

FAITH AND LIFE

NO. 551

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“Simon Peter, a servant and an Apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ. Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, according as His Divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that has called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these you might be partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”
2 Peter 1:1-4.

THE two most important things in our holy religion are faith and life. He who shall rightly understand these two words is not far from being a master in experimental theology. Faith and life! These are vital points to a Christian. They possess so intimate a connection with each other that they are by no means to be severed. God has so joined them together, let no man seek to put them asunder. You shall never find true faith unattended by true godliness. On the other hand, you shall never discover a truly holy life which has not for its root and foundation a living faith upon the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Woe unto those who seek after the one without the other! There are some who cultivate faith and forget holiness. These may be very high in orthodoxy, but they shall be very deep in damnation in that day when God shall condemn those who hold the Truth of God in unrighteousness and make the doctrine of Christ to pander to their lusts. There are others who have strained after holiness of life, but have denied the faith. These are comparable unto the Pharisees of old, of whom the Master said, they were “whitewashed sepulchers.” They were fair to look upon externally, but inwardly, because the living faith was not there, they were full of dead men’s bones and all manner of uncleanness. You must have faith, for this is the foundation! You must have holiness of life, for this is the superstructure.

Of what use is the mere foundation of a building to a man in the day of storms? Can he hide himself among sunken stones and concrete? He wants a house to *cover* him as well as a foundation upon which that house might have been built! Even so we need the superstructure of spiritual life if we would have comfort in the day of doubt. But seek not a holy life without faith—for that would be to erect a house which can afford no permanent shelter because it has no foundation on a rock—a house which must come down with a tremendous crash in the day when the rain descends and the floods come and the winds blow and beat upon it.

Let faith and life be put together and, like the two abutments of an arch, they shall make your piety strong. Like the horses of Pharaoh's chariot, they pull together gloriously. Like light and heat streaming from the same sun, they are alike full of blessing. Like the two pillars of the temple, they are for glory and for beauty. They are two streams from the Fountain of Grace. Two lamps lit with holy fire. Two olive trees watered by heavenly care. Two stars carried in Jesus' hands. The Lord grant that we may have both of these to perfection so that His name may be praised.

Now it will be clear to all that in the four verses before us our Apostle has most excellently set forth the necessity of these two things—twice over he insists upon faith and twice over upon holiness of life. We will take the first occasion first.

I. Observe, in the first place, what he says concerning the character and the origin of faith and then concerning the character and origin of spiritual life. "Simon Peter, a servant and an Apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ." So far the faith. "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, according as His Divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that has called us to glory and virtue." These two verses, you see, concern the spiritual life which comes with the faith.

Let us begin where Peter begins, with FAITH. You have here a description of true saving faith.

First, you have a description of its source. He says, "to them that have obtained like precious faith." See, then, my Brothers and Sisters, faith does not grow in man's heart by nature. It is a thing which is *obtained*. It is not a matter which springs up by a process of education, or by the example and excellent instruction of our parents. It is a thing which has to be obtained. Not imitation, but regeneration! Not development, but conversion! All our good things come from *without* us—only evil can be educed from *within* us.

Now that faith which is obtained by us must be *given* to us. And well are we taught in Scripture that "faith is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God." Although faith is the *act* of man, yet it is the *work* of God. "With the heart man believes unto righteousness," but that heart must, first of all, have been renewed by Divine Grace before it ever can be *capable* of the act of saving faith. Faith, we say, is man's act, for we are commanded to, "*believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ," and we shall be saved.

At the same time faith is God's *gift* and wherever we find it we may know that it did not come there from the force of nature, but from a work of Divine Grace. How this magnifies the Grace of God, my Brethren, and how low this casts human nature! Faith! Is it not one of the simplest things? Merely to depend upon the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ—does it not seem one of the easiest of virtues? To be *nothing* and to let Him be everything—to be still and to let Him work for me—does not this seem to be the most elementary of all the Christian Graces? Indeed, so it is.

And yet, even to this first principle and rudiment poor human nature is so fallen and so utterly undone that it cannot attain unto it! Brethren, the Lord must not only open the gates of Heaven to us at the last, but He must open the gates of our heart to faith at the first. It is not enough for us to know that He must make us perfect in every good work to do His will. We must be taught that He must even give us a *desire* after Christ. And when this is given, *HE* must enable us to give the grip of the hand of faith whereby Jesus Christ becomes our Savior and Lord.

Now the question comes (and we will try and make the text of today a text of examination all the way through)—have we obtained this faith? Are we conscious that we have been operated upon by the Holy Spirit? Is there a vital principle in us which was not there originally? Do we know today the folly of carnal confidence? Have we a hope that we have been enabled, through Divine Grace, to cast away all our own righteousness and every dependence? And are we, now, whether we sink or swim, resting entirely upon the Person, the righteousness, the blood, the intercession, the precious merit of our Lord Jesus Christ?

If not, we have cause enough to tremble. But if we have, while the Apostle writes, “Unto them that have obtained like precious faith,” he writes to us, and across the interval of centuries his benediction comes as full and fresh as ever, “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you.”

Peter, having described the *origin* of this faith, proceeds to describe its *object*. The word, “through,” in our translation, might, quite as correctly have been rendered “in”—“faith in the righteousness of our God and our Savior Jesus Christ.” True faith, then, is a faith *in* Jesus Christ, but it is a faith in Jesus Christ as Divine. That man who believes in Jesus Christ as simply a Prophet, as only a great teacher, has not the faith which will save him. Charity would make us hope for many Unitarians, but honesty compels us to condemn them without exception so far as vital godliness is concerned.

It matters not how intelligent may be their conversation, nor how charitable may be their manners, nor how patriotic may be their spirit—if they reject Jesus Christ as very God of very God we believe they shall, without doubt, perish everlastingly. Our Lord uttered no dubious words when He said, “He that believes not shall be damned,” and we must not attempt to be more liberal than the Lord Himself. Little allowance can I make for one who receives Jesus the Prophet and rejects Him as God. It is an atrocious outrage upon common sense for a man to profess to be a Believer in Christ at all if he does not receive His Divinity. I would undertake, at any time, to prove to a demonstration that if Christ were not God, He was the grossest impostor who ever lived. He was one of two things—He was either Divine or a villain. There is no stopping between the two.

I cannot imagine a character more vile than that which would be borne by a man who should lead his followers to adore him as God, without ever putting in a word by way of caveat, to stop their idolatry! No, who could have spoken in terms so ambiguous that two thousand years after His death there should be found millions of persons resting upon Him as God? I say, if He were not God, the atrocity of His having palmed Himself

upon us, His disciples, as God, puts aside altogether from consideration any of the apparent virtues of His life. He was the grossest of all deceivers, if He was not “very God of very God.”

O Beloved, you and I have found no difficulties here! When we have beheld the record of His miracles. When we have listened to the testimony of His Divine Father. When we have heard the Words of the inspired Apostles. When we have felt the majesty of His own Divine influence in our own hearts we have graciously accepted Him as, “the Wonderful, the Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father.” And, as John bore witness of Him and said, “The Word was in the beginning with God and the Word was God,” even so have we received Him! So that at this day, He that was born of the virgin Mary, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, is to us, “God over all, blessed forever.”—

**“Jesus is worthy to receive
Honor and power Divine.
And blessings more than we can give,
Be Lord forever Yours.”**

Now, beloved Friends, have we heartily and joyfully received Jesus Christ as God? My Hearer, if you have not, I pray you seek of God the faith which saves, for you have it not as yet, nor are you in the way to it. Who but a God could bear the weight of sin? Who but a God shall be the “same yesterday, today and forever”? Concerning whom but a God could it be said, “I am the Lord, I change not. Therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed”? We have to do with Christ and we should be consumed if He changed. Inasmuch, then, as He does not change and we are not consumed, He must be Divine and our soul rolls the entire burden of its care and guilt upon the mighty shoulders of the everlasting God, who—

**“Bears the earth’s huge pillars up,
And spreads the heavens abroad.”**

Mark in further dwelling upon the text that the Apostle has put in another word beside, “God,” and that is, “of God and our Savior.” As if the Glory of the Godhead might be too bright for us, he has attempted it by gentler words, “our Savior.” Now, to trust Jesus Christ as Divine will save no man, unless there is added to this a resting in Him as the great Propitiatory Sacrifice. Jesus Christ is our Savior because He became a Substitute for guilty man. He, having taken upon Himself, the form of manhood by union with our nature, stood in the place of sinners. When the whole tempest of Divine wrath was about to spend itself on man, He endured it all for His elect. When the great whip of the Law must fall, He bared His own shoulders to the lash.

When the cry was heard, “Awake, O Sword!” it was against Christ the Shepherd, against the Man who was the fellow to the eternal God. And because He thus suffered in the place of man, He received power from on high to become the Savior of man and to bring many sons into Glory because He had been made perfect through suffering. Now, have we received Jesus Christ as our Savior? Happy are you if you have laid your hand upon the head of Him who was slain for sinners. Be glad and rejoice in the Lord without ceasing if today that blessed Redeemer who has ascended upon high has become your Savior, delivered you from sin, passed

by your transgressions and made you to be accepted in the Beloved! A Savior is He to us when He delivers us from the curse, punishment, guilt and power of sin! "He shall save His people from their sins." O great God, be You my Savior, mighty to save!

But be pleased to notice the word "righteousness." It is a faith in the righteousness of our God and our Savior. In these days, certain Divines have tried to get rid of all idea of Atonement. They have taught that faith in Jesus Christ would save men, apart from any faith in Him as a Sacrifice. Ah, Brethren, it does not say, "faith in the teaching of God our Savior," I do not find here that it is written, "faith in the Character of God our Savior, as our Exemplar." No, but "faith in the *righteousness* of God our Savior." That righteousness, like a white robe, must be cast around *us*. I have not received Jesus Christ at all, but I am an adversary and an enemy to Him unless I have received Him as Jehovah Tsidkenu, the Lord our Righteousness.

There is His perfect life. That life was a life for me. It contains all the virtues, in it there is no spot. It keeps the Law of God and makes it honorable. My faith takes that righteousness of Jesus Christ and it is cast about me and I am then so beautifully, no, so *perfectly* arrayed, that even the eyes of God can see neither spot nor blemish in me. Have we, then, today, a faith in the righteousness of God our Savior? For no faith but this can ever bring the soul into a condition of acceptance before the Most High. "Why," says one, "these are the very simplicities of the Gospel." Beloved, I know they are and therefore do we deal them out this morning. For thanks be to God—it is the simplicities which lie at the foundation. And it is rather by simplicities than by mysteries that a Christian is to try himself and to see whether he is in the faith or not. Ask the question, Brethren—have we, then, this like precious faith in God and our Savior Jesus Christ?

Our Apostle has not finished the description without saying that it is "like precious faith." All faith is the same sort of faith. Our faith may not be like that of Peter's, in degree, but if it is genuine, it is like it as to its nature, its origin, its objects and its results. Here is a blessed equality! Speak of "liberty, equality and fraternity," you shall only find these things carried out within the Church of Christ. There is, indeed, a blessed equality here, for the poorest Little-Faith who ever crept into Heaven on its hands and knees, has a like precious faith with the mighty Apostle Peter.

I say, Brothers and Sisters, if the one is gold, so is the other. If the one can move mountains, so can the other. Remember that the privileges of mountain-moving and of plucking up the trees and casting them into the sea are not given to *great* faith, but, "if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed," it shall be done. Little faith has a royal descent and is as truly of Divine birth as is the greatest and fullest assurance which ever made glad the heart of man! Therefore it ensures the same inheritance at the last and the same safety by the way. It is "like precious faith." He tells us, too, that faith is "precious," and is it not precious? For it deals with precious things, with precious promises, with precious blood, with a precious

redemption, with all the preciousness of the Person of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Well may that be a precious faith which supplies our greatest want, delivers us from our greatest danger and admits us to the greatest Glory. Well may that be called “precious faith,” which is the symbol of our election, the evidence of our calling, the root of all our Graces, the channel of communion, the weapon of prevalence, the shield of safety, the substance of hope, the evidence of eternity, the reward of immortality and the passport of Glory! O for more of this inestimably precious faith! Precious faith, indeed, it is.

When the Apostle, Simon Peter, writes, “to them that have obtained like precious faith with us, through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ,” does he write to you? Does he write to me? If not, if we are not here addressed, remember that we can never expect to hear the voice which says, “Come you blessed of My Father.” But we are today in such a condition, that, dying as we now are, “Depart you cursed” must be the thunder which shall roll in our ears and drive us down to Hell. So much, then, concerning faith.

Now we shall turn to notice with great brevity, the LIFE. “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, according as His Divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that has called us to glory and virtue.” Here we have, then, Brethren, the fountain and source of our spiritual life. Just as faith is a gift which is to be obtained, so you will perceive that our spiritual life is a principle which is given. A thing which is given to us, too, by Divine power—“according as His Divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness.”

To give life at all is the essential attribute of God. This is an attribute which He will not alienate—to save and to destroy belong unto the Sovereign of Heaven. “He can create and He can destroy,” is one of the most profound notes in the ascription of our praise. Suppose a corpse is before us. How great a pretender would he be who should boast that it was in his power to restore it to life! Certainly it would be even a greater pretense if anyone should say that he could give to himself or to another Divine life—the spiritual life by which a man is made a Christian. My Brethren, you who are partakers of the Divine nature know that by nature you were dead in trespasses and sins and would have continued so until this day if there had not been an interposition of Divine energy on your behalf.

There you lay in the grave of your sin, rotten, corrupt. The voice of the minister called to you, but you did not hear. You were often bid to come forth, but you did not and could not come. But when the Lord said, “Lazarus, come forth,” then Lazarus came forth. And when He said to you, “Live,” then you lived, also, and the spiritual life beat within you with joy and peace through believing. This we ought never to forget, because let us never fail to remember that if our religion is a thing which sprang from *ourselves*, it is of the flesh and must die. That which is born of the flesh in

its best and most favorable moments is flesh. Only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. "You must be born again."

If a man's religious life is only a refinement of his ordinary life—if it is only a high attainment of the natural existence—then is it not the spiritual life and does not prepare him for eternal life before the Throne of God. No, we must have a *supernatural* spark of heavenly flame kindled within us. Just as nothing but the soul can quicken the body and make it live, so the Spirit alone can quicken the soul and make the soul live. We must have the third master principle infused or else we shall be but natural men—made after the image of the first Adam.

We must have, I say, the new spirit, or else we shall not be like the second Adam, who was made a quickening Spirit. Only of the Christian can we say that he is *spirit*, soul and body. The ungodly man has only soul and body and as to spiritual existence he is as dead as the body would be if there were no soul. Now the implantation of this new principle, called the spirit, is a work of Divine power. Divine power! What stupendous issues are grasped in that term, "Divine power"!

It was this which dug the deep foundations of the earth and sea! Divine power! It is this which guides the marches of the stars of Heaven! Divine power! It is this which holds up the pillars of the universe and which one day shall shake them and hurry all things back to their native nothingness. Yet the same power which is required to create a world and to sustain it is required to make a man a Christian! And unless that power is put forth, the spiritual life is not in any one of us. You will perceive, dear Friends, that the Apostle Peter wished to see this Divine life in a healthy and vigorous state and therefore he prays that Grace and peace may be multiplied. Divine power is the foundation of this life. Grace is the food it feeds upon and peace is the element in which it lives most healthily.

Give a Christian much Grace and his spiritual life will be like the life of a man who is well clothed and nurtured. Keep the spiritual life without abundant Grace and it becomes lean, faint and ready to die—and though it cannot die, yet will it seem as though it gave up the ghost, unless fresh Grace is bestowed. Peace, I say, is the element in which it flourishes most. Let a Christian be much disturbed in mind, let earthly cares get into his soul, let him have doubts and fears as to his eternal safety, let him lose a sense of reconciliation to God, let his adoption be but dimly before his eyes and you will not see much of the Divine life within him. But oh, if God shall smile upon the life within you, if He shall give you Grace, and your soul dwells much in the balmy air of heavenly peace—then shall you be strong to exercise yourself unto godliness and your whole life shall adorn the doctrine of God your Savior.

Observe again, that in describing this life, Peter speaks of it as one which was conferred upon us by our being *called*. He says, "We were called unto glory and virtue." I find translators differ here. Many of them think the word should be "By"—"We are called by the Glory and virtue of God," that is, there is a manifestation of all the glorious attributes of God and of all the efficacious virtue and energy of His power in the calling of every Christian. Simon Peter himself was at his fishing and in his boat,

but Jesus said to him, "Follow Me," and at once he followed Christ. He says there was in that calling, the Divine Glory and virtue. And, doubtless, when you and I shall get to Heaven and see things as they are, we shall discover in our effectual calling of God to Grace, a Glory as great as in the creation of worlds and a virtue as great as in the healing of the sick, when virtue went from the garments of our Savior.

Now, can we say today that we have a life within us which is the result of Divine power and have we, upon searching ourselves, reason to believe, dear Friends, that there is that within us which distinguishes us from other men because we have been called out of mankind by the Glory and energy of the Divine power? I am afraid some of us must say "No." Then the Lord in His mercy has yet to bring us into the number of His people. But if we can, however, tremblingly say "Yes, I trust there is something of the life in me," then as Peter did so, do I wish for you that benediction, "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

O Brothers and Sisters, whatever men may say against the faith of God there is nothing in the world which creates virtue like true faith! Wherever true faith enters, though it be into the heart of a harlot or of a thief, what a change it makes! See her there—she has polluted herself many times—she has gone far into sin. Mary has been a sinner! She hears the preaching of the Savior. Standing in the crowd she listens to Him one day as He preaches concerning the prodigal and how the loving father pressed him to his bosom. She comes to Jesus and she finds forgiveness. Is she a harlot any longer? No, there she is, washing His feet with her tears and wiping them with the hairs of her head. The woman who was a sinner hates her evil ways and loves her gracious Lord. We may say of her, "But she is washed, but she is sanctified, but she is saved."

Take Saul of Tarsus. Foaming with blood, breathing out threats, he is going to Damascus to drag the saints of God to prison. On the road he is struck down. By Divine mercy he is led to put his trust in Jesus. Is he a persecutor any longer? See that earnest Apostle beaten with rods—shipwrecked—in labors more abundant than all the rest of them! He counts not his life dear unto him, that he may win Christ and be found in Him. Saul of Tarsus becomes a majestic proof of what the Grace of God can do! See Zaccheus, the grasping publican, distributing his wealth! The Ephesians burning their magical books! The jailer washing the Apostle's stripes!

Take the cases of many now present. Let memory refresh itself this morning with the recollection of the change which has been worked in you. We have nothing to boast of—God forbid that we should glory, save in the Cross of Christ—but yet some of us are wonderful instances of renewing Grace. We were unclean, our mouths could utter blasphemy. Our temper was hot and terrible. Our hands were unrighteous—we were altogether as an unclean thing—but how changed now!

Again, I say we boast of nothing which we now are, for by the Grace of God we are what we are, yet the change is something to be wondered at! Has Divine Grace worked this change in you? Be not weary with my reit-

eration of this question. Let me put it again to you till I get an answer—no, till I force you to an answer—Have you this precious faith? Can you not answer the question? Then, have you not that Divine life, that life which is given by Divine calling? If you have the one, you have the other. And if you have not both, you have neither—for where there is the one, the other must come and where the other has come—the other has been there.

II. I have thus fully but feebly brought the subject before you. Allow me to remind you that another verse remains which handles the same topics. In the fourth verse he deals with the privileges of faith and also with the privileges of the spiritual life.

Notice the PRIVILEGE OF FAITH first. “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises”—there is the faith. “That by these you might be partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust”—there is the life resulting from the faith. Now, the privileges of faith first. The privileges of faith are that we have given to us, “Exceeding great and precious promises.” “Great and precious”—two words which do not often come together.

Many things are great which are not precious, such as great rocks which are of little value. On the other hand, many things are precious which are not great—such as diamonds and other jewels which cannot be very great if they are very precious. But here we have promises which are so great that they are not less than Infinite! And so precious that they are not less than Divine! I shall not attempt to speak about their greatness or their preciousness, but just give a catalog of them and leave you to guess at both. We have some of them which are like birds in the hand—we have them already. Other promises are like birds in the bush, only that they are just as valuable and as sure as those which are in the hand.

Note here, then, we have received by precious faith the promise and pardon. Hark you, my Soul, all your sins are forgiven! He who has faith in Christ has no sin to curse him. His sins are washed away, they have ceased to be. They have been carried on the scapegoat’s head into the wilderness. They are drowned in the Red Sea. They are blotted out. They are thrown behind God’s back. They are cast into the depths of the sea. Here is a promise of perfect pardon. Is not this great and precious—as great as your sins are? And if your sins demanded a costly ransom, this precious promise is as great as the demand.

Then comes the righteousness of Christ—you are not only pardoned, that is, washed and made clean, but you are dressed—robed in garments such as no man could ever weave. The vesture is Divine. Jehovah Himself has worked out your righteousness for you. The holy life of Jesus, the Son of God, has become your beautiful dress and you are covered with it. Christian, is not this an exceedingly great and precious promise? The Law was great—this righteousness is as great as the Law. The Law asked a precious revenue from man, more than humanity could pay—the righteousness of Christ has paid it all! Is it not great and precious?

Then next comes reconciliation. You were strangers, but you are brought near by the blood of Christ. Once aliens, but now fellow citizens

with the saints and of the household of God. Is not this great and precious? Then comes your adoption. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is." "And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ, if so we suffer with Him that we may be glorified together." Oh, how glorious is this great and precious promise of adoption!

Then we have the promise of Providence—"all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to His purpose." Your place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks. "Your bread shall be given you and your waters shall be sure." "As your days your strength shall be." "Fear not, I am with you; be not dismayed, I am your God." "When you pass through the rivers, I will be with you, the floods shall not overflow you. When you go through the fire, you shall not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon you." When I think of Providence, the greatness of its daily gifts and the preciousness of its hourly gifts, I may well say, here is an exceeding great and precious promise!

Then you have the promise, too, that you shall never taste of death but shall only sleep in Jesus. "Write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth. Yes, says the Spirit, that they cease from their labors. And their works do follow them." Nor does the promise cease here! You have the promise of a resurrection. "For the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

Beloved, we know that if Christ rose from the dead, so also they who sleep in Jesus will the Lord bring with Him. Nor is this all, for we shall reign with Jesus at His coming. We shall be glorified with Him. We shall sit upon His Throne, even as He has overcome and sits with His Father upon His Throne. The harps of Heaven, the streets of Glory, the trees of Paradise, the river of the Water of Life, the eternity of immaculate bliss—all these God has promised to them who love Him. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard the things which God has prepared for them that love Him, but He has revealed them to us by His Spirit," and by our faith we have grasped them and we have today "the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen."

Now, Beloved, see how rich faith makes you! What treasure! What a costly regalia! What gold mines! What oceans of wealth! What mountains of sparkling treasures has God conferred upon you by faith! But we must not forget the *life* and with that we close. The text says, He has given us this promise, "that"—"in order that." What then? What are all these treasures lavished for? Why these pearls? Why these jewels? Why, I say, these oceans of treasure? Why? Is the end worthy of the means? Surely God never gives greater store than the thing which He would purchase will be worth! We may suppose, then, the end to be very great when such costly means have been given. And what is the end? Why, "that by these you might be partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

O, my Brothers and Sisters, if you have these mercies today by faith, see to it that the result is obtained. Be not content to be made rich in these great and precious promises, without answering God's design in your being thus enriched! That design, you perceive, is twofold. It is first that you may be partakers of the Divine nature. And, secondly, that you may escape the corruption which is in the world.

To be a partaker of the Divine nature is not, of course, to become God. That cannot be. The essence of Deity is not to be participated in by the creature. Between the creature and the Creator there must ever be a gulf fixed in respect of essence. But as the first man Adam was made in the image of God, so we, by the renewal of the Holy Spirit, are in a yet more Divine sense made in the image of the Most High and are partakers of the Divine nature. We are, by Grace, made like God. "God is love," we become love—"He that loves is born of God." God is truth—we become true and we love that which is true and we hate the darkness and the lie.

God is good, it is His very name—He makes us good by His Grace so that we become the pure in heart who shall see God. No, I will say this—that we become partakers of the Divine nature in even a higher sense than this—in fact, in any sense, anything short of our being absolutely Divine. Do we not become members of the body of the Divine Person of Christ? And what sort of union is this—"members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones"? The same blood which flows in the head flows in the hand, and the same life which quickens Christ, quickens His people, for, "You are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God."

No, as if this were not enough, we are *married* into Christ. He has betrothed us unto Himself in righteousness and in faithfulness. And as the spouse must, in the nature of things, be a partaker of the same nature as the husband, so Jesus Christ first became partaker of flesh and blood that the two might be one flesh. And then He makes His Church partakers of the same spirit, that the two may be one spirit—for He who is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Oh, marvelous mystery! We look into it, but who shall understand it? One with Jesus, by eternal union! One, married to Him—so one with Him that the branch is not more one with the vine than we are a part of the Lord, our Savior and our Redeemer!

Rejoice in this, Brethren! You are made partakers of the Divine nature and all these promises are given to you in order that you may show this forth among the sons of men, that you are like God and not like ordinary men! That you are different now from what flesh and blood would make you, having been made participators of the nature of God.

Then the other result which follows from it was this, "Having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." Ah, Beloved, it were ill that a man who is alive should dwell in corruption. "Why seek you the living among the dead?" said the angel to Magdalene. Should the living dwell among the dead? Should Divine life be found among the corruptions of worldly lusts? The Bride of Christ drunk? Frequenting the ale-house? A member of Christ's body found intoxicated in the streets, or lying, or blaspheming, or dishonest? God forbid!

Shall I take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? How can I drink the cup of the Lord and drink the cup of Belial? How can it be possible that I can have life and yet dwell in the black, dark, foul, filthy, pestiferous tomb of the world's lusts? Surely, Brethren, from these open lusts and sins you have escaped—have you also escaped from the more secret and more delusive lime twigs of the Satanic fowler? O, have you come forth from the lust of pride? Have you escaped from slothfulness? Have you clean escaped from carnal security? Are we seeking, day by day, to live above worldliness—the love of the things of the world and the ensnaring avarice which they nourish? Remember, it is for this that you have been enriched with the treasures of God. Do not, oh, I implore you, do not—chosen of God and beloved by Him and so graciously enriched—do not suffer all this lavish treasure to be wasted upon you.

There is nothing which my heart desires more than to see you, the members of this Church, distinguished for holiness—it is the Christian's crown and glory. An unholy Church? It is of no use to the world and of no esteem among men. Oh, it is an abomination—Hell's laughter—Heaven's abhorrence! And the larger the Church, the more influential, the worse nuisance does it become when it becomes dead and unholy. The worst evils which have ever come upon the world have been brought upon her by an unholy Church. From where came the darkness of the dark ages? From the Church of Rome! And if we want to see the world again sitting in Egyptian darkness, bound with fetters of iron, we have only to give up the faith and to renounce holiness of life and we may drag the world down again to the limbo of superstition and bind her fast in chains of ignorance and vice.

O Christian, the vows of God are upon you! You are God's priest—act as such! You are God's king—reign over your lusts! You are God's chosen—do not associate with Belial! Heaven is your portion—live like a heavenly spirit! And so shall you prove that you have the true faith. But unless you do this, your end shall be to lift up your eyes in Hell and find yourself mistaken when it will be too late to seek or find a remedy. The Lord give us the faith and the life, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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PARTICULAR ELECTION

NO. 123

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 22, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

“Therefore, Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things, you shall never fall, for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”
2 Peter 1:10, 11.

IT is exceedingly desirable that in the hours of worship and in the House of Prayer our minds should be as much as possible divested of every worldly thought. Although the business of the week will very naturally struggle with us to encroach upon the Sabbath, it is our business to guard the Sabbath from the intrusion of our worldly cares, as we would guard an oasis from the overwhelming eruption of the sand. I have felt, however, that today we should be surrounded with circumstances of peculiar difficulty in endeavoring to bring our minds to spiritual matters, for of all times, perhaps, election times are the worst. So important in the minds of most men are political matters that very naturally after the hurry of the week, combined with the engrossing pursuit of elections, we are apt to bring the same thoughts and the same feelings into the House of Prayer and speculate, perhaps, even in the place of worship, whether a conservative or a liberal shall be returned for our borough. Or whether for the City of London there shall be returned Lord John Russell, Baron Rothschild or Mr. Currie. I thought, this morning, “Well, it is of no use my trying to stop this great train in its progress! People are just now going on at an express rate on these matters. I think I will be wise and instead of endeavoring to turn them off the line, I will turn the points so that they may still continue their pursuits with the same swiftness as ever, but in a new direction! It shall be the same line. They shall still be traveling in earnest towards election but, perhaps, I may have some skill to turn the points so that they shall be enabled to consider election in a rather different manner!”

When Mr. Whitefield was once applied to use his influence at a general election, he returned answer to his lordship who requested him that he knew very little about *general* elections but that if his lordship took his advice he would make his own *particular* “calling and election sure,” which was a very proper remark. I would not, however, say to any persons here present, despise the privilege which you have as citizens. Far be it from me to do it! When we become Christians, we do not leave off

being Englishmen! When we become professors of religion, we do not cease to have the rights and privileges which citizenship has bestowed on us. Let us, whenever we shall have the opportunity of using the right of voting, use it as in the sight of Almighty God, knowing that for everything, we shall be brought into account and for that among the rest, seeing that we are entrusted with it. And let us remember that we are our own governors, to a great degree, and that if at the next election we should choose wrong governors, we shall have nobody to blame but ourselves, however wrongly they may afterwards act, unless we exercise all prudence and prayer to Almighty God to direct our hearts to a right choice in this matter. May God so help us and may the result be for His Glory, however unexpected that result may be to any of us!

Having said so much, let me, then, turn the points and draw you to a consideration of your own particular calling and election, bidding you, in the words of the Apostle, “therefore, Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things, you shall never fall, for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” We have here, first of all, *two fundamental points in religion*—“calling and election.” We have here, secondly, *some good advice*—“to make our calling and election sure,” or, rather, to assure ourselves that we are *called and elected*. And then, in the third place, we have *some reasons given us why we should use this diligence to be assured of our election*—because, on the one hand, we shall so be kept from falling and on the other hand, we shall attain unto “an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

I. First of all, then, there are the TWO IMPORTANT MATTERS IN RELIGION—secrets, both of them, to the world—only to be understood by those who have been quickened by Divine Grace—“CALLING AND ELECTION.”

By the word, “calling,” in Scripture, we understand two things—one, *the general call*, which in the preaching of the Gospel is given to every creature under Heaven. The second call (that which is here intended) is the *special call*—which we call the effectual call, whereby God secretly, in the use of means, by the Irresistible power of His Holy Spirit, calls out of mankind a certain number whom He has before elected. He calls them from their sins to become righteous, from their death in trespasses and sins to become living spiritual men and from their worldly pursuits to become the lovers of Jesus Christ. The two callings differ very much. As Bunyan very prettily puts it, “By His common call, He gives nothing. By His special call, He always has something to give. He has also a brooding voice for them who are under His wing and He has an outcry to give the alarm when He sees the enemy come.” What we have to obtain as absolutely necessary to our salvation, is a special calling, made in us—not to

our ears but to our hearts—not to our mere fleshly understanding, but to the inner man, by the power of the Spirit. And then the other important thing is election. As without calling there is no salvation, so without election there is no calling! Holy Scripture teaches us that God has from the beginning chosen us who are saved unto holiness through Jesus Christ. We are told that as many as are ordained unto eternal life, believe—and that their believing is the effect of their being ordained to eternal life from before all worlds! However much this may be disputed, as it frequently is, you must first deny the authenticity and full Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures before you can legitimately and truly deny it. And since, without doubt, I have many here who are members of the Episcopal Church, allow me to say to them what I have often said before, “You, of all men, are the most inconsistent in the world unless you believe the Doctrine of Election, for if it is not taught in Scripture, there is this one thing for an absolute certainty, it is taught in your Articles.” Nothing can be more forcibly expressed, nothing more definitely laid down than the Doctrine of Predestination in the Book of Common Prayer. Although we are told what we already know, that that Doctrine is a high mystery and is only to be carefully handled by men who are enlightened.

However, without doubt, it is the Doctrine of Scripture that those who are saved are saved because God chose them to be saved and are called as the effect of that first choice of God! If any of you dispute this, I stand upon the authority of Holy Scripture. Yes, and if it were necessary to appeal to tradition, which I am sure it is not and no Christian would ever do it, yet I would take you upon that point. For I can trace this Doctrine through the lips of a succession of holy men, from this present moment to the days of Calvin. From there to Augustine and from there on to Paul, himself, and even to the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ! The Doctrine is without doubt taught in Scripture and were not men too proud to humble themselves to it, it would universally be believed and received as being no other than manifest Truth of God! Why, Sirs, do you not believe that God loves His children? And do you not know that God is unchangeable? Therefore, if He loves them, now, He must always have loved them! Do you not believe that if men are saved, God saves them? And if so, can you see any difficulty in admitting that because He saves them, there must have been a *purpose* to save them—a purpose which existed before all worlds? Will you not grant me that? If you will not, I must leave you to the Scriptures, themselves. And if *they* will not convince you on the point, then I must leave you unconvinced!

