saved another." Oh, have you ever thought how many souls sink to Hell every hour? Did the dreary thought that the death knell of a soul is tolled by every tick of yonder clock ever strike you? Have you ever thought that myriads of your fellow creatures are now in Hell—and that myriads more are hastening there? And yet do you sleep? What? Physician, will you sleep when men are dying? Sailor, will you sleep when the wreck is out at sea and the life boat is waiting for hands to man it? Christian, will you tarry while souls are being lost? I do not say that *you* can save them—God, alone, can do that—but you may be the instrument! And would you lose the opportunity of winning another jewel for your crown in Heaven? Would you sleep while work is being done? Well, said the British king, at the Battle of Agincourt, "Come on and conquer"—

***"And gentlemen in England—now a-bed,  
Shall think themselves accursed they were not here—  
And hold their manhood cheap, when any speaks  
That fought with us upon this glorious day."***

So I think, when souls are being saved, Christians in bed may think themselves accursed they are not here! Sleepy Christian, let me shout in your ears—you are sleeping while souls are being lost—sleeping while men are being damned—sleeping while Hell is being peopled—sleeping while Christ is being dishonored—sleeping while the devil is grinning at your sleepy face—sleeping while demons are dancing round your slumbering carcass and shouting it in Hell that a Christian is asleep! You will never catch the devil asleep. Let not the devil catch you asleep! Watch and be sober, that you may be always up to do your duty.

I have no time to use other considerations, though the subject is large enough and I should have no difficulty in finding sticks enough to beat a sleeping dog with. "Let us not sleep as do others."

**III.** Now it may be asked, WHEN IS THE CHRISTIAN MOST LIABLE TO SLEEP?

First, I answer, he is most liable to sleep *when his temporal circumstances are all right*. When your nest is well feathered, you are then most

likely to sleep. There is little danger of your sleeping when there is a bramble bush in the bed. When all is downy, then the most likely thing will be that you will say, "Soul, Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years—take your rest—eat, drink and be merry!" Let me ask some of you, when you were more straitened in circumstances, when you had to rely upon Providence each hour and had troubles to take the Throne of Grace—were you not more wakeful than you are now? The miller who has his wheel turned by a constant stream goes to sleep but he that attends on the wind, which sometimes blows hard and sometimes gently, sleeps not, lest haply the full gust might rend the sails, or there should not be enough to make them go round! Those who live by the day often sleep not by day, but they sleep in the night—the sleep of the Beloved. Easy roads tend to make us slumber. Few sleep in a storm. Many sleep on a calm night. He is a brave boy, indeed, who can have his eyes sealed when "upon the high and giddy mast, in bosom of the rude imperious surge." But he is no wonder who sleeps when there is no danger. Why is the Church asleep now? She would not sleep if Smithfield were filled with stakes, if Bartholomew's bells were ringing in her ears! She would not sleep if Sicilian Vespers might be sung on tomorrow's eve. She would not sleep if massacres were common. But what is her condition? Every man sitting under his own vine and his own fig tree—none daring to make him afraid. Tread softly! She is fast asleep! Wake up, Church! Or else we will cut down the fig tree about your ears. Start up! For the figs are ripe, they hang into your sleepy mouth and you are too lazy to bite them off!

Now, another dangerous time is *when all goes well in spiritual matters*. You never read that Christian went to sleep when lions were in the way. He never slept when he was going through the River Death, or when he was in Giant Despair's castle, or when he was fighting with Apollyon. Poor creature! He almost wished he *could* sleep, then. But when he had got half way up the Hill Difficulty and came to a pretty little arbor—in he went and sat down and began to read his roll. Oh, how he rested himself! How he undid his sandals and rubbed his weary feet! Very soon his mouth was open—his arms hung down and he was fast asleep! Again, the Enchanted Ground was a very easy, smooth place, and liable to send the Pilgrim to sleep. You remember Bunyan's description of some of the arbors—"Then they came to an arbor, warm and promising much refreshing to the weary pilgrims. For it was finely worked above head, beautified with greens and furnished with benches and settles. It also had in it, a soft couch, where the weary might sleep. The arbor was called the Slothful's Friend and was made on purpose to allure, if it might, some of the pilgrims to take up their rest, there, when weary."

Depend upon it, it is in easy places that men shut their eyes and wander into the dreamy land of forgetfulness! Old Erskine said a good thing when he remarked—"I like a roaring devil better than a sleeping devil." There is no temptation half as bad as not being tempted! The distressed soul does not sleep. It is after we get into confidence and full assurance that we are in danger of slumbering. Take care, you who are full of gladness. There is no season in which we are so likely to fall asleep as that of high enjoyment. The disciples went to sleep after they had seen Christ transfigured on the mountaintop. Take heed, joyous Christian, good times are very dangerous—they often lull you into a sound sleep!

Yet there is one more thing. And if I ever were afraid of anything, I would fear to speak before my grave and reverend fathers in the faith, the fact that one of the most likely places for us to sleep in is *when we get near our journey's end*. It is ill for a child to say that, and I will, therefore, back it up by the words of that great pilot, John Bunyan—"For this Enchanted Ground is one of the last refuges that the enemy to pilgrims has, therefore it is, as you see, placed almost at the end of the way and so it stands against us within the more advantage. For when, thinks the enemy, will these fools be so desirous to sit down as when they are weary? And when so like to be weary as when almost at their journey's end? Therefore it is, I say, that the Enchanted Ground is paced so near to the land, Beulah, and so near the end of their race. Therefore let pilgrims look to themselves, lest it happen to them as it has done to these who, as you see, are fallen asleep and none can awake them." May a child speak to those who are far before him in years and experience? But I am not a child when I preach. In the pulpit we stand as ambassadors of God and God knows nothing of childhood or age. He teaches whom He wills and speaks as He pleases! It is true, my Brothers and Sisters, that those who have been years in Grace are most in danger of slumbering. Somehow we get into the routine of the thing—it is usual for us to go to the House of God. It is usual for us to belong to the church and that, of itself, tends to make people sleepy. Go into some of your churches in London and you will hear a most delicious sermon preached to a people all sound asleep! The reason is that the service is all alike. They know when they have got to the third, "Our Father which are in Heaven," when they have passed the general confession and when they have got to the sermon—then it is the time to sleep for 20 minutes! If the minister should smite his ecclesiastic fist upon the Bible, or enliven his faculties with a pinch of snuff, or even use his pocket handkerchief, the people would wake up because it would be something out of the usual course! Or, if he uttered an old sentiment, they might be awakened and would probably think that he

had broken the 59<sup>th</sup> Commandment, in making some of the congregation smile! But he never violates decorum. He stands the very mirror of modesty and the picture of everything that is orderly. I have digressed, but you will see what I mean.

If we are always going on the same road we are liable to sleep. If Moab gets at ease and is not emptied from vessel to vessel, he sleeps on, for he knows no change. And when years have worn our road with a rut of godliness, we are apt to throw the reins on our horse's neck and sleep soundly!

**IV.** Now, lastly, let me give a little GOOD ADVICE to the sleeping Christian. But Christian, if you *are* asleep, you will not hear me! I will speak gently, then, and let you sleep on. No I will not! I will shout in your ears, "Awake you that sleep! Arise from the dead and Christ shall give you light! Go to the ant, you sluggard—consider her ways and be wise. Put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem. Put on your glorious array, you Church of the living God."

But now what is the best plan to stay awake when you are going across the Enchanted Ground? This book tells us that one of the best plans is *to keep Christian company* and talk about the ways of the Lord. Christian and Hopeful said to themselves, "Let us talk together and then we shall not sleep." Christian said, "Brother where shall we begin?" And Hopeful said, "We will begin where God began with us." There is no subject so likely to keep a man awake as talking of the place where God began with him! When Christians talk together, they won't sleep! Hold Christian company and you will not be so likely to slumber. Christians who isolate themselves and stand alone are very liable to lie down and sleep on the settle or the soft couch—but if you talk much, together, as they did in old times, you will find it extremely beneficial. Two Christians talking together of the ways of the Lord will go much faster to Heaven than one! And when a whole Church unites in speaking of the Lord's loving kindness, verily, Beloved, there is no way like that of keeping themselves awake!

Then let me remind you that if you will *look at interesting things*, you will not sleep. And how can you be kept awake in the Enchanted Ground better than by holding up your Savior before your eyes? There are some things, it is said, which will not let men shut their eyes if they are held before them. Jesus Christ, Crucified on Calvary, is one of these! I never knew a Christian go to sleep at the foot of the Cross. But he always said—

***"Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,  
Which before the Cross I spend."***

And he said, too—

***“Here I’d sit forever viewing  
Mercy’s streams in streams of blood.”***

But he never said, “Here I would lie down and sleep,” for he could not sleep with that shriek, “*Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani?*” in his ears! He could not sleep with, “It is finished!” going into his very soul. Stay near to the Cross, Christian, and you will not sleep.

Then I would advise you to *let the wind blow on you*. Let the breath of the Holy Spirit continually fan your temples and you will not sleep. Seek to live daily under the influence of the Holy Spirit—derive all your strength from Him and you will not slumber!

Lastly, labor to *impress yourself with a deep sense of the value of the place to which you are going*. If you remember that you are going to Heaven, you will not sleep on the road! If you think that Hell is behind you and the devil pursuing you, I am sure you will not be inclined to sleep. Would the manslayer sleep if the avenger of blood were behind him and the City of Refuge before him? Christian, will you sleep while the pearly gates are open, the songs of angels waiting for you to join them? A crown decorated with delight to be worn upon your brow? Ah, no—

***“Forget the steps already trod  
And onward urge your way!  
Weak as you are, you shall not faint,  
Or, fainting, shall not die.  
He feeds the strength of every saint,  
He’ll help you from on high.”***

Dearly Beloved, I have finished my sermon. There are some of you that I must dismiss, because I find nothing in the text for you. It is said, “Let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober.” There are some here who do not sleep at all because they are positively dead. And if it takes a stronger voice than mine to wake the sleeper, how much more mighty must be that voice which wakes the dead? Yet even to the dead I speak. For God can wake them, though I cannot. O, dead Man! Do you not know that your body and your soul are worthless carrion? That while you are dead, you lie abhorred of God and abhorred of man? That soon the vulture of remorse will come and devour your lifeless soul—and though you have lived in this world these 70 years (perhaps) without God and without Christ—in your last hour, the vulture of remorse shall come and tear your spirit? And though you now laugh at the wild bird that circles in the sky, he will soon descend upon you and your death will be a bed of shrieks, howling and wailings and lamentations! Do you not know that afterwards that dead soul will be cast into Hell? And as in the East they burn the bodies, so your body and your soul together shall be

burned in Hell! Go not away and dream that this is a metaphor! It is the Truth of God! Say not it is a fiction—laugh not at it as a mere picture! Hell is a positive flame—it is a fire that burns the body, albeit that it burns the soul, too! There is physical fire for the body and there is spiritual fire for the soul. Go your way, O Man—such shall be your fate. Even now your funeral pile is building, your years of sin have laid huge trees across each other. Look! The angel is flying down from Heaven with a brand already lit! You are lying dead upon the pile—he puts the brand to the base. Your disease proves that the lower parts are kindling with the flame—those pains of yours are the crackling of the fire. It shall reach you soon, old Man—it shall reach you soon, you poor diseased one! You are near death and when it reaches you, you shall know the meaning of the fire that is unquenchable and the worm that dies not!

Yet while there is hope I will tell you the Gospel. “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved and he that believes not shall be,” *must* be “damned.” He that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, that is—with a simple naked faith, comes and puts his trust in Him—shall be saved! But he that believes not shall inevitably—hear it, men and women and tremble—*he that believes not shall assuredly be damned.*

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P.S.—It is frequently objected that the preacher is censorious—he is not desirous of defending himself from the charge. He is confident that many are conscious that his charges are *true* and if true, Christian love requires us to warn those who err. Nor will candid men condemn the minister who is bold enough to point out the faults of the Church and the age, even when all classes are moved to anger by his faithful rebukes and pour on his head the full vials of their wrath. IF THIS IS VILE, WE PURPOSE TO BE VILER, STILL!—C. H. S.

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON  
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**



# THE CHRISTIAN'S HELMET

## NO. 3167

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 21, 1909.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
IN THE YEAR 1866.

*“And for a helmet the hope of salvation.”*  
*1 Thessalonians 5:8.*

THE very mention of a helmet may well seem to REMIND EVERY CHRISTIAN HERE THAT HE IS A SOLDIER.

