

THE NECESSITY OF GROWING FAITH

NO. 1857

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“We are bound to thank God always for you, Brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all abounds toward each other.”
2 Thessalonians 1:3.

LAST Lord's-Day I tried to say cheering and encouraging words to “Little-Faith.” I trust that the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, did thereby strengthen some to whom the Savior said, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” But none of us would desire to remain among the Little-Faiths—we long to press forward in our march to the better land. If we have just started in the heavenly race, it is well, for there are grounds of comfort about the first steps in the right way, but we are not going to stop at the starting-point! Our desire is towards the finish line and the crown. My prayer, at the commencement of this discourse, is that we may, each of us, rise out of our little faith into the loftier region of *assurance*, so that those who love us best may be able to say, “We are bound to thank God always for you, Brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly.”

The Church of Jesus Christ at Thessalonica did not commence under very propitious circumstances. Remember that oft-quoted text about the Bereans—“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they searched the Scriptures daily whether those things were so.” That record does not relate to the *converts* in Thessalonica, but to those Jews who heard Paul preach in the synagogue and refused to test his teaching by a reference to the Old Testament. They were not a noble sort of people and yet, from among them, there were taken by almighty Grace a certain company who were led to believe in the true Messiah! Thus they became more noble than even the Bereans, for we do not hear of a Church in Berea, neither was an Epistle written to the Bereans. Thessalonica received *two* Epistles, bright with hearty commendations. Paul praised the Philippians, but the Thessalonians he praised even more, thanking God at every remembrance of them, and glorying in them among the Churches of God for their patience and faith.

I shall ask you, with your Bibles open, to see whether we cannot account in some measure for this remarkable condition of things. The verse before us is full of thanksgiving to God for the growth of the Thessalonians in faith and in love. And to my mind, it sounds like an echo of the First Epistle to the Thessalonians. The First Epistle is the key and the

cause of the Second. Very often a man's success in this place, or in that, will tally with his own condition of heart in relation to that place. As we sow we reap. The Grace of God enabled Paul to sow toward the Thessalonians with great hopefulness, trust and prayerfulness and, consequently, he reaped plentifully.

Observe how (1 Thess. 1:2, 3) Paul began by distinctly recognizing the existence of faith and love in that Church. "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father." Recognize the root and then look for the flower! See that faith is in the soul, smile upon it and foster it—and then you may expect that the faith will steadily increase. In our text Paul mentions faith as growing and love as abounding, while in the next verse he mentions patience, which is the outgrowth of hope—"the patience of hope." He noticed in the Thessalonians the birth of those three Divine sisters—faith, hope, and charity! That which he recognized with pleasure, he afterwards saw growing exceedingly! Those who cherish the seed shall rejoice in the plant. Observe in the children under your care the first blossoms of any good thing and you shall observe its increase! Despise not the day of small things. When you have learned to recognize faith in its buds, you shall soon see faith in its flowers and faith in its fruits! Do not overlook feeble Grace, or criticize it because it is as yet imperfect—mark its beginnings with thankfulness and you shall behold its advance with delight!

In addition to recognizing the beginnings of faith, Paul labored hard to promote it. Look in the second chapter and read verses 7, 8, 11, 12—"But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherishes her children: so being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the Gospel of God, only, but also our own souls because you were dear unto us. As you know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father does his children, that you would walk worthy of God, who has called you unto His kingdom and glory." He threw his whole strength into the work of building that Church, toiling night and day for it and, consequently, he obtained his desire—for still it is true in the farming of God, that those who sow and steep their seed in the tears of earnestness, shall doubtless come again, rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them!

Paul had accompanied his public labors with his private prayers. See how 1 Thessalonians 3:12 tallies with our text—"And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love, one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you." This was his prayer—and he received exactly what he prayed for. He saw abounding love in each one towards every other! The Lord seemed to have noted the wording of Paul's prayer and to have answered him according to the letter of his request. If we open our mouth wide, the Lord will fill it! Brothers and Sisters, what we comfortably recognize in its gracious beginnings—what we labor to increase and what we earnestly guard with prayer shall, in due time, be granted to us!

More than this—Paul had gone on to exhort them to abound in love and faith. Look at Chapter 4, verse 9—“As touching brotherly love you need not that I write unto you: for you yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And indeed you do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, Brethren, that you increase more and more.” Paul did not only quietly pray for the Church, but he added his earnest admonitions. He bids them increase more and more and, in response, they *do* increase, so that he says, “your faith grows exceedingly.” When a man says, “more and more,” it is only another way of saying, “exceedingly.” Is it not so? There was a big heart in Paul towards the Thessalonians. He wanted them to grow in faith and love “more,” and then, to take another step and add another, “more,” to it! The exhortation being given out of a full heart, behold, God has fulfilled it to His servant and the people have willingly followed up the Apostolic precept!

But Paul had added faith to his prayers and his exhortations. Look at Chapter 5:23, 24, and see if it is not so. “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calls you, who also will do it.” When we are sure that God will do it, it will surely be done! We miss many a blessing because we ask without faith. The Apostle believed that he had the petition which he had sought of the Lord and he received according to his faith. He who can firmly believe shall, before long, fervently pour out thanksgiving! The Church at Thessalonica, the child of Paul’s prayers, the child of his labors and, at last, the child of his faith, obtained a remarkable degree of faith and an amazing warmth of love. The Lord give to us, who are workers, the mind and spirit of Paul, and lead us to follow him in our conduct to others, and then I do not doubt that our good wishes shall be realized! If we are right, ourselves, we shall see prosperity in the Churches, or classes, or families whose good we seek—and as we feel bound to pray about them, we shall also feel bound to thank God concerning them.

Before I plunge into the sermon, I should like to pause and ask whether we, as Christian men and women, are such that Paul could say of us, “We are bound to thank God always for you, Brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all abounds toward each other.” What do you think? Could your pastor bless God for you? Could your nearest and dearest Christian friend feel that he was bound to always thank God for you? If not, why not? Oh that we may rise into such a happy state that we shall be the cause of gratitude in others! It ought to be so—we ought to glorify God—causing men to see our good works and praise our Father in Heaven.

One more question—Do you think we are in such a condition that it would be safe for anybody to praise *us*? Would it be safe to ourselves for us to be thus commended and made *subjects* of thankfulness? It takes a great deal of Grace to be able to bear praise. Censure seldom does us much harm. A man struggles up against slander and the discouragement which comes of it may not be an unmixed evil, but praise soon suggests pride and is, therefore, not an unmixed good. “As the fining-pot for silver,

and the furnace for gold, so is a man to his praise.” Would it be safe if Paul were, here, to say good things about *you* as he did about the Thessalonians? Did it not prove that the Brothers and Sisters, there, were sober, well-established Believers?

Once more, do you ever feel it in your heart to talk like this about your fellow Christians? Paul was in a fine condition when he could thus extol his Brethren. Few men are ready with hearty commendations of others. We are greedy in receiving praise and niggardly in dispensing it. We seldom speak too kindly of one another. Now and then you hear a person say, “There is no such thing as love in the Church at all.” I know that gentleman very well and I never saw any excess of love in *him*. I heard one say, “Brotherly love is all a mockery; there is no reality in Christian charity”—and truly, he measured his own corn very accurately! Most men would see others better if their own eyes were clearer. When a man honestly feels that his fellow Christians are, for the most part, much better than himself and that he would willingly sit at the feet of many of them, then he is, himself, in a healthy state. I admire the Grace of God in many around me! I see their imperfections as though I did not see them! I am not looking for the thorns, but for the roses—and I see so many of them that my heart is glad and in spirit I bless the name of the Lord!

The man who can commend the work of the Lord in others without saying a word about himself, has, by that fact, given himself a good character. His eyes must have been washed in the fountains of Love. They must have been cleansed from the dust of pride, envy and self, or he would not have so seen or so spoken. I love the text because it is an instance of a man of great Grace, of a man under the Inspiration of the Spirit of God who yet delighted to speak enthusiastically of a Church which certainly was far from perfect. I delight in that eye which can be a little blind to faults while it exercises a clear vision in seeing all that is good and praiseworthy towards God!

So, then, we come to our text and the subject runs thus—for us to grow in faith is a *subject for devout thanksgiving*. And, in the second place, it is *an object for diligent endeavor*. Thirdly, if we greatly grow in faith it will be *the source of other growth*, for as faith increases, love, patience and every other virtue will flourish.

I. For us to grow and increase in faith is A SUBJECT FOR DEVOUT THANKSGIVING. Paul gives a commendation of the Thessalonian Church which is exceedingly warm and hearty. One critic says the words may be regarded as somewhat extravagant, after the mode of the Apostle when he wishes to be emphatic. He writes fervidly—“Your faith grows exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other abounds.” It is an intense and unreserved commendation. As I have already said, this Church was not absolutely perfect for, because of the love of every one towards another and their great kindness towards the poor, certain unworthy persons encroached upon their liberality. To use a very rough word, *beggars* were multiplied among them as they always are where generosity abounds. Shame that it should be so. Read chapter 3, Verse 11—“For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not

at all, but are busybodies.” There had been, also, among them, here and there, a person of loose life and of sharp business dealings—and to such Paul spoke in the First Epistle—but these flies in the pot of ointment did not destroy its sweetness. They were, comparatively, so few, that Paul speaks of the whole body with warm praise. When our faith shall grow and our love abound, it may be proper for a pastor to speak with unrestricted admiration of what the Lord has done.

The blessing of increased faith is of unspeakable value and, therefore, praise should be largely rendered for it. Little faith will save, but strong faith is that which builds up the Church, which overcomes the world, which wins sinners and which glorifies God. Little-Faith is slow and feeble and, to suit his pace, the whole flock travel softly. Little-Faith is a wounded soldier and has to be carried in an ambulance by the armies of the Lord. But faith which grows exceedingly lifts the banner aloft, leads the van, meets hand to hand the foes of our Prince and puts them to the rout! If we were invoking blessings upon a Church, we could scarcely ask for a larger blessing than that all the Brothers and Sisters might be strong in faith, giving glory to God! Strong-Faith ventures into large endeavors for Christ and, therefore, missions are projected. Strong-Faith carries out the projects of holy zeal and, therefore, daring ideas are turned into facts! Strong-Faith is a shield against the darts of error and, therefore, she is the object of the contempt and hatred of heresy.

Strong-Faith builds the walls of Zion and casts down the walls of Jericho. Strong-Faith smites the Philistines hip and thigh and makes Israel to dwell in peace. Oh that the night of Little-Faith were over and that the day of glorious faith would come! Soon would our young men see visions and our old men dream dreams if faith were more among us. When the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith in the earth? At the revival of faith, we shall see another Pentecost with its rushing mighty wind and its tongues of flame—but during our lack of faith we still abide in weakness and the enemy will exact upon us. O God, we beseech You, make Your face to shine upon us! Cause our faith to grow exceedingly and our love to abound yet more and more! Then shall there be times of refreshing from the Presence of the Lord.

Paul thus fervently gave thanks to God because the blessing came to the Church at a remarkably seasonable time. The people of Thessalonica had risen against the Church and persecuted it. Thus, without were fights, but within there were no fears, for the Brethren were firm in faith and fervent in love. The Church was subject to constant tribulation, but its faith grew exceedingly. Has it not often been so with the Lord’s people? Times of cloud and rain have been *growing* times. Pharaoh dealt harshly with Israel, but the more he oppressed them, the more they multiplied! The more the Church of God is trod down, the more it rises into power and influence! The bush burns and is not consumed. No, rather, it flourishes in the flame! I say not that this increase of faith is the immediate effect of persecution, but it is singularly the attendant put upon it. God knew that when His poor servants were hauled to prison; when they were brought before rulers and kings for His name’s sake; when they were

robbed of their goods, they needed increased strength and, therefore, He gave it to them by growth in *faith*. As the persecution rose upon them like a deluge, their confidence in God rose above it—like Noah's ark, which rose higher, the deeper the waters became! They stood fast in the day of trial and became an example to all other Churches, whether persecuted or not—and this because their faith grew exceedingly!

Beloved, I pray for each member of this Church that your confidence in God may rise from ebb to flood. We need it much just now. This is a time of depression in trade, when many are suffering need and almost all find their means decreased. We need to be rich in faith, for we are growing poor in pocket! Many children of God cannot find employment in which to earn their bread. This is, moreover, a time of abounding vice. Perhaps never in our memories were any of us so shocked as we have been of late by the discoveries of unspeakable abominations! We need that our faith should grow exceedingly, for sin runs down our streets in torrents! It is also a period of grievous departure from the faith once delivered to the saints. Looking back to our younger days, we are amazed at the progress of error. We mourned, in those days, that men trifled with the Doctrines of the Gospel, but what shall we say now, when men deride those Doctrines and mock at them as antiquated fables? The foundations of the earth are removed and only here and there will you find a man who bears up the pillars—therefore we need that our faith should be exceedingly steadfast. I charge you, Brothers and Sisters, to be rooted and grounded in faith, seeing the times are evil! I cannot speak emphatically enough upon the abounding dangers of the times—they demand of us that we be not of doubtful minds, but that we take firm hold of the Infallible Truths of God and endure as seeing Him who is invisible! He that cannot say, "I believe and am sure," is one born out of due time.

The Apostle's commendation was meet and fit, since, if there is any growth in faith, it is the work of God's Spirit. Faith is the *gift* of God in its beginnings and it is equally the *gift* of God in its increase. If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, God gave it to you. And if you have faith as a spreading tree, God has given the increase. The infancy of faith is of God and so is its perfect manhood. In the natural world, we ought as much to admire God's hand in growth as in creation for, indeed, the bursting out of spring, the advance of summer and the maturity of autumn are all a sort of creation seen in detail. Even thus the *progress* of faith reveals the same power as the *commencement* of faith. If you do not look to God for more faith, you will never have more faith—great faith in its strong broad current flows as much from the fountainhead of Grace as in its first trickling stream of hope in Christ. Let God have all the glory of faith from its Alpha to its Omega!

If you are a strong man in Christ Jesus, take heed that you do not sacrifice to your own net, nor burn incense to your own drag and glorify your own experience as if *you* made yourself strong and rich in the things of God. We are bound to render all the thanksgiving unto God—it is meet that it should be so. Look how the Apostle puts it—"We are bound to thank God always for you." I like the modesty of that. He does not so

much say that he thanked God, though he did do so. But in deep humility he admits the debt which he could not fully pay. He did not judge his thanksgivings to be sufficient, but acknowledged that he was still under bonds to render more praise. I rejoice to be bound with these bonds, to be bound to thank God every day and all day! I wear these golden fetters and count them my best ornaments! “Bind the sacrifice with cords, even with cords to the horns of the altar.” I would be bound over not to keep the peace, but to keep *praise* forever. Let the Altar of Incense be always burning, yes, flaming higher and higher with the sweet spices of love and gratitude. Blessed be God for what He is doing for His people when He causes their faith to grow—for it is a blessing so immense, so incalculable that our praises ought to rise to the height and glory of loud-sounding hallelujahs!

Brothers and Sisters, let us bless God for every good man we know whose faith has grown, for every holy woman whose love in the Church is manifest to all! And when we have done so, let us turn our eyes to God and say, “Lord, make me such a one that others may glorify You in me, also. I am, as yet, sadly weak and undeveloped. Make me to grow till all Your image shall be seen in me and my fellow Christians shall bless You concerning me.” Thus have I set growth in faith before you as a subject for thanksgiving. It is, indeed, a jewel worth more than both the Indies!

II. In the second place, it is worthy to have AN OBJECTIVE OF DILIGENT ENDEAVOR. If you have it not, labor speedily to attain it. As the merchantman seeks goodly pearls, so seek a growing faith. Covet, earnestly, the best gifts and the noblest Graces. Never be self-satisfied, but cry with Jabez, “Oh that the Lord would bless me, indeed, and enlarge my coast.”

Why? Because the *proof* of faith lies in the *growth* of faith. If you have a dead faith, it will always be the same. But if you have the faith of God’s elect, it must grow! If I heard of a child that was born some years ago and had never grown, I should begin to guess that my friend was entrapping me and that the child was dead from birth. Life in its earliest stages is always attended with growth. Brothers and Sisters, you must have *more* faith, or we shall fear that you have *no* faith—you must have more love, or else, for sure, you have no love at all. That which does not *grow* unto God does not *live* unto God!

We ought to have more faith because God’s Truth deserves it. It ought to be the easiest thing in the world for us to trust God. To believe every word of the Lord should be an act to which we need not to be exhorted—it should be as natural as for the lungs to heave, or the heart to beat! We ought, as children of God, to believe our Father by instinct, even as young eaglets hide under their mother’s wing. We ought to exercise faith even as the eye sees and the ears hear because thereunto we were created by the Holy Spirit. It should be a necessity of our spiritual existence that we must and will trust the Lord Jesus Christ yet more and more! I pray that it may be so, for unbelief is a horrible crime. Have you doubted God? Have you, in any sense, mistrusted Him? Have you limited the Holy One of Is-

rael? Then continue not the slave of such a sin, but give unto God your heart's confidence from this time forward and forever.

Moreover, we ought to grow in faith because it will be so much for our own spiritual health, strength and joy. Does Little-Faith know what he might be, do and enjoy if he could only quit its littleness? There are many ways of being a Christian, as there are many ways of being an Englishman—but all are not equally desirable. I may be an Englishman in banishment, or in the workhouse, or in prison—but I prefer to be an Englishman at home, in health and at liberty. So you may be a Christian and be weak, timorous and sad. But this is not desirable—it is better to be a happy, holy, vigorous, useful Christian! As your being an Englishman does not depend on your health or wealth, so neither does your salvation turn upon the strength or joy of your faith—yet much does depend on it. Why not glorify God on the road to Heaven? Why not have foretastes of it now?

It is not my desire to go through the world in miserable style, singing always—

**“Do I love the Lord or not?
Am I His, or am I not?”**

I infinitely prefer to so trust God that my peace may be like a river and my righteousness like the waves of the sea! Look at the difference between Abraham, the Father of the faithful, and his nephew, Lot. Lot was righteous, but he was, by no means, as strong in faith as Abraham. Neither was he as great or as happy. Abraham is calm, bold, royal. Lot is greedy, timid, trembling. Lot, in Sodom, is, with difficulty, made to run for his life, while Abraham, alone with God, is interceding for others! Lot escapes from a burning city with the loss of all things, while Abraham dwells peacefully with the Lord who is the Possessor of Heaven and earth. Abraham's faith makes him rise like some lone Alp till he touches the very Heaven of God! It is well to be Lot, but it is infinitely better to be Abraham! Seek the highest degree of faith, for if this is in you and abounds, you shall not be barren or unfruitful. Heaven lies that way. More faith, more rest of heart. To grow heavenly we must grow more believing.

The question is, *how* is this to be done? How is my faith to be made to grow exceedingly? I have already told you that it is the *work of the Holy Spirit*—but He still uses us for the increase of our own faith! If we are to grow in faith, certain evils are to be avoided with scrupulous care. Avoid continual change of doctrine. If you have a tree in your garden and you transplant it often, it will yield you scanty fruit. Those who are everything by turns and nothing long, are, “ever learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the Truth of God.” Unstable as water, they shall not excel! Those Brothers and Sisters who believe this, today, and that, tomorrow, and the other thing the next day, do not believe anything in downright earnest! They cannot grow! They are not rooted and grounded. Like the moon, they are always changing—and what light they have is cold and sickly. He who can change his religion, has none to change! Those who prefer philosophy to Christ, never knew Him!

Then, again, if you had a tree and did not transplant it, but began to dig away the earth from it, removing the ground in which it stood, you

would impoverish it and prevent its fruitfulness. I know certain professors who are giving up the ground which their souls should grow in. One doctrine after another is forsaken till nothing is held to be important. They do not believe much, now, and they are on the line to believe nothing at all. The experiment of the Frenchman who had just brought his horse to live on a straw a day, when it died, is being repeated among us, faith being literally starved to death! What low diet some men prescribe for their souls! Marrow and fatness they do not even smell! How can your faith grow when vital Truths of God are abandoned, or held with feeble grasp? Oh for a band of Puritan Believers! Oh for a troop of spiritual Ironsides!

Next, a tree cannot grow if it is shut out from sun, rain and dew. Without heavenly influences, we must be barren. Plant a little tree right under a great oak so that it is always in the shade and it cannot grow! Clear the big tree away or the sapling will dwindle to death. Some men's faith cannot grow because it is overshadowed by worldliness, by tolerated sin, by love of riches, by the pride of life, by cares of lower things. The pursuit of Christ Crucified must be all-absorbing or it will be ineffectual. To know what you believe and to abide steadfast in it, is the way to be robust in faith. Men whose hearts are not in their trades, men who chop and change—these are the men whose names appear in the *Gazette*—are not many spiritual bankruptcies due to the same cause?

There are methods which the spiritual farmer uses to cause faith to grow. First, faith grows by an increase of *knowledge*. Many persons doubt because they are not instructed. Some doubt whether they shall hold on to the end—they are ignorant of the Doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the Saints! Some are in despair because they find evil desires arising in their hearts—they do not know the teaching of Scripture as to the two natures and the warfare between flesh and spirit. Many think themselves condemned because they cannot wholly keep the Law—they forget that they are justified by faith! A great deal of unbelief vanishes when knowledge, like the morning sun, drives away the mists! Unbelief is an owl of the night and when the sun rises, it hides away in a dark corner. Study the Word of God—give your heart to searching it! Seek to get at the inner teaching and learn the analogy of faith. Practice deep-sea fishing and you will reach those mysterious Truths which are the secret riches of the soul. These Truths are much despised now, but those who rejoice in them will find their faith growing exceedingly.

Better still than mere knowledge, which, alone, would puff you up, faith grows by *experience*. When a man has tried and proved a thing, then his confidence in it is largely increased. Take a promise and test it, and then you will say, "I know that is so." When you have tested it again and again, and again, nobody will be able to shake you, for you will say, "I have tasted and handled of this good Word of God. I have made it my own and I am not to be driven from it." The experienced Christian is the established Christian. The man who proved all things is the man who holds fast that which is good. God give Grace to increase our faith by knowledge and by experience!

Faith also grows by much *meditation and walking with God*. If you want to believe in a man, you must know him. Half the disputes between Christian people arise from their not knowing one another. There is a hymn of Mr. Sankey's which I venture to alter thus—

**“When we know each other better
The mists will roll away.”**

When we know each other, our suspicions, prejudices and dislikes will speedily disappear. I am sure it is so with our God. When you walk with Him; when your communion with Him is close and constant, your faith in Him will grow exceedingly. Some of you, I am afraid, do not give five minutes in the day to meditation. You are in too great a hurry for that. In London life, men get up in a hurry even as they went to bed in a hurry and slept in a hurry! They swallow their breakfast in a hurry; they have no time to digest it; the bell is ringing at the station and they must hurry to catch the train! They reach business in a hurry. They hurry through it and they hurry to get back from it. Men cannot think, for they have barely time to blink their eyes. As to an hour's meditation and reading the Scriptures and communing with God, many professors, nowadays, would think they committed robbery against the god of this world if they took half-an-hour out of their service to give it to fellowship with the world to come! If our faith is to grow exceedingly, we must maintain constant conversation with God.

Another way of increasing faith is by much *prayer*. Pray *for* faith and pray *with* faith—thus shall your soul become firm in its reliance on the promises. It is while we wrestle with the Angel that we find out our weakness, as the sinew of our thigh shrinks. But, at the same time, we prove our God-given strength, since as princes we wrestle with God and prevail! Power *from* prayer as well as power *in* prayer is what we need. On our knees we gather strength till doubting and fearing disappear.

We must be careful to render *obedience to God*. A man cannot trust God while he lives in sin. Every act of disobedience weakens confidence in God. Faith and obedience are bound up in the same bundle. He that obeys God, trusts God. And he that trusts God, obeys God. He that is without faith is without works and He that is without works is without faith. Do not oppose faith and good works to one another, for there is a blessed relationship between them. And if you abound in obedience, your faith shall grow exceedingly.

Again, faith grows by *exercise*. The man who uses the little faith he has will get more faith. But he that says, “I have not enough faith for such-and-such work” and, therefore, shrinks back, shall become more and more timid, till, at last, like a coward, he runs away! Go forward with your little faith and to your surprise it shall have grown as you have advanced! Accomplish much and then endeavor something more, and something more. I have often used an illustration taken from a person who teaches the art of growing taller. I do not believe in that art—we shall not add a cubit to our stature just yet. But part of this professor's exercise is that in the morning, when you get up, you are to reach as high as you can and aim a little higher every morning, though it is only the hundredth part of an inch. By that means you are to grow. This is so with faith. Do all you

can and then do a little more—and when you can do that, then do a little more than you can. Always have something in hand that is greater than your present capacity. Grow up to it and when you have grown up to it, grow more! By many little additions, a great house is built. Brick by brick, up rose the pyramid! Believe and yet believe more! Trust and have further trust! Hope shall become faith and faith shall ripen to full assurance and perfect confidence in God Most High!

This then, Brothers and Sisters, is what I commend to you. May God the Holy Spirit help you all to go from faith to faith.

III. Finally, this growing faith becomes THE CENTER OF OTHER CHRISTIAN GRACES. “Your faith grows exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all abounds toward each other.” A firm faith in Gospel Truths will make us love one another, for each Doctrine of Truth is an argument for love. If you believe in God as having chosen His people, you will love His elect. If you believe in Christ as having made Atonement for His people, you will love His redeemed and seek their peace. If you believe in the Doctrine of Regeneration and know that we must be born again, you will love the regenerate. Whatever doctrine it is that is true, it ministers toward the love of the heart. I am sure you will find a deep, firm, fervent unity with one another in those that hold the Truth of God in the love of it. If you are not filled with brotherly love, it must be because you are not firmly believing that Truth which works toward love.

Firmness in the faith ministers toward the unity of the Church. The Church at Thessalonica did not have a secession, or a split, as some call it—the Church at Thessalonica did not divide under the pressure of persecution—they adhered closely to one another! As they were hammered all the more, the more they were consolidated. They were welded into one solid mass by the hammer of persecution and the fire of love—and the reason was because they each one held the Truth of God with all firmness. I am always afraid of a Church that is made up of mixed elements—when some are Calvinistic, some Arminian, some Baptist and some Pae-dobaptist. When the minister who holds them together dies, they will disintegrate. When certain reasons that now make them cohere, cease to exist, the Church will divide like quicksilver—each little bit breaking into smaller bits—and so they will go rolling about in innumerable factions. But given a Church that holds the Truths of God firmly, with deep and strong faith, then if the pastor dies, or 20 pastors die, they believe in a Pastor who lives forever—and whoever comes or does not come—the Truth they hold, holds them in living unity. I cannot imagine a greater blessing for you as a Church, in years to come, than for each man and woman to be intelligently established in the Truth of God you have received. Who shall separate the men who are one in Christ by the grip of mighty faith? I commend firm faith to you with all my heart as the source of love and the means of unity in years to come.

This faith breeds patience in men and patience assists love. Truth to tell, God’s people are, some of them, an amazing tribe! A countryman was accustomed to say that if God had not chosen His people before they were born, He would never have done so afterwards. There is truth in that say-

ing. Therefore if a man loves his fellow Christians as an act of mere nature, he will often feel himself baffled. He will say, "They acted very unkindly to me. Who can love people that are so ill-mannered, so ungrateful?" But when faith is strong, you will say, "What is that to me? I love them for *Christ's* sake. If I am to have a reward, it shall come from my Lord Christ. As for God's people, I love them despite their faults. Over the head of the mistaken judgements they form of me, I love all my Brethren." The way to make men better is not to be always censuring them, but to *love* them more. The quickest way to win a sinner is to love him to Christ! The quickest way to sanctify a Believer is to love him into purity and holiness! Only faith can do this. May faith, therefore, grow exceedingly, for faith, by working patience, helps us to bear with others.

If there is anything grand, good, desirable—anything Christ-like, anything God-like—the way to it is to let your faith grow exceedingly! If this Church is to become more and more a missionary Church, as I pray God it may, your faith must grow exceedingly! If you are to stand fast as a breakwater in these times of departure from the faith once delivered to the saints, your faith must grow exceedingly! If you are to be made a blessing to this wicked city and shine like a lighthouse over this sea of London, your faith must grow exceedingly! If God has brought you as a Church, together with other Churches, to the Kingdom for such a time as this—if you are to achieve your destiny and work for God and glorify His name—your faith must grow exceedingly!

The man who is timorous and faint-hearted, let him go home—he is not fit for the day of battle. The age requires heroes! The chicken-hearted are out of their place in this perilous century! You that know what you know and believe what you believe, whose tramp is that of fearless warriors—you have a high calling—fulfill it! You shall see what God will do for you and with you! And it shall be written in the pages of eternity that at such a time the Church grew in its faith and, therefore, God used it for His Glory.

May it be so. May those among us who have no faith be led to Jesus. O Believers, try your own faith by speaking to unbelievers as they go away this morning! This afternoon, in the Sunday school, prove your faith by winning your dear children for Christ! Try your faith every day in the week by giving sinners no rest until they come to Christ! God bless you, each one, for His name's sake. Amen.

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A LECTURE FOR LITTLE-FAITH NO. 205

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 18, 1858,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

“We are bound to thank God always for you, Brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith grows exceedingly and the charity of every one of you all toward each other abounds.”
2 Thessalonians 1:3.

“We are bound to thank God always for you, Brethren, as it is meet.” Whether we shall praise God or not, is not left to our opinion. Although the commandment says not, “You shall praise the Lord,” yet praise is God’s most righteous due, and every man, as a partaker of God’s bounty, and especially every Christian, is bound to praise God, as it is meet. It is true we have no authoritative rubric for daily praise. We have no commandment left on record specially prescribing certain hours of song and thanksgiving. But still the law written upon the heart teaches us with Divine authority that it is right to praise God. And this unwritten mandate has as much power and authority about it, as if it had been recorded on the tables of stone, or handed to us from the top of thundering Sinai.

The Christian’s duty is to praise God. Think not you who are always mourning that you are guiltless in that respect. Imagine not that you can discharge your duty to your God without songs of praise. It is your duty to praise Him. You are bound by the bonds of His love as long as you live to bless His name. It is meet and comely that you should do so. It is not only a pleasurable exercise, but it is the absolute duty of the Christian life to praise God. This is taught us in the text—“We are bound to thank God always for you, Brethren, as it is meet.”

Let not your harps, then, hang upon the willows, you mourning children of the Lord. It is your duty to strike them and bring forth their loudest music. It is sinful if you cease from praising God—you are blessed in order that you may bless Him. And if you do not praise God you are not bringing forth the fruit which He, as the Divine Husbandman, may well expect at your hands. Go forth then, you sons of God and chant His praise. With every morning’s dawn lift up your notes of thanksgiving—and every evening let the setting sun be followed with your song. Girdle the earth with your praises. Surround it with an atmosphere of melody. So shall God Himself look down from Heaven and accept your praises as like in kind, though not equal in degree, to the praises of cherubim and seraphim.

It seems, however, that the Apostle Paul in this instance exercised praise not for himself but for others—for the Church at Thessalonica. If any of you should in ignorance ask the question why it was that Paul should take so deep an interest in the salvation of these saints and in their growth in faith, I would remind you—that this is a secret known only

to the men who have brought forth and nourished children—and therefore love them. The Apostle Paul had founded the Church at Thessalonica, most of these people were his spiritual offspring. By the words of his mouth—attended by the power of the Spirit—they had been brought out of darkness into marvelous light.

And they who have had spiritual children—who have brought many sons unto God—can tell you that there is an interest felt by a spiritual father that is not to be equaled even by the tender affection of a mother towards her babe. “Yes,” said the Apostle, “I have been tender over you as a nursing father,” and in another place he says he had, “travailed in birth,” for their souls. This is a secret not known to the hireling minister. Only he whom God has Himself ordained and thrust forth into the work—only he who has had his tongue touched with a live coal from off the altar can tell you what it is to agonize for men’s souls before they are converted—and what it is to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, when the travail of their souls is seen in the salvation of God’s elect.

And now, Beloved, having thus given you two thoughts which seemed to me to arise naturally from the text, I shall repair at once to the object of this morning’s discourse. The Apostle thanks God that the faith of the Thessalonians had grown exceedingly. Leaving out the rest of the text, I shall direct your attention this morning to the subject of growth in faith. Faith has degrees.

In the first place, I shall endeavor to notice the inconveniences of *little faith*. Secondly, the means of promoting its *growth*. And thirdly, a certain high attainment, unto which faith will assuredly grow, if we diligently *water and cultivate it*.

I. In the first place, THE INCONVENIENCES OF LITTLE FAITH. When faith first commences in the soul, it is like a grain of mustard seed of which the Savior said it was the least of all seeds. But as God the Holy Spirit is pleased to bedew it with the sacred moisture of His grace, it germinates and grows and begins to spread, until at last it becomes a great tree. To use another figure—when faith commences in the soul it is simply *looking* unto Jesus—and perhaps even then there are so many clouds of doubts and so much dimness of the eye that we have need for the light of the Spirit to shine upon the Cross before we are able even so much as to see it.

When faith grows a little, it rises from looking to Christ to *coming* to Christ. He who stood afar off and looked to the Cross by-and-by plucks up courage, and getting heart to himself, he runs up to the Cross—or perhaps he does not run, but has to be drawn before he can so much as creep there—and even then it is with a limping gait that he draws near to Christ the Savior. But that done, faith goes a little farther—it *lays hold* on Christ. It begins to see Him in His excellence and appropriates Him in some degree, conceives Him to be a real Christ and a real Savior—and is convinced of His suitability.

And when it has done as much as that, it goes further. It leans on Christ. It leans on its Beloved—casts all the burden of its cares, sorrows and griefs upon that blessed shoulder and permits all its sins to be swal-

lowed up in the great red sea of the Savior's blood. And faith can then go further still. Having seen and run towards Him, laid hold of Him, leaned upon Him—faith in the next place puts in a humble, but a sure and *certain claim* to all that Christ is and all that He has worked. And then, trusting alone in this, appropriating all this to itself, faith mounts to full assurance. And out of Heaven there is no state more rapturous and blessed.