It will be asked, however, why is *calling* here put before *election*, seeing election is eternal and calling takes place in time? I reply, because calling is first to *us*. The first thing which you and I can know is our *calling*—we cannot tell whether we are elect until we feel that we are called! We must, first of all, prove our calling—and then our election is most certainly

sure. “Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called—and whom He called, them He also justified—and whom He justified, them He also glorified.” Calling comes first in our apprehension. We are by God’s Spirit called from our evil estate, regenerated and made new creatures—and then, looking backward, we behold ourselves as being most assuredly elect because we were called!

Here, then, I think I have explained the text. There are the two things which you and I are to prove to be sure to ourselves—whether we are *called* and whether we are *elected*. And oh, dear Friends, this is a matter about which you and I should be very anxious, for consider what an *honorable* thing it is to be elected! In this world it is thought a mighty thing to be elected to the House of Parliament. But how much more honorable to be elected to eternal life? To be elected to “the Church of the first born, whose names are written in Heaven.” To be elected to be a compeer of angels, to be a favorite of the living God, to dwell with the Most High among the fairest of the sons of light, nearest the eternal Throne! Election in this world is but a short-lived thing, but God’s election is *eternal*. Let a man be elected to a seat in the House—seven years must be the longest period that he can hold his election. But if you and I are elected according to the Divine Purpose, we shall hold our seats when the daystar shall have ceased to burn! When the sun shall have grown dim with age and when the eternal hills shall have bowed themselves with weakness—if we are chosen of God and precious, then are we chosen forever—for God changes not in the objects of His election! Those whom He has ordained, He has ordained to eternal life, “and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of His hand.” It is worthwhile to know ourselves elect, for nothing in this world can make a man more *happy* or more valiant than the knowledge of his election. “Nevertheless,” said Christ to His Apostles, “rejoice not in this, but rather rejoice that your names are written in Heaven”—that being the sweetest comfort, the honeycomb that drops with the most precious drops of all, the *knowledge* of our being chosen by God! And this, too, Beloved, makes a man *valiant*. When a man by diligence has attained to the assurance of his election, you cannot make him a coward. You can never make him cry, “quit,” even in the thickest battle. He holds the standard firmly and cleaves his foes with the sword of the Truth of God. “Was I not ordained by God to be the standard-bearer of this Truth? I must, I will stand by it, despite you all,” he says to every enemy! “Am I not a chosen king? Can floods of water wash out the sacred unction from a king’s bright brow? No, never! And if God has chosen me to be a king and a priest unto God forever and ever, come what may or come what will—the lion’s teeth, the fiery furnace, the spear, the rack, the stake—all these things are less than nothing, seeing I am chosen of God unto salvation!”

It has been said that the Doctrine of Election naturally makes men weak. It is a lie! It may seem so in theory, but in practice it has always been found to be the reverse. The men who have believed in destiny and have held fast and firm by it have always done the most valiant deeds. There is one point in which this is akin even with Mahomet's faith—the deeds that were done by him were chiefly done from a firm confidence that God had ordained him to his work. Never had Cromwell driven his foes before him if it had not been in the stern strength of this Omnipotent Truth. And there shall scarcely be found a man strong enough to do great and valiant deeds unless, confident in the God of Providence, he looks upon the happenings of life as being steered by God! He then gives himself up to God's firm Predestination, to be borne along by the current of His will, contrary to all the wills and all the wishes of the world! "Therefore, Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure."

II. Come, then, here is the second point—GOOD ADVICE. "Make your calling and election sure." Not towards God, for they are sure to Him—make them sure to yourself! Be quite certain of them. Be fully satisfied about them. In many of our dissenting places of worship, very great encouragement is held out to doubting. A person comes before the pastor and says, "Oh, Sir, I am so afraid I am not converted. I tremble lest I should not be a child of God. Oh, I fear I am not one of the Lord's elect." The pastor will put out his hands to him and say, "Dear Brother, you are all right so long as you can doubt." Now, I hold that is altogether wrong! Scripture never says, "He who *doubts* shall be saved," but, "He who *believes*." It may be true that the man is in a good state. It may be true that he needs a little comfort. But his doubts are not good things, nor ought we to encourage him in his doubts—our business is to encourage him *out* of his doubts and, by the grace of God, to urge him to "give *all* diligence to make his calling and election sure," not to doubt it but to be sure of it! Ah, I have heard some hypocritical doubters say, "Oh, I have had such doubts whether I am the Lord's," and I have thought to myself, "And so have I very great doubts about you." I have heard some say they do tremble so because they are afraid they are not the Lord's people and the lazy fellows sit in their pews on Sunday and just listen to the sermon—they never think of giving diligence! They never do good, perhaps are inconsistent in their lives and then talk about doubting. It is quite right they should doubt—it is well they should and if they did not doubt, we might begin to doubt for them! Idle men have no right to assurance. The Scripture says, "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure."

Full assurance is an excellent attainment. It is profitable for a man to be certain in this life and absolutely sure of his own calling and election. But how can he be sure? Now, many of our more ignorant hearers im-

agine that the only way they have of being assured of their election is by some revelation, some dream and some mystery! I have enjoyed very hearty laughs at the expense of some people who have trusted in their visions! Really, if you had passed among so many shades of ignorant professing Christians as I have, and had to resolve so many doubts and fears, you would be so infinitely sick of dreams and visions that you would say, as soon as a person began to speak about them, "Now, just hold your tongue!" "Sir," said a woman, "I saw blue lights in the front parlor when I was in prayer and I thought I saw the Savior in the corner and I said to myself I am safe." [Mr. Spurgeon here narrated a remarkable story of a poor woman who was possessed with a singular delusion.] And yet there are tens of thousands of people in every part of the country and members, too, of Christian bodies, who have no better grounds for their belief that they are called and elected, than some equally ridiculous vision, or the equally absurd hearing of a voice! A young woman came to me some time ago. She wanted to join the Church and when I asked her how she knew herself to be converted, she said she was down at the bottom of the garden and she thought she heard a voice and she thought she saw something up in the clouds that said to her such-and-such. "Well," I said to her, "that thing may have been the means of doing good to you, but if you put any trust in it, it is all over with you." A dream, yes, and a vision may often bring men to Christ. I have known many who have been brought to Him by them, beyond a doubt, though it has been mysterious to me how it was. But when men bring these forward as a *proof of their conversion*, it is a mistake—you may see 50,000 dreams and 50,00 visions and you may be a fool for all that—and all the bigger sinner for having seen them! There is better evidence to be had than all this—"Give diligence to make your calling and election sure."

"How, then," says one, "am I to make my calling and election sure?" Why, thus—if you would get out of a doubting state—get out of an idle state. If you would get out of a trembling state, get out of an indifferent lukewarm state—for lukewarmness and doubting and laziness and trembling very naturally go hand in hand! If you would enjoy the eminent Grace of the full assurance of faith under the blessed Spirit's influence and assistance, do what the Scripture tells you—"Give diligence to make your calling and election sure." Wherein shall you be diligent? Note how the Scripture has given us a list. Be diligent in your *faith*. Take care that your faith is of the right kind—that it is not a creed but a credence—that it is not a mere belief of Doctrine but a reception of Doctrine into your heart and the practical light of the Doctrine in your soul! Take care that your faith results from necessity—that you believe in Christ because you have nothing else to believe in. Take care it is simple faith, hanging alone on Christ, without any other dependence but Jesus Christ and Him Crucified. And when you have given diligence about that, give diligence next

to your *courage*. Labor to get *virtue*. Plead with God that He would give you the face of a lion, that you may never be afraid of any enemy—however much he may jeer or threaten you, but that you may, with a consciousness of right, go on, boldly trusting in God and having, by the help of the Holy Spirit, obtained that, study well the Scriptures and get *knowledge*. For a knowledge of Doctrine will tend very much to confirm your faith. Try to understand God's Word. Get a sensible, spiritual idea of it. Get, if you can, a system of Divinity out of God's Bible. Put the Doctrines together. Get real, theological knowledge, founded upon the Infalible Word. Get a knowledge of that science which is most despised but which is the most necessary of all, the science of Christ and of Him Crucified and of the great Doctrines of Grace. And when you have done this, "Add to your knowledge *temperance*." Take heed to your body—be temperate there. Take heed to your soul—be temperate there. Be not drunk with pride. Be not lifted up with self-confidence. Be temperate. Be not harsh towards your friends, nor bitter to your enemies. Get temperance of lips, temperance of life, temperance of heart, temperance of thought. Be not passionate—be not carried away by every wind of Doctrine. Get temperance and then add to it, by God's Holy Spirit, *patience*. Ask Him to give you that patience which endures affliction, which, when it is tried, shall come forth as gold. Array yourself with patience, that you may not murmur in your sicknesses—hat you may not curse God in your losses, nor be depressed in your afflictions. Pray without ceasing, until the Holy Spirit has nerved you with patience to endure unto the end!

And when you have that, get *godliness*. Godliness is something more than religion. The most religious men may be the most godless men and sometimes a godly man may seem to be irreligious. Let me just explain that seeming paradox. A real *religious* man is a man who sighs after sacraments, attends Churches and Chapels and is outwardly good but goes not farther. A godly man is a man who does not look so much to the dress as to the person—he looks not to the outward form, but to the inward and spiritual Grace. He is a godly man as well as attentive to religion. Some men, however, are godly and, to a great extent, despise form. They may be godly without some degree of religion. But a man cannot be fully righteous without being godly in the true meaning of each of these words, though not in the general vulgar sense of them. Add to your patience an eye to God. Live in His sight, dwell close to Him! Seek for fellowship with Him and you have got godliness. And then to that, add *brotherly love*. Be loving towards all the members of Christ's Church. Have a love to all the saints of every denomination. And then add to that charity, which opens its arms to all men and loves them. And when you have got all these, *then* you will know your calling and election! And just in proportion as you practice these heavenly rules of life, in this heavenly manner, will you come to know that you are called and that you are

elect. But by no other means can you attain to a knowledge of that except by the witness of the Spirit, bearing witness with your spirit that you are born of God and then witnessing in your conscience that you are not what you were, but are a new man or woman in Christ Jesus and are, therefore, called and elected.

A man over there says he is elect. He gets drunk. Yes, you are elect by the devil, Sir. That is about your only election. Another man says, "Blessed be God, I don't care about evidences a bit. I am not so legal as you are!" No, I dare say you are not. But you have no great reason to bless God about it, for, my dear Friend, unless you have these evidences of a new birth, take heed to yourself—"God is not mocked—whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap." "Well," says another, "but I think that Doctrine of Election a very licentious Doctrine." Think on as long as you please, but please to bear me witness that as I have preached it, today, there is nothing licentious about it! Very likely *you* are licentious and you would make the Doctrine licentious, if you believed it. But "to the pure all things are pure." He who receives God's Truth in his heart does not often pervert it and turn aside from it unto wicked ways. No man, let me repeat, no man has any right to believe himself elect of God unless he has been renewed by God! No man has any right to believe himself called unless his life is, in the main, consistent with his vocation and he walks worthy of that whereunto he is called! Out with an election that lets you live in sin! Away with it! Away with it! That was never the design of God's Word and it never was the Doctrine of Calvinists, either! Though we have been lied against and our teachings perverted, we have always stood by this—that good works, though they do not procure nor in any degree *merit* salvation, yet they are the necessary *evidences* of salvation! And unless they are in men, the soul is still dead, uncalled and unrenewed. The nearer you live to Christ, the more you imitate Him. The more your life is conformed to Him and the more simply you hang upon Him by faith, the more certain you may be of your election in Christ and of your calling by His Holy Spirit. May the Holy One of Israel give you the sweet assurance of Grace by affording you "tokens for good" in the Graces which He enables you to manifest!

III. And now I shall close up by giving you THE APOSTLE'S REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD MAKE YOUR CALLING AND ELECTION SURE.

I put in one of my own to begin with. It is because, as I have said, *it will make you so happy*. Men who doubt their calling and election cannot be full of joy. The happiest saints are those who know and believe it. You know our friends say this is a howling wilderness and you know my reply to it is that they make all the howling themselves. There would not be much howling if they were to look up a little more and look down a little less, for by faith they would make it blossom like the rose and give to it the excellence and glory of Carmel and Sharon! But why they howl so

much is because they do not believe. Our happiness and our faith are, to a great degree, proportionate. They are Siamese twins to the Christian. They must flourish or decay together—

***“When I can say my God is mine,
Then I can all my griefs resign!
Can tread the world beneath my feet,
And all that earth calls good or great.”***

But ah—

***“When gloomy doubts prevail,
I fear to call Him mine,
The streams of comfort seem to fail,
And all my hopes decline.”***

Only faith can make a Christian lead a happy life.

But now for Peter’s reasons. First, because *“if you do these things you shall never fall.”* “Perhaps,” says one, “in attention to election we may forget our daily walk and, like the old philosopher who looked up to the stars, we may walk on and tumble into a ditch!” “No, no,” says Peter, “if you take care of your calling and election, you shall not trip but with your eyes up there, looking for your calling and election, God will take care of your feet and you shall never fall!” Is it not very notable that in many Churches and Chapels, you do not often hear a sermon about *to-day*? It is always either about old eternity, or else about the millennium. Either about what God did before man was made, or else about what God will do when all are dead and buried. It is a pity they do not tell us something about what we are to do today, now, in our daily walk and conversation! Peter removes this difficulty. He says, “This point is a practical point, for you can only answer your election for yourself by taking care of your practice. And while you are so taking care of your practice and assuring yourself of your election, you are doing the best possible thing to keep you from falling.” And is it not desirable that a true Christian should be kept from falling? Mark the difference between *falling* and *falling away*. The true Believer can never fall away and perish, but he may fall and injure himself. He shall not fall and break his neck. But a broken leg is bad enough, without a broken neck. “Though he falls, he shall not be utterly cast down.” But that is no reason why he should dash himself against a stone! His desire is that day by day he may grow more holy, that hour by hour he may be more thoroughly renewed until conformed to the image of Christ, he may enter into eternal bliss! If, then, you take care of your calling and election, you are doing the best thing in the world to prevent you from falling, for in so doing you shall never fall.

And now, the other reason and then I shall have almost concluded. *“For so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”* An “abundant entrance” has sometimes been illustrated in this way—You see yonder ship? After a long voyage, it has neared the haven but is much injured, the sails are

torn to ribbons and it is in such a forlorn condition that it cannot come up to the harbor—a steam tug is pulling it in with the greatest possible difficulty. That is like the righteous being “scarcely saved.” But do you see that other ship? It has made a prosperous voyage and now, laden to the water’s edge, with the sails all up and with the white canvass filled with the wind, it rides into the harbor joyously and nobly. That is an “abundant entrance”! And if you and I are helped by God’s Spirit to add to our faith, virtue and so on, we shall have, at the last, “an abundant entrance into the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.” There is a man who is a Christian. But, alas, there are many inconsistencies in his life for which he has to mourn. He lies there, dying on his bed. The thought of his past life rushes upon him. He cries, “O Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner,” and the prayer is answered. His faith is in Christ and he shall be saved. But oh, what griefs he has upon his bed—“Oh if I had served my God better! And these children of mine—if I had but trained them up better, ‘in the nurture and admonition of the Lord!’ “I am saved,” he says, “but alas, alas! Though it is a great salvation, I cannot enjoy it just yet. I am dying in gloom and clouds and darkness. I trust, I hope I shall be gathered to my fathers but I have no works to follow me—or very few, indeed, for though I am saved, I am but *just* saved—saved ‘so as by fire.’” Here is another one. He, too, is dying. Ask him what his dependence is—he tells you, “I rest in none else but Jesus.” But mark him as he looks back to his past life. “In such a place,” he says, “I preached the Gospel and God helped me.” And though with no pride about him—he will not congratulate himself upon what he has done—yet does he lift his hands to Heaven and he blesses God that throughout a long life he has been able to keep his garments white. That he has served his Master. And now, like a shock of corn fully ripe, he is about to be gathered into his Master’s garner. Listen to him! It is not the feeble lisp of the trembler, but with, “victory, victory, victory!” for his dying shout! He shuts his eyes and dies like a warrior in his glory. That is the “abundant entrance.” Now, the man who “gives diligence to make his calling and election sure,” shall ensure for himself “an abundant entrance into the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

What a terrible picture is hinted at in these words of the Apostle—“Saved so as by fire!” Let me try and present it to you. The man has come to the edge of Jordan. The time has arrived for him to die. He is a Believer—just a Believer. But his life has not been what he could wish. Not all that he now desires that it had been. And now stern Death is at him and he has to take his first step into the Jordan. Judge of his horror when the flames surround his feet! He treads upon the hot sand of the stream. He takes the next step. His hair is well near on end. Though his eyes are fixed on Heaven on the other side of the shore, his face is yet marked with horror. He takes another step and he is all bathing in fire. Another

step and he is up to his very loins in flames—“saved, so as by fire.” A strong hand has grasped him that drags him onward through the stream. But how dreadful must be the death, even of the Christian, when he is saved “so as by fire”! There on the river’s brink, astonished, he looks back and sees the liquid flames through which he has been called to walk as a consequence of his indifference in this life. Saved he is—thanks to God! And his Heaven shall be great and his crown shall be golden and his harp shall be sweet and his hymns shall be eternal and his bliss unfading—but his dying moment—the last article of death, was blackened by sin. And he was saved “so as by fire!”

Mark the other man. He, too, has to die. He has often feared death. He dips the first foot in Jordan. As his body trembles, his pulse waxes faint and even his eyes are well near closed. His lips can scarcely speak, but still he says, “Jesus, You are with me, You are with me, passing through the stream!” He takes another step and the waters now begin to refresh him. He dips his hand and tastes the stream and tells those who are watching him in tears, that to die is blessed. “The stream is sweet,” he says, “it is not bitter—it is blessed to die!” Then he takes another step and when he is well near submerged in the stream and lost to vision, he says—

***“And when you hear my eye strings break,
How sweet my minutes roll —
A mortal paleness on my cheek
But glory in my soul!”***

That is the “abundant entrance” of the man who has manfully served his God—who, by Divine Grace, has had a path unclouded and serene—who, by diligence, has, “made his calling and election sure” and, therefore, as a reward, not of debt but of Grace, has entered Heaven with higher honors and with greater ease than others equally saved but not saved in so splendid a manner!

Just one more thought. It is said that the entrance is to be “ministered to us.” That gives me a sweet hint that, I find, is dwelt upon by Doddridge. Christ will open the gates of Heaven, but the heavenly train of virtues—the works which follow us—will go up with us and minister an entrance to us. I sometimes think if God should enable me to live and die for the good of these congregations, so that many of them shall be saved, how sweet it will be to enter Heaven and when I shall come there, to have an entrance ministered to me not by Christ, alone, but by some of you for whom I have ministered! One shall meet me at the gate and say, “Minister, you were the cause of my salvation!” And another and another and another shall all exclaim the same! When Whitefield entered Heaven—that highly honored servant of the Lord—I think I can see the hosts rushing to the gate to meet him! There are thousands there who have been brought to God by him! Oh how they open wide the gates! And how they praise God that he has been the means of bringing them to Heaven!

And how they do minister unto him an abundant entrance! There will be some of you, perhaps, in Heaven, with starless crowns—for you never did good to your fellow creatures. You never were the means of saving souls—you are to have crowns without stars. But “they who turn many to righteousness”—“yours are the stars, forever and ever.” And an entrance shall be abundantly ministered to them. I want to get a heavy crown in Heaven—not to wear, but to have all the more costly gift to give to Christ! And you ought to desire the same, that you may have all the more honors and so have the more to cast at His feet, with—“Not unto us, but unto Your name, O Christ, be the glory!” “Therefore, Brethren, give all diligence to make your calling and election sure.”

And now, to conclude. There are some of you with whom this text has nothing to do. You cannot “make your calling and election sure,” for you have not been called! And you have no right to believe that you are elected if you have never been called. To such of you, let me say, do not ask whether you are elected, first, but ask whether you are called. And go to God’s House and bend your knees in prayer. And may God, in His infinite mercy, call you! And mark this—if any of you can say—

***“Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Your Cross I cling.”***

If any of you, renouncing your self-righteousness, can now come to Christ and take Him to be your All-in-All—you are called, you are elect! “Make your calling and election sure,” and go on your way rejoicing! May God bless you. And to Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be glory forever more! Amen.

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.**

FALLEN ANGELS A LESSON TO FALLEN MEN NO. 1820

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

***“God spared not the angels who sinned, but cast them down to Hell,
and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment.”
2 Peter 2:4.***

“THESE are ancient things.” Most men hunger after the latest news, but let us, on this occasion, go back upon the earliest records and think of the hoary past, before man was made. It does us good to look back upon the past of God’s dealings with His creatures—herein lies the value of history. We should not confine our attention to God’s dealings with *men*, but we should observe how He acts towards another order of beings—how He dealt with angels before man had become the second sinner. If angels transgress, what is His conduct towards them? This study will enlarge our minds and show us great principles in their wider sweep. We shall inevitably make mistakes in our judgment as to God’s conduct towards men if we do not remember sufficiently how He has dealt with beings who are, in certain respects, much superior to the human race. By seeing how God treated the rebellions angels, light may be cast upon His dealings with us and thereby misapprehensions may be removed.

We shall go to our subject at once, asking aid from the Spirit of all Grace. We will first view the mysterious fact of the fall of the angels and their casting away *for our warning*. Then, secondly, we shall regard the fact of the hopeless doom of the angels who sinned as it stands in contrast to the amazing mercy of the Lord towards men. Thus our second head will lead us to view the text *for our admiration*—I hope for the increase of our grateful love and reverent wonder.

I. First, then, let us consider our text FOR OUR WARNING. “God spared not the angels who sinned, but cast them down to Hell.” Behold, here, a wonder of wickedness—angels sin! A wonder of justice—God spared them not! A wonder of punishment—He cast them down to Hell! A wonder of future vengeance, for they are reserved for judgment! Here are deep and terrible themes. Black as tempest are the facts and flashes of terrible lightning flame forth from them.

Let us receive a warning, first, against *the deceivableness of sin*, for whoever we may be, *we may never reckon that on account of our position or condition, we shall be free from the assaults of sin*, or even certain of not being overcome by it. Notice that these who sinned were angels in Heaven, so that there is no necessary security in the most holy position. We know that they were in heavenly places, for it was from that high abode that

they were cast down to Hell by the terrible right hand of the Eternal King. These angels that kept not their first estate, but sinned against God, dwelt with their brethren in the courts of the Most High. They seemed to be, as it were, walled round with fire to keep out all evil from them. Their communications were only with perfect spirits like themselves and yet, as they were undergoing a probation, they were made capable of choosing evil if they willed to do so, or of cleaving to good if their hearts were steadfast with their God.

There were none about them to tempt them to evil. They were, on the contrary, surrounded with every good and holy influence—they saw God and lived in His courts. They conversed with seraphim and cherubim. Their daily engagements were all of a holy order—worship and service were their duty and delight. Their company was select; there were no lapsed classes among them to render the moral atmosphere impure. They were not only in a Paradise, but in the central abode of God Himself! Yet evil entered into the breasts of angels—even envy, ambition, pride, rebellion—and they fell, fell never to rise again—

***“High in the bright and happy throng,
Satan, a tall archangel sat.
Among the morning stars he sung,
Till sin destroyed his heavenly state.
'Twas sin that hurled him from his throne.
Groveling in fire the rebel lies
How are you sunk in darkness down,
Son of the Morning, from the skies!***

Beloved Hearer, this should teach us not to presume upon anything connected with our position here below. You may be the child of godly parents who watch over you with sedulous care and yet you may grow up to be a man of Belial. You may never enter a haunt of iniquity. Your journeys may be only to and from the house of God and yet you may be a bond slave of iniquity. The house in which you live may be none other than the house of God and the very gate of Heaven through your father's prayers and yet you may, yourself, live to blaspheme. Your reading may be bound up with the Bible. Your companions may be of the choicest. Your talk may concern holy things. You may be as if you were in the garden of the Lord, shut in to everything that is good and every evil shut out from you—and yet you may have no part nor lot with the people of God. As there were a Ham and an ungodly Canaan even in Noah's Ark, so may it turn out that you may be such in the very midst of all that should make you gracious and sanctified!

It is unhappy, indeed, to read the annals of human life and to meet with men that have gone from their mother's side, have gone from where their father knelt in prayer—have gone out from brothers and sisters whose piety was not only unquestionable, but even remarkable—and they have gone to be leaders in every form of wickedness! Many of the enemies of the Cross of Christ have been so trained in godliness that we find it hard to believe that they could, indeed, be so vile! An Apostle must declare it with tears before he is believed! The sons of God they seemed to be, but they turned out to be sons of perdition after all! Let no man, therefore, arise and shake himself, as though no sins could ever bind him because

he feels himself to be a very Samson through his connections and surroundings.

Yes, Sir, it may be that you shall fall—fall foully, fall desperately—unless the Grace of God is in you! You may fall so as never to come to God and Christ—or find eternal life. It was so with these angels. The best natural thing that creation can work is not sufficient to preserve the fickle creature from sin! *Regeneration* must come in—the work of the Holy Spirit—a yet higher work than the material creating power of God. Or else you may put the creature where you please—and that creature may be perfect and yet sin will reach and destroy him! You and I are far from perfect. We are not unfallen angels! We are not angels at all and we have evil hearts within us. Therefore let us not imagine, for a moment, that the most select position can screen us from the worst of sin.

The next thought is that *the greatest possible ability, apparently consecrated, is still nothing to rely upon* as a reason why we should not yet fall so low as to prostitute it all to the service of the worst of evils. Angels are beings of remarkable power. We know that they have amazing intelligence and beauty. We read of one whose face was like that of an angel of God. When a thing is spoken of as being exceedingly good, it is often connected with angels—“men did eat angels’ food.” It is supposed that everything with regard to them is of superior order and of refined quality. I suppose that a spirit that is not cumbered with flesh and blood, as we are, must be delivered from much that hampers and beclouds. Oftentimes a clear judgment is dimmed by a headache, or an attack of indigestion. Anything that affects the body drags down the mind, but these angelic beings are delivered from such weakness and they are clothed with a glory of strength, beauty and power.

Hear, then, and observe! However great Lucifer was, he degenerated into Satan—the Son of the Morning became Apollyon the Destroyer. However excellent the fallen angels may once have been, they have now become potent only for mischief—their wisdom has curdled into cunning and their strength has soured into a vicious force—so that no man may say within himself, “I am a clear thinker, therefore I shall never become a blaspheming infidel.” Or, “I am gifted in prayer, therefore I shall never become a blasphemer.” You know not what you may become. There is a great difference between gift in prayer and Grace in prayer—*gift* will breed pride and pride will ensure destruction! It is only Grace that can preserve unto eternal Gory.

There is also a great difference between office and person and, therefore, a man may not say, “I am a minister—I shall be kept faithful in the Church of God.” Ah me! But we have seen leaders turn aside and we need not marvel, for if angels fall, what man may think that he can stand? To trust our office as a security is to rest upon a broken reed! The Grace of God can keep the least and weakest of us, but, apart from that heavenly power, how dare any man hope to be preserved to the end! Self-confidence is the beginning of declension. He that reckons that he is past temptation is already entangled in its net. We must never presume. Angels fell—why should not men? An angel occupies a high position near the Throne of

God—"Are they not all ministering spirits?" We have evidence in Scripture that they are called on grand occasions to discharge high commissions for the King of kings. And yet, these courtiers, these household messengers of the palace of Heaven, these domestics of Glory—even *these* went astray, fell and turned to devils!

Let no man dream that because he occupies an office in the Church his salvation is, therefore, secure—an Apostle fell! The arrows of the Prince of Darkness can reach the highest seats of the synagogue. The high places of the field of service are not free from danger. No, they are the more perilous as they are the more notable! The powers of darkness make their direst onset upon the foremost soldiers of the Cross, hoping to overthrow the standard-bearers and create confusion throughout the camp.

Neither, dear Friends—to continue my warning—*must any of us suppose that we shall be kept by the mere fact that we are engaged in the most sublime possible office.* Apart from the perpetual miracle of God's Grace, nothing can keep us from declension, apostasy and spiritual death. "Oh, but I spend my time," one may say—"I spend my time wholly in the service of God! I go from door to door seeking the lost souls of men, as a city missionary." Or, "I conduct a large class in the school and I have brought many to the Savior." All this is good, but if you trust in *it* for your standing before God, it will certainly fail you! If any one of us were to say, "But I am a minister, called to offer prayer and to preach the precious Word of God—my engagements are so sanctified; they bring me into such hallowed fellowship with holy things that it is not possible that I should fall"—this would be the height of folly!

We need not go beyond the pale of professed ministers of Christ to find specimens of every infamy of which man is capable! After having preached to others, there is grave cause for trembling lest we be castaways, ourselves. No, there is nothing in the most sacred office in the Church to preserve us or our characters. Office, if we trust in it, may even become, as in the case of Judas, a Tarpeian rock from which we may be cast down to our destruction—for the angelic office in Heaven did not keep the angels from being hurled over the battlements of Glory when once they dared to sin. Let not the angels of the Churches hope to be kept from falling unless He that bears the seven stars in His right hand shall keep them even to the end!

I want you to notice, as a great warning, that *this sin of the angels was not prevented, even, by the fullest happiness.* Oh, what a change, dear Friends, from the joy they once knew—when they were the servants of God—to being cast down to Hell in chains of darkness as they now are! The devils go about the world tempting men, but they are never released from their darkness. They cannot escape from the prison which they make for themselves—the blackness and horror of God's judgment always shut them in, be they where they may. What a difference between that and the Throne of God and the vision thereof, which was once their joy! The service of God was once theirs, but now the slavery of evil holds them in iron bonds. Once they took delight in the high praises of their Creator, but now they curse Him in their heart of hearts.

Once, on high days, when the servants of God came together, they sang for joy as they beheld new worlds created by their great Lord and King! Now, everything He does is as gall and wormwood to them. They curse Him and themselves, and they are always busily occupied in seeking to pull down His kingdom and to quench His Light among the sons of men. Oh, the misery of these old offenders! They once were supremely happy—but this happiness of theirs did not suffice to preserve their fidelity. The most golden wages will not keep a servant loyal to the kindest of masters. The most blessed experience will not preserve a soul from sinning! You may come here and be greatly blessed under a sermon—and sweetly sing and pray with intense fervor and seem carried up to the gates of Heaven by it—but remember that no feelings of joy or happiness can be relied upon as sufficient holdfasts to keep us near the Lord.

We have seen men drink of the cup of the Lord till they appeared to be full of love to Him and yet they have gone back to be drunken with the cup of devils! We have known men preach the Gospel and yet, afterwards, blaspheme every truth of Revelation and deny the inspiration of the Book of God! We have known them appear to be among the holiest and the best and yet they have come, at last, to be common frequenters of the most evil haunts of the city and to be ringleaders in folly! Is not this a dreadful thing and should it not be a warning to every one of us? “Let him who thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall.” There is One who is able to keep us from falling and to present us faultless before His Presence with exceedingly great joy—but if we do not trust in Him and abide in Him—we shall perish! If we dare to confide in our position, our ability, our office, our service, or our experience, we shall, sooner or later, discover that we are prone to sin and that when we sin, God will not spare us any more than He spared the angels who sinned.

This warning, be it noted, applies itself to the very foulest of sin. The angels did not merely sin and lose Heaven, but they passed beyond all other beings in sin and made themselves fit denizens for Hell. When Christ was describing the most wicked of men, He said that he was a devil. “One of you is a devil,” was His expression—for the devil is the most wicked form of existence. Now, is it not singular that after being in Heaven, it remained possible for an angel to become so dreadful a being as a devil in Hell now is? If any of us come very near to the Kingdom of God and yet the life of God is not in us—if we are joined with the Church of God, perform holy duties and yet depend upon ourselves and so fall into sin—we may fall into the foulest of sins. I do not think that Judas could have been what he was if he had not been an Apostle. The best of that which looks like goodness must be used as the raw material with which to make a traitor who will sell his Master!

The devils have gone into open war with God—the same beings that once bowed before His awful majesty are now openly and defiantly at war with the God that made them! They once could sing their chorales with delight and day without night, circle the Throne of God rejoicingly. But now they blaspheme, rage and rave against all that is good in earth or Heaven. They go about like roaring lions seeking whom they may devour—

even they who once would have been ministering spirits, eager to save and bless. They were once loyal subjects, but now they are traitors, rebels, seducers. They try to lead the people of God astray. They do their utmost to stir up sin in every human bosom. So bad have they become that their leader actually met the Son of God, Himself, and tempted Him to fall down and worship him! Was ever such infamous, such infernal impudence as for the devil, himself, to ask the eternal Son of God to do him homage? O base proposal, that the purity of the Most High should bow itself before the impiety of a fallen spirit!

Yet, so far have devils proceeded that in them evil has reached its ripeness and maturity. Let this be a lesson to us. I must not for a moment think that apart from the keeping of God's Spirit, I am incapable, even, of the foulest sin. Recall the story of Hazael. When the Prophet told him what he would do, he exclaimed in amazement, "Is your servant a dog that he should do this thing?" He was not only dog enough to seek the Syrian throne, but he was devil enough to suffocate his master with a wet cloth and then to carry out with eagerness all those terrible deeds of barbarity which the Prophet had foretold! We may yet do horrible deeds which we think ourselves incapable of doing! How much of devil there lies within the unregenerate heart, no man can tell.