I. If you were not soldiers, you would not need armor. But being soldiers, you need to be clad from head to foot in armor of proof. I suppose every Christian here knows, as a matter of theory, that he is a Christian soldier and that he has been enlisted under the banner of the Cross to fight against the powers of darkness until he wins the victory. But we all need to have our memories refreshed upon this matter, for soldiering, in time of war, at any rate, is not a very pleasant occupation—and the flesh constantly attempts to give it over. That “we have no abiding city here,” is a Truth of God which we all know and yet the most of us try to make the earth as comfortable for ourselves as if it were to be our abiding residence! We are all soldiers—we know that—but still, too many Christians act as if they could be the friends of the world and the friends of God at the same time. Now, Christian, remember once and for all that you are a soldier! Did you dream, young man, that as soon as you were baptized and added to the Church, the conflict was all over? Ah, it was then but just beginning! Like Caesar, you then crossed the Rubicon and declared war against your deadly enemy. You drew your sword—you did not sheathe it. Your proper note on joining the Church is not one of congratulation, as though the victory were won, but one of *preparation*—for now the trumpet sounds and the fight begins! You are a soldier at all times, Christian! You ought to sit even at your table as a soldier sits and you should go out especially into the world as a soldier goes out. Never take off your armor, for if you do, in some unguarded moment you may meet with serious wounds! But *keep your armor always about you and be watchful*, for you are always in the midst of enemies wherever you may be! And even when the persons who surround you are your friends, there are still evil spirits, unseen of men, who watch for your tripping—and you must not put up your sword, for you are to wrestle against principalities, powers and spiritual wickedness in high places—against whom you must always be on the watch. You are a soldier, Christian—remember that!

Nor are you a soldier in barracks, or at home, but *you are a soldier in an enemy's country*. Your place is either in the trenches or else in the thick of the battle! You who are sick are like soldiers in the trenches. You are patiently hoping and quietly waiting, as it were, upon the ramparts, looking for the time to come. But others of you, out in business and engaged in the concerns of life, are like soldiers marching in a long file to the conflict, like the housemen dashing on to the front of the battle. More or less, according to your circumstances, you are all exposed to the foe and that at every period of life!

Where are you, let me ask, but *in the country of an enemy who never gives any quarter?* If you fall, it is death! The world never forgives the Christian—it hates him with a perfect hatred and it longs to hurt him. Only let the world see you commit half a stumble and they will soon report and magnify it! What might be done by other men without observation, if it were done by a Christian, would be noticed, reported and misrepresented. The world understands that you are its natural antagonist. Satan perceives in you a representative of his old enemy, the Lord Jesus, and you may rest assured that he will never give you quarter if once he gets an opportunity of destroying you! Mind the enemy, mind the enemy, for he is one of a malicious spirit!

You have to fight with one, too, *who never yet made a truce*. You may come to terms and parley, but the powers of evil never do. You may hang out the white flag if you like. The foe may seem, for a time, as though he gave you credit, but never give your foe any credit! He hates you when he seems to love you best. “Dread the Greeks, even when they bring you gifts,” said the tradition of old—and let the Christian dread the world most when it puts on its softest speeches! Stand, then, upon your guard, you warriors of the Cross, when least you fear, the cringing foe will come behind you and stab you under the pretense of friendship! Your Master was betrayed with a kiss, and so will you be unless you watch unto prayer.

You have to do with an enemy *who never can make any peace with you, nor can you ever make any peace with him*. If you become at peace with sin, sin has conquered you—and it is impossible, unless you give up the fight and yield your neck to the everlasting thralldom—that there should ever be peace for so much as a moment. Oh, Christian, see how guarded you ought to be! How necessary to be clothed with your armor! How necessary to have it of the right kind, to keep it bright and to wear it constantly! You are a soldier, a soldier in battle, a soldier in the foeman's country, a soldier with a cruel and malicious enemy who knows neither truce nor parley, and who gives no quarter, but will fight with you till you die! Heaven is the land where your sword should be sheathed—there shall you hang the banner high—but here we wrestle with the foe and must do so till we cross the torrent of death. Right up to the river's edge must the conflict be waged. Foot by foot and inch by inch must all the land to Canaan's happy shore be won. Not a step can be taken without conflict and strife—but once there, you may lay aside your helmet and

put on your crown, put away your sword, and take your palm branch—your fingers shall no longer need to learn to war, but your hearts shall learn the music of the happy songsters in the skies! This, then, is the first thought—that you are a soldier.

**II.** But the second thought is BEING A SOLDIER, LOOK TO YOUR HEAD.

Soldiers, look to your heads! A wound in the head is a serious matter. The head, being a vital part, we need to be well protected there. The heart needs to be guarded with the breastplate, but the head needs to be protected quite as much, for even if a man should be true-hearted, yet if a shot should go through his brain he would not be worth much as a soldier—his body would strew the plain. The head must be taken care of. There are a great many Christian people who never have any trouble with their heads at all. There are certain religionists who get their hearts warmed and then they think that that is enough. Now, give me above everything else a good warm heart, but oh, to have that warm heart coupled with a head that is well taken care of! Do you know that a hot head and a hot heart together do a deal of mischief, but with a hot heart and a cold brain you may do a world of service to the Master. Have right Doctrine in the head and then set the soul on fire and you will soon win the world! There is no standing in that man's way whose head and heart are both right—but to neglect the head has been a serious mischief with many Christians. They have been almost powerless for usefulness because they have not taken care of their brains. They have got to Heaven, but they have not got many victories on the road because their brains have been out of order. They have never been able to clearly understand the Doctrines—they have not been able to give a reason for the hope that is in them. They have not, in fact, looked well to the helmet which was to cover their heads!

The text refers us to our head because it speaks of a helmet—and a helmet is of no use to any part except the head. Among other reasons why we should preserve the head in the day of battle, let us give these—*the head is peculiarly liable to the temptations of Satan, of self and of fame.* It is not easy, you know, to stand on a high pinnacle without the brain beginning to reel. And if God takes a man and puts him on a high pinnacle of usefulness, he had need to have his head taken care of. If a Brother is possessed of a considerable amount of wealth, there is a great danger in that wealth unless there is a wealth of Divine Grace as well as a wealth of gold. If a man is well spoken of, his sphere may not be very large, but if everybody praises him, he will also need to have his head well protected—for the little praise, even though it should come from fools—would be too much for a fool. If a man can stand commendation, he can stand anything. The severest trial which a Christian has to bear is probably the trial which comes from his kind but inconsiderate friends who would puff him up, if they could, by telling him what a fine fellow he is. If your friends will not do this, you will probably have a friend within who will do it for you—and if you should forget it, the devil will not!

“What a capital sermon you gave us this morning, Mr. Bunyan,” said a friend where John had been preaching. “You are too late,” said Bunyan, “the devil told me that before I came out of the pulpit.” Yes, and he will be sure to do it—and hence the need of having a helmet to put on the head so that when you are successful, when you are getting on in life, when friends are speaking well of you—you may not get intoxicated with it! Oh, to have a good, cool helmet to put on your brain when it begins to get a little hot with praise, so that you may still stand fast and not be borne down by vanity! O Vanity, Vanity, Vanity, how many you have slain! How many who then seemed upon the very brink of greatness have stumbled upon this stumbling-block—men who seemed as though they would enter Heaven—but a little bit of honor, some glittering bribe, a golden gift has turned them aside and they fail! Take care of your heads, Brothers and Sisters!

And is not *the head liable to attacks from skepticism?* People who have no brains are not often troubled with doubts, but people who have brains have probably felt that whether they resolved to use them or not, the brains would use themselves. It is very good of our good fathers to tell us not to read dangerous books, very good of them, indeed! But we do read them for all that—and though we sometimes tell the young folks not to read this and that heretical treatise, and we wish they would take our advice—yet somehow or other they get hold of such things and will ponder them. Brothers and Sisters, I believe that in such times as these, when everything is so free, and when discussion is so common—we must expect that our young fellows will look at a great many things which they had better leave alone—and their heads will be endangered thereby, for the bullets of skepticism threaten to go right through their brains! Well, what then? As we cannot take Christians out of the way of the bullets, we should give them a helmet to preserve them from them! He who has a hope of salvation—a good hope that he is saved, a hope that he shall see the face of Christ with joy at last—is not afraid of all the quibbles of skepticism! He may hear them all and for a moment be staggered by them, as a soldier might be who had a sudden shock or even a wound, but after a while he recovers and feels sound enough to enter into the conflict again. And the Christian can say—

***“Let all the forms that men devise  
Assail my faith with treacherous art—  
I’d call them vanity and lies,  
And bind the Gospel to my heart.”***

It has been very well observed that a man is not often a very thorough democrat after he gets a little money in the bank. Well, I think it is very likely that when a man gets a little stake in his country, he begins to be, to the merest extent, conservative. As soon as ever a man gets a stake in Christianity and feels that he has got salvation in Jesus Christ, he gets to be very, very conservative of the old-fashioned Truth of God. He cannot give up the Bible, then, because it is a broad land of wealth to him! He cannot give up Christ, for He is *his* Savior, *his* salvation. He cannot give up a single promise because that promise is so dear to his own soul.

The helmet of salvation, then, will preserve the head in times of skepticism!

The head, again, is very greatly in danger *from the attacks of personal unbelief*. Who among us has not doubted his own interest in Christ? Happy are you who are free from such trouble! But there are seasons with some of us when we turn our title deeds over and we are sometimes afraid lest they should not be genuine. There are times when, if we could, we would give a world to know that we are Christ's, for at times we cannot—

***“Read our title clear  
To mansions in the skies.”***

Well, Beloved, this is very dangerous to our heads, but the man who has got the helmet of a right, sound, God-given hope of salvation—who has received from God the Holy Spirit a helmet which I am going to describe, by-and-by—when these doubts and fears come, they may distress him for a little while, but he knows the smell of gunpowder and he is not afraid! In the midst of all of Satan's accusations, or the rising up of his old corruptions, or the threats of the flesh and of the world, he stands calm and unmoved because he wears as a helmet, the hope of salvation!

Nor are these all the dangers to which the head is exposed. *Some persons are attacked by threats from the world*. The world brings down its double-handled sword with a tremendous blow upon the heads of many Christians. “You will suffer the loss of all things for Christ if you are such a fanatic as to do as you do. You will be poor, your children will need bread, your wife will be worse than a widow if you are such a fool.” “Ah,” says the Christian, “but I have a hope of salvation!” And the blow, when it comes, does not go through his head, but just falls on the helmet and the world's sword gets blunted. “I can afford to be poor,” said Dr. Gill, when one of his subscribers threatened to give up his seat and would not attend if the doctor preached such-and-such a Doctrine. So says the Christian, “I can afford to be poor. I can afford to be despised. I have in Heaven a better and more enduring substance.” So, by the use of this blessed helmet he is not destroyed by the threats of the world!

We want our young people to wear this helmet, too, *because of the errors of the times*. The errors of the times are many. We have to deal not merely with skepticism, but with superstition. They are tempted on the one side, they are tempted on the other. This and that you will have cried up. “Lo here,” and, “Lo there!” And there will be many misled who are not the people of God. “If it were possible, they would deceive the very elect”—but the elect are not deceived because their heads are not vulnerable to these errors, for they wear the hope of salvation and they are not afraid of all the “ites” or the “isms” in the world. The man knows he is saved. Once you get to know Christ personally and that He loved you and gave Himself for you—and then rejoice that you are forgiven and justified through Him—the world will count you stupid and obstinate, but you will stand firm and be able to resist all its sarcasm and its ridicule. He who

has made a refuge of Jesus Christ may stand safe, whatever errors may invade the land!

They tell us that the Church of God is in great danger and that Popery will spread over the land altogether. I believe it will, but that it will spread over the *Church of God*—no—I know far better than that! The Church of God can never be in danger! Every man in whom is the life of God would be as ready to die tomorrow for the Truth as our forefathers were in the Marian days! Rest assured there would still be found men and women to stand in the burning piles if the times required them—and our prisons would not long be without heavenly-minded tenants if the Truth needed to be defended by suffering, even unto death! There *is* danger, great danger! There never was such danger in modern times of Popery spreading over the land as now. But there is no danger to the man who has his helmet on! No, let the arrows fly thick as hail and let the foes have all political power and all the *prestige* of antiquity that they may—a little body of true-hearted Christians will still stand out at the thick of the onslaught and cut their way to Glory and to victory through whole hosts because their heads are guarded with the heavenly helmet of the hope of salvation! Soldiers, then, take care of your heads! I will say no more on that point.