But, as I have observed at the beginning, faith is but very small and there are some Christians who never get out of little faith all the while they are here. You notice in John Bunyan's "*Pilgrim's Progress*," how many Little-Faiths he mentions. There is our old friend Ready-to-Halt, who went all the way to the Celestial City on crutches but left them when he went into the river Jordan. Then there is little Feeble-Mind, who carried his feeble mind with him all the way to the banks of the river and then left it and ordered it to be buried in a dunghill that none might inherit it.

Then there is Mr. Fearing, too, who used to stumble over a straw and was always frightened if he saw a drop of rain, because he thought the floods of Heaven were let loose upon him. And you remember Mr. Despondency and Miss Much-Afraid, who were so long locked up in the dungeon of Giant Despair, that they were almost starved to death, and there was little left of them but skin and bone. And poor Mr. Feeble-Mind, who had been taken into the cave of Giant Slay-Good who was about to eat him, when Great-Heart came to his deliverance.

John Bunyan was a very wise man. He has put a great many of those characters in his book, because there are a great many of them. He has not left us with one Mr. Ready-to-Halt, but he has given us seven or eight graphic characters because he himself, in his own time, has been one of them and he had known many others who had walked in the same path. I doubt not I have a very large congregation this morning of this very class of persons. Now let me notice the inconveniences of little faith.

The first inconvenience of little faith is that while it is always sure of Heaven it very seldom thinks so. Little-Faith is quite as sure of Heaven as Great-Faith. When Jesus Christ counts up His jewels at the Last Day He will take to Himself the little pearls as well as the great ones. If a diamond is ever so small yet it is precious because it is a diamond. So with faith, be it ever so little, if it is true faith, Christ will never lose even the smallest jewel of His crown. Little-Faith is always sure of Heaven, because the name of Little-Faith is in the book of eternal life. Little-Faith was chosen of God before the foundation of the world. Little-Faith was bought with the blood of Christ—yes and he cost as much as Great-Faith.

"For every man a shekel" was of redemption. Every man, whether great or small, prince or peasant, had to redeem himself with a shekel. Christ has bought all, both little and great, with the same most precious blood. Little-Faith is always sure of Heaven, for God has begun the good work in him and He will carry it on. God loves him and He will love him unto the end. God has provided a crown for him and He will not allow the crown to hang there without a head. He has erected for him a mansion in Heaven and He will not allow the mansion to stand untenanted forever.

Little-Faith is always safe, but he very seldom knows it. If you meet him he is sometimes afraid of Hell—very often afraid that the wrath of God abides on him. He will tell you that the country on the other side of the flood can never belong to a worm so base as he. Sometimes it is because he feels himself so unworthy. Another time it is because the things of God are too good to be true, he says, or he cannot think they can be true to such an one as he is. Sometimes he is afraid he is not elect. Another time he fears that he has not been called aright, that he has not come to Christ aright. Another time his fears are that he will not hold on to the end, that he shall not be able to persevere—kill a thousand of his fears and he is sure to have another host by tomorrow. For unbelief is one of those things that you cannot destroy. “It has,” says Bunyan, “as many lives as a cat.” You may kill it over and over again, but still it lives.

It is one of those ill weeds that sleep in the soil even after it has been burned and it only needs a little encouragement to grow again. Now Great-Faith is sure of Heaven and he knows it. He climbs Pisgah’s top and views the landscape over. He drinks in the mysteries of Paradise even before he enters within the pearly gates. He sees the streets that are paved with gold. He beholds the walls of the city, the foundations whereof are of precious stones. He hears the mystic music of the glorified and begins to smell on earth the perfumes of Heaven. But poor Little-Faith can scarcely look at the sun. He very seldom sees the light—he gropes in the valley and while all is safe he always thinks himself unsafe. That is one of the disadvantages of little faith.

Another disadvantage is that Little-Faith, while always having grace enough (for that is Little-Faith’s promise, “My grace shall be sufficient for you”) yet never *thinks* he has grace enough. He will have quite enough grace to carry him to Heaven. And Great-Heart won’t have any more. The greatest saint, when he entered Heaven, found that he went in with an empty wallet—he had eaten his last crust of bread when he got there. The manna ceased when the children of Israel entered into Canaan. They had none to carry with them there—they began to eat the corn of the land when the manna of the wilderness had ceased

But Little-Faith is always afraid that he has not grace enough. You see him in trouble. “Oh,” says he, “I shall never be able to hold my head above water.” Blessed be God he never can sink. If you see him in prosperity, he is afraid he shall be intoxicated with pride—that he shall turn aside like Balaam. If you meet him attacked by an enemy, he is scarcely able to say three words for himself. And he lets the enemy exact upon him. If you find him fighting the battle of the Lord Jesus Christ he holds his sword tight enough, good man, but he has not much strength in his arm to bring his sword down with might. He can do but little, for he is afraid that God’s grace will not be sufficient for him. Great-Faith, on the other hand, can shake the world. What cares he about trouble, trial, or duty?—

**“He that helped him bears him through,
And makes him more than conqueror too.”**

He would face an army single-handed, if God commanded him. And “with the jawbone of an ass, he would slay heaps upon heaps, and thou-

sands of men.” There is no fear of his lacking strength. He can do all things, or can bear all sufferings, for his Lord is there. Come what may, his arm is always sufficient for him. He treads down his enemy and his cry every day is like the shout of Deborah, “Oh my Soul, you have trod down strength.” Little-Faith treads down strength, too, but he does not know it. He kills his enemies, but has not eyesight enough to see the slain. He often hits so hard that his foemen retreat, but he thinks they are there still.

He conjures up a thousand phantoms and when he has routed his real enemies he makes others—and trembles at the phantoms which he has himself made. Little-Faith will assuredly find that his garments will not wax old, that his shoes shall be iron and brass and that as his day is so shall his strength be. But all the way he will be murmuring, because he thinks his garments will grow old, that his feet will be blistered and sore. And he is terrified lest the day should be too heavy for him and that the evil of the day shall more than counterbalance his grace. Yes, it is an inconvenient thing to have little faith, for little faith perverts everything into sorrow and grief.

Again, there is a sad inconvenience about little faith, namely, that if Little-Faith is sorely tempted to sin, he is apt to fall. Strong-Faith can well contest with the enemy. Satan comes along and says, “All these things will I give you if you will fall down and worship me.” “No,” we say, “you can not give us all these things, for they are ours already.” “No,” says he, “but you are poor, naked and miserable.” “Yes,” say we to him, “but still these things are ours and it is good for us to be poor, good for us to be without earthly goods, or else our Father would give them to us.”

“Oh,” says Satan, “you deceive yourselves. You have no portion in these things. But if you will serve me, then I will make you rich and happy here.” Strong-Faith says, “Serve you, you Fiend! Avaunt! Do you offer me silver?—behold God gives me gold! Do you say to me, “I will give you this if you disobey?—fool that you are! I have a thousand times as great wages for my obedience as you can offer for my disobedience.” But when Satan meets Little-Faith, he says to him, “If you are a son of God cast yourself down.” And poor Little-Faith is so afraid that he is not a son of God that he is very apt to cast himself down upon the supposition. “There,” says Satan, “I will give you all this if you will disobey.” Little-Faith says, “I am not quite sure that I am a child of God, that I have a portion among them that are sanctified.” And he is very apt to fall into sin by reason of the littleness of his faith.

Yet at the same time I must observe that I have seen some Little-Faiths who are far less apt to fall into sin than others. They have been so cautious that they dared not put one foot before the other, because they were afraid they should put it awry—they scarcely even dared to open their lips, but they prayed, “O Lord, You open my lips,” afraid that they should let a wrong word out, if they were to speak—always alarmed lest they should be falling into sin unconsciously, having a very tender conscience.

Well, I like people of this sort. I have sometimes thought that Little-Faith holds tighter to Christ than any other. For a man who is very near

drowning is sure to clutch the plank all the tighter with the grasp of a drowning man, which tightens and becomes more clenched the more his hope is decreased. Well, Beloved, Little-Faith may be kept from falling, but this is the fruit of tender conscience and not of little faith. Careful walking is not the result of little faith. It may go with it and so may keep Little-Faith from perishing, but little faith is in itself a dangerous thing, laying us open to innumerable temptations and taking away very much of our strength to resist them.

“The joy of the Lord is your strength.” And if that joy ceases you become weak and very apt to turn aside. Beloved, you who are Little-Faiths, I tell you it is inconvenient for you always to remain so. For you have many nights and few days. Your years are like Norwegian years—very long winters and very short summers. You howl a lot, but very little shouting. You are often playing upon the pipe of mourning, but very seldom sounding the trump of exultation. I would to God you could change your notes a little.

Why should the children of a King go mourning all their days? It is not the Lord’s will that you should be always sorrowful. “Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice.” Oh, you that have been fasting, anoint your heads and wash your faces, that you appear not unto men to fast. Oh, you that are sad in heart, “Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.” Therefore rejoice, for you shall praise Him. Say unto yourselves, “Why are you cast down, oh, Soul and why are you disquieted within me? Hope you in God, for I shall yet praise Him, who is the light of my countenance and my God.”

II. Having thus noticed the inconveniences and disadvantages of little faith, let me give you A FEW RULES WITH REGARD TO THE WAY OF STRENGTHENING IT. If you would have your little faith grow into great faith, you must *feed* it well. Faith is a feeding grace. It does not ask you to give it the things that are seen, but it does ask you to give it the promise of the things that are not seen, which are eternal. You tell me you have little faith. I ask you whether you are given to the meditation of God’s Word, whether you have studied the promises, whether you carry one of those sacred things about with you every day?

Do you reply, “No”? Then, I tell you, I do not wonder at your unbelief. He who deals largely with the promises, will, under grace, very soon find that there is great room for believing them. Get a promise, Beloved, every day, and take it with you wherever you go. Mark it, learn it and inwardly digest it. Don’t do as some men do—who think it a Christian duty to read a chapter every morning—and they read one as long as your arm without understanding it at all. But take out some choice text and pray the Lord during the day to break it up to your mind.

Do as Luther says—“When I get hold of a promise,” says he, “I look upon it as I would a fruit tree. I think—there hang the fruits above my head and if I would get them I must shake the tree to and fro.” So I take a promise and meditate upon it. I shake it to and fro—and sometimes the mellow fruit falls into my hand. At other times the fruit is less ready to fall, but I never leave off till I get it. I shake, shake all the day long. I turn

the text over and over again and at last the pomegranate drops down and my soul is comforted with apples, for it was sick of love. Do that, Christian. Deal much with the promises. Have much commerce with these powders of the merchant—there is a rich perfume in every promise of God. It is an alabaster box, break it by meditation and the sweet scent of faith shall be shed abroad in your house.

Again, *prove the promise* and in that way you will get your faith strengthened. When you are at anytime placed in distress, take a promise and see whether it is true. Suppose you are very near lacking bread. Take this promise, “Your bread shall be given you, your water shall be sure.” Rise up in the morning when nothing is in the cupboard, and say, “I will see whether God will keep this promise.” And if He does, do not forget it—set it down in your book. Make a mark in your Bible against it. Do as the old woman did, who put T and P against the promise, and told her minister that it means “tried and proved”—so that when she was again in distress, she could not help believing.

Have you been exercised by Satan? There is a promise that says, “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” Take that and prove it—and when you have proved it, make a mark against it and say—“This I know is true, for I have proved it to be so.” There is nothing in the world that can confirm faith like proof. “What I want,” said one, “is facts.” And so it is with the Christian. What he wants is a fact to make him believe. The older you grow, the stronger your faith ought to become, for you have so many more facts with which to buttress your faith and compel you to believe in God. Only think of a man who has come to be seventy years of age—what a pile of evidence could he accumulate if he kept a note of all God’s providential goodness and all His loving kindness.

You do not wonder when you hear a man, the hairs of whose head are white with the sunlight of Heaven, get up and say, “These fifty years have I served God, and He has never forsaken me. I can bear willing testimony to His faithfulness, not one good thing has failed of all that the Lord has promised—all has come to pass.” Now we, who are young beginners, must not expect that our faith will be so strong as it will be in years to come.

Every instance of God’s love should make us believe Him more. And as each promise passes by, and we can see the fulfillment of it at the heels thereof, we must be compelled and constrained to say that God has kept so many of these promises and will keep them unto the end. But the worst of it is that we forget them all—and so we begin to have gray hairs sprinkled on our heads—and we have no more faith than when we began. Because we have forgotten God’s repeated answers, and though He has fulfilled the promise we have suffered it to lie buried in forgetfulness.

Another plan I would recommend for the strengthening of your faith, though not so excellent as the last, is to associate yourselves with *Godly and much-tried men*. It is astonishing how young Believers will get their faith refreshed by talking with old and advanced Christians. Perhaps you are in great doubt and distress. You run off to an old Brother and you say, “Oh my dear Friend, I am afraid I am not a child of God at all, I am in

such deep distress, I have had blasphemous thoughts cast into my heart. If I were a child of God I should never feel like that.”

The old man smiles and says, “Ah, you have not gone very far on the road to Heaven, or else you would know better. Why I am the subject of these thoughts very often. Old as I am, and though I hope I have enjoyed the full assurance for a long time, yet there are seasons when if I could have Heaven for a grain of faith, I could not think Heaven was mine, for I could not find so much as a grain in me, though it is there.”

And he will tell you what dangers he has passed, and of the sovereign love that kept him—of the temptations that threatened to ensnare him—and of the wisdom that guided his feet. And he will tell you of his own weakness and God’s omnipotence—of his own emptiness, and God’s fullness—of his own changeableness, and God’s immutability. And if after talking with such a man you don’t believe, surely you are sinful indeed. For “out of the mouth of two witnesses, the whole shall be established,” but when there are many such who can bear testimony to God, it would be foul sin indeed if we were to doubt Him.

Another way whereby you may obtain increase of faith is to labor to get as much as possible *free from self*. I have striven with all my might to attain the position of perfect indifference of all men. I have found at times, if I have been much praised in company—and if my heart has given way a little and I have taken notice of it, and felt pleased—that the very next time I was censured and abused I felt the censure and abuse very keenly, for the very fact that I took the praise rendered me liable to lay hold upon the censure.

Therefore I have always tried, especially of late, to take no more notice of man’s praise than of his censure, but to fix my heart simply upon this—I know that I have a right motive in what I attempt to do, I am conscious that I endeavor to serve God with a single eye to *His* glory—and therefore it is not for me to take praise from man nor censure, but to stand independently upon the one rock of right doing.

Now the same thing will apply to you. Perhaps you find yourself full of virtue and grace one day and the devil flatters you—“Ah, you are a bright Christian. You might join the Church now, you would be quite an honor to it—see how well you are prospering?” And unconsciously to yourself you believe the sound of that siren music and you half believe that really you are growing rich in grace.

Well, the next day you find yourself very low indeed in godly matters. Perhaps you fall into some sin and now the devil says, “Ah, now you are no child of God—look at your sins.” Beloved, the only way in which you can maintain your faith is to live above the praise of self and the censure of self—live simply upon the blood and merits of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who can say in the midst of all his virtues, “These are but dross and dung. My hope is fixed on nothing less than Jesus Christ’s finished sacrifice”—such a man, when sins prevail, will find his faith remains constant.

He will say, “I once was full of virtue and then I did not trust in myself. Now I have none, still do I trust in my Savior, for change as I may, He changes not. If I had to depend on myself in the least degree then it would

be up and down, up and down, but since I rely on what Christ has done, since He is the unbuttressed pillar of my hope, then come what may, my soul does rest secure, confident in faith." Faith will never be weak if self is weak, but when self is strong, faith cannot be strong, for self is very much like what the gardener calls the sucker at the bottom of the tree, which never bears fruit but only sucks away the nourishment from the tree itself. Now, self is that sucker which sucks away the nourishment from faith—you must cut it up or else your faith will always be little faith and you will have difficulty in maintaining any comfort in your soul.

But, perhaps, the only way in which most men get their faith increased is by *great trouble*. We don't grow strong in faith on sunshiny days. It is only in strong weather that a man gets faith. Faith is not an attainment that drops like the gentle dew from Heaven. It generally comes in the whirlwind and the storm. Look at the old oaks—how is it that they have become so deeply rooted in the earth? Ask the March winds and they will tell you. It was not the April shower that did it, or the sweet May sunshine, but it was March's rough wind, the blustering month of old Boreas shaking the tree to and fro and causing its roots to bind themselves around the rocks. So must it be with us.

We don't make great soldiers in the barracks at home. They must be made amidst flying shot and thundering cannon. We cannot expect to make good sailors on the Serpentine. They must be made far away on the deep sea, where the wild winds howl and the thunders roll like drums in the march of the God of armies. Storms and tempests are the things that make men tough and hardy mariners. They see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep. So with Christians. Great-Faith must have great trials. Mr. Great-Heart would never have been Mr. Great-Heart if he had not once been Mr. Great-Trouble. Valiant-for-Truth would never have put to fight those foes and have been so valiant, if the foes had not first attacked him. So with us—we must expect great troubles before we shall attain much faith.

Then he who would have great faith, must *exercise what he has*. I should not like tomorrow to go and shoe horses, or to make horseshoes on an anvil. I am sure my arm would ache in the first hour with lifting the heavy hammer and banging it down so many times. Whatever the time might be, I should not be able to keep time. The reason why the blacksmith's arm does not tire is because he is used to it. He has kept at it all day long these many years, till there's an arm for you! He turns up his sleeve and shows you the strong sinew that never tires, so strong has it become by use.

Do you want to get your faith strong? Use it! You lazy lie-a-bed Christians, that go up to your Churches and Chapels, take your seats, hear our sermons and talk about getting good, but never think about *doing* good—you that are letting Hell fill beneath you—and yet are too idle to stretch out your hands to pluck brands from the eternal burning—you that see sin running down your streets, yet can never put so much as your foot to turn or stem the current, I wonder not that you have to complain of the

littleness of your faith! It *ought* to be little. You do but little. And why should God give you more strength than you mean to use?

Strong faith must always be an *exercised* faith and he that dares not exercise the faith he has shall not have more. "Take away from him the one talent and give it to him that has, because he did not put it out to usury." In Mr. Whitfield's life, you do not often find him complaining of want of faith, or if he did, it was when he only preached nine times a week. He never complained when he preached sixteen times. Read Grimshaw's life—you do not often find him troubled with despondency when he preached twenty-four times in seven days. It was only when he was growing a little idle and only preached twelve times.

Keep always at it—and all at it—and there is not much fear of your faith becoming weak. It is with our faith as with boys in the winter time. There they go round the fire, rubbing and chafing their hands to keep the blood in circulation and almost fighting each other to see which shall sit on the fire and get warm. At last the father comes, and says, "Boys, this won't do, you will never get warm by these artificial means. Run out and do some work." Then they all go out and they come in again with a ruddy hue in their cheeks, their hands no longer tingles and they say, "Well, father, we didn't think it half so warm as it is."

So must it be with you—you must set to work if you would have your faith grow strong and warm. True, your works won't save you. But faith without works is dead, frozen to death—but faith with works grows to a red heat of fervency and to the strength of stability. Go and teach in the Sunday School, or go and catch seven or eight poor ragged children. Go and visit the poor old woman in her hovel. Go and see some poor dying creatures in the back streets of our great city and you will say, "Dear me, how wonderfully my faith is refreshed just by doing something." You have been watering *yourself* while you were watering *others*.

Now my last advice shall be this—the best way to get your faith strengthened is to have *communion with Christ*. If you commune with Christ, you cannot be unbelieving. When His left hand is under my head and His right hand does embrace me, I cannot doubt. When my Beloved sits at His table and He brings me into His banqueting house, and His banner over me is His love, then, indeed, I do believe. When I feast with Him, my unbelief is abashed and hides its head. Speak, you that have been led in the green pastures and have been made to lie down by the still waters. You who have seen His rod and His staff, and hope to see them even when you walk through the valley of the shadow of death—speak! You that have sat at His feet with Mary, or laid your head upon His bosom with the well-beloved John—have you not found when you have been near to Christ your faith has grown strong, and when you have been far away, then your faith has become weak?

It is impossible to look Christ in the face and then doubt Him. When you cannot see Him, then you doubt Him. But if you live in fellowship with Him, you are like the ewe lambs of Nathan's parable—for you lie in His bosom—and eat from His table and drink from His cup. You must believe when your Beloved speaks unto you, and says, "Rise up My love, My

fair one, and come away." There is no hesitation then. You must arise from the lowlands of your doubt up to the hills of assurance.

III. And now, in conclusion, there is A CERTAIN HIGH ATTAINMENT TO WHICH FAITH MAY, IF DILIGENTLY CULTIVATED, CERTAINLY ATTAIN. Can a man's faith grow so strong that he will never afterwards doubt at all? I reply, no. He who has the strongest faith will have sorrowful intervals of despondency. I suppose there has scarcely ever been a Christian who has not, at some time or other, had the most painful doubts concerning his acceptance in the Beloved. All God's children will have paroxysms of doubt even though they are usually strong in faith.

Again—may a man so cultivate his faith that he may be infallibly sure that he is a child of God—so sure that he has made no mistake—so sure that all the doubts and fears which may be thrust upon him may not be able at that time to get an advantage over him? I answer, yes, decidedly he may. A man may, in this life, be as sure of his acceptance in the Beloved as he is of his own existence. No, he not only may, but there are some of us who have enjoyed this precious state and privilege for years. We do not mean for years together—our peace has been interrupted—we have now and then been subjected to doubts.

But I have known some—I knew one especially, who said that for thirty years he had enjoyed almost invariably a full sense of his acceptance in Christ. "I have had," he said "very often a sense of sin, but I have had with that a sense of the power of the blood of Christ. I have now and then for a little time had great despondency, but still I may say, taking it as a general rule, that for thirty years I have enjoyed the fullest assurance of my acceptance in the Beloved." I trust a large portion of God's people can say that for months and years and they have not had to sing—

"Tis a point I long to know."

But they can say, "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him."

I will try to depict the state of the Christian. He may be as poor as poverty can make him, but he is rich. He has no thought with regard to the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. He casts himself upon the Providence of God. He believes that He who clothes the lilies, and feeds the ravens, will not allow His children to go starving or barefooted. He has but little concern as to his temporal estate. He folds his arms and floats down the stream of Providence singing all the way. Whether he floats by mud bank, dark, dreary and noxious—or by palace fair and valley pleasant—he alters not his position.

He neither moves nor struggles. He has no will nor wish which way to swim—his only desire being to "lie passive in God's hand and know no will but His." When the storm flies over his head he finds Christ to be a shelter from the tempest. When the heat is hot he finds Christ to be the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. He just casts his anchor down deep into the sea and when the wind blows, he sleeps. Hurricanes may come about his ears, the masts creak and every timber seem to be strained and every nail to stare from its place—but there he sleeps.

Christ is at the helm. He says, "My Anchor is within the veil, I know it will keep its hold." The earth shakes beneath his feet. But he says, "Though the earth be removed and mountains be cast into the sea, yet will not we fear, for God is our refuge and strength, and a very present help in time of trouble." Ask him about his eternal interests and he tells you that his only confidence is in Christ—and that die when he may—he knows he shall stand boldly at the Last Great Day clothed in his Savior's righteousness.

He speaks very confidently though never boastingly. Though he has no time to dance the giddy dance of presumption, he stands firmly on the rock of confidence. Perhaps you think he is proud—ah, he is a humble man. He lies low before the Cross, but not before *you*—he can look you boldly in the face and tell you that Christ is able to keep that which he has committed to Him. He knows that—

***"His honor is engaged to save
The meanest of His sheep
All that His heavenly Father gave,
His hands securely keep."***

And die when he may, he can lay his head upon the pillow of the promise and breathe his life out on the Savior's breast without a struggle or a murmur, crying—"Victory," in the arms of death—challenging Death to produce his sting and demanding of the grave its victory. Such is the effect of strong faith. I repeat, the weakest in the world, by diligent cultivation may attain to it. Only seek the refreshing influence of the Divine Spirit. Walk in Christ's commandments and live near to Him. And you that are dwarfs, like Zaccheus, shall become as giants. The hyssop on the wall shall stare up into the dignity of the cedar in Lebanon—and you that fly before your enemies shall yet be able to chase a thousand—and two of you shall put ten thousand to flight. May the Lord enable His poor little ones so to grow!

As for those of you who have no faith in Christ, let me remind you of one sad thing—namely, that "without faith it is impossible to please God." If you have not put your trust in Christ, then God is angry with you every day. "If you turn not He will whet His sword, for He has bent His bow and made it ready." I beseech you, cast yourself on Christ. He is worthy of your trust—there is none other to trust to—He is willing to receive you. He invites you. He shed His blood for you. He intercedes for you. Believe on Him, for thus His promise runs, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Do both of these things. Believe on Him and then profess your faith in Baptism—and the Lord bless you, and hold you to the end, and make you to increase exceedingly in faith, to the glory of God. May the Lord add His blessing!

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THE GROWTH OF FAITH

NO. 3250

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 18, 1911.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 24, 1864.

*“We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet,
because that your faith grows exceedingly.”*
2 Thessalonians 1:3.

[Two other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon on the same verse are #205, Volume 4—
A LECTURE FOR LITTLE-FAITH and #1857, Volume 31—
THE NECESSITY OF GROWING FAITH—read/download both sermons free of charge at
<http://www.spurgeongems.org> .]

BEWARE of imagining that you have reached finality in religion. Just as some politicians have said, “We have gone as far in reform as we ever mean to go, so here we shall stop,” certain religious professors say, “We have gone as far in religion as there is any need to go. We are converted, we are saved, so here we shall remain.” Beware, I say, of such a spirit as that, but rather imitate the example of the Apostle Paul who wrote, “Forgetting these things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” We are not content with merely being alive! We wish to be in health as well as in life, and we ought not to be satisfied with being saved—we should desire to have our faith in full strength and to have all our graces at the highest degree of development! The men of this world are not usually content with just bread to eat and raiment to put on, they are like those daughters of the horseleech that cry, “Give, give!” But when spiritual things are concerned, these insatiable cravings are not so manifest. Many are content to be wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked when they might buy of Christ all spiritual blessings without money and without price! Even those who have fled for refuge to, lay hold upon the hope set before them are often quite content to lie down just inside the City of Refuge as if they had been sent into this world simply with the selfish end of being saved! They act as if there were nothing for them to do in the way of serving God and reflecting before other men that Glory of God which, in His Grace, has been made to shine upon them! So again I say, beware of that spirit of finality which would permit you to rest content with your present attainments, for if you are, I shall not be able to thank God that your faith grows exceedingly, and you will miss the joy that comes to the Believer who is growing in Grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

I am going to speak to you, first, upon *how Christians grow in faith*. Secondly, *upon the signs of that growth*. And then, thirdly, I hope to give you *some reasons why we should not be satisfied without this growth in faith*.

I. First, then, let us consider HOW CHRISTIANS GROW IN FAITH.

There are many ways in which the Lord causes faith to grow. One is from *the force of life, itself*. It is natural for life to grow until it has reached its maturity. Here is a living seed. If it is put into the earth under proper circumstances, nothing can prevent it from bursting its shell. In due time the green blade must be seen. You may command that green blade to remain at the same length as at present, but if you pass that way in another month, you will find that it has disobeyed your command—because it lives, it must grow! And if you should continue to visit it until it bends its head in the ripeness of autumn, you would see that it, must, by the very law of its nature, still keep on growing. It is the same with us—the anatomist will tell you that every part of the infant's body is so prepared that it can grow—there is provision for the growth of every organ and every limb so that, slowly and without difficulty, the whole shall be developed into a full grown man. It is life that grows. Put a bar of iron into the best soil that you can find—water it, and fertilize it, and let the genial sun shine upon it—but never a leaf or a rootlet will you find upon it, for it is dead! It is not so with the Christian. Because of the life that is in him, he must grow. You who are the living branches in the living Vine prove it by your growth. You who are the children of God should increase in wisdom and stature, and go on from strength to strength until you appear in Zion before God. If your faith is as feeble, now, as it was 20 years ago. If you have not made any spiritual advance during the last 10 years, you ought very gravely to question whether you have any spiritual life at all! You may not be able to see the growth, but there must be growth if there is life. There are some plants in which the unseen growth is more valuable than that which is visible—the gardener prizes the potatoes that are underground more than the tops that everyone can see. But with the Christian, there must be both the visible growth in zeal and good works—the hidden growth is in his deep humility and communion with his Lord in secret. So the force of life within produces growth.

There are certain circumstances under which Believers especially grow, and *they grow in faith by the exercise of faith*. See the blacksmith's boy when he first tries to swing his father's big hammer—how soon he gets tired! But ask the smith whether *his arms ache*—"Oh, no!" he says, "I have made too many horseshoes for that." Exercise has developed his muscles and strengthened his sinews to such an extent that the bringing down of that big hammer with a merry ring is but child's play to him. So the young Christian, when he begins to exercise faith, can perhaps only imitate him who said, "Lord, I believe, help You my unbelief." But speak to him some years later, when his faith has been much exercised, and then you will find that he has grown more like Abraham who "staggered

not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what He had promised, He was able, also, to perform.” You know that if you let your arm lie unused, in time you will be unable to use it, like the Indian fakir who holds up his hand in the air until he has lost all power of moving it. So a man may keep his faith unused until it can scarcely be called faith at all—therefore mind that your faith is kept in full exercise for so only will it grow!

Christians also *grow in faith by holy walking*. Living with Jesus—and to live with Him we must be consistent in holiness—we get to know Him better and to trust Him more. It is said of some men that “the better they are known, the less they are trusted,” but it is not so with the Lord Jesus Christ. Two cannot walk together except they are agreed, but if there is an agreement between our life and the Character of Christ and we are, by Grace, enabled to walk scrupulously in the path of integrity, our faith will grow stronger and stronger as we get to know more of Christ. Sinning is most injurious to faith. I think it is Brookes who said that “either sinning will kill our assurance or our assurance will kill our sinning.” Sin indulged will prevent the full assurance of faith—and even a little sin will do this. Have you ever had a small stone in your boot? If so, and you have tried to walk, you have found it very uncomfortable travelling. If you have a tiny splinter of wood beneath your nail, you know how painful it is—you get it extracted as soon as you can, lest you should lose your finger, or even your hand. Beware of little sins, Beloved, for they will keep all comfort out of your life and effectually hinder the growth of your faith.

Another way of helping faith to grow is *by a diligent use of Gospel ordinances*. There are some of you who are very lax in this respect. Some who come to the Tabernacle twice on the Lord’s-Day do not come at all during the week. Your bodies would not grow strong if you only fed them once a week—and it is the same with your souls. Prayer Meetings are most soul-fattening ordinances! Many of us can testify that at such gatherings, we have often been able to say, “This is none other but the House of God and this is the gate of Heaven!” I do not expect to see you all at the Prayer Meetings, for some of you have home and business duties requiring your attention and these must not be neglected. Still, there are many more of you who might come if you would. And while I am speaking of ordinances, I must not forget that very precious one of the Lord’s Supper, nor its companion, Believers’ Baptism. Both of these are exceedingly helpful to the Christian. All the means of Grace help the growth of faith and every other virtue. Of course I include the private as well as the public means of Grace. Private prayer is like a conservatory in which God’s plants grow very rapidly. Christians need a temperature higher than this world can give them—they are rare exotics, plants of heavenly birth—and they need Divine warmth before they can bloom and bring forth fruit unto perfection. And this can only be obtained by private

prayer, secret fellowship with Christ and devout meditation upon the Scriptures!

I will only further say, upon this point, that *a Christian may expect to grow in faith the more troubles he has*. If you have ever been at sea in a storm and noticed how unconcerned about it the weather-beaten sailors have been, you must have realized that it was because they had been hardened in many a tempest that they could so calmly go on with their duties while you and other landsmen were in dread of sinking, or longing for the end of the voyage! Storms help to make the sailors sturdy—and trials help to make Christians strong in faith and in every other Divine Grace. Damascus blades have to be annealed and those who are to be like a sharp sword in the Lord's hand will have to pass through the fire. The more the wind blows, the firmer will the oak's roots grip the soil—

**“March winds and April showers
Bring forth May flowers”—**

and you, as Christians, must have your stormy times and your rainy days if you are to bring forth the flowers of Grace and the fruit of the Spirit! You will probably grow more in the cloudy and dark day of adversity than you will while the sun of prosperity is shining brightly upon you. So be of good courage, Beloved, under the most adverse circumstances, for they are working for your lasting good!

II. I will not say more about how Christians grow in faith. But, in the second place, I will try to point out SOME OF THE MARKS AND EVIDENCES OF THAT GROWTH.

First, however, let me say that *swelling is not necessarily growing*. We know some people who seem to fancy that they have grown in Grace because they have such big notions as to their own attainments. They evidently imagine that they are *the* people and that wisdom will die with them. We never like to see a child with too big a head, for we fear it is only an indication of disease, and not a sign of health. And we fear that many professors of religion are suffering in a similar fashion. They know too much, for they are wise above what is written and are not content to be teachable and sit as little children at the feet of Jesus, the Great Teacher.

But there is such a thing as true growing and this can be seen in various ways. First, if you are growing in faith, *Christ becomes increasingly precious to you*. Perhaps you walked by a park one day and you said to yourself, “That is a very pretty place.” Possibly the next time you went that way, somebody said to you, “I should not wonder if that estate should belong to you, some day,” and that made you take a much more personal interest in it. By-and-by, the owner died and you learned that he had left the estate to you! How greatly your interest in it increased, then, and how much more you valued the mansion, the park, the gardens and everything belonging to the estate! In like manner, Christ was precious to me when I first began to hope that He might one day be mine. He was more precious to me when I first realized that He really was mine—and the more fully I am assured of my interest in Him—the more

precious does He become to me! This is the best test I can give you, Beloved—the most accurate thermometer by which you can ascertain the rise or fall of your spiritual temperature—Is Christ Jesus more precious to you than He ever was before? If so, then I am bound to thank God always for you, Brothers and Sisters, because your faith grows exceedingly!