O my unrenewed Hearer, I would not slander you, but I must warn you—there are all the makings of a Hell within your heart! It only needs that the restraining hand of God should be removed and you would come out in your true colors—and those are the colors of iniquity! If it were not for the restraints of society and Providence, there would be eruptions of evil, even in the most moral, sufficient to shake society to its foundations! An officer in India had tamed a leopard. From the time when it was quite a kitten he had brought it up, till it went about the house like a cat and everybody played with it. But he was sitting in his chair one day, asleep, when the leopard licked his hand. It licked it in all innocence, but as he licked, the skin was broken and the taste of blood came to the leopard—and from that moment it was not content to dwell with men. It rushed forth to kill and was no more at ease till it reached the jungle! That leopard, though tamed, was still a leopard! So a man, sobered by moral motives, but unchanged in heart, is a still fallen man, and the taste of blood, I mean the taste of sin, will soon reveal the tiger in him!

Wash a Russian and you find a Tartar. Tempt a moralist and you discover a sinner! The thin crust of goodness which is formed by education, soon disappears under temptation. You may be everything that looks like good, but unless you have been born again, you are still capable of the direst evil. It does seem a horrible thing to me that there should stream from a man's lips the foulest blasphemy and yet, he that utters it, was once accustomed to sing in the House of God and bow his knee with the saints. O God, that ever a creature bidding fair to serve his Maker, should sink to such a depth! Yet such horrors abound! The vessel which adorned the lordly festival is broken and thrown on the dunghill—and even so, the excellent and honorable are defiled and cast away!

I know what some are whispering, "I never could become an open reprobate!" How do you know that? You already question the warnings of Scripture and you may go further before long! He that is the most sure is the most insecure! But he that cries, "Hold me up, Lord," shall be made to stand! Be this our confession, "O Lord, I know that I shall become utterly vile except Your sovereign Grace prevent!" In humility let us cast ourselves upon the mighty Grace of God and we shall be kept! In fervent earnestness let us cry to the Strong for strength and we shall not be overcome by evil! He that presumes shall fall—he that confides shall stand!

The text may lead us a little farther before we leave it, by giving us *a warning against the punishment of sin* as well as against the sin, itself. Read this—"God spared not the angels who sinned, but cast them down to Hell." They were very great; they were very powerful—but God did not spare them for all that. If sinners are kings, princes, magistrates, millionaires—God will cast them into Hell. If they were commanders of all the forces of the world, he that is a just and righteous judge would not spare them because of their dignities and powers. "God spared not the angels"—why should He spare you, you great ones of the earth? They were very numerous, too. I do not know how many there were, but we read of legions of devils on one occasion. But God did not spare angelic sinners because there were so many of them—He made room in Hell for them all—and set them in darkness and in bonds, every one of them. God will not spare sinful men because of their millions—"the wicked shall be turned into Hell—and all the nations that forget God." Be they few or many, sinners must be punished, and God will not turn away His wrath from those who do iniquity.

God did not spare the rebel angels because of their *unity*. I never heard of devils quarrelling—it is very amazing in Scripture to notice their unanimity—their concord with one another. But "though hand join in hand, yet shall not the wicked go unpunished." You unbelievers may combine together to hate and oppose the Gospel, but it matters not, God will deal with your confederacies, break up your unities and make you companions in Hell even as you have been comrades in sin! "God spared not the angels who sinned, but cast them down to Hell."

Neither did He spare them because of their *craft*. There were never such subtle creatures as these are—so wise, so deep, so crafty—but these serpents and all the brood of them had to feel the power of God's vengeance, notwithstanding their cunning! Men often escape at the bar of their country because of their long-headed ways of evading the law. They keep within legal bounds and yet are great villains. Or if they go over the line, they hire a clever tongue to plead for them, be they as guilty as they may, and through crafty pleading they escape from a righteous sentence. Thus is it with men, but no counselors can pervert judgment with the Most High! He will deal out justice even to a hair's breadth and He will by no means spare the guilty. "God spared not the angels who sinned"—why should He spare any guilty son of Adam? Be sure that He will not spare any one of us if we live in sin. Unless we accept the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, our sin will find us out and God will find our sin out—and

He will cast us, also, down to the place prepared for the devil and his angels. Let the flatterers of today preach what they may, the Lord will punish men who live and die in their sins! He spared not the angels who sinned—certainly He will not spare men if they sin. Let this stand as a warning to us.

II. But now I want to carry you on and ask all your attention to this second point for OUR ADMIRATION. I want you to admire, dear Friends, the fact that *though angels fell, the saints of God are made to stand*. The angels sinned fatally, but the saints of God “cannot sin, for they are born of God.” You know the sense in which the Apostle means that—not that we do not all sin, but that we do not so sin as to depart from the living God, give up our allegiance to Him—and cease to be His loving children. No. “He keeps himself,” says the Scripture, “and that wicked one touches him not.” But what a wonder it is! I tell you, when the tales of God’s people shall be written and the records of the saints shall be read by the Light of Glory, we shall be miracles of Grace to ourselves and to one another! “Oh,” we shall say, “I had almost gone, but the hand of Grace interposed and snatched me from slipping over the awful precipice. My mind almost consented to that sin and yet I was able to cry out, ‘How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?’ There was great stress of weather and my poor boat was almost on the rocks, but still, though I grazed the bottom, yet I did not make shipwreck.”

“Oh, if I had been left at that moment,” one will say, “what would have become of me? Though I had tasted of the heavenly gift and the powers of the world to come, yet had I been left to myself at that hour, I would have so fallen that I could never again have been brought to repentance! But I was kept—preserved by as great a miracle as if a spark should fall into the sea and yet burn on, or a straw should be blown into a heated furnace and should not be consumed, or a moth should be trodden on by a giant and yet remain uncrushed—

**“Kept alive with death so near,
I to God the glory give.”**

To think that men should stand where angels fall! We are, by Sovereign Grace, called to be as near to God as the angels ever were—and in some respects we are nearer! We are the bodyguard of Christ, His chosen ones with whom He communes. We are the table companions of our Lord—we eat of His bread and drink of His cup—and are made partakers with Him. We are lifted up to be one with Him and are made to be “members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.” Yet God’s eternal unbounded power keeps us in the day of temptation and leads us so that if we go through the rivers we are not drowned, and when we pass through the fires we are not burned. O, the splendor of triumphant Grace! Neither the glory of our calling, nor the unworthiness of our original, shall cause us to be traitors. We shall neither perish through pride nor lust, but the new nature within us shall overcome all sin and abide faithful to the end.

“Now, unto Him that is able to keep us from falling, unto Him be honor and glory, and dominion and power forever and ever.” I cannot look back on my past life without feeling the tears rush into my eyes at the remembrance of how I have been preserved in the hour of trial. We could not

possibly tell, nor would we wish to tell in public, of those hours of weakness, those times of strong delusion, those moments of slipping and of fainting which have happened to us. We grieve as we remember our worse than childish weaknesses! And yet we have not stained our garments! We have not dishonored the holy name by which we are named! We have not been suffered to turn aside from the straightness of our path so as to bring grief to the Holy Spirit and dishonor to the Church of God! Verily this is a wonder!

Mr. Bunyan tells us that Christian, by the light of day, looked back on the Valley of the Shadow of Death which he had passed through in the nighttime and saw what a narrow path he had kept, and what a quay there was on one side and what a miry place on the other—and where the hobgoblins were and all the fiends of Hell. When he looked back on it, he was lost in admiration and gratitude! So it must be and will be with you if, through a dangerous way you have yet held on in your plain course and have not turned from your integrity. We shall be full to the brim with gratitude and love! Grace shall reign unto eternal life. Redeemed men shall stand where angels fall, for God shall keep them! He is able to hold them up and He will do it even to the end!

Now, let us learn another lesson full of admiration—and that is *that God should deal in Grace with men and not with angels—*

***“From Heaven the sinning angels fell,
And wrath and darkness chained them down.
But man, vile man, forsook his bliss,
And mercy lifts him to a crown!
Amazing work of Sovereign Grace
That could distinguish rebels so!
Our guilty treasons called aloud
For everlasting fetters too.”***

Now, you that do not believe in the Doctrine of Election, but kick at it and bite your lips at the mention of it, listen to this! God gave fallen angels no Savior, no Gospel, no space for repentance—yet He gives these to men—why is this? What reason was there? Can *you* conceive one? Why did God pass the fallen angels by and yet look in love upon the sons of men? “Oh,” says one, “perhaps fallen angels were the greater offenders of the two.” I do not think so—certainly many men go far to rival devils in rebellion.

“Perhaps men were tempted and angels were not.” Stop! Let us be clear on this point. Very likely Satan, the first angel that fell, was not tempted, but just as likely all the others were. Their leader tempted them as much as Eve tempted Adam, or the serpent tempted Eve. The mass of fallen angels may have been seduced by the example of Satan, the Prince of devils. I do not, therefore, see any great difference as to that matter. This I do know, that some men are greater sinners than devils. “No,” you ask, “how is that?” I answer that the devil never yet rejected Free Grace and dying love! The devil never yet struggled against the Holy Spirit in his own conscience! The devil never yet refused the mercy of God! These supreme pinnacles of wickedness are only reached by you who are hearers of the Gospel and yet cast its precious message behind your backs! It is amazing that God should deal in mercy with men who act so wickedly, while yet He

never spoke of mercy to the fallen angels, nor set before them terms of peace! They were given over, then and there, to be bound in chains of darkness until the judgment of the Last Great Day!

Notice that God gave the angels no respite. He did not wait for them to continue in sin for years, but when they sinned, they fell. The punishment followed hard on the crime. They cast God out of their hearts and He cast them out of Heaven. How different is His conduct to some of you! You have sinned through a series of years. How old are you? Twenty years? Thirty? Forty? Fifty? Sixty? Seventy? Is it 80 years that you have lived in rebellion against God? And yet He has not cut you down! Wonderful patience! He banished the angels from His Presence at once. He spared not the angels, but He has spared you. Why is this?

The Lord never entered into any parley with the angels—never invited them to repentance or to mercy. Oh, but what parleys God has had with some of you! I am not the only one who has entreated and tried to persuade you! Yes, with some of you I have pleaded very earnestly that you would turn from the error of your ways and live—that you would believe in Christ and find eternal life. But why should the Lord offer peace to men and not to fallen angels?

For the angels, God never made a Covenant of Grace, “ordered in all things and sure.” They broke their Covenant of Works and they fell, never to rise again! For the angels, there was never a sacrifice—no dying Son of God for them—no bloody sweat and wounded hands and feet for them! And yet a great Atonement is prepared for men. What sovereignty of God’s Grace is displayed here! He opens the golden gates of love for us and shuts the iron gate on beings nobler than we are! The Spirit of God strives with us, but He never strives with fallen angels. Devils are left to themselves, but concerning man, the Lord cries, “how can I give you up?” How justly might God have left us alone, for we have been given unto idols—and yet He follows us with the admonitions of His mercy!

For the devils there is no pardon, no hope, no gate of Heaven—and yet there is *all* this for men. Oh, dear Hearers, do not, I pray you, reject these choice gifts of Almighty love! If God is so specially gracious to the race of men, let not man become singularly ungrateful to his God, presumptuously wanton in his sin! Let us turn unto the Lord with full purpose of heart, seeing that He turns to us with such specialty of favor. I am sure that it is a great wonder and a thing for admiration that God should look upon us and not on fallen angels, because, as I have already said, angels certainly are not worse sinners than some men have been. Angels are not more willful than we have been, for we have sinned against light and knowledge with deliberate intent and purpose.

Angels are certainly more valuable—if God had wanted one of the two races to be employed as His servants, the best would have been chosen and these are *not* men, but angels! Angels can do more for God than we can—yet He has chosen us. Angels must, surely, be more missed than men—their downfall made a great gap in Heaven. We go there to fill the space and to repair the breach which was made when they were cast down from Glory. But, surely, it were easier to restore the angels who

came from Heaven than to take up inferior creatures who had never been there! If we make a distinction between men in the distribution of our charity, we very properly say, "Let us first do good to those who would be the most miserable without it."

Now, men have never known Heaven and, consequently, cannot so much feel the loss of it as those who have been there and have fallen from it. We are like people that have always been poor—but the angels have been in Heaven and are, therefore, like wealthy persons who have come down to poverty! What a Hell to them to be out of Heaven! What misery to those spirits to miss the eternal glories which they once enjoyed! One would have thought, therefore, that God would have restored the angels before He raised up the human race. But He has not—He has redeemed us and left the elder race of rebels unrestored! No man knows why and in our amazement we cry—How is this? Why this election of Grace?

Tell me, you who would leave God no choice, but would deify the will of man, what all this means? Where is your proud theory that God is bound to treat all alike, as if we had a claim on God? I point you to the fallen angels and what can you say?

Sometimes princes, when they mean to give a pardon according to their will, say to themselves, "We will pardon the man who will be most dangerous if we leave him to be our enemy." Now, bad as men are, and great enemies of God as they become, yet the devil has more power to harm God than a man can have—and yet God does not pardon the devil! He lets Satan go on with all his dreadful power and do his worst in reviling his Lord—and yet the Lord's *mercy* comes to us whose powers are within so narrow a range compared with the fallen angels! He makes choice of *puny man* to receive His Grace!

One would think that to restore an angel was more easy and more agreeable to the plan of the universe than to exalt fallen man. There is nothing to do but to put an angel back in his place. But men must be taken into a new existence! Christ, Himself, must come and be a Man and, to wash away the sin of man, Christ must die! Nothing more could have been needed had devils been saved. I cannot conceive the salvation of angels to be more difficult than the salvation of men! I rather conceive it to have been the easier thing of the two if the Lord had so willed it. And yet, involving, as it did, the Incarnation of the Son of God and His death to make atonement, the infinitely gracious Father condescended to ordain that He would take up *men* and would not take up the fallen angels! It is a marvel! It is a mystery! I put it before you for your admiration. Oh, Sirs, do not despise it! Let not such amazing Sovereignty of Grace be treated with contempt by any of us! Talk no more about the injustice of the election of certain men, for if you do, the devils will bear witness that you are quibbling at the royal prerogative of the great Lord who says, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

Now, I think that I see in this *a great argument with God's people*. Has the Lord given up angels and chosen you? It reminds me of that famous text, "Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable, and

I have loved you. Therefore will I give men for you, and people for your life. I gave Egypt for your ransom; Ethiopia and Seba for you." See, He has passed angels by and He has made choice of us! What a height of Grace! Behold how He loves us! What shall we do in return? Let us do angels' work!

Come, Brothers and Sisters, let us glow with such a fire of devotion as might have burned in an auger's heart! Let us be as intensely zealous as a redeemed angel might have been! Let us glorify God as angels would have done had they been restored and made, again, to taste Divine favor and infinite love! What manner of people ought we to be? What manner of lives ought we to live? What manner of consecration ought to be upon us? Should not our whole being live unto God?

I have given you this somewhat in the rough, for time flies, but think it over and profit by it. Think it over, you ungodly ones, and do not cast away mercy like this. When you read, "He took not up angels, but He took up the seed of Abraham," be full of surprise, and fly at once to Jesus! And, O you saints, as you read it, say to yourselves—

***"For more love than seraphs know
We will, like seraphs burn."***

God bless you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 17.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—261, 668, 869.**

TO MY CONGREGATION OF HEARERS AND READERS:

By the great mercy of God I was permitted to leave my house on Tuesday and commence my journey to the South of France. It seemed impossible for me to recover while in our trying climate and so, in great weakness, I have ventured to make a move. I beg your prayers for my recovery and especially for the sanctification of my grievous pains, so that they may turn out to be for God's Glory. Week by week I shall carefully prepare these Sermons and I hope they will be attended with the Divine blessing. In them I hope to keep up my communion with thousands of dear friends, though we are divided by many a league.

Friends at the Tabernacle, I have heard of one enthusiastic friend who so misses my ministry that *he wished he could fall asleep till I return*. That is exactly what I hope you will *not* do! Be doubly alive! Seek for a revival of religion—labor for it! Everything shines through the fire while the Builder is absent—let it be seen that our building is not wood, hay and stubble which will disappear, but precious metal that will remain to the Glory of God. **KEEP UP THE PRAYER MEETINGS!** Sustain every holy work. Live near to God. Continue in concord. Devote yourselves wholly unto the Lord. With Christian love to my dear Hearers and Readers,

I am yours, for I am Christ's, **C. H. SPURGEON.**

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THE LORD'S KNOWLEDGE, OUR SAFEGUARD NO. 2441

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, DECEMBER 1, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 30, 1887.

*"The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the Day of Judgment to be punished."
2 Peter 2:9.*

THERE are very narrow limits to our knowledge. There is a great breadth to our *conceit*, but the things that we really know are very few, after all. He who is wisest will be the first to confess his own ignorance. Our faith in the superior knowledge of God is a great source of comfort to us. That He knows everything is a sort of Omnipresent covering to our naked ignorance. Though we know not as yet, we rejoice that He knows, and it is better that He should know than that we should know. Knowledge is safer in the hands of God than it would be in our hands. Only the Infinite God is to be trusted with infinite knowledge!

The first words of our text, "The Lord knows," often come as a comfort to my own mind. The text says, "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations." This is only one of the many things which the Lord knows. For instance, sometimes we meet with perplexing doctrines—perhaps we endeavor to effect reconciliation between the Predestination of God and the freedom of human action. It is better not to wade too far into those deep waters, lest we lose ourselves in an abyss! "The Lord knows." There is a reconciling point in His mind as to all the great Truths which He has revealed. One was wishful, the other night, to tell me some great secret which he had discovered, but I was not so wishful to hear it, for I did not think that I should be any holier or any happier if I did hear it! I was just as pleased not to know as I should have been to know the secret. That insatiable craving to know everything draws away the life of men from what ought to be their insatiable craving, namely, to be *like* God, to *know* Him, to *trust* Him, to *love* Him and to *serve* Him.

Sometimes, dear Friends, we come across puzzling prophecies. Some Brothers and Sisters profess to know all about prophecy. I do not, neither am I quite sure that they do. This I know, that you have only to place one set of interpreters of prophecy over against another set and they speedily swallow one another, as Aaron's rod swallowed the rods of the magicians of Egypt! But I am satisfied to feel that "the Lord knows." And He knows how every prophecy will be fulfilled and the exact order in which the prophecies will come to be facts. We may make our prophetic charts if we like, but God will follow His own chart. We may think that we have discovered the clue of the maze in the Apocalypse and in Daniel, but whether we have, or have not, is of no very great consequence! John

and Daniel spoke by the Holy Spirit and their words will all be fulfilled in due time—and the Lord knows all about the whole matter.

The same is the case in reference to the Lord's amazing promises. Many of them are so amazingly bright and grand that we sometimes ask ourselves, "How can all these things be fulfilled?" And possibly, like Abraham, we may have a Divine promise, yet there may come a precept or a Providence which seems to murder the promise and render its fulfillment impossible, as when God said to the Patriarch, "In Isaac shall your seed be called," and then bade him offer up his son in whom the promise was wrapped up! Yet Abraham, although he did not know how the promise would be fulfilled, staggered not because of unbelief, for he felt that *God knew*. God will keep His promises, Brothers and Sisters. We need not try to help Him as she did who sought to secure the blessing for her favorite son by setting him on an evil and mischievous piece of plotting to deceive his aged father.

It is not your work to fulfill God's promises—you will have enough to do to obey His precepts—and you will need His help to enable you to do that! He does not need your help in fulfilling His promises, but you may say with regard to the whole of them, "The Lord knows how to fulfill them and He will fulfill them to the dot of every i and the stroke of every t. Not one good thing that He has promised shall ever fail to be bestowed upon those who put their trust in Him."

The same is the case, also, dear Friends, with regard to afflictive Providences. "I cannot see the wisdom of this trial," says one. "I cannot understand why this trouble has befallen me," says another. Why do you wish to understand? Why do you need to see? We walk by faith, not by sight! I have known what it is to feel a thrill of sacred joy within my soul when my Divine Master has given me a task altogether beyond my strength. I have felt, "If this work had been only half as heavy as it is, I might have attempted it, but now I know that I cannot perform this task in my own strength, so I am cast upon Omnipotence." It is poor work—paddling about on the muddy beach, lifting first one foot and then the other! The grand exercise is to *swim*—and you must swim when you cannot touch the bottom. Sometimes God puts us into an ocean of afflictions where there seems to be no bottom. Our trials are altogether too heavy for us, they quite overwhelm us. Oh, then, what a mercy it is if we have faith enough to trust in God!

If Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had been summoned to the common trial by ordeal—well-known among our ancestors—that of walking over red-hot plowshares, they might have hoped, somehow, to pick their way. But when they were "bound in their coats, their hose, their hats and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning, fiery furnace"—where there was no possibility of escape unless Jehovah, Himself, entered the furnace with them—well, then, they had a grander arena for the display of faith in God! They had passed from the littleness of human possibility into the grandeurs of Omnipotence—and God was glorified as they walked loose in the midst of the fire having had nothing burnt except their bonds! It is a great gain when any tried or

persecuted child of God has the company of his Heavenly Father even in the midst of the fiery trial to which he is exposed.

It is the same with regard to grievous temptations. Some of the Lord's very dear children are sorely tempted, sometimes by their own thoughts, into which Satan casts the bitterness of his blasphemies. Sometimes by trials at home which they cannot understand, or by afflictions which seem like that wind from the wilderness which smote the four corners of the house where Job's children were feasting. Well now, at such times, when we cannot comprehend our temptations, but seem altogether in a maze, and at a standstill, then let us fall back on these three words, "*The Lord knows.*" The infinite breadth of Divine Wisdom comprehends all our needs, all our sorrows, all our feeblenesses, all our trials and temptations! Let this be like an all-surrounding atmosphere to us, breathing which we shall feel our life strengthened and our hearts made glad!

In our text, the Apostle calls attention to one item of God's knowledge. He makes us feel quite safe as to the government of the universe, seeing it is in the hands of the All-Knowing One, the Lord who knows, on the one hand, "how to deliver the godly out of temptations" and, on the other hand, how "to reserve the unjust unto the Day of Judgment to be punished."

I. In considering these words, I shall ask you, first, to think of THE LORD'S KNOWLEDGE IN REFERENCE TO CHARACTER. This may not appear on the surface of the text, but it is evidently implied, for the Lord would not know how to deliver the godly if He did not know *who* were godly and He would not know how to reserve the unjust unto the future judgment if He did not know *who* were unjust! Reflect, then, for a few moments, upon the Truth of God that *the Lord knows the godly*. Sometimes they come under trials and temptations so that they are not known to others. Their former friends and their kindred stand aloof from them, as Job's friends and kindred did from him. The Patriarch was so sorely smitten and wounded that his three friends concluded he must be a hypocrite. He "was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil," a very favorite of Heaven, yet his friends did not know him as one of the godly because of the great trials which had befallen him.

Yes, and sometimes, because of imperfections, others may not know us to be godly. It is a pity that it should be so, but there are times when sin fiercely assails the Believer and he is sorely put to it. He has to confess that he gives cause to others to stand in doubt of him. Well, Beloved, when others do not know you to be godly, the Lord knows! "The Lord knows them that are His." There have been secret passages between you and God which nobody else can ever know. He perceives your sincerity in the midst of your infirmity and, though He will chasten you for your sin, He still knows that you believe in Him. You may, like Samson, lose your eyes and be shorn of your strength. I pray that you may not fall so low as that, but even if you do, remember that it is written of the blinded Nazarite, "howbeit the hair of his head began to grow, again," and the Lord gave him back his former strength, for, notwithstanding all his folly and his sin, he was a Believer in Jehovah! He had a firm, childlike faith

in the Most High, and in the power of that faith he did great exploits and the Lord, even in Samson's death-struggle, acknowledged him as His servant and avenged him of his adversaries.

Do not let us get into such a condition that others may justifiably doubt us, but if they *maliciously* doubt us—if without cause they cast out our name as evil, if they slander us and invent fictions and falsehoods to injure our character—let us come back to this, which is implied, if not stated, in our text, “The Lord knows the godly.”

It may sometimes come as a great comfort to us that the Lord knows the godly when they do not know themselves. I have heard some of God's people speak as though this were not possible, but I boldly assert it from my own observation of hundreds of those who truly love the Lord. We may sometimes be so beset with temptations and our spirit may so sink within us that we may have to stand in doubt as to our own salvation and say, “Am I really the Lord's, or am I not?” There are times when we have to hear the question from our own conscience—and why should we not hear it from our own conscience, since Peter heard it from his Master's own lips, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?” I would like to say to you, with the poet Cowper—

**“Come, then—a still small whisper in your ear—
He has no hope who never had a fear
And He who never doubted of his state,
He may, perhaps—perhaps he may—too late.”**

It is not an ill thing to go and search to the very foundations to see whether there is peace between God and your soul or not! Some of the best of the Lord's servants have had to go through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, wherein the voice of the evil spirit has been louder in their ears than the whisper of their own faith—and they have had to stand still in utter bewilderment! They could not get *their* sword out of its sheath, or, if they could, they were unable to use it, for it seemed as if the enemy could not be touched by their sword. The only weapon they could handle was the weapon of all-prayer, as they cried out in their anguish, “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” Now remember, when you do not know yourself to be godly, God knows! Here is the comfort for our hearts, “The Lord knows the godly.” He knows both them and their ways—but the way of the *ungodly* shall perish.

As this is true about the godly, so is it most solemnly certain concerning the ungodly. *The Lord knows the unjust.* That is to say, despite their loud pretensions of piety, the Lord knows that they are really ungodly. They have joined the Church, they wear the name of Christian, they are even honored among Christian men—but the Lord knows the unjust—no garb of religion can conceal their wickedness, no form of pious speech can hide the insincerity of their hearts! Oh, should there be any such here, may this flash of light go right through them! The Lord knows the unjust, whatever they may pretend to be.

He knows them, also, notwithstanding their great possessions. “I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree.” And many a hollow profession has been gilded over with riches and, because the man was well-to-do, they thought that he must be do-

ing well—two very different things, however. But God can read us through and through. If we climbed to a throne, He would discern the state of our heart even there! And if we had the acclamations of a nation for our devotion and piety, He would discover us, even then, for all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do! Let this not be forgotten by any of us! Let us not try to deceive the Lord, but let everything be open and above-board before Him. There should be in us all the most strict truthfulness—I am afraid that there is a tinge of hypocrisy even in the most gracious. May God take it away from us and let us walk in the Light of God as He is in the light, while the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, still cleanses us from all sin, for we shall still need it!

II. Now let us come to the very marrow of the text, which is this—THE LORD'S KNOWLEDGE IN REFERENCE TO THE GODLY. "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations."

Notice their name—"the godly"—that is, the people who know God. He is no dream of fancy to them—they *know* Him. He is the most real of all existences to them. Knowing Him, they fear Him. They have learned to fear and tremble before the Most High. It was a name of scorn which they gave to the Society of Friends when they called them, "Quakers." But, after all, it was a right thing for them, like Moses, to exceedingly fear and quake in the Presence of the Most High God. The godly also *trust* God. To them, God is the pillar of their confidence, the brightness of their life, the life of their light, the light of their delight! They rest on Him, as on the Rock of Ages, and they rest nowhere else. These godly ones also *love* God—their heart goes out towards Him. He is their Joy. He is their Companion, their Friend. He is All in All to them. The Lord knows these godly ones and He makes them to know Him. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His Covenant."

Well, it is certain that these godly ones will have to suffer temptation. Gold is tried in the furnace. Good things are tested and proved—and godly men are full often tempted and afflicted and tried. They shall, very few of them, get to Heaven without passing through the trying waters and testing fires, else to them the promise would not be true, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers they shall not overflow you; when you walk through the fires, you shall not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon you." The Lord knows all about them and their trials! And especially, according to our text, "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations." Let me make a few observations upon that Truth of God.

The first is this—*His knowledge answers much better for them than their own would do.* They do not know how they will be delivered out of temptations. Sometimes they make a guess and so make a mistake—and then they are disappointed. They would be far wiser if they left knowledge to the Most High and kept to their own sphere, which is that of trusting, believing and knowing that the Lord knows! One says of Adam that he knew a great deal and it was a pity that he did not know one thing more, namely, that he knew enough, for had he known that he knew enough, he would not have eaten of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good

and Evil! You know enough when you believe. If you know nothing except how you can put your hand into the hand of God, you may go boldly on with a surer tread than the best-sighted man ever knew by his own wisdom alone! "Commit your way unto the Lord; trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." Better that the knowledge be with the Lord, your Head, than in your own head, for you are not the Lord! "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations." It is almost a cant expression among the ungodly—"The Lord knows." Oh, but let it be a very solemn expression among us, "The Lord knows" and, blessed be His name, "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations!"

In the next place, *His knowledge of their case is perfect*. He knew the temptation before it came! Before *He appointed it*, He weighed it in His unerring scales—not in the big scale of the coal merchant, but in the delicate scales of the chemist who measures every tiny grain and has a scale that will turn with the weight of a single hair! If God appoints me 10 afflictions, the devil, himself, cannot make 11 of them! If the Lord shall put half an ounce of a bitter ingredient into your cup, all the devils in Hell cannot make an ounce of it! God knows your affliction before it comes to you and He knows it when it comes to you. When Israel was in Egypt, the Lord knew their afflictions. Well said David, "You have known my soul in adversities." The Lord knows just where the trial touches and pinches us, how we grieve under it, how far it has gone and how far it must not go. The Lord knows our afflictions with a perfect knowledge before they come—and when they come—and He also knows all about them when they go. I bless His name that He can foresee the effect of trial upon His children! He knows what Grace it will brighten. He knows what shams it will destroy. He knows what it will teach us and He knows what it will make us unlearn, which we thought we needed to know. He knows all about us from beginning to end and, consequently, His knowledge of our temptations is absolutely perfect—and we may be content and rest in perfect peace. "He knows the way that I take."

And this is true *in every case of every child of God*. "The Lord knows how to deliver"—not merely some one godly man, or some 20 godly men, but "the godly" as a whole, all of them! Dear Friend, to put it very personally, the Lord knows how to deliver you out of your present temptation. But do not put your hand to sin in order to deliver yourself! That is what Satan will tempt you to do. Lay not the hand of Uzzah upon the Ark of the Lord, much less upon any piece of furniture in your own house! Oh, the temptation there is, sometimes, to indulge in a hasty temper, or to speculate in business, or to keep back a part of the truth, or to pretend to be something which you are not, or to allow a sin to go unreproved because you wish to escape reproach or to avoid censorious judgments! No, the Lord knows how to deliver you, and if He does not deliver you, then say with those three holy children whom I mentioned a few minutes ago, "If it is so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto you, O king, that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up." Do not at-

tempt to supplement the wisdom of God with your insanity, for it is nothing better than insanity when you fancy that you can ever profit by wrongdoing!

God's knowledge, as revealed to us in this verse, gives us a very comfortable thought. If the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation, then, depend upon it, *there is a way of deliverance out of every temptation*. The Lord does *not* know what does *not* exist. If He knows that there is a way of deliverance, then there is a way of deliverance, and there is a way of escape for you! You do not see it—do not ask or wish to see it. Ah, those eyes of ours—would God that they were put out! I was going to say we see a great deal too much, Brothers and Sisters, or we think we do. And because we say we see, we go blindly on, stumbling and blundering every foot of the way! It is for God to see and it is for us to believe and to trust in Him! There is a way of deliverance and it will be proved before long that there is a way of deliverance for *you*. If you believe it, you shall see it. God knows how to deliver—that means that there is a way of deliverance!

But it means more. The Lord knows how to deliver the godly *in the way most profitable for themselves*. We have invented various ways of deliverance, but God has not used them. And then we have found out another way, but He has not acknowledged that. And we have sought another way, but He would not have that. No, He knows how to deliver, so why do you come in with your inventions? Verily, I shall apply that text even to you, “God has made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions”—even inventions for escaping from trouble and trial! But the Lord knows which is the best way for their deliverance. He will bring you out of Egypt, but not in the way you thought, that you should flee away all of a sudden and escape by stealth. No, no—this is how He will deliver you, even as He delivered Israel of old—“He brought them forth also with silver and gold: and there was not one feeble person among their tribes.” He will bring you out in a profitable way and a right way!

And, best of all, He will bring you out *in the way which will be most glorifying to Himself*. With a high hand and an outstretched arm, He led His people out of Egypt, shattering all the might and pomp of the proudest monarch of the day! And the emancipated nation sang unto the Lord a new song as they took their timbrels and danced before Him who had triumphed gloriously over their cruel oppressor. That is what you, also, shall yet do. “The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations” in the way that is most glorious to Himself. God's children ought to think less of what is done, at any time, than of the Glory that God gets out of it. We sometimes want to see a great work, but a great work may not glorify God. If there is a little, obscure, unknown work—and to human eyes it remains almost a secret—if it glorifies God, it is to be preferred to the most gigantic wave of supposed revival that, after all, would leave behind it the names of men, but the name of God would be forgotten! In all things let God be glorified! Oh, that we would always aim at this objective! The salvation of men is a grand aim, but it must always be

in subordination to the Glory of the Lord, that His arm may be revealed and that all flesh may see it together. Oh, that God might be glorified! Be this our prayer in our trials and in coming out of our trials, "Father, glorify Your name."