**III.** God has provided a covering for your heads, let us therefore now CONSIDER THE HELMET WITH WHICH HE WOULD HAVE YOUR HEADS PROTECTED.

“The hope of salvation!” This is not the hope I spoke about this morning, for that was the hope that salvation was possible. This helmet is made up of an actual hope that, being already saved in Christ Jesus, you should abide unto eternal life. It is a personal hope, founded upon personal conviction—and is worked in us by the Holy Spirit.

To begin, then, describing this helmet. *Who is its Giver?* You ask our friend, the soldier, where he gets his uniforms, and he answers that he gets them from the government stores. He gets his uniforms from Her Majesty. And that is how we must get our helmets. If any of you construct helmets of hope for yourselves, they will be of no use to you in the day of battle! The true helmet of hope must come from the heavenly arsenal! You must go to the Divine Storehouse, for unto God belongs salvation and the hope of salvation must be given to you by His free Grace. A hope of salvation is not purchasable. Our great King does not sell His armor, but gives it freely to all who enlist. They take the shilling and accept faith. They trust Christ and they are enlisted—and then the armor is given them gratis. From head to foot they are arrayed by Grace!

Do you ask, *who is the Maker of this helmet?* Weapons are valued often according to the maker. A known maker gets his own price for his articles. Armorers of old took much trouble with the ancient helmets because a man's life might depend upon that very useful means of defense. So we have here the name of God the Holy Spirit upon this helmet! A hope of salvation is the work of God the Holy Spirit in our soul. It is the Spirit who brings us to Jesus, shows us our need of Him and gives us

faith in Him—and it is that same Spirit who enables us to hope that we shall endure to the end and enter into eternal life. Be not satisfied with a hope which is natural, but have a hope that is supernatural! Rest not satisfied with that which is made in the workshop of Nature. Go not to those who buy and sell for themselves, but go to the blessed Spirit, who gives freely and upbraids not!

Or would you inquire, further, *of what metal this helmet is made?* That it is made of hope, we are told, but it is of the utmost consequence that it is a good hope! Beware of getting a base hope, a helmet made of paltry metal. There were some helmets they used to wear in the olden times which looked very well, but they were of no more use than brown-paper hats. And when a soldier goes into the fight with one of those on, the sword went through his skull. Get a good helmet, one made of the right metal. This is what a Christian's hope is made of—he believes that Christ came into the world to save sinners. He trusts Christ to save him and he hopes that when Christ comes, he shall reign with Him. He believes that when the trumpet sounds, he shall rise with Christ and that in Heaven he shall have a secure dwelling place at the right hand of the Father. This hope is made up of proper and fitting deductions from certain truthful statements. That Christ died for *sinners* is true. That He died to save all who trust in Him is true. That *I* trust Him is true. Therefore that I am saved is true! And, being saved, that I shall inherit all His promises is a matter of course!

Some people have a hope, but they do not know where they get it from, nor do they know a reason for it. When some people die, you hear it said, "I hope, I hope he is gone to Heaven." Well, I wish he may have gone, but I dare not say of some that I hope so, because hope must have a *reason*. An anchor is of no use without its barb. It must be able to hold fast. It must have, at any rate, the modern anchor—some weight about it with which it can hold to the bottom. Hope must have its barb, too! It must have its reason, it must have its weight. If I say I hope such-and-such, I am foolish for hoping it if I have not a reason for hoping. If you were to say you hoped the person sitting next to you would give you a thousand pounder, it would be a most absurd hope! You may wish it if you like, but what ground have you for the hope? But if somebody owes you a thousand pounds and you have his acknowledgement of the debt, you may then very well say that you hope it will be paid, for you have a legitimate right to expect it. Such is the Christian's hope! God has promised to save those who believe. Lord, I believe You—You have promised to save me, and I hope you will—I *know* You will! The Christian's hope is not a fancy, not a silly desire. It did not spring up in the night, like Jonah's gourd, and it will not wither in a night. The Christian's hope is something that will bear a crack from a club, or a cut from a sharp sword. It is made of good metal. John Bunyan said of a certain sword that it was "a true Jerusalem blade"—and I may call this a true Jerusalem helmet and he that wears it need not fear!

Having shown the metal of which the helmet is made, let me now describe *the strength of the helmet*. It is so strong that he who wears it is invulnerable under all sorts of assaults. He may stagger under a blow, but he cannot be hurt by it. Recollect what David said. All the troubles in the world once set on David and began to beat him—and they gave him many terrible blows. They thought they had certainly ruined him. David was bleeding and was full of wounds. He half thought he would die and he tells us, himself, that he would have fainted, only he had a bottle of cordial with him called *faith*. He says, “I had fainted if I had not believed.” But just at the time when they thought he would faint and die, suddenly the old hero that slew Goliath made all his enemies fly before him as he cried, “Why are you cast down, O my Soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope you in God.” And he laid about him right and left, as he should. “I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance and my God.” “Hope you in God,” Christian! Oh that blessed word, HOPE! You know what the New Zealanders call hope? They call it in their language, “the swimming thought,” because it always swims. You cannot drown it—it always keeps its head above the wave! When you think you have drowned the Christian’s hope, up it comes, all dripping from the brine, and cries again, “Hope you in God, for I shall yet praise Him!” Hope is the nightingale that sings in the night. Faith is the lark that mounts up towards Heaven, but hope is the nightingale that cheers the valley in the darkness! Oh, Christian, be thankful that you have so strong a helmet as this which can bear all assaults and can keep you unwounded in the midst of the fray!

This hope of salvation *is a helmet which will not come off*. It is of main importance, you know, to have a helmet that will not be knocked off the first thing in the fight. That is why our policemen are dressed differently from what they used to be, because their hats used to get knocked off the very first thing. So it will be with some people’s helmets if they have a commonplace hope—but the Christian wears a helmet that he cannot get off. There was once a good soldier of Jesus Christ—this soldier happened to be a woman, however, and some women are the best soldiers Christ ever had—they are His true Amazons! This good woman had been much attacked by a skeptical person and when she was very much confused with some of his knotty questions, she turned round and said to him, “I cannot answer you, Sir, but neither can you answer me, for I have a something within me that you cannot understand which makes me feel that I could not give up what I know of Christ for all the world.” You see, he could not get her helmet off—and the devil himself cannot drag the Christian’s helmet off when he has once got it fairly buckled on. The world can neither give nor take away the hope of a Christian! It comes from God and He will never withdraw it, for His gifts and calling are without repentance. Once let this helmet be put on and He will never remove it, but we shall hope on and hope always until we shall see His face at the last!



I should like to go round among this regiment, as the commanding officers sometimes do, to have a look at you. This helmet is an old-fashioned kind of armor and in the old days the lieutenants and other officials, when they went round the regiment, used to look not only to see that the men had their helmets, but to see that they had oiled them, for in those times they used to oil their helmets to make them shine and to keep the various joints, buckles and so on, in good order. No rust was ever allowed on the helmets and it is said that when the soldiers marched out with their bronze helmets and their white plumes, they shone most brilliantly in the sun. David speaks, you know, of "anointing the shield." He was speaking of a bronze shield which had to be anointed with oil. Now, when God anoints His people's hope—when He gives them the oil of joy, their hope begins to shine bright in the light of the Savior's Countenance—and what a fine array of soldiers they then are! Satan trembles at the gleaming of their swords—he cannot endure to look upon their helmets. But some of you do not keep your hope clear—you do not keep it bright. It gets rusty out of use and then before long it gets to sit uncomfortably upon you and you get weary with the fight. O Holy Spirit, anoint our heads with fresh oil and let Your saints go forth tonight terrible as an army with banners!

Do not let it be overlooked that *the helmet was generally considered to be a place of honor*. The man put his plume in his helmet. He frequently wore his crest there and in the thick of the fight the captain's plume was seen in the midst of the smoke and dust of battle—and the men pressed to the place where they saw it. Now, the Christian's hope is his honor and his glory. I must not be ashamed of my hope! I must wear it for beauty and for dignity and he who has a right good hope will be a leader to others. Others will see it and will fight with renewed courage. And where he hews a lane of the foes, they will follow him, even as he follows his Lord and Master who has overcome and sits down upon His Father's Throne! I hope there are many Christians here who keep their helmets bright—and that there are many more who desire to have such helmets to protect themselves and to grace their profession.

**IV. YET THERE ARE SOME HERE WHO HAVE NO HELMETS.** The reason is obvious. They are not Christ's soldiers.

Of course the Lord Jesus does not provide anybody with armor but those in His service. But Satan knows how to give you a helmet, too. His helmets are very potent ones. Though the sword of the Spirit can go right through them, nothing else can. He can give and has given some of you a headpiece that covers your entire skull—a thick headpiece of indifference, so that no matter what is preached, you do not care. "What do I care?" you say—and that is your helmet.

Then he puts a piece in the front of the helmet called *a brazen forehead and a brow of brass*. "What do I care?" That is your cry. Then he takes care to fit the helmet right over your eyes so that you cannot see—yes, though Hell itself is before you, you do not see it! "What do I care?" Then he also knows how so to fit the helmet that it acts as a gag to your

mouth so that you never pray. You can swear through it, but you cannot pray! Still you stick to your old cry, "What do I care?"

Ah, it is not very likely that any sword of mine will get at your head! Arguments will not move you, for that is a question that cannot very well be argued—"What do I care?" It is all very well for you to say that, but oh, I pray God the Holy Spirit to get at your head, notwithstanding that horrible helmet, for if not, God has a way of dealing with such as you are—when you come to die, you will sing another song! When you come to lie there upon that bed of sickness and the grim day of eternity is in view, you will not be able to say quite so gaily as you do now, "What do I care?" And when the trumpet rings through earth and Heaven and your body starts up from your grave—and you see the great Judge upon His Throne—you will not be able to say, then, "What do I care?" Your head will then be bare to the pitiless tempest of Divine wrath! Bareheaded, you must be exposed to the everlasting storm that shall descend upon you. And when the great angel binds you up with your fellows in bundles to burn, you will *then* feel that you are not able to say, "What do I care?" for cares will come upon you like a wild deluge when you are banished from His Presence and all hope is gone!

Oh, I wish you would take off that helmet! May God grant you Grace to unbuckle it tonight, never to put it on again! Do care. You are not a fool, my Friend, are you? It is only a fool who says, "What do I care?" *Surely you care about your soul! Surely Hell is worth escaping from! Surely Heaven is worth winning! Surely that Cross on which our Savior died is worth thinking of! Surely that poor soul of yours is worth caring about!* Do, I pray you, think, and not go hastily on. Oh, may Jesus Christ, who died for such as you are, bring you to trust Him! And then, unbuckling all that evil armor of, "What do I care?" you will bow before His Cross and kiss His hands—and He will put upon you the golden helmet of a hope of salvation and you will rise, one of the Kings own soldiers, to fight His battles and win an immortal wreath of everlasting victory! May it is so with every one of us!

### **EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: 1 THESSALONIANS 5:1-28.**

**Verses 1, 2.** *But of the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I write you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night. It will be a great surprise to the wicked. It will take them by surprise. Just at that moment when they least expect it, Christ will come, and as the thief comes to destroy and to kill, so will the coming of Christ be the death of their carnal ease—the destruction of their earthly hopes!*

**3.** *For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. A terrible text that—"They shall not escape." They shall not escape by their own power or force or wisdom! They shall not escape even*

by the annihilation which they might well desire, but which shall not come to them. They shall not escape.

**4.** *But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.* You know that Christ will come. You expect the dissolution of this present state. To you, therefore, it will come as one who calls at daytime. You cannot know the hour. You must not know it. But since you know that He will come, and come to your joy—and since you are in the light, you look with gladness to that coming!

**5, 6.** *You are all the children of light and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep as do others.* If we were children of the night, sleep is a proper occupation for the night, but as we are the children of the day, let us not sleep as others.

**6.** *But let us watch and be sober.* Watchfulness and sobriety are appropriate duties for the day. To be always serving our Lord with constancy and to keep ourselves from the fascinations of the world which make men's minds drunk—may these two things be our daily care.