Further, if you are growing in faith, you desire to be more like Christ and you are more and more dissatisfied with yourself because you are so little like He. You are longing to be so completely conformed to His image that all the virtues of His Character shall be reflected and reproduced in you. It is a sure proof of genuine faith in Christ that it produces likeness to Him—and growth in faith is good evidence of growth in likeness to Him. Are you more like Christ than you were years ago, or do you desire above everything else to be more and more like He? If so, my Brother or Sister, I feel confident that you are growing in faith, and I thank God that it is so—

***“Lord, if You, Your Grace impart,
Poor in spirit, meek in heart,
I shall as my Master be,
Rooted in humility!”***

Another evidence of growing in faith is that *the promises become more consolatory to us* and our heart and mind are kept more restful under their gracious influence. On board ship, though the vessel may rock and reel and turn whichever way the helmsman may guide, the faithful needle always points to the pole! And it is the same with the true Christian—

***“Let cares like a wild deluge come,
And storms of sorrow fall”—***

His faith still points to Heaven! His trust is fixed on Jesus! Whatever else may move, he remains firm and steadfast, and he cries as David did when he was hunted by Saul as a partridge upon the mountains, “My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed! I will sing and give praise.” I do not know whether your experience is similar to mine, but I find myself, on the whole, more equable in spiritual things than I used to be. When one has known the Lord for 14 years, one can look back over a considerable period and, taking such a survey as that, I can discover certain times when I had great bursts of exhilaration, great heights of holy joy, followed by deep sinking of spirit and utter prostration of soul! I still have both those experiences at times, but not often, either of them, now. On the whole, I find my soul calmly and quietly resting upon the promises of God—neither unduly delighted at the prospect of the joys of Heaven nor too much depressed by the cares of the world, the responsibilities of my ministry, or the sin that still troubles me—simply resting upon the Rock, Christ Jesus, having few doubts and fears, and comforting assurance of salvation, but not so much of the ecstatic rapture that was one of the characteristics of my early faith. I suppose that this is the condition of many Christians and I am inclined to regard it as one of the evidences of growth in Grace when we become more equable in our spiritual tempe-

rament. Children are very much excited over matters which a full-grown man scarcely notices. And the spiritual child is swayed here and there by many winds which have little or no effect upon one who has come to the full stature of a man in Christ Jesus.

Love to the saints is another choice and clear proof of the growth of faith. In the verse from which our text is taken, Paul thanks God, “as it is meet,” for the two Graces which he perceives in the Church of the Thesalonians—“because that your faith grows exceedingly, and the charity (or love) of every one of you all toward each other abounds.” So love to the saints is thus linked with the growth of faith. We need far more true Christian love toward one another, though probably we have less cause for complaint in that respect than most other communities have, for we have learned the blessedness of dwelling together in unity. In some of our churches there is still far too much caste feeling, too much bowing down before rank and fashion. I met the other day with a pretty story concerning Philip Henry, the father of Matthew Henry, the commentator. He wanted to marry the daughter of a gentleman who was one of his hearers. The father of the young lady said to her, “I have no personal objection to Mr. Henry. He is a good man, a Christian gentleman, but I do not know where he came from, so I cannot consent to your marriage with him.” “Well, Father,” said the young lady, “though we don’t know where he came from, we do know where he is going, and I would like to go there with him.” When I meet a genuine Christian, I may not know where he came from. He may have sprung, as men say, from the dunghill. His parents may have been the poorest of the poor, but what does that matter? I know where he is going and that is a much more important consideration! He is going to the upper house where there are many mansions! He is going to the palace of the great King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, where the princes of the blood royal are forever to bask in the sunshine of the Presence of the King of kings and Lord of lords! And I would like to go with him that I may form one of the blessed company. Never mind the corduroy or the fustian that the man may wear, or the cotton or calico of the poor woman—I love them as Brothers and Sisters in Christ and I want to go to the Heaven where they are bound! The real test of a man’s nobility is not, “From where did he come?” but, “where is he going?” If he is going where the people of God are going. If God is his Father and Jesus Christ is his Savior—and the Holy Spirit is his Guide and Counselor—if Heaven is the haven where he is bound, it will be one of the proofs that your faith is growing if you feel an intense love for him and wish to share with him all the blessings of the Covenant of Grace in time and throughout eternity!

Another sign of the growth of faith is *the growth of zeal*. I cannot see a man’s faith, but I can see the evidences that it is growing when I perceive how zealous he is in all good works for his Lord. When a train travels at a very rapid rate, the axles grow hot—and the greater the speed, the greater is the heat that is generated by the friction. And in like manner, the more rapidly a man travels in the path of a Divine Life by faith, the great-

er is the earnestness which he displays in the service of Christ. Do you care but little for the souls of those around you? Are you not doing all that you can to bring glory to God by the extension of the Kingdom of Christ among the sons of men? Then we *cannot* thank God that your faith is growing exceedingly! Indeed, there is grave cause to fear whether you possess the faith of God's elect if this evidence is lacking! Remember that question of the Apostle James, "What does it profit, my brethren, though a man says he has faith, and has not works?" And his very emphatic answer—"Faith, if it has not works, is dead, being alone." I find it well to often adopt those lines of Dr. Watts, and would advise you to do the same—

***“Awake my zeal, awake my love,
To serve my Savior here below!
In works which perfect saints above,
And holy angels cannot do!
Awake my charity, to feed
The hungry soul, and clothe the poor—
In Heaven are found no sons of need,
There all these duties are no more.”***

And the more faith you have, *the more liberality will you display*. I do not wonder that some people give so little to the cause of God—they give only as much or as little as they believe! It is said that Dean Swift, preaching from that text, "He that has pity upon the poor lends unto You, Lord, and that which he has given will He pay him again," made this characteristic commencement to his sermon—"If you like the security, down with the dust!" It seems as if there are many people, nowadays, who do not like the security, for they keep their "sordid dust" to themselves, hoarding it up for those who come after them to scatter as they please! But the more a man believes in the security of godliness, the more will he give to the poor, to the cause of Christ, and to every worthy cause that he can help. After all, the great stimulant to Christian liberality is that which Paul used when he wrote to the Corinthians, "You know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor that you, through His poverty, might be rich." Or that which the Master, Himself, used with His disciples, "Freely you have received, freely give."

If I were to try to tell you all the good which growth in faith will do to us, I would need to keep you here all night. I was much struck with a remark that I read the other day, to the effect that faith may be compared to the gastric juices in the stomach. When that solvent is in a healthy state, all the food that is eaten is properly dissolved and digested—and then the entire man becomes healthy from head to foot. But if anything should be amiss with this necessary fluid, then everything will go wrong. So, a growing faith is essential to a healthy spiritual life. Let faith be in increasingly vigorous exercise, then the whole life will benefit. But let faith become feeble and inactive, then the whole of your spiritual being will be weakened and injured! I will even dare to say that faith

affects Heaven, earth and Hell. If you have but little faith, you cannot tread the world beneath your feet, nor laugh at its troubles, nor smile at its cares. If you have but little faith, you cannot open the windows of Heaven, you cannot bring down a blessing from God. Even Hell itself feels the influence of your faith! Satan trembles when he knows that your faith is firm and strong. But if it is tottering and trembling, then he sounds the note of triumph and seeks to lead his hosts on to make a full end of you because you are beginning to relax your grip of your shield! It was not without good reason that Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." And to the Hebrews, "Cast not away, therefore, your confidence, which has great recompense of reward." The Lord grant that we may always have cause to thank Him because your faith grows exceedingly!

III. I intended, before closing my discourse, to give you SOME REASONS WHY WE SHOULD NOT BE SATISFIED WITHOUT THIS GROWTH IN FAITH, but my time has almost gone and I hope I have already said enough to prove to you the urgent need of an ever-growing faith. For your own soul's sake, for your own happiness and usefulness, for Christ's sake, for sinners' sake, for the Church's sake, if you would adorn the Doctrine of God your Savior in all things, if you would be a blessing to your day and generation, if you would bring into the fold of the Good Shepherd the lost sheep and lambs that are wandering away from Him, cry continually to Him, "Lord, increase our faith!"

I have only time for just a word or two with you who have no faith at all. Sad must be the reflections of those of you here who are not Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. What can you mean by such sinful folly? The Son of God has come from Heaven to earth seeking the lost—and yet you do not believe in Him though you are among the lost! A proclamation of liberty is made to you who are slaves to sin and Satan—yet you will not accept the emancipation which would be so great a blessing to you! Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners and you have been told, over and over again, that if you will but trust Him, you shall be saved even though you are among the chief of sinners! Yet you will not believe in Him! O Soul, why will you not trust in Jesus? Is He not worthy of your confidence? Where will you find anyone else in all the world who so richly deserves to be trusted? No happy or miserable feelings are needed to fit you for believing in Him—no meritorious deeds, no gifts of alms are required as a preparation for faith in Him! Jesus Christ can save you just as you are if you will but trust Him—so trust Him now with your whole heart and you shall be saved! Trust to Him as completely as the drowning man trusts to the lifeboat or the life buoy—if he tried to swim to land, he would be lost—his only hope of being saved is in trusting to a power greater than his own.

It is just so with you, Sinner! You are powerless to save yourself, but all power in Heaven and in earth has been committed to Christ—He is mighty to save! Therefore trust Him to save you! Rest wholly upon what

He is as the Christ of God, the anointed and appointed Savior—and upon what He has done upon Calvary's Cross to save all who believe in Him—and you shall be saved this very hour! Trust Jesus here and now and you shall be saved here and now—and to God shall be all the Glory forever and ever! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
GENESIS 22:1-19.**

Verse 1. *And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt—* [See Sermon #2223, Volume 37—ABRAHAM'S TRIAL—A LESSON FOR BELIEVERS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>] That is, “God did test or try”—

1, 2. *Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And He said, Take now your son.* “But, Lord, I have two sons, Ishmael and Isaac.”

2. *Your only son.* “But, Lord, both Ishmael and Isaac are my sons and each of them is the only son of his mother.”

2. *Isaac, whom you love.* See how definitely God points out to Abraham the son who is to be the means of the great trial of his father's faith—“Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love.”—

2. *And get you into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell you.* It was usually the way, in God's commands to Abraham, to make him sail under sealed orders. When he was first bidden to leave his country and his kindred, and his father's house, he had to go to a land that God would show him. They have true faith who can go forth at God's command, not knowing where they are going! So Abraham did, and now the Lord says to him, “Take Isaac, and offer him for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell you.”

3. *And Abraham rose up early in the morning—*Obedience should be prompt. We should show our willingness to obey the Lord's command by not delaying. “Abraham rose up early in the morning”—

3. *And saddled his donkey and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and split the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.* All the details are mentioned, for true obedience is very careful of detail. They who would serve God aright must serve Him faithfully in little things as well as in great ones. There must be a saddling of the donkey, a calling of the two young men as well as Isaac, and a splitting of the wood for the burnt offering. We must do everything that is included in the bounds of the Divine command—and do it all with scrupulous exactness and care. Indifferent obedience to God's command is practically disobedience! Careless obedience is dead obedience, the heart is gone out of it. Let us learn from Abraham how to obey.

4. *Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off.* His was deliberate obedience! He could bear suspense, thinking

over the whole matter for three days, and setting his face like a flint to obey his Lord's command.

5. *And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide you here with the donkey; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.* Abraham did not deceive the young men. He believed that he and Isaac would come to them again. He believed that though he might be compelled to slay his son, "God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." Abraham bade the young men stay where they were. They must not see all that he was to do before the Lord. Oftentimes, our highest obedience must be a solitary one—friends cannot help us in such emergencies—and it is better for them and better for us that they should not be with us.

6. *And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife.* That knife was cutting into his own heart all the while, yet he took it. Unbelief would have left the knife at home, but genuine faith takes it.

6-8. *And they went both of them together. And Isaac spoke unto Abraham his father, and said, My Father: and he said, Here am I, my Son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My Son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.* Abraham here spoke like a Prophet. In fact, throughout this whole incident, he never opened his mouth without a prophetic utterance! And I believe that when men walk with God, and live near to God, they will possibly even without being aware of it, speak very weighty words which will have much more in them than they, themselves, apprehend. Is it not written, concerning the man whose delight is in the Law of the Lord, "his leaf also shall not wither"? Not only shall his fruit be abundant, but his casual word, "his leaf also shall not wither." So was it with it Abraham. He spoke like a Prophet of God when he was really speaking to his son in the anguish of his spirit—and in his prophetic utterance we find the sum and substance of the Gospel—"My Son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering." He is the great Provider and He provides the offering, not only for us, but for Himself, for the sacrifice was necessary to God as well as to man. And it is a burnt offering, not only a sin offering but an offering of a sweet savor unto Himself. "So they went both of them together." Twice we are told this, for this incident is a type of the Father going with the Son and the Son going with the Father up to the great Sacrifice on Calvary. It was not Christ alone who willingly died, or the Father alone who gave His Son, but they went both of them together—even as Abraham and Isaac did here.

9. *And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there.* See him pulling out the large, rough, unhewn stones that lay round about the place, and then fling them up into an altar!

9, 10. *And laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.* So that, in intent and purpose, he had

consummated the sacrifice and, therefore, we read in Hebrew 11:17, “By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only-begotten son.” He had virtually done so in the esteem of God though no trace of a wound could be found upon Isaac! How often God takes the will for the deed with His people! When He finds them willing to make the sacrifice that He demands, He often does not require it at their hands. If you are willing to suffer for Christ’s sake, it may be that you shall not be caused to suffer—and if you are willing to be a martyr for the Truth of God, you may be permitted to wear the martyr’s crown even though you are never called to stand at the stake, the scaffold or the block!

11. *And the Angel of the LORD called unto him out of Heaven, and said Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.* Abraham always gives the same answer to the Lord’s call, “Here am I.”

12. *And He said, Lay not your hand upon the lad, neither do you anything unto him: for now I know that you fear God seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son from Me.* The necessary test had been applied and Abraham’s faith had endured the trial! God knows all things by His Divine Omniscience, but now He knew by this severe test and trial which He had applied, that Abraham really loved Him best of all.

Notice that the Angel says, “Now I know that you fear God.” I do not think that the gracious use of godly fear has ever been sufficiently estimated by the most of us. Here, the stress is not laid upon the faith, but upon the filial fear of Abraham. That holy awe, that sacred reverence of God is the very essence of our acceptance with Him. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” “The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him.” This is a very different thing from slavish fear—it is a right sort of fear, the kind of fear that love does not cast out, but which love lives within happy fellowship!

13. *And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son.* Here is another type of our Savior’s great Sacrifice on Calvary—the ram offered in the place of Jesus. How often do you and I have our great Substitute very near to us, yet we do not see Him because we do not lift up our eyes and look. “Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns.” So, if you lift up your eyes, and look the right way, you will see the great Sacrifice close by you, held fast for you, even as this ram was caught to die instead of Isaac. Oh, that you may have Grace to turn your head in the right direction and look to Christ and live!

14. *And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-Jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.* [See Sermon #1803, Volume 30—JEHOVAH-JIREH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] God will foresee. “God will—as we usually say—“provide,” which is being interpreted, “foresee.” He will have everything ready against the time when it will be needed. He who provided the ram

for a burnt offering in the place of Isaac will provide everything else that is required! And you may depend upon it that He who, in the greatest emergency that could ever happen, provided His only-begotten and well-beloved Son to die as the Substitute for sinners, will have foreseen every other emergency that can occur and will have fore-provided all that is necessary to meet it. Blessed be the name of Jehovah-Jireh!

15, 16. *And the Angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of Heaven the second time, and said, By Myself have I sworn, says the LORD. "Because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself."*

16-18. *Because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son: that in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed as the stars of the Heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because you have obeyed My voice.* There stands the old Covenant, the Covenant of Grace made with Abraham concerning his seed. Paul writes to the Galatians, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He says not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to your seed, which is Christ." It is in Christ that all the nations of the earth are to be blessed. If there is a nation that has not yet heard the Gospel, it must hear it, for so the promise stands, "In your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." We may look for a glorious future from the preaching of Christ throughout every land, for so the Covenant was made with Abraham because he had obeyed God's voice! God had been good to Abraham before that time, for he was His beloved friend, but now He lifts him up to a higher platform altogether and makes him a greater blessing than ever! It may be that God is about to test and try some of you in order that He may afterwards make you to be greater and more useful than you have ever been before.

19. *So Abraham returned unto his young men. As he said that he would!*

19. *And they rose up and went together to Beer-Sheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beer-Sheba. So the Lord bore His servant through this great trial, and blessed him more than He had ever blessed him before.*

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

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

JESUS ADMIRIED IN THEM THAT BELIEVE NO. 1477

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 1, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.”
2 Thessalonians 1:10.*

WHAT a difference between the first and second comings of our Lord! When He shall come a second time it will be to be glorified and admired, but when He came the first time it was to be despised and rejected of men. He comes a second time to reign with unexampled splendor, but the first time He came to die in circumstances of shame and sorrow. Lift up your eyes, you sons of Light, and anticipate the change which will be as great for you as for your Lord—for now you are hidden even as He was hidden and misunderstood even as He was misunderstood when He walked among the sons of men! “We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like He; for we shall see Him as He is.” His manifestation will be *our* manifestation and in the day in which He is revealed in Glory, then shall His saints be glorified with Him.

Observe that our Lord is spoken of as coming in His Glory and as, at the same time, taking vengeance in flaming fire on them that know not God and that obey not the Gospel. This is a note of great terror to all those who are ignorant of God and wickedly unbelieving concerning His Christ. Let them take heed, for the Lord will gain Glory by the overthrow of His enemies and those who would not bow before Him cheerfully shall be compelled to bow before Him abjectly. They shall crouch at His feet! They will lick the dust in terror and at the glance of His eyes they shall utterly wither away! As it is written, they “shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the Presence of the Lord and from the Glory of His power.”

But this is not the main objective for which Christ will come, nor is this the matter in which He finds His chief Glory, for, observe, He does this, as it were, by the way when He comes for another purpose. To destroy the wicked is a matter of necessity in which His spirit takes no delight, for He does this, according to the text, not so much when He comes to do it as when He shall come with another objective, namely, “To be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in them that believe.” The crowning honor of Christ will be seen in His *people* and this is the design with which He will return to this earth in the latter days—that He may be illustrious in His saints and exceedingly magnified in them.

Even now His saints glorify Him. When they walk in holiness they do, as it were, reflect His light. Their holy deeds are beams from Him who is the Sun of Righteousness. When they believe in Him they also glorify Him, for there is no Grace which pays lowlier homage at the Throne of Jesus than the Grace of faith whereby we trust Him and so confess Him to be our All in All. We glorify our gracious Lord, but, beloved Brethren, we

must all confess that we do not do this as we could desire, for, alas, too often we dishonor Him and grieve His Holy Spirit. By our lack of zeal and by our many sins we are guilty of discrediting His Gospel and dishonoring His name.

Happy, happy, happy day when this shall no more be possible—when we shall be rid of the inward corruption which now works itself into outward sin! Happy day when we shall never dishonor Christ again but shall shine with a clear, pure radiance like the moon on the Passover night when it looks the sun full in the face and then shines upon the earth at her best. Today we are like vessels on the wheel half fashioned, yet even now, somewhat of His Divine skill is seen in us as His handiwork. Still the unformed clay is only in part seen and much remains to be done. How much more of the great Potter's creating wisdom and sanctifying power will be displayed when we shall be the perfect products of His hand! In the bud and germ our new nature brings honor to its Author, but it will do far more when its perfection manifests the Finisher.

Then shall Jesus be glorified and admired in every one of us when the days of the new creation are ended and God shall usher in the eternal Sabbath by pronouncing His Grace-work to be very good. This morning, as God shall help me, I shall speak, first, of *the special glorification of Christ here intended*. And, secondly, I shall conclude the sermon by calling your attention to *the special considerations which this grand Truth of God suggests*.

I. Let us consider carefully THE SPECIAL GLORIFICATION HERE INTENDED. And the first point to note is *the time*. The text says, "When He shall come to be glorified in His saints." The full glorification of Christ in His saints will be when He shall come a *second time* according to the sure word of prophecy. He is glorified in them now, for He says, "All Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I am glorified in them." But as yet that Glory is perceptible to Himself rather than to the outer world. The lamps are being trimmed—they will shine before long. These are the days of preparation before that Sabbath which is, in an infinite sense, a high day.

As it was said of Esther, that for so many months she prepared herself with myrrh and sweet odors before she entered the king's palace to be espoused of him, even so are we now being purified and made ready for that august day when the perfected Church shall be presented unto Christ as a bride unto her husband! John says of her that she shall be "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." This is our night wherein we must watch, but behold, the morning comes—a morning without clouds—and then shall we walk in a seven-fold light because our Well-Beloved has come! That second advent of His will be His revelation—he was under a cloud here and men perceived Him not, save only a few who beheld His Glory—but when He comes a second time, all veils will be removed and every eye shall see the Glory of His Countenance. For this He waits and His Church waits with Him. We know not when the set time shall arrive, but every hour is bringing it nearer to us and, therefore, let us stand with loins girt, awaiting it.

Note, secondly, *in whom* this glorification of Christ is to be found. The text does not say He will be glorified "by" His saints, but "*in His saints*." There is a shade of difference, yes, more than a shade, between the two

terms! We endeavor to glorify Him, now, by our actions, but then He will be glorified in our own persons, character and condition. He is glorified *by* what we do, but He is, at the last, to be glorified *in* what we *are*. Who are these in whom Jesus is to be glorified and admired? They are spoken of under two descriptions—"in His *saints*," and, "in all them that *believe*." In, "His saints" first. All those in whom Christ will be glorified are described as holy ones, or saints—men and women who have been sanctified, made pure and whose gracious lives show that they have been under the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Their obedient actions prove that they are disciples of a Holy Master, even of Him who was "holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners."

But, inasmuch as these saints are also said to be *Believers*, I gather that the holiness which will honor Christ at the last is a holiness based on faith in Him. It is a holiness of which this was the root—that they first trusted in Christ and then, being saved, they loved their Lord and *obeyed* Him. Their faith worked by love and purified their souls and so cleansed their lives. It is an inner as well as an outer purity arising out of the living and operative principle of faith. If any think that they can attain to holiness apart from faith in Christ they are as much mistaken as he who should hope to reap a harvest without casting seed into the furrows! Faith is the bulb and saintship is the delightfully fragrant flower which comes of it when planted in the soil of a renewed heart.

Beware, I pray you, of any pretense to a holiness arising out of yourselves and maintained by the energy of your own unaided wills—as well look to gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles! True saintship must spring from confidence in the Savior of sinners and, if it does not, it is lacking in the first elements of truth. How can that be a perfect character which finds its basis in self-esteem? How could Christ be glorified by saints who refuse to trust in Him? I would call your attention, once again, to the second description, "All them that believe." This is enlarged by the hint that they are believers in a certain testimony according to the bracketed sentence—"because our testimony among you was believed."

Now, the testimony of the Apostles was concerning *Christ*. They saw Him in the body and they bore witness that He was "God manifest in the flesh." They saw His holy life and they bore witness to it. They saw His death of grief and they witnessed that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." They saw Him risen from the dead and they said, "We are witnesses of His Resurrection." They saw Him rise into Heaven and they bore witness that God had taken Him up to His right hand. Now, all that believe this witness are saved. "If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." All who, with a simple faith, come and cast themselves upon the Incarnate God, living and dying for men and always sitting at the right hand of God to make intercession for them—these are the people in whom Christ will be glorified and admired at the Last Great Day.

But inasmuch as they are first said to be saints, be it never forgotten that this faith must be a *living* faith—a faith which produces a hatred of sin, a faith which renews the character and shapes the life after the noble model of Christ—thus turning sinners into saints. The two descriptions

must not be violently rent asunder. You must not say that the favored people are sanctified without remembering that they are justified by faith! Nor may you say that they are justified by faith without remembering that without holiness no man shall see the Lord! So at the last, the people in whom Christ will be admired will be those holy ones who were saved by faith in Him.

So far, then, we see our way, but now a question arises—*by whom* will Christ be thus glorified and admired? He shines in His people, but who will see the Glory? I answer first, that His people will see it. Every saint will glorify Christ in himself and admire Christ in himself. He will say, “What a wonder that such a poor creature as I am should be thus perfected! How glorious is my Lord who has worked this miracle upon me!” Surely our consciousness of having been cleansed and made holy will cause us to fulfill those words of John Berridge which we sang just now—

***“He cheers them with an eternal smile,
They sing hosannas all the while.
Or, overwhelmed with rapture sweet,
Sink down adoring at His feet.”***

This I know, that when I personally enter Heaven I shall forever admire and adore the everlasting love which brought me there! Yes, we will all glorify and admire our Savior for what He has worked in us by His infinite Grace.

The saints will also admire Christ in one another. As I shall see you and you shall see your Brothers and Sisters in Christ all perfect, you will be filled with wonderment, gratitude and delight! You will be free from all envy and, therefore, you will rejoice in all the beauty of your fellow saints—their Heaven will be a Heaven to you—and what a multitude of Heavens you will have as you will joy in the joy of all the redeemed! We shall as much admire the Lord’s handiwork in others as in ourselves and shall, each one, praise Him for saving all the rest! You will see your Lord in all your Brethren and this will make you praise and adore Him world without end with a perpetual amazement of ever-growing delight.

But that will not be all. Besides the blood-bought and ransomed of Christ, there will be on that great day of His coming all the holy angels to stand by and look on and wonder. They marveled much when first He stooped from Heaven to earth and they desired to look into those things which, then, were a mystery to them. But when they shall see their beloved Prince come back with ten thousand times ten thousand of the ransomed at His feet—all of them made perfect by having washed their robes and made them white in His blood—how the principalities and powers will admire Him in every one of His redeemed! How they will praise that conquering arm which has brought home all these spoils from the war! How will the hosts of Heaven shout His praises as they see Him lead all these captives captive with a new captivity in chains of love, joyfully gracing His triumph and showing forth the completeness of His victory!

We do not know what other races of innocent creatures there may be, but I think it is no stretch of the imagination to believe that as this world is only one speck in the creation of God, there may be millions of other races in the countless worlds around us—and all these may be invited to behold the wonders of redeeming love as manifested in the saints in the

day of the Lord! I seem to see these unfallen intelligences encompassing the saints as a cloud of witnesses and in rapt vision beholding in them the love and Grace of the redeeming Lord.

What songs! What shouts shall rise from all these to the praise of the ever-blessed God! What an orchestra of praise will the universe become! From star to star the holy hymn shall roll till all space shall ring out the hosannas of wondering spirits. "The Wonderful, The Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace," shall have brought home all that men wondered at and they, with Himself, shall be the wonder of eternity! Then shall Satan and his defeated legions and the lost spirits of ungodly men bite their lips with envy and rage and tremble at the majesty of Jesus in that day! By their confessed defeat and manifest despair, they shall glorify Him in His people in whom they have been utterly overthrown!

They shall see that there is not one lost whom He redeemed by blood; not one snatched away of all the sheep His Father gave Him; not one warrior enlisted beneath His banner fallen in the day of battle, but all *more than conquerors* through Him that loved them! What despair shall seize upon diabolic spirits as they discover their total defeat! Defeated in men who were once their slaves! Poor dupes whom they could so easily beguile by their craftiness—defeated even in these! Jesus, triumphant by taking the lambs from between the lion's jaws and rescuing His feeble sheep from their power, will utterly put them to shame in His redeemed! With what anguish will they sink into the Hell prepared for them because now they hear with anger all earth and Heaven and every star ringing with the shout—Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns and the Lamb has conquered by His blood!

You see, then, that there are enough spectators to magnify Christ in His saints and so, fourthly, let us inquire *in what degree* will the Lord Jesus be glorified? Our answer is it will be to the very highest degree. He shall come to be glorified in His saints to the utmost, for this is clear from the words, "to be admired." When our translation was made, the word, "admired," had, to ordinary Englishmen, a stronger flavor of wonder than it has to us now. We often speak of admiring a thing in the softer sense of loving it, but the real meaning of the English word and of the Greek, also, is *wonder*—our Lord will be *wondered* at in all them that believe!

Those who look upon the saints will feel a sudden wonderment of sacred delight. They will be startled with the surprising Glory of the Lord's work in them. "We thought He would do great things, but this! This surpasses conception!" Every saint will be a wonder to himself. "I thought my bliss would be great, but not like this!" All His Brothers and Sisters will be a wonder to the perfected Believer. He will say, "I thought the saints would be perfect, but I never imagined such a transfiguration of excessive glory would be put upon each of them! I could not have imagined my Lord to be so good and gracious."

The angels in Heaven will say that they never anticipated such deeds of Grace—they knew that He had undertaken a great work—but they did not know that He would do so much for His people and in His people. The first-born sons of light, used to great marvels from of old, will be entranced with a new wonder as they see the handiwork of Immanuel's free

Grace and dying love! The men who once despised the saints, who called them canting hypocrites and trampled on them and perhaps slew them—the kings and princes of the earth who sold the righteous for a pair of shoes—what will they say when they see the *least* of the Savior's followers become a prince of more illustrious rank than the great ones of the earth and Christ shining out in every one of these favored beings? For their uplifting Jesus will be wondered at by those who once despised both Him and them!

My next point leads us into the very heart of the subject—in *what respects* will Christ be glorified and wondered at? I cannot expect to tell you one tenth part of it! I am only going to give you a little sample of what this must mean—exhaustive exposition were quite impossible to me. I think with regard to His saints that Jesus will be glorified and wondered at on account of their number—"a number that no man can number." John was a great arithmetician and he managed to count up to 144,000 of all the tribes of the children of Israel. But that was only a representative number for the Jewish Church. As for the Church of God, comprehending the Gentile nations, he gave up all idea of computation and confessed that it is "a number which no man can number." When he heard them sing, he says, "I heard a voice like the voice of many waters and like great thunder."

There were so many of them that their song was like the Mediterranean sea lashed to fury by a tempest—no, not one great sea in uproar, but ocean upon ocean, the Atlantic and the Pacific piled upon each other, and the Arctic upon these, and other oceans upon these, layers of oceans—all thundering out their mightiest roar! And such will be the song of the redeemed, for the crowds which swell the matchless hymn will be beyond all reckoning! Behold, you who laughed at His kingdom! Look how the little one has become a thousand! Now look, you foes of Christ who saw the handful of corn on the top of the mountains—see how the fruit shakes like Lebanon and they of the city do flourish like grass of the earth!

Who can reckon the drops of the dew or the sands on the seashore? When they have counted these, then shall they not have *guessed* at the multitude of the redeemed that Christ shall bring to Glory! And all this harvest from one grain of wheat, which, unless it had fallen into the ground and died, would have remained alone! What said the Word? "If it dies, it shall bring forth much fruit." Is not the prophecy fulfilled? Oh Beloved, what a harvest from the lone Man of Nazareth! What fruit from that glorious Man—the Branch! Men esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted—and they made nothing of Him—and yet there sprang of Him (and He as good as dead) these multitudes which are as many as the stars of Heaven! Is He not glorified and wondered at in them? The day shall declare it without fail.

But there is *quality* as well as quantity. He is admired in His saints because they are, every one of them, proofs of His power to save from evil. My eyes can hardly bear, even though it is but in imagination, to gaze upon the glittering ranks of the white-robed ones where each one outshines the sun—and they are all as if a seven-fold midday had clothed them! Yet all these, as I look at them, tell me, "We have washed our robes—for they were once defiled. We have made them white—but this

whiteness is caused by the blood of the Lamb.” These were heirs of wrath even as others! These were dead in trespasses and sins! All these, like sheep, had gone astray and turned, everyone to his own ways! But look at them and see how He has saved them, washed them, cleansed them, perfected them! His power and Grace are seen in all of them.

If your eyes will pause here and there, you will discover some that were supremely stubborn—whose neck was as an iron sinew—and yet He conquered them by love! Some were densely ignorant, but He opened their blind eyes! Some grossly infected with the leprosy of lust, but He healed them! Some under Satan’s most terrible power, but He cast the devil out of them! Oh, how He will be glorified in special cases! In you drunks made into saints! In you blasphemers turned into loving disciples! In you persecutors who breathed out threats, taught to sing everlastingly hymns of praise! He will be exceedingly glorified in such!

Brothers and Sisters, beloved in the Lord, in each one of us there was some special difficulty as to our salvation—some impossibility which was possible with God though it would have been forever impossible with us. Remember, also, that all those saints made perfect would have been in Hell had it not been for the Son’s atoning Sacrifice. This they will remember more vividly because they will see other men condemned for the sins with which they, also, were once polluted! The crash of vengeance upon the ungodly will make the saints magnify the Lord the more as they see themselves delivered! They will each feel—

***“Oh were it not for Grace Divine,
That fate so dreadful had been mine.”***

In each one, the memory of the horrible pit where they were drawn and the miry clay out of which they were lifted shall make their Savior more glorified and wondered at.

Perhaps the chief point in which Christ will be glorified will be the absolute perfection of all the saints. They shall then be “without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.” We have not experienced what perfection is and, therefore, we can hardly conceive it. Our thoughts are too sinful for us to get a full idea of what absolute perfection must be, but, dear Brethren, we shall have no sin left in us, for they are, “without fault before the Throne of God” and we shall have no remaining propensity to sin. There shall be no bias in the will towards that which is evil—it shall be fixed forever upon that which is good. The affections will never be wanton again—they will be chaste for Christ. The understanding will never make mistakes. You shall never put bitter for sweet, nor sweet for bitter. You shall be “perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.”

And truly, Brothers and Sisters, He who works this in us will be a wonder! Christ will be admired and adored because of this grand result. O mighty Master, with what strange moral alchemy did You work to turn that morose dispositioned man into a mass of love! How did You work to lift that selfish Mammonite up from his hoarded gains to make him find his gain in You? How did You overcome that proud spirit, that fickle spirit, that lazy spirit, that lustful spirit—how did You contrive to take all these away? How did You extirpate the very roots of sin and every little rootlet of sin out of your redeemed so that not a tiny fiber can be found? “The sins of Jacob shall be sought for and they shall not be found, yes, they shall

not be, says the Lord.” Neither the guilt of sin nor the propensity to sin—both shall be gone—and Christ shall have done it and He will be “glorified in His saints, and admired in them that believe.”