III. Now, I must say a few solemn and weighty words upon THE LORD'S KNOWLEDGE IN REFERENCE TO THE UNJUST—"and to reserve the unjust unto the Day of Judgment to be punished."

Observe that Peter does not say, "the ungodly." He is not dealing with their inward character so much as with their *outward conduct*. They are "unjust." Ungodliness is unrighteousness and, sooner or later, the ungodly are seen to be unjust.

Ungodly men are legally unjust—they have broken God's Law and, therefore, they are not justified in His sight. Worse than that, they are evangelically unjust, for they have not believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, they have not His justifying righteousness to cover them. And then they are *practically* unjust, for their life is an injustice to God and to men. They have not received the sanctifying power of the Spirit to make them just in their daily lives.

God knows how to deal with these people. Let me read Peter's words, again, "The Lord knows how to reserve the unjust unto the Day of Judgment to be punished." You hear their blasphemies. You mark their infamies and your indignation burns against them—but the Lord knows how to deal with them. *He knows how to reserve them under restraints*. He acts like a magistrate who commits a prisoner for trial at the Great Assize. That is what God has done with some of you ungodly ones—you are committed for trial at the Day of Judgment. The Lord lets you live, but you are only out on bail and you will soon have to appear before the great Judge of Heaven and earth.

According to the Revised Version, and I think that translation is correct, *the punishment has already begun*. The Lord knows how to go, on even, now punishing the ungodly! That unrest of theirs, those fears, the trembling—all show that God is dealing with them. They swell themselves out very big, they laugh with loud laughter, they deny the Truth of God and they scoff at Christ—but, believe me, dear Friends, you need not wish to be like they are—no, not even like the healthiest, the wealthiest, the proudest and the greatest of them! The Lord knows how, even now, to smite them, and He does smite them! The life of an ungodly man, at its best, is a horrible life. I would sooner be God's dog than the devil's darling! It is better to be the most weeping Jeremiah than the most boastful Pharaoh. The day will come when the ungodly will, themselves, see it to be so—and the proudest tyrant will envy the lowest man or woman who crept humbly to the Mercy Seat and cried, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!"

The Lord knows how to deal with the unjust even now and *He will know how to deal with them by-and-by*. O Sirs, these are no trifling matters of which I am speaking! The unjust may be in the fullness of their strength, but the Lord can bring them down to lie on a sickbed. Even there they may defy God, but He knows how to stop their impious

mouths. "Ah," He says—and that is an awful text—"Ah, I will ease Me of My adversaries, and avenge Me of My enemies," as if they vexed and plagued His Holy Spirit and, at last He says, "I will be rid of them. They shall not trouble Me any longer. I will ease Me of My adversaries." Then He sends the "reaper, whose name is Death." I think that I meet him now, swinging his sharp sickle, and I say to him, "Whither away, O Death? What are you about to do? Will you dare destroy that scarlet poppy blazing in the midst of the growing corn?" "Ah," he says, "one touch of my sickle will bring it down." "And that blue flower, yonder, in all its splendid majesty of beauty?" "Ah," he says, "I will lay that low with all the common grasses of the field."

The Lord knows how to deal with the unjust *in the next world as well as in this*. Oh, that dreadful thought! Trouble not yourselves about it, except to "flee from the wrath to come!" Raise no perplexing questions in your mind. The Lord knows how to deal with the unjust in the world to come and that dealing shall be according to the strictest rule of justice. The Judge of all the earth shall do right—men shall not be able to accuse Him of injustice! He will deal with them as the God who cannot err. They are in His hands and, "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Do not believe those who tell you that it is not. They are the servants of the devil—be they who they may—who seek to delude your souls upon this matter! I beseech you, escape for your lives! Look not behind you, stay not in all the plain but escape to the Cross of Christ, for there, and there, only, is there salvation for the unrighteous! Oh, seek it now, for Jesus' sake!

I close with an illustration of the text which I feel almost certain was in the mind of Peter when he wrote these words, "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the Day of Judgment to be punished." Turn to the 12th Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, where you have the record of Peter lying asleep in the prison, watched by soldiers, and yet at dead of night the angel of the Lord came into the prison, smote Peter on the side, bade him bind on his sandals, gird himself and follow him. Peter went through all the doors of the prison till he came to the great iron gate and that opened of its own accord! And there stood Peter, out in the street, in answer to the prayers made at the Prayer Meeting at Mrs. Mark's house, when the Christians in Jerusalem were gathered that night to pray for him. This miracle proves that the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of trial!

Read the rest of the chapter, please, for that takes in the other half of my text. Herod sat upon his throne of state and all the people were paying him homage. And when he made an oration from his golden throne, they shouted, "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man." That same God, who had delivered Peter, knew how to lay hold of Herod, for we are told that immediately the angel of the Lord smote him and he was eaten of worms and gave up the ghost! The first is a brilliant deed of infinitely wise Grace, the next is an astounding deed of infinitely wise Justice! It is not necessary that you go to the gallows to meet your doom—a few worms can destroy you! It is not necessary that you be killed in a great

railway accident, or that there be a collision at sea, or that you fall on the field of battle! Herod was eaten of worms. A grape-stone has, before now, choked and killed a man. A draught of water has been poisonous to another. A little gas, that was almost impalpable, has laid another in his grave. There is not one of you ungodly ones who can escape if God shall say to His angels, "Smite that man while he sits in his pew. He has resisted My mercy and rejected My love. He will not come to Christ." You, too, may be eaten of worms before another Sunday comes! God grant that you may not meet such a fate, but may you learn the lesson of this text and feel the force and power of it in your own souls, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 PETER 1:16-21; 2:1-10.**

1 Peter 1:16. *For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.* There is need in these perilous times to come back to such an elementary Truth as this. The Truths taught us in God's Word are not fables, myths, or merely parables, but they are matters of actual fact. The Apostles were eyewitnesses of "the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"—"eyewitnesses of His majesty." We receive these Truths of God without the slightest question and base our faith upon them. We would be troubled, indeed, if we had any doubts whatever about these great foundation facts of our holy religion.

17, 18. *For He received from God the Father honor and Glory when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent Glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from Heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount.* They were not deceived—neither Peter, nor James, nor John. There was "such a voice" from God, Himself, which they literally heard. It was the Father bearing approving witness to the Person and work of His only-begotten and well-beloved Son.

19. *We have also a more sure word of prophecy.* Surely nothing could be more sure than the evidence presented to the Apostles in the holy mount! Yet Peter thus writes to express his utmost confidence in the Word of God. Surer than the light he saw, which dazzled him. Surer than the voice he heard which he never failed to remember and to which he always bore unfaltering witness! Surer, even, than these things is that Divine Book which is still preserved to us—"We have also a more sure word of prophecy."

19. *Whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the day star arises in your hearts.* You already have the assurance of the Word, itself—you must build upon that and upon that, alone—but you shall have added to that a, "day dawns," and a, "day star," in your own hearts. We have the witness within us now—"The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." And those things which we have re-

ceived by faith we now have proven to be true by their effect upon our own souls! We know the Light of God, now, because we walk in it! We know it to be the Light of God for it has enlightened us.

20, 21. *Knowing this, first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.* How we rejoice in this fact! We shall never give it up. It is a disbelief of Inspiration which lies at the bottom of all the modern theories—but with this disbelief we have not the slightest fellowship! In our inmost souls we believe that “holy men of God spoke as they were moved (or, “borne along”), by the Holy Spirit.” They spoke not for their own age, alone, neither were the prophecies given to a few persons so as to belong privately to them—but the whole Inspired Scripture stands fast for all the faithful and is the Truth of God to us, today, even as it was to those to whom it was first spoken!

1 Peter 2:1. *But there were false prophets also among the people.* How true that still is! Be not startled, Brothers and Sisters, as though some strange thing had happened to us in this generation! It was always so and so it will continue. If there are true Prophets, there will also be false prophets. And if there is the Spirit of God, there will be the spirit of evil! And often, in proportion as the everlasting Truth of God is full of power, the everlasting lie will be full of power, too, and will strive mightily against it. That same sun and shower which shall make yonder wheat to grow, will, at the same time, cause the thorns to spring up! And perhaps for a time they may threaten to choke the wheat until, at last, the wheat will choke the thistles. “There were false prophets also among the people.”

1. *Even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies.* They always try to do their hateful work privately and then they ask, “What is all this fuss about? We have not departed from the truth, we are as sound in the faith as any of you are,” when they know, traitors that they are, that they are undermining the foundations and trying to take away the very cornerstone of the faith! These “false teachers” would deceive the very elect of God if it were possible, but they are not easily deceived, for God has given them a discerning mind by which they “try the spirits whether they are of God.” The Lord Jesus said of His sheep, “A stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.” Sheep though they are, they have discernment enough to know their shepherd—and the godly soon detect false teachers who privily “bring in damnable heresies,”

1, 2. *Even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be spoken of evilly.* They say, “It is narrow; it is old-fashioned; it is not in accordance with the spirit of the age.” I know not what else they say, but, for all that they say, it still remains “the way of truth.”

3, 4. *And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingers not, and*

their damnation slumbers not. For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to Hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgement. “If God spared not the angels that sinned,” He will not spare *any who sin*, however high their position may be—even though they are the angels of the Churches, He will “cast them down to Hell.”

5. *And spared not the old world, but saved Noah, the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly.* Which some in these days say could not be consistent with the acts of a God of Love. Their imaginary deity, from whom they have taken away every glorious attribute of holiness and justice, would not have done this! But the God that judges righteously must and will punish sin, as He always has done and, “this God is our God forever and ever,” even the God who is “a consuming fire.”

6-8. *And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an example unto those that after should live ungodly; and delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds).* I love to see in God's people a holy horror of the sin which surrounds them. In several of the prayers in which we joined before we came upstairs to this service, there were many tears and cries over the wickedness of our streets—the impurity and the drunkenness which defile so many all around us. Alas! Alas! Men seem bent on horrible iniquity and it looks as if London, this great modern Babylon, will repeat the story of the cities of the plain! Well may we pray, “O Lord, have mercy upon the people!”

9. *The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations.* As He delivered Lot—

9, 10. *And to reserve the unjust unto the Day of Judgment to be punished: but chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise government.* We have far too many, nowadays, of both these sorts of sinners, and of the two sorts joined in one—“them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government.”

10. *Presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.* There let us cease our reading and turn to another holy song in which we will praise our God, whose Grace has made us to differ from the ungodly by whom we are surrounded.

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

GOD'S ESTIMATE OF TIME

NO. 447

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 27, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“But, Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.”
2 Peter 3:8.***

FROM this text certain persons, more desirous to find arguments for their theories, than a truthful exposition of the Apostle's meaning, have drawn the inference that a day in Scripture is typical of a thousand years—that is to say, that inasmuch as God was six days in creating the heavens and the earth and then rested on the seventh day, so we must expect to have a thousand years for every day. A thousand years in which the new heavens and the new earth will be in preparation, and then we shall enjoy in the seventh thousand a period of perfect peace and holiness.

Now such may possibly be the case. It may so happen that when the six thousandth year of labor shall be over, we shall enter upon the millennial rest. The last millennium may be a Sunday to the preceding six. But even if we knew this, I am not sure that it would be of any great assistance to us in foretelling the day when the Church militant should be universally triumphant through the coming of her Lord. The chronology of the past is surrounded with so much obscurity that we question whether any man will be able to tell us when the six thousand years will be over, or within a hundred or two of how old the world is.

Our curiosity would be rather tantalized than gratified, even if this theory could be verified. For all the chronologies we have, even that which the translators have put into our Bibles, are matters of conjecture, and their accuracy is far from indisputable. We could not, therefore, ascertain the times and seasons any more certainly, nor ought we desire to do so, for the Father keeps them in His own power and as for the time of the end we believe no man knows it, no, not even the angels of God.

Brethren, we would not wish to discover what God has hidden, nor to question where He declines to answer. It is certain, however, that our text does not teach the doctrine of the Sabbatical seventh thousand years. For looking at the whole drift of the passage, you will see that the words were written to meet the arguments of some who said, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the Fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.” “No,” answers the Apostle, “It is not so.”

And then he quotes the memorable case of the flood as an instance of Divine interposition. Knowing, moreover, that even the faithful had begun to chide the tardy hours, and think the promise long in fulfillment, he meets the adversary and consoles the friend by the words of our text. He as much as says, “You know not what you say when you speak of length

of time, for you forget that in God's estimate one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day." The Apostle, no doubt wrote this also for the encouragement of Christians in our day, who, because the chariot of Christ is long in coming to the triumph, are growing weary and are ready to cast down their arms and leave the conflict.

Like a good officer rallying the dispirited, he exhorts them to patience—"Beloved, it is not long. It may seem a tedious age to you, but it is fitting that you tarry for a while. Cease your impatience, and while you cry, 'Why are His chariots so long in coming?' remember that the time is not long to Him. To Him one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years are as one day." What the Apostle seems to teach as the general principle is that our estimate of time is not the right one, certainly not the Divine standard. And that when we look at time in relation to God, we must remember that the distinctions which are known to us are not observed by Him.

Before, however, I enter upon the subject itself, let me remark that the Apostle says he would not have us ignorant concerning this matter. And therefore, beyond a doubt, great importance is to be attached to it. Some have a willful ignorance, and of them the Apostle speaks in the preceding, verse—"This they willingly are ignorant of." See to it, Brethren, that you do not commit this sin of shutting your eyes to the light. Others have an idle ignorance. They will not study. They do not search the Scriptures. And, therefore, many things are not revealed to them. That the soul should be without knowledge is not good. And more especially, that the Christian's mind should be without knowledge of God must be exceedingly harmful.

We cannot form an idea of what God is but we should be very careful that we do not make Him to be what He is not. Our Apostle is most earnest that upon this point of God's eternity we should make no mistakes, and should not estimate and measure the existence of the Infinite One by our rules and standards, because, practically, the worst effects may flow from an error here. Impatience may ripen into unbelief. This may rot into petulant complaint, and that may breed inaction, sloth, disobedience, rebellion, and we know not how many other evils.

But now, to the text at once and we will handle it, as God shall help us, in three ways. First, we shall say a little as to *the general principle of the text*. Secondly, taking the words of the passage, we shall dwell upon *God's estimate of a day*. And then, in the third place, still keeping to the words of the sentence, we shall enlarge upon *God's estimate of a thousand years*.

I. First of all, then, we shall take the statement before us AS A GENERAL PRINCIPLE, "that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day."

1. In opening up this general principle, we remark that *all time is equally present with God*. When we know that an event is to transpire to-day, it appears very near to us. But when we know that it will not occur until a thousand years have elapsed, we think nothing of it. We feel that we shall have gone to our graves long before that era, and therefore the event does not strike us as having any connection with ourselves. Now, it is not so with God. All things are equally near and present to His view.

The distance of a thousand years, before the occurrence of an event, is no more to Him than would be the interval of a day.

With God, indeed, there is neither past, present, nor future. He takes for His name the "I AM." He does not call himself the "I WAS," for then we should conceive that He used to be something which He is not now—that some part of His Character had changed, or some attribute ceased from existence—for there is an ominous sound of annihilation in the sound of the word, "He WAS." Is it not rather a knell for the dead, than a name for the living?

Nor does our Lord God speak of Himself as the "I SHALL BE," for that might lead us to imagine that He is not now something which He is to be in the ages to come—whereas, we know that His Being is perfect, His Essence infinite, His dominion absolute, His power unlimited, and His glory transcendent. Development is out of the question, He is all today that He will be in future. Of the Lord Jesus we read that He is the Everlasting Father and yet He has the dew of His youth. Childhood, manhood and old age belong to creatures, but at the right hand of the Most High they have no abode.

Growth, progress, advancement—all these are virtues in finite beings but to the Infinite the thought of such change would be an insult. Yesterday, today and tomorrow, belong to dying mortal—the Immortal King lives in an eternal *today*. He is the I AM. I AM in the present. I AM in the past, and I AM in the future. Just as we say of God that He is everywhere, so we may say of Him that He is always. He is everywhere in space. He is everywhere in time. God is today in the past. He is today already in the future. He is today in that present in which we are.

This is a subject upon which we can only speak without ourselves fully understanding what we say, but yet, perhaps, a metaphor may tend to make the matter a little simpler. There is a river flowing along in gentle slope toward the sea. A boatman is upon it. His vessel is here, soon it is there, and soon it will be at the river's mouth—only that part of the river upon which he is sailing is present to him. But up yonder, on a lofty mountain, stands a traveler, as he looks from the summit he marks the source of the river and gazes upon its infant stream, where as yet it is but a narrow line of silver.

Then he follows it with his clear eyes until it swells into a rolling flood and he tracks it till it is finally absorbed into the ocean. Now, as the climber stands upon that Alp, that whole sparkling line of water adorning the plain is equally present to him from its source to its fall. There is not one part of the stream which is nearer to him than another. In the long distance he sees the whole of it, from the end to the beginning. The boatman yonder has shifted his place since we have been looking upon him from the top of the mountain. He cannot see the whole of the river. He can only speak of the river under the heads of where he *was*, where he *is*, and where he is *to be*.

But we who see it as a whole speak of it as a whole, and it is all present before our view. Such, we think, is the stream of time to God. From the altitude of His observance He looks down upon it and sees it in one gaze, taking in, not at many thoughts but at one thought, all the revolutions of

time and all the changes of ages and seeing both the thousands of years that have gone and the thousands that are yet to come, as present at one view before His eyes.

Or, to use another figure—there are some stars which are known as double stars and with the strongest telescope it seems impossible to discover any distance between them. They are all but joined—there are certain motions by which the astronomer perceives they are two stars, and not one—but to the common observer they seem as one. Even with the strongest telescope, we say, no distance is apparent between them. And yet it is perfectly certain that there may be millions and millions of miles of space between those two stars. But from the distance at which we stand they resolve themselves into one. So it is with the events of time.

Such, for instance, as the Fall and the Redemption. There is to us a space of some thousands of years. But God, who is far-seeing, from His lofty Throne, looks down upon them and they resolve themselves into one. He sees the Fall as taking place in the morning of time and the Redemption as completed before eventide has come. To Him they are one thought. We look at the Fall and weep over it and then afterwards we view the restoration in Christ and rejoice. But God regards the whole as one—the Fall and the rising again of Israel are one. He links them so closely together that He clearly beholds the glory which by the whole occurrence is brought to Him and the common good which is given to the creatures that His hands have made.

I know that by figures, however simple we may make them, we cannot set forth God to human eyes, for the face of none of His attributes can be seen. Yet it seems to me that we may by these thoughts be led to remember that a thousand years in the future are to God but as one day and so, too, with the past, since He looks upon all things in one eternal NOW, as they stand perpetually present before His eyes.

Let the sinner remember this. His sins, he says, were committed ten or twenty years ago. To God they are present in unmitigated hue of scarlet at this moment. Let the sinner remember this when he thinks of death and of the penalty after death. “Ah,” he says, “it is a long time to come.” Not so, Sinner. To God it is but as a day and if you could estimate it aright, how near the judgment is to you, and how close are those consuming flames into which impenitent souls must be cast! Think of this, I pray you, O dying Sinner, tremble, and God help you to look upon your years as one day, and oh, remember, that one day in Hell will be more painful than a thousand years on earth. God keep you from that place, for His name's sake!

2. Still, taking the text as a general principle, it teaches us in the next place, *that all time is equally powerless with God to affect Him*. A day does not make any particular change in us that we can notice. We do not meet our friend at night, after having seen him the previous morning and say, “My dear Sir, how much older you look!” There is no doubt we all do grow older in one day, but the change is not very perceptible, at least by such coarse, common optics as those which mortal men possess.

But if you take fifty years—what a difference is perceptible in any of us! Some of my dear friends round about me, who are now gray or bald, were,

fifty years ago, fine, tall, handsome young men in the full strength and vigor of their days. And others of us, twenty years ago were prattling boys, fond of play and frolic, and now we have come to manhood and are bearing the burden and heat of the day. The fingers of time blot the Epistle of life very sadly. As to this present congregation, wait but a hundred years and where shall we all be? Unless the Lord comes we shall, every one of us, be slumbering in the dust, awaiting the trump of the archangel.

But as a day seems to make no change with us, so but far more truthfully, a thousand years make no change with God. Ages roll on but He abides the same as when the waves break themselves against the rock and the rock stands fast forever. Brethren, we need be under no apprehension that God will ever be affected with *weakness* through the revolutions of time. The Ancient of Days, ever omnipotent, faints not, neither is weary. Is the Lord's arm waxed short? Is His ear heavy that He cannot hear? Is His arm shortened that He cannot save?

We shall find, if this creaking earth is to perform revolutions upon its axle for another thousand years longer, that the Lord will show Himself as strong to help His servants and as mighty to crush His foes as previously. And as time brings no weakness, certainly it shall bring no *decay* to God. Upon His brow there is never a furrow—no signs of palsy are in His hands. In the vision, His head and hair, we are told, are white like wool, as white as snow, as the emblem of His eternity, as the Ancient of Days. But "His locks are bushy and black as the raven," said another, as the emblem of His perpetual youth and of His eternal strength.

O Sun, your fires shall one day become extinct! O Moon, you shall hide your light! And you, you Stars, when you are ripe, shall fall like fig leaves from the tree! And as for you, O Earth, your ancient mountains already crumble to decay and you yourself and all that dwells on you shall pass away as a garment that is worn out! But as for You, O God, You are the same and of Your years there is no end. From everlasting to everlasting You are God! And as no weakness and no decay can be brought to God by time, *so no change in His purpose* can ever come through revolving years. To that which He has set His seal He stands fast and what His heart decrees, that will He do. He knows no change, He is not a man that He should lie, neither the son of man that He should change His mind.

Moreover, as there can be no change in His decree, *so no unforeseen difficulties can intervene to prevent the accomplishment of it.* Has He not said, and will He not do it? Has He not commanded and shall it not come to pass? There shall be no unforeseen and unprovided energy required—no unexpected impediments shall block up His path. Up till today He has leveled the mountains and bridged the seas. Up till now His own right hand and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory. Up till now no weapon formed against Him has prospered, and every tongue that has risen against Him in judgment, He has condemned. And so shall it be world without end.

As long as there is a work to do, He shall do it. As long as there is an enemy to conquer, that enemy shall be overcome. Conquering and to conquer is Your course, O Lord, and throughout all ages You are the Lord

strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. One day, in the matter of change, is to God as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.

3. Yet further—no doubt the text intends to teach *that all time is insignificant to God*. Within the compass of a drop of water we are told that sometimes a thousand living creatures may be discovered, and to those little creatures, no doubt, their size is something very important. There is a creature inside that drop which can only be seen by the strongest microscope, but it is a hundred times larger than its neighbor, and it feels, no doubt, that the difference is amazing and extraordinary. But to you and to me, who cannot even see the largest creature with the naked eye, the gigantic animalcule is as imperceptible as his dwarfish friend. They both seem so utterly insignificant that we squander whole millions of them and are not very penitent if we destroy them by the thousands.

But what would one of those little animals say if some Prophet of its own kind could tell it that there is a creature living that could count the whole world of a drop of water as nothing? That it could take up ten thousand thousand of those drops and scatter them without exertion of half its power? That this creature would not be encumbered if it should carry on the tip of its finger all the thousands that live in that great world—a drop of water? That this creature would have no disturbance of heart, even if the great king of one of the empires in that drop should gather all his armies against it and lead them to battle?

Why, then the little creatures would say, “How can this be, we can hardly grasp the idea?” But when that philosopher could have gotten an idea of man, and of the utter insignificance of its own self, and of its own little narrow world—then it would have achieved an easy task compared with that which lies before *us* when we attempt to get an idea of God. The fact is, it is only because He is infinite that He can even observe our existence. We think of the infinite nature of God in being able to marshal all the stars and govern all the orbs which bespangle the brow of night. But I take it to be quite as great a wonder that He should even know that such insignificant nothings as we are in existence, much more that He should count every hair of our heads and not suffer one of them to fall to the ground without His express decree.

The Infinite is as much known in the minute as in the magnanimous, and God may be as really discovered by us in the drop of water as in the rolling orb. But this is wonderful of God, that He even observes *us*. What do you think now, Brethren? Do you not think that the thousand years which we make so much fuss about are only comparable to a drop, and that the one day that we think so little of is a particle of that drop and that both the drop and the particle are alike to God and are utterly insignificant to Him?

They are not to be mentioned. They are but ciphers in His great existence. They are but drops in the ocean of His life, they are but one leaf in an eternal forest of existence, they are but one grain of sand on the mighty shore of the perpetual being of the Eternal One. A thousand years are as a day and a day as thousand years.

4. I think we ought also to learn from the text *that all time is equally obedient to God*. You and I are the servants of time but God is its sover-

eign Master. I cannot make an hour longer than it is—I often wish I could. When there is but an hour's space between some important labor, and more preparation is needed, one would pull an hour at both ends if one could. But it is rigidly an hour and refuses to be lengthened. There are times when we would make a day, if we could, much shorter. When we are racked with pain, we say in the morning, "Would God it were evening!"

We want to bring the two ends of the day together but unhappily they refuse to move from their fixed position. Time, inexorable Time, goes on, with so many ticks of the clock and though every motion of the pendulum may be as the cutting of a sword into our vitals, yet Time will not relent, but on he goes. To the miserable he will never be fast, and to the happy he will never be slow. He himself, and his footsteps, retain incessantly one ordained motion.

Not so, however, with God. Time is not His master. If He shall say to the sun, "Stand still and you, moon, in the valley of Ajalon," they must stand there eternally, unless He bids them move again. And if, on the other hand, He should bid them speed their course till the dial should go forward many degrees, it must be so. The horses of the sun must hasten their speed, they must fly onward as God Himself shall ordain, for He is their charioteer and the reins are in His hands. To Him, if the days were longer, or if they were shorter, it would be nothing. He cares not for these.

Oh, Brethren, we understand Him not. But let us adore Him. We cannot comprehend Him, but let us admire Him. I say again, this is wonderful that He is Time's Master and bids him move slowly or rapidly and Time is obedient to the behests of the Eternal God. One day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.

II. Only a few words upon the second head—GOD'S ESTIMATE OF A DAY. He can make a day as useful, and to Him it shall be as long as a thousand years.

Brethren, I think this is one of the most brilliant of the Church's hopes. We have been saying, "How many converts have been made by the Missionary Society during fifty or sixty years?" And we have said, "Well, at this rate, how long will it be before the world is converted?" Ah, "At this rate." But how do you know *God's* rate? God can do as much in a day as has been done in a thousand years that are past, if so He wills it. To the snail a furlong is a very long distance, but to a stag or a hound, how little it is. And then to a steam engine it is nothing. And then to a ray of light it becomes nothing at all. And then there may be something that travels as much more swiftly than light as light does more swiftly than the snail and then where would distance be? It is annihilated. It is gone.

So is work and labor and toil with God. It is for you and I continually to work, work, work. And if our pace is but that of the snail, we must still persevere, hoping to reach the end. But the day may come when God shall make one minister more mighty than a thousand. When one sermon shall be enough to convert a congregation. When that one congregation shall in an instant be endowed with fiery tongues and all the Brethren shall go forth and themselves become preachers. And before one day, one natural day is set, it may be possible for God to have made the light of the Gospel

flash from one end of the earth to the other, as quickly as the light of the sun travels from east to west.

Limit not the Holy One of Israel—

***“When He makes bare His arm,
What shall His work withstand?
When He His people’s cause defends,
Who, who shall stay His hand?”***

When He comes forth out of His chamber like the sun, what thick darkness shall shade His light? He looses the bands of Orion and guides Arcturus with his sons—shall He not, when He chooses, loose the bands of His Church, and guide forth those stars of His right hand—the chosen preachers of the Gospel of Christ? Only let Him will it, and there shall be one day written in the records of the Church that shall be equal in achievements, in conquests, and in triumphs, to any thousand years of her history recorded previously.

This should lead us to remember that when God speaks of judging the world at the Day of Judgment, He will find no difficulty in doing it. Two hundred judges might find it difficult to try in one day all the cases that might be brought before them in a single nation. But God, when He holds the great assize, shall be able to convict every guilty one and to absolve every penitent and that, too, in one day. The Judgment could not be performed better if it lasted through an age. It shall be none the worse because it is confined to a day.

Oh Master, let us see Your great works! Come forth and once again make days illustrious things. When You brought up Your people out of Egypt, when You did lead them through the Red sea, You needed not a thousand years to break the chivalry of Egypt and to raise a wail from the sons of Mizraim. 'Twas but an uplifted rod—a few hours of divided sea, a terrific union of the parted floods and lo, Egypt's horses and chariots passed away and they sank like lead in the mighty waters.

You needed not a thousand years to break the power of Jabin, king of Hazor—You did but speak and the mighty river, the river Kishon, swept them away. The stars fought from Heaven, the stars fought against Sisera. The might of the heathen was broken and Israel was free. You did not need a thousand years to drive back Sennacherib. Lo, You did put Your bit into his mouth and Your hook into his nose and in one night the angel of the Lord smote the horse and the rider and they lay dead and you led him back into confusion into the house of his god and he fell by the hands of the offspring of his heart.

Glory be unto You, Jehovah! When You rise up in the greatness of Your might You shall slay kings and overthrow mighty kings. The two-leaved gates of brass shall open and the bars of iron shall be cut in pieces. You shall in one day cause the nations of the earth to say, “The Lord, He is God, the Lord, He is God, the Lord, He is God alone.”

III. But we now turn to notice GOD'S ESTIMATE OF A THOUSAND YEARS. A day is to Him as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. The complaint which is brought by mournful unbelieving Zion is, “He is long in coming! His widowed spouse waits for Him but the Bridegroom tarries.” Oh, the long and dreary winter, oh, the dark and dreary winter, when will summer come? When shall the rain be over and passed and the

voice of the turtle be heard in our land? We have tarried 1860 years and more and yet no coming of the Son of Man. The dweller in the isle brings no tribute, the inhabitant of the wilderness bows not to lick the dust.

Christ reigns not yet in Jerusalem, nor do His ancients behold His face wearing the crown of His Father David. "How long, how long?" the saints under the altar cry, "How long?" And the saints at the altar here today take up the same wailing notes, "How long? How long? How long?" But He answers, "I am not long. What if I have waited and the time is long to you? Yet it is not long to Me." God bids you think for a moment, that if you really measure aright, it is no lengthened period of time that He has made the vision to tarry. For see you first, my Brethren, the time that has elapsed since Christ's crucifixion is not long *compared with eternity*.

Try, if you can, to measure eternity. You will find your task impossible. Even should another thousand years roll on, what would some three thousand years be compared with eternity? You might form a comparison between a shell full of water from the sea in the child's hand, and the whole of the sea, itself, but it were not possible by human figures to put down the comparison between two or three thousand years and eternity. No, the comparison cannot be made. It is nothing contrasted with all things. It is the unit put in comparison with the infinite. Why, therefore, do you think Him long?

If in all eternity you are to meditate upon the riches of God in Christ revealed to you in these 6000 years, if through all the eternal cycles this is to be the subject of your meditation, do you wonder that it should have been so long? Marvel you not rather that it should be so short a time? Then, again, when you say that God is long in the accomplishment of His great purposes, remember that *He has no need to be in a hurry*.

Whatever you and I find to do, we must do it with all our might—for there is neither work nor device in the grave where we are hastening. But God lives and lives forever. Our sun goes down. If the laborer would get his day's work done, he must toil with the sweat upon his brow. But God's sun never goes down. He may, like a God, take His own time and go about His work leisurely. Surely He need not run to reach His purpose. When two little kings grow offended with one another, straightway they hasten into war. But when some mighty monarchy becomes provoked, it can take its time and wait and marshal all its troops for the affray.

You might have seen yesterday the clouds gathering hastily, with the winds pursuing them in fierceness. Their black host speedily covered the face of the sky, the rain fell in rattling drops and poured upon the earth in torrents. There was haste and fury, but we knew from the very haste with which the clouds came together, that they only betokened a hurried storm. It is when the clouds come slowly up to the great rendezvous—when at last God's trumpet sounds to summon His black warriors to the battle—when you behold, at length, the sharp flash, the glitter of His spear, who is the Lord of tempests and His mighty ones come up to be marshaled in their line—then the trumpet sounds again exceedingly loud and long and for many an hour the earth shall be deluged with the rain and men shall shake when they hear the voice of God breaking the cedar and rending the mountaintops.

That which gathers long lasts long. The little is always in a hurry but the great can wait. "He that believes shall not make haste," simply because believing makes him great. And God, on whom Believers rest, makes no haste because of His greatness. He may well take His time, and go leisurely about His work. There is no need, we say, that the Lord our God, who is rich in years, should spend His time as we must do who have but slender store.

Besides, there is an advantage in His being slow—*it tests our faith*. We are getting weary, some of us, because we have little faith. But if the Church of Christ shall keep on from this day till another thousand years, sending out the pick of her ministry to the most desolate regions to preach. If she shall continue to send her young, brave sons, fresh to the altar of distant martyrdom. If our Churches at home shall continue to pay a spiritual taxation like that which Israel paid when Solomon's temple was in the building. If everyone of us shall be willing to spend and to be spent for God. And if the Church shall keep at that stretch for two thousand years to come, (we pray God she may not have the trial), but if she should, then there will be honor unto her God, who by His Grace sustained her and there will be honor to her faith, which thus honored God.