**7.** *For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that are drunk are drunk in the night.* There are a few who have reached to such a pitch of shameless idleness that they sleep in the day. And there are others who have come to such a state of debauchery that they are drunk in the day. But this is not the common way of things, nor even in the judgment of the most licentious of the world is this at all a proper state of things. "They that sleep, sleep in the night. They that are drunk are drunk in the night." Let us who are of the day be sober, and let us of course be awake, but let us be more than awake, since watchfulness is here joined to wakefulness and watchfulness in a soldier requires that his armor be on. So Paul pushes the parallel a little farther.

**8.** *But let us who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation.* Soldiers, when they sleep, take off their armor. But in the day when they are awake and on their guard they wear their armor and are ready for the fray. See how much is involved in Christian wakefulness. God help us to carry out every virtue to its legitimate consequences—not to be wakeful after a fashion, but wakeful after God's fashion!

**9.** *For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.* In making us children of light, he gave evidence that our appointment was for the light—that His eternal ordinances were that through the light of Gospel Grace we should, by and by, enter into the light of eternal Glory. "God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."

**10.** *Who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.* They who have served their day and generation, when they sleep, are not parted from their Lord. They become not the children of the darkness by that fact, for He died for us, that whether we wake or sleep we should live together with Him. Whether we are living here or living there, we shall still live together with Him.

**11.** *Therefore comfort yourselves together and edify one another, just as you also are doing.* The more of this the better. Christian people should constantly converse with one another for mutual edification.

**12, 13.** *And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake.* You see, in the Church of old they edified one another, but for all that, they did not cast off God's ordinance of Christian ministry. There was rule in the Church, then, as there should be now—and the Apostle, when he speaks of this individual edification, this mutual instruction—does not forget to notice those who were the pastors of the flock. He says, “Know them which labor among you and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake.”

**13.** *And be at peace among yourselves.* How can a Church prosper if it is not?

**14-16.** *Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man, but always follow that which is good both among yourselves and to all men. Rejoice evermore.* Here follows a string of Christian precepts—a golden chain. “Rejoice evermore.”

**17-19.** *Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit.* Do not despise His operations, either in yourselves or in your brethren. Do not quench Him by neglect, much less by open opposition!

**20-22.** *Despise not prophesying. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil.* Not from that which other people choose to think evil, but from all real evil whatever it is—even from the very shadow that it casts and the shape which it assumes!

**23-26.** *And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calls you, who also will do it. Brethren, pray for us. Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.* Give one another a hearty shake of the hands. That is the western interpretation of the eastern form. Outward forms differ. The inward sense abides the same. Let brotherly love continue in a hearty friendliness among yourselves.

**27, 28.** *I charge you by the Lord that this Epistle be read unto all the holy brethren. The Grace of our lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.*

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON  
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

# REJOICE EVERMORE

## NO. 1900

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 23, 1886,  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Rejoice evermore.”***  
***1 Thessalonians 5:16.***

THIS is a sunny precept. When we read it, we feel that the time of the singing of birds has come. That joy should be made a duty is a sure token of the blessedness of the New Covenant. Because Jesus has suffered, we are encouraged, commanded and enabled to rejoice. Only the Man of Sorrows and His chosen Apostles can teach for a precept such a word as this—*“Rejoice evermore.”* Happy people who can be thus exhorted! We ought to rejoice that there is a command to rejoice! Glory be unto the God of happiness who bids His children be happy. While musing on this text, I seem carried in spirit to the green woods and their bowers. As in a dell, all blue with flowers, where the sun smiles down upon me through the half-born oak leaves, I sit down and hear the blessed birds of the air piping out their love-notes—their music says only this—*“Rejoice evermore.”* All that I see, and hear, and feel surrounds me with garlands of delight, while the fairest of all the shepherds of Sharon sings to me this delicious pastoral—*“Rejoice evermore.”* The very words have breathed spring into my soul and set my heart blossoming! Thus am I also made to be as a daffodil which long has hidden away among the clods, but now, at last, ventures to lift up her yellow lily and ring out her golden bell. Who can be sad, or silent, when the voice of the Beloved says, *“Rejoice evermore”*?

Our Apostle speaks of rejoicing as a personal, present, permanent duty to be always carried out by the people of God. The Lord has not left it to our own option whether we will sorrow or rejoice, but He has pinned us down to it by positive injunction—*“Rejoice evermore.”* He will have this cloth of gold spread over the whole field of life. He has laid down as first and last, beginning, middle and end—*“Rejoice evermore.”* Some things are to be done at one time, some at another, but rejoicing is for all times, forever and forevermore, which, I suppose, is more than ever, if more can be! Fill life's sea with joy up to the high water mark. Spare not, stint not, when rejoicing is the order of the day. Run out to your full tether, sweep your largest circle when you use the golden compasses of joy!

Some things being once done are done with and you need not further meddle with them; but you have never done with rejoicing. *“Rejoice evermore.”*

*Our text is set in the midst of many precepts.* Notice how from the 14<sup>th</sup> verse, the Apostle packs together a number of duties of Christian ministers and Church members—one towards another. “We exhort you, Brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.” All these things are to be done in turn, according as occasion requires, but, “*rejoice evermore.*” You have plenty to do, but this thing you have *always* to do. You shall never be able to fold your hands for lack of some holy task or other, but be not worried—be not fretted by what you have to do—on the contrary, take up the sacred duties with alacrity, welcoming each one of them and entering upon them with delight! Rejoice in each one, because you “*rejoice evermore.*” You will have to warn the unruly and their rebellious tempers will, perhaps, irritate you. Or, if in patience you possess your soul, yet you may grow sad at having so melancholy a duty to perform, but be not troubled, even by the grief of injured love. Warn the unruly, but “*rejoice evermore.*”

Do not pause in the blessed service of rejoicing when you are called upon to comfort the feeble-minded. There is a danger that the feeble-minded may rob you of your comfort, but let it not be so. In attempting to lift them out of the waters you may, perhaps, be almost drowned, yourself—your deliverance will lie in the sweet words, “*Rejoice evermore.*” You will lose your power both to warn the unruly and to comfort the feeble-minded if you lose your joy. The joy of the Lord will be your strength in all these matters. Therefore, “*rejoice evermore.*” Close at your hand will lie the weak who need supporting and you may be half saying to yourselves, “We wish that all God’s people were strong, that we might unitedly spend all our strength against the foe instead of having to use it at home for supporting our own weak soldiers.” But be not dejected on that account—while you are supporting the weak, still, “*rejoice evermore.*” Your rejoicing will be a great support to the faint—your *ceasing* to rejoice will be a terrible confirmation of their sorrow! Lend the feeble a hand, but do not stop your own singing! Does not a mother carry her baby and sing at the same time?

As you turn about, you find all men gathering to hinder you, to grieve you, to slander you, or to make use of you for their base purposes. But be not grieved. Put up with your poor fellow creatures since the Lord puts up with you, but do not leave off rejoicing! As you are patient towards all men, let your patience have a flavor of joy in it. However great the provocations that you endure, still, “*rejoice evermore.*” As it is written, “With all your sacrifices you shall offer salt,” so let it be your settled purpose with every other duty to offer rejoicing. I am sure, Brothers, that we make a very great mistake if we get like Martha—cumbered with much serving—for that cumbering prevents our serving our Master well. He loves to see those who serve in His house of a cheerful countenance. He wants not slaves to Grace His Throne. He would have His children wait upon Him with a light in their faces which is the reflection of His own! He would have His joy fulfilled in them, that their joy may be full. It is His royal pleasure that His service should be delight, His worship, Heaven,

His Presence, Glory! Let your hearts be sanctified, but let not your hearts be troubled. Amidst a thousand duties give not way to a single anxiety! While you are desirous to honor God in everything, yet be not overburdened, even, with the cares of His cause and service, lest you put forth the hand of Uzzah to stay the Ark of the Lord. The Lord forbade His priests to wear garments that caused sweat and He will not have any of us fret and worry about His cause so as to lose our rest in Himself. Wrestle for a blessing, but still “*rejoice evermore.*”

The command to rejoice is set in the midst of duties—it is put there to teach us how to perform them all.

Also notice that our text *comes just after a flavoring of trouble and bitterness.* Read verse 15—“See that none render evil for evil unto any man.” Children of God are apt to have evil rendered to them. They may have slanderous reports spread about them. They may be accused of things they never dreamed of. They may be cut to the heart by the ingratitude of those who ought to have been their friends, but still they are bid, “*rejoice evermore.*” Even rejoice in the persecution and in the slander! “Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.” So says our Lord. “Rejoice,” He says, “and be exceedingly glad.”

There is an expression in the Greek that never has been rendered into English, and never will be—*agalliasthe*. Old Trapp half puns upon the *agalliasthe* as he says, “dance a galliard.” I do not know what a “galliard” was, but I suppose that it was some very joyous kind of dance. Certainly we know of no better way of translating our Lord’s word than by—*exult*, or *leap for joy*. Even when your good name shall be tarnished by the malice of the wicked, then you are to leap for joy! When are you to be wretched? Surely despondency is excluded. If slander is to make us dance, when are we to fret? Suppose some other kind of trial should come upon you? You are still to rejoice in the Lord always. The dearest friend is dead—“*rejoice evermore.*” The sweet babe is sickening, the darling of your household will be taken away—“*rejoice evermore.*” Trade is ebbing out, prosperity is disappearing from you—you may even be brought to poverty—but, “*rejoice evermore.*” Your health is affected, your lungs are weak, your heart does not beat with regularity, very soon you may be sick unto death, but, “*rejoice evermore.*” Shortly you must put off this tabernacle altogether! Tokens warn you that you must soon close your eyes in death, but, “*rejoice evermore.*” There is no limit to the exhortation! It is always in season! Through fire and through water, through life and through death, “*rejoice evermore.*”

Now and then a commentator says that the command of our text must mean that we are to be in the habit of rejoicing, for there must necessarily be intervals in which we do not rejoice. It is to be “constant but intermittent.” so one good man says. I do not know how that can be, though I know what he means. He means that it ought to be the general tenor of

our life that we rejoice, yet he evidently feels that there must be black clouds, now and then, to vary the abiding sunshine. He warns us that there will be broken bits of road where as yet the steam roller has not forced in the granite. *But that will not do as an interpretation of the text*, for the Apostle expressly says, “Rejoice evermore”—that is, rejoice straight on and never leave off rejoicing! Whatever happens, rejoice! Come what may, rejoice! If the worst darkens to the worst—if the night lowers into a sevenfold midnight, yet, “rejoice evermore!” This carillon of celestial bells is to keep on ringing through the night as well as through the day. “Rejoice, rejoice, you saints of God at every time, in every place, and under every circumstance. Joy, joy, forever! Rejoice evermore. In the midst of a thousand duties, amid the surges of 10,000 trials, still rejoice.” There is to be about the Christian a constancy of joy.

I am bound to mention that among the curiosities of the Churches I have known many deeply spiritual Christian people who have been afraid to rejoice. Much genuine religion has been “sickened over with the pale cast of thought!” Some take such a view of religion that it is, to them, a sacred duty to be gloomy! They believe in the holiness of discontent, the sanctity of repining—and they recoil from grateful joy as if it were the devil in the form of an angel of light! One of the commandments of the saints of misery is, “Draw down the blinds on Sunday.” Another is, “Never smile during a sermon—it is wicked.” A third precept is, “Never rest yourself and be sure that you never let anybody else rest for an instant. Why should anybody be allowed a moment’s quiet in a world so full of sin? Go through the world and impress people with the idea that it is an awful thing to live.”

I have known some very good people spoiled for practical usefulness—and spoiled as to being like the Lord Jesus Christ by their deeply laid conviction that it was wicked to be glad. Well do I remember an earnest Christian woman who saw me when I was first converted, full of the joy of the Lord and joyfully assured of my salvation in Christ Jesus. She seemed distressed at the sight of so much joy! She shook her head. She looked at me with that heavenly-minded pity which these good people usually lay by in store. It seemed to her a dreadful thing that so young a Christian should dare to know whom he had believed! If you had been a Christian a hundred years you might, perhaps, begin to think it possible that you were saved—but to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ straight away like a little child—and at once to rejoice in His salvation seemed to this dear old Christian woman to be an act of such shocking temerity that she could only shake her dear head and prognosticate all sorts of horrible things!