This is but the beginning, however. There will be seen in every saint, in that last wondrous day, the wisdom and power and love of Christ in having brought them through all the trials of the way. He kept their faith alive when otherwise it would have died out. He sustained them under trials when they would have fainted. He held them fast in their integrity when temptation solicited them and they had almost slipped with their feet. Yes, He sustained some of them in prison, on the rack, at the stake and still kept them faithful! One might hardly wish to be a martyr, but I reckon that the martyrs will be the admiration of us all, or rather Christ will be admired in them. However they could bear such pain as some of them did for Christ’s sake, none of us can guess, except that we know that Christ was in them suffering in His members. Eternally will Jesus be wondered at in them as all intelligent spirits shall see how He upheld them so that neither tribulation, nor distress, nor nakedness, nor famine, nor sword could separate them from His love!

These are the men that wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, tormented—of whom the world was not worthy—but now they stand arrayed as kings and priests in surpassing glory forever! Verily, their Lord shall be admired in them! Don’t you agree? Recollect, dear Friends, that we shall see, in that day, how the blessed Christ, as “Head over all things to His Church,” has ruled every Providence to the sanctification of His people. We then will understand how the dark days begat showers which made the plants of the Lord to grow; how the fierce sun which threatened to scorch them to the root filled them with warmth of Divine love and ripened their choice fruit.

What a tale the saints will have to tell of how that which threatened to dampen the fire of Grace made it burn more mightily; how the stones which threatened to kill their faith was turned into bread for them; how the rod and staff of the Good Shepherd was always with them to bring them safely home! I have sometimes thought that if I get into Heaven by the skin of my teeth I will sit down on the Glory Shore and bless Him forever who, on a board, or on a broken piece of the ship, brought my soul safely to land! And surely they who obtain an abundant entrance, coming into the fair havens, like a ship in full sail without danger of shipwreck, will have to praise the Lord that they thus came into the blessed Port of Peace! In each case the Lord will be specially glorified and admired.

I cannot stop over this, but I must beg you to notice that as a king is glorious in his regalia, so will Christ put on His saints as His personal splendor in that day when He shall make up His jewels. It is with Christ as it was with that noble Roman matron who, when she called at her friends’ houses and saw their trinkets, asked them to come next day to her house and she would exhibit her jewels. They expected to see rubies, pearls and diamonds, but she called in her two boys and said, “These are my jewels.” Even so will Jesus, instead of emeralds, amethyst, onyx and topaz, exhibit His saints! “These are My choice treasures,” He says, “in whom I will be glorified.”

Solomon surely was never more full of glory than when he had finished the temple—when all the tribes came together to see the noble structure and confessed it to be “beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth.” But what will be the Glory of Christ when all the *living stones* shall be put into their places and His Church shall have her windows of agates and her gates of carbuncle and all her borders of precious stones? Then, indeed, will He be glorified, when the 12 foundations of His new Jerusalem shall be courses of stones most precious, the likes of which was never seen!

Now, inasmuch as my text lays special stress upon *believing*, I invite you, just for a minute, to consider how as Believers as well as saints, the saved ones will glorify their Lord. First, it will be wonderful that there should be so many brought to faith in Him—men with no God and men with many gods; men steeped in ignorance and men puffed up with carnal wisdom; great men and poor men—all brought to believe in the one Redeemer and praise Him for His great salvation! Will He not be glorified in their common faith? It will magnify Him that these will all be saved by faith and not by their own merits. Not one among them will boast that he was saved by his own good works, but all of them will rejoice to have been saved by that blessedly simple way of “Believe and live.”

They will *all* praise God they were saved by Sovereign Grace through the atoning blood—looked to by the tearful eye of simple faith! This, too, shall make Jesus glorious, that all of them, weak as they were, were made strong by faith; all of them personally unfit for battle were yet made triumphant in conflict because by faith they overcame through the blood of the Lamb! All of them shall be there to show that their faith was honored, that Christ was faithful to His promise and never allowed them to believe in vain. All of them standing in heavenly places, saved by faith, will ascribe every particle of the Glory to the Lord Jesus only—

***“I ask them where their victory came?
They, with united breath,
Ascribe their conquest to the Lamb,
Their triumph to His death.”***

They believed and were saved, but faith takes no credit to itself—it is a self-denying Divine Grace—and puts the crown upon the head of Christ and, therefore, is it written that He will be glorified in His saints and He will also be admired in all them that believe.

I have scarcely skirted the subject, even now, and time is falling me. I want you to reflect that Jesus will be glorified in the risen bodies of all His saints. Now, in Heaven they are pure spirits, but when He shall come, they shall be clothed again. Poor body, you must sleep awhile, but what you shall be at your awaking does not yet appear. You are now the shriveled seed, but there is a flower to come of you which shall be lovely beyond all thought! Though sown in weakness, this body shall be raised in power! Though sown in corruption, it shall be raised in incorruption! Weakness, weariness, pain and death will be banished forever! Infirmary and deformity will be all unknown! The Lord will raise up our bodies to be like unto His glorious body! Oh, what a prospect lies before us!

Let us remember that this blessed resurrection will come to us because He rose, for there must be a resurrection to the members because the

Head has risen. Oh, the charm of being a risen man, perfect in body, soul and spirit! All that charm will be due to Christ and, therefore, He will be admired in us. Then let us think of the absolute perfection of the Church as to numbers—all who have believed in Him will be with Him in Glory. The text says He will be “admired in *all* them that believe.” Now, if some of those who believe perished, He would not be admired in them—but they will all be there, the little ones as well as the great ones.

You will be there, you poor feeble folk who, when you say, “Lord, I believe,” are obliged to add, “help You my unbelief.” He shall be admired in all Believers without a single exception and, perhaps, there shall be more wonder at the going to Heaven of the weak Believers than at the stronger ones. Mr. Greatheart, when he comes there, will owe his victories to his Master and lay his laurels at His feet. But fainting Feeblemind and limping Ready-to-Halt with his crutches, and trembling Little-Faith—when they enter into rest, will make Heaven ring with notes of even greater admiration that such poor creeping worms of the earth should win the day by mighty Grace! Suppose that one of them should be missing at the last? Stop the harps! Silence the songs! No beginning to be merry while one child is shut out! I am quite certain if, as a family, we were going to sing our evening hymn of joy and thankfulness, if mother said, “Where is the little mite? Where is the last one of the family?” There would be a pause. If we had to say—she is lost—there would be no singing and no resting till she was found!

It is the Glory of Jesus that as a Shepherd He has lost none of His flock! As the Captain of salvation, He has brought many sons to Glory and has lost none—and hence He is admired, not in *some* that believe, nor yet in all but *one*—but He is “admired in *all* them that believe.” Does not this delight you, you who are weak and trembling, that He will be admired in you? There is little to admire in you at present, as you penitently confess, but since Christ is in you now and will be more fully manifested in you, there will be, before long, much to admire! May you partake in the excellence of our Divine Lord and be conformed to His likeness that He may be seen in you and glorified in you.

Another point of admiration will be the eternal safety of all His believing people. There they are safe from fear of harm. You dogs of Hell, you howled at their heels and hoped to devour them but, lo, they are clean escaped from you! What must it be to be lifted above gunshot of the enemy where no more watch shall need to be kept, for even the roar of the Satanic artillery cannot be heard? Oh glorious Christ, to bring them all to such a state of safety, You are, indeed, to be wondered at forever! Moreover, all the saints will be so honored, so happy and so like their Lord that everything about them will be themes for never-ending admiration!

You may have seen a room hung round with mirrors and when you stood in the midst you were reflected from every point—you were seen here and seen there and there again and there again—and so every part of you was reflected. Just such is Heaven! Jesus is the Center and all His saints, like mirrors, reflect His Glory. Is He human? So are they! Is He the Son of God? So are they sons of God! Is He perfect? So are they! Is He exalted? So are they! Is He a Prophet? So are they, making known unto principalities and powers the manifold wisdom of God! Is He a Priest? So

are they! Is He a King? So are they, for He has made us priests and kings unto God and we shall reign forever and ever! Look where you will along the ranks of the redeemed, this one thing shall be seen—the Glory of Christ Jesus, even to surprise and wonder!

II. I have no time to make those SUGGESTIONS with which I intended to have finished and so I will just tell you what they would have been. First, the text suggests that the principal subject for self-examination with us all should be—Am I a saint? Am I holy? Am I a believer in Christ? Yes or no?—for on that yes or no must hang your glorification by Christ, or your banishment from His Presence. The next thing is—observe the small value of human opinion. When Christ was here the world reckoned Him to be a nobody and while His people are here they must expect to be judged in the same way!

What do worldlings know about it? How soon will their judgment be reversed? When our Lord shall appear, even those who sneered will be compelled to admire. When they shall see the Glory of Christ in every one of His people, awe-stricken, they will have nothing to say against us—no, not even the false tongue of malicious slander shall dare to hiss out a serpent word in that day! Never mind them, then. Put up with reproach which shall so soon be silenced. The next suggestion is a great encouragement to enquirers who are seeking Christ, for I put it to you, you great sinners—if Jesus is to be glorified in saved sinners, would He not be glorified, indeed, if He saved *you*? If He were ever to save such a rebel as you have been, would it not be the astonishment of eternity?

I mean you who are known in the village as Wicked Jack, or known as a common swearer—what if my Master were to make a saint of you! Bad raw material? Yet suppose He transformed you into a precious jewel and made you to be as holy as God is holy—what would you say of Him? “Say of Him,” you say, “I would praise Him world without end!” Yes, and you *shall* do so if you will come and trust Him! Put your trust in Him! The Lord help you to do so at once and He shall be admired even in *you* forever and ever!

Our text also gives an exhortation to Believers. Will Jesus Christ be honored and glorified in all the saints? Then let us think well of them all and love them all. Some dear children of God have uncomely bodies, or they are blind or deformed, or maimed. And many of these have scanty purses and it may be the Church knows most of them as coming for alms. Moreover, they have little knowledge, little power to please. And they are uncouth in manners and belong to what are called the lowest ranks of society—do not, therefore, despise them—for one day our Lord will be glorified in them! How He will be admired in yonder poor bedridden woman when she rises from the workhouse to sing hallelujah to God and the Lamb among the brightest of the shining ones! Why, I think the pain, the poverty, the weakness and the sorrow of saints below will greatly glorify the Captain of their salvation as they tell how Divine Grace helped them to bear their burdens and to rejoice under their afflictions!

Lastly, Brothers and Sisters, this text ought to encourage all of you who love Jesus to go on talking about Him to others and bearing your testimony for His name. You see how the Apostle Paul has inserted a few words by way of parenthesis? Draw the words out of the brackets and

take them home, "Because our testimony among you was believed." Do you see those crowds of idolatrous heathens and do you see those hosts of saved ones before the Throne of God? What is the medium which linked the two characters? By what visible means did the sinners become saints? Do you see that insignificant looking man with weak eyes? That man whose bodily presence is weak and whose speech is contemptible? Do you not see his bodkin and needle case? He has been making and mending tents, for he is only a tent-maker.

Now, those bright spirits which shine like suns, flashing forth Christ's Glory, were made thus bright through the addresses and prayers of that tent-maker! The Thessalonians were heathens plunged in sin and this poor tent-maker came in among them and told them of Jesus Christ and His Gospel! His testimony was believed, by God's Grace, and that belief changed the lives of his hearers and made them holy—and they, being renewed, came at last to be perfectly holy and there they are—and Jesus Christ is glorified in them!

Beloved, will it not be a delightful thing throughout eternity to contemplate that you went into your Sunday school class this afternoon and you were afraid you could not say much, but you talked about Jesus Christ with a tear in your eyes and you brought a dear girl to believe in His saving name through your testimony? In years to come that girl will be among those that shine out to the Glory of Christ forever! Or you will get away this evening, perhaps, to talk in a lodging house to some of those poor, despised tramps. You will go and tell one of those poor vagrants, or one of the fallen women, the story of your Lord's love and blood—and the poor broken heart will catch at the gracious Words of God and come to Jesus—and then a heavenly character will be begun and another jewel secured for the Redeemer's diadem!

I think you will admire His crown all the more because, as you see certain stones sparkling in it, you will say, "Blessed be His name forever! He helped *me* to dive into the sea and find that pearl for Him and now it adorns His sacred brow!" Now, get at it, all of you! You that are doing nothing for Jesus, be ashamed of yourselves and ask Him to work in you that you may begin to work for Him! And unto God shall be the Glory, forever and ever. Amen and amen!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 Thessalonians 1:11.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—92, 873, 861.**

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TITLES OF HONOR

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“Brethren beloved of the Lord.”
2 Thessalonians. 2:13.

THE verse from which my text is taken begins thus, “But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord,” so I will commence my discourse by saying that we might often find comfort and relief from gloomy apprehensions by associating with those who are “beloved of the Lord.” If you read the Chapter through, you will perceive that Paul’s mind was greatly exercised concerning the perilous times which were to come to the Church of Christ. He wrote to warn the Thessalonians concerning the coming of antichrist, and then said that there were some to whom God would send “strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteous.” The Apostle’s heart was so heavily burdened with that sorrowful theme that he was glad to turn his pen to quite a different subject and, therefore, he wrote, “But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord.” Just now, there is a general opinion that the growth of Popery in this land is most alarming and that the declension of vital godliness is very serious. And while we do not fully agree with the alarmists, we are obliged to admit that these are times of peculiar peril. The tendency of those who look only at the black side of the question is to fret and worry—and to feel that God’s Church is in danger. Brethren, I would not have you shut your eyes to the dangers by which we are surrounded, but I would not have you dispirited by them, either! There are still many saints left in the world. There are still they who, like those in Sardis, have not defiled their garments. There are still some who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. There are still many earnest and faithful testifiers to the Truth of God as it is in Jesus. So, although you may mourn over the evils of the times, you are bound to always give thanks to God that there are some “brethren beloved of the Lord” still left upon the face of the earth! David spoke of the saints that were on the earth in his day as “the excellent, in whom is all my delight.” And David’s Lord, our blessed Master, no doubt found no small solace, as a Man, in associating with Mary, Martha and Lazarus, for He seems to have withdrawn from the multitude

who mocked and scoffed and to have retired into the privacy of domestic piety—and there to have found joy and comfort in the midst of the happy family that was so closely attached to Him. There are still in the world many of the precious sons of Zion who are comparable to fine gold and concerning whom the Lord says, “They shall be Mine in that day when I make up My jewels.” Be wise, my Brothers and Sisters, and let it be said of you as it was said of them of old, “They that feared the Lord spoke often, one to another,” for there is comfort to be found in the society of God’s saints—let the times be ever so perilous and dark.

But I would advance a step beyond this preliminary observation and remark that when things are outwardly not as the children of God would like them to be, and when there is much within them that is not as it should be, they may often derive much solace by reflecting upon their true condition in the sight of God in connection with the Lord Jesus Christ. Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I know that many of you have grievous trials to endure. And I am well aware that if you look within, you will see much that will distress you. You will perceive that the old Adam still lurks within you and that notwithstanding all the force that has been brought against him by Divine Grace, he is still far too vigorous! It is true that some of you have also to suffer from poverty and that your lot is a very difficult one—yet we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, and you are, yourselves, bound to give thanks on your own behalf because notwithstanding your poverty, and notwithstanding your infirmity, and notwithstanding even the sin of which you have such cause to mourn, you are still “beloved of the Lord”—and in the Person of Jesus Christ you are “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing”! When faith recognizes the vital union which exists between Christ and the soul and realizes the consequent blessedness and security of the saint, then it cries, “I am bound to give thanks always unto God, for I am still beloved of the Lord notwithstanding all that causes me often to weep and mourn.”

It is my purpose, this evening, to invite all of you who are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ to contemplate your true standing in the sight of God—that you may be uplifted from the dunghills of your complaints, shake off the ashes of your doubts, unwind the sackcloth of your fears, put on your beautiful garments of holy rejoicing and sing aloud unto Him through whose Grace you are made worthy to be called “brethren beloved of the Lord.” There are two topics on which I have to speak. First, *the titles mentioned in the text*. And, secondly, *the wearers of those titles*.

I. First, then, let us think for a while of THE TITLES MENTIONED IN THE TEXT—“brethren” and, “beloved of the Lord.”

“*Brethren*” is a very special word—the utterance of it awakens an echo in every Believer’s heart. It is naturally a silver word, but spiritually God has transmuted it into gold. I do not wonder that a certain sect has appropriated this title, yet we equally claim the name of, “brethren,” as our

own, and we share it with all who are the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. The title, “brethren,” is very hallowed and very precious to us—let us try to find out what it implies.

First, it indicates a common nature. Whatever opinions any may hold concerning the unity of the human race, there can be no difference of opinion about the unity of nature in those who are born of the same parents. Where should I expect to find a person more in sympathy with myself than my own brother? Where should I expect to find, beneath the cope of Heaven, another soul that should be more akin to mine than the soul of my brother? If there are not peace and love between us, where can they be found? However much we may differ from one another in some respects, there must be certain lineaments of feature or traits of character in which we are alike. But even if this is not so naturally, it certainly is so spiritually! All Believers are alike partakers of the Divine Nature—we are all equally begotten again unto a lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead! The inner life of all true Christians is the same—there is not a Baptist life and a Methodist life, or a Nonconformist life and a Church of England life. The Divine Life is one wherever it is bestowed. The life of my hand and the life of my foot are one and the same, pulsating from the same central source and maintained by the same power. And the life of God is the same in all the members of the Mystical Body of Christ. This is something more than brotherhood—that idea does not cover the whole truth although it includes much of it. There is a distinct unity of nature in all the saints of the living God! Hence, Brothers and Sisters, I can never tolerate any attempts to limit communion between those who are really one in Christ. It always seems to me that it would be an infraction of the Divine Law if I were to say to a Brother in Christ that I could not commune with him because of certain minor matters in which we do not quite agree. Besides, whether I am willing to do so or not, I cannot help communing with him for he is a part of Christ’s Mystical Body of which I also am a part! So that unless I could myself get out of that body, or he could get out of it, which is impossible for either of us, I must remain in spiritual communion with him whatever I may do concerning the outward and visible symbols of that communion. No, more than that, if I could go to Heaven and that Brother still tarried here upon the earth, our communion would not be broken, for Dr. Watts was right when he sang—

**“The saints on earth, and all the dead,
But one communion make!
All join in Christ, their living Head,
And of His Grace partake.”**

The term, “brethren,” also implies a common experience. The brethren in an earthly family have the same parents, they live in the same house, they partake of the some food, they share all the privileges and varied experiences of the same household. So is it with those who are of the

household of faith, the family of God. Their experiences may vary even as one child in the home differs from another, but there is much more similarity than there is diversity in the experiences of the living children of the living God. We have all been broken in pieces. We have all been bound up. We have all been emptied. We have all been brought to the Cross. We have all been led by one Spirit to drink of the same precious Truth! We have not all subscribed to the same creed, yet in substance and in effect, the Doctrine of all the children of God is, to a large extent, identical. They rely for salvation upon the atoning Sacrifice of Christ, and therein they are all one. Their pilgrim path is through the same wilderness, they eat the same manna, they drink of the same Rock, they are led by the same cloudy-fiery pillar, and they come at last to the same heavenly Canaan and go no more out forever! They are and they must be one, not only because they are one in nature, but because the various processes through which that nature has to pass are so largely the same.

More than this, the title, "brethren," implies that we love one another. It is said that there is a lack of love in certain churches that profess to be Christian. Well, perhaps there is. I am not going to be an accuser of the brethren in that respect, but I believe there is a great deal more love existing among Christians than many persons imagine. Possibly, those who say there is a lack of love in our midst judge by the state of their own hearts, while those who really love the saints find that the saints also love them. Do not suppose, dear Friends, because the preacher has sometimes to proclaim very unpalatable Truths of God and because he sometimes delivers his message in stern tones, that therefore he has not a tender heart! Fidelity to the Truth of God requires that it should be spoken in such a fashion as to secure public attention, and this involves the use of great plainness of speech and a manner of delivery which some may resent. And the man who honestly and fearlessly acts thus is more acceptable to God and has far greater and truer love in his heart than the one who says, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace! As I hate Satan and all his works, so my soul hates every false doctrine in this Church and in every Church! But as I love God and all that God loves, so am I desirous to love every child of the loving God. And I will further say that not only do I desire to love every child of God, but I think I really do. Do you not feel, beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, whenever you meet a Believer in Jesus, and begin to talk of the things that belong to His Kingdom, you have fellowship with him in heart and spirit even though you had never seen him before? When we talk of Jesus, our love to one another soon begins to flow! The true basis of our communion with one another is that we are there in Christ Jesus—and that union manifests itself in love to all who are, as our text puts it, "brethren beloved of the Lord."

This word, "brethren," is a far-reaching word, for it further implies that all Christians have a common Father. Let all Believers rejoice that

they can unite in saying, "Our Father, who are in Heaven." There is a straight line from my heart to the heart of God—and so there is from your heart, my Brother or my Sister in Christ—so our Father's heart is our common meeting place! We were there in purpose before this world was created. We are there by faith at this moment and we shall be there by blessed experience when this world has passed away and time shall be no more! Having the same Father, we share equally in that Father's love. We may not always feel the same love to all our Brothers and Sisters in Christ, but God's love to us and His love to them knows no variation. I trust you all realize that our Father is quite impartial in His love to all His children and that all who are truly members of His family through their union to Christ shall have an equal share of it. Hence the tie of Christian brotherhood become a very solemn and a very precious thing, for it not only binds us fast to our Father in Heaven, but it also binds us closely to one another! I pray that the members of this Church may always act toward each other as Brothers and Sisters in Christ. I wish that among all the saints there might be a sort of spiritual Freemasonry so that whenever we might meet, we should recognize one another by the holy grip of Christian love. There are certain sacred passwords that are common to all the saints and I will defy the hypocrite or the worldling to pronounce them aright—but if he should be able to utter them with his lips—he can never really know their meaning in his heart. There are certain experiences that cannot be learned without the teaching of the Holy Spirit. There is a certain way of speaking about Christ that can never be acquired as a parrot learns to talk. There is a certain ring which God gives to His gold which is never bestowed upon baser metal—and there is a certain something about a true child of God which enables him to recognize others of the same family and which also enables them to recognize him so that when they come together, their hearts leap up at the thought that they are "brethren beloved of the Lord."

Perhaps I have lingered too long over that first title, so now I must turn to the second one, "beloved of the Lord." You do need my explanations here, for the Holy Spirit inspired the Apostle to give the Divine explanation of this title of honor. Turn to the verse from which our text is taken and you will see that the first thought concerning the Lord's love to you is that of its antiquity—"We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God has from the beginning chosen you." You always were "beloved of the Lord"! He did not begin to love you when you first repented and turned to Him. He saw you in the glass of His eternal purpose and he loved you then! That love He proved many centuries before you knew anything about it, for His beloved Son, Jesus Christ, your Lord and Savior, had redeemed you 1800 years before you were born—He gave the fullest proof of His affection for you in laying down His life for you. There was nothing in you to merit this wondrous Self-Sacrifice on the part of Christ—on the contrary, you

were His enemies, you profaned His holy name, and despised His Sacrifice after you learned what He had done! But He gave Himself for you because *from eternity* He had loved you with a love that would not be turned from its purpose by anything that He foresaw would be done by you!

In addition to the antiquity of the Lord's love to you, think also of its richness. The Apostle says, "God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation." Have you grasped the full meaning of that word, *salvation*, Beloved? It does not merely mean salvation from Hell, though that is included in it, but it means salvation from sin, salvation from the guilt and power of sin, salvation from your doubts, your fears, your troubles—salvation from that besetting infirmity of yours, salvation from the devil's dominion over you, salvation in all its fullness from first to last! To all this "God has from the beginning chosen you" who are "brethren beloved of the Lord"! This is no mean inheritance, no slender portion, no slight gift—indeed, it is not easy to find words in which adequately to describe all that God has done for you in choosing you "to salvation." It will need all eternity to fully explain the meaning of that great word! You are, indeed, "beloved of the Lord" in having such a priceless portion as this bestowed upon you!

Notice, next, the wisdom, of the Lord's love to you. "God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." Had it been possible for you to have had salvation without sanctification, it would have been a curse to you instead of a blessing. If such a thing were possible, I cannot conceive of a more lamentable condition than for a man to have the happiness of salvation without the holiness of it! Happily, it is not possible. If you could be saved from the consequences of sin, but not from the sin, itself, and its power and pollution, it would be no blessing to you. But the salvation to which God has from the beginning chosen you is inseparably linked with the cleansing and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit who operates within you through the instrumentality of faith! Your belief of the Truth of God has a purifying influence upon your whole life and makes you desire to follow in the footprints of your dear Lord and Savior. Thus God shows His wisdom in the choice of the means which He blesses to your salvation—blessing you as much by the means as by the salvation, itself—blessing you as much in the road as in the end to which it leads! You are, indeed, "beloved of the Lord" in having the Spirit of God thus dwelling in you and bestowing upon you that precious gift of faith by which you are enabled to believe the Truths of God!

Observe, too, in order to increase your joy in the Lord, the signs of this love. In the next verse, the Apostle goes on to say, "whereunto He called you by our Gospel." Do you not remember, you who are "beloved of the Lord," when you were called by the Gospel? Then was the eternal purpose of God fulfilled in your experience. Go back in thought to the time of

your espousal to Christ. Recall the sound of the silver trumpet that then brought you into Gospel liberty. You had been to the House of God hundreds of times before when that same trumpet was ringing out the glad refrain—

***“The year of jubilee is come!
Return, you ransomed sinners, home”—***

but your ears and heart had been sealed to the message! But that day the Lord opened your heart and unstopped your ears, so that you were numbered among the happy people who heard the joyful sound! Your calling proved your election, and it stands to you still as gracious evidence of God’s eternal love to you. Happy are we, too, if we can say with the Apostle, “whereunto He called you by our Gospel.” I know that however many may preach the Gospel better than I do, there is no one who can preach a better Gospel than the one I preach, for it is that Gospel which “is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes.” “Our Gospel” is the best of gospels, the richest of gospels, it cannot be excelled, it cannot be equaled! In fact, it is the only Gospel that is worthy of the name! You remember how Paul wrote to the Galatians, “I marvel that you are so soon removed from Him that called you into the Grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another.” That is to say, it is not another gospel and it brings only a curse both upon him who preaches it and those who receive it! But blessed are you who have been called unto salvation by “our Gospel.”

There is yet one more sign of God’s eternal love which is to be seen by us in the future—“to the obtaining of the Glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” We who believe in Jesus are so “beloved of the Lord” that He will never be satisfied until we share His Glory! So be glad in the Lord and rejoice in the glorious prospect that He has set before you! God was not content to choose you to happiness here, but He has also chosen you to happiness hereafter! He was not satisfied with making a little Heaven for you here below, but He has made a great Heaven for you up above! He has not appointed an earthly paradise where He might sometimes come to you as He came to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, but He has prepared a place for you in His own Home in Glory that you may dwell forever in your Father’s House where there are many abiding places. Rejoice, then, “beloved of the Lord,” that He has “called you by our Gospel to the obtaining of the Glory of our Lord Jesus Christ”!

Of course it is not in my power to enable every Christian here to suck all the sweet out of this title, but it is in the power of the Holy Spirit to enable you to—and by the exercise of faith you may draw much of it out. I claim this title for myself—“beloved of the Lord”—and each Brother or Sister in Christ may claim it for himself or herself. “O man greatly beloved” was the title given to Daniel, and that is the title that is given to every Believer in Jesus. “That disciple whom Jesus loved” was the distinguishing title of one of His followers when Christ was here in the flesh.

And now that after the flesh we know Christ no more, we are His in such a special sense that every child of God is “that disciple whom Jesus loves.” May you get a firm grip of that Truth of God, Beloved, and realize that Jesus loves you! You cannot obtain this assurance except by faith, but when you have believed, joy and peace will quickly follow upon the heels of faith. No, they come hand in hand, for we have joy and peace in believing!

II. I have taken so long in speaking of these titles of honor that I have very little time left for speaking of THE WEARERS OF THESE TITLES.

Suppose, dear Friends, you had all heard the Gospel preached and that you understood the dignity and happiness of a Christian—what sort of a person would you suppose him to be? If I try to picture him for you, you will see how far your ideas and mine agree. I should think you would so imagine that a man who is “beloved of the Lord” would be the happiest man in the world. You naturally suppose that if the eternal God has loved him, if the infinite heart of the Most High has been set upon him from all eternity, he must experience the greatest imaginable delight in such a belief and he must feel that whatever else he may or may not possess, he is rich to the fairest possible extent in having the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Spirit who is given unto him! I know that a sorrowful friend over yonder is saying, “If I really could say that Jesus is mine, I would be quite content to be poor. If I were ‘beloved of the Lord,’ I would not mind if I had to lie in a dungeon or even to be burned to death for His sake.” So I conceive that those who are “beloved of the Lord” must be the most happy and joyful people to be found anywhere upon the face of the earth!

I suppose, too, that the influence of this love upon them would make them very careful not to offend their loving Lord. Naturally, the love of Christ would exercise such a constraining influence upon them that they would feel that men so highly favored as they are ought not to live as other men do—but that, being distinguished by such peculiar privileges, they should be “a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Without violating the proprieties of conjecture, I can conceive that the “beloved of the Lord” would be most heavenly-minded people. Having such treasure in Heaven, they would naturally not care about the things of earth, but would set their affection on things above so that where their treasure is there would their heart be also. I think the Believer would be longing and panting to get a peep through the pearly gates and that until he could be there with his loving Lord, he would often be singing—

***“My heart is with Him on His Throne,
And ill can brook delay!
Each moment listening for the voice,
‘Rise up, and come away!’”***

Further, I can suppose that the “beloved of the Lord” are so grateful for their Lord’s love that they are constantly telling others the story of that love. And that when they meet their fellow Christians, their constant

theme of conversation is the riches of Divine Grace. I can suppose that these people are so different from others that wherever they go, they are looked upon with astonishment! Difficulties I suppose they have, but being “beloved of the Lord” they take their difficulties to Him and He enables them to overcome them by His Grace. Trials I suppose they have, but they are sure to go to God about them and He either removes them or gives the necessary strength to endure them. I suppose they are people who compass sea and land, not to make proselytes to their particular sect, but by holy self-denial and consecrated service to glorify God and extend the Redeemer’s Kingdom on earth.

Is not this what you are longing to do, Beloved? Well, it is a good thing to have high aspirations, but it is an even better thing to turn those aspirations to practical account. Is there not something that we can do for Christ *tonight*? The Israelites found the manna in the wilderness, not by looking up to Heaven, but by looking down on the ground. And instead of looking up to Heaven for means of glorifying God, we may find opportunities of doing so all around our daily path! Let us, each one, ask ourselves these questions and answer them as in the sight of God—What can I do for God in my own family circle? What can I say about Jesus to my friends? How can I bring most Glory to God in my own spiritual life? What choice gift can I bring to my Savior as Mary brought the costly ointment of spikenard and anointed the feet of Jesus? What tears of penitence can I weep before His marred visage? What holy faith can I now exercise in His risen and glorified Person? Let me, as the “beloved of the Lord,” with my largest ideas concerning His Glory and the coming of His Kingdom, see what I can practically do to show that I truly love Him by whom I am so greatly beloved!

I wish, Brothers and Sisters, that the portrait of the happiest man in the world that I tried to draw a few minutes ago might prove to be your own likeness. Some of you are sad and despondent, yet you are the “beloved of the Lord.” Then why are you so dispirited? You are heavy of heart tonight, but since you are the “beloved of the Lord,” you should rejoice in Him whatever there may be to cause you present heaviness of spirit! You have been struggling with inbred sin and the fight has been so fierce that you have feared that you would be defeated—but as you are the “beloved of the Lord,” you must be more than conquerors through Him who has loved you!

Some of you have come here tonight from the workshop where you have been laughed at and mocked—you have most painful recollections of the scorn with which you were assailed this very afternoon—but since you are the “beloved of the Lord,” the day will come when these things will be reckoned among your highest honors. “Take that, John Bunyan,” said one to a certain Christian as he pushed him into the gutter. “Oh,” said the other, “you may push me into the gutter again if you can only prove my right to bear that noble name!” So may you say to those who

persecute you for Christ's sake, "You may do it again if it pleases you, for it would be an honor to me to be spit upon because I belong to Christ." Cultivate that spirit, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, and let the thought that that you are the "beloved of the Lord" make amends for every cruel act or word on the part of His enemies. When the last trumpet sounds, and the innumerable hosts of the redeemed are gathered together unto Christ—and you whom God has from the beginning chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, you whom He has called by our Gospel—when you obtain, I say, the Glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, you will forget the little suffering that you have ever borne on His account and rejoice with unspeakable joy and full of Glory that you are forever to be numbered among the "beloved of the Lord"!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 8:1-14.**

This wonderful Chapter is the very cream of the cream of Holy Scripture! What a grand keynote the Apostle strikes in the first verse!

Verse 1. *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* [See Sermon #1917, Volume 32—IN CHRIST NO CONDEMNATION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] "No condemnation"—that is the first note of the Chapter. In the last verse it is "no separation." What glorious music there is here—no condemnation to those who are in Christ, no separation of them from Christ! Happy are the people who have a share in this double blessing—but unhappy are the men and women who know nothing of it! We will read it again—"There is therefore now no condemnation." There is a great deal of accusation, and a great deal more of tribulation, but there is no condemnation—not the least hint of it! Some condemnation we might have expected, but "there is therefore now *no* condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

2. *For the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the Law of sin and death.* I have broken away from its thralldom! The new Law, the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, the Law of Grace has set me free from the domination of the Law of sin and death! Happy is the free man who is thus liberated by the Grace of God.

3. *For what the Law could not do—God has done by His Grace.* "What the Law could not do"—

3. *In that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin—Or, as the marginal reading renders it, "by a sacrifice for sin"—*

3-5. *Condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh.* Unregenerate men, the men who remain in the state in which they were born. The men

who allow their lower nature to have the predominance. “They that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh.” That is all that they care about, all that they think about, all that they toil for, all that they really “mind.”