To win a fight when it lasts but for an hour, what is there in it? One gallant charge and the enemy has fled. Comrade, that is a battle worthy to be written with your Waterloos and your Marathons, when hour after hour, and day after day, valor disdains to succumb and patience endures the fight while foot to foot the soldiers stand. To see gallant courage fiercely longing for the charge but obediently awaiting the signal. Look, Brethren, how they stand like lions at bay, stand bearing wounds and agony and the horrors of death, until at last, the captain gives the triumphant signal and they dash upon their foes! The ranks of the enemy are broken and the foemen fall at their feet.

So is it today. We are standing in our Churches, like British soldiers in their solid square. We roll our deadly musketry against our enemy but the foe is in the distance and we cannot reach him as we would. Great Master, You shall come, and then at one triumphant charge, we shall give but one great cheer—"The Lord God omnipotent reigns," and they shall fly like chaff before the whirlwind and like the mist before the storm.

Further, it is well that God should thus be long, because *He is unraveling revelation*. I fear I have seldom been in the position of those hearers, who would wish the preacher to be longer—but there have been books of which one could say when we have reached the last page, "Would that there were another volume, that our interest might continue!" Now, what is the history of the Church but the great book of God's revelation of Himself to man? The Lion of the tribe of Judah has prevailed to loose the seals and to open the book for us, and year after year He reads another page and yet another in the Church's history. Brethren, if Christ should come today, if we should have no more conflicts, no more difficulties, no more trials, then we might suppose that the book had come to its brilliant golden end.

But if it keeps on a thousand years to come, so much the better—the glowing eyes of angels wish not for the end of the story and the bright eyes

of immortal spirits before the Throne, when it shall be all over, shall not regret that it was too long. No, let it go on, great Master. Let a thousand years run on. Our loving hearts will patiently bear it, as though it were but one day.

And more—the victory of Christ at the end will be all the greater and the redemption all the more glorious, because of this long time of strife and confusion. I have often admired, in reading history, how in the grand duel between good and evil, God has seemed to give all the advantage to His foe. Did you notice this in the combat of old between Patience and Suffering? God is in Job. Job is on a dunghill—the messengers come in such an order as most naturally to break his spirit—at last he is touched in his bone and in his flesh with sore pains, and yet, in spite of that, Job on the dunghill, is master over the Prince of Hell, with Providence at his back.

God gave the foeman the advantage and yet won the victory. So, in the greater battle which is waging now. When first the Gospel was preached—learning, eloquence and power—all these might aid the cause. But Christ disdained to take them. “No,” said He, “My enemy shall have the learning. The philosophers of Greece shall have the wisdom of men. Their orators shall wield all eloquence but not My Apostles. As for power, I have not chosen the great ones of this world.” So that the eloquence, learning, pomp and power of nations were put into the opposite scale and then Christianity came out, like a naked wrestler, all unarmed against one that was clothed from head to foot in mail of proof.

The Gospel comes out like a David with nothing but a sling and a stone against one, the staff of whose spear, is like a weaver's beam. See the hosts of Philistia come up armed to the eyes, every one of them, and there are thousands of them—there is God's hero—he is but one man. He has no weapon but the decayed bone of an ass's jaw. But he dashes at them right and left, hip and thigh, with a great slaughter, and smites them till heaps upon heaps with the jaw bone of an ass has he slain a thousand men.

Brethren, whenever you see anything in the world which would lead you to believe that the enemy is getting the upper hand, say, “Ah, it is only God throwing in the advantage on the side of His enemies.” The battle was fair enough before, but He is giving them all on their side, letting them have every weapon, bidding them take all the power and all the wit and all the eloquence and learning. We will beat them yet! Now in the name of Him that lives and was dead once more we, who are God's servants, full of weakness, throw down the gauntlet against the world that seems to be omnipotent! Against your learning and your eloquence and your multitudes and your authorities and your dignities, your powers and your State alliances, we still throw down the gauntlet.

Take it up, O earth, if you dare! But remember when we make the challenge, we expect stern fighting. We know from God's authority, which cannot lie, that a glorious victory awaits us. Now see, Brethren, this is why God is a thousand years about it! He can shake the old harlot of the seven hills tomorrow if He wills. He can knock down the idol gods today if

so it pleases Him. Tonight, before you and I go to sleep, every idol might be cast to the moles and to the bats if Jehovah willed it—but He does not.

“No,” says He, “they shall have their time. They shall have their opportunity. They shall strive against Me. I will hold in My power. I will not go forth against them. I will let them lay their plans with deliberation and execute their schemes at their leisure—but I will laugh at them in their preparations, and I will at last crush them in My hot displeasure.” And then the shout shall be the louder and the choral song shall be the more mighty and the everlasting hallelujah shall have a deeper bass and yet it shall have a shriller note of glory when at the last the triumph shall be won.

After all the four hundred years of Israel's bondage, Egypt's power was broken and Israel went free. And Miriam took her timbrel and danced before the Lord—so we shall also, in a few days, when all the adversaries are overthrown, take up for ourselves the same song of Moses and the Lamb—“Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider has He cast into the sea. So let all Your enemies perish, O Lord, and let them that hate You become as the fat of rams.”

I shall now leave my subject to the consideration of the faithful to cheer their hearts. If you think the work has been long and tedious, you will not think so any more, Brothers and Sisters, if you obey Peter's exhortation, “Be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.” As to those present who know not Christ, may the one day of their conversion take place today. And that one day of God's Grace and favor in their hearts they shall find to be as good as a thousand years spent in the pleasures of sin.

“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, he that believes not shall be damned.” God help us to believe, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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THE WORLD ON FIRE

NO. 1125

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 3, 1873,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness?”
2 Peter 3:10, 11.

MEN have frequently inferred liberty to sin from the apparent absence of God from the world. Because the Lord, in His infinite long-suffering, has suffered transgression to go for awhile unpunished, therefore they have wickedly said, “How does God know? The Almighty does not regard us. He will neither interfere to punish men nor to reward them, whether they break or keep His Commandments.” When for a long time no great changes have occurred in the world, no remarkable judgments, no visitations of famine, pestilence, or war, men are very apt to grow carnally secure and to take license to sin from the merciful respite which ought to have led them to gratitude, and through gratitude to obedience. At certain periods it has seemed to the Most High to be imperatively necessary to send great calamities upon mankind lest pride, oppression and profanity should cause society utterly to rot.

The fall of dynasties, the overthrow of empires, devastating wars and dire famines have been necessities of God's moral government, bits in men's mouths, bridles for their arrogance, checks to their licentiousness. The Lord is slow to smite the wicked, for His tender mercy is great and He delights not in the sufferings of men. And therefore He keeps His arrows in His quiver and hangs up His bow. But, alas, men take advantage of His love to grow grossly sinful and to blaspheme His name! Against this spirit the Apostle is arguing in this chapter. The profanely secure had said, “Since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were; where, then, is the evidence of God's existence? The world goes on like a clock, needing no hand to move its wheels or guide its action. There is no God,” they say, “to interfere, and we may live as we like.”

“No,” says the Apostle, “but God has interfered.” And though he might have quoted a thousand lesser instances which I have already hinted at, he preferred to forego them for the present, and to put his finger upon the great event of the flood, and say, “Here, at least, God did interfere.” He could no longer bear the transgressions of mankind and therefore He pulled up the sluices of the great deep and opened the floodgates of

Heaven. He bade the angry floods leap forth from their lairs and they swallowed up the earth right speedily. Thus it is plain that all things have not continued in one course—there have been interpositions of Divine Justice. The Apostle then tells the scoffer that there will be another interposition before long. But instead of water, fire shall be the instrument of destruction.

God's mill grinds slowly, but it grinds to powder. Justice loiters to commune with Mercy, but it speedily makes up for its lingering. Long is the blow withheld, but when it falls it cuts to the soul. God's wrath is long in kindling, but in the end it shall burn as an oven. We shall speak this morning upon the general conflagration foretold in our text. "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

Then, secondly, we shall discourse upon the practical inferences which the Apostle draws from it—"What manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness?"

I. Let us turn our thoughts to THE LAST GENERAL CONFLAGRATION. Information as to the future in Scripture is generally very indistinct in arrangement and though many attempts have been made to form a consistent scheme of prophecy, not one has been even moderately successful. There are, in the Word of God, many clear testimonies as to distinct events in the future, but these cannot easily be arranged in order so as to harmonize with other events. Neither will the most accurate observer, as I believe, ever make a consistent series of them, so as to map them down. They are perfectly consistent and their order is Divine—but we shall need the actual fulfillment to make the plan clear.

So intricate is the architecture of future history that only the Architect Himself knows where this stone and that and the other are ordained to stand. It is not for us to fling any one of the stones away, or censure it as ill-fashioned. We are but children and our little plans of house-building, like children with their toy bricks, are very simple and elementary, indeed. But God's architecture is of a high class and we cannot, therefore, conjecture where this event will come in, or where that marvel will find its place. But we may rest quite assured that each one will follow in an orderly manner upon the other and, instead of puzzling our brains over projects of interpretation, we may be quite satisfied to take each of the facts separately as we find them, believingly expect them and, above all, deduce from them their legitimate practical conclusions.

The right way of knowing anything is to know how to act in consequence of it. And in *spiritual* things a man knows nothing until he lives what he knows. If you and I know the Truths with regard to the future, each one as we find them in Scripture, and then act according to the inferences fairly to be drawn from them, we shall be wiser men than if

we became inventors of elaborate schemes. In this Epistle of Peter there is one Truth of God very plainly taught, namely, that this present world is to be consumed by fire. We learn, also, that this conflagration will take place in connection with the Judgment, for, “the heavens and the earth which now are, are kept in store, unto fire, against the Day of Judgment and perdition of ungodly men.”

The former destruction of the world by water was in consequence of sin and was a declaration of God’s wrath against it. It did not happen as an accident, or occur without design. Man sinned, was warned and sinned again, until God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth. The amalgamation of the people of God with the world was the crowning offense of all, for, “the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair, and they took them wives of all which they chose.” Thus were Church and State set up and the Church and the world were blended till the Lord’s Spirit was grieved and would no longer strive with man. Floods of sin called for floods of destruction. So will it be with the last fire. It will not happen as an inevitable result of physical causes, but because God intends to purge this material world from all traces of *sin*.

It has been defiled and whenever He makes it into a new Heaven and a new earth, He will cleanse it as by fire. Under the Levitical dispensation the cleansing of vessels which had been defiled was effected by passing them through the fire, as a type of the intense energy needed to remove sin and the Lord’s abhorrence of it. Even thus shall this earth dissolve with fervent heat and thus the Lord shall proclaim to the whole universe that He hates even the *garment* spotted by the flesh. When a house was defiled with leprosy it was destroyed and so must this earth be, for the plague of sin has polluted it. We gather, also, from our text that this fire will burn up all the works existing upon the earth—everything which man has constructed shall perish. We have heard architects speak of building for eternity! Aha! Aha! They have built but for an hour and their noblest fabrics will disappear like children’s castles of sand upon the sea beach.

Down will go the vast cathedrals and the towering palaces in one common crash! Whole cities will flame upon earth’s funeral pyre, while forests and melting mountains blend their smoke. The pride of power, the pomp of wealth, the beauty of art, the cunning of skill—all, all, must go! The sea of flame will overwhelm and devour everything without exception. The massive masonry and rock-like foundations of our vast engineering works shall run like wax in the tremendous heat! So fierce will be the flames that everything capable of being burned will be utterly consumed and the elements, or the solid portions of the earth shall be liquefied by the intense heat—rocks, metals, everything shall dissolve—and the atmosphere, itself, shall burn with fury when its oxygen shall unite with the hydrogen and other gases liberated by the intense heat.

Chemists tell us that the great noise which Peter speaks of would certainly accompany such a combustion. The whole world shall become

one molten mass, again, and this terrestrial firmament shall cease to be. "The heavens shall vanish away like smoke and the earth shall wax old like a garment." God has impressed Nature with His seal today, but He will melt it down, and then, as we hope, pour out the molten matter and stamp upon it a yet more lovely image than it has ever borne before. We may here, note, that the prophecy that the earth will thus be consumed with fervent heat is readily to be believed, not only because God says it, but because there are evidently the means at hand for the accomplishment of the prophecy. Pliny was known to say that it was a miracle that the world escaped burning for a single day and I do not wonder at the remark, considering the character of the district in which he spent much of his time.

In visiting the country around Naples, the same thought constantly occurred to me. Yonder is Vesuvius ready at any moment to vomit fire and continually sending up clouds of smoke. Ascend the mountainside, clambering over ashes and masses of lava—all beneath you is glowing—thrust in your staff and it is charred. Then go across to the Solfatara on the other side of Naples. Stand at the vent of that ancient volcano and listen to the terrible rumblings which attend the rush of steam and sulfur. Then stamp your foot or dash a stone upon the ground and hear how the earth resounds—it is evident that you are standing over a vast cavern! Look around you and remark how the earth steams with sulfuric exhalations. Observe, also, how the earth in some places has risen and fallen, again and again.

Down there at Puteoli in the Temple of Serapis there are pillars which have sunk below the tide mark and then have risen above it several times, as you can see for yourself by the mark of the sea worms. In a single night vast hills have risen in one place like bubbles upon the baker's dough, while in other localities there have been equally sudden subsiding of the surface. Yet this volcanic region around Naples is but one of the many vent holes of the great fires which are in the bowels of the earth—300 or more burning mountains have already vomited flame. According to the belief of many geologists, the whole center of the earth is a mass of molten matter and we live upon a thin crust which has cooled down, and is probably not so much as one hundred miles thick.

When the miner descends no further than 45 feet he finds that the heat has increased one degree of Fahrenheit, so that it is easy to see how small a distance down the solid shell extends. There is no known rock which would not be entirely liquefied by the heat produced at 60 miles depth. The probabilities are that the whole internal mass is in a liquid and, perhaps, in a gaseous state. It is well known that the earth is flattened at the poles, just to the amount it would be by rotation on its axis had it been a liquid mass, and therefore there is every probability that it was once liquid and is cooling down. Everyone who is at all acquainted with the condition of the globe knows that it only needs the Lord's will and the

fiery sea, of which yonder volcanoes are but the safety valves, would burst forth and flood the earth with flame. Or, if God so willed it, the thin crust which divides the ocean of water from the ocean of fire might soon be broken through and the result would be disruption and destruction.

Astronomers tell us that within the last 200 or 300 years some 13 fixed stars have disappeared and, according to their belief, they have been burned up. They have watched them blaze up in clear flames in quarters of the heavens where no star had ever been seen before and then they have disappeared forever, being, as it is wisely conjectured, burnt out. If such things happen in other worlds, is there anything improbable in the belief that the like will occur to us? But if there were no internal sea of fire and no instance of other worlds being consumed by fire, who can guess the power which lurks in electricity and other subtle forces? Faraday said that there was enough latent electricity in a single drop of water for an ordinary flash of lightning. What reserves of destructive force there must be in and around the globe!

God's dreadful armies lie in ambush everywhere. What if I say God's bodyguard is sleeping in His guard chamber? He has but to speak the word and the servants of His Omnipotence will rise, terrible in their destructive power. He spoke to His ancients of the sea and they marched in gigantic might till they had covered the mountain tops and laid the race of men dead at their feet! Let Him speak to His ministers of flaming fire and they will at once subdue the globe by quenchless burnings. Earth is as a pile of wood and the torch-bearers stand ready to kindle it at any moment! There has always been a cry of fire among men and the cry grows louder every century, for the burning is near. But if there were no such arrangements as these, we should still be bound to believe what God has said—and it is His solemn declaration that the day shall come when the Lord Jesus Christ shall appear as a thief in the night. And the heavens, that is the atmosphere, shall pass away with a great noise, while the elements, or rudimentary substances of the globe, shall melt with fervent heat. The earth, also, and the works that are therein, or thereon, shall be burned up.

We gather from our text that this will happen at a time when it will be very little expected. The dread hour will come as a thief in the night. It was not expected in Noah's day that the world would be destroyed. That was not for any lack of warning, but because men could not conceive it possible. They argued against Noah that all things had continued as they were from the days of their first father, Adam, and that so they would be. They thought Noah a fool for going up and down the world proclaiming an absurdity and frightening people with a bugbear. Thus speak they now, when God's Word declares that the whole world will be destroyed by fire. They reject the testimony and continue in sin, in worldliness and in rebellion against God! And so will they do up to the very moment when the shrill sound of the trumpet shall convince them that the Lord has

come and that the Day of Judgment and perdition of ungodly men has arrived.

No preaching will, of itself, avail to make ungodly men expect the coming of Christ, however clear, bold, consistent and long continued it may be. The world is mad upon its idols. Its ears are too dull to hear the Truth. Charm we never so wisely, this adder will never listen to warning. Men's eyes are blinded. They will not see and so they hurry on to their doom. And then, "when they shall say, 'Peace and safety,' sudden destruction shall come upon them, as pain upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape." It is well for us to remind you, again, that the long time which has intervened since Peter foretold the destruction of the world by fire is to be understood in the sense of Infinite Mercy. We are not to interpret it according to the wicked suggestion of unbelief, for the Lord will surely be revealed in flaming fire. We are to read it with the eyes of faith and gratitude.

God waits that men may be saved. He tarries that, in this long time of waiting, hundreds everywhere may believe in Jesus and enter into eternal life. And while we may consistently desire to hasten the coming of the Lord, we may be equally content that Mercy's day should be lengthened. While I have prayed, "Come quickly," I have often felt inclined to contradict myself and cry, "Yet tarry for awhile, good Lord! Let Mercy's day be lengthened! Let the heathen yet receive the Savior." We may desire the coming of the Lord, but we ought, also, to be in sympathy with the tarrying of the Most High, to which His loving heart inclines Him. Although we read of the world being burned with fire, we are not told that it will be annihilated. We know that nothing has been annihilated yet. No fire has yet been able to destroy a single atom of matter. There is upon the face of the earth, at this moment, just as much matter as when God created it—fire changes form, but does not obliterate substance.

This world, so far as we know, will not cease to be. It will pass through the purifying flame and then it may be the soft and gentle breath of Almighty Love will blow upon it and cool it rapidly—and the Divine hand will shape it as it cools into a Paradise more fair than that which bloomed upon the banks of Hiddekel. We believe from various things which are hinted at in Scripture, though we would not dogmatize, that this world will be refitted and renovated. And in that sense we expect new heavens and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness. Luther used to say that the world is now in its working clothes and that, by-and-by, it will be arrayed in its Easter garments of joy. One likes to think that the trail of the old serpent will not always remain upon the globe and it is a cheering thought that where sin has abounded God's Glory should yet more abound.

I cannot believe in that world being annihilated upon which Jesus was born and lived and died. Surely an earth with a Calvary upon it must last on! Will not the blood of Jesus immortalize it? It has groaned and

travailed with mankind, being made subject to vanity for our sake. Surely it is to have its joyful redemption and keep its Sabbaths after the fire has burned out every trace of sin and sorrow. Whether or not it shall be so matters little to the saints, for we shall be with Christ where He is, and behold His Glory! And, as to the future—"Forever with the Lord" may well satisfy us!

II. The Apostle has drawn PRACTICAL INFERENCES. "Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" What does he mean by this? What connection can there be between the burning of the globe and holy conversation and godliness? The first connection is this. Our position as Christians is, at this moment, like that of Noah before the destruction of the world by water. What manner of person ought Noah to have been? He said to himself, "This fair and beautiful world in which I dwell will soon be covered with the ooze and slime of a tremendous deluge."

He looked upon his fellow men and he thought and said of them, "Except these men fly to the ark and are sheltered with me, they will, every one of them, be drowned." He saw them marrying and given in marriage, feasting and trifling at the very hour when the flood came and he felt that if they would believe as he did they would find something other to do than to be engrossed in carnal pleasures. When he saw them heaping up money he would almost laugh yet weep to think that they should hoard up gold to be submerged with themselves in the general flood. When men added to their estates acre after acre, I have no doubt the Patriarch said to himself, "The flood will sweep away all these landmarks and as it carries away the owner so will it destroy all vestige of his barn and his farm and his fields."

I should suppose such a man, daily expecting the rain to descend and the flood to burst up from beneath, would lead a life very free from worldliness, a life the very reverse of the rest of his fellow men. They would reckon him to be very eccentric. They would be unable to understand him. And, indeed, his conduct would be such that no one *could* understand it except upon the theory that he believed in the destruction of all around him. Now our life ought to be like that of Noah. Look around on the beauties of Nature and when you enjoy them, say to yourself, "All these are to be dissolved and to melt with fervent heat." Look up into the clear blue and think that yonder sky, itself, shall shrivel like a scroll and be rolled up like a garment that has seen its better days and must be put aside.

Look on your fellow men, your own children and your household, and those you pass in the street or meet with in transacting business, and say, "Alas, alas, unless these men, women and children fly to Jesus and are saved in Him, they will be destroyed with the earth on which they dwell, for the day of the Lord is surely coming and judgment awaits the ungodly." This should make us act in a spirit the opposite of those who

now say, "Go, let us buy and sell and get gain. Let us heap together treasure. Let us live for this world. Let us eat and drink, and be merry." They are of the earth, therefore is their conduct and conversation earthy. They build here, on this quicksand, and after their own sort they find a pleasure therein—but you whose eyes have been opened know better—and you, therefore build upon the Rock.

You understand that the things which are seen are but a dream, that the things unseen are, alone, substantial. Therefore set loose by all things below the moon and clutch as with the grasp of a dying man the things immortal and eternal which your God has revealed to you! Such conduct will separate you from your fellow men, as there is down deep in your heart an objective different from theirs. And as you set a different estimate on all things, your conduct will be wide apart from theirs. Being swayed by different motives, your life will diverge from theirs and they will misunderstand you. And while trying to find motives for you, as they do not know the true motive, they will ascribe ill motives to you.

But so it must be. You must come out from among them, be separate and touch not the unclean thing. And the fact that all these things are to be dissolved should make it easy for you to do so, no, *natural* for you to do so, as it must have made it both easy and natural to the Patriarch Noah. I will, however, not dwell longer upon that thought, but remark further that the nearness of the Lord as suggested by the fact that the world is to be destroyed, according to His Word, suggests holiness. The sinner finds a reason for sin when he says, "God is not here. Everything goes on in the ordinary way. God does not care what men do." "No," says the Apostle, "He is not away, He is here, holding back the fire. He is reserving this world a little while, but by-and-by He will let the fires loose and the world will be destroyed. He is not far off. He is even at the door."

If I give the Greek rendering, it should be, "All these things are dissolving." They are even giving to dissolve. They are in the *process* of dissolution. God is close upon us, can you not hear His footsteps? Christ is returning. He is on His journey now. Faith hears the tramp of His steeds as they hurry on the chariot of His vengeance. "Behold, I come quickly," is the word which rings over the mountains of division. The King is coming! He is coming to His Throne and to His judgment. Now a man does not go up to a king's door and there talk treason! And men do not sit in a king's audience chamber, when they expect Him to enter any moment, and there speak ill of him! The King is on His way and almost here. You are at His door. He is at yours. What manner of people ought you to be? How can you sin against One who is so close at hand? How can you rebel against One whose eyes of fire behold and whose hand of vengeance is uplifted to smite the sinner?

The words of the text are very forcible. The Apostle says, "What manner of persons ought you to be? "Remember he was talking to *saints* and he teaches us that even saints ought to be more saintly than they are. He is

not saying to the *ungodly*, “What manner of persons ought *you* to be”! He might have so spoken, but with how much greater force does he address those who profess to be loved with the everlasting love of God, to have been bought with the precious blood of Jesus, to be affianced unto Christ in eternal wedlock, to be members of His body, parts of Himself? “What manner of persons ought you to be?” He implies that they are *not* what they should be and I am afraid there is no man of God but what will grant the truth of the implication in his own case. We have not attained to what we ought to be and I may say to the best child of God here this morning, “Dear Brother and Sister, there is a lot beyond.”

Yes, Brethren, and the text is so broad in its expression that it plainly teaches the limitless nature of Christian holiness. “What manner of persons ought you to be?” As if he could not tell what sort of persons they ought to be. As if holiness had in it no Ultima Thule, no pillars of Hercules beyond which the adventurous mariner might not go. There is a lot beyond for us all, if we are to be holy as God is, His is infinite holiness and where can a limit be imagined? He does not say, “You ought to be kind, just, loving, prayerful, truthful,” and the like. But as if he held up his hands in wonder and could not express the obligations of the Christian, he cries, “Because these things are all passing away, what manner of persons ought you to be?”

And then he goes on to specify two branches of holy life. “In all holy conversation,” that is to say, all holy behavior towards men. “And godliness,” that is, all pious dealing towards God. True religion, by no means, depreciates the duties of the second table of the Law. Some professors think very little of the common virtues of daily life, but they err greatly, and will find themselves in an evil plight at last. My Brother, if the grace you possess does not make you honest, God have mercy on you and take such grace away from you. If you have a kind of grace which does not keep you chaste and make your behavior decent. If you have a sort of grace which lets you cheat and lie. Which allows you to take undue advantage in trade—away with such grace! It is the grace of the devil and not the Divine Grace of God, and may you be saved from it! If our religion does not make us moral, it is a millstone about our necks to destroy us! If you have not reached morality, how can you dare to talk about *holiness*, which is a far higher and loftier thing? The best morality in the world will not prove a man to be a Christian! But if a man has not morality, it proves that he is not a child of God.

And then as to God—the duties of the first table are not to be neglected. We are to fulfill all manner of godliness. God is to be worshipped by us devoutly and we are to take pains to worship Him in His own way. How many people have a kind of—what shall I call it?—a happy-go-lucky religion? Whatever their mother or their father was, that are they. A great many of you go to certain places of worship, not because you have ever enquired whether the denomination you belong to is right or not, but

because you have drifted that way and there you stick! How few take the Bible and search for themselves. Yet no man has obeyed God aright who has not done so. If I could not honestly say, "I am a member of this denomination because I have weighed the Truths of God which are held by my Brethren and I believe them to be according to God's Book," I could not feel that I had done right towards the Most High.

The idea that there are good people in all denominations is well enough, but a great many have perverted it into an excuse for never caring what God's Truths or ordinances are. Rest assured that he who neglects one of the least of Christ's ordinances and teaches men so, the same shall be least in the kingdom of Heaven. Every Truth of God is important. Trifling with conscience is the sin of the present age. Men have even come to occupy pulpits in churches when they do not believe the fundamental doctrines of the Church. We have heard them even claim a right to retain their pulpits after they have denied the doctrines of the denomination to which they belong. From any power to believe in such a conscience may God deliver every one of us! Be right even in little things! Be precise—you serve a precise God. Charity towards others is one thing, laxity for yourselves is quite another thing.

Believe that your brother is conscientious though he may be in error, but as for yourself use your conscience and practice your judgment in the careful study of the Truth of God, and then whatever your conclusions, carry them out at all hazards. Though you should lose everything thereby—you will lose nothing in the long run! If you count the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt, you have made a wise choice and will rejoice in having made it! Oh, when I think that all I see about me is to be consumed, there remains nothing worth living for but to glorify God! If we were to live here forever and this world were all, we might, perhaps, think it some gain to sin. But if we are soon to pass away and all around us is to dissolve in smoke, there is nothing to do, if we are wise, but to do our duty in the station in which God has placed us, both towards God and man, resting in the precious blood of Christ for our pardon, and in His righteousness for our acceptance.

For these things will endure when we are dead, according as it is written, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, yes, thus says the Spirit, for they rest from their labors and their works do follow them." The evanescence of all things around us suggests our looking away to eternal things. I saw yesterday with much solemnity of mind the spot where the Bishop of Winchester met with sudden death. A cross is cut in the turf to mark the place. The spot is in the midst of the most lovely scenery conceivable. I have often walked hard by, full of delight at the fair prospect. It is a spot too fair to be darkened by so dark a cloud. Death seems hardly congruous with the beauty which everywhere charms the eye. I could only imagine if anyone knew that he should die just at that moment, what would be his conversation? Riding over the downs what

would be the conversation of a man of God who expected to die in the valley below?

Such ought to be our constant conversation. We should live always as if we might die in a moment. Mr. Wesley once said, "Now, if I knew I should die tomorrow morning, I would do exactly what I have planned to do. I should take the class meeting at such an hour, preach at such an hour, and be up at such a time in the morning to pray." That good man's life was spent in prospect of sudden departure and it was therefore active and holy. Is ours the same? The motive for holiness becomes stronger, still, if the thought is not merely that I shall die, but that all these things around me shall be dissolved. That breezy down, that towering hill, yonder lofty trees and this overhanging cliff, these rich meadows, the ripening harvest, all, all will, in a moment, be on a blaze!

Am I ready to be caught away to be with my Lord in the air? Or shall I be left to perish amidst the conflagration? How ought I to live! How ought I to stand, as it were, on tiptoe, ready when He shall call me, to be away up into the Glory, far off from this perishing world! It makes us look upon all these things in a different light and upon eternal things with a more fixed eye—and a more stern resolve to live unto God. Observe, if sin, even on the inanimate world, needs such a purging by fire as this—if the fact that sin committed here makes it necessary that God should burn it all up—what a horrid thing sin must be! O to be purged from it! Refining fire, go through my heart! Spirit of the living God, sweep with all Your mighty burnings through and through my body, soul and spirit till You have purged me of every tendency to sin.

This ought to be the prayer of the Christian. If all these things will have to be purged, what manner of persons ought we to be in daily purging ourselves by a holy jealousy and a sacred revenge from every unclean wish, every false word and everything that would be inconsistent with that life of God which is in our nature? And if, again, God is so angry with sin that when He comes to judge it He will come with flaming fire and if the terrors of God against the wicked will be utterly overwhelming, what gratitude ought you and I feel for pardoned sin? What joy for safety in the Lord Jesus Christ?

And then, again, as the result of that, what a detestation of the sin which made it necessary that Christ should die to save us from the wrath to come! Oh, Believer, you will never have to say—"Rocks hide me, mountains fall on me." Believer in Jesus, you will never have to escape from those tongues of flame which will lick up the sea! You will not be alarmed at the melting mountains—you will be safe—not a hair of your head shall be singed! Oh, what do you owe to Sovereign Grace for such an escape as this? Bless the Lord Jesus! Fall down at His dear feet and adore Him! And then, rising up, say, "What can I do to glorify You? O Lord, keep me clear of the sin which would have destroyed me and help me to live such a life as becomes one who has been saved from the wrath to come."

Is there not much force in the Apostle's inference? I only trust we may all feel it.

Once more, he meant us to feel that the suddenness of all this ought to keep us on our watchtower. This conflagration will come with no signs to herald it which the ungodly will observe. You who are on the watch will observe them. You will see the tokens of His coming. You will rejoice to go forth to meet Him. But to the ungodly His coming will be as much unawares as was His first Advent which happened in the night, when all the world was wrapped in sleep. Men will still be buying and selling, and getting gain, and thinking of nothing so little as of the last Advent. And then the Lord will appear. Christian, let not that day come upon you as a thief! Stand ever watching. Live as if you said to yourself, "Today everything I have may be burned up. Today all my lands may run like lava. All my gold may melt like molten lead. Today I, myself, may have done with this world and the world may be consumed." Live such a life as that.

"Why," says one, "then we should be pilgrims and strangers." That is just how you should be! "Then," says another, "we should not be minding much about the stock in the bank and laying in for the future." Just so. That is how the Master would have you live—He would have you duly prudent and provident, but not covetous or anxious. If you feel that all these things are to be dissolved, you will then do all things as in the Presence of God. You will wish to use everything you have as not abusing it and as reckoning that it will perish in the using. God grant you, Brothers and Sisters, so to live.

I would to God that all here present were prepared for the future. You remember John Bunyan makes Christian sit in the City of Destruction at ease until he hears from one called Evangelist, that the city was to be burned up. And then he cries, "Alas, alas, woe is me, and I shall be destroyed in it." That thought set him running and nothing could stop him. His wife bade him come back, but he said, "The city is to be destroyed, and I must be away." His children clung about his garments to hold him, but he said, "No, I must run to the City of Safety, for this city is to be burned up." Man, it will all go! If all you love is here below, it will all go! Your gold and silver will all go!

Will you not have Christ? Will you not have a Savior? For if you will not, there remains for you only a fearful looking for judgment and of fiery indignation! Tempt not the anger of God! Yield to His mercy now! Believe in His dear Son. I pray that you may this day be saved and God be glorified in your salvation. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 Peter 3.

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GOD'S LONG-SUFFERING— AN APPEAL TO THE CONSCIENCE NO. 1997

**A SERMON DELIVERED IN THE AUTUMN OF 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation.”
2 Peter 3:15.***

JESUS is well called, “our Lord.” Let us, at the commencement, adore Him. Let us each one cry to Him, “My Lord, and my God.” It is a long time since our Lord went up to Heaven and He said that He would come again. Evidently, some of those who best understood Him *misunderstood* Him and thought that He would surely come again even in their lifetime. He said that He would come and faithful ones in all ages have looked for Him—it is not possible that our Lord can have deceived us. Because He is so sweetly our Lord, our Brethren have made sure that He will keep His word and He will. But certain of them have gone beyond our Lord’s promise and have felt sure that they knew when He would come—and they have been bitterly disappointed because the hour which they fixed, passed over, and He did not appear. This does not prove that He will not come. The day is certainly nearer and every hour is hastening His coming. “Behold, He comes with clouds, and every eye shall see Him.”