Since then I have found a great many like she and when I have seen them shake their heads they have not shaken me half so much as she shook my heart on that first occasion! I know them, now, and I know that there is, after all, nothing in that shake of the head. The fact is that they ought to shake their heads about themselves for getting into so sad a state while this text stands on the sacred page, “Rejoice evermore.” It



cannot be a wise and prudent thing to neglect this plain precept of the Word of God! It cannot be an unsafe thing to do what we are commanded to do! It cannot be a wrong thing for a Believer to abide in that state of mind which is recommended by the Holy Spirit in words so plain and so unguarded, "*Rejoice evermore.*"

Oh, dear Friends, you may rejoice! God has laid no embargo upon rejoicing! He puts no restriction upon happiness. Do believe it that you are permitted to be happy! Do believe that there is no ordinance of God commanding you to be miserable. Turn this Book over and see if there is any precept that the Lord has given you in which He has said, "Groan in the Lord always, and again I say, groan." You may groan if you like. You have Christian liberty for that, but, at the same time, do believe that you have larger liberty to rejoice, for so it is put before you! He bids you rejoice and yet, again, He says "rejoice." Some of God's sheep dare not go into the Lord's own pasture. It is dark and thick with rich and luscious food—and into that field their Shepherd has already led them. Yet they dream that there is a gate and that gate is shut—and across it is written this word—"Presumption." They are afraid to feed where God has made the best grass to grow for them because they are afraid of being presumptuous! The fear is groundless, but painfully common.

Oh that I could deliver the true Believer from this evil influence! If you are Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, everything that there is in Christ is yours! If you are resting in Jesus Christ, though you have only lately begun to trust in Him, the whole Covenant of Grace with all its infinite supplies belongs to you and you have the right to partake of that which Grace has provided! Jesus invites you to eat and drink abundantly. Beloved in the Lord, the only sin that you can commit at the banquet of love will be to deny yourselves! The feast is spread by royal hands—and royal bounty bids you come! Hold not back through shame or fear! Come and saturate your souls with goodness. "Eat you that which is good and let your soul delight itself in fatness," for so God permits you to do.

But I go a step farther and that is, that *it is a sin not to rejoice*. I will not say it harshly—I should like to say it as softly and tenderly as it could be put—but it must be said and I must not take away from the force of it by my tenderness. If it is a command, "Rejoice evermore," then it is a breach of the command not to rejoice evermore! And what is a breach of a command? What is a neglect to obey a precept? Is it not a *sin*—a sin of shortcoming, though not of transgression? Beloved, why do your faces wear those gloomy colors? Why do you distrust? Why do you mourn? Why are you continually suspicious of the faithfulness of God? Why are you not rejoicing when there is God's Word for it, first permitting, and then *commanding* you? Come, you unhappy and dolorous professors, question yourselves rather than others! O you forlorn one, cease to judge those whose eyes flash with exultation!

Next time that you meet with a rejoicing Christian, do not begin to chide him, but quietly chide yourself because you do not rejoice. As for you who are swift of foot, I hope that you will not say an unkind word of

poor Mephibosheth who is lame in both his feet, for he is dear to David and he shall sit at David's table. But, on the other hand, Mephibosheth, in his lameness, must not grow bitter and censorious and find fault with Asahel who is fleet of foot as a young roe, or otherwise it may seem almost too ridiculous! No, no, Heavy-Heart, chide not the glad. Glad-Heart, deal not roughly with the sorrowful! Bear one another's burdens and share one another's joys! If there is any chiding, let it be the chiding of Little-Faith, sorrowfully bemoaning his own weakness of Grace. Oh that God would help us to be faithful to our own experiences—then we shall not criticize others, but judge ourselves.

All this by way of introduction.

**I.** And now, just for a minute or two, I desire to speak upon THE QUALITY OF THIS REJOICING which is commanded in our text. May the Holy Spirit enable me to set before you the select taste and special quality of a Believer's life-long joy! "Rejoice evermore."

Brothers and Sisters, *this is not carnal rejoicing*. If it were, it would be impossible to always keep it up. There is a joy of harvest, but where shall we find it in winter? There is a joy of wealth, but where is this joy when riches take to themselves wings and fly away? There is a joy of health, but that is not always with us, for the evil days come and the years of weakness and sorrow. There is a joy in having your children round about you. Sweet are domestic joys, but these do not last forever. At the house of the happiest, knocks the hand of death! No, if your joys spring from earthly fountains, those fountains may be dried up and then your joys are gone. If the foundation of a man's joy is *anywhere* on earth, it will be shaken, for there is a day coming when the whole earth shall shake and even now it is far from being a stable thing.

Build not on the floods and what are outward circumstances but as waves of the changeful sea! No, Beloved, it cannot be carnal joy which is commanded here, since carnal joy in the nature of things cannot be forevermore. I know not that carnal joy is commanded anywhere. Men are permitted to rejoice in the things of this life, but that is the most that we can say. They are forbidden to rejoice too much in these things, for they are as honey, of which a man may soon eat till he is sickened. The joy which God commands is a joy in which it is impossible to go too far. It is a heavenly joy, based upon things which will last forever, or else we could not be bid to "rejoice evermore."

Again, as this joy is not carnal, so I feel quite sure that *it is not presumptuous*. Some persons ought not to rejoice. Did not the Prophet Hosea say, "Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, as other people, for you have departed from your God"? There are some persons who rejoice and it would be well if a faithful hand were to dash the cup from their lips! They have never fled to Christ for refuge—they have never been born again—they have never submitted themselves to the righteousness of God and yet they are at ease in Zion. Ah, wretched ease! Many are ignorant of their ruin, strangers to the remedy of Grace, strangers to the blood that bought redemption—and yet they rejoice in their own righteousness.

They have a joy that has been accumulated through years of false profession, hypocritical formality and vain pretence. Such as these are not told to “rejoice evermore.”

There must be sound reasons for rejoicing, now, or there can be no reason for rejoicing always. If your joy will not bear looking at, have done with it! If, when you run with the footmen of common self-examinations in time of health, they weary you, what will you do when you contend with the black horsemen of dark thought in the hour of death? The joy that will abide forever is the joy to be sought after! But joy which a man cannot justify never ought to be thought of as enduring “evermore.” Is your hope fixed on what Jesus did for sinners on the Cross? Are you really a partaker of the life that is in Him? Have you been begotten again unto a lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead? If so, it is safe for you to rejoice at once and it will be equally safe for you to “rejoice evermore!” Is it not clear that the rejoicing commanded in our text is not a presumptuous joy, or a carnal joy?

Again, dear Friends, I feel bound to add that *it must not be a fanatical joy*. Certain religious people are of a restless, excitable turn and never feel good till they are half out of their minds. You would not wonder if their hair should stand bolt upright, like the quills of the fretful porcupine. They are in such a state of mind that they cry, “hallelujah,” at anything or nothing, for they feel ready to cry, or shout, or jump, or dance. I do not condemn their delirium, but I *am* anxious to know what goes with it? Come here, Friend. Let us have a talk. What do you know? What? Is it possible that I offend you the moment I seek a reason for the hope that is in you? Is it so that you do not know anything of the Doctrines of Grace? You were never taught anything? The object of the institution which enlisted you is not to teach you, but only to excite you! It pours boiling water into you, but it does not feed you with milk. That is a miserable business!

We like excitement of a proper kind and we covet earnestly a high and holy joy, but if our rejoicing does not come out of a clear understanding of the things of God and if there is no Truth of God at the bottom of it, what does it profit us? Those who rejoice without knowing why can be driven to despair without knowing why—and such persons are likely to be found in a lunatic asylum before long. The religion of Jesus Christ acts upon truthful, reasonable, logical principles—it is sanctified common sense. A Christian man should only exhibit a joy which he can justify and of which he can say, “There is reason for it.” I pray you, take care that you have joy which you may expect to endure forever because there is a good solid reason at the back of it. The excitement of animal enthusiasm will die out like the crackling of thorns under a pot—we desire to have a flame burning on the hearth of our souls which is fed with the fuel of Eternal Truth and will, therefore, burn on forevermore.

I go a little farther, and I say that I believe that this joy which is commanded here, “Rejoice evermore,” is *not even that high and Divine exhilaration which Christians feel upon special occasions*. We could tell of rap-

turous ecstasies and sublime joys which, if they are not Heaven, itself, are so near akin to it that we would not change them for the place that Gabriel fills when nearest to his Master's Throne! Oh, there are times when God's Elijah, having brought down the fire from Heaven, girds up his loins and runs before Ahab's chariot with a Divine enthusiasm which onlookers cannot understand! There are moments on the top of the mountain when Peter is no fool for saying, "Let us build three tabernacles." It is so good to be there that we would willingly stay on that mountain and never come down again to the bustle, turmoil and sin of a guilty world!

Now, you are not commanded in the text to be always in such a high, exalted, rapturous state of mind as that. "Rejoice evermore," but you cannot always rejoice at *that* rate! I have said that you cannot and I mean it *literally*. There is a physical impossibility in it! The strain upon the mind would be much too great. We could not live in such a condition of excitement and tension. Sometimes we can swim in the deep waters, but who can *always* swim? We can take to ourselves the wings of eagles and soar beyond the stars—but we are not condors and cannot always fly—we are more like the sparrows which find a house near the altar of God. When we cannot mount as on wings, we think it quite sufficient if we can run without weariness and walk without fainting. The ordinary joy of the Christian is that which is commanded here—it is not the joy of Jubilee but of every year. It is not the joy of harvest but of all the months. "*Rejoice evermore.*" No, Miriam, no, not always the timbrel! Not every day, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously." There is other work for you. No, Moses, not every day, "Your right hand, O Lord, has dashed in pieces the enemy." No, you have other work to do among these rebels, quite as honoring to your God and quite as useful as writing Israel's triumphal hymn!

No, James and John and Peter, not always on the top of Tabor. Sometimes in the house of death with your Master where the young girl is raised. And sometimes in Gethsemane to keep watch, if you can, while He sweats great drops of blood. You are to "rejoice evermore," but you are not always to be clashing the high-sounding cymbals—sometimes the softer psaltery must satisfy your hand. All days are not holidays. There was a day when Job lost his cattle and his children and yet blessed the name of the Lord. All days are not wedding days. There was a day wherein Jacob cried, "All these things are against me!" All days are not as the days of Heaven upon earth. And until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, we shall have to bear about a joy that is rather a lamp in the night than a sun in the day—a joy that gladdens us when we are cast down, rather than lifts us up to ecstasy.

I hope that you catch my thought, though I am afraid that I do but dimly put it. This shows you what kind of joy could not always be with us. The joy that can always be with us is a part of ourselves—a power of the new nature which God works in us by His own Spirit. It consists in the great cheerfulness of the new-born disposition—a full conviction that

whatever God does is right—a sweet agreement with the Providence of God—let it ordain what it will, an intense delight in God, Himself, and in the Person of His dear Son. And, consequently, a quietness, a calm, a stillness of soul, “the peace of God which passes all understanding.” This holy rejoicing is a drop of the essence of Heaven! You have heard of “songs without words”—such is the joy of the Lord in the soul—a sort of silent song forever sung within the spirit. It is a quiet making of music with every pulse of the heart, a living Psalmody before God with every heaving of the lungs.

I hope that you know what it means, or that if you do not, you may soon learn. This is a joy that has no wear and tear about it. You can keep, from year to year, the even tenor of this way, for this is the pace for which men’s minds were made. “*Rejoice evermore.*” You can live to be as old as Methuselah in this frame, for this rejoicing will never tear you to pieces. It will conserve you and act as the salt of your physical, mental, and spiritual man.

Thus much upon the quality of this joy.

**II.** Suffer a few words upon THE OBJECT OF THE REJOICING, in order to help you, dear Friends, to indulge it. “*Rejoice evermore.*” How can we keep this feast? What are the objects of such a joy as this?

God helping us, we can always rejoice *in God*. What a God we have! “God, my exceeding joy,” said the Psalmist. “Delight yourself, also, in the Lord.” Every attribute of God, every characteristic of God is an inexhaustible gold mine of precious joy to every man who is reconciled to God. Delight yourself in God the Father, His electing love, His unchanging Grace, His illimitable power, His transcending Glory, in your being His child and in that Providence with which He orders all things for you! Delight yourself in your Father God! Delight yourself, also, in the Son, who is, “God with us.” God with us before the earth was, in the Covenant Council when He became our Surety and our Representative. God with us when His delights were with the sons of men. Delight in Him as Man suffering, sympathizing with you. Delight in Him as God putting forth infinite wisdom and power for you. I would need a month in which to give a bare outline of the various points of our Lord’s Divine and human Character which furnish us with objects of joy! Do but think of Him. Do but for a moment consider His love and if you are at all right in heart, it must bring unspeakable pleasure to you—

**“Jesus, the very thought of You  
With sweetness fills my breast.”**

Then think of the Holy Spirit and rejoice in Him as *dwelling in you*, quickening you, comforting you, illuminating you, and abiding with you forever. Think of the Triune God and be blessed.