5. *But they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.* Those in whom there is a new life begotten by the Holy Spirit—these mind the things of the Spirit. Each nature seeks its own things—the flesh seeks the things of the flesh, the spirit seeks the things of the Spirit. Judge you, my Hearers, to which case you belong by this test—for what are you living for? That which you live for is the true index of your nature. Do you mind spiritual things or the things of the flesh?

6, 7. *For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be.* [See Sermons #20, Volume 1—THE CARNAL MIND ENMITY AGAINST GOD and #1878, Volume 32—A TRAITOR SUSPECTED AND CONVICTED—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] The old nature never will obey the Law of God—it can never do so. What, then, is to be done with it? Improve it? No, my Hearers, the only thing to be done with it is to let it die and then to bury it. In Baptism you have a most significant symbol of what is to be done with the flesh—you are to treat it as a dead thing and, therefore, to bury it. Let the old life be crucified and put to death with Christ and let the new life take its place!

8. *So then they that are in the flesh*—Those who are still in the old nature, living for it, living to it—

8. *Cannot please God.* Men may wash this old nature, they may clothe it, they may decorate it, they may educate it, but there is no evolution which can produce Grace out of Nature. The child of Nature may be finely dressed, but it is a dead child however gaudily it is attired. There is a vital eternal difference between the old nature and the new.

9. *But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwells in you.* You saints of Rome to whom Paul was writing, and you who believe in Christ now—“You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwells in you.”

9. *Now if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.* If Christ’s Spirit has not quickened you, you do not belong to Christ. Some ministers preach a very general sort of gospel in which everybody has a share, but the Bible knows nothing of that sort of gospel! “If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.” Do you know what it is to have the Spirit of Christ? If not, my Hearer, do not deceive yourself—you are none of His. “If any man”—be he prince or magistrate, a member of Parliament or a doctor of divinity—“if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.”

10. *And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.* Hence the body suffers, the body is

sick, the body decays, the body is under the dominion of death because of sin—but the Spirit is full of life because of righteousness.

11. *But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwells in you.* You Believers may have a good hope concerning your bodies! “He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies.” Wait a while, therefore—what God has done for your souls He will, in due time, also do for your bodies! This should make you long for the day of Christ’s appearing, as Paul says in the 23rd verse of this Chapter, “waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body,” when Christ shall appear, and we shall be raised—

“From beds of dust and silent clay”—

the body itself born a second time, regenerate like the soul!

12. *Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.* [See Sermon #96, Volume 2—THE CHRISTIAN—A DEBTOR—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] We owe the flesh nothing! I mean the law of sin in our members—we owe nothing to that. It has been a curse and a plague to us. We are not debtors to the flesh, so we must not “live after the flesh.”

13. *For if you live after the flesh, you shall die.* If you live simply to gratify your ambition. If you live for avarice. If you live to please yourself—if you live for any earthly object which can be comprised under the term “after the flesh”—you will certainly be disappointed, for you will die and your hope will die with you!

13. *But if you, through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live.* If you seek, by the Holy Spirit’s power, to kill sin. If you try to crush all sinful desires. If you keep evil with a rope about its neck—if you mortify it—put it to death, then you shall live! Holiness is the mode of the Christian’s life—sin is the way of the sinner’s death.

14. *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.* [See Sermon #1220, Volume 21—THE LEADING OF THE SPIRIT, THE SECRET TOKEN OF THE SONS OF GOD—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

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

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

NOS. 41, 42

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 2, 1855,
BY THE REV. C H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

“But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto He called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
2 Thessalonians 2:13, 14.

IF there were no other text in the Sacred Word except this one, I think we would all be bound to receive and acknowledge the truthfulness of the great and glorious Doctrine of God’s ancient choice of His family. But there seems to be an inveterate prejudice in the human mind against this Doctrine—and although most other Doctrines will be received by professing Christians, some with caution, others with pleasure—this one seems to be most frequently disregarded and discarded! In many of our pulpits it would be reckoned a high sin and treason to preach a sermon upon *Election* because they could not make it what they call a, “practical” discourse! I believe they have erred from the Truth of God. Whatever God has revealed, He has revealed for a purpose. There is nothing in Scripture which may not, under the influence of God’s Spirit, be turned into a practical discourse—“for all Scripture is given by Inspiration of God and is profitable” for some purpose of spiritual usefulness. It is true, it may not be turned into a free will discourse—that we know right well—but it *can* be turned into a practical *Free Grace* discourse. And *Free Grace* practice is the best practice when the true Doctrines of God’s Immutable Love are brought to bear upon the hearts of saints and sinners! Now I trust, this morning, some of you who are startled at the very sound of this word will say, “I will give it a fair hearing. I will lay aside my prejudices. I will hear what this man has to say.” Do not shut your ears and say at once, “It is high Doctrine.” Who has authorized you to call it high or low? Why should you oppose yourself to God’s Doctrine? Remember what became of the children who found fault with God’s Prophet and exclaimed, “Go up, you bald-head! Go up, you bald-head!” Say nothing against God’s Doctrines, lest haply some evil beast should come out of the forest and devour you, also! There are other woes beside the open judgment of Heaven—take heed that these fall not on your head. Lay aside your prejudices—listen calmly, listen dispassionately—

hear what Scripture says! And when you receive the Truth, if God should be pleased to reveal and manifest it to your souls, do not be ashamed to confess it! To confess you were wrong, yesterday, is only to acknowledge that you are a little wiser today. Instead of being a reflection on yourself, it is an honor to your judgment and shows that you are improving in the knowledge of the Truth of God! Do not be ashamed to learn and to cast aside your old doctrines and views. But take up that which you may more plainly see to be in the Word of God. And if you do not see it to be here in the Bible—whatever I may say, or whatever authorities I may plead—I beseech you, as you love your souls, reject it! And if from this pulpit you ever hear things contrary to this Sacred Word, remember that the Bible must be first—and God’s minister must lie underneath it!

We must not stand on the Bible to preach—we must preach with the Bible above our heads. After all we have preached, we are well aware that the mountain of Truth is higher than our eyes can discern—clouds and darkness are round about its summit and we cannot discern its topmost pinnacle. Yet we will try to preach it as well as we can. But since we are mortal and liable to err, exercise your judgment—“Try the spirits, whether they are of God”—and if on mature reflection on your bended knees, you are led to disregard Election—a thing which I consider to be utterly impossible—then forsake it! Do not hear it preached, but believe and confess whatever you see to be God’s Word. I can say no more than that by way of introduction.

Now, first. I shall speak a little concerning the *truthfulness* of this Doctrine—“God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation.” Secondly, I shall try to prove that this Election is *absolute*—“He has from the beginning chosen you to salvation,” not for sanctification, but, “*through sanctification* of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” Thirdly, this Election is *eternal* because the text says, “God has from *the beginning* chosen you.” Fourthly, it is *personal*—“*He* has chosen *you*.” Then we will look at the *effects* of the Doctrine—see what it does. And lastly, as God may enable us, we will try and look at its *tendencies and* see whether it is, indeed, a terrible and licentious Doctrine. We will take the flower and, like true bees, see whether there is any honey whatever in it—whether any good can come *of* it—or whether it is an unmixed, undiluted evil.

I. First, I must try and prove that the Doctrine is TRUE. And let me begin with an *argumentum ad hominen*—I will speak to you according to your different positions and stations. There are some of you who belong to the Church of England and I am happy to see so many of you here. Though now and then I certainly say some very hard things about Church and State, yet I love the old Church, for she has in her communion many godly ministers and eminent saints. Now I know you are great Believers in what the Articles declare to be sound Doctrine. I will give you a specimen of what they utter concerning Election, so that if

you believe them, you cannot avoid receiving Election. I will read a portion of the 17th Article upon Predestination and Election—

“Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) He has continually decreed by His counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom He has chosen in Christ out of mankind and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honor. Therefore, they which are endued with so excellent a benefit of God, are called according to God’s purpose by His Spirit working in due season: they, through Divine Grace, obey the calling: they are justified freely: they are made sons of God by adoption: they are made like the image of His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ: they walk religiously in good works and at length, by God’s mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity.”

Now, I think any Churchman, if he is a sincere and honest believer in Mother Church, must be a thorough believer in Election. True, if he turns to certain other portions of the Prayer Book, he will find things contrary to the Doctrines of Free Grace and altogether apart from Scriptural teaching. But if he looks at the Articles, he must see that God has chosen His people unto eternal life! I am not so desperately enamored, however, of that book as you may be—and I have only used this Article to show you that if you belong to the Establishment of England, you should at least offer no objection to this Doctrine of Predestination.

Another human authority whereby I would confirm the Doctrine of Election is the old Waldensian Creed. If you read the creed of the old Waldenses—emanating from them in the midst of the burning heat of persecution—you will see that these renowned professors and confessors of the Christian faith did most firmly receive and embrace this Doctrine as being a portion of the Truth of God. I have copied from an old book, one of the Articles of their faith—“That God saves from corruption and damnation those whom He has chosen from the foundations of the world, not for any disposition, faith, or holiness that He before saw in them, but of His mere mercy in Christ Jesus, His Son, passing by all the rest according to the irreprehensible reason of His own free will and justice.”

It is no novelty, then, that I am preaching no new Doctrine! I love to proclaim these strong old Doctrines which are called by nickname, Calvinism, but which are surely and verily the revealed Truth of God as it is in Christ Jesus! By this Truth of God, I make a pilgrimage into the past and as I go, I see father after father, confessor after confessor, martyr after martyr, standing up to shake hands with me! Were I a Pelagian, or a believer in the Doctrine of free will, I would have to walk for centuries all alone. Here and there a heretic of no very honorable character might rise up and call me, Brother. But taking these things to be the standard of my faith, I see the land of the ancients peopled with

my Brothers and Sisters—I behold multitudes who confess the same as I do and acknowledge that this is the religion of God’s own Church!

I also give you an extract from the old Baptist Confession. We are Baptists in this congregation—the greater part of us, at any rate—and we like to see what our own forefathers wrote. Some 200 years ago the Baptists assembled together and published their articles of faith to put an end to certain reports against their orthodoxy which had gone forth to the world. I turn to this old book—which I have just published—Baptist Confession of Faith—and I find the following as the 3rd Article—“By the decree of God for the manifestation of His Glory, some men and angels are predestinated, or foreordained to eternal life through Jesus Christ to the praise of His glorious Grace. Others being left to act in their sin to their just condemnation to the praise of His glorious Justice. These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished. Those of mankind who are predestinated to life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and Immutable purpose and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, has chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory out of His mere Free Grace and love, without any other thing in the creature as condition or cause moving Him hereunto.”

As for these human authorities, I care not one rush for all three of them! I care not what they say, pro or *con*, as to this Doctrine. I have only used them as a kind of confirmation to *your* faith, to show you that while I may be railed upon as a heretic and as a hyper-Calvinist, after all I am backed up by antiquity! All the past stands by me. I do not care for the present. Give me the past and I will hope for the future. Let the present rise up in my teeth, I will not care. What though a host of the Churches of London may have forsaken the great cardinal Doctrines of God, it matters not. If a handful of us stand alone in an unflinching maintenance of the Sovereignty of our God. If we are beset by enemies, yes, and even by our own Brothers and Sisters who ought to be our friends and helpers, it matters not—if we can but count upon the past—the noble army of martyrs, the glorious host of confessors! They are our friends. They are the witnesses of the Truth of God and they stand by us! With these for us, we will not say that we stand alone, but we may exclaim, “Lo, God has reserved unto Himself seven thousand that have not bowed the knee unto Baal.” But the best of all is—*God* is with us!

The great Truth of God is always the Bible and the Bible, alone. My Hearers, you do not believe in any other book than the Bible, do you? If I could prove this from all the books in Christendom—if I could fetch back the Alexandrian library and prove it, there—you would not believe it any more! But you surely will believe what is in God’s Word!

I have selected a few texts to read to you. I love to give you a whole volley of texts when I am afraid you will distrust a Truth of God so that you may be too astonished to doubt, if you do not, in reality, believe! Just let me run through a catalog of passages where the people of God are called elect. Of course if the people are called *elect*, there must be *Election*. If Jesus Christ and His Apostles were accustomed to call Believers by the title of, elect, we must certainly believe that they were so, otherwise the term does not mean anything! Jesus Christ says, "Except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved; but for the *elect's* sake, whom He has chosen, He has shortened the days." "False Christs and false Prophets shall rise and shall show signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the *elect*." "Then shall He send His angels and shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the uttermost parts of the earth to the uttermost part of Heaven."—Mark 13:20, 22, 27. "Shall not God avenge His own *elect* who cry day and night unto Him, though He bears long with them?"—Luke 18:7. Together with many other passages which might be selected, wherein either the word, "elect," or, "chosen," or, "foreordained," or "appointed," is mentioned—or the phrase, "My sheep," or some similar designation, showing that Christ's people are distinguished from the rest of mankind!

But you have concordances and I will not trouble you with texts. Throughout the Epistles the saints are constantly called, "the elect." In Colossians we find Paul saying, "Put on, therefore, as the *elect* of God, holy and beloved, hearts of mercies." When he writes to Titus, he calls himself, "Paul, a servant of God and an Apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's *elect*." Peter says, "*Elect* according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." Then if you turn to John, you will find he is very fond of the word! He says, "The elder to the *elect* lady." And he speaks of our "*elect* sister." And we know where it is written, "The church that is at Babylon, *elected* together with you." They were not ashamed of the word in *those* days. They were not afraid to talk about it. Nowadays the word has been dressed up with diversities of meaning and persons have mutilated and marred the Doctrine so that they have made it a very Doctrine of devils! I do confess that many who call themselves Believers have gone to rank Antinomianism! But not withstanding this, why should I be ashamed of it, if men wrest it? We love God's Truth on the rack as well as when it is walking upright. If there were a martyr whom we loved before he went on the rack, we would love him still more when he was stretched there! When God's Truth is stretched on the rack, we do not call it a lie! We love not to see it racked, but we love it even when racked because we can discern what its proper proportions ought to have been if it had not been racked and tortured by the cruelty and inventions of men! If you will read many of the Epistles of the ancient fathers, you

will find them always writing to the people of God as the, “elect.” Indeed, the common conversational term used among many of the Churches by the primitive Christians to one another was that of the, “elect.” They would often use the term to one another, showing that it was generally believed that all God’s people were manifestly “elect.”

But now for the verses that will positively prove the Doctrine. Open your Bibles and turn to John 15:16, and there you will see that Jesus Christ has chosen His people, for He says, “You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain: that whatever you shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you.” Then in the 19th verse, “If you were of the world, the world would love his own, but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” Then in the 17th Chapter and the 8th and 9th verses, “For I have given unto them the words which You gave Me; and they have received them and have known surely that I came out from You and they have believed that You did send Me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me for they are Yours.” Turn to Acts 13:48—“And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the Word of the Lord; and as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed.” They may try to split that passage into hairs if they like—but it says, “ordained to eternal life” in the original as plainly as it possibly can! And we do not care about all the different commentaries thereupon. You scarcely need to be reminded of Romans 8, because I trust you are all well-acquainted with that Chapter and understand it by this time. In the 29th and following verses, it says, “For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many Brethren. 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. What shall we then say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” It would also be unnecessary to repeat the whole of the 9th Chapter of Romans. As long as that remains in the Bible, no man shall be able to prove Arminianism! So long as that is written there, not the most violent contortions of the passage will ever be able to exterminate the Doctrine of Election from the Scriptures! Let us read such verses as these—“For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to Election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calls; it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.” Then read the 22nd verse, “What if God, willing to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to

destruction? And that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory?"

Then go on to Romans 11:7—"What then? Israel has not obtained that which he seeks for, but the Election has obtained it and the rest were blinded." In the 6th verse of the same Chapter, we read—"Even so, then, at this present time also there is a remnant according to the Election of Grace." You, no doubt, all remember the passage in 1 Corinthians 1:26-29—"For you see your calling, Brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world and things which are despised, has God chosen, yes and things which are not, to bring to nothing things which are: that no flesh should glory in His Presence." Again, remember the passage in 1 Thessalonians 5:9—"God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ," and then you have my text, which I think would be quite enough. But if you need any more, you can find them at your leisure if we have not quite removed your suspicions as to the Doctrine not being true.

I think, my Friends, that this overwhelming mass of Scripture testimony must stagger those who dare to laugh at this Doctrine! What shall we say of those who have so often despised it and denied its Divinity? What shall we say to those who have railed at its justice and dared to defy God and call Him an Almighty tyrant, when they have heard of His having elected so many to eternal life? Can you, O Rejecter, cast it out of the Bible? Can you take the penknife of Jehudi and cut it out of the Word of God? Would you be like the women at the feet of Solomon and have the child cut in halves that you might have your half? Is it not here in Scripture? And is it not your duty to bow before it and meekly acknowledge what you understand not—to receive it as the Truth even though you could not understand its meaning? I will not attempt to prove the justice of God in having thus elected some and left others. It is not for me to vindicate my Master! He will speak for Himself and He does so—"But, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why have you made me thus? Has not the potter power over the clay of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?" Who is he that shall say unto his father, "What have you begotten?...or unto his mother, "What have you brought forth?" "I am the Lord—I form the light and create darkness. I, the Lord, do all these things. Who are you that replies against God? Tremble and kiss His rod; bow down and submit to His scepter; impugn not His justice and arraign not His acts before your bar, O man!"

But there are some who say, "It is hard for God to choose some and leave others." Now, I will ask you one question. Is there any of you here,

this morning, who wishes to be holy, who wishes to be regenerate, to leave off sin and walk in holiness? “Yes, there is,” someone says, “I do.” Then God has elected you! But another says, “No. I don’t want to be holy. I don’t want to give up my lusts and my vices.” Why should you grumble, then, that God has not elected *you*? For if you were elected, you would not like it, according to your own confession! If God, this morning, had chosen you to holiness, you say you would not care for it. Do you not acknowledge that you prefer drunkenness to sobriety, dishonesty to honesty? You love this world’s pleasures better than religion—then why should you grumble that God has not chosen you to religion? If you love religion, He has chosen you to it! If you desire it, He has chosen you to it! If you do not, what right have you to say that God ought to have given you what you do not wish for? Supposing I had in my hand something which you do not value, and I said I shall give it to such-and-such a person—you would have no right to grumble that I did not give it to you! You could not be so foolish as to grumble that the other has got what you do not care about! According to your own confession, many of you do not want religion—do not want a new heart and a right spirit—do not want the forgiveness of sins! You do not want sanctification. You do not want to be elected to these things—then why should you grumble? You count these things but as husks, so why should you complain of God who has given them to those whom He has chosen? If you believe them to be good and desire them, they are there for you! God gives liberally to all those who desire—but first of all, *He* makes them desire—otherwise they never would. If you love these things, He has elected you to them and you may have them. But if you do not, who are you that you should find fault with God when it is your own desperate will that keeps you from loving these things? Suppose a man in the street should say, “What a shame it is I cannot have a seat in the Chapel to hear what this man has to say.” And suppose he says, “I hate the preacher—I can’t bear his Doctrine—but still, it’s a shame I have not a seat”? Would you expect a man to say so? No—you would at once say, “That man does not care for it. Why should he trouble himself about other people having what they value and he despises?” You do not like holiness, you do not like righteousness. If God has elected me to these things, has He hurt you by it? “Ah, but,” some say, “I thought it meant that God elected some to Heaven and some to Hell.” That is a very different matter from the Gospel Doctrine! He has elected men to holiness and to righteousness—and through that to Heaven. You must not say that He has elected these simply to Heaven and others only to Hell. He has elected you to *holiness* if you love holiness. If any of you love to be saved by Jesus Christ—Jesus Christ elected you to be saved! If any of you desire to have salvation, you are elected to have it—if you desire it sincerely and earnestly! But, if you

don't desire it, why on earth would you be so preposterously foolish as to grumble because God gives that which you do not like, to other people?

II. Thus I have tried to say something with regard to the Truth of the Doctrine of Election. And now, briefly, let me say that Election is absolute, that is, it does not depend upon what we are. The text says, "God has from the beginning chosen us unto salvation." But our opponents say that God chooses people because they are good—that He chooses them on account of sundry works which they have done. Now, we ask in reply to this, what works are those on account of which God elects His people? Are they what we commonly call, "works of Law"?—works of obedience which the creature can render? If so, we reply to you—If men cannot be *justified* by the works of the Law, it seems to us pretty clear that they cannot be *elected* by the works of the Law! If they cannot be justified by their good deeds, they cannot be saved by them. Then the decree of Election could not have been formed upon good works. "But," say others, "God elected them on the foresight of their faith." Now God *gives* faith, therefore He could not have elected them on *account* of faith which He foresaw. There shall be 20 beggars in the street and I determine to give one of them a shilling. Will anyone say that I determined to give that one a shilling—that I elected him to have the shilling—because I foresaw that he would have it? That would be talking nonsense! In like manner, to say that God elected men because He foresaw they would have faith—which is salvation in the germ—would be too absurd for us to listen to for a moment! Faith is the gift of God. Every virtue comes from Him. Therefore it cannot have caused Him to elect men, because it is His gift! Election, we are sure, is absolute and altogether apart from the virtues which the saints have afterwards. What if a saint should be as holy and devout as Paul? What if he should be as bold as Peter, or as loving as John? Still, he could claim nothing but what he received from his Maker! I never knew a saint, yet, of any denomination who thought that God saved him because He foresaw that he would have these virtues and merits. Now, my Brothers and Sisters, the best jewels that the saint ever wears, if they are jewels of our own fashioning, are not of the first water! There is something of earth mixed with them. The highest Grace we ever possess has something of earthliness about it. We feel this when we are most refined, when we are most sanctified and our language must always be—

***"I the chief of sinners am;
Jesus died for me."***

Our only hope, our only plea, still hangs on Grace as exhibited in the Person of Jesus Christ. And I am sure we must utterly reject and disregard all thought that our Graces, which are gifts of our Lord, which are His right-hand planting, could have ever caused His love. And we always must sing—

***“What was there in us that could merit esteem
Or give the Creator delight?
It was even so, Father, we always must sing,
Because it seemed good in Your sight”***

“He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy.” He saves because He will save. And if you ask me why He saves me, I can only say because He would do it. Is there anything in me that should recommend me to God? No. I lay aside everything. I had nothing to recommend me. When God saved me, I was the most abject, lost and ruined of the race. I lay before Him as an infant in my blood. Verily, I had no power to help myself. O how wretched did I feel and know myself to be! If you had something to recommend you to God, I never had. I will be content to be saved by Grace, unalloyed, pure Grace. I can boast of no merits. If you can do so, still I cannot. I must sing—

***“Free Grace alone from the first to the last
Has won my affection and held my soul fast.”***

III. Then, thirdly, this Election is ETERNAL. “God has from the beginning chosen you unto eternal life.” Can any man tell me when the beginning was? Years ago we thought the beginning of this world was when Adam came upon it. But we have discovered that thousands of years before that, God was preparing chaotic matter to make it a fit abode for man, putting races of creatures upon it who might die and leave behind the marks of His handiwork and marvelous skill before He tried His hand on man. But that was not the beginning, for Revelation points us to a period long before this world was fashioned—to the days when the morning stars were begotten—when, like drops of dew from the fingers of the morning, stars and constellations fell trickling from the hand of God. When, by His own lips, He launched forth ponderous orbs. When with His own hands He sent comets, like thunderbolts, wandering through the sky to find, one day, their proper sphere. We go back to years gone by, when worlds were made and systems fashioned, but we have not even approached the beginning! Until we go to the time when all the universe slept in the mind of God as yet unborn—until we enter the eternity where God the Creator lived alone, everything sleeping within Him, all creation resting in His mighty gigantic thought—we have not guessed the beginning. We may go back, back, back, ages upon ages. We may go back, if we might use such strange words, whole eternities and yet never arrive at the beginning! Our wings might be tired, our imagination would die away. Could it outstrip the lightnings flashing in majesty, power and rapidity, it would soon weary itself before it could get to the beginning! But God from the *beginning* chose His people. When the unnavigated ether was yet unfanned by the wing of a single angel. When space was shoreless, or else unborn. When universal silence reigned and not a voice or whisper shocked the solemnity of silence. When there was no being and no motion, no time and nothing but God, Himself, alone in His eternity—

when without the song of an angel, without the attendance of even the cherubim—long before the living creatures were born, or the wheels of the chariot of Jehovah were fashioned—even then, “in the beginning was the Word,” and in the beginning God’s people were one with the Word and “in the beginning He chose them unto eternal life.” Our Election, then, is eternal. I will not stop to prove it. I only just run over these thoughts for the benefit of young beginners, that they may understand what we mean by eternal, absolute Election.

IV. And, next, the Election is PERSONAL. Here again, our opponents have tried to overthrow Election by telling us that it is an Election of *nations*—and not of people. But here the Apostle says, “God has from the beginning chosen *you*.” It is the most miserable shift on earth to make out that God has not chosen persons, but nations, because the very same objection that lies against the choice of persons, lies against the choice of a nation! If it were not just to choose a *person* it would be far more unjust to choose a nation, since nations are but the union of multitudes of persons! To choose a nation seems to be a more gigantic crime—if Election is a crime—than to choose one person. Surely to choose ten thousand would be reckoned to be worse than choosing one—to distinguish a whole nation from the rest of mankind seems to be a greater extravaganza in the acts of Divine Sovereignty than the Election of one poor mortal and leaving out another. But what are nations but men? What are whole peoples but combinations of different units? A nation is made up of that individual, and that, and that. And if you tell me that God chose the Jews, I say, then, He chose that Jew and that Jew and that Jew. And if you say He chooses Britain, then I say He chooses that British person and that British person and that British person. So that it is the same thing, after all. Election, then, is personal—it must be so! Everyone who reads this text and others like it, will see that Scripture continually speaks of God’s people one by one and speaks of them as having been the special subjects of Election—

**“Sons we are through God’s Election,
Who in Jesus Christ believe;
By eternal destination
Sovereign Grace we here receive.”**

We know it is personal Election

V. The other thought is—for my time flies too swiftly to enable me to dwell at length upon these points—that Election produces GOOD RESULTS. “He has from the beginning chosen you unto sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the Truth.” How many men mistake the Doctrine of Election altogether! And how my soul burns and boils at the recollection of the terrible evils that have accrued from the spoiling and the wresting of that glorious portion of God’s glorious Truth! How many are there who have said to themselves, “I am elect,” and have sat down in sloth and

worse than that! They have said, "I am the elect of God," and with both hands they have done wickedness. They have swiftly run to every unclean thing because they have said, "I am the chosen child of God, irrespective of my works—therefore I may live as I like and do what I like." O, Beloved! Let me solemnly warn everyone of you not to carry the Truth of God too far—or, rather not to turn the Truth of God into error, for we cannot carry it too far! We may overstep the Truth—we can make that which was meant to be sweet for our comfort a terrible mixture for our destruction. I tell you there have been thousands of men who have been ruined by misunderstanding Election—who have said, "God has elected me to Heaven and to eternal life"—but they have forgotten that it is written, God has elected them, "through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the Truth." This is God's Election—Election to *sanctification* and to *faith*. God chooses His people to be holy and to be Believers! How many of you here, then, are Believers? How many of my congregation can put their hands upon their hearts and say, "I trust in God that I am sanctified"? Is there one of you who says, "I am elect"?

One of you says, "I trust I am elect"—but I jog your memory about some vicious act that you committed during the last six days. Another of you says, "I am elect"—but I would look you in the face and say, "*Elect?* You are a most cursed hypocrite and that is all you are!" Others would say, "I am elect"—but I would remind them that they neglect the Mercy Seat and do not pray. Oh, Beloved, never think you are elect unless you are *holy*. You may come to Christ as a sinner but you may not come to Christ as an elect person until you can see your holiness! Do not misconstrue what I say—do not say, "I am elect," and yet think you can be living in sin! That is impossible. The elect of God are holy. They are not pure, they are not perfect, they are not spotless—but taking their life as a whole, they are holy persons. They are marked and distinct from others—and no man has a right to conclude himself elect except in his holiness. He may be elect and yet lying in darkness, but he has no right to believe it. No one can say it, if there is no evidence of it. The man may live one day, but he is dead at present. If you are walking in the fear of God, trying to please Him and to obey His Commandments, doubt not that your name has been written in the Lamb's Book of Life from before the foundation of the world!

And, lest this should be too high for you, note the other mark of Election, which is faith—belief of the Truth of God. Whoever believes God's Truth and believes on Jesus Christ, is elect. I frequently meet with poor souls who are fretting and worrying themselves about this thought—"What if I should not be elect!" "Oh, Sir," they say, "I know I put my trust in Jesus. I know I believe in His name and trust in His blood. But what if I should not be elect?" Poor dear creature! You do not know much about the Gospel or you would never talk so, for *he that*

believes is elect. Those who are elect, are elect unto sanctification and unto faith. If you have faith, you are one of God's elect! You may know it and ought to know it, for it is an absolute certainty! If you, as a sinner, look to Jesus Christ this morning and say—

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

you are elect! I am not afraid of Election frightening poor saints or sinners. There are many Divines who tell the enquirer, “Election has nothing to do with you.” That is very bad, because the poor soul is not to be silenced like that. If you could silence him so, it might be well—but he will think of it, he can't help it. Say to him, then, if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, you are elect. If you will cast yourself on Jesus, you are elect. I tell you—the chief of sinners—this morning—I tell you in His name—if you will come to God without any works of your own, cast yourself on the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ—if you will come, now, and trust in Him, you are elect—you were loved of God from before the foundation of the world, for you could not do that unless God had given you the power and had chosen you to do it! Now you are safe and secure if you do but come and cast yourself on Jesus Christ and wish to be saved and to be loved by Him. But think not that any man will be saved without faith and without holiness. Do not conceive, my Hearers, that some decree, passed in the dark ages of eternity, will save your souls, unless you believe in Christ! Do not sit down and fancy that you are to be saved without faith and holiness! That is a most abominable and accursed heresy and has ruined thousands.

Lay not Election as a pillow for you to sleep on, or you may be ruined. God forbid that I should be sewing pillows under armholes that you may rest comfortably in your sins. Sinner, there is nothing in the Bible to lighten your sins! But if you are condemned, O Man! If you are lost, O Woman! You will not find in this Bible one drop to cool your tongue, or one Doctrine to lessen your guilt. Your damnation will be entirely your own fault and your sin will richly merit it—because you believe you are not condemned. “You believe not because you are not of My sheep. You will not come to Me that you might have life.” Do not fancy that Election excuses sin—do not dream of it—do not rock yourself in sweet complacency in the thought of your irresponsibility! You are responsible. We must give you both things. We must have Divine Sovereignty and we must have man's responsibility. We must have Election, but we must ply your hearts—we must send God's Truth at you. We must speak to you and remind you of this, that while it is written, “In Me is your help,” yet it is also written, “O Israel, you have destroyed yourself.”

VI. Now, lastly, what are the true and legitimate tendencies of right conceptions concerning the Doctrine of Election? First, I will tell you

what the Doctrine of Election will make saints do under the blessing of God. And, secondly what it will do for sinners if God blesses it to them.

First, I think Election, to a saint, is one of the most *stripping* Doctrines in all the world—to take away all trust in the flesh or all reliance upon anything except Jesus Christ. How often do we wrap ourselves up in our own righteousness and array ourselves with the false pearls and gems of our own works and doings? We begin to say, “Now I shall be saved, because I have this and that evidence.” Instead of that, it is naked faith that saves—that faith and that, alone, unites to the Lamb—irrespective of works, although it is productive of them. How often do we lean on some work other than that of our own Beloved Jesus and trust in some might, other than that which comes from on High? Now if we would have this might taken from us, we must consider Election. Pause, my Soul, and consider this. God loved you before you had a being! He loved you when you were dead in trespasses and sins and sent His Son to die for you! He purchased you with His precious blood before you could say His name! Can you, then, be *proud*?

I know nothing, nothing again, that is more *humbling* for us than this Doctrine of Election. I have sometimes fallen prostrate before it when endeavoring to understand it. I have stretched my wings and, eagle-like, I have soared towards the sun. Steady has been my eye and true my wing for a season. But, when I came near it and the one thought possessed me—“God has from the beginning chosen you unto salvation,” I was lost in its luster! I was staggered with the mighty thought—and from the dizzy elevation down came my soul, prostrate and broken, saying, “Lord, I am nothing, I am less than nothing! Why me? Why me?”

Friends, if you want to be humbled, study Election, for it will make you humble under the influence of God’s Spirit. He who is proud of his election is not elect—and he who is humbled under a sense of it may believe that he is. He has every reason to believe that he is, for it is one of the most blessed effects of Election—that it helps us to humble ourselves before God.

Once again—Election in the Christian should make him very *fearless* and very *bold*. No man will be so bold as he who believes that he is elect of God. What cares he for man if he is chosen of his Maker? What will he care for the pitiful chirpings of some tiny sparrows when he knows that he is an eagle of a royal race? Will he care when the beggar points at him, when the blood royal of heaven runs in his veins? Will he fear if all the world stand against him? If earth is all in arms abroad, he dwells in perfect peace—for he is in the secret place of the tabernacle of the Most High, in the great pavilion of the Almighty! “I am God’s,” he says, “I am distinct from other men. They are of an inferior race. Am I not noble? Am I not one of the aristocrats of Heaven? Is not my name written in God’s Book?” Does he care for the world? No—like the lion that cares not for

the barking of the dog, he smiles at all his enemies—and when they come too near him, he moves himself and dashes them to pieces. What cares he for them? He walks about them like a colossus—while little men walk under him and understand him not. His brow is made of iron, his heart is of flint—what does he care for man? No—if one universal hiss came up from the wide world, he would smile at it, for he would say—

***“He that has made his refuge God,
Shall find a most secure abode.”***

I am one of His elect. I am chosen of God and precious—and though the world cast me out, I fear not. Ah, you time-serving professors, some of you will bend like the willows! There are few oaken-Christians, nowadays, that can stand the storm—and I will tell you the reason. It is because you do not believe yourselves to be elect! The man who knows he is elect will be too proud to sin—he will not humble himself to commit the acts of common people. The believer in God’s Truth will say, “I compromise my principles? I change my Doctrines? I lay aside my views? I hide what I believe to be true? No! Since I know I am one of God’s elect, in the very teeth of all men I shall speak God’s Truth, whatever man may say.” Nothing makes a man so truly bold as to feel that he is God’s elect! He shall not quiver, he shall not shake—who knows that God has chosen him!