But why are His chariots so long in coming? Why does He delay? The world grows gray, not only with age, but with iniquity, and yet the Deliverer comes not. We have waited for His footfall at the dead of night and looked out for Him through the gates of the morning. We have expected Him in the heat of the day and reckoned that He might come before yet another sun went down. But He is not here! He waits. He waits very, very long. Will He not come?

Long-suffering is that which keeps Him from coming. He is bearing with men. Not yet the thunderbolt! Not yet the riven heavens and the reeling earth! Not yet the Great White Throne and the Day of Judgement, for He is full of pity, and bears long with men! Even to the cries of His own elect, who cry day and night to Him—He is not in haste to answer—for He is very patient, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy.

But His patience sometimes greatly puzzles us. We cannot make it out. Eighteen, 19 centuries and the world not converted! Nineteen centuries and Satan still to the front and all manner of iniquity still wounding this

poor, bleeding world! What does it mean? O Son of God, what does it mean? Seed of the woman, when will You appear with Your foot upon the serpent's head? We are puzzled at the long-suffering which causes so weary a delay.

One of the reasons is that we have not much long-suffering ourselves. We think that we do well to be angry with the rebellious and so we prove ourselves to be more like Jonah than Jesus! A few have learned to be patient and show pity to the ungodly, but many more are of the mind of James and John who would have called fire from Heaven upon those who rejected the Savior. We are in such a hurry! We have not the eternal leisure of God. We have but to live, like mayflies, our little day and, therefore, we are in hot haste to see all things accomplished before the sun goes down. We are but leaves in the forest of existence and if something is not done soon, and done quickly, we shall fade and pass away amid unaccomplished hope! And so we are not patient. We are staggered when the Master tells us to forgive unto 70 times seven. When He forgives unto 70 times seven, and still waits, and still holds back His thunders, we are amazed because our mind is not in harmony with the mind of the infinitely patient God!

We are all the more puzzled, again, because the ungodly so sadly misuse this long-suffering of God as a reason for greater sin and as a motive for denying that there is a God at all! Because He gives them space for repentance, they make it into space for iniquity! And because He will not deal out His judgments immediately, they say, "Where is the promise of His coming?"

We have impatiently wished that He would break the silence. Have I not, in my heart of hearts cried out, "O Lord, how long? Can this go on much longer? Can You bear it? Will You not come with the iron rod, breaking Your foes before Your face, most mighty Son of God?" It is hard to have the days of blasphemy and rebuke multiplied upon us, and to hear the adversary say in every corner, "Where is their God, now?" Yet, dear Friends, we ought not to be affected by the hissing of these serpents. Surely we would not have our God change His purposes because of the foolish taunts of men! One said, "If there is a God, let Him strike me dead!" But God did not smite him and from this he argued that there was no God! From the same fact I argue that there *is* a God and that this God is truly God, for, if He had been less than Divine, He might have struck him dead. But, being infinitely patient, He bore with him still. Who was that speck that he should cause God to move hand or foot even to crush him? God is not easily moved, even by the blasphemies of the ungodly. He may be provoked, one of these days, for long-suffering has its end, but for a while the Lord pauses in pity, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters, Gods long-suffering with a guilty world He may never explain to us. There are many things which we must not

ask to have explained. We get into deep waters and into terrible troubles when we must have everything explained. For my part, I like to believe great Truths which are beyond my reason. A religion without mysteries, seems to me, to be false on the face of it. If there is an Infinite God, it is not possible that poor I, with my finite mind, shall ever be able to understand everything about Him! If the Lord chooses to tarry till thousands of years have passed away, yes, till *millions* of years have elapsed, yet let Him do as He wills! Is He not infinitely wise and good? And who are we that we should put Him to the test? Let Him tarry His own time. Only let us watch and wait, for He will come, and they that wait for Him shall have their reward!

At this time I am going to speak a little upon this point. First, *let us admire the long-suffering of God*. And, secondly, *let us make a right account of it* by accounting it to be salvation.

I. First, I would conduct your minds hurriedly over a few points that may help you to ADMIRE THE LONG-SUFFERING OF GOD.

Admire the long-suffering of God as to *peculiar sins*. Look, Brothers and Sisters, they make images of wood or stone and they say, “these are God,” and they set up these things in the place of Him that made the heavens and the earth! How does He endure to see reasonable beings bowing down before idols, before fetishes, before the basest objects? How does He bear that men should even worship emblems of impurity and say that these are God? How does He bear it—He that sits in the heavens, in whose hands our breath is, and whose are all our ways?

Others, even in this country, blaspheme God! What an amount of profanity is poured out before God in this city! One can scarcely walk the streets today without hearing horrible language. An oath has often chilled me to the marrow—an oath which was not excused by any special circumstance, but rolled out of the man’s mouth as a customary thing. We have, today, some among us that might match the devil in blasphemy, so foully do they talk! And oh, how is it that God bears it when they dare imprecate His curse upon their bodies and their souls? O Father, how do You bear it? How do You endure these profane persons who insult You to Your face?

Besides, there are those who use fair speech and yet blaspheme most intolerably. Men of education and of science are often worse than the common folk because they blaspheme with fearful deliberation and solemnly speak against God and against His Son—and against the precious blood, and against the Holy Spirit! How is it that the Thrice-Holy One bears with them? Oh, wondrous long-suffering of a gracious God!

And then there are others who wallow in unmentionable impurity and uncleanness. No, I will not attempt any description, nor would I wish to take your thoughts to those things whereof men may blush to think, though they blush not to do them. The moon sees a world of foulness, fornication and adultery! And yet, O God, You bear it! This great blot upon

the face of the world—this huge city of London reeks in its filthiness—and yet You hold Your peace!

And then, when I turn my thoughts another way, to the oppression of the poor, to the grinding down of those who, with the hardest labor, can scarcely earn enough bread to keep body and soul together, how does the Just God permit it? When I mark the oppression of man by man—for among wild beasts there is none that equals the cruelty of man to man—how does the All-Merciful bear it? I think the Word of the Lord must often rattle in its scabbard and He must force it down, and say, “Sword of the Lord, rest and be quiet!”

I will not go further, because the list is endless. The wonder is that a gracious God should continue to bear all this! Think of the sin involved in false teaching. I stood, one day, at the foot of Pilate's staircase in Rome, and saw the poor creatures go up and down, on their knees, on what they are taught was the very staircase on which the Lord Jesus Christ stood before Pilate! I noticed sundry priests looking on and I felt morally certain that they knew it to be an imposture. I thought that if the Lord would lend me His thunderbolts about five minutes, I would make a wonderful clearance thereabouts—but He did nothing of the kind. God is not in a hurry as we are! Sometimes it does suggest itself to a hot spirit to wish for speedy dealing with iniquity—but the Lord is patient and full of pity.

Especially notice, next, that this long-suffering of God *is seen in peculiar persons*. In certain persons sins are greater than the same sins would be in other people. They have been favored with a tender conscience and with good instruction, so that when they sin, they sin with a vengeance. I have known some who have stood at God's altar and have gone forth from His temple to transgress—they have been Levites of His sanctuary and yet first in transgressions! Yet the Lord spares the traitors and lets them live.

It is amazing that God should have such long-suffering when we look at the *peculiar circumstances* under which some men sin. Some men sin against God willfully when they have no temptation to do so and can plead no necessity. If the poor man steals, we half forgive him. But some do so who have all that heart could wish. When the man driven to extremity has said the thing that was not true, we have half excused him. But some are willful liars, with no gain or profit therein. Some sin for the sheer love of sin, not for the pleasure they gain by it, nor for the profit they hope from it, but for mere wantonness! Born of godly parents, trained as you were in the very school of godliness, made to know, as you know in your own conscience, the Lord Jesus to be the Son of God, when *you* sin against Him, there is a painful emphasis in your transgressions! I speak to some who may well wonder that they are still alive after having sinned with such gross aggravations!

Some manifest the long-suffering of God very wonderfully in the length of time in which they have been spared to sin. Many men are provoked by one offense and think themselves miracles of patience if they forget it. But

many have provoked God 50, 60, 70, perhaps 80 years! You could not stand 80 *minutes* of provocation, and yet the Lord has put up with you throughout a lifetime! You tottered into this house tonight. You might have tottered more if you had remembered the weight of sin that clings to you! Yet the mercy of God spares you. Still, with outstretched arms, Infinite Mercy bids you come and receive, at the hands of God, your pardon bought with the blood of Jesus Christ! This long-suffering of God is marvelous!

Remember that it would be easy on God's part to be rid of you. There is a text where He says, "Ah, I will ease Me of My adversaries." Some men bear because they cannot help it. They are obliged to submit. But God is not in that condition! One wish and the sinner will never provoke Him again, nor refuse His mercy again. He will be gone out of the land of hope. Therefore, I say the long-suffering of God is enhanced in its wonderfulness by the fact that He is under no necessity to exercise it except that which springs out of His own love.

I beg all of you who are unconverted to think earnestly upon God's long-suffering to you in permitting you to be here, still to hear from the Cross of Christ the invitation, "look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth."

II. Secondly, let us take THE RIGHT ACCOUNT OF THE LONG-SUFFERING OF GOD. "Account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation." What does this mean?

Does it not mean, first, *as to the saving of the many?* The Lord Jesus Christ is, as I believe, to have the pre-eminence. I think that He will have the pre-eminence in the number of souls that will be saved as compared with those that will be lost—and that can scarcely be effected except by a lapse of time in which many will be brought to Christ. I am not, however, going into any speculations. I look at it this way. As long as this old hulk keeps beating up against the rocks; as long as she does not quite go down into the sea of fire, it means man's salvation. It means, "Out with the lifeboat! Man the lifeboat and let us take off from her all that we can and bring them to shore." God calls upon us until the world is utterly destroyed with fire, to go on saving men with all our might and main. Every year that passes is meant to be a year of salvation. We rightly call each year, "the year of our Lord." Let us make it so by more and more earnest efforts for the bringing of sinners to the Cross of Christ. I cannot think that the world is spared to increase its damnation. Christ came not to destroy the world, but that the world, through Him, might be saved. And so, as every year rolls by, let us account it salvation and spend and be spent in the hope that by any means we may save some.

And if we can indulge a still brighter hope that the Kingdom of Christ shall come, and that multitudes shall be converted, and that the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea, so

let it be! But always let this be to the front—that this long-suffering of God means *salvation*—and at that we are to aim.

So, dear Friends, in the second place, the next meaning of this is *to any of you who are unconverted*. I want you to account that the long-suffering of God in sparing you means to you, salvation! Why are you here tonight? Surely it is salvation! I met, years ago, a soldier who had ridden in the charge of Balaclava. He was one of the few that came back when the saddles were emptied right and left of him. I could not help getting into a corner and saying to him, “Dear Sir, do you not think that God has some design of love to you in sparing you when so many fell? Have you given your heart to Him?” I felt that I had a right to say *that*. Perhaps I speak to some of you who were picked off a wreck years ago. Why was that? I hope it was that you might be saved! You have lately had a fever and have hardly been out before now. You have come here, tonight, still weak, scarcely recovered. Why were you saved from that fever when others were cut down? Surely it must mean salvation! At any rate, the God who was so full of pity as to spare you, now says to you, “Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me.”

When Master Bunyan was a lad, he was so foolhardy that when an adder rose against him, he took it in his hand and plucked the sting out of its mouth, but he was not harmed. It was his turn to stand sentinel at the siege of Nottingham and, as he was going forth, another man offered to take his place. That man was shot and Master Bunyan thus escaped. We would have had no “Pilgrim’s Progress” if it had not been for that. Did not God preserve him on purpose that he might be saved? There are special interpositions of Divine Providence by which God spares ungodly men whom He might have cut down long ago as cumberers of the ground—should we not look upon these as having the intention that the barren tree may be cared for yet another year, if haply it may bring forth fruit? Some of you who are here tonight are wonders to yourselves that you are still in the land of the living—I pray you account the long-suffering of God to be salvation! See salvation in it! Be encouraged to look to Christ and, looking to Him, you shall find salvation, for, “there is life in a look at the Crucified One.” Account God’s long-suffering to be salvation to you if to no one else!

God’s long-suffering is one of the great means by which He works for the salvation of His elect. He will not let them die till first they live to God. He will not suffer them to pass into eternity till first His Infinite Love has justified them through the righteousness of Christ.

Thus I have said what I hope may be embraced by some here present.

But I must finish. This text seems to me to have a bearing upon *the people of God*. Indeed, it is for them that it is written, “Account that the long-suffering of God is salvation.”

I must turn the text to give you what really lies in it. God hears the cry going up from His own elect and it is written, “Shall not God avenge His

own elect, though He bears long with them?" That long forbearance of God brings to His own people much trouble, pain, sorrow—much amazement and soul distress. Brothers and Sisters, you must learn to look upon that as salvation! I hear you say, "What do you mean?" I mean this. The very fact that you are made to groan and cry by reason of God's long-suffering to guilty men gives you sympathy with Christ—and union with Christ who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself! Reckon that in being brought into harmony, sympathy, oneness with Christ through enduring the result of the Divine long-suffering, you find salvation! It is salvation to a man to be put side by side with Christ. If you have to bear the jests and gibes of the ungodly—if God spares them and permits them to persecute you, be glad of it—and reckon it as salvation, for now you are made partaker of Christ's sufferings. What more salvation do you desire?

Remember, too, that when the ungodly persecute the righteous, they give them the mark of salvation, for of old it was so. He that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the spirit. If you were never reviled, if you were never slandered or traduced, who would know that you are a Christian? But when, through the long-suffering of God with the ungodly, you are made to suffer, account it to be a mark of your salvation. "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you."

Once more. Reckon the long-suffering of God, when it permits the ungodly to slander and injure you, as salvation because it tends to your salvation by driving you nearer to the Lord. It prevents your making your home in this world. It forces you to be a stranger and a foreigner. It compels you to go outside the gate bearing Christ's reproach and so, in this way, that which seemed so hard to bear brings salvation to you!

Therefore, comfort one another, dear children of God! Be not overly cast down and troubled because of your Lord's delaying His coming, for He will yet help you and you shall be delivered.

If the Lord has shown long-suffering to any of you and yet you have never repented or turned to Him, do so tonight! "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and you are not saved." But, oh, that you might be saved before this service ends! The leaves are falling from the trees thick and fast, and before you fall from the tree of this mortal life, think of your God and turn to Him and live! "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." May He snatch you from the burning! Amen, and amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 Peter 3.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—174, 529, 513.**

In THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL, I have earnestly asked my dear friends to unite in prayer for the revival of true religion. I wish to press this with all my heart upon my Sermon readers. A visitation from the Holy Spirit would be to our Churches what the springtide is to the sleeping

bulbs and leafless trees—the Truth of God and righteousness would seem to blossom from the ground! False doctrine and worldliness are wolves which come down upon the sheepfolds in the winter of lifeless Christianity, but are no more seen in the clear, bright days of Grace. When the Lord clothes the Gospel with the power of His Spirit, error cannot stand in its presence and sin is afraid to show its face. This, then, is what we need—and prayer is the one great and effectual method of obtaining it.

How can we promote prayerfulness concerning the present crisis? Let us, each one, be more than ever earnest with the Lord to plead his own cause. Oh, that He would gird His sword upon His thigh and ride forth to the battle because of truth and righteousness! Let us, when we meet by two and three, make a point of bowing the knee together for this objective. This will suggest larger meetings and then, best of all, we will hope that the pastors will call the Churches together and say, “There is need of special prayer for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the overthrow of error.” If this could be done by all faithful ministers, the Church would not be long without heavenly refreshment!

Personally, I beg my beloved Brothers and Sisters to praise God with me for very remarkable help lately sent me in an hour of severe trial—and also to entreat the Lord on my behalf that I may be kept steadfast, peaceful—and made wise under the peculiar circumstances of the present severe conflict. What I have done up to now I have done under pressure of a necessity which no faithful man could have resisted. I have nothing to regret, nothing about which I have a shadow of a doubt. I could do no other than I have done. Unless I had been willing to have been condemned at the Last Great Day with the enemies of the Cross of Christ, I could not have kept silent, nor have continued in an evil confederacy with those who make void the Gospel. I can bear anything but an accusing conscience.

C. H. S.

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THE EVER-PRESENT CRISIS

NO. 2533

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“You therefore, Beloved, seeing you know these things before, beware lest you, also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.”
2 Peter 3:17.

The Apostle has told us that there will come, in the last days, scoffers. We, therefore, know this is to be the case, for we have been informed concerning it. Forewarned is forearmed and now that we see the scoffers and cannot help seeing them, we perceive another proof of the truth of Scripture. Every time a blasphemer opens his mouth to deny the truth of Revelation, he will help to confirm us in our conviction of the very Truth of God which he denies! The Holy Spirit told us, by the pen of Peter, that it would be so, and now we see how truly he wrote.

I do not think it is of any use to sit down and fret about the badness of the times. Ever since I first understood anything, I have always heard that there has been “a crisis.” Somebody or other has continually assured me that we were just on the brink of something perfectly horrible. I have never been quite able to see that the times at any particular period have been very much worse than they used to be. Thirty years ago they seemed to me to be about as bad as they could be—and I could not see any room for their getting much worse! I used to, then, constantly hear laments about “the good old times,” and I remember saying that the times, then, were the good old times, for time was never so old before. And, taking all things into account, I thought that, perhaps, the evils of that time were not so very much greater than the evils of the ages that had gone before. Still, I do incline a little to the belief that the times have become worse of late. At any rate, in this matter of scoffers!

The scoffers who used to be in holes and corners have now come out into the open and, worse still, they have climbed into the pulpits! And if not there, actually to scoff, they insinuate doubts and undermine the faith of many who formerly believed. The times are certainly now very perilous, whatever they may have been in the past, and, as we look into the Scriptures, we see that the New Testament, even where it does not take the exact shape of prophecy, nevertheless does give us many indications of what we may expect in human history—and those indications are being verified continually all around us! Seeing we know these things before, we are bound to pay the more earnest heed to the lesson of Peter in the text before us which seems to me to be most suitable to the times in which we live!

There is another matter that ought not to be passed over without much searching of heart and much lamentation—and that is that in all our churches of every sort there is a very dreadful leakage continually going on. It is so with ourselves. We receive large numbers into fellowship, but there are continually large numbers going out from us, not always by sin, but many, of course, by death and emigration and removal. And there is a large proportion of members who drop out of sight, although, at the time of their admission, they gave credible evidence of conversion, according to the judgment of those who watch over men's souls. Look in any of the lists that are published by any religious body—at the column recording the numbers of those who are dropped for non-attendance and so disappear from the church roll—and you must be saddened to see how many are thus lost to us who, at one time, appeared to become good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

Because of that sad fact, I thought it all the more necessary that I should speak at this time upon the words in our text—"You therefore, Beloved, seeing you know these things before, beware lest you, also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness."

I. First, dear Friends, there is a TITLE here given to all Believers which is well worthy of our careful consideration for a little while. The Apostle says, "You therefore, *Beloved*."

Peter is not the Apostle of Love. We do not expect to find him speaking in such terms as we have in John's Epistles. Yet it is very amazing that the greatest praise of love was written, not by John, but by Paul. And here, Peter, without seeming to go at all out of his way, speaks just as affectionately as John might have spoken. I suppose he felt that when he was administering a rebuke, and when he was warning against a great peril, it was right that he should speak in the most affectionate terms. I do not think that we shall ever do people much good by bullying them. I question whether any receive rebukes at all if they are not administered in love. They only resent them if they are spoken in anger. But when the tone of the reprover is that of affection, then even stripes will be accepted, even as it was with David when he said, "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head."

In our text, Peter, very honestly warning those to whom he wrote in plainest terms, calls them, "Beloved." Nor was he using a word which was not true. I do not think that it is always a wise thing to call everybody, "Dear *this*," and, "Dear *that*." In fact, if anybody talks like that to me, I always begin to suspect that there is some motive for such endearing terms. It seems to be the natural course of things that if people say, "Dear *this*," and, "Dear *that*," and, "Dear *the other*," they think that, possibly, by such talk they can get something out of us and, therefore, they use those unctuous terms without meaning them in their heart. Have we not known people call each other Brother and Sister when all the while they were gossiping one another's character away? It was not so with Peter—he really loved those people to whom he was writing. And it was because he loved them that he wrote so plainly to them and gave them the needed warning so very honestly. Let us, in passing, learn this lesson—

that real affection is a necessary qualification of one who is to be a leader of God's people. Continually to blend this affection with faithfulness is the part of true wisdom, for we shall be cutting and wounding to no good purpose unless we use the lancet with a very tender hand. If we must cut deep, even to the very heart, then it must be done with great tenderness—a lion's heart must be linked to a lady's hand.

Why did the Apostle Peter love these people and call them, "Beloved"? I think we can answer the question by putting ourselves, in our inferior ministry, in a similar position. All those who are converted and brought to Christ are truly beloved by God's people *for Christ's sake*. Wherever we can see anything pertaining to Christ, we wish to give the love that is due to Christ. Where we see that the Holy Spirit has worked the life of God in any Believers, we feel that the life which is in us is in sympathy with the life which is in them. There must be, on the part of a minister of Christ, a deep and intense affection towards all those whom he believes to belong to Christ. Especially is this the case with our own converts—there is a tie of the nearest and most powerful kind which unites us to those who have been brought to the Lord Jesus by our instrumentality. Do they flourish? Then we also flourish. Do they decline? Then our heart languishes. They are our epistles and when they are blotted, we feel that there is a spot upon ourselves. But when they are legible and men read them to the glory of *God*, our soul is full of delight! I trust that we can say of all those whom we have brought to the Savior—and whom we have seen united in the fellowship of the Church—that without using the word unmeaningly, we can call them, "Beloved." And it is because they are beloved that we long to see them "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." We pray the Lord to have them always in His holy keeping, to preserve them from the temptations which are in the world through lust, to deliver them from the power of their own inbred corruptions and make them perfect in every good work, to do His will, working in them that which is well pleasing in His sight.

Workers for Christ, learn the lesson of this title before we pass on to the next part of our subject. Go, in the spirit of love, to deal with those whom you would bless. Love them to Christ if they are unconverted! Bind them to the Cross with cords of love if they are converted. And if, being converted, they have wandered away from their Lord, draw them back "with cords of a man, with bands of love," remembering, yourselves, lest you, also, be tempted to stray from your Savior! There, then, is the title which Peter here uses—"Beloved."

II. The second thing which I notice in the text is, A WATCHWORD given by Peter to those whom he addressed. "You therefore, Beloved, seeing you know these things before, *beware*."

That word needs to be sounded in the ears of young converts very soon after they come to know the Lord. They are men and women given to appetite and they are very apt to eat whatever is set before them which looks like spiritual meat—and many a disease may be engendered in them by eating unwholesome spiritual food! This warning word, "Beware," needs to be spoken, today, with much earnestness. Beware of many of the books that are given you to read! Beware of much of the teaching that is rife in the present day! Beware of the example of some

who are called Christians! Beware of the deceitful talk of some who would make a gain of you and lead you away from Christ! Beware, above all, of yourself—beware of leaning to your own understanding, beware of giving the reins to your own will, beware of trusting in your own grace and believing that you are beyond the gunshot of the enemy! This is not the best watchword we can give you for your comfort, but it is oftentimes a necessary watchword. Going round the camp at night, we may well whisper in the ear of the sentinel, “Sleep not, but beware!” And waking up the army in the morning, we may well sound the word down the ranks, “Beware!” All day long, all night long, in every place, from every quarter, *beware*, for the world is full of adversaries! Every bush conceals a foe—almost every tuft is at the verge of a rifle-pit. Beware, you are in an enemy’s country! You have no right to sleep, or to say, “I am perfectly safe and need not watch.” This is the watchword we give you, even as Peter gave it long ago, “Beware.”

Be not credulous—“Beware.” Remember how the Apostle John says, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” Drink not in every novelty, listen not to every new teacher, be not “carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they are in wait to deceive,” but, “beware.”

Be not too confiding—“Beware.” Trust in the Lord with all your heart, but watch against men, for there are some who would, if it were possible, deceive even the very elect! They are watching to see how they can deceive you. If they cannot lead you into some great and gross error, they will insinuate doubts and questions. They will leave behind a spark, if they cannot kindle a fire. Just as when Captain Cook went round the world, he landed on every shore and scattered all manner of English seeds broadcast, so there are some who go up and down the land sowing tares among the wheat—and they are never better pleased than when they drop a handful of the evil seed in the mind of some youngster who has but lately come to Christ and who does not, as yet, know the devices of the adversary! “Therefore, Beloved, beware.” Be not too confiding, but be always on the watch against evil of all kinds.

Above all, *be not careless*, but, “beware.” I know some who have said, “Really, it does not matter what we believe, as long as we are right on the main points.” But it *does* matter, for they who neglect any of Christ’s Words shall fall by little and little. Every Truth of God is a diamond of untold value! I do not know whether there is such a thing as an unimportant Truth of God. Somewhere or other, near to it, there may lie certain consequences that we know not of and, the Truth of God being neglected, an error may fill its place—and that error may become pregnant with mischief from generation to generation! It is an ill time for the Church of Christ when she begins to walk blindfolded, or when she even desires to neglect any of the precepts or the doctrines which Christ has left behind Him. Moses was to make the tabernacle according to the pattern shown to him in the mount—and Ezekiel was to remind the people of his day of the exact pattern of the house of the Lord—and we need constantly to be put in mind of all that makes up the palace of Truth

where Christ dwells. May we be helped to escape all carelessness by giving heed to this Apostolic watchword!

I pass on the watchword, "Beware," to you, dear Friends, and pray especially that you may beware of the errors of the wicked. There are plenty of them. May you watch both against the errors which are matters of doctrine and the wickedness which is matter of practice! And may you be kept from both of these!

III. Advancing a little further, I want you to notice, thirdly, AN ARGUMENT in our text. There are really two arguments. "You therefore, Beloved, *seeing you know these things before*, beware lest you, also, fall."

First, "seeing you know these things before, beware." If you are deceived, you will be culpably, guiltily deceived because you have been warned. If you should be led away from Christ and His Truth, from holy living and holy thinking, you will be led astray willfully because you have already received the intimation that you must watch and pray lest you enter into temptation! Peter here tells you, first, that *there are scoffers*. Then mind that you get out of their way. He tells you, also, that *there are seducers* and that they shall wax worse and worse. Take care that you do not let them seduce you. Of course they will not come to you with the name, "seducer," printed on their foreheads—they will appear to you not as messengers of Satan, but as angels of light—and they will pretend to be very nice, excellent people, when all the while they will be only excellent in doing mischief. And Satan will think well of them because they serve his purpose.

You are warned that *these people will twist the Scriptures*. They are great hands at that evil employment. They assert that *anything* can be taught from the Bible and so it can if a man is only wicked enough to twist it from its proper meaning! There is no book under Heaven that cannot be made to say the exact opposite of what its author intended, if a man is only sufficiently delivered from the power of principle to twist it. Such a man is a thief, for he steals words and uses them for his own wicked purposes when they were meant for quite another end! No doubt he can make any misuse that he likes, even of Holy Writ. But the Scripture as God gave it to us is plain enough—on all the great Truths of God, it is a child's book. There are certain great Truths, undoubtedly, in the Word of God, which are hard to be understood, but even those are not difficult because of the language in which they are proclaimed, but because the Truth, itself, is mysterious and deep. Therefore, dear Friends, if we come honestly to the Scriptures and seek to be taught of the Spirit, we shall learn the things of God. But we must not be surprised if others act dishonestly and twist the Scriptures to their own destruction, for it has been foretold that they will do so. You know this before, therefore, beware! Be on your guard.

Then the second argument is, "Beware lest you, also, fall." As some have turned aside, twisting the Scriptures to their own destruction, you may do the same, for *you are of the same nature as they are*. Say not with Hazael, "Is your servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" Left to ourselves, we are dogs, enough, for anything, Brothers and Sisters! If we are without the Grace of God, neither dogs nor devils are worse than we are! We are quite capable of believing a lie and of clinging to it until

we perish if the Grace of God does not keep us to the Truth and preserve us to the end. Let us never begin to think ourselves exempt from the weaknesses of human intellects, or even from the perversities of human minds. But watch, for with the same nature as other men, *the same danger is around us* as is around other men. And unless God, in His infinite mercy, shall preserve us, we, too, shall apostatize, forsake the faith and become worse than infidels.

IV. Now, in the fourth place, let us briefly notice A CATASTROPHE which is foreshadowed in the text. "Beware lest you, also...fall from your own steadfastness."

Beware lest you fall from your steadfastness *as to belief of the revealed Truth of God*. Beware lest you neglect this truthful doctrine and that, till, at last, you drift into a sea of error. Do not believe what some tell you, that it is of no consequence what we preach, or what you hear. On the contrary, cleave closely to Holy Scripture. Judge everything that we say, or that anyone else says, by the supreme test of the Inspired Word. If I say anything to you merely on my own authority, reject it! But if it is on the authority of God's Word, reject it at your peril! Hold that fast which is really written in this Book and pray that it may be written on your heart by God's Holy Spirit. Be prepared at all times to judge by the Law and by the Testimony, that which you hear, for, if it is not according to this Word, there is no Light of God in it. Take care that you do not depart from the steadfastness of your faith in these Truths of God, for there are some who have not really drunk in any error, yet they do not believe the Truth in the very power of it. They adopt a creed as a mere letter, but what is the use of that? One dead creed on the shelf is as bad as another—we need to know in our own soul the Truth of God *is*. The Truth concerning sin so as to hate it—the Truth concerning the Atonement so as to prize it—the Truth concerning the Deity of Christ so as to rejoice in it!

I cannot stay to mention all the Truths of God in detail, but these and every other Truth are to be laid home to the soul and tested and proved in the daily life. Oh, that none of us may fall from our steadfastness in this matter! As with an iron grip, hold what you hold in these evil times of doubt and unbelief. To my mind, it is a pleasant thing, nowadays, to meet with a person who really believes *anything*. I have found a man up to his neck in error and yet holding firmly some one Truth of God. I have said to him, "Sit down, my Friend, and let us have a talk, for you believe something, and so do I, and so far we can get on together." But it is different where there is nothing at all believed, where it is, "Whichever you please, you pay your money and you take your choice." We are told that we must "keep abreast of the times." And, "truth is always advancing." If it is so, then one thing was true in the year 1800, and another in the year 1830, and a different thing was true in the year 1840, another in 1860, another in 1880—and we are going on to a new truth for 1900! Some seem to think that the Truth of God changes like the moon, or like the weather! In their opinion, it is never at one stay, but ebbs and flows like the troubled sea when it cannot rest! But we believe in the Truth of God that never alters and never can be altered, but stands Immutable as God, Himself! May we be kept steadfast in our belief of that!

And, dear Friends, it is a painful thing when men are *not steadfast in their practice*. Of all the griefs the Church ever feels, the keenest is when those who once stood in her midst dishonor the name of Christ by unholy living. Are there not many such? They did run well, but what has hindered them that they do not still obey the Truth? Once they were regularly at the Prayer Meetings. Once, they were among the most earnest Sunday school teachers and Christian workers, but where are they now? Eaten up with worldliness, honeycombed with the desire after amusements that are, at least, questionable, their spiritual life is reduced to the lowest ebb, and even their morals begin to be very doubtful. God save you, beloved Friends, from such a catastrophe as that! We cannot live too near to Christ—the very marrow of religion lies in that which some men think to be the too great precision of it. I am certain that the full enjoyment of true religion does not belong to the great mass of Christian professors—they do not get near enough to the center and heart of it all to realize what its sweetness is. They do not sufficiently consecrate themselves to their Lord and Master, or live in such complete fellowship with Him as to really get at the marrow and fatness which are stored up in the central regions of true godliness. The Lord help us to get there, and when we *do* get there, may He keep us in that blissful spot!

And, oh, to be *steadfast in our labors for Christ*—not diligent, today, and sluggish tomorrow! Let us always be like the racer who is intent on reaching the goal, pressing forward as though he could not go fast enough to win the prize—so let us always be panting to do more for the glory of God. We have many professors who are like runners that are short-winded—they could win a sharp, short race, but they cannot hold on through life—and who among us could do so unless the Lord should hold us up? This is the point of Peter's warning, let us see that we fall not from our steadfastness of Christian progress, but always be as if we were arrows shot from the bow of the Eternal that must speed onward till we reach the target of perfection! Beware, therefore, lest you fall from your steadfastness, for that would be, indeed, a terrible catastrophe.