Then muse upon the Covenant of Grace. Think of redemption by blood. Think of Divine Sovereignty and all that has come of it in the form of Grace to men. Think of your effectual calling, your justification, your acceptance in the Beloved. Think of your final perseverance. Think of your union with the glorious Person of the Well-Beloved and of all the life

and all the Glory that is wrapped up in that surpassing truth. "Rejoice evermore." With such a God, you have always a source of joy!

I believe, dear Friends, that if we are right-minded, every doctrine of the Gospel will make us glad, every promise of the Gospel will make us glad, every precept of the Gospel will make us glad. If you were to go over a list of all the privileges that belong to the people of God, you might pause over each one and say, "I could rejoice always in this if I had nothing else." If ever you fail to rejoice, permit me to exhort you to awaken each one of the Graces of the Spirit to its most active exercise. Begin with the first of them—*faith*. Believe, and as you believe this and that out of the 10,000 blessings which God has promised, joy will spring up in your soul! Have you exercised faith? Then lead out the sister Grace of *hope*. Begin hoping for the resurrection, hoping for the Second Coming, hoping for the glory which is then to be revealed. What sources of joy are these!

When you have indulged hope, then go on to *love* and let this fairest of the heavenly sisters point you to the way of joy. Go on to love God more and more and to love His people and to love poor sinners. And, as you love, you will not fail to rejoice, for joy is born of love! Love has on her left hand sorrow for the griefs of those she loves, but at her right hand a holy joy in the very fact of loving her fellows, for he that loves does a joyful thing. If you cannot get joy either out of hope, or faith, or love, then go on to *patience*. I believe that one of the sweetest joys under Heaven comes out of the severest suffering when patience is brought into play. "Sweet," says Toplady, "to lie passive in Your hands and know no will but Yours." And it is so sweet, so inexpressibly sweet, that to my experience the joy that comes of perfect patience is, under certain aspects, the most Divine of all the joys that Christians know this side of Heaven. The abyss of agony has a pearl in it which is not to be found upon the mountain of delight. Put patience to her perfect work and she will bring you the power to rejoice evermore.

I will suppose that you have gone through all this and that you still say, "I cannot rejoice as I would." Then arise, dear Brothers and Sisters, and gird yourself for holy exercise. Begin with *prayer*. Prayer will make the darkening cloud disappear and then you will rejoice. If supplication is over and you are not rejoicing, then sing a Psalm. "Bring here the minstrel." Often does holy music set the Prophet going. Let us sing a song unto the Lord and if we have no joy in our hearts, already, we shall not have sung very many verses before rejoicing will drop on us like the dew which soaks the dry and dusky tents of the Arabians. If neither prayer nor praise will do it, then read the Word. Sit still and meditate on what the Lord has spoken. Go up to the Communion Table—gather with the people of God in sweet mutual converse. Or go out and preach, my Brothers, to sinners! Go to the Sunday school class, and tell the dear children about Christ. In Christian labor you will joy in the Lord as you would not have rejoiced in Him if you had been at home idle.

At any rate, when you do not rejoice, say to yourself, "Come, Heart, this will not do. Why are you cast down, O my Soul?" I have heard of a

mother that whenever her children began to cry and grow fretty, she said, "They must have medicine." She was sure that they were not well. Whenever you begin to fret and worry, say to yourself, "I must take heavenly medicine, for I am not right. The leaves of the Scriptures are for my healing—I will use them for my soul's good. If my heart were right, I would rejoice in the Lord, and as I am not rejoicing I must resort to the great Physician."

Brothers and Sisters, we must rejoice. Why should we not rejoice, since all things are ours? Heaven is ours in the future and earth is ours in the present. With the past and all its sins blotted out, the future and all its needs provided for by the bounty of an unchanging God, why should we be sad? If we are not glad, the stars may rebuke us as they twinkle amid the darkness—the sun may rebuke us for refusing to shine in the light of God. Come, Brothers and Sisters, let us obey the Word that says, "*Rejoice evermore.*"

**III.** Lastly, somebody will say, "But why should we rejoice?" What are THE REASONS FOR THIS REJOICING? We ought not to need arguments to persuade us to be happy! The worldling says that, "he counts it one of the wisest things to drive dull care away." The child of God may count it the wisest thing to cast his care upon his God. You do not need an argument for rejoicing, but if you did, it is found in the command of your Lord, who says to you, "Rejoice evermore."

*Rejoicing wards off temptation.* The Christian may be tempted, but little impression is made upon him by the pleasurable bait if he is happy in the Lord. There is a passage in Paul—I forget, just now, where it is—where he speaks of putting on the armor of light. It is fine poetry as well as solid fact that we wear the armor of light. And part of the meaning is that we are so surrounded with seraphic joy that nothing can tempt us. The joy which we wear is far superior to any which the Evil One can offer us and so his temptation has lost its power. What can the devil offer the joyous Christian? Why, if he were to say to him, "I will give you all the kingdoms of the world and the glory thereof, if you will fall down and worship me," the Believer would reply to him, "Fiend, I have more than that! I have perfect contentment! I have absolute delight in God. My soul swims in a deep sea of bliss as I think of God." The devil will speedily quit such a man as that, for the joy of the Lord is an armor through which he cannot send the dagger of his temptation!

This joy of the Lord will shut out worldly mirth from the heart. The rejoicing Christian is not the kind of man that needs to spend his evenings in a theater. "Pooh!" he says, "what can I do *there*?" You say to the man who has once eaten bread, "I will take you to such a grand feast. I will show you a company of swine all feeding upon husks. Look upon them, see how they enjoy themselves! You shall have as much as you like and be as happy as they are." He says, "But you do not know me! You do not understand me. I have none of the qualities that link me with swine! I cannot enjoy the things which they enjoy." He that is once happy in God pours contempt upon the most sublime happiness that a worldling can

know! It is altogether out of his line. He does not know their mirth, even as they do not know his rejoicing. I suppose that the fish of the sea have joys suitable to their natures. I do not envy them—I am not inclined to dive into their element. It is so with the children of God—they are not inclined to go after worldly things when they are happy in the Lord.

But your miserable professors who simply go to a place of worship because they ought to go, and who are very good because they dare not be anything else, they have no joy in the Lord! They go to the devil for their joy—they openly confess that sometimes they must have a bit of pleasure and, therefore, they go to questionable amusements. No wonder that they are found in Satan's courts, looking up to him for delights, since they find no rejoicing in the ways of the Lord!

He that rejoices in the Lord always will be *a great encouragement to his fellow Christians*. He comes into the room—you like the very look of his face. It is a half-holiday to look at him and as soon as he speaks, he drops a sweet word of encouragement for the weak and afflicted. We have some Brothers and Sisters round about us whose faces always refresh me before preaching! Their words are cheering and strengthening. Those who rejoice in the Lord evermore cannot help perfuming the room where they are with the aroma of their joy. Others catch the blessed contagion of their contentment and become happy, too.

*This is the kind of thing that attracts sinners.* They used, in the old times, to catch pigeons and send them out with sweet salves on their wings—other pigeons followed them into the dovecote for the sake of their perfume and so were captured. I would that everyone of us had the heavenly anointing on our wings, the Divine perfumes of peace, joy and rest! For then others would be fascinated to Jesus, allured to Heaven. God grant that it may be so, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON  
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**



# “PRAY WITHOUT CEASING”

## NO. 1039

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 10, 1872  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

**“Pray without ceasing.”  
1 Thessalonians 5:17.**

THE position of our text is very suggestive. Observe what it follows. It comes immediately after the precept, “Rejoice evermore,” as if that command had somewhat staggered the reader and made him ask, “How can I always rejoice?” and, therefore, the Apostle appended an answer, “Always pray.” The more praying the more rejoicing! Prayer gives a channel to the pent-up sorrows of the soul—they flow away and in their place streams of sacred delight pour into the heart. At the same time the more rejoicing the more praying! When the heart is in a quiet condition and full of joy in the Lord, then also will it be sure to draw near unto the Lord in worship. Holy joy and prayer act and react upon each other.

Observe, however, what immediately follows the text: “In everything give thanks.” When joy and prayer are married their first born child is *gratitude*. When we joy in God for what we have and believingly pray to Him for more, then our souls thank Him both in the enjoyment of what we have and in the prospect of what is yet to come. Those three texts are three companion pictures representing the life of a true Christian. The central sketch is the connecting link between those on either side. These three precepts are an ornament of Divine Grace to every Believer’s neck—wear them, every one of you, for glory and for beauty!

“Rejoice evermore.” “Pray without ceasing.” “In everything give thanks.” But we cannot spare any time for the consideration of the context—we must advance to the precept in hand. Our text, though exceedingly short, is marvelously full and we will discuss it under the following heads. We shall ask and answer four questions. What do these words imply? Secondly, What do they actually mean? Thirdly, How shall we obey them? And, fourthly, Why should WE especially obey them?

**I. WHAT DO THESE WORDS IMPLY?** “Pray without ceasing.” Do they not imply that the use of the voice is not an essential element in prayer? It would be most unseemly, even if it were possible, for us to continue unceasingly to pray aloud. There would, of course, be no opportunity for preaching and hearing—for the exchange of friendly conversation, for business, or for any other of the duties of life—while the din of so many voices would remind our neighbors rather of the worship of Baal than that of Zion. It was never the design of the Lord Jesus that our throats, lungs, and tongues should be forever at work.

Since we are to pray without ceasing, and yet could not pray with the voice without ceasing, it is clear that audible language is not essential to

prayer. We may speak a thousand words which seem to be prayer, and yet never pray. On the other hand, we may cry into God’s ear most effectually and yet never say a word. In the book of Exodus God is represented as saying to Moses, “Why do you cry unto Me?” And yet it is not recorded that Moses had uttered so much as a single syllable at that time. It is true that the use of the voice often helps prayer. I find, personally, that I can pray best when alone if I can hear my own voice. At the same time it is not essential. It does not enter at all into the acceptability, reality, or prevalence of prayer. Silence is as fit a garment for devotion as any that language can fashion.

It is equally clear that the *posture* of prayer is of no great importance, for if it were necessary that we should pray on our knees we could not pray without ceasing—the posture would become painful and injurious. To what end has our Creator given us feet if He desires us never to stand upon them? If He had meant us to be on our knees without ceasing, He would have fashioned the body differently and would not have endowed us with such unnecessary length of limbs. It is well to pray on one’s knees. It is a most fitting posture. It is one which expresses humility, and when humility is truly felt kneeling is a natural and beautiful token of it. But, at the same time, good men have prayed flat upon their faces. They have prayed sitting, have prayed standing, have prayed in many postures—the posture does not enter into the essence of prayer. Consent not to be placed in bondage by those to whom the bended knee is reckoned of more importance than the contrite heart

It is clear, too, from the text, that the *place* is not essential to prayer, for if there were only certain holy places where prayer was acceptable and we had to pray without ceasing, our Churches ought to be extremely large so that we might always live in them! And they would have to comprise all the arrangements necessary for human habitations. If it is true that there is some sanctity this side of a brick wall more than there is on the other side of it. If it is true that the fresh air blows away Divine Grace and that for the highest acceptance we need arches, pillars, aisles, chancels and such, then farewell, you green lanes and fair gardens! Farewell lovely woods, for from now on we must, without ceasing, dwell where your fragrance and freshness can never reach us!

But this is ridiculous! Therefore I gather that the frequenting of some one particular place has little or nothing to do with prayer. And such a conclusion is consistent with the saying of Paul upon Mars’ Hill, “God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of Heaven and earth, dwells not in temples made with hands.” “Pray without ceasing.” That precept at one stroke overthrows the idea of particular times in which prayer is more acceptable or more proper than at others. If I am to pray without ceasing, then, *every* second must be suitable for prayer. And there is not one unholy moment in the hour, nor one unaccepted hour in the day, nor one unhallowed day in the year!