Moreover, Election will make us *holy*. Nothing under the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit can make a Christian more holy than the thought that he is chosen! “Shall I sin,” he says, “after God has chosen me? Shall I transgress after such love? Shall I go astray after so much loving kindness and tender mercy? No, my God, since You have chosen me, I will love You. I will live to You—

***“Since You, the everlasting God,
My Father have become.”***

I will give myself to You to be Yours forever, by Election and by Redemption, casting myself on You and solemnly consecrating myself to Your service.

And now, lastly, to the ungodly. What says Election to you? First, you ungodly ones, I will excuse you for a moment. There are many of you who do not like Election and I cannot blame you for it, for I have heard those preach Election who have sat down and said, “I have not one word to say to the sinner.” Now, I say you *ought* to dislike such preaching as that, and I do not blame you for it! But I say, take courage, take hope, O you Sinner, that there is Election! So far from dispiriting and discouraging you, it is a very hopeful and joyous thing that there is an Election. What if I told you, perhaps, none can be saved, none are ordained to eternal life? Would you not tremble and fold your hands in hopelessness and say, “Then how can I be saved, since none are elect?” But, I say there is a multitude of elect, beyond all counting—a host that no mortal can

number! Therefore, take heart, poor Sinner! Cast away your despondency—may you not be elect as well as any other?—for there is chosen an innumerable host! There is joy and comfort for you! Then, not only take heart, but go and try the Master! Remember, if you were not elect, you would lose nothing by it. What did the four lepers say? “Let us fall unto the host of the Syrians, for if we stay here, we must die, and if we go to them, we can but die.” O Sinner! Come to the Throne of electing mercy! You may die where you are. Go to God—and, even supposing He should spurn you, suppose His uplifted hand should drive you away—a thing impossible—yet you will not lose anything! You will not be more damned for that. Besides, supposing you are damned, you would at least have the satisfaction of being able to lift up your eyes in Hell and say, “God, I asked mercy of You and You would not grant it. I sought it, but You did refuse it.” That you shall never say, O Sinner! If you go to Him and ask Him, you shall receive—for He never has spurned one yet! Is not that hope for you? Though there is an allotted number, yet it is true that all who seek belong to that number! Go and seek—and if you should be the first one to go to Hell, tell the devils that you did perish thus—tell the demons that you are a castaway after having come as a guilty sinner to Jesus. I tell you it would disgrace the Eternal—with reverence to His name—and He would not allow such a thing! He is jealous of His honor and He could not allow a sinner to say that!

But ah, poor Soul! Do not think thus, that you can lose anything by coming! There is yet one more thought—do you love the thought of Election this morning? Are you willing to admit its justice? Do you say, “I feel that I am lost. I deserve it and if my brother is saved, I cannot murmur. If God destroys me, I deserve it, but if He saves the person sitting beside me, He has a right to do what He will with His own and I have lost nothing by it.” Can you say that honestly from your heart? If so, then the Doctrine of Election has had its right effect on your spirit and you are not far from the Kingdom of Heaven! You are brought where you ought to be, where the Spirit wants you to be—and being so this morning, depart in peace! God has forgiven your sins! You would not feel that if you were not pardoned—you would not feel that if the Spirit of God were not working in you! Rejoice, then, in this! Let your hope rest on the Cross of Christ. Think not on Election, but on Christ Jesus. Rest on Jesus—Jesus first, last and without end!

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.**

DIVINE LOVE AND ITS GIFTS

NO. 1096

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 16, 1873,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father,
which has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation
and good hope through Grace, comfort your hearts,
and establish you in every good word and work.”
2 Thessalonians 2:16, 17.***

THE Thessalonians had been much disturbed by the predictions of different persons that the day of Christ was at hand. There always have been pretenders to prophetic knowledge who have fixed dates for the end of the world and, by their fanaticism, have driven many into lunatic asylums and disturbed the peace of others. Some of this band had worried the saints at Thessalonica. The Apostle, after beseeching them not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled by such follies, went on to beg them not to be deceived by forged letters or pretended prophets and then prayed for them that they might possess abiding consolation which would keep them calmly persevering in holiness.

His prayer is singularly emphatic. He cries to the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and to God, even our Father, to comfort their hearts, that by such consolations they may be so confirmed that nothing may cause them to decline from any holy enterprise or testimony. Perhaps, during their fright, some of them had ceased from service, reckoning it vain to go on with anything when the world was so near its end. Therefore Paul would have them calmed in spirit that they might diligently persevere in their Christian course. That which frightens us from duty cannot be a good thing—true comfort establishes us in every good word and work.

It is an ill wind which blows no one any good. We owe to the needless alarms of the Thessalonians this prayer, which, while it was useful for them, is also instructive for us. And I pray that while we look into it we may be led into deep thoughts of the love of God and not into *thoughts* only, but into a personal enjoyment of that love, so that this morning the love of God may be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us. To hear of the love of God is sweet—to believe it most precious—but to *enjoy* it is Paradise below the skies! May God grant us a taste this morning.

I shall first call your earnest attention to the blessed fact recorded in our text, that “our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, loved us.” Then we will dwell upon the past manifestations of that love—“He has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace.”

And then we shall dwell for a while upon the prayer which Paul based upon this love and its manifestation, “that God would comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work.”

I. First, then, dear Brethren, let me ask your hearts, as well as your minds, to consider THIS GLORIOUS FACT—“Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, has loved us.” I cannot help repeating my frequent remark that the love of God is a theme more fit for the solitary contemplation of each person than for public utterance or explanation. It is to be felt, but it never can be uttered. Who can speak of love? In what language shall we sing its sweetness? No other word, nor set of words, can utter its meaning. You may go round about and make a long definitions, but you have not defined it—and he who never felt his heart glow with it will remain an utter stranger to it—depict it as you may.

Love must be felt in the *heart*. It cannot be learned from a dictionary. “God has loved us.” I want you not so much to follow what I shall have to say upon that wonderful fact as to try and think over this thought for yourselves. God has loved us! Drink into that Truth of God! Take the Word, lay it under your tongue and let it dissolve like a wafer made with honey till it sweetens all your soul. God has loved us! Let me remark that it does not say, “He pitied us.” That would be true, for, “like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him.” Pity is one degree below love and often leads to it, but it is not love—you may pity a person whom, apart from his sufferings, you would heartily dislike. You cannot endure the man, yet you are sorrowful that he should be so pained.

Nor does the text declare that God has had mercy upon us. I could comprehend that, yes, and bless God forever, because His mercy endures forever. It is, to my mind, quite understandable that the good and gracious God should be merciful towards His creatures—but it is a far greater thing that He should *love* them. Love is a feeling vastly more to be valued than mere mercy. Merciful is a man to his beast, but he does not love it. Merciful has many a man been to his enemies for whom he has had no degree of affection. But God does not merely pity us and have mercy upon us, He loves us! Neither can this word be bartered for that of benevolence. There is an aspect under which God is love to all His creatures because He is benevolent and wishes well towards all things that He has made, but Paul was not thinking of *that* when he said, “God has loved us, and given us everlasting consolation.”

A mother is not said to be *benevolent* towards her child, nor a husband coldly benevolent towards his bride—benevolence would be a poor, poor, substitute for love. Love is as infinitely beyond benevolence as the gold of kings in value exceeds the stone of the quarry. We have frequently heard theologians declare that the love of God towards His elect is the love of complacency and the statement, though perhaps true, is most frosty. One would not like to strike out the word, “love,” and put in its place the word,

“complacency.” It would be like setting up a globe of ice in the place of the sun. Love glows with sunlight—complacency has, at best, but cold moon-like beams.

No, we must hold to the words, “has loved us.” Truly, the Lord has a complacency in His people as He sees them in Christ, but He has much more than that. He is benevolent towards His people and towards *all* creatures, but He is much more than that towards *us*. He is merciful, He is pitiful, He is everything that is good, but He is more than that—He “has loved us.” You know, Mother, how you look upon that dear child of yours as you hold it in your arms. Why, it seems a part of yourself! You love it as you love yourself and your thoughts of it do not differ from your thoughts about your own welfare—the child is intertwined with your very being.

Now God also has united us to Himself by cords of love and bonds of affection. And He thinks of us as He thinks of Himself. I can express this, but I cannot explain it. Even now I feel much more inclined to sit down and weep for joy of heart that God could ever love me than to try and speak to you. He made the heavens and I am less than the smallest speck—yet He loves me! It is His eternal arm that has held up the universe in all ages and I am as a leaf of the forest, green awhile, but soon to grow yellow and to be buried with my fellows, yet the Eternal loves me and always will love me! With His great Infinite heart He loves me! As a God He loves me! Eternal loves me! It is a conquering thought, it utterly overcomes us and crushes us with its weight of joy. It bows us to the ground and casts us into a swoon of ecstasy when it is realized by the mind, “God, even our Father, has loved us.”

Now, permit the other side of the thought to shine upon your minds. The marvel is not merely that God has loved, but that he has loved *us*! And we are so insignificant, so frail, so foolish, let us add—for this increases the marvel—so *sinful* and therefore so uncomely, so ungrateful. We are so provoking, so willfully obstinate in returning to old sins again and so deserve to be abhorred and rejected! I can imagine the Lord’s love to the Apostles. We can sometimes think of His love to the early saints without any great wonder, and of His love to the Patriarchs and to the confessors and the martyrs, and to some eminently holy men whose biographies have charmed us—but that our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself God, even our Father, should have loved us is a world of wonders! And if I put it into the singular number and say, “Who loved *me* and gave Himself for *me*,” it shall ever stand first of all miracles to my soul’s apprehension that I should be the object of Divine affection! Dear Brothers and Sisters, I leave this meditation with you. I cannot speak of it anymore. I beseech you to baptize your souls into it and to let this one thought overwhelm you this day—“God, even our Father, has loved us.”

Let me carry your minds onward a little further. Remember that the eternal love of God is the great Fountain and Source from which proceed

all the spiritual blessings which we enjoy. If you stand at the source of a great river like the Thames you see nothing there but a tiny rivulet—the fact being that we do but by courtesy speak of that little brook as the source of the river—it is only a very partial source. A great river derives its volume of water from a thousand streams and is sustained by the whole of the watershed along which it flows. The imaginary fountainhead of a river is therefore but a small affair. But suppose the Thames had never borrowed from a single stream in all its course, but welled up at once a full-grown river from some one fountainhead—what a sight it would be!

Now the mercy of God to us in Christ Jesus owes nothing to any other stream. It leaps in all its fullness from the infinite depths of the love of God to us and if in contemplation you can travel to that great deep, profound and unfathomable, and see welling up all the floods of Covenant Grace which afterwards flow on forever to all the chosen seed, you have before you that which angels wonder at! If it would be marvelous to see one river leap up from the earth full-grown, what would it be to gaze upon a vast spring from which all the rivers of the earth should at once come bubbling up, a thousand of them born at a birth? What a vision it would be! Who can conceive it? And yet the love of God is that Fountain from which all the rivers of mercy which have ever gladdened our race—all the rivers of Grace in time and of glory hereafter—take their rise! My Soul, stand at that sacred Fountainhead and adore and magnify forever and ever, “God, even our Father, who has loved us.”

Now please notice the words of the text, for they are full of instruction. When speaking of this love, the Apostle joins our Lord Jesus Christ Himself with, “God, even our Father.” He honored the Deity of Jesus by speaking of Him side by side, and on terms of equality, with God the Father. But there is more here than this, for the words remind us that our Lord Jesus Christ and God, even our Father, act in holy concert in the matters which concern our welfare. Jesus Christ is the Gift of the Father’s love to us, but Jesus Himself loved His own and laid down His life for His flock. It is true that the Son loves us, but the Father Himself loves us, too. The love of God does not come to us from one Person of the blessed Trinity alone, but from all.

We ought to make no distinctions by way of preference in the love of either Father, Son, or Holy Spirit. One love dwells in the breast of the one undivided Three. We must adore and bless our Lord Jesus Christ and God, even our Father, with equal gratitude. Still notice that Jesus Christ is here put first and if the reason is requested, we find it in His mediatorial office. He is first to us in our *experience*. We began our dealings with Heaven, not by going to the Father, but to His Son, Jesus Christ. Our Lord has truly said, “No man comes unto the Father but by Me.” All attempts to get to commune with the Father, unless through the Son, will be futile. Election by the Father is not first to us, though it stands forth in order of time—redemption by the Son is our starting point.

Not at the Throne of Sovereignty, but at the Cross of dying Love our spiritual life must date its birth. Look to Jesus first, even our Lord Jesus Christ, and then follow after the Father. I am sure every converted soul here knows that this is the truth and I would exhort everyone who is seeking salvation to take care to observe God's order. You must remember that the love of the Father will never be perceived by us, nor felt in our hearts, till first of all we go to Jesus Christ, who is the one Mediator between God and man.

Note the words of the text again—The love of God to us gives to us the Lord Jesus to be our own Savior, Friend, Husband and Lord. By Grace we obtain possession of Jesus Christ—Christ is ours. Observe the Lord, “*Our* Lord Jesus Christ.” The Apostle might have written, “*The* Lord Jesus Christ,” but when he was testifying of the great love of God, the article would not have sufficed—he must use a word of *possession*. Faith looks to Jesus and finds salvation in that look. Then she grows into Assurance and having used her eyes to look with, she next employs her hands to grasp with. She takes hold of Jesus and says: “He is all my salvation, He is all my desire, He is my Christ.” And from then on Assurance speaks not of *the* Lord Jesus Christ, but of *our* Lord Jesus Christ!

I want you to drink into the love of God this morning from the silver pipe of this thought—Jesus Christ the Son of the eternal God, who is also a Man like yourself, is yours, altogether yours. If you are believers in Him He is from head to foot entirely yours! In all His offices, in all His attributes, in all that He is, in all that He has done, in all that He is doing, in all that He *shall* do, He is your Savior! Though you cannot take Him up in your arms as Simeon did, yet your faith can embrace Him with the same ecstasy and feel that you have seen God's salvation! Behold what manner of love is revealed in this, that God should give His only Son to us. God commends His love to us by this unspeakable Gift. Here love has reached its climax. Blessed be the love of God this morning and forevermore!

Observe that this love displays itself in another shape, for the text goes on to say, “And God, even our Father.” He might have said, “God, even *the* Father.” I have no doubt the text does refer to the Father as one Person of the blessed Trinity, but it runs thus—“even *our* Father.” A father! There is music in that word but not to a fatherless child—to him it is full of sorrowful memories. Those who have never lost a father can scarcely know how precious a relation a father is. A father, who is a father, indeed, is very dear! Do we not remember how we climbed his knee? Do we not remember the kisses we imprinted on his cheeks? Do we not recall, today, with gratitude the chidings of his wisdom and the gentle encouragements of his affection? We owe, ah, who shall tell how much we owe to our fathers according to the flesh—and when they are taken from us we lament their loss—and feel that a great gap is made in our family circle.

Listen, then, to these words, “Our Father, who is in Heaven.” Consider the Grace contained in the Lord's deigning to take us into the relationship

of children and giving us, with the relationship, the nature and the spirit of children, so that we say, "Abba, Father." Did you ever lie in bed with your limbs vexed with sore pains and cry, "Father, pity Your child?" Did you ever look into the face of death and as you thought you were about to depart, cry, "My Father, help me! Uphold me with Your gracious hand and bear me through the stream of death"? It is at such times that we realize the glory of the Fatherhood of God and in our feebleness learn to cling to the Divine strength and catch at the Divine love. It is most precious to think that God is our own Father!

There, now, I cannot talk about it. Upon some themes it would be hard to be silent, but here it is hard to speak. I can but exclaim, "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God!" And, having said that, what more remains? Before I turn from this gracious and fruitful topic of the love of God, I beg you to notice that it is no new thing, no affair of yesterday. "Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God, even our Father, has loved us." He does not tell us when this began and he could not have done so had he tried! He has loved us. Loved us when first we came to Him repenting. Loved us when we were spending our living with harlots. Loved us when we were at the swine trough. Loved us when from head to foot we were one mass of defilement.

O God, did You love me when I played the rebel? Did You love me when I could blaspheme Your name? What manner of love is this? Yes, and He loved us before we had a being! Loved us and redeemed us long before we existed! Loved us before this world had sprung out of nothingness! Loved us before the daystar first proclaimed the morning! Loved us before any of the angels had begun to cover their faces with their wings in reverent adoration! From everlasting, the Lord loved His people!

Now, again I say, drink into this Truth of God—feed on it. Expect us not to speak at length about it, but contemplate the fact—"Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, has loved us."

II. Now we shall turn to the second point which is THE MANIFESTATIONS OF THIS LOVE. They divide under two heads—"everlasting consolation" and, "good hope through Grace." First, God's love has given us everlasting consolation. The Lord found us wretched. When the arrows of conviction were sticking in our hearts we were bleeding to death and what we needed, first of all, was to have these wounds staunch. Therefore the Lord came to us with consolations. Do you remember the time when the blood of Jesus Christ flowed warm over your wounds and made them cease to bleed? Have you forgotten the hour when you heard the voice of the Lord saying in the Word, "Whoever believes in Him is not condemned," and you were enabled to see Jesus Christ as your Substitute suffering in your place—and you knew that your sins were forgiven for His name's sake? You have not forgotten that, have you?

Well, that was one of the everlasting consolations which He gave you in the time of your distress. Since that day you have had your sorrows—perhaps you have seldom been long without them—but consolation has always followed on the heels of tribulation and your main consolation has continued to be where it was at the first—you still find the sweetest joy on earth to be looking unto Jesus! When sin rebels you put it down by the same Grace which overthrew it at the first. Conscience starts and accuses you and you answer its accusations with that sweet word, “Jesus died for our transgressions, and rose again for our justification.”

The greatest delight of all is that this consolation is an *everlasting* one—other sources of comfort dry up—friends have called to visit you in times of distress and have suggested pleasant thoughts that have whiled away a mournful hour. But your griefs have returned again and the passing comfort has been of no further service to you. When a man sees that Jesus Christ took all his sins and was punished for them so that the man, himself, can never be punished again—when he understands that wondrous mystery of Substitution—then he gets a consolation which serves him at all times and in all weathers! Whatever may occur to him he flies to this Refuge—and even though he may have fallen into great sin, he knows that the Atonement was not made for sham sin, but for real sin—and he resorts again to that same Fountain filled with blood where he was once washed, resting fully assured that it will be equal to the washing of him as long as he shall be capable of sin. “Everlasting consolation!”

There are some here present who have tried this consolation for 40 or 50 years—dear Brothers and Sisters, I am sure you do not find it is any the weaker, but, on the contrary, you understand more of its strength! You are more happy today in falling back upon the love of God than you were. And at this moment you feel that in the absence of all other comforts it would suffice you to know that everlasting consolation which is given you in Christ Jesus. Let us run over, for a moment, some of our consolations. The first one is, as I have already said, that God has forgiven us all our transgressions because Jesus died in our place. The next consolation is that God loves us and can never change in His love—“Whom once He loves He never leaves, but loves them to the end.”

Then we have the grand consolation that the promises of God do not depend upon our faithfulness for their fulfillment, but are all established and made yes and amen in Christ Jesus. We have this consolation—that our salvation does not depend upon ourselves! As we fell and were lost by the first Adam’s unrighteousness, so we have risen and are saved through the second Adam’s righteousness, beyond all risk and fear of perishing. We stand upon a firm Foundation, not on the shifting sand of creature obedience and faithfulness, but upon the eternal Rock of a world which Christ has completed and over which He sang that joyous paeon—“It is finished”—before He entered into His rest.

We have, also, this consolation, that all things work together for good for us who love God and are the called according to His purpose. And again, this other consolation, that as long as Christ exists we are as safe, for He has said, "Because I live, you shall live also." We also have this consolation, that even though we shall sleep in the dust for awhile, yet He has said it, "I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am that they may behold My Glory." In fact, to tell you all the consolations which God has given us would need many an hour! And fully to enjoy them will occupy your entire lives, for *everlasting* consolation is not to be spread out before you and done with in the short space of a discourse. Thus much upon one of the first manifestations of Divine love.

The next is, He has given us "good hope." Consolation for the present, hope for the future. "Good hope," the hope when days and years are past we all shall meet in Heaven. The hope that whatever the future may be, it is full of bliss for us. The hope of immortality for our souls and of resurrection for our bodies, for when Christ shall come, we, also, that sleep in Jesus, shall come with Him. The hope of reigning with Jesus Christ on earth in the days of His triumph and reigning with Him forever and ever in endless felicity. This is our hope, a good hope, for it is based and founded on a good foundation. A fanatic's hope will pass away with the vapors which produced it, but the hope of the true Believer is good because it is founded in Truth and in Divine Grace.

"A good hope in Grace," is the Greek. If I believed in my own merit and based my hopes on them, I should be only self-deceived and blinded, for what merit have I? But if my hope is fixed, alone, in Grace and that is the sphere in which my consolation and hope are found, then, since God is assuredly gracious, since He has made a Covenant of Grace with all Believers. Since He has ratified the Covenant by the gift of His own Son and since He has sworn by His holiness, ours is a good hope. Since God will be as good as His Word, our hope in Grace is good. Here stands the fact—it is written, "he that believes in the Lord Jesus has everlasting life." God has covenanted with that man that He shall be saved *eternally*, and since God cannot lie, the believing man must and shall be saved.

Why is it, do you think, that some Believer's hopes flicker? Because they get away from a hope in Grace and look towards themselves and their own merits. "Oh," they say, "I have not prayed as I did. I do not feel as I did, therefore, my hope declines." Friend, was your hope founded on your prayers? Was your hope grounded in part upon your feelings? If so, it may well quiver and tremble! One of these days it will go down altogether, for the foundation is not able to bear its weight. But if my hope is fixed on this—that God has promised and cannot change His promise—I have a good foundation to build on. He will not alter the thing that has gone forth out of His lips. He has said, "he that believes and is baptized shall be saved," and He cannot change His own Word! Therefore every Believer has the promise of eternal life.

“But,” says one, “it surprises me to hear you talk so,” Does it? It much more surprises me that I may so speak! It is marvelous to the last degree that God, even our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ should have given us such a hope as this! I never feel at all astonished at some people’s hope when I find that it is this—the hope that if they behave themselves they will get to Heaven—the hope that if they are faithful, God will be faithful. Why! Any simpleton might have imagined such a hope as that! But a Divine Revelation was needed to set before us the great hope of the Gospel and it needs Grace-given faith to believe that God will not change nor lie and, therefore, must save all those who have believed in His Son Jesus Christ. He cannot suffer one of the sheep of Christ to perish, or His promise will be of no effect.

“If I believed that,” says one, “it would cause me to lead a careless life.” Perhaps it would, but it does not lead true Believers to do so. On the contrary, we feel that if God loves us so and deals so generously with us, and takes us right away from the whips of Sinai and the Covenant of the Law, and places us entirely under Grace, we love Him as we never loved before! And because of that love, sin is hateful to us and we shun it as a deadly thing! The Law which *you* think would drive men to holiness has never done it, while the Grace which you imagine would lead us to licentiousness binds us with solemn bonds of consecration to serve our God 10 times more than before!

Suppose some one were to tell my children that the continuance of my love to them will depend entirely upon their good behavior. My children would repel the suggestion with indignation. They would answer, “we know better! You speak falsely! Our father will always love us.” Even so, the Lord’s children know that their Father’s love is Immutable. For our transgressions, our heavenly Father will visit us with the rod, but never with the sword. He will be angry with us and chide us, but He will love us just as much when He is angry as He did before. And as long as ever we are His sons—and that we always must be, for sonship is not a relationship which will ever change—so long will He love us.

Do you think that children become disobedient because their relationship is unchangeable? I never heard of such a thing! They have many reasons for being disobedient within their own little wayward hearts, but no child disobeys his father because he always must be his father’s child, or because his father loves him! I have heard of one child who said to another, “Come with me, John, and rob such an orchard. Your father is so kind he will not beat you if you are found out.” The little lad drew himself up and said, “Do you think because my father is kind to me that, therefore, I will go and vex him?” This is the holy reasoning of love—it draws no license from Grace, but rather feels the strong constraints of gratitude leading it to holiness.

It may be that in unregenerate hearts the love of God, if it could come there, would be turned into an excuse for sin, but it is not so to us, my

Brothers and Sisters. Since the Grace of God has made us new creatures in Christ Jesus, the love of God constrains us not to sin but to walk in holiness all our days. Blessed be His name, then! We are not ashamed to rejoice that God, even our Father, has loved us, and given us everlasting consolation and good hope in Grace.

III. The last thing is THE PRAYER flowing out of all this. The Apostle prays, and we pray this morning, that God would comfort your hearts. This is not spoken of everybody, but of such as believe in the Lord Jesus. It is of the utmost importance that your hearts should be comforted. Cheerfulness, habitual calm, peace of mind, content of spirit—these ought to be the very atmosphere you breathe—and Paul thinks it so important that he prays that God Himself, and Christ Himself, may comfort your hearts.

I know you have many troubles—how very few are altogether without them! Some of you are very poor, others suffer heavy losses in business and exercises of soul, with much trial in the world and in the Church. I pray the good Lord comfort your hearts, speaking not to your ears only, but to your innermost nature. “Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” Why, surely, if you believe that God loves you, it ought to make your heart glad! And if He gives you everlasting consolation you cannot be otherwise than happy!

I remember well when I was under a sense of sin looking at a dog and wishing I were such as he, that I might die without fear of judgment hereafter, for it seemed so awful a thing to live on forever as a sinner. But now, on the other hand, I have sometimes looked at the happiest animals and I have said to myself, “Ah, but yonder poor creature does not know the love of God and how thankful I am to God that He has given me the capacity to know Him. Why, if I could hear of an angel in Heaven who did not know the love of God I should pity him! There are kings and mighty emperors who know not the Lord’s love and what poor, pitiable creatures they are! But as for you who rejoice in Divine love, I would have you go into the darkest alley, if you are forced to live there, and undergo the most wearisome toil if that is your lot—yes, and go home to a persecuting husband, or a churlish father and yet hear melodious music ringing in your hearts for—“God, even our Father, which has loved us, has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace.” This is enough to make the wilderness rejoice and blossom as the rose.

The next part of the prayer is that the “Lord would establish us in every good word and work.” I see that the most approved editions of the original have it, “in every good work and word,” putting the best first, and the thought is this, that God would make His people so happy that they would never have an inclination to leave off any good work or word. Depression of spirit often leads to slackness of hand. No doubt many, through sad hearts, have ceased to labor for Christ. A lack of gladness has restrained their activity.

Now, the Apostle would not have any one of us cease from serving God in good works or in good words through a lack of consolation. Does God love you? Do you know it? How, then, can you cease from any good work? Did enemies abuse you for speaking the Truth of God? Did you say it because you felt you loved God? Say it again, Man! Say it again! Did you work in your class without success? Did you do it because God loved you and you wanted to show that you loved Him? Go on, Brother! Go on, Sister! Success or no success! God loves you and He has given you everlasting consolation, therefore be established in your good work.

Have you been accustomed to sing His praises and has the devil said, "Leave off! Leave off!" Have you been accustomed to rebuke sin and to tell others about the Savior in your own poor way, and are you getting low in spirit? Do you doubt your own interest in Christ? Have you lost the comfort you once enjoyed? O, dear Brother, come back to the old original source of happiness—"Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, which has loved us, and given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace." After refreshing yourself with this blessed Truth of God, you will return with renewed energy to good words and works and continue in them steadfast, unmovable—till life's allotted service shall come to a close.

Now and then we become greatly disheartened about the condition of the Church. I know I do, I see everywhere Popery spreading, or else rationalism—these rival evils are devouring our country. There is far too little prayerfulness and too little Gospel preaching. And at times one is apt to cry out, like Elijah, that no one is left who is faithful to Jehovah—all knees are bowed to Baal! We must not give way to this feeling, dear Friends, for, "God, even the Father, has loved us." When the disciples were too much elated with their success and came back to Jesus and said, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us," Jesus said, "Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, but rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven."

And today, when we are depressed with great anxieties and come back to our Master, and say, "Lord, the devil is getting the upper hand over us," He repeats to us the same admonition, "Nevertheless do not be depressed about this, but rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven and your Father has given you everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace." Establish your hearts, then, beloved Brothers and Sisters! Be "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." Things are not what they seem. Dark nights are but the prelude to bright days. The rain shall be followed by the clear shining. When the Truth of God retreats, she only retires to leap to a greater victory! Though each wave, as it comes up upon the shore, may die and you may think that there is no progress, yet the tide is coming in—even Jehovah's tide of everlasting Truth which shall cover all the earth!

Be not discouraged! Go to your God. Get away, every man, from your circumstances and from your selves and get to your Savior and your Shepherd! And there, like sheep in the pasture, lie down to feed. And then, like sheep obedient to the Shepherd, rise up and follow Him where ever He goes. God bless you in this. Perhaps while I have been preaching, some unconverted person here has been saying—"There is nothing for me." Do you remember, dear Friend, what the Syro-Phoenician woman said? She was called a dog by the Savior and that is what you think you are, but she said, "The dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the Master's table."

Now, if I called myself a dog, would there be anything in this subject that I might dare to lay hold upon, because, like a crumb, it fell from the table? Yes. It seems to me there is. Evidently God deals with His own people in a way of Grace, for it is said, He has "given" us—it is altogether of His free love and it is added—"through Grace," or absolute favor. The consolations of the Lord are the gifts of mercy and love. Well, then, if He is gracious to one, why should He not be gracious to another? And if those who sit at His table were once unclean, filthy and depraved, and yet the Sovereign Grace of God called them and brought them into the banquet of love, why should it not light on me also?

If it is not of him that wills nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy—why should He not show mercy to me, whoever I may be? Why not to me? But is there a door through which I can come to the gracious Lord? Yes, there is, and it is the other crumb in the text, for it begins with, "our Lord Jesus Christ." My Soul, that is where you must begin this morning! There is the Lord Jesus Christ! I see Him hanging on the Cross bleeding for the sins of others, with hands stretched wide that He may receive sinners to His heart. And that heart has a channel made down to it by the spear, that prayers and tears may find an easy way into His sympathies.

Come, my Soul, come now and tell your case to Jesus. Fellow Sinner, come and confess your sins to Jesus and then throw yourself at His feet with this upon your heart and lips—"If I must perish, I will perish clinging to the Cross, declaring to all men that my hope is stayed on Him whom God has set forth to be the propitiation for the sins of man." You will never perish there, Sinner! Go there at once and be safe! God help you for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 Thessalonians 2, 3.

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FREE GRACE A MOTIVE FOR FREE GIVING

NO. 1542

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 13, 1880,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

ON BEHALF OF THE FREE HOSPITALS OF LONDON.

*“Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God, even our Father,
which has loved us and has given us everlasting
consolation and good hope through Grace,
comfort your hearts and establish you in
every good word and work.”
2 Thessalonians 2:16, 17.*

THE Thessalonian saints had been much persecuted and afflicted and they had exhibited great faith, so much so that Paul says, “We ourselves glory in you in the Church of God for your patience and faith.” As if they had not enough trouble coming from the outside, there sprang up in their midst certain hot-headed teachers who declared that the Day of Christ was immediately at hand. The coming of the Lord is the most grand hope of the Church and it is an evidence of the extreme power of error to poison and pervert the Truth of God that a hope which is our brightest consolation can be so twisted as to cause the saints to be “shaken in mind” and troubled.

But so it appears to have been with the Thessalonians. They were perplexed with mysterious rumors which the zealots probably supported by a misinterpretation of the Apostle's own language in his former letter to them. It would appear that they were tempted to leave their regular habits of life—some of them even neglected their business upon the theory that there was no need to attend to it because the world was so speedily to be at an end. This gave an occasion for “busybodies” to cease from working and create great disquietude among the more sober members and, therefore, Paul wrote them this second letter with the earnest intent that they might be established in the Truth of God, kept from evil and that disorderly walking might be repressed and that the Church might be at peace. Paul felt that it was of the utmost importance that this honorable Church should be at rest and should not lack consolation either as to its bitter persecutions or its internal difficulties.

My subject, this morning, leads me to make this the first point to be dwelt upon—it is most important that Believers should enjoy consolation. When I have, for a while, spoken upon that, I would with delight expatiate upon the fact that this consolation is most freely provided and bestowed in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ—and it is from this subject that I purpose to draw a practical inference which may help the collection for the hospitals, namely, that the freeness with which these consolations are given to us should lead us to a holy benevolence towards others who need consolation.

I. First, then, IT IS OF THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE THAT BELIEVERS SHOULD ENJOY CONSOLATION. We must not say that it does not matter whether we are doubting or believing, whether we are sighing or rejoicing—it *does* matter a great deal. Every commander knows that if he has not his soldiers in good heart, there may be a great many of them and they may be well trained for war, but the battle is not likely to be won. Courage is essential to valor. Much depends upon the case in which a man finds himself upon the eve of conflict. If the soldier has no stomach for the fight, as our forefathers were known to say, he will make a sorry display when the tug of war comes on.

The Lord delights not to see His people with their heads hanging down like bulrushes, depressed and dismayed. His Word to them is, “Be strong; fear not.” He is “the blessed God” and He would have those who know His glorious Gospel to live a life of blessedness, that they may the better serve Him. Does not His Spirit say, “Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say, Rejoice”? Has He not given the Comforter, that He may continually console us? Believers will far better answer the Lord’s purpose and bring more glory to His name if they are filled with peace and joy in believing, than they will if they yield to despondency, for the Scripture says, “the joy of the Lord is your strength.”