V. And now, fifthly, just for a minute, notice that here is A WARNING. "Beware lest you, also, *being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.*"

A man does not usually go bad all of a sudden. "Oh," says one, "there is So-and-So, who was with us a little while ago, but he has gone into gross sin." Just so, but long before there were any outward signs of evil, there was the undermining going on in his character, depend upon it. When men fall, it is often the case that they have been "led away." Somebody gets hold of your ear and leads you away. Some get a hold on your empty pockets and lead you away because of your needs. Some get hold of your eyes and lead you away by your eyelids. There are many points where a man may be grasped by one who is seeking to destroy him, but, dear Friends, I beg you not to be easily led away by anybody! Know what you know for yourselves—do your own thinking! When you want to find the Truth of God, work your passage to it—study the Scriptures for yourselves, always seeking the instruction of the Holy Spirit—and then, if you are led, do not be "led away." It would take a great deal to lead me away

from what I know, from that Refuge wherein I have hidden, from that Rock whereon I have built for time and for eternity. My Lord—

***“To whom or where could I go,
If I should turn from You?”***

If you are led away, dear Friends, do *not be led away by error*. If somebody can teach you more than you now know, and it is really God’s Truth, go and learn it. If there is an upper room at the feast and the King says to you, “Come up higher,” go up higher by all means! We do not want you at the lower end of the table if there is better fare at the higher end of it. But do not let men lead you away with error, especially when it is “the error of the wicked”—and you can soon determine that. I will tell you how you can detect men who would lead you away with the error of the wicked. You can always be sure that those who would make you think *lightly of the Scriptures* are leading you away with the error of the wicked! He is no good man who thinks little of the best of books—the Book of God! I will have nothing to do with that man who makes me think less of the Word of God than I used to think! I know at once where he comes from and understand what his objective is—if possible, to lead me away with the error of the wicked! Have nothing to do with any man who would make you think less of Christ than you do! His error must be the error of the wicked!

If he begins to point out to you some defect in Christ’s teaching, or some fault in His life, or tells you that He is not very God of very God, get out of his society at once! I would have you do what John is said to have done with Cerinthus who denied the Deity of Christ. John was in a bath, to which the unbeliever came, and it is said that John hurried out at once, for fear that he should be contaminated by contact with Cerinthus, or lest the bath should fall on them both! Something of that kind of spirit the most loving followers of Christ will be sure to have. You can be sure of this, that he will do you no good who does not honor your Lord and Master, so get out of his company as soon as you can.

And shun also those people who would make you think less of prayer, for they would lead you away with the error of the wicked. You know how some of them talk, “No doubt it is a very proper thing for people to pray. It does them good and relieves their mind, but to suppose that God hears prayer and answers it is positively ridiculous!” Yet for all that, they say that they would not discourage us from praying. Now, personally, I feel inclined to say to a man who tells me that, “My dear Sir, you have as good as called me an idiot, and I am very much obliged to you for the compliment.” “No,” he says, “I did not call you an idiot.” But I am an idiot if I go on praying when I know that God does not hear me! I say that a man is a natural fool who, believing that God never hears and answers prayer, yet goes and kneels down to pray. Why, he might as well go to the top of a hill and whistle to the winds! Surely, if there is no effect produced by prayer, it is idle to say that it will do us good to pray! We are not so foolish as to believe that! When we get to that state of mind, we hope to be taken in at Earlswood or at Bethlehem. But we have not come to that condition just yet and, when any speak ill of prayer, we understand that they do not know even the elements of true religion! If a person were to say to me, “I will teach you to read,” and he began by saying

of the first letters of the alphabet, "That is not A, and that is not B," I would say, "Oh, thank you, I will not trouble you any longer. I knew better than that when I was quite a little boy!"

That man, again, who begins to speak lightly of sin, will lead you away with the error of the wicked. You know how he talks, "Do not listen to those old-fashioned Puritan notions! You can go and mix in society, you can indulge in this and that amusement and yet you can be a Christian all the same." Ah, yes! I constantly see persons trying to see not how *near* they can live to God, but how far they can live *from* God and yet be called Christians! There are some who seem to be inculcating on our youth this kind of doctrine. Do not keep away from temptation, but go into temptation. Do not burn yourself, but just singe your hair. Do not, by any means, actually kill yourself in the machinery, but get a finger cut off every now and then—then you will know something of the nature of steel and of how it operates when it cuts through a bone. That is very instructive, no doubt!

This is the typical of the talk that we hear from many in this evil age, "Of course you must know a little about life. Young people are not to be always tied to their mother's apron strings—they must go out and learn a little for themselves." That is, drink a little poison every now and then just to see how it operates on you. Take a drop of acid and see what it will do for you. My advice is—Keep clear of all such things! Let this warning be always remembered, "Beware, beware, beware." I have never yet come under a rule of life that seemed to me too severe. On the contrary, I still find myself all too apt to wander in thought, if not in act, and I would be glad if I could not only be bound, but nailed right up to the Cross.

"Oh," says one, "what do you mean by *that* expression?" I mean that I wish I could realize the truth of Paul's words, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me." I would gladly have no liberty to do *anything* that is even questionable! I would find my liberty in being perfectly holy. Oh, that God would help each one of us to reach that point! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: 2 PETER 3.

Verse 1. *This second epistle, Beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance.* The purest minds need stirring up at times. It would be a great pity to stir up impure minds. That would only be to do mischief. But pure minds may be stirred as much as you please and the more the better! There are hallowed memories in the minds of all Christians, but those memories are apt to lie asleep—it is well to ring the alarm bell and wake up all the memories within the Believer's heart, even as Peter did when he wrote—"I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance."

2. *That you may be mindful of the Words which were spoken before by the holy Prophets, and of the commandment of us, the Apostles of the Lord and Savior.* Peter believed in the Inspiration of the very "Words" of Scripture. He was not one of those precious "advanced thinkers" who would, if

they could, tear the very soul out of the Book and leave us nothing at all. He wrote, "That you may be mindful of the Words"—the very Words—"which were spoken before by the holy Prophets." "Oh," says one, "but words do not mean anything—it is the *inward sense* that is really important." Exactly so—that is just what the fool said about eggshells. He said that they did not matter—it was only the inward life-germ of the chick within that was important! So he broke all the shells and, thereby, destroyed the life that was within! We contend for *every* Word of the Bible and believe in the verbal and plenary Inspiration of Holy Scripture, believing, indeed, that there can be no other Inspiration but that. If the Words could be taken from us, the sense, itself, would be gone.

3. *Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers.* A prophecy which has been abundantly fulfilled! You need not go far to find them—they come in the form of living men—and they swarm in the form of their books. They are to be met with almost everywhere! Like the locusts, they fill the air and hide the light of the sun! "There shall come in the last days scoffers."

3. *Walking after their own lusts.* Errors of doctrine are almost always attended with errors of practice and, certainly, they legitimately lead that way. Those who scoff according to the lusts of their intellect are very likely to live according to the lusts of their flesh! The two things are congruous. They are born from the same cause, they flourish for the same reasons, and they tend to the same ends! "Walking after their own lusts."

4. *And saying, Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.* Only the modern scoffers have tried to improve upon their predecessors, for they say, "All things have developed by evolution from the beginning, which never had a beginning, but which somehow or other has always existed." Thus the scoffers change their tune, but they never alter their spirit—it is always an attack upon the revealed Truth of God! Indeed, they scarcely seem to believe that there *is* any revealed Truth, and they will only accept that which they might, themselves, have invented! Notwithstanding what these men say, all things have not continued as they were since the beginning of the creation, for there have been great interpositions of Divine power in the past, as Peter goes on to show.

5-7. *For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the Word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same Word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the Day of Judgment and perdition of ungodly men.* Admire the power of God's Word! It was by the Word of God that the heavens were made, by the Word of God that the earth was drowned, by the Word of God that it has been preserved ever since—and will be preserved until, by that same Word, fire shall come to devour all the works of men. As surely as Noah's flood came, so surely shall there be a burning up at the appointed season. "The heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same Word are kept in store, reserved unto fire."

8. *But, Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.* You are in a hurry. You do not understand the infinite leisure of the Eternal One. The wondrous system of Divine Grace seems to have hardly room and scope enough in the few years that men give to it by their prophetic calculations! But God's prophecies are being fulfilled to the very letter. It may be that the length of time for their accomplishment will be far greater than any have imagined, yet to God it shall still be a very little while. "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." We cry, "How long? How long?" Yet, according to God's reckoning, it is but the day before yesterday that Christ died, and only about a week ago that Adam was expelled from Eden. A thousand years is, after all, a very brief space of time. If it is measured by *our* life, it seems long. But what is the life of a man? Measured other ways—and there are many other modes of measurement—it grows even longer. But measured by the eternity of God, it is a vanishing point altogether—there seems to be nothing left of it.

9. *The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.* So He hurries not. He gives the sinner space and time enough in which to repent. Oh, that man would turn to God, moved by that gracious long-suffering of His!

10. *But the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night.* It is impossible to tell when it will come, but the Day of the Lord *will* come and, to the great mass of mankind it will come as a thief in the night. Though often warned, they will not expect it. The Lord's saints will watch for Him, for they are not in ignorance that that Day should overtake them as a thief. But, to the ungodly, the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night."

10. *In the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth, also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up.* Men make great boasts concerning what they build and there are many wonderful works of men upon the face of the globe. But the day will come when there will be no trace of them left, for they will have utterly disappeared! Why, then, should you and I live for these things—for the things which are seen, which are temporal? O Beloved, live for the things which are *not seen*, which are *eternal!*

11. *Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness.* These are garments which we should wear in prospect of eternity! These are things which no fire can touch, for holiness and godliness will outlive even the flames of the Last Great Day!

12, 13. *Looking for and hastening unto the coming of the Day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.* We believe that God will, in the end, have a complete victory over sin, and that even this poor world of ours, purified by the fire, shall be lifted up,

in a sevenfold splendor, to be a part of the great Kingdom of our God. “New heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.”

14. *Therefore, Beloved, seeing that you look for such things, be diligent that you may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless.* Be diligent to get rid of all those spots which sin has made. In one sense, you are cleansed from them, already, but in another sense, the purifying work must constantly go on. You are to overcome your besetting sin—you are to vanquish all your tendencies to evil—every thought is to be brought into captivity to the mind of the Lord.

15, 16. *And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul, also, according to the wisdom given unto him, has written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable, twist, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction.* If Peter, here, alluded to the Doctrine of Election, and the great doctrines that spring out of predestination, that is no argument why they should not be preached, for if they are not to be preached because men twist them, then *nothing* is to be preached, seeing that we are here told that they also twist other Scriptures unto their own destruction! Any rope will do for a man to hang himself with—and any doctrine will surface for a man to ruin himself with if he wishes to do so. The doctrine of Divine Mercy has been twisted into a reason why we should live in sin! The doctrine of Human Capability has been twisted into this falsehood—“I can repent when I like, or believe when I like and, therefore, I may leave it to the very last.” There is no form of opinion which cannot be rendered mischievous! Our business is to study the Word of God and preach it as we find it—and if men will twist it, we cannot help that. Is it not so that the Truth of God will always be a savor of life unto life to those who believe—and a savor of death unto death to those who perish?

17, 18. *You therefore, Beloved, seeing you know these things before, beware lest you, also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in Grace.* The only way to prevent falling is to grow—the tree that grows will not fall over!

18. *And in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen.* An ascription of praise to Christ is never out of place at the beginning or at the end of an Epistle, or in the middle of it! You may praise the Lord Jesus Christ anywhere, at any time—it shall never be a waste of time to sing unto His name! “To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen.”

HYMNS FROM—“OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—384, 668, 670.

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

GROWTH IN GRACE

NO. 2700

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 11, 1900.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, IN THE AUTUMN OF 1858.**

*“But grow in Grace, and in the knowledge
of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”
2 Peter 3:18.*

IT is worth while to remark that this passage immediately follows the 17th verse, where the Apostle says, “Beloved, seeing you know these things before, beware lest you, also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in Grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” He puts the one after the other, as if the one must be the means of the other. There had been some, in the Apostle’s day, who had twisted, to their own destruction, certain expressions in the Epistles of Paul which Peter said were “hard to be understood.” And, therefore, he warned Christian men and women to take heed lest they, “being led away with the error of the wicked,” should “fall from their own steadfastness.”

In order that they might know how to stand and to be preserved from falling, he gave them this direction—“grow in Grace,” for the way to stand is to grow. The way to be steadfast is to go forward. There is no standing except by progression. If you see even such a simple thing as a child’s top rolling along your floor at home, you will observe that it will always stand upright as long as it keeps on rolling—but when it stops, down it goes! So is it with the Christian—as long as he is in motion, he stands—but if it were possible for the motion to cease, then the Christian would fall from his steadfastness. Glory be to God, he will be kept from falling, and he shall be presented faultless before the Throne of God! The way to stand, then, is to go forward. The way to be steadfast is to progress. The way to be alive, according to the Apostle, is to “grow in Grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

We will offer, first of all, two or three remarks upon *growth “in Grace” in general*. And, secondly, a few remarks upon *growth in Grace being intimately connected with growth “in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”*

I. First, then, we shall offer some remarks upon GROWTH “IN GRACE” IN GENERAL. What shall we say about it?

The first remark we make is that *there is a sense in which there is no such thing at all as growth in Grace*. If you understand the word, Grace, as signifying free favor and the love of God towards His people, there is not, and there cannot be any growth in that at all—

***“The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in his crucified God”—***

he is, by the Grace of God, then and there justified and complete in Christ Jesus! And if he lives till his hair is gray, he will never be more justified, and never be more beloved than he is the very first moment in which he believes in Christ. As soon as ever I have a vital connection with the Lamb of God, I am “in Grace.” Let me live on, let my Grace grow, let my faith increase, let my zeal become warmer, let my love be more ardent, yet I shall not be more “in Grace” than I was before! God will not love me more, He will not have a deeper and a purer affection in His heart to me then than He has the very first moment I turn to Him, nor will His Grace the less justify me, or less accept me, the first moment when I come to Him with all my sins about me, than it shall do when I stand before His Throne! We never grow in the Grace of election. We are always, as Peter says in his first Epistle, “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.” And in that sense of being, “in Grace,” there is neither growth nor any retrograde movement. So also is it in the matter of justification—

***“In union with the Lamb,
From condemnation free,
The saints forever were,
And shall forever be.”***

And they are at any one time as much justified as they are at any other time. Give me to be justified today, then I was justified yesterday, and I shall be justified tomorrow. As soon as I put my trust in the Savior, I became complete in Grace, so far as that was concerned, I was made perfect in Christ Jesus. I cannot be more than perfect and, therefore, I cannot in that respect grow in Grace. I cannot receive more justifying mercy. I cannot receive more pardoning Grace, for I have had it all at once and have so become perfect in Christ.

But you will remark that our text does not say anything about Grace growing—it does not say that Grace grows! It tells us to “grow in Grace.” There is a vast difference between Grace growing and our growing in Grace. God’s Grace never increases—it is always infinite, so it cannot be more. It is always everlasting. It is always bottomless, it is always shoreless. It cannot be more and, in the Nature of God, it could not be less. The text tells us to “grow in Grace.” We are in the sea of God’s Grace—we cannot be in a deeper sea, but let us grow, now that we are in it. We cannot be more in it than we are, or than we have always been. We are in

God's Grace. We are in the Covenant. We are in the scheme of redemption. We are in union with Jesus—we cannot be more or less so, for we are eternally secure through the blood of our Savior. But while *it* cannot grow, *we* can grow more in it and so we shall “grow in Grace.”

I must make another remark. *It is certain that while the Grace of God toward us does not grow, yet there is such a thing as the development of Grace.* There are some persons who strongly object to the Doctrine of Progressive Sanctification and to our mentioning anything like growth in Grace. My Brothers and Sisters are welcome to object if they like, but I am sure, if they read the Scriptures (they will surely not object to Scriptural terms), they will find growth in Grace very frequently mentioned. If that does not mean progressive sanctification, then I do not understand the term, “growth in Grace,” at all! It is quite certain that there are degrees in the development of Grace. You will surely not say that the young man who has been converted only for the last few months, knows as much of Grace, understands as much about it, and has as much faith and as much love, as the man who has for the last 20 or 30 years been earnestly engaged in his Master's service!

You will not tell me that one man, who is scarcely ever seen coming up to the House of God, and who is daily in a state of religious starvation, stands on a par in Grace with a man who is laboring for his Master, whose love is evident to all, and whose faith is testified before the whole congregation! You will not tell me there is a dead level in Christianity which all alike reach. If you do say so, I shall tell you that you have no eyes, or that you do not look about you. For it is certain that there are some who are further advanced than others are, some with greater faith than others have. There are “great faiths” as well as “little faiths,” great loves as well as little loves! There are men of ardent spirits who have Grace more fully developed in them than it is in others. It is true, they are not more loved of God than others are, and not more justified, nor more accepted, for in that respect we all stand on a level, and there is no difference. But as to the development of Grace in our souls and the display of Grace in our lives, everyone must admit that there is a difference between different saints.

I cannot understand the difference existing between various ministers of Christ, if it is not because of the difference in the degrees of Grace which they possess. Some have just started in the Christian ministry and have preached a little about redemption, but they have not gone far enough to preach about election, or, at least, not about the vital union of every blood-bought child of God with the person of Emmanuel. Or if they should now and then preach upon that blessed Truth of God, they cannot talk about the eternal security of the saints and declare how, against wind and tide, they shall all sail safely into the heavenly harbor. They have not grown enough in Grace to preach on such themes as these—so

will not everyone admit that there are degrees of development in Grace—while it is also true that there are none of us more justified, more elect more chosen of God and loved of Him than any other Believers are?

Now for a third remark, which is *that growth in Grace is not to be measured by weeks, months and years*. There are persons who think that the age of a man will tell how much he knows about Divine things. “Oh,” say some, “So-and-So is such a young man—what can *he* know about Divine Grace? There is a hoary-headed father there—he must know a great deal more.” If you talk like that, you will soon find out your mistake. God often delights to show how He scorns and scoffs at all the distinctions of man. He makes the young men prudent and He even gives to children, knowledge and discretion! Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings He ordains strength because of His enemies. It is true—we do believe and we should believe that there is more knowledge beneath the gray hairs than under the youth’s curly locks—generally speaking, it is so. Yet God, in order to display His Sovereignty, has so arranged that He sometimes puts His treasures into an earthen vessel that has not been fashioned more than a few years!

Do not suppose that persons grow in Grace according to their years. Some grow faster in Grace in five minutes than others do in 50 years. I believe that some saints progress further in Grace in one single month than others do in 12 months or 12 years. I am sure I may speak concerning myself. I have sometimes grown more in Grace in one hour, than I have at other seasons in a week, a month, or a year—when God, in His Infinite Wisdom, has been pleased to give me a vision of the Savior, or to break up the fountains of wickedness that lay hidden in my soul. I have learned more in one hour, when the Holy Spirit’s hand has been upon me, than I have in weeks and months simply with my own study. God’s people grow like trees grow. Sometimes they take a start and grow upward. At another time, they are growing downward. Sometimes, apparently, the sap sleeps within the branch—a winter time comes over it and it is asleep.

Do not imagine, my dear Friends, that because you are getting old, you are growing in Grace. People are continually warning young men of their danger. No doubt we are in danger, but let me remind you that there is not an instance in Sacred Scripture of a young man disgracing his profession—but there are instances in Scripture of men of middle age and of gray hairs doing so. It is thus we, who are young, are in the greatest danger and, therefore, God upholds us to show the power of His Grace. But some of you older folk conceive that you are not in peril and, therefore, God allows you to fall, that He may stain the pride of your self-glorying and let you see that it is not anything in flesh—neither age, nor standing, nor rank, nor condition which ensures our safety—but that He holds up the humble and casts down the proud! David did not fall into

his great sin until he had certainly come to maturity and into the very prime of life—then he sinned with Bathsheba. Lot did not transgress so grossly before he became an old man.

If you turn to the pages of Scripture, you will notice that wherever there has been a lamentable fall—as in the case of Peter—it has been a man who has grown up and become strong in years. God thus shows us that it is not mere years that can teach us Grace—in fact, that years, and age, and learning, and talent have nothing to do with Grace—and He could, if He pleased, take a child six years old and pour wisdom and knowledge into the lips of that child that could puzzle the seers of this world! He often takes the most unlikely instruments and uses them for the accomplishment of His purposes. And because men have said that experimental preachers must have gray heads, he says, “No, it shall be a youth who shall lead the multitude! It shall be a child, out of whose mouth I will pour words of wisdom, for I will overthrow all human glory and show mankind that it is not the preacher who is to be praised, but God.” Salvation is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs but it is God that shows mercy! It is not the man who preaches, who accomplishes the work, but God working through the man. He could dispense with the man altogether if He pleased. At any rate, He will have the man He pleases, and at what age He pleases, and qualify him as He pleases.

Once more, *growth in Grace is not to be estimated by our feelings*. There are some of you, Beloved, who think you are not growing in Grace because you do not feel so lively as you used to do. “Ah,” you say, “when I was young, everything was bright. What peaceful hours I then enjoyed! I would go over hedge and ditch to hear the Gospel preached. I had such an intense desire to hear about God and Jesus Christ, such love to the Gospel that when I once got to hear a minister preach, it mattered not whoever he might be, it all seemed sweet. But now I am so depressed that I cannot enjoy the Truth of God as I used to do.” Do not think because your wild heat is gone, that you have not grown. When we light a fire, we always put the straw and kindling at the bottom. And when we first light it, there is a deal of flame and a great deal of smoke. But, afterwards, when the flame gets hold of the coals, there is not so much blaze, but there is really more heat. You may have lost some of your flame and smoke, but you have more solid fire! We would rather warm our hands by the coals than by the straw, for that must soon go.

So is it with Divine Grace—it begins with a flame which catches the lighter substances and lays hold on the imagination and the passions. But, later in life it appeals to the judgment, and makes the man one solid lump of burning fire. He is not a little flame, rising towards Heaven, that the wind might blow out with a puff, but he becomes so strong a fire that the wind shall but increase the flame, and shall make the heat the

greater! So it may be with you. Perhaps you have become more solid though you are less fiery.

Do not suppose, when you are depressed, that, therefore, you are not growing in Grace. Many of God's plants grow best in the dark and He often puts them in the dark to make them grow. When you are growing upwards, remember that there is such a thing as growing downward. You may have had, yesterday, a Divine manifestation that took you up to the top of the Delectable Mountains. You must not think you are big because you are up on high, for pigmies perched on Alps are still pigmies. And if you were ever so little, it would not make you any bigger if you were taken to the top of St. Paul's. If, on the other hand, you are deep down in a mine, do not imagine that you are any the smaller for that reason. I can tell you that you will often grow faster in the dungeon than on the top of a mountain, but it is not a pleasant place to be. When our depravity is revealed to us, when our desolation of spirit and our utter hopelessness and powerlessness are uncovered and made manifest by God's Holy Spirit, we grow, I believe, even faster than we do when, on the wings of seraphs, we are privileged to mount on high! So, do not measure your growth in Grace by your feelings. Some of you make a kind of barometer of your feelings. Do not do so! If we are in Christ, we are in Christ by faith, and not by feelings, and remember, whether your feelings are good or bad, you are no more or less a child of God. Your faith, Sinner, unites you with the Lamb—not your feelings! Trust Him in darkness, trust Him in distress, lean on Him when you cannot see Him. And when there seems nothing to walk on, still walk, for the ground is firm beneath the foot of faith!

Just by way of warning, let me urge you not to think that you are growing in Grace *because you happen to be doing a little more for the church externally*. "Oh," we often say, "now I am progressing, am I not? I am busy in the Sunday school, laboring hard there! I am preaching! I am doing this, or that, or the other—now I am truly growing in Grace." Ah, it is a proper thing to be diligent in good works and to be abounding in acts of righteousness, but if you begin to say, "Now I am growing," because of this or because of that, you have made a great mistake! It often happens that when we are very full of public labors, we are very short in private devotions. I must confess that it has been so with me—and that is a very lamentable thing—for then I was not really growing at all. A man may have his hands ever so full before the world and think he is doing much, but he may not be really growing in Grace, after all.

Do not think that this is an excuse for anybody who is not doing much, you Issachar-like people, like "a strong ass between two burdens," too lazy to lift either! I am not giving you a word of comfort. You are not growing, for you are doing nothing—and those who are doing something must not boast of their growth. It has more to do with private devotion

than with public exercise. It has more to do with meditation than with explanation. It has more to do with contemplation and adoration than with public service. We must look more to the state of the *internal* matters, keeping up private prayer and attending to the reading of the Scriptures. If we do not, however much we may seem to progress outwardly, we are not any richer—we are only beating out the little gold we had into a thinner plate, and spreading it over a wider surface. The more we do for Christ, the more He will do for us, but let us take heed that while we water other people's vineyards, our own is not neglected, and that the stones of the hedges are not cast down. May God grant you, Brothers and Sisters, to grow in Grace!

II. Now we come to the second thought, THAT GROWTH IN GRACE IS INTIMATELY CONNECTED WITH GROWTH "IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST." In fact, there cannot be any Grace at all except as we know Christ! And there can be no growth in Grace except as we grow in our knowledge of Christ. We may always test whether we are growing by this question—Do I know more of Christ today than I did yesterday? Do I live nearer to Christ today than I did a little while ago? For increase in the knowledge of Christ is the *evidence* as well as the *cause* of true growth in Grace. In order to prove this, I will mention one or two Christian virtues, and you will see that they must increase as we know more of Christ.

With regard to love, some of us say, "How little we love Christ!" Many of you sing—

***"'Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought—
Do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I His, or am I not?"***

That is a very good hymn—I find no fault with it—but please do not sing it too often! Now and then, you are welcome to it, but get through it as quickly as you can. I would far rather hear you sing that grand hymn of Toplady's—

***"A debtor to mercy alone,
Of Covenant mercy I sing!
Nor fear, with Your righteousness on,
My person and offering to bring."***

"Oh!" you say, "I long to grow in love. I want to know that I love Jesus. I want to feel my heart going out after Him, and my soul knit to Him." Well, the way to grow in love is to *know more of Christ*. The more you know of the Savior, the better you must love Him. The more you discover of His beauties, of His excellences, of His virtues, of His perfections, and of His glories, the more your soul will be drawn towards Him. I tell you who do not love Christ at all, it is because you do not know Him, for if you knew anything of Him, you would love Him in proportion to your knowledge! The more you know of my Master, the more you will love

Him. You have only lifted one corner of the veil that shrouds His forehead, you have seen but one portion of His visage, so you love Him—but if you had faith to lift the veil entirely, to see all of His blessed Countenance, to mark the majestic sweetness which sits enthroned upon His lofty brow. If you could focus on His eyes, which are “like the fish pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-Rabbim”—if you could describe Him as being “altogether lovely,” ah, you would love Him more!

Blessed are the men that improve upon acquaintance! Jesus Christ is one of those blessed ones—the more you know of Him, the more you love Him. Sweet Jesus! When I first saw You, I loved You! When first Your wounded hands and bleeding side were uncovered to me, then I loved You. Ah, but that love is nothing compared with what I have now. And oh, when I shall see You as You are—when my soul becomes changed into love—the love I have now shall seem to have been nothing but a spark compared with that vehement flame of love which I shall have to You then! Know more of Christ. Read more of Him. Think more of Him. Ask about Him more because you will be sure to grow in the Grace of love in proportion as you know more of Christ!

So is it with regard to *faith*. What is the reason why so many of us groan because our faith is so feeble? It is because we do not know enough of Christ! There are many people who need to know a great deal more about Jesus than they know at present. And if they knew more about Jesus, they would have more faith. “Oh,” says one, “when I look at myself, I think, ‘Oh, what is to become of me?’ Then I search to see if there are not some evidences of Grace.” That is all wrong! You have no business to look *there*—you will not grow in faith by looking at yourself! One look at Jesus is worth 50 at yourself! If you would have more faith, keep your eyes on Jesus! The wounds of Christ on Calvary are the mothers of faith—these are the breasts from which faith must draw its nourishment. If you would grow in faith, you must live near to the Cross. The sweet flower of faith was first sown in Christ’s precious blood—and it must be watered by it every day. Know more of Christ! Think more of Him and your faith will increase! Your little faith would soon get strong if you lived more on Jesus. If you would become Great-Hearts, by-and-by, and knock those giants about as terribly as Mr. Great-Heart did of old, live near to Jesus! Live with Jesus. Feast at His banqueting table, for there is no food so strengthening to the spirit as the flesh of your Lord, and no wine can so invigorate your soul as the blood of Jesus Christ your Savior.

So is it with regard to our *courage*, for that is a Christian Grace, and one in which many are terribly deficient. Our Christian courage will always increase in proportion as we know Christ. We have far too many timid Christians who have not enough courage, I was about to say, to speak to a cheese-mite—they would not be able to profess the name of

Christ before the smallest creature in the world! They would almost be ashamed to declare that they loved the Savior even within bare walls, for fear some bird of the air should hear them and go and tell the tale. They are so ashamed of their own faith (and yet it is real faith) that they scarcely dare to speak! The smallest stone in the road would make them stumble. A straw would be almost as great to them as a range of mountains like the Himalayas would be to others. They would be entirely cast out of the road if they had the least prospect that there could be a shadow in it for them to pass by! It is because we do not know enough of Christ that we are afraid of anything.

I believe that when we come truly to know Christ, we shall be afraid of nothing at all. Shall we be afraid of man? No! We shall say, "Whether it is right to obey God rather than man, you judge." Shall we be afraid of the devil when we know Christ? No! We shall say, "Christ has the devil chained and He can always pull the dog of Hell in when he attempts to bite us. Christ has hold of the dragon and he cannot inflict deeper wounds than Christ wills." We shall not be afraid of the messenger of death, for we shall regard him as an angel of the Covenant sent to fetch God's people up to Heaven! Courage will always be increased in proportion as we know more of Jesus and if we could have Christ for our daily and hourly Companion, I believe all the hosts of Hell, marshaled in battle, would no more frighten us than would a flock of small birds that might settle upon our path! But we would say, "In the name of the Lord, we will destroy them." If you would have more true Christian courage, get more of "the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

So is it with regard to our *zeal*, which is a Grace sadly lacking in these times. If we would be more zealous, we must live nearer to Christ. If the Son of Man were to come now, would He find zeal upon the earth? His own question was, "Shall He find faith?" But, would He find *zeal*? It would be difficult even for Him to discover much of it among Christians. There is sound orthodoxy, but no zeal. There is heterodoxy, but still no zeal. Where do you find it? Just here and there. There is a remnant, according to the election of Grace, who are zealous for God, but, in these times—we are sorry to say it—religion has degenerated into a kind of formality. It is a fashionable thing to be pious. We have been going on in the same track as other people—there is an old cart-rut, and we all drive along it. We have kept on at the same pace as our fathers, but, oh, if we knew more of Christ, we would have more zeal!

I cannot think it possible for men to lack zeal when they know Christ. They would then say, "Did my Savior shed His blood for me and shall I fear even to die for Him? Did He come all the way from Heaven to earth to save souls and shall not I also seek to win them for Him?" Would we have so many lazy preachers if they had more of Christ in their hearts? If they understood more of Jesus, would we have so many slothful, slug-

gish members in our churches, with so many who can make any excuse rather than labor for Christ, patching up any empty apology for idleness? No, Brothers and Sisters, if we knew more of the Savior, if we had more frequent visions of Him, if we saw Him more often on His Cross and viewed Him more frequently sitting with the crown upon His head, we would say, “I vow revenge against my sloth! All I can do will be too little for so good a Lord—

***‘All that I am, and all I have,
Shall be forever Thine.
Whatever my duty bids me give,
My cheerful hands resign.
Yet if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call,
I love my God with zeal so great,
That I should give Him all.’***

It is no use to try to get more zeal except in the right way, knowing more of Christ. And if we seek to grow in zeal as certain people we might mention have done, we shall have a zeal like a house on fire! It will do more mischief than it will do good. There may be some heat and a great deal of illumination, but it will die away, by-and-by, into black ashes, poisoning the churches everywhere. I have seen a certain kind of revival in England and I can always tell where such “revivals” have been by the scarred state of the places after them. These so-called “revivals” have been worked by excitable meetings, held by sundry preachers who have invented strange doctrines, but have said nothing about the Grace of God. They have for a time stirred up the people to a kind of religious *furor*, and they have left behind them a very desert. Before them it was like a garden of the Lord, but behind them barrenness and desolation. The church has been divided—there has been a reaction, and the people have sunk into the most lamentable condition. If we would have true zeal, it must be by the preaching of the good old doctrine, proclaiming Jesus Christ and Him Crucified, for anything else comes of the devil, and to Hell it shall tend. Its issue shall be destruction—not salvation!

But if we keep to the Truth of God, there will be “revival” enough. We want nothing but the good old-fashioned Gospel to stir the world again. Though men have tried new schemes, God will not claim them. All these heresies must be swept away and the true Gospel—distinguishing Grace of God in all the Sovereignty of election—must yet again be preached! And when it is preached in all its fullness, then shall the church be zealous and then shall Zion arise and shake herself from the dust, and put on her beautiful garments.

Further, if we would grow also in *the Grace of brotherly kindness*, we must know more of Christ. O Beloved, we must lament that there is too little brotherly kindness in the world! There is a great deal of that mawkish, mistaken kindness which says, “We must never say anything con-

trary to anybody else's opinion. If we know of a doctrinal error, we must not expose it, because love of our brethren implies that, even if they are wrong, we would not tell them of it." But I think true brotherly kindness is always to preach the Truth of God and tell our brethren where they are wrong and give them the opportunity of getting set right. Brotherly kindness is to preach whatever we believe to be true, and to maintain what God has taught us. And then, after all, to say, "Well, Brother, you differ from me. I am not infallible. I still love you." But that is no love which makes us hide the Truth of God! True love will make us honest, zealous and affectionate.