The Lord has not appointed a certain week for prayer, but *all* weeks should be weeks of prayer. Neither has He said that one hour of the day is more acceptable than another. All time is equally legitimate for supplica-

tion, equally holy, equally accepted with God or else we should not have been told to pray without ceasing. It is good to have your times of prayer. It is good to set apart seasons for special supplication—we have no doubt of that—but we must never allow this to gender the superstition that there is a certain holy hour for prayer in the morning, a specially acceptable hour for prayer in the evening and a sacred time for prayer at certain seasons of the year.

Wherever we seek the Lord with true hearts He is found by us! Whenever we cry unto Him He hears us. Every place is hallowed ground to a hallowed heart, and every day is a holy day to a holy man. From January to December the calendar has not one date in which prayer is forbidden! All the days are red-letter days—whether Sundays or weekdays they are all accepted times for prayer. Clear, then, is it from the text that the voice, the posture, the place, the time—none of them enter into the essence of prayer—or else, in this case, we should be commanded to perform an impossibility which we are quite certain is not after the manner of the Lord our God.

There is one other thing implied in the text, namely, that a Christian has no right to go into any place where he could *not* continue to pray. Pray without ceasing? Then I am never to be in a place where I could not pray without ceasing. Hence, many worldly amusements, without being particularized, may be judged and condemned at once. Certain people believe in ready-made prayers cut and dried for all occasions, and, at the same time, they believe persons to be regenerated in Baptism though their lives are anything but Christian. Ought they not to provide prayers for all circumstances in which these, the dear regenerated, but graceless sons and daughters of their Church, are found?

As, for instance, a pious collect for a young prince or nobleman who is about to go to a shooting match, that he may be forgiven for his cruelty towards those poor pigeons who are only badly wounded and made to linger in misery? Or, also, a prayer for a religious and regenerated gentleman who is going to a horserace, and a collect for young persons who have received the Grace of confirmation upon their going to the theater to attend a very questionable play? Could not such special collects be made to order?

You revolt at the idea? Well, then, have nothing to do with that which you cannot ask God’s blessing upon! Have nothing to do with it, for if God cannot bless it, you may depend upon it—the devil has cursed it! Anything that is right for you to do you may consecrate with prayer! Let this be a sure gauge and test to you—if you feel that it would be an insult to the Lord of Heaven for you to ask His blessing upon what is proposed to you—then stand clear of the unholy thing! If God does not approve, neither must you have fellowship with it! These matters are clearly implied in the precept, “Pray without ceasing.”

**II.** But now, WHAT DOES THIS ACTUALLY MEAN? If it does not mean we are to be always on our knees, nor always saying prayers, nor always in Church or in meeting—and does not mean that we are to consider any day as unfit for praying—what then? The words mean, first, a privilege.

Secondly, a precept—“Pray without ceasing.” Our Lord Jesus Christ, in these words assures you that you may pray without ceasing. There is no time when you may not pray. You have permission here given to come to the Mercy Seat when you will—for the veil of the Most Holy place is torn in two from the top to the bottom—and our access to the Mercy Seat is undisputed and indisputable.

Kings hold their formal receptions upon certain appointed days, and then their courtiers are admitted. But the King of kings holds a constant reception! The monarch whose palace was in Shushan would have none approach him unless he sent for them. But the King of kings has called for all His people, and they may come at all times. They were slain who went unto the King Ahasuerus unless he stretched out his scepter to them. But our King never withdraws His scepter—it is always stretched out, and whoever desires to come to Him may come now, and come at any time. Among the Persians there were some few of the nobility who had the peculiar and special right of an audience with the king at any time they chose. Now that which was the peculiar right of a very few and of the very great is the privilege of every child of God!

He may come in unto the King at all times. The dead of night is not too late for God! The breaking of the morning, when the first gray light is seen, is not too early for the Most High! At midday He is not too busy! And when the evening gathers He is not weary with His children’s prayers. “Pray without ceasing,” is, if I read it correctly, a most sweet and precious permit to the Believer to pour out his heart at all times before the Lord. I hear its still small voice saying, “Come to the Mercy Seat, O My child, whenever you will! Come to the treasury of Grace whenever you desire—

***“The happy gates of Gospel Grace  
Stand open night and day.”***

The doors of the temple of Divine Love shall not be shut. Nothing can set a barrier between a praying soul and its God. The road of angels and of prayers is forever open. Let us but send out the dove of prayer and we may be certain that she will return unto us with an olive branch of peace in her mouth. Evermore the Lord has regard unto the pleadings of His servants and waits to be gracious unto them.

Still, however, it is a precept, “Pray without ceasing.” And what does it mean? It means a great Truth of God which I cannot very well convey to you in a few words, and, therefore, must try and bring it out under four or five points. It means, first, never abandon prayer. Never, for *any* cause or reason cease to pray! Imagine not that you must pray until you are saved, and may then stop. For those whose sins are pardoned, prayer is quite as necessary as for those mourning under a sense of sin. “Pray without ceasing,” for in order that you may persevere in Grace you must persevere in prayer. Should you become experienced in Grace and enriched with much spiritual knowledge, you must not dream of restraining prayer because of your gifts and Graces.

“Pray without ceasing,” or else your flower will fade and your spiritual fruit will never ripen. Continue in prayer until the last moment of your life—

***"Long as they live must Christians pray,  
For only while they pray they live."***

As we breathe without ceasing, so must we pray without ceasing. As there is no attainment in life, of health, or of strength, or of muscular vigor which can place a man beyond the necessity of breathing, so no condition of spiritual growth or advance in Grace will allow a man to dispense with prayer—

***"Let us pray! Our life is praying.  
Prayer with time alone may cease—  
Then in Heaven, God's will obeying,  
Life is praise and perfect peace."***

Never give up praying, not even though Satan should suggest to you that it is in vain for you to cry unto God. Pray in his teeth—"pray without ceasing."

If for awhile the heavens are as brass and your prayer only echoes in thunder above your head, pray on! If, month after month your prayer appears to have miscarried and no reply has been vouchsafed to you, yet still continue to draw near unto the Lord! Do not abandon the Mercy Seat for any reason whatever. If it is a good thing that you have been asking for, and you are sure it is according to the Divine will, continue to pray! If the vision tarries, wait for it—pray, weep, entreat, wrestle—agonize till you get that which you are praying for. If your heart is cold in prayer, do not restrain prayer until your heart warms—but pray your soul unto heat by the help of the ever-blessed Spirit who helps our infirmities! If the iron is hot, then hammer it. And if it is cold, hammer it till you heat it!

Never cease prayer for any reason or argument. If the philosopher should tell you that every event is fixed, and, therefore, prayer cannot possibly change anything, and, consequently, must be folly—still, if you cannot answer him and are somewhat puzzled—go on with your supplications notwithstanding all. No difficult problem concerning digestion would prevent your *eating*, for the result justifies the practice! And so no quibble should make us cease prayer, for the assured success of it commends it to us! You know what your God has told you, and if you cannot reply to every difficulty which man can suggest, resolve to be obedient to the Divine will, and still, "Pray without ceasing." Never, never, never renounce the habit of prayer, or your confidence in its power!

A second meaning is this. Never suspend the regular offering of prayer. You will, if you are a watchful Christian, have your times of daily devotion fixed not by superstition, but for your convenience and remembrance. Just as David, three times a day, and as another saint, seven times a day sought the Lord, be sure to keep up your daily prayer without intermission. This advice will not comprehend the whole range of the text—I am not pretending that it does. I am only mentioning it now as supplementary to other thoughts.

"Pray without ceasing," that is, never give up the morning prayer, nor the evening prayer, nor the prayer at midday if such has grown to be your habit. If you change hours and times, as you may, yet keep up the practice of regularly recurring retirement, meditation, and prayer. You may be said to continue in prayer if your habitual devotions are maintained. It

would be quite correct for me to say that I know a man who has been always begging ever since I have been in London. I do not think that I ever passed the spot where he stands without seeing him there. He is a blind person and stands near a Church. As long as my recollection serves me he has been begging without ceasing.

Of course he has not begged when he has been *asleep*. He has not begged when he has gone home to his meals. Nor did you understand me to have asserted anything so absurd when I said he had begged without ceasing for years. And so, if at those times when it is proper for you to separate yourself from your ordinary labors—if you continue perseveringly begging at Mercy’s Throne—it may be, with comparative correctness, said of you that you pray without ceasing. Through all hours are alike to me, I find it profitable to meet with God at set periods, for these seem to me to be like the winding up of the clock. The clock is to go all day, but there is a time for winding it up. And the little special season that we set apart and hedge round about for communion with our God seems to wind us up for the rest of the day. Therefore, if you would pray without ceasing, continue in the offering of the morning and the evening sacrifice, and let it be perpetually an ordinance with you that your times of prayer are not broken in upon.

That, however, is only a help, for I must add, thirdly, between these times of devotion labor to be much in ejaculatory prayer. While your hands are busy with the world, let your hearts still talk with God—not in 20 sentences at a time, for such an interval might be inconsistent with your calling—but in broken sentences and interjections. It is always wrong to present one duty to God stained with the blood of another, and that we should do if we spoiled study or labor by running away to pray at all hours. But we may, without this, let short sentences go up to Heaven. Yes, and we may shoot upwards cries and single words, such as an, “Ah,” an, “Oh,” an, “O that.” Or, without words we may pray in the upward glancing of the eye or the sigh of the heart.

He who prays without ceasing uses many little darts and hand grenades of godly desire which he casts forth at every available interval. Sometimes he will blow the furnace of his desires to a great heat in regular prayer, and, as a consequence, at other times the sparks will continue to rise up to Heaven in the form of brief words, and looks, and desires. Fourthly, if we would pray without ceasing we must be always in the *spirit* of prayer. Our heart, renewed by the Holy Spirit, must be like the magnetized needle which always has an inclination towards the pole. It does not always point to that pole—you can turn it aside if you will—in an iron ship it exhibits serious deflections. Under all circumstances it is not exactly true—but if you put your finger to that needle and force it round to the east, you have only to take away the pressure and immediately it returns to its beloved pole again.

So let your heart be magnetized with prayer so that if the finger of duty turns it away from the immediate act of prayer, there may still be the longing desire for prayer in your soul—and the moment you can do so, your heart reverts to its beloved work. As perfume lies in flowers even

when they do not shed their fragrance upon the gale, so let prayer lie in your hearts. But, perhaps the last meaning that I shall give has the most of the Truth of the text in it, namely this—Let all your actions be consistent with your prayers and be, in fact, a *continuation* of your prayers. If I am to pray without ceasing, it cannot mean that I am always to be in the act of direct devotion, for the human mind, as at presently constituted, needs variety of occupations and it could not, without producing madness or imbecility, continue always in the exercise of one function.

We must, therefore, change the modus or the manner of operation if we are ceaselessly to continue in prayer. We must pursue our prayers, but do it in another manner. Take an instance. This morning I prayed to God to arouse His people to prayerfulness. Very well—as I came to this house my soul continued to ejaculate, “O Lord, awaken Your children to prayerfulness.” Now, while I am preaching to you and driving at the same point, am I not praying? Is not my sermon the continuation of my prayer—for am I not desiring and aiming at the same thing? Is it not a continuing to pray when we use the best means towards the obtaining of that which we pray for? Do you not see my point? He who prays for his fellow creatures and then seeks their good is still praying!

In this sense there is truth in that old saying—

**“He prays best that loves best  
Both man, and bird, and beast.”**

Loving is praying. If I seek in prayer the good of my fellow creature, and then go and try to promote it, I am practically praying for his good in my actions! If I seek, as I should, God’s glory above everything, then if all my actions are meant to tend to God’s glory, I am continuing to pray though I may not be praying with my thoughts or with my lips! Oh, that our whole life might be a prayer! It can be. There can be a praying without ceasing before the Lord, though there be many pauses in what the most of men would call prayer.

Pray, then, without ceasing, my Brothers and Sisters. Let your whole life be praying. If you change the method, yet change not the pursuit but continue still to worship, still to adore. This I think to be the meaning of our text—never altogether abandon prayer. Do not suspend the regular offering of prayer. Be much in earnest ejaculations. Be always in the spirit of prayer, and let the whole of your life be consistent with your prayer and become a part of it.

**III. HOW CAN WE OBEY THESE WORDS?** First, let us labor as much as we can to prevent all sinful interruptions. “Pray without ceasing.” Then if it is impossible to be in the act of prayer, always, at least let us be as much as possible in that act. And let us prevent those interruptions which I mentioned in the early part of my discourse—the interruptions occasioned by our own sin. Let us endeavor to keep clear, as far as we can, of anything and everything in ourselves or round about us that would prevent our abounding in supplication.