I am sure that the Lord would have us be of good courage, for its importance is implied in the very existence of our text. It is the prayer of an Inspired man. Paul wrote not only at the dictate of brotherly love, but under the guidance of the Holy Spirit when he penned this prayer, “Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God, even our Father, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.” The Holy Spirit moved the man of God to breathe this desire and to put it on record that it might be the desire of all good men as long as ever the Epistle should be read and that all Christian men should value consolation, even as it was valued by one who was a tender lover of the flock of Christ.

It would be great presumption on our part to lightly esteem that which was a prime matter of concern with so instructed and experienced a teacher as the Apostle to the Gentiles. Paul puts this prayer into a very remarkable shape. To my mind it is expressed in a deeply solemn form, for he writes, “Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.” Was there need for that word, “Himself”? Does it not make it very emphatic that he seems to call upon the Lord Jesus to give them comfort, not by any intermediate agency, but in His own Person and by His own power? It is so essential that we should be comforted that Jesus, even our own Lord Jesus Christ, is entreated, Himself, to become the Consolation of His people. Is not that a weighty matter which leads the reverent heart of Paul thus to plead?

Nor is this all, for he goes on to say, “and God, even our Father,” as if God the Father, Himself, must undertake the work of cheering His people, so necessary was it that they should be at rest. No one else could give them such comfort as they required. But God could do it and, therefore, “God, even our Father,” must be specially invoked. The prayer is that the Lord Jesus and the Father who are One may join in the most necessary work of comforting the hearts of the tried Thessalonian saints. It reminds

me of Paul's solemn benediction in the opening of the Epistle, "Grace unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

This prayer of Inspiration, couched in such solemn terms and directed so earnestly to the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and to God, even our Father, proves the importance and necessity of saints being filled with comfort. Nor is this the only instance in the Epistle where this desire is expressed, for a little farther on, in the third chapter, at the 16th verse, we have it in other words but with equal forcefulness—"Now the Lord of Peace, Himself, give you peace always by all means." I do not know that in one single sentence there could be compressed a more intense desire that they may be at peace. "The Lord" is invoked and He is styled, "the Lord of Peace," that all His Divine Majesty may be seen and His peace-making power may be displayed.

"The Lord of Peace" is entreated to give peace, not by His angels nor by His ministers, nor by His Providence, but, "Himself," to give peace—and this is asked for "always"—"give you peace *always*." Peace in the cool of the evening is not enough—it is needed at all parts of the day, in all the days of the year, in every period of life, in every place and under all circumstances! The wish is expressed with great breadth in the words, "Give you peace always by all means"—if it cannot be brought by one means, let it be by another, but somehow or other may you enjoy the peace which the Lord, alone, can create!

I cannot imagine that such a prayer as this would have been placed among the Scriptures of Truth, which are to be our guide till the Lord comes, unless it had been of the utmost importance that we should enjoy peace of mind. The Apostle almost hints at one reason for this strong necessity, for in one word he lets us see that it is a vital blessing because it affects the Christian's heart. His expression is, "Comfort your hearts." It is well to have strong hands—how else shall we labor? It is well to have a firm feet, how else shall we stand? Yet these are secondary matters as compared with a healthy *heart*. A disease of the heart is an injury to the whole man. If anything goes amiss at the fountain, the streams of life soon feel it. The entire manhood depends upon the heart—hence the need of comfort for the heart and the value of the promise, "He shall strengthen your heart."

It is a calamity when the springs of action are weakened and the spirit is made to sink. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?" Touch the flesh where you will, but spare the brain and the heart, for these are the man so nearly that he is wounded to the quick when these are hurt. When the spirits begin to sink, then the waters have come in, even into the soul. Hence our Lord said to His disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled." However your house may be troubled, however your bodily frame may be troubled, "let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me." Faith upholds the heart and enables the man to bear up under pressure—*faith*, I say and nothing else.

I am sure, dear Friends, you will clearly see the need that we should be comforted, because the lack of comfort will grievously affect the action of the heart and mar the entire life force of our being. See you to it, then,

that you lift up the hands that hang down and confirm the feeble knees by saying to them that are of a feeble heart, "Be strong, fear not." Ask that the heart may rejoice in God, for then the roughness of the way and the stress of the weather will be matters of small concern. Beloved Brethren, this confidence is necessary to prevent impatience and other evils. Possibly it was the lack of comfort which led certain of the Thessalonians to preach the immediate coming of the Lord—their impatience excited the wish and the wish led on to the assertion.

When men lose the present comfort of plain Gospel Doctrines they are very apt to begin speculating and in carnal heat foretelling the coming of the Lord. They left that patient waiting which is our *duty*, for a fevered prophesying which is nowhere encouraged in the Word of God. Hence the Apostle said to them in the fifth verse of the third chapter, "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patient waiting for Christ." A man does not wait patiently when he is low in spirit and weary at heart. Let a man feel his own heart right with God and be at peace and he can quietly wait until Christ comes, even though the Lord shall delay His coming for many a day. But when everything is tossed about and our hope grows dim and our fellowship is broken and our zeal is burning low, we jump at anything which will end the struggle and enable us to avoid further effort.

Laziness and despondency lead many to cry, "Why are His chariots so long in coming?" just as idle workmen long for Saturday night. You think time too long and life too long, for you are not happy where your Lord has placed you and you are eager to rush out of the field of service into the chamber of rest. This will not do, my Brothers and Sisters, either for you or for me. We must be braced up to further labor. We must receive comfort in our spirit that we may be able, patiently, to toil on, however long life may be and however long our Lord may delay. For if not—if we grow impatient—we may resort to rash fanatical action as I have already shown you that certain Thessalonians did. Under the idea that the Lord was coming, they neglected their daily calling and became busybodies, gadding about from house to house and loafing upon others who did not pretend to be quite so spiritual.

They were mere star-gazers, looking for the Advent with their mouths open and their eyes turned up, being evermore in grievous danger of falling into a ditch! Paul bade them get to work and eat their own bread, quoting himself as an example, for he had worked with labor and travail night and day that he might not be chargeable to them. My Friend, if you are growing impatient for the Day of the Lord, I pray that comfort of heart may cool you. Tomorrow morning take down the shop shutters and sell your goods as if Christ were not coming at all, for should He come, you will be all the more fit to meet Him for being engaged in your calling.

If I knew that the Lord would come tomorrow I should attend to my regular Monday duties and on no account leave one of them to go and stand at the window, looking for wonders! Whether the Master comes tomorrow or in a thousand years, your wisest course is to follow your calling in His fear and for His sake. We ought to do our work better under the impression that perhaps He may come and find us at it! We may not ne-

glect our duty under pretense of His appearing. Of this, however, be sure, you will not patiently wait if you are not happy. You will not go on conscientiously plodding, doing the same work, walking in the same regular way unless your heart is stayed upon God! You will run after this novelty or that if your mind is not resting in Jesus. Hence the devout prayer of our text that God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, may comfort our hearts and establish us in every good word and work.

Once more, I am sure this comfort is eminently desirable because it promotes fruitfulness. The Apostle more than hints at this—"Comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work." When we are not happy in the Lord we do not give ourselves heartily to His service. We grow impatient and then we need the exhortation of the 13th verse of the third chapter, "But you, Brethren, be not weary in well doing." If we feel that Jesus is ours, that all things are working for our good and that eternal Glory is secured to us by a sure Covenant, we are moved by gratitude to complete consecration, for the love of Christ constrains us. Doubts and disquietudes take us off from our Master's work, but when He gives us rest, we take His yoke upon us cheerfully and find in it yet further rest unto our souls.

When our hearts sing, our hands toil and we cannot do enough for our Redeeming Lord! Right gladly do we present ourselves as living sacrifices to Him who "loved us and gave Himself for us." Thus, too, we are established in our work and bound with fresh bonds to it, so that we delight to labor on till He shall come who shall say, "Well done, good and faithful servant: enter you into the joy of your Lord." So it all comes to this—we who are constitutionally despondent must not give way to depression—we must cry to God to help us by the Divine Comforter. We must aim at being cheerful Christians. We have abundant reasons for being cheerful, for the Father Himself loves us and has given us everlasting consolation in Christ Jesus. Do not let us be so unwise and so ungrateful as to neglect these consolations of the Spirit.

If the table is sumptuously spread, why should we be hungry? If the fountain flows so freely, why should we be thirsty? Moreover, if we wear of a dark countenance, we may distress the weak ones in the family of God. It may be that we shall spread the infection of depression among our fellow Believers and this must not be. Let us wear our sackcloth on our loins if we must wear it, but let us not wave it in everybody's face lest we offend against the generation of the Lord's people! Is it not clear from the Word, Brethren, that we shall be damaged if we give way to apprehension and dismay? Is it not apparent that we are invigorated, equipped and prepared for our Lord's use when we are strong in the Lord and the power of His might? Therefore let us breathe earnestly to God the desire that His everlasting consolation may be laid home to our spirits and that our hearts may be comforted at this moment.

II. We shall now turn to the second point of our meditation which is this—GOSPEL CONSOLATION IS MOST FREELY BESTOWED. I want, in the chief place, to call your attention to the manner in which all the way through, the freeness of Divine Consolation is set before us by the Apostle. First, observe that the consolations bestowed upon Believers are most free

because they are described as a gift. “Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God, even our Father, which has loved us and has given us everlasting consolation.” The old proverb has it, “Nothing is freer than a gift.” Every blessing that we receive from God comes as a gift.

We have purchased nothing—what have we to purchase it with? We have earned nothing—what work did we ever do that could deserve everlasting consolation from the hand of the great Lord? Comfort in Christ is an absolutely free, spontaneous gift of Sovereign Grace, given not on account of anything we have done, or ever shall do, but because the Lord has a right to do as He wills with His own—therefore does He select unto Himself a people to whom the free gift of His consolation shall be given! If you have any comfort at this time, my Brothers and Sisters, it is God’s gift to you. If you triumph in God, it is God who has given you your holy joy, therefore bless and praise Him from whom such a gift has come.

The freeness of this gift is seen in every part of it. The consolation given us of God is very complete, but it is as manifestly free as it is evidently perfect. Notice its completeness, I pray you. It covers the past with these golden words, “which has loved us.” As for the present, it is enriched with this Truth of God, “has given us everlasting consolation.” And as for the future, it is glorified with this blessing, “and good hope through Grace.” Here is a *triple* comfort, a consolation in three worlds and under each aspect it is a free favor! He “has loved us”—why is this? Come, you wise men, pry into the ancient past and tell me why God loved His chosen!

Stand and gaze as long as you will into the eternal mind and say to yourself, why did God make this choice of love? The sole reply out of the excellent Glory falls from Jesus’ lips—“Even so Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.” Shall not the bridegroom elect his own bride? Shall not the King of kings dispense His favors as He wills? He has loved us “from before the foundation of the world”—a love so ancient cannot have been born of any *human* cause. Eternal love is a flame enfolding itself—it borrows no fuel from without, but lives upon itself! He says, “I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” But why that everlasting love, we cannot tell. Beloved, by Divine Love the mysterious past is made to glow with the Glory of God—its light is like a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.

Once, when we looked back into the past, we saw the blackness of our guilt and the hole of the pit from which we were lifted. But now we behold a silver stream of mercy flowing from the Throne of God and of the Lamb and we track it to the eternal purpose of love and the Covenant of Grace. Gaze as you can into light ineffable, but even with the eye of faith all that you can discern in the ages which are past is this word which has a splendor about it beyond compare—the word, “LOVE.” In eternity the Lord loved us! Oh, how free is this! How much we owe for it! The past is bright with love, with love most free!

As for the present, “He has given us everlasting consolation.” We have it *now*. Christ is His people’s Christ *today*—the consolation of Israel even now. The pardon of sin is ours; the perfect righteousness of Christ is ours; life in Christ is ours; union to Christ is ours; marriage to Christ is ours. Glory with Christ shall be ours by-and-by, but even now we have the ear-

nest of it in the Spirit which dwells within us and shall be with us forever. All this is assuredly a gift—how could it be otherwise? We could never have enjoyed this everlasting consolation today if Free Grace and dying love had not brought it to us. Bless, then, the Giver!

As for the future, what of that? Darkness lowers the clouds and the storm mutters from afar and we tremble lest in the end of life, when physical force decays, we may be overtaken with a storm in the article of death—but this covers all—we have “good hope through Grace.” The Scriptures of Truth have assured us that the great Shepherd will be with us in the valley of death shade and that after death there is a resurrection and with our risen body we shall behold the King in His beauty when He shall stand, in the latter days, upon the earth and we shall, in our perfect manhood, dwell forever in His Glory. This is so good a hope that it fills all the future with music. This, too, is a gift. There is not a trace of legal claim in it—it comes not by way of reward, but of Divine favor.

Thus the past, the present, the future are all rich with the Lord’s own generous gifts and in nothing can we trace a single consolation to anything but Free Grace. Lest we should make any mistake about these consolations coming to us most freely, the Apostle mentions One from whose hand they come, from whom nothing has ever come in other manner but that of manifest Grace. He mentions, “our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.” Oh it charms me to think that He should comfort me! When Jesus Christ begins to draw near a man’s soul, his joy begins. But when the Lord sets Himself down steadily to console His Brethren, I guarantee you it is done in heavenly style, for He will not fail nor be discouraged! He will wash our feet if the weariness is there. He will give His bosom for a pillow for our head if the pain is there.

He has said, “I will make all his bed in his sickness,” so that if the woe comes from disease, He will cheer us there. He will anoint our eyes with salve if the eyes are failing and bind up the broken heart if that is bleeding. Lest we fall, He will put underneath us the everlasting arms and lest we are wounded, He will spread over us the shadow of His wings. He will be all to us that He is in Himself—judge you what that is. His whole being—His Godhead in its grandeur, His Humanity in its tenderness He has given to us. He lays Himself out for us and be sure of this—He will not leave us comfortless! He will come to us. He is such a blessed Sympathizer in all grief, such a mighty Helper in all distress that if He comes to our rescue, we may be sure that our deliverance will be accomplished.

But, Brothers and Sisters, at the sight of our loving Lord we feel that it would be treason to impute His benefits to any motive but that of Grace. Is He not full of Grace and Truth? The Law came by Moses, not by Jesus. His coming was not to judge and to censure—“God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world,” much less did He send His Son to condemn His people! There *will* come a Day of Judgment, but just now the Son of God sits upon His Throne to grant pardons and to give Grace to help in times of need. His Throne is a Throne of Grace and His scepter is that of love. We know that the comforts of the Gospel must be graciously free since they are brought to us by Jesus Christ Himself.

Then the Apostle solemnly adds, “and God our Father.” There seems to me to be a peculiar touch of sweetness about this. It is not, “God *the* Father”—which notes His relation to Jesus, but *our* Father, which sets forth His relation to *us*. We love God the Father! Unto the Father be Glory forever and ever! But as “*our* Father” He comes nearer to us and gladdens our hearts. Now, a father does not pay wages to his children. His gifts to them are freely bestowed out of the love of his fatherly heart. What father expects to be paid for what he does for his sons and daughters?

Thus we see that the everlasting consolations of the Gospel—coming to us because we are the children of God—are quite free from anything which makes them a hire or a debt. And they come to us in the freest possible manner as spontaneous donations of our great Father, whose delight it is to give good gifts to them that ask Him. Cannot you look up, you desponding ones, at this moment and cry, “Our Father”? Our first hymn greatly refreshed *my* spirit just now, for I felt very heavy till the Holy Spirit comforted me with it—

***“If in my Father’s love I share a filial part,
Send down Your Spirit, like a dove,
To rest upon my heart.”***

And I felt that I could urge that argument and in my inmost heart I pleaded it before the Lord—Oh, if I am, indeed, Your child and You are a Father to me, then deal with me as with a son and let me feel Your Spirit resting within my bosom, that I may know myself to be Yours beyond a doubt! O how sweet to feel the Spirit’s witness and to cry, “Abba, Father”!

Now, Beloved, the spirit of adoption is never a spirit of bondage or legality. It never boasts of human merit, but its one song is, “Free Grace and dying love.” May our Father’s free favor make your hearts sing concerning this and I know that this will be your tune—

***“Behold what wondrous Grace
The Father has bestowed
On sinners of a mortal race
To call them sons of God!”***

Look at the text again and you will see how explicit Paul is upon one point. To make us see the freeness of those consolations which come to God’s troubled people, he writes it, “Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God, even our Father, which has loved us.” Divine Love is the foundation of our consolation! No everlasting consolation could have visited our hearts if the Father and the Son had not loved us! I always feel inclined to sit down when my ministry causes me to come across the great Truth of God’s love to His people because it is not so much a Truth of God to *spea*k upon with the tongue as to enjoy in silence in the heart.

I can fully understand that God should pity my misery. I can comprehend God’s caring for my weakness. But I am filled with sacred amazement when I am told that He loves me! Loves me? What can there be in me for the Holy Spirit to love! Brothers and Sisters, what can there be in you that Jesus should set His heart on you? He has made us and not we ourselves—does the potter fall in love with his own clay? Will he die to save a broken vessel? There were other creatures far fairer. Why were angels passed by? Wonder of wonders that the Lord should love us poor no-

bodies, defiled with sin, with such evil tempers and such strange natures! Ah me, with such *estranged* natures, which is far worse!

That the Lord our God should love us. That Christ should love us so as actually to have died for us! Jesus so loved us that He espoused our nature, occupied our dwelling place, the world! He took our burden of sin, carried our cross and laid in our grave! They say that love is blind—I will not say that our Redeemer’s love is of that sort—far rather will I say that it must have been wonderfully quick-sighted love to have been able to perceive anything lovable in us! Yet is His love the source and fountain of all our mercies. He has loved us! There can be no question that this is free, for love is unpurchaseable!

If a man should give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly despised. Love goes not in the market, it knows nothing of price, or barter—it must go forth unbribed, unhired, or not at all—in all cases but far more in the instance of the Eternal Love of the great Father and His only-begotten Son! Price and purchase for Divine Love? Wherein would such an insinuation fall short of blackest blasphemy? Yet again, observe that as if the Apostle feared that we should get away from this Doctrine of Grace, he added, “He has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace.”

Some people do not like the sound of that word, “Grace.” It is too Calvinistic. We do not care what you call it, but it is the very best word in the Bible next to the name of God our Savior! It is from the Grace of God that all our hope begins. Man as a rebel can never earn anything but damnation through his own merits—Grace must reign or man must die. Every blessing that can ever come to condemned sinners such as we are must come because God’s great love wills it to come because, “He is gracious and full of compassion.” All other roads are broken up! Grace alone bridges the chasm and makes a way for traffic between Heaven and earth! Grace reigns in our spiritual comfort and only Grace! Let us glorify God for it.

Everlasting consolation is not a blessing given to us as the result of our own works. This is most clear from the last part of our text, for there it is asked that the Lord may comfort our hearts, not because we are established in every good word and work, but that we may *be* so. All the good works which adorn the Christian character are the *result* of God’s Grace and not the cause of it. Grace is given us in order that we may serve God, not because we *do* serve God. To make us holy is the object of Divine Grace, but Grace did not wait until it *found* us holy, or it would never have visited us. To close this part of the subject I would remark that this is the reason why the consolations which God gives us are everlasting. Dwell on that word, “everlasting.” Do not suffer anyone to fritter away its meaning. You may safely forget that there are certain folks alive who declare that everlasting has not the meaning of endless duration, for it means that or nothing! We have too much personal interest involved in this word to allow it to be toned down into age-lasting or any other miserable sense.

We should as soon think that the Bible meant the opposite of what it seems to do as believe that everlasting means something temporary. He

has given us *everlasting* consolation and the reason why it is everlasting is because it is founded on the Grace of God! If it were built upon *our* merits it would stand upon a foundation of ice or mist—it would rest on a shadow buttressed by a *dream*. But if God loved us out of pure Grace and if Jesus Christ has given us consolation out of pure love and if our whole comfort rests upon the Sovereign Grace of God in Christ Jesus, then there is no reason why it should ever pass away unless God's Grace can evaporate, which cannot be, since God changes not, but must be forevermore the same! Our Lord Jesus changes not, for He is the "same yesterday, today and forever."

Ah, you high-fliers who derive a lofty comfort from your *feelings*, your happy *sensations*, your holy *works* and your belief that sin is dead in *you*, fly away as much as you can—you will be brought down one of these days! Like Icarus in the Grecian fable who flew so high that he melted the wax of his wings and fell, so will it be with all who venture aloft on wings of self-confidence. He who lies humbly at God's feet, conscious of his sin and mourning over it and resting for everything upon Sovereign Grace and free mercy in Christ Jesus, he may stay where he is with safety, for his hope shall never fail him. Let the Lord be magnified for this! He is our Rock and there is no unfaithfulness in Him and he that rests in Him shall not be ashamed or confused world without end.

III. So far have we come—now for our closing point which is a practical one. SINCE THESE CONSOLATIONS OF GOD'S LOVE HAVE BEEN SO FREELY BESTOWED UPON US, THEY SHOULD LEAD US TO A LIFE OF HOLY BENEVOLENCE. We ought to be free in our giving to others since God has been so free in His giving to us. As He has abounded toward us in infinite liberality, we ought to abound towards all with whom we come in contact up to the full measure of our ability in all love and kindness and mercy. In every benevolent enterprise Christian men should take a hearty interest. Read that 17th verse—"Comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work."

I am a man and being a man everything that concerns men concerns me. I am a Christian man and as a follower of Christ, the Son of Man, everything that can do good to my fellow men is a matter in which I delight to take my share. This should be done in direct actions as well as in words. Read—"Establish you in every good word and work." Certain of the oldest manuscripts run, "In every good *work* and word" and I suppose in our new translation we shall have it so and very properly, too. In this case *work* is probably first and *word* next.

Some Christian people think that "word" should be everything and work nothing, but the Scriptures are not of their mind. These professors speak a great deal about what they *will* do; talk a great deal about what other people *ought* to do and a great deal more about what others *fail* to do—and so they go on with word, word, word and nothing else but word. They do not get as far as "work"—but the Apostle put work first in this case, as much as to say, "whether you talk about it or not, *do* it. Be established in every good work even if you do not get so far as being capable of a multiplicity of words."

Brethren, let us yoke word and work together—every good thing should command our advocacy and secure our aid to the fullest of our ability. Direct practical assistance should be rendered by us all, since our Lord loves not in word, only, but in deed and in truth. This should be done without pressure. No one could lay constraint upon God to bless His people. No pressure was put upon Christ to redeem us! Everything, as we have shown, was spontaneous, sovereign, free. Even so should men give to God out of an overflowing heart. Give to Him as a king gives to a king! How does a king give? Why, as he likes and that is the way to give—to give because you are delighted to give—not because you feel obliged to do it by being observed by others, but out of a royal heart which delights in liberal giving!

Shall you not do as you will with your own? How can a gracious heart better please itself than by doing good? Give as you would give to a king, for we never give our meaner possessions to royal personages—we give the best we have if we give them anything. Let it be so in all the services that we render to God! Let Him have our best, our noblest, our dearest possessions. The particular case before us this morning is, to my mind, a very important one and one which should greatly move all generous spirits. In this great city of near upon four millions inhabitants, the provision of hospital accommodation is, to a painful degree, small.

In those hospitals which will be helped by the collections of today, I think there are only 5,531 beds, or about one for every 723 persons. Considering the liability of working men to disease and accident and the great number of the poorer classes, this is a fearfully small preparation for possible necessity. But this is not the worst, for out of these 5,000 beds, as I gather from an admirable paper in *The Lancet*, there are never more than 3,232 in daily use, thus diminishing the supply to an appalling extent!

These empty beds are very largely made so by the lamentable fact that the hospitals have not the means of using them. The depression in trade has been felt by our free hospitals to such an extent that they live from hand to mouth in a manner which is not honorable to one of the wealthiest cities in the world.

The Hospital Sunday Collection has not yet come up to the proper mark and it is time for ministers to say so and instruct their people, who, if they knew the need, would promptly supply it. *The Lancet* wisely says that if the sermons of today could be preached in the hospitals, themselves, the collections would be doubled. There are many objections to carrying out the suggestion, but I have no doubt the result would be as anticipated. Suppose me, then, to be preaching in one of the great wards and yourselves to be standing among the beds. I know those poor creatures lying near you writhing in pain and those others grateful for the relief they have received would plead much more forcibly than I can! The sight of suffering is the best argument with benevolence.

Look at the rows of sick folk and let your heart be touched. As the service could not well be held in the hospital, *The Lancet* suggests that the ministers should spend Saturday in visiting a hospital. I could not very well do that, but I have tried in my mind, vividly, to realize the scene and I think most of you are quite as able to draw the picture as I am, for you

have been there to see for yourselves—and some of you have been there as patients to partake, for yourselves, in hospital benefits. Picture the wards of mercy and let every sick person there entreat you to help the funds of these admirable institutions.

An exceedingly powerful plea to my mind arises from those empty beds. There they are, 2,000 of them! Waiting to be couches of hope to the suffering! Alas, they cannot be filled because there is not the means for providing the people with food and nourishment while they are there. Sorrowful necessity! I cannot endure to think of it. A bed for a sick man rendered useless by some one's meanness! Where is the tightwad? Surely he is not here! It would be even more painful to go to the homes where those persons who ought to occupy those empty beds are pining for the need of hospital help, waiting the next turn—which turn may find them in the grave—but which turn would come tomorrow morning if funds were forthcoming. Must they lie there till they are beyond the reach of surgical help because the wealthy of this so-called Christian city cannot spare a little from their luxuries to furnish poor sick humans with nutriment?

O that one with a trumpet tongue could speak to our nobles, our merchants, our traders, our gentlemen of leisure and bid them consider the sick poor! O that they all knew the exquisite luxury of doing good! I would say to employers, will you let these people lie and pine away for lack of medical help, many of them your workmen whose strength has been spent in your trades and handicrafts? Pain is crushing them and provision is made for their help and cure, as far as it can be made, but it is rendered useless by the need of money to bear the expenses of the patients! Is this to be always so? Is this to remain so for another year? Surely it shall not be!

I ask you, dear Friends, according as God has entrusted you with this world's wealth, to help the hospitals! I do this with all the greater confidence because you are Believers in the Doctrines of Free Grace. Give freely, for you have *received* freely! Remember that yesterday and today Jews, Catholics, Protestants, people of all sects have heartily joined in this common effort for suffering humanity and if those who believe in the Free Grace of God are behind-hand—no—if they are not among the foremost in the race, it will be to the dishonor of the glorious Gospel which they profess! The Lord accept your offerings as you now present them!

I hear the sound of your gold and silver already, for you are eager in the work of mercy. The collectors are a little too rapid in their work, but I will not restrain them, for it is a fit ending to my discourse that you should hasten to pass from word to work. In so doing may God bless you. Amen.

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COMFORT AND CONSTANCY

NO. 2363

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY JUNE 3, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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***“Now our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father, which has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good Word and work.”
2 Thessalonians 2:16, 17.***

THE Thessalonians had been a good deal confused by certain persons who had said that the coming of the Lord was immediately at hand. Paul, therefore, bade them to be steadfast and not be worried and perplexed by any such teaching. And then he presented this prayer to God for them, that they might have these two things, comfort and constancy—that God would comfort their hearts and establish them—“in every good Word and work.” It is a very blessed and comprehensive prayer and, while we are thinking of it, let us be praying it for ourselves and for one another, that the Lord may comfort our hearts and establish us “in every good Word and work.”

I. The first enquiry to be answered is this, WHY IS THERE THE CONJUNCTION OF THESE TWO THINGS IN THIS REMARKABLE PRAYER? Why is it put thus, “Our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father... comfort your hearts and establish you in every good Word and work”?

I answer, first, the two things, comfort and constancy, are put together *because comfort by itself is not enough*. We do not desire, first and above all things, that Christians should have comfort. It is a very great privilege to be comforted, especially by the Comforter, for such comfort is sound, safe and holy, but, at the same time, they err who think that the first and chief reason for knowing God is that you may feel comforted and happy! I fear that there are many who are under that notion. They expect every sermon to comfort them—otherwise they think it is a wasted opportunity. Even when they are alone in prayer, their chief thought is that they need to be comforted by their own devotion. But, sometimes, *rebuke* is better than comfort, and spiritual quickening and especially true sanctification, are more greatly to be valued than any measure of comfort whatever! If we were to confine ourselves to prayer for the Lord only to comfort His people, we would have a very imperfect form of intercession. No, it needs that we should not only be comforted by our religion, but that we should be led by it into holy activity so as to abound in every good Word and work, and be established therein.

I give another answer to the question, Why is there this conjunction between comfort and constancy? *Because establishment in every good Word and work is not enough if it is alone.* We need to be comforted as well as to *serve the Lord.* Our God is not like Pharaoh who would not give to the children of Israel even a day in which they might have rest and worship God. Pharaoh said, “Why do you, Moses and Aaron, let (or hinder) the people from their works? Get you unto your burdens.” But God does not speak so to us. The service which His children render to Him is quite compatible with rest. We are like certain birds that are said to rest on the wing—we never have a better rest than when every faculty is occupied in the service of our Lord!

But work by itself, establishment in every good Word and work, alone, might tend to weariness. We might be jaded if God did not minister Divine consolation to us while we served Him. Moreover, I am sure that we would never do the work well if God did not comfort us, for unhappy workers, those who do not love their work and are not at home in it, those who feel no comfort of religion, themselves, are generally very poor and unsuccessful workers. The second blessing mentioned in our text is certainly a very necessary one, this establishing in every good Word and work, but you also need the first one, that God may, “comfort your hearts.” When you get the two together—when you are up to your necks in holy service and up to your hearts in Divine comfort—then these two things cause you not to be barren or unfruitful and, at the same time, they help you not to be weary in well-doing. You are made to be “steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord,” because you are comforted with the belief that, “your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” I see those two reasons for the conjunction of comfort and constancy in the text. First, because comfort, alone, is not sufficient and, secondly, because constancy without comfort will not suffice us.

And next, dear Friends, it is *because the comfort of the heart aids in the establishment of the soul in service.* They are put together because the one helps the other. May the Lord “comfort your hearts and establish you in every good Word and work!” He that is happy in the Lord will persevere in the service of the Lord. He that derives real support and comfort from his religion is the man who will not backslide from it. I notice that it is usually thus with those who decline—they first of all lose the comfort and joy of religion—they have not the brightness and delight that they once had in the things of God. And then, of course, they drop, first, this particular service, and then the other—they begin to absent themselves from the means of Grace, Prayer Meetings and so forth, because they miss what is so material a stay to the establishment of their minds, that is, the comfort, joy and peace that true religion used to bring them.

Whenever you are not happy in the Lord, I urge you not to rest until you become so. It is no small evil to get out of the sunlight of God’s Countenance. A dear child will not say, “If my father is angry with me, it does not matter; he will not kill me; I shall always be his child.” No, just in proportion as he enjoys his father’s love, it will be painful to him to come in the least degree under his father’s displeasure and he will cry

out to be fully restored and to have, again, from those dear lips the kiss of forgiveness that will put away all his offenses. So, dear Friends, believe that your lack of comfort is an evil thing which may lead to your loss of industry and perseverance in the cause of your Lord. If your heart is not comforted by God, you are not likely to be “established in every good Word and work.”

Now let me turn the text around the other way. I think that these two things are put together *because establishment in Word and work is so necessary for our comfort*. I said we must be comforted that we might be constant in the service of God. Now I put it that we must be *constant in the service of God* that we may be comforted! God does not give His dainties to idlers. He has choice secrets into which He does not admit everybody, nor even all of His own family. When we are diligent in His service and all our powers are fully consecrated to Him, *then* He gives us gracious rewards—not of debt, but according to the discipline of His own house, wherein He honors the faithful and chastises those who are negligent.

Now, Beloved, you will miss your comfort when you begin to neglect your work. I know how it used to be with the boys at home. In cold weather they huddled round the fire—almost *sat* on the fire! It was so cold that they could not tell how they would live through the bitter winter. But when Father came in, he said, “Now, you boys, set to work and clear away that snow. Don’t sit here idle, go and do something!” And they came in with ruddy cheeks and, somehow or other, the temperature seemed to have altered considerably, for they were quite warm from their exercise. I think the best thing that could happen to some men would be that they might have something to do. I do not find much about depression of spirit in the journals of Mr. Wesley or Mr. Whitefield and men of that sort who spent themselves in the Lord’s service.

The fact is, the Lord seemed to carry them on from one work to another and from strength to strength in their service—and they were comforted as to their hearts because they were established in every good Word and work. These things act and react, one upon another—the comfort makes us work—the work brings to us a fresh measure of comfort! See how even the Savior puts it. He says, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” That is the first rest, *pardon of sin*. What next? “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls.” That is another rest over and above what Jesus gives. “Through bearing My yoke, you shall find in My service *rest unto your souls*.” God grant us Grace to seek that rest which we are to find, now that we have received the rest which Jesus gives to those who come to Him!

I have not yet fully answered this question—Why is there the conjunction of these two things, comfort and constancy? I think it is *because the two blended together serve a very useful purpose*. We are in this world to bear witness and by our bearing witness we are to bring others to faith in Christ through the operation of the Holy Spirit. Now, there are some people who are only to be won for Christ by the holy confidence and comfort

of Believers. I am sure that if a Christian woman, in the time of affliction at home, is calm, patient, resigned and happy, she is more likely to see her husband converted by the comfort that religion brings to her own heart than by taking him to hear a sermon. By her Christian character she will preach to him and supply him with evidence of the power of Grace which he will not be able to deny.

I have known persons, in a storm at sea, exercise great influence over all in the vessel by the way in which they have been able to live above the storm, resting patiently in God. And in times of personal sickness, what a wonderful influence there is about holy patience! Some members of the family, who never have been moved by the external services of religion, have been deeply impressed by the patience of great sufferers—and especially by the serenity of dying saints. They have said to themselves, “There is something in this religion, after all. There is no mistake about it—the Grace which could support and calm the heart at such a time as this *must* be the gift of God.” Now, if this were accompanied by idleness, it would lose much or all of its force, but when this holy calm comes over one who, in days of health, was full of active service for the Master, then the two things, together, become powerful arguments which gainsayers are not able to resist! Seek to have this blessed blending, this comfort, like a light that burns within the lamp, and then this establishment in Word and work, like the rays of light that stream from the lantern at the head of the lighthouse, that all may see, both far and near.

And I should like to give one other answer to this query, which is this. Paul in his prayer puts the two things together, *because there is great need for both*. There is great need to pray that our Father would comfort the hearts of His people, for there is trouble enough in the land! There is trouble enough in every *house*—there is trouble enough for each one of us—we need you to often pray for us, that God would comfort our hearts. It may be that we have to play the man in public and yet, when we get away by ourselves, our heart is very heavy and we have to cry mightily to God for supporting Grace. Some of the strongest of God’s servants, those who carry a smiling countenance, who, if they fast, anoint their head and wash their face, that they appear not unto men to fast, yet have need to pray very earnestly to the Comforter that He would come and sustain their spirit.

And there is equal need that we should have Grace given us to be constant and instant in every good Word and work, for there is a tendency in us to think that we have done enough. The feeling creeps over men of a certain age that it is time for the young people to do the Lord’s work. One says, “I am now at such an age that as much cannot be expected of me as used to be.” Oh, yes, if you have much serving, Martha is not the only woman that gets cumbered with it, and being cumbered is not confined to women! Oh, how many there are who are not women, who are cumbered as much as Martha was! We need to have the Mary-spirit to keep the heart bright and cheerful, or else we shall quarrel with our work, or with our sister, or possibly with our Master, as we say to Him, “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?” We need both

comfort and constancy and, therefore, I commend to you this piece of heavenly plaiting—let the two things be twisted together in your life! May the Lord “comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good Word and work”!

II. As I look at my text, a second question comes to my mind. WHY DOES THE APOSTLE SO SPECIALLY ADDRESS THIS PRAYER? Notice to whom he addresses it—“Now our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father... comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good Word and work.” Why is this?

It seems to me that in the first place, in this prayer *the whole Trinity is supplicated*. When the Apostle is desiring comfort to be given, he does not mention the Comforter, for that is needless. It would occur to every Christian mind that the Holy Spirit was necessary, since in comforting and quickening He is only exercising His special office. But the Apostle does mention, “Our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father,” so that, to the mind of the thoughtful reader, the prayer for comfort and establishment is directed to the ever-blessed Three-in-One. Oh, that we more often remembered the distinction of the Divine Persons without dividing the Divine Substance! It becomes instructed Believers to remember that one blessing comes from the Father, another blessing from the Son and a third blessing through the Holy Spirit. There are times when it would seem as if the one blessing must come through the three Divine Persons, that there must be a manifestation of the whole Trinity to produce the result. I cannot help noticing that Truth of God and reminding you how the Savior is especially placed, here, side by side with, “God, even our Father,” that we may see that equal reverence is to be paid to Him *with* the Father, and equal prayer to be offered to Him with that presented to the great Father of spirits.

But then, I think next, that mention is here made of, “Our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself” because, as the prayer is for consolation, He is “the Consolation of Israel.” The Holy Spirit is the Comforter, but *Christ, Himself, is the Comfort*—the Holy Spirit gives the consolation, but Jesus Christ *is* the Consolation. Beloved, we are never so comforted as when we turn to our blessed Lord, Himself! His Humanity, His sympathy with us, His griefs, His bearing our infirmities, His putting away of our sins, His pleading for us at the right hand of God, His everlasting union with His people—all this makes us turn our eyes to Him! He is the Sun that makes our day. From Him flows that “river of the Water of Life” which quenches our thirst. So you see why the “Lord Jesus Christ, Himself,” is mentioned in this prayer for comfort, since He is the every *essence* of the Believer’s consolation!

But then we are reminded of “God, even our Father,” and is not this expression brought to our mind that we may derive comfort from *the relation which God bears to His people*? O you children of God, does not the recollection that He is your Father comfort you? Children of the heavenly King, is not the fact of your relationship to Him a well of unceasing consolation? What more do you require to lift your spirits out of the dust than to know that this manner of love has been bestowed upon you, that

you should be called the children of God! “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ”? I believe that if the Holy Spirit only lays home to the heart the fact of our new birth and our adoption into the family of God, we have enough comfort to make us swim through seas of trouble without fear! And also enough motive for the most constant, diligent *service*, when we know that it is for our Father who is in Heaven that we are spending the strength that He, Himself, gives us! Do you not see, therefore, why the Apostle thus addresses His prayer to “God, even our Father,” and to “our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself”?

And is not this another reason why Paul thus prayed, because he would remind us that *it requires the direct action of the Godhead upon our hearts to produce comfort and constancy*? This is especially evident at certain times. Very frequently, when I have to comfort mourners—cases where, perhaps, a young husband has been taken away, leaving a large family of little children unprovided for—or, perhaps, where two persons who have been together for many years, till their lives have grown into one and, all of a sudden, the wife or the husband has been taken away, I have said and I cannot help saying it often, “My dear Friend, I cannot comfort you as I should like to. I have never been exactly in your circumstances and, therefore, I cannot enter into your peculiar grief. But I would remind you that one Person of the Divine Trinity has undertaken the office of Comforter and He can do what nobody else can.”

You must, sometimes, have felt the power of a single text of Scripture laid upon a wound in your heart—it will staunch the bleeding and heal by a sort of heavenly magic! Have you not, at times, felt in a flutter of distress so that you could not rest? Christian friends have spoken kindly to you, but they only seemed to mock you. Then, in a moment, a soft, calming influence has stolen over your spirit and you have felt that you could bear 10 times the weight which had almost crushed you an hour before! God can comfort to purpose—therefore the Apostle did not say—“I hope you will enjoy the comfort I have given you, or that, perhaps, your minister, next Lord’s-Day may give you.” No, this was his prayer at this particular juncture—“Now our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father, which has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good Word and work.” It is grand in your prayers to fall back upon your God and upon a God whom you know as your Lord Jesus Christ, and your Father, and to feel, “The case is beyond me, but it is not beyond my God! The trial overwhelms me even in my sympathy with the tried one, how much more does it overwhelm the actual bearer of it? But I put you and your sorrow into hands quite equal to the emergency and leave you there.”

There is much more to be learned than I can tell you, because time fails me, as to how it was that the Apostle presented this remarkable prayer in this remarkable manner.

III. The third point, with which I close, is this. WHAT DOES PAUL MENTION IN HIS PRAYER AS PLEAS? He mentioned several facts for the strengthening of the faith of those for whom he prayed and gave argu-

ments which they should use while pleading with God for others. Let us speak of these arguments very briefly. There are six of them.

First, Paul says that *Jesus is ours*. He is asking for comfort and establishment and he begins his prayer, “Now, our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself.” Do, if you can, get the sweetness of this expression, “Our Lord Jesus Christ.” Why did not Paul say, “*The* Lord Jesus Christ”? Why did he not say, “*My* Lord Jesus Christ”? No, here is a plural possessive pronoun—“*Our* Lord Jesus Christ.” Is it so, then, that God has given us the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, to be *ours*? Can we not only call His blood ours, and His Resurrection ours, and His Kingdom ours, but is He, Himself, *ours*? Oh, can we get a grip of Him as, “My Beloved”? Is He my Husband, my Covenant Head, my Jesus and my All? Come, then, Beloved—I was going to say that you hardly need pray for comfort because you have it, already—you have it in Jesus!

Here is a solid mass of the pure gold of comfort in the fact that Jesus Christ, Himself, is yours. You are Christ’s, but Christ is also yours! As the husband belongs to the wife, and the wife belongs to the husband, so there is a mutual possession between Christ and you who are believers in Him. Are you poor? What? And yet Christ is yours? Do you say that you are helpless and friendless? How is that when you can say, “Our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself”? No, here is a well opened in the desert for you—come and say to it—“Spring up, O well!” Sing unto it, drink of its Living Water and fill your earthen vessels to the fullest! There is comfort enough for all saints in “Our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself.”

The second plea in Paul’s prayer is that *God is our Father*—“Now our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father.” I have already shown you what a mine and mountain of delightful consolation lies in the fact that the God who made the heavens and the earth, the Omnipotent and Unchangeable Jehovah is “*our* Father.” Do not think that this is a mere metaphor—that God is only set forth to us under the *image* of a father. There is no doubt that He *is* our Father—it is a matter of fact if we are trusting His Son. “Doubtless You are our Father, though Abraham is ignorant of us and Israel acknowledge us not: You, O Lord, are our Father, our Redeemer; Your name is from everlasting.” We have been begotten again by God—our new birth is from His power and His Divine energy! We belong to His family and shall never be cast out of it. Dear Friends, what a plea this is in prayer! “My Father, will You not comfort my heart? My Father, will You let Your child despond? My Father, will You not relieve me in the hour of my distress? Jesus Christ, my Lord Jesus Christ, do this for me, and great God, my Father, fail not to cheer my heart!”

Then the Apostle goes on to remind us that *God has loved us*. Kindly look at the text and remember it—“God, even our Father, which has loved us.” You do not expect me to preach from those words, do you? “Which has loved us.” I cannot comprehend this Truth! I can very well understand God *pitying* us, as we pity a beggar in the streets—but God’s *loving* us always deprives me of the power to explain it! There was nothing in us to love! There was everything in us loathsome and nothing lov-

able, yet the Lord loved us before the world began! He has loved us without bound, so as to give His only-begotten Son to die for us! Is not that a powerful plea in prayer? “Lord, comfort my heart, establish me in every good Word and work, for You have loved me, therefore continue to love me. If You have given me Your love, surely You will not deny me the comforts of Your face and the consolations of Your Word.”

Then Paul adds, “Who has loved us, and has given us.” *God has given us much* and all His past gifts are pleas for more gifts. Men do not plead so. The beggar in the street cannot say, “Give me a penny, today, because you gave me one yesterday,” else we might reply, “That is the reason why I will *not* give you anymore!” But when dealing with God, this is a good plea. “O flowing Fountain, You have long been flowing, Flow on still! O blessed Sun, You did shine yesterday, shine today!” God loves us to make His past mercies arguments for obtaining future blessings, so the Apostle says, “God, even our Father, which has loved us, and has given us.”

But what has God given us? *God has given us “everlasting consolation.”* Catch at that expression, for it reminds us of everlasting love, the Everlasting Covenant, the everlasting promises, everlasting redemption and the everlasting Heaven. Men, nowadays, clip this word, “everlasting,” round the edges. We do not—we take it as we find it. That which is everlasting lasts forever—you can be assured of that! And God has given us consolation which will last us in life and last us in death—and last us throughout eternity! Well, if He has given us “everlasting consolation,” we may well plead that He would graciously enable us to lay hold upon it, that our hearts may be comforted and cheered and that we may be established in every good Word and work!

There is only one more expression upon which I will say a sentence or so. *God has given us “good hope through Grace.”* It is of Grace and, therefore, it is a gift! And He has given it to us through the operation of His Grace upon our hearts. It is a hope, a good hope, a “good hope through Grace.” We have a good hope that God’s love will never fail us and that, when life dies out on earth, we shall enter into His rest forever and behold His face with joy. We have a good hope that when days and years are past, we shall meet in Heaven! We have a good hope of dwelling throughout eternity with our God—“forever with the Lord.” O Father, after You have done so much for us and given so much to us, it is but little we ask of You, now, when we pray You to comfort our hearts and to establish us in every good Word and work!

I cannot understand what those do who have no God. I cannot comprehend the condition of those who have no “good hope through Grace.” What can they do? They have to work very hard from Monday morning to Saturday night. On Sunday they have no day of rest, no thought of a world to come, no rising to a purer atmosphere. They lie in bed, perhaps, in the morning, and then get up and lounge about in their shirtsleeves. There is nothing for them to get but what is found beneath the moon and very little of that. It is better to be a dog than a man if there is no hope of

a hereafter! It is better not to live at all than to live such a dead, good-for-nothing life as that man lives who lives without God and without hope!

Surely, you who are without God and without Christ, have your sinking, your mourning, your dull times, have you not? What do you do, then? Perhaps you try to drug yourself with strong drink. Alas, some do that and this is mischievous, indeed—to try to poison conscience and silence the best friend you have within you! Do not so, but think about God, and about “our Lord Jesus Christ.” This way lies hope, where stands that Cross, and He pleads, who received, there, those five wounds for sinners! This way lies your only hope! Oh, that you would think of it and consider it! If God Himself comes down from Heaven to save men, it must be worthwhile for man to look and understand what God did for him in that wondrous Sacrifice. Look, for—

“There is life for a look at the Crucified One”—

look now, for—

“There is life at this moment for you.”

Especially is there life for you who came in here troubled, downcast, almost wishing you were not alive at all, but fearing that when life came to an end, it might be worse for you than ever, for you have “the dread of something after death.” Oh, that you were reconciled to God through the death of Jesus Christ! That being done, He would comfort your hearts and you would be led into every good Word and work through gratitude to the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, and His Grace would save you and preserve you to the end! May this be the very moment when you shall seek and find the Lord!” “If you seek Him, He will be found of you.” God grant it, for His dear son’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 Thessalonians 2; 3:1-5.**

2 Thessalonians 2:1, 2. *Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, that you be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the Day of Christ is at hand.* Paul believed in the Second Coming of Christ, for he beseeches the Brothers and Sisters, “by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” He felt the power of this great Truth. He often exhorts us to be watchful because of the uncertainty of the time of that coming as far as we are concerned. But there were some who sprang up in his day, as in ours, who professed that they knew a great deal about the Second Advent—when it was to happen, and so on—and they began to foretell and to prophesy beyond what was really revealed of God. By this means, some persons were terrified and others driven to a very foolish course of action. It would seem, from this Epistle, that some people forsook their daily calling and, on pretence of the near return of Christ, endeavored to live upon the alms of Christian people instead of themselves working. Many, however, were shaken in mind, so Paul wrote to reassure and strengthen them—“That you be not

soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the Day of Christ is at hand.”

3, 4. *Let no man deceive you, by any means: for that Day shall not come, except there comes a falling away, first, and that man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition; who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he, as God, sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.* It has been usually thought that this passage alludes to the great apostasy of the Church of Rome and, certainly, if there were a hue and cry raised for the culprit here described, one might well arrest that apostasy upon suspicion! It may not, however, be the man of sin, or the son of perdition—it may be that general spirit which springs up again and again, one of the many anti-Christes that were already in the world even in John’s day. There are many such spirits that are constantly rising up, not outside the Church—there, we could deal with them—but *inside* the Church, using the Words of Truth, and the signs of Truth to signify something far other than the Truth of God! This is the great rook that threatens destruction! Oh, that God’s Church might always be kept from striking upon it! But there is this rook which would, if it were possible, wreck the very elect ship of Christ, itself!

5-7. *Remember you not, that when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now you know what withholds that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity does already work: only He who now lets will let, until He is taken out of the way.* There was something that hindered the full development of anti-Christ in Paul’s day. When that is taken out of the way, then will there be a fuller revelation of this sinful system.

8-12. *And then shall that wicked one be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming. Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, in them that perish, because they received not the love of the Truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the Truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.* We will not attempt to explain all this in detail. It would be too much of a task for a mere exposition, but the Church has always to be on her guard against that which comes as an angel of light, but is really a spirit of darkness.

13. *But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God has, from the beginning, chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the Truth.* How the saints praise one another! How sweet is Christian fellowship! How we rejoice in the blessed love of God to His people when we are assailed by those who battle against His Truth! Then is the love of the Brethren stronger than ever and our faithfulness to God is largely increased. The Apostle falls back upon the doctrine of electing love—“God has, from the beginning, chosen you to salvation.” And he admires the methods by

which that love effects its purpose—“Salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the Truth.” Men are made holy by the Spirit of God—the holiness is that of life and of the understanding. They attain to a belief of the Truth of God, as well as to a practice of the Divine Commands. Oh, happy people who are ordained, from the beginning, unto salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the Truth!

14. *To which He called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.* How the Apostle loved the Gospel! It was Christ’s Gospel, but Paul calls it, “*Our Gospel.*” He and his Brethren had made it so completely their own and it had become so much their own in contradistinction to “another gospel, which is not another,” that he speaks of it with unction and joy! “He called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

15. *Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you have been taught, whether by word, or our Epistle.* “The things which we have handed out to you, which you have been taught, whether by word, or our Epistle.” They had heard Paul preach. He had not only written to them, but he had also spoken to them. And he bade them treasure up what he had said and what he had written, and hold it fast as for dear life. The Apostle did not preach that which he, afterwards, left, as the ostrich leaves its eggs, but he watched over it and he watched over the people who had heard it, anxious that the Truth of God to which they had listened should prove in them to be the message of everlasting life! Oh, my dear Hearers, are there not still some of you who have heard our Gospel, to whom we have often and long spoken and yet, notwithstanding, it has not yet been the message of eternal life to you though it has been to many others? God have mercy upon you and yet bring you to the feet of Jesus! As for others who come to listen to the Word for the first time—may it be the power of God unto salvation on the very first occasion of their hearing it, to the praise of God and the Glory of His Son!

16, 17. *Now our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father, which has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good Word and work.* I believe in an established Church—not established by acts of Parliament—but established by the purpose and by the Presence of God in the midst of it. Oh, to be a member of a Church established in every good Word and work! Do you know God’s Word? Seek to know it better, still! Try to strike your roots down deeply into this fruitful soil! Suck out the Divine nutriment of it, that you may grow so strong that none shall be able to tear you away from it!

Have you begun to work for Jesus? May you be established in that good work! Go on working more and more, with both your hands and all your heart, that somehow you may glorify His blessed name! Let me read these sweet verses again—“Now our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father, which has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good Word and work.”

2 Thessalonians 3:1. *Finally, brethren, pray for us.* “Pray for us,” says the Apostle. “Pray for myself and the Brothers who are with me. Pray for all the Apostles and preachers of the Word.” “Finally, Brethren.” If this were the last word we had to say to you, we would make just this request, “Finally, Brothers and Sisters, pray for us.” You cannot tell how much God’s servants are helped by the prayers of His people! The strongest man in Israel will be the better for the prayers of the weakest saint in Zion! If you can do nothing else, you can pray for us—therefore, day and night, be at the Mercy Seat on our behalf. “Finally, Brethren, pray for us.”

1. *That the Word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you.* “You Thessalonians enjoy the power of the Word. Pray that it may be so everywhere else.” Paul is said to have written this Epistle from Corinth or Athens, and he longed that, there, the Word of God might prevail as it had done at Thessalonica. Pray just now that in every part of the world, God’s Word may have free course! There are many who stand in the way of it. Pray God that they may be swept out of the way, that the Word of the Lord may have free course. We need the Gospel to run and spread till the whole earth shall know its blessed message!

2. *And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.* All men are not candid, or true. “All men have not faith.”

3. *But the Lord is faithful.* What a wonderful contrast this is and how suggestive of comfort! “All men have not faith. But the Lord is full of faith, faith-ful.” True, He keeps all His promises. “The Lord is faithful.”

3-5. *Who shall establish you, and keep you from evil. And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that you both do and will do the things which we command you. And the Lord direct your hearts.* You see, Paul does not command the Thessalonians to do anything but what he can pray God to work in them. The command of a man, by itself, is nothing, but when he only asks that to be done which he can pray God to do, then there is power about his message! “We have confidence in the Lord touching you, that you both do and will do the things which we command you. And the Lord direct your hearts.”

5. *Into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.* May the Lord hear that prayer for all of us, for Christ Jesus’ sake! Amen.

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WHAT WE HAVE, AND ARE TO HAVE

NO. 2991

A SERMON
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**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 28, 1876.**

*“Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, our Father, who has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.”
2 Thessalonians 2:16, 17.*

EVERY man who is engaged in a good work desires that it may be lasting. “Establish You the work of our hands upon us; yes, the work of our hands establish You it,” was not only a very appropriate prayer from the mouth of Moses, who had led the children of Israel through the wilderness, but it is also a very appropriate prayer to be presented by every minister of Jesus Christ. We desire to build that which will endure the fire of the great testing day—not wood, hay and stubble, but gold, silver and precious stones.

The Apostle Paul, like all true servants of Christ, was very anxious about those who had been converted and formed into churches by him. He desired that all the professed converts should be real converts and that the members of the churches in the various countries where the Gospel had been preached might be well trained and instructed—and might know the Truth of God and be firmly rooted in it. It somewhat saddened him that the Christians at Thessalonica had been disturbed by a rumor about the speedy coming of Christ. He was grieved that they had been troubled concerning this matter and he was still more sorry that they had not men among them able to guide them at such a crisis, for they were like children carried away by novelties. The Apostle wanted them to be firmly established in the faith, to know the Truth of God and to have it abiding in their hearts so that they would be able to stand fast in the evil day, whatever error might be raging round about them.

I think, Brothers and Sisters, that the prayer of the Apostle is very suitable for this present period. We have rejoiced to see a large number of persons coming out as professed followers of Christ, but what is needed is that they should be so enlisted in the army of Christ that they will remain faithful even unto death. We do not want our work to be shallow and superficial—we want it to be like that “city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” It is heart-breaking service to sow the good Seed of the Kingdom upon the rocky ground, for it springs up so rapidly simply because it has no depth of earth and then, when the burning heat of the sun shines upon it, it withers away because it has neither moisture nor root. It would be far better to have

half a dozen souls really brought to Jesus Christ and enduring to the end, than to have half a dozen thousand blazing away with a false profession for a time—and then returning like the dog to his vomit, or like the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. Our Lord's own declaration is, "He that endures to the end shall be saved." It is that endurance, that holding out to the end, which is the point to which we would direct all our endeavors on behalf of our hearers and our converts—and the point about which we would most earnestly pray to our God.

Because these Thessalonians had been somewhat fluttered and disturbed, the Apostle was distressed concerning them and he, therefore, exhorted them to steadfastness. "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which you have been taught, whether by word, or our Epistle." But after exhorting them to stand fast, he did not feel that this was sufficient. So he stopped writing, laid down his pen, fell on his knees and prayed to God to make them stand fast. And when we realize how feeble our utmost exertions are, we may well join fervent prayer to them! And when we remember that the flesh is so weak and that even when men resolve to stand fast, their feet are very soon caused to slip, we may well cry to the great Holder-Up of His saints to keep them from falling, or even from stumbling. The preacher's work is only half done when he has exhorted his hearers to stand fast—he must then fall upon his knees and pray for them. And you who teach others in the Sunday school and elsewhere, must remember that whatever you exhort your scholars to do, you should always pray to God to lead them to do it. This is a blessed compound of preaching and praying—it makes a rich amalgam of Christian ministry when there is, first, the testimony of the Truth of God to men and next, the pleading with God on the behalf of men. Regard, then, our text as the Apostle's prayer for the Thessalonians, and for all of us who believe in Jesus, that we may stand tall, in this evil day, and that, having done all, we may still stand steadfast whoever and whatever may oppose.

Paul's prayer is instructive, for it directs our attention to two things. First, to *what we have already*—"Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, our Father, who has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace." And then it tells us *what we are to have*, what is the natural result of what we already have—"Comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work."

I. First, then, Brothers and Sisters, we are to consider **WHAT WE ALREADY HAVE.**

The Apostle mentions, first, the source of all our blessings and then the streams. "Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, our Father." There is *the source of all our blessings* and, to my mind, it is exceedingly suggestive to notice that word, "our," put in twice in the early part of the text. Paul does not write, "Now *the* Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, our Father." But it is, "*Our* Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, our Father."

The source of our present comfort and of our future perseverance is the fact that Jesus Christ is ours. Look at Him now with the adoring eyes of your reverent contemplation, in His glorious Deity and His perfect Manhood. Look at Him in the manger. Behold Him on the Cross. Regard His perfect life and His redeeming death. Behold Him in His Resurrection, His triumphant Ascension and His perpetual intercession. And look forward to His promised return from Heaven. Beloved Believer, He is yours—all yours. In all those positions and conditions He has given Himself to you and to me, and we may together say, “*Our Lord Jesus Christ!*” Oh, how precious is this Truth of God to our soul! Being Divine, He is Omnipotent and that almighty power He wields for us! Being Divine, He is Omniscient and those sleepless eyes of His are always on the watch for us! Being Divine, He is Immutable and that eternal love of His which knows no shadow of a change, is fixed upon us! All His attributes and Himself, also, He places at our disposal—so let each one of us gratefully respond, “You are my portion, says my soul.” Enlarge your thoughts concerning the Lord Jesus! Think most highly of Him! Extol Him with your heart and with your tongue! But remember that when you have reached the utmost heights that you can attain in your estimation of Him, He is yours, altogether yours, and you can say with Paul, “*Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself!*”—

***“Our Lord is risen from the dead
Our Jesus is gone up on high!
The powers of Hell are captives led—
Dragged to the portals of the sky.
There His triumphal chariot waits
And angels chant the solemn lay—
Lift up your heads, you heavenly gates!
You everlasting dove, give way!”***

And then the Apostle adds, “And God, *our Father.*” We sometimes tremble at the thought of God our Father, as well we may. How could we ever approach Him were it not for God in human flesh, our Lord Jesus Christ? But when we have once really trusted in Christ, it is an easy matter for us to look by faith to God and to rejoice in Him! And, with the deepest reverence of soul, let us know that God—the ever-blessed God—the terrible God—the Omnipotent God who shakes both Heaven and earth with His voice, who touches the hills and they smoke—this God is *our God!* And all His attributes of power, as well as those which we usually consider to be more full of Grace, are exerted on our behalf! I do not know anything that is more comforting in times of trouble than this great Truth. I met, yesterday, a gentleman who told me that he was converted some 30 years ago, through the instrumentality of a great-uncle of mine with whom he lived as an apprentice. He said, “There was a terrible thunderstorms and the old gentleman was sitting by the fireside and we youngsters were afraid. The flashes of lightning were so vivid and the thunder pealed out so terribly, but,” he added, “the old gentleman rose from the fireside, went to the window, and as he looked out, he began to sing—

“The God that rules on high

***And thunders when He pleases,
That rides upon the stormy sky,
And manages the seas—
This awful God is ours,
Our Father and our love!
He shall send down His heavenly powers
To carry us above.”***

The gentleman said to me, “I never forgot the impression I then received of that good man’s quietude of mind, and of the evident delight which he took in that display of the Divine Omnipotence. There seemed to him a sweetness in the eloquence of his Father’s voice, though it made every timber in the old house shake.”

Yes, Brothers and Sisters, the Apostle brings these things to our minds so that we may realize that in having “*our* Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, *our* Father,” we have on our side those who will be true to us forever and, therefore, we ought to continue to be comforted in heart and established in every good word and work. If you had trusted only to a dead Savior, you might well go and weep over His tomb—if you had such gods as the heathen have, then might all consolation be withheld from you. But with an almighty Savior who always lives to make intercession for you and with an Omnipotent and Omniscient Father who always lives to watch over you as His dear children, you must not so much as think of being disquieted in spirit, nor even *dream* of being moved from the firm foundation of your faith and hope, and love!

While still thinking of this source of our consolation, it will help us if we notice, next, that the Apostle specially mentions the Person of Christ. “Our Lord Jesus Christ *Himself*.” Why did he put in that word, “Himself,” just there? It would have sounded all right if he had written, “Now our Lord Jesus Christ, and God, our Father, who has loved us.” Ah, but he wanted to call our very particular attention to the real Personality of our Lord Jesus Christ and to make us feel that, in Him—not merely in what He does and what He bestows, but in “Himself” is the source of our comfort! “Now our Lord Jesus Christ *Himself*.” O Brothers and Sisters, is there any surer source of joy to a Christian than Jesus Christ, the Incarnate God? John writes, “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of Grace and truth.” And from the inspired Word I know that God has taken Humanity into union with Divinity, and that He who stands at the right hand of God, even the Father, is the Son of Mary, bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh! Why, there is comfort in the knowledge that He is there as the Representative Man who has taken redeemed human nature right up to the Throne of God—picked up human nature as it lay, all bruised and mangled, outside the gate of the earthly Paradise—and taken it up into the heavenly Paradise from which it can never be expelled!

There must be thoughts of love to man in the heart of God since His only-begotten and well-beloved Son is a Man! When you think of your Savior, you are not to think exclusively of Him as God, but also to think of Him as Man, for He was born into this world and lived in it. He ate and

drank, and slept and walked as we do—and He also died as we do! And in His Humanity, as well as in His Divinity, He has gone into Glory. Leaving out, for the moment, what He has done for us, we may well rejoice in what He is, Himself, as Immanuel, God With Us! Here is music in the very sound of that sweet name—and there is the very essence of music in “our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.”

But look at His Person, not merely as Man, but as the God-Man who has offered a complete Atonement for His people’s guilt. Up yonder, enthroned in Glory, is your Savior, not merely as Man, but as the Mediator between God and men, who has completed His great Sacrifice, accomplished all His Father’s purposes and fulfilled His Father’s will so that He could truly say, “It is finished.” Look at Him, by faith, as the glorified Man—glorified because, having descended into the grave bearing His people’s sin, He came up out of the grave without sin. He “was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.” And His Resurrection was the proof that He had—

***“To the utmost farthing paid
Whatever His people owed.”***

Surely it should bring the sweetest consolation to you to think of Jesus Christ as the Representative of His people, gone up into Glory and soon to come to this earth again to reign “before His ancients gloriously,” when the bodies of all His saints shall be fashioned like unto His glorious body, and so shall be “forever with the Lord.” Brothers and Sisters, may “our Lord Jesus Christ *Himself*” manifest Himself unto you with those dear upraised hands of His, with the scars still visible! And as you gaze upon Him, may you realize that He is giving to you “everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace” and, therefore, may your hearts be comforted and may you be established in every good word and work! How can you be moved from your steadfastness so long as you can see Him? How can you ever depart from Him who has won your affection and holds your soul fast with cords of a man, and bands of love? Surely you must cling to Him forever and ever! I feel that I must say with the poet—

***“A very wretch, Lord! I should prove,
Had I no love for Thee—
Rather than not my Savior love,
Oh, may I cease to be!”***

The Apostle, however, does not let us forget that in union with our dear Redeemer, at one with Him in every purpose of Divine Grace, is “God, our Father, who has loved us.” And he bids us think not so much of His Person which we cannot comprehend, as of His love. So, Beloved, let us try to view God our Father in the attitude of loving us. Truly, this is a boundless and unfathomable sea! We can neither fly across it, nor dive into its depths. Remember, Believer, that the Lord loved you long before the foundation of the world. You are so insignificant in the scale of being that if He had quite forgotten you, you might not have wondered. And yet, before the mountains were created, or He had kindled the morning star, in the glass of His decrees He beheld you and even then He loved you! Recollect how Jeremiah was inspired to write, “The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an

everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” Dwell on that wondrous Truth of God, that God has loved you with an everlasting love. Suck the honey of consolation out of that glorious fact! Surely if your faith is at all in exercise, you will find much sacred sweetness there.

God loved us, as Paul wrote to the Ephesians, “even when we were dead in sins.” God loved you when you resisted His Spirit. He loved you when you despised His Son. He loved you out of the horrible pit and the miry clay. He loved you into a state of Grace and so loved you into loving Him. And He has loved you ever since with a constant love though He has sometimes chastened you for your profit—for His love is wise and discriminating. He has never deserted you and His love for you has been constant and true. He has often been grieved with you when you have sinned against Him, for His love is a holy love which cannot endure iniquity—yet He has forgiven you, for His love is a gracious love! He has always loved you and is loving you at this moment. Surely this fact ought both to comfort the Believer’s heart and to hold it fast! And this is what the Apostle was aiming at when he wrote our text. What can bind a Christian to his God so well as a sense of Divine Love? If it is but shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit, you will not be tempted away from your Heavenly Father’s house, neither will you be weary of your Heavenly Father’s work, nor tired of your Heavenly Father’s words. That which comes to us perfumed with love is always sweet and precious, so let us rejoice to remember “God, our Father, who has loved us.”

And, Beloved, do not forget that having once loved you, He will always love you. When this great world has passed away and, like a dream, has vanished into nothingness, you will still live because Jesus will still live—and you will still be loved by “God, our Father,” because Jesus will still be loved by Him. As you are in Him, you shall be forever in Him and forever be the object of the Father’s love. These are simple matters to speak of, but they are sublime Truths of God to live upon. Bread is a common thing, but a hungry man thinks it very precious. O you hungry children of God, cut large slices from the loaf that is set before you, now, and gratefully feed upon it! Here is “our Lord Jesus Christ Himself,” in His complex Person as God and Man, as a fountain of comfort to His people and He is “God, our Father,” in His everlasting love to us, as the same fountain under another aspect.

Then the Apostle, having pointed out to us the Divine Source of all our blessings, bids us survey *the streams which flow from that Source*—“who has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace.” Beloved, the consolation which God gives to us is not temporary, but eternal! Such consolation is worth having and when we get it, we may well rejoice over it.

What are the consolations which God gives to His people? I need not mention all the forms of consolation, for, to meet each separate case of distress, there is a special message of comfort—and every promise that God gives you is part of the everlasting consolation with which He has enriched all His chosen people. The potent “shalls” and “wills” of Jehovah

stand fast like His Throne and can never be changed. Has He given you a promise and shall He not fulfill it? Yes, and fulfill it again, and again, and again, as long as you shall need to have it fulfilled, for His promises are inexhaustible and full of manifold riches of blessedness to the believing soul! God's promise of consolation is based upon the "Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things, and sure." God has entered into a Covenant with Christ on the behalf of all His people. And from the provisions of that Covenant He will never depart, for He has "confirmed it by an oath: that by two Immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before us."—

***"His oath, His Covenant, and His blood,
Support me in the sinking flood.
When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my hope and stay—
On Christ the solid Rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand."***

Pardoned sin is, to my mind, one phase of the "everlasting consolation" which God has given us, for, be it known unto you that God does not forgive your sin today and then lay it to your charge again tomorrow. Little children give presents and then want to have them back again—and fickle men often play fast and loose with one another. But when God forgives, He forgives forever, "for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." That is to say, He never changes His mind and takes back the gift which He has bestowed. Have you received absolution from the lips of your God? Then