Why don't we love one another as much as we ought? It is because we do not love the Savior enough, and we have not seen enough of Him. If we had known more of the Savior, I am sure we should love Him better. I met with a strange idea the other day when reading a book by old Burroughs. He says, "If Jesus Christ were to come down to His Church now, He would see some of His children with black eyes. Some others would be seen scratched in the face and some bruised all over. He would say to them, 'What have you been doing?' If one should answer, 'Lord, I have been fighting with my brother, and he did this,' the Lord would say, 'Children of one family fight? The birds of one nest disagree? How sad it is!'" It is a strange thought, but it may be a profitable one, for if our Lord Jesus Christ finds His people quarrelling, what will He say?

You may remember a story I have told you before. An old Scotch elder had been disputing with his minister at an elders' meeting. He said some hard things and almost broke the minister's heart. Afterwards, he went home and the minister went home, too. The next morning, when the elder came down, his wife said to him, "Eh, Jan, you look very sad this morning. What's the matter wi' you?" "Ah," he said, "you would be sad too if you had had such a dream as I've had." "Weel, and what did you dream about?" "Oh, I dreamed I had been at an elders' meeting and I said some hard things, and grieved the minister. And as he went home, I thought he died, and went to Heaven. A fortnight after, I thought I died, and that I went to Heaven, too. And when I got to the gates of Heaven, out came the minister, and put out his hand to welcome me, saying, 'Come along, Jan, there's nae strife up here, and I'm happy to see you.'" The elder went to the minister to beg his pardon, but he found that he was dead. And he laid it so to heart that, within a fortnight, the elder, himself, departed. And I should not wonder if he did meet the minister at Heaven's gate, and hear him say, "Come along, Jan, there's nae strife up here." It will be well for us to remember that there is no strife up there. Glorified saints have no strife among themselves and we would love one another more in brotherly kindness if we thought more of Heaven, and more of our blessed Jesus!

Lastly, there is another Grace in which we need to grow. That is, *the Grace of humility*. I am sure we would increase in that Grace if we lived nearer to Christ. O Humility, most precious thing, you are most rare! He who talks most of it has least of it. He who preaches of it best, full often is least the subject of its power! O Humility, I have sometimes thought that you were a phantom, and that pride was the reality! Humility, where are you? The depths of poverty say, "You are not in me," for the poor are often proud. The heights of riches say, "You are not here," for the rich are often proud, too. O Humility, you are not to be found in science, for philosophy puffs up. You are not to be found in ignorance, for that is the mother of pride. O Humility, where can I find you? Where are you? Nowhere can I see you, or know what you are—unless I sit at the feet of Jesus and behold myself a lost, ruined sinner purchased by Divine Love. If you, dear Friend, would be truly humble, you must look at your Savior, for then you will say—

***"Alas, and did my Savior bleed?
And did my Sovereign die?
Would He devote that sacred head
For such a worm as I?"***

You will never feel yourself such a worm as when, by faith, you see your Savior dying for you! You will never know your own nothingness so well as when you see your Savior's greatness. When you grow in the Grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, you will be sure to grow in humility!

Growing Christians think themselves nothing, but, full-grown Christians think themselves less than nothing. The nearer we get to Jesus, the smaller self will appear to be. Self and Christ can never come close together. When I stand near self, Christ is small. When I stand near Christ, self is small. May God grant to you, dear Friends, to grow in the knowledge of Christ! Read the Scriptures more. Seek more the influences of the Holy Spirit upon them. Spend more time in devotion—ask God the Holy Spirit to give you a fresh sight of Calvary. Be more often on the Mount of Transfiguration, in the Garden of Suffering, in the Hall of Agony, under the Cross of Crucifixion! Live with Jesus and near to Him—and so, changed from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord, you shall, each one of you, grow unto the stature of a perfect man or woman in Christ Jesus!

—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.**

A PSALM FOR THE NEW YEAR NO. 427

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 5, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen.”
2 Peter 3:18.***

BEHOLD, Beloved, our perpetual dangers. Where can we go to escape from peril? Where shall we fly to avoid temptation? If we venture into business, worldliness is there. If we retire to our homes, trials are there. One would have imagined that in the green pastures of the Word of God there would have been perfect security for God’s sheep. Surely no lion shall be there and no ravenous beast shall go up from there! Alas, it is not so. For even while we are reading the Bible we are still exposed to peril. Not that the Truth of God is dangerous, but that our corrupt hearts can find poison in the very flowers of Paradise.

Mark what our Apostle says of the writings of St. Paul, “Wherein are some things which are hard to be understood.” And mark the danger to which we are exposed, lest we, being unlearned and unstable, should wrest even the Word of God itself to our own destruction. With the Bible before our eyes, we may still commit sin—pondering over the hallowed Words of Inspiration we may receive a deadly wound from “the error of the wicked.” Even at the horns of the altar we need that God should still cover us with the shadow of His wings. It is a very pleasing reflection that our gracious Father has provided a shield by which we may be sheltered from every ill and in our text the evil of heterodoxy finds a suitable preventative.

We are in danger, lest misinterpreting Scripture we should make God say what He does not—and lest by departing from the teaching of the Holy Spirit we should wrest the letter of the Word and lose its spirit—and lest from the letter draw a meaning which may be for our soul’s ruin. How shall we escape this? Peter, speaking by the Holy Spirit, has in the words before us, pointed out our safeguard. While we search the Scriptures and grow in acquaintance with them, see to it that we grow in Divine Grace. And while we desire to know the doctrine, long above all to grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—and let our study of Scripture and our growth in Divine Grace and in the knowledge of Christ still be subservient to that higher object—that we may live to bring glory both now and forever to Him who has loved us and bought us with His blood.

Let your hearts say evermore, “Amen” to the doxology of praise, so shall you be kept from all pestilent errors and you shall not fall from your own steadfastness. It appears, then, that our text is adapted to be a heavenly remedy for certain diseases to which even students of Scripture are ex-

posed. I am persuaded it may serve also as a most blessed directory to us through the whole of the coming year.

I might divide my text, this morning, as good old Adams does. He says there are here two trumpets. One is blown from Heaven to earth—"Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." The other sounds from earth to Heaven—"To Him be glory both now and forever." Or I might quote him again. He says here is first a point of *theology*, "Grow in grace." Secondly, a point of *doxology*, "To Him be glory both now and forever."

We will take the text in the same natural divisions with other headings and notice, first, that we have here a Divine injunction, with a special direction. And secondly, *a grateful doxology, with a suggestive conclusion.*

I. To begin, then, at the beginning, we have here first of all, A DIVINE INJUNCTION WITH A SPECIAL DIRECTION—"Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

"*Grow in grace.*" What is this? It must be, in the outset, implied that we have been quickened by Divine Grace, otherwise this text cannot apply to us at all. Dead things cannot grow. Only those who are alive unto God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead have in them any power or capability of growth. The great Quickener must first implant the seeds of life, then afterwards those seeds can germinate and grow. To you, therefore, who are dead in trespasses and sins, this text has no application. You cannot grow in Divine Grace, because as yet you are under the curse of the Law and the wrath of God abides on you. Tremble, repent, believe—and may God have mercy on you!

But being alive from the dead and quickened by the Spirit of God which is in you, Beloved Brethren, *you* who are born again are bid to grow, for growth shall prove your life. A post planted in the earth grows not—but a tree, rooted there, increases from a sapling to a forest king. Drop a pebble into the richest soil and it will be a pebble still of the same size, but put in there the grain or the seed, and it will spring up and produce its stalk and its flower. You who are alive unto God, see to it that you grow in all the Divine Graces.

Grow in that root-grace, *faith*. Seek to believe the promises better than you have done. Go from that trembling faith which says, "Lord, I believe: help You my unbelief," upward to that which staggers not at the promise, but which, like Abraham, believes that He who has promised is able also to perform. Let your faith increase in extent, believing more, the Truths of God—let it increase in firmness, getting a tighter grip of every Truth. Let it increase in constancy, not being feeble or wavering, nor always tossed about with every wind. Let your faith daily increase in simplicity, resting more fully and more entirely and more completely upon the finished work of your Lord Jesus Christ.

See to it that your *love*, also grows. If you have loved with a spark, pray that the spark may become an all-consuming flame. If you have brought little to Christ, pray that you may bring your all, and may offer that all in such a fashion, that like Mary's broken alabaster box, the King, Himself, may be satisfied with the perfume. Ask that your love may become more

extended—that you may have love unto all the saints. And even more practical, that it may move your every thought, your every word and deed—make them more intense—that you may become as burning and shining lights whose flame is love to God and man.

Pray that you may grow in *hope*, that “the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, you may know what is the hope of His calling and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.” Pray that you may be looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. That the hope not seen as yet may enable you with patience to wait for it. Pray that you may, by hope, enter into the joys of Heaven while you are on earth. Pray that hope may give you immortality while you are yet mortal—may give you resurrection before you die—may give you to see God, while as yet the glass darkly parts you from Him.

Ask that you may grow in *humility* till you can say, “I am less than the least of all the saints.” That you may grow in *consecration* till you can cry, “For me to live is Christ: to die is gain.” Pray that you may grow in *contentment* till you can feel, “In whatever state I am, I have learned to be content.” Pray to advance in likeness to the Lord Jesus, that your very enemies may take knowledge of you, that you have been with Jesus and have learned of Him. Finally, if there is any virtue, if there is any praise, if there is anything that is lovely and of good repute, if there is anything that can increase your usefulness, that can add to your happiness, that can make you more serviceable to man and more glorious towards God—pray to grow in it—for you have not yet attained, neither are you yet already perfect.

Following up an illustration furnished by the Holy Scriptures, let me remind you all, you faithful Believers in Christ, that you are compared to *trees*—trees of the Lord’s right hand planting. Seek to grow as the tree grows. Pray that this year you may grow downward. That you may know more of your own vileness, more of your own nothingness—and so be rooted in humility. Pray that your roots may penetrate below the mere topsoil of the Truth of God, into the great rocks which underlie the uppermost stratum. Pray that you may get a good hold of the doctrines of eternal love, of immutable faithfulness, of complete satisfaction, of union to Christ, of the eternal purpose of God, which He purposed in Christ Jesus before the world was.

These deep things of God will yield a rich and abundant sap and your roots shall drink from the hidden fountains of “the depth which lies under.” This will be a growth which will not add to your fame, which will not minister to your vanity—but it will be invaluable in the hour of storm, a growth the value of which no heart can conceive when the hurricane is tearing up the hypocrite and hurling into the sea of destruction the “trees whose fruit withers, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots.”

As you root downward, seek to grow *upward*. Send out the top shoot of your love towards Heaven. As the trees send out their spring shoots and their midsummer shoots, and as you see upon the top of the fir that new green child of spring—the fresh shoot which lifts its hand towards the sun—so pant to have more love and greater desires after God. Seek a

nearer approach towards Him in prayer, a sweeter spirit of adoption, a more intense and intimate fellowship with the Father and with His son Jesus Christ. This mounting upwards will add to your beauty and to your delight.

Then pray to grow *on either side*. Stretch out your branches. Let the shadow of your holy influence extend as far as God has given you opportunities. But see to it, also, that you grow in *fruitfulness*, for to increase the bough without adding to the fruit is to diminish the beauty of the tree. Labor this year, by God's Grace, to bring forth more fruit unto Him than you have ever done. Lord, give to this congregation more of the fruits of penitence for sin, of faith in the great sacrifice, of love to Jesus, of zeal for the conversion of souls. We would not be as the gleanings of the vintage when there is only here and there a cluster upon the uppermost bough, we would be as the valley of Eshcol, whose presses burst with new wine. This is to grow in Divine Grace—to root downward, to shoot upward, to extend your influences like far-reaching branches—and to bring forth fruit unto the Lord's glory.

But we will borrow another figure from Scripture. Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ, we are not only compared to trees but to *children*. Let us grow as babes do, nourished by unadulterated milk—steadily, slowly—but surely and certainly. Little each day but much in years. Oh that we may grow as a child does in strength, till the little tottering limbs of our faith shall be firm muscular legs with which the young man may run without weariness, and feet upon which the strong man may walk without fainting. As yet our wings are immature and we can hardly leave the nest.

Lord, bid our growth proceed till we can mount as with the wings of eagles towards Yourself, surmounting clouds and storms and dwelling in the serene Presence of the Most High. Let us grow in the development of all our powers. Let us ask that we may be no more little infants of a span long but that many cubits may be added to our stature till we ripen to perfect men in Christ Jesus. And let us specially pray that we may grow as healthy children, uniformly.

Brothers and Sisters, it is an ill sign if a child's head enlarges but not the rest of his body, or if its arm or foot should be swollen to an ill proportion. Beauty consists in the proportion of every part. A vigorous judgment should not be yoked with a cold heart, nor a clear eye with a withered hand. A giant's head rides ill on a dwarf's shoulders. A virtue nourished at the expense of others is a fattened cannibal fed upon the flesh and blood of its murdered kinsmen. And it ill becomes a Christian to harbor such a monster. Let us pray that faith and love and every Divine Grace may be developed—that not one power of the man may be left unnurtured or un-grown—for only thus can we truly grow in Divine Grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

But do you inquire *why* we should thus grow in Divine Grace? Let us say, Brethren, that if we do not advance in Divine Grace it is a sorrowful sign. It is a mark of *sickness*. It is an unhealthy child that grows not, a cankered tree that sends forth no fresh shoots. More—it may not only be a sign of unhealthiness but of *deformity*. If a man's shoulders have come to

a certain breadth and his lower limbs refuse to lift him aloft, we call him a dwarf, and we look upon him with some degree of pity. He is ill-formed. O Lord, let us grow, for we would not be abortions, we would not be deformities. We would be children like unto God our Father—we would be comely ones, everyone of us like the sons of a king.

Not to grow may be, moreover, the sign of death. It may say to us, Inasmuch as you *grow* not, you *live* not. Inasmuch as you do not increase in faith and love and Divine Grace—and inasmuch as you do not ripen towards the harvest—fear and tremble lest you should only have a name to live and be destitute of life. Fear, lest you should be the painted counterfeit—a lovely picture drawn by the painter's skillful hand, but without reality, without the life-power which should make it bud and germinate and blossom and bring forth fruit.

Advance in Divine Grace, because not to progress foretells many evil things and may result in that worst of all things—the want of spiritual life. Grow in Grace, because, Beloved, to increase in Grace is the only pathway to enduring nobility. Oh, do you not wish to stand with that noble host who have served their Master well and have entered into their eternal rest? Who among you does not wish to have his name written with the missionaries of modern times—with Judson and with Carey, with Williams and with Moffat? Who among us is there who has no ambition to find his name written among those servants of God—Whitfield, Grimshaw, Newton, Romaine, Toplady and others who preached the Word with power?

Are there any of us who wish to go back to the vile dust from where we sprung, “unwept, unhonored, and unsung?” Then let us be as we are. Let us cease our march. Meanness lies at your door—be stunted and be ignoble. But if we would be *princes* in God's Israel, if we would be mighty warriors for the Cross of Christ, let us pray this prayer, “Lord, bid us grow in Your Grace, that we may be faithful servants and receive Your commendation at the last.”

But, my Brothers and Sisters, to grow is not only to be noble, it is to be happy. That man who stops growing, refuses to be blessed. With most men in business, if they do not win, they lose. With the warrior, if he gains not in the battle, his enemy is getting an advantage. That wise man who gets no wiser, grows more foolish. That Christian who does not know more of his Lord and become more like He, knows less of his Lord and becomes less like He. Our armor, if unused, will tarnish, and our arms, if not strengthened by effort, will be weakened by indolence. Our *happiness* declines as our spirituality fades.

To be happy, I say, we must go forward. Forward is the sunlight! Forward is victory! Forward is Heaven! Forward is Christ! But here, to stand still is danger—no, it is death. O Lord, for our happiness' sake bid us advance, and for our usefulness' sake let us ascend. Oh, if we as a congregation and as a Church grew more in Grace—if we were stronger in faith, mightier in prayer, more fervent in heart, more holy in life—who can tell how much we might effect our age? Men who walk but lightly, leave but faint steps. But men who tread with the tramp of Roman soldiers stamp

their footprints on the sands of time, never to be erased. So let us live that in our day, and in after days the world may be the better and Christ's Church the more prosperous for our having lived. For this reason, if for no other, let us grow in Divine Grace.

Oh, could I fire you with some hallowed ambition today I would be but too happy! Could I snatch from some ancient altar a live coal such as that which fell upon the lip of Isaiah, I would say unto you, Lo, this has touched your lip—go forth in the Spirit and power of God, even the Most High—and live as they lived who counted not their lives dear unto them that they might serve their Master and be found in Him. I point you to the spirits who have entered within the veil and who rest upon the couches of eternal glory, and I say, they won the victory by Divine Grace—and growth in Divine Grace was the means of their triumph. Emulate them! Press forward as they did and through Grace you shall inherit their rest and their triumph and sit down with them forever.

But do you inquire *how* you shall grow in Divine Grace? The answer is simple. He who gave you Grace must *give you more* of it. Where you first received your Grace, there you must receive the increase of that Divine Grace. He who made the cattle and who created man, was the same who afterwards said, "Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth." So He that has given you Grace must speak with the fiat of His omnipotence in your heart and say to that Grace, "Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the soul till its native emptiness shall be filled, and the natural wilderness shall rejoice and blossom like a rose."

But at the same time we would have you use the *means*. And those means are much prayer, a more diligent search of the sacred Scriptures, a more constant fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ—greater activity in His cause, an earnest attendance upon the means of Grace—a devout reception of all revealed Truths of God, and so forth. If you do these things you shall never be stunted or dwarfed, for He that has given you life will thus enable you to fulfill the word which He spoke to you by His Apostle, "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

I have thus explained the Divine exhortation. But you perceive it contains a *special injunction*, upon which we must pause a moment. "And in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

My Beloved Brethren in the Lord Jesus, we must see to it that we ripen in the knowledge of *Him*. Oh, that this year we may know more of Him in His Divine nature and in His human relationship to us in His finished work, in His death, in His resurrection, in His present glorious intercession and in His future royal advent! To know more of Christ in His work is, I think, a blessed means of enabling us to work more for Christ.

We must study to know more of Christ also in His Character—in that Divine compound of every perfection, faith, zeal and deference to His Father's will—in His courage, meekness, and love. He was the lion of the tribe of Judah and yet the Man upon whom the Dove descended in the waters of Baptism. Let us thirst to know Him of whom even His enemies said, "Never man spoke like this Man," and His unrighteous judge said, "I find no fault in Him."

Above all, let us long to know Christ in His Person. This year endeavor to make a better acquaintance with the Crucified One. Study His hands and His feet. Abide hard by the Cross and let the sponge, the vinegar and the nails be subjects of your devout attention. This year seek to penetrate into His very heart and to search those deep far-reaching caverns of His unknown love—that love which can never find a rival and can never know a parallel. If you can add to this a knowledge of His sufferings, you will do well.

Oh, if you can grow in the knowledge of fellowship—if you shall this year drink of His cup and be baptized with His Baptism—if you shall this year abide in Him and He in you—blessed shall you be! This is the only growth in Divine Grace which is true growth. And all other growth which leads us not to increase in the knowledge of Christ is but the puffing up of the flesh—not the building up of the Spirit. Grow in the knowledge of Christ, then, my Brothers and Sisters.

And do you ask me *why*? Oh, if you have ever known Him you will not ask that question. He that longs not to know more of Christ, knows nothing of Him yet. He that ever sipped this wine will thirst for more, for although Christ does satisfy, yet it is such a satisfaction, that we want to taste more and more and more and more. Oh, if you know the love of Jesus, I am sure as the hart pants for the water brooks, so will you pant after Him. If you say you do not desire to know Him better, then I tell you, you love Him not, for love always cries, “Nearer, nearer, nearer.”

Absence from Christ is Hell. But presence with Christ is Heaven. And, as we get nearer to Him, our Heaven becomes more heavenly and we enjoy it more and feel more that it is of God. Oh, may you, this year, come to the very well of Bethlehem and not merely receive a vessel from it, as David did, at the risk of the lives of three mighty men—but may you come to the well and drink—drink from the well itself, from that bottomless well-spring of eternal love. Oh, this year may the secret of the Lord be with you and may you be in the secret place of the Most High!

My Master, should You permit me to ask You one thing as a special favor, it should be this—that I may “know Him and the power of His resurrection, being made conformable to His death!” Nearer to You, blessed Lord, nearer to You—this is all our cry shall be. The Lord grant that our cry may be heard, that we may grow in the knowledge of Christ! We wish to know Christ this year as our *Lord*—Lord of every thought and every desire, of every word and every act. And as our *Savior*, too—our Savior from every indwelling sin, our Savior from every evil past, from every trial to come.

All hail, Jesus! We salute You as Lord. Teach us to feel Your Kingship over us and to feel it every hour. All hail You, crucified One! We acknowledge You as Savior. Help us to rejoice in Your salvation and to feel the plenitude of that salvation in all and every part of spirit, soul and body, being wholly saved by You.

I have thus, Brothers and Sisters, sought to expound the point of theology. I lift up my heart in prayer for you all that you may grow in Divine Grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

II. In the second place, we have A GRATEFUL THANKSGIVING WITH A MOST SUGGESTIVE TERMINATION—"To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."

The Apostles, we must remark, very frequently suspended their writing in order to lift up their hearts in praise. Praise is never out of season and it is no interruption to interrupt any engagement in order to laud and magnify our God. "To Him be glory." Brethren, do not let me preach now but let me interpret your emotions. Let it be not so much my utterance, as your utterance by my lips. Let every heart joyously feel this doxology, To Him, the God that made the heavens and the earth, without whom was not anything made. To Him who in His infinite compassion became the Surety of the Covenant—to Him who became a babe of a span long.

To Him who was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief—to Him who on the bloody tree poured out His heart's life that He might redeem His people—to *HIM* who said, "I thirst," and, "It is finished!"—to Him whose lifeless body slumbered in the grave—to Him be glory! To him that burst the bonds of death—to Him who ascended on high and led captivity captive—to Him who sits at the right hand of the Father and who shall soon come to be our Judge—"to Him be glory."

Yes, to Him, you atheists, who deny Him—to Him, you Socinians, who doubt His Deity—to Him, you kings, who vaunt your splendor and will not have this Man to reign over you—to Him, you people, who against Him stand up, and you rulers who against Him take counsel—to Him, the King whom God has set upon His holy hill of Zion—to Him be glory! To Him be glory as the Lord—King of kings and lords. "Wonderful, Counselors, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." And yet again Hosanna in the highest—Hallelujah, King of kings and Lord of lords! To Him be glory as LORD! To Him be glory as SAVIOR!

He alone has redeemed us unto God by His blood. He alone has "trode the winepress," and "comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength." "To Him be glory." Hear it, you angels—"To Him be glory." Clap your wings. Cry "Hallelujah, to Him be glory." Hear it you spirits of the just made perfect—sweep the strings of your celestial harps and say, "Hallelujah, glory to Him who has redeemed us unto God by His own blood." "*To HIM be glory.*" Church of God respond! Let every pious heart say "*To HIM be glory.*" Yes, unto Him be glory, you Fiends of Hell, as you tremble at His Presence and see the key of your prison swinging at His girdle. Let Heaven and earth and Hell—let things that are, and were, and shall be, cry, "To Him be glory."

But the Apostle adds, "*now*"—"to Him be glory, *now*." O Brethren, postpone not the day of His triumph! Put not off the hour of His coronation. *Now, NOW*—

***"Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all."***

Now, now. For now, today, "He has raised us up together and made us sit in heavenly places with Christ Jesus." Beloved, now are we the sons of

God—"now are our sins forgiven. Now are we robed in His righteousness! Now are our feet upon a Rock and our goings are established. Who is there among you that would defer the time of your hosannas? "To Him be glory *now*." O cherubim above, "To Him be glory now!" For you "continually do cry, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts." Adore Him yet again, for, "To Him be glory now."

"*And forever*." Never shall we cease our praise. Time! You shall grow old and die. Eternity! Your unnumbered years shall speed their everlasting course. But forever, forever, forever, "to Him be glory." Is He not a "Priest forever, after the order of Melchisedec"? "To Him be glory." Is He not king forever?—King of kings and Lord of lords, the everlasting Father? "To Him be glory *forever*." Never shall His praises cease. That which was bought with blood deserves to last while immortality endures. The glory of the Cross must never be eclipsed. The luster of the grave and of the resurrection must never be dimmed.

Oh, my beloved Brothers and Sisters, my spirit begins to feel the ardor of the immortals. I would anticipate the songs of Heaven. My tongue, had it but celestial liberty, would begin even now to join those thrice-melodious sonnets sung by flaming tongues above. O Jesus! You shall be praised forever! As long as immortal spirits live—as long as the Father's Throne endures—forever, forever, forever, unto You shall be glory!

But now, there is a conclusion to this of the most suggestive kind, "*Amen*." Brethren, I want to work this amen out—not as a matter of doctrine, but as a matter of blessed transport. Come, give me your hearts again. "To Him be glory both now and forever, *Amen*." What does this Amen mean? Amen has four meanings in Scripture. By the way, the Puritan's remark—it is a very remarkable thing—that under the old Law, there was no amen to the blessings. The only amen was to the curses. When they pronounced the curses, "All the people said Amen."

Under the Law there never was an amen to the blessing. Now, it is an equally remarkable and more blessed thing, that under the Gospel, there is no amen to the curses, the only amen is to the blessings. "May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God our Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all, Amen." "If any man loves not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha." No amen. There is no amen to the curse under the Gospel. But "all the promises of God are yes and amen, in Christ Jesus."

Now, the "*Amen*"—and here I am greatly indebted to good old Thomas Adams—means four things. First, it is *the desire of the heart*, "Behold, I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." We say amen at the end of the prayer, to signify, "Lord, let it be so"—it is our heart's desire. Now, Brethren, give me your hearts, then—for it is all a heart-matter here. "To Him be glory both now and forever, Amen." Is that your heart's desire? If not, you cannot say amen to it. Does your heart long, pant, thirst, groan and cry out after Christ, so that you *can* say, every time you bend your knee, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven, for Yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever, Amen"?

Can you say, "Amen, Lord, let Your kingdom come"? Brethren, if you can say it in this sense, if it is your heart's desire that Christ's glory should be extended and His kingdom should come, say "Amen," aloud this morning. Now join with me, for my heart glows with it. I can say it—and the Judge of All knows how my heart longs to see Jesus magnified. Join with me then, you who can do it honestly, while I repeat the doxology—"To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen." [The congregation very heartily, aloud, said, "Amen."]

So be it Lord. You hear Your Church as it cries "Amen!" Verily, it is our heart's desire—

***"Amen, with joy Divine, let earth's
Unnumbered myriads cry;
Amen, with joy Divine, let Heaven's
Unnumbered choirs reply."***

But it signifies more than this. It means *the affirmation of our faith*. We only say amen to that which we really believe to be true. We add our affidavit, as it were, to God's promise, that we believe Him to be faithful and true.

Have you any doubts but that Jesus Christ is glorious now and forever? Do you doubt His being glorified of angels, cherubim and seraphim, today? And do you not believe, my Brethren, that they that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him and that His enemies shall lick the dust? If you so believe, if you have faith today amid the world's obstinacy and the sinner's pride, amid abounding superstition and dominant evil—if you have faith still to believe that Christ shall be glorious forever and ever, then join with me and again say Amen. "To Him be glory both now and forever, Amen." [The congregation again said "Amen."]

Lord, You hear it, though it is a feebler cry than aforesaid, for there are more who can desire it than there are who believe it. Nevertheless, You abide faithful—

***"This little seed from Heaven
Shall soon become a tree;
This ever-blessed leaven
Diffused abroad must be—
Till God the Son shall come again,
It must go on. Amen! Amen."***

But there is yet a third meaning to this amen. It often expresses *the joy of the heart*. When of old they brought forth a Jewish king, the high priest took a horn of oil and poured it on his head. Then came forward a herald, and the moment he had sounded the trumpet, one with a loud voice said, "God save the king! God save the king!" and all the people said, "Amen." And one shout went up to Heaven, while with joy of heart they saluted the king in whom they hoped to see a prosperous ruler through whom God would bless them and make them victorious.

Now, what do you say? As you see King Jesus sitting upon Mount Zion with death and Hell beneath His feet. As today you anticipate the glory of His Advent. As today you are expecting the time when you shall reign with Him forever and ever, does not your heart say, "Amen"? I can remember, in a season of the greatest darkness of mind and weakness of body, there

was one text which used to cheer me beyond all measure. There was nothing in the text about myself. It was no promise to *me* but it was something about *Him*. It was this—"Him has God highly exalted and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven and things in earth and things under the earth."

Oh, it seemed so joyous that *He* was exalted. What did it matter what became of *me*? What did it signify what should become of all of us? King David is worth ten thousand of us. Let our names perish but let His name last forever. Brothers and Sisters, this morning I bring forth the King to you. I bring Him before the eyes of your faith today. I proclaim Him king, again, and do you, if you desire Him to be king, and if you rejoice in His reign, say "Amen"? Here, here He stands in vision before your eyes. Crown Him! Crown Him! Lo, He is today crowned afresh. "To Him be glory both now and forever." Joyous hearts lift up your voices and with one accord say "Amen." [The congregation again said "Amen."] Amen, Lord, be You King in the midst of us all—

***"Yes, amen, let all adore You,
High on Your exalted Throne!
Savior, take Your power and glory;
Claim the kingdoms for Your own—
O come quickly! Hallelujah, Come, Lord, come."***

But, lastly and this is a very solemn point. Amen is sometimes used in Scripture as an amen of resolution. It means, "I, in the name of God, solemnly pledge myself that in His strength I will seek to make it so. To Him be glory both now and forever." Now I shall not want you to say, "Amen" to this *aloud*, but I shall pause to let you say it silently in your own souls by-and-by.

I walked last week through the long galleries which vanity has dedicated to all the glories of France. You pass through room after room where especially you see the triumphs of Napoleon in writhing bodies and in the blood and vapor and smoke. Surely as you walk through the pages of Scripture, you walk through a much more marvelous picture gallery, in which you see the glories of Christ. This Book contains the memorials of His honors. In another place in Paris there stands a column made with the cannons taken by the Emperor in battle. A mighty trophy, certainly. O Jesus! You have a better than this—a trophy made of forgiven souls—of eyes which wept but whose tears have been wiped away—of broken hearts that have been healed and of saved souls that forever more rejoice!

What trophies Christ has to make Him glorious, both now and forever—trophies of living hearts that love Him—trophies of immortal spirits who find their Heaven in gazing upon His beauties! What must the glories of Christ be forever when you and I and all the ten thousand millions He has bought with His blood shall be in Heaven. Oh, when we have been there many a thousand years we shall feel as fresh a rapture as when we came there! And if our spirits should be sent on any errand from our Master, and we should have to leave His Presence for a moment, oh, with what wings of a dove we will fly back to behold His face again!

When we shall all surround that Throne, what songs will I, the chief of sinners, saved by blood, give Him! What hymns will you give Him, you who have had your iniquities cleansed and are today saved? What praise will all those multitudes give Him who have all been partakers of His Grace? But this has more to do with “forever.” Now, what do you say about our glorifying Him *now*? Oh, Brothers and Sisters, make it your prayer this morning, “Lord, help me to glorify You. I am poor, help me to glorify You by contentment. I am sick, help me to give You honor by patience. I have talents, help me to extol You by spending them for You. I have time, Lord, help me to redeem it, that I may serve You.

“I have a heart to feel, Lord, let that heart feel no love but Yours and glow with no flame, but affection for You. I have a head to think, Lord help me to think *of* You and *for* You. You have put me in this world for something, Lord, show me what that is, and help me to work out my life-purpose. For I do desire to say amen. I cannot do much—my amen is but a feeble one—but as the widow put in her two mites, which made a farthing, which was all her living, so, Lord, I put my time and eternity, too, into Your treasury. It is all yours, take it, and thus I say, ‘Amen’ to Peter’s doxology.”

And now, throughout this year will you go forth, my Brothers and Sisters, and say amen to this? I pray you do so. You who do not love Christ cannot say amen. Remember you are under the Law. There is an amen to all the curses for you. There is none to the blessings while you are under the Law. O poor Sinner under the Law, may this be the day when your slavery to the Law shall come to an end! “How can it be?” you say. By faith in Christ, I answer. “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” Oh that you may believe on Him, and then your joyful heart will say amen!

Then will you say, “Loudest of all the saints in Heaven, I will shout amen, when I see the royal crown brought forth and Jesus is acknowledged Lord of all.” May God grant that this year may be the best year this Church has ever had. This year concludes eight years of my ministry among you and seven years of Printed Sermons are now before the public. How much of blessedness God has caused to pass through our mind and how much He has been pleased to own His Word, we cannot fully measure. But we know that He *has* been with us in deed and in truth.

Now that we begin this year, may the Lord make it so that all the past shall seem to be as nothing compared with that which is to come. I bless you my Brothers and Sisters in the name of the Lord, and commencing this year, I beg again for renewed tokens of your affection by a renewal of your prayers. And on my part, I only trust that it may be mine through this year and as long as I live, to be giving my amen to that doxology—“To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen.”

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