And let us also keep clear of interruptions from the sins of others. Do others forbid us to pray? Let us not be afraid of their wrath. Remember Daniel, who while he was under the penalty of being cast into a den of li-

ons, yet opened his window towards Jerusalem and prayed seven times a day as he had done before. Under no threats—and for no bribes—let us ever cease to pray. In private let us always pray. And if duty calls us to do so where others observe us, let us so much fear the eyes of God that we shall not dare to fear the eyes of man!

Let us next avoid all unnecessary interruptions of every sort to our prayer. If we know that any matter from which we can escape has a tendency to disturb the spirit of prayer within us, let us avoid it earnestly. Let us try, as much as possible, not to be put off the scent in prayer. Satan’s object will be to distract the mind, to throw it off the rails, to divert its aim. But let us resolve before God we will not turn aside from following hard after Him. Sir Thomas Abney had for many years practiced family prayer regularly. He was elected Lord Mayor of London and on the night of his election he must be present at a banquet. But when the time came for him to call his family together in prayer, having no wish either to be a Pharisee or to give up his practice, he excused himself to the guests in this way—he said he had an important engagement with a very dear Friend and they must excuse him for a few minutes.

It was most true, his dearest Friend was the Lord Jesus, and family prayer was an important engagement. And so he withdrew for awhile to the family altar and in that respect prayed without ceasing. We sometimes allow good things to interrupt our prayers and thus make them evil. Mrs. Rowe observes in one of her letters that if the 12 Apostles were preaching in the town where she lived and she could never hear them again, if it were her time for private devotion she would not be bribed out of her closet by the hope of hearing them! I am not sure but what she might have taken another time for her private devotions and so have enjoyed both privileges—but at the same time, supposing she must have lost the prayer and have only got the preaching in exchange, I agree with her—it would have been exchanging gold for silver!

She would be more profited in praying than she would be in hearing, for praying is the *end* of preaching. Preaching is but the wheat stalk while praying is the golden grain itself—and he has the best who gets it. Sometimes we think we are too busy to pray. That, also, is a great mistake, for praying is a saving of time. You remember Luther’s remark, “I have so much to do today that I shall never get through it with less than three hours’ prayer”? He had not been accustomed to take so much time for prayer on ordinary days, but since that was a busy day, he must have more communion with his God!

But, perhaps our occupations begin early, and we therefore say, “How can I get alone with God in prayer?” It is said of Sir Henry Havelock that every morning when the march began at six, he always rose at four that he might not miss his time for the reading of the Scripture and communion with his God. If we have no time we must *make* time, for if God has given us time for secondary duties, He must have given us time for primary ones—and to draw near to him is a primary duty! We must let nothing set it aside. There is no real need to sacrifice any duty—we have time



enough for all if we are not idle. And, indeed, the one will help the other instead of clashing with it!

When Edward Payson was a student at College, he found he had so much to do to attend his classes and prepare for examinations that he could not spend as much time as he should in private prayer. But, at last, waking up to the feeling that he was going back in Divine things through his habits, he took due time for devotion and he asserts in his diary that he did more in his studies in a single week after he had spent time with God in prayer, than he had accomplished in 12 months before. God can multiply our ability to make use of time. If we give the Lord His due, we shall have enough for all necessary purposes. In this matter seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Your other engagements will run smoothly if you do not forget your engagement with God.

We must, dear Friends, in order to pray without ceasing, strive against indolence in prayer. I believe that no man loves prayer until the Holy Spirit has taught him the sweetness and value of it. If you have ever prayed without ceasing you will pray without ceasing! The men who do not love to pray must be strangers to its secret joy. When prayer is a mechanical act and there is no *soul* in it, it is a slavery and a weariness. But when it is really *living* prayer, and when the man prays because he is a Christian and cannot help praying—when he prays along the street, prays in his business, prays in the house, prays in the field—when his whole soul is full of prayer, then he cannot have too much of it. He will not be backward in prayer who meets Jesus in it, but he who knows not the Well-Beloved will count it a drudgery.

Let us avoid, above all things, lethargy and indifference in prayer. Oh, it is a dreadful thing that ever we should insult the majesty of Heaven by words from which our heart has gone! I must, my Soul, I must school you to this, that you must have communion with God! And if in your prayer you do not talk with God, you shall keep on praying till you do! Come not away from the Mercy Seat till you have prayed! Beloved Brothers and Sisters, say unto your soul—“here have I come to the Throne of Grace to worship God and seek His blessing, and I am not going away till I have done it. I will not rise from my knees because I have spent my customary minutes, but here will I pray till I find the blessing.”

Satan will often leave off tempting when he finds you thus resolute in prayer. Brethren, we need waking up! Routine grows upon us. We get into the mill-horse way—round, and round, and round the mill. From this may God save us! It is deadly. A man may pray 20 years with regularity, as far as the time goes, and the form goes—and have never prayed a single grain of prayer in the whole period! One real groan fetched from the *heart* is worth a million litanies! One living breath from a gracious soul is worth 10,000 collects! May we be kept awake by God’s Grace, praying without ceasing.

And we must take care, dear Brethren, again, if we would perform this duty, that we fight against anything like despair of being heard. If we have not been heard after six times we must, as Elijah, go again seven times! If

our Peter is in prison, and the Church has prayed God to liberate him, and he is still in fetters bound in the inner prison, let us pray on, for one of these days Peter will knock at the gate! Be importunate! Heaven’s gate does not open to every runaway knock. Knock, and knock, and knock again—and add to your knocking and to your asking, *seeking*—and be not satisfied till you get a real answer!

Never cease from prayer through presumption. Guard against that. Feel, O Christian, that you always *need* to pray. Say not, “I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing.” You are, by nature, still naked and poor, and miserable. Therefore, persevere in prayer and buy of the Lord fine gold, and clean raiment, that you may be rich and fitly clothed. Thus I have tried to set before you, Beloved, how, by resisting presumption and despair, indolence and lethargy, and trying to put aside all sinful and other interruptions we may pray without ceasing.

**IV.** Now, very briefly, in the last place, WHY SHOULD WE OBEY THIS PRECEPT? Of course we should obey it because it is of Divine authority! But, moreover, we should attend to it because the Lord always deserves to be worshipped. Prayer is a method of worship. Continue, therefore, to always render to your Creator, your Preserver, your Redeemer, your Father, the homage of your prayers!

With such a King let us not be slack in homage. Let us pay Him the revenue of praise continually. Evermore may we magnify and bless His name. His enemies curse Him—let us bless Him without ceasing! Moreover, Brethren, the spirit of love within us surely prompts us to draw near to God without ceasing. Christ is our Husband. Is the bride true to her marriage vows if she cares not for her Beloved’s company? God is our Father. What sort of a child is that which does not desire to climb on its father’s knee and receive a smile from its father’s face? If you and I can live day after day and week after week without anything like communion with God, how does the love of God dwell in us?

“Pray without ceasing,” because the Lord never ceases to love you, never ceases to bless you, and never ceases to regard you as His child. “Pray without ceasing,” for you need a blessing on all the work you are doing. Is it common work? “Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.” Is it business? It is vain to rise up early and sit up late and eat the bread of carefulness, for without God you cannot prosper. You are taught to say, “Give us this day our daily bread”—an inspired prayer for secular things. Oh, consecrate your seculars by prayer!

And, if you are engaged in God’s service, what work is there in which you can hope for success without His blessing? To teach the young, to preach the Gospel, to distribute tracts, to instruct the ignorant—do not all these need His blessing? What are they if that favor is denied? Pray, therefore, as long as you work. You are always in danger of being tempted—there is no position in life in which you may not be assaulted by the enemy. “Pray without ceasing,” therefore. A man who is going along a dark road where he knows that there are enemies, if he must be alone and has a sword with him, he carries it drawn in his hand—to let the robbers know that he is ready for them. So Christian, pray without ceasing! Carry

your sword in your hand—wave that mighty weapon of all-prayer of which Bunyan speaks! Never sheathe it, for it will cut through coats of mail!

You need fear no foe if you can but pray. As you are tempted without ceasing, so pray without ceasing. You need always to pray, for you always need something. In no condition are you so rich as not to need something from your God. It is not possible for you to say, “I have all things,” or, if you can, you have them only in Christ, and from Christ you must continue to seek them. As you are always in need, so beg always at Mercy’s gate. Moreover, blessings are always waiting for you. Angels are ready with favors that you know not of, and you have but to ask and have! Oh, could you see what might be had for the asking you would not be so slack! The priceless benisons of Heaven which lie on one side as yet, oh, did you but perceive that they are only waiting for you to *pray*, you would not hesitate a moment!

The man who knows that his farming is profitable and that his land brings forth abundantly will be glad to sow a broader stretch of land another year. And he who knows that God answers prayer and is ready, still, to answer it, will open his mouth yet wider that God may fill it! Continue to pray, Brothers and Sisters, for even if you should not need prayer yourself, there are others who do—there are the dying, the sick, the poor, the ignorant, the backsliding, the blaspheming, the heathen at home and the heathen abroad. “Pray without ceasing,” for the enemy works incessantly, and as yet the kingdom has not come unto Zion. You shall never be able to say, “I left off praying, for I had nothing to pray for.” On this side of Heaven objects for prayer are as multitudinous as the stars of the sky!

And, now, I said I would say a word as to why *we* ought to especially pray, and that shall close the sermon. Beloved Friends, this Church ought to pray without ceasing! We have been, in years past, notable for prayer. If ever a Church has prayed it has been, by God’s Grace, this Church. I might find many faults with some who hinder prayer, but yet I must say in God’s sight I know and feel that there has been living prayer in this Church for many years, and hence it is we have had many years of peace and prosperity. We have lacked nothing because we have not lacked prayer. I do not doubt we might have had much more if we had prayed more—still prayer has been very mighty here.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, suppose you had no pastor. Suppose the preacher was gone from you, and that the black cloth upon this pulpit was not for a deceased elder of the Church but for the preacher, himself? You would pray, would you not? Will you not pray for me, then, while I live? If you would pray for another to come, will you not pray for me while I am here? I desire to discharge my office before you in God’s sight with all earnestness, but I cannot without your prayers! And as being gone from you, you would lift up many sighs and you would with prayers ask for a successor, pray for me while I am yet with you!

Beloved, you have prayed very earnestly for the pastor when he has been sick. Your prayers have been his consolation and his restoration. Will you not pray for him now that he is able to preach the Gospel—that

his health may be sanctified to God’s service and the ministry of the Truth of God may be mighty in the winning of souls? I ask it of you. I think I might *claim* it of you. I do beseech you, Brothers and Sisters, pray for me! Suppose again, dear Brethren, there were no conversions in our midst, would you not pray? And since there are a great many conversions, should that be a reason for leaving off? Shall we worship God the less because He gives us more? Instead of one prayer which would go up were there no conversions, there should be 10 now that He continues to work salvation among us!

Suppose we were divided, and had many schisms, and jealousies, and much bickering—would not the faithful ones pray in bitterness of spirit? Will you not pray, since there are no divisions and much Christian love? Surely, I say again, you will not treat God the worse because He treats you the better! That were foolish, indeed! Suppose we were surrounded today with hosts of persecutors and error everywhere crept into our midst and did us damage—would you not pray, you who love the Lord? And now that we live in days of peace, and error, though it prowls around, is kept out of our fold, will you not commune with the Lord all the more? I will say yet a third time, shall we pray the less because God gives the more?

Oh no! But the better He is to us the more let us adore and magnify His name! Just now we need to pray because some are growing cold and turning to their old sins. We need to pray because we are doing much for Christ. Every agency is in full work. We need a great blessing upon great efforts. We have had such results from prayer as might make a man’s ears to tingle who should hear of them for the first time—our history as a Church has not been second, even, to Apostolic history itself! We have seen God’s arm made bare in the eyes of all the people—and to the ends of the earth the testimony of this pulpit has gone forth and thousands have found the Savior—all in answer to many prayers!

Pray, then, without ceasing! O Church in the Tabernacle, hold fast what you have, that no man take your crown! Oh, continue to be a praying Church that we, together, when we shall stand before the Judgment seat of Christ, pastor and people, may not be accused of being prayerless nor of being slack in the work of the Lord! I earnestly hope all this will tend to make tomorrow’s day of prayer more earnest and intense. But yet more do I pray that at all times all of us may be fervent, frequent, instant and constant in prayer—praying in the Holy Spirit, in the name of Jesus.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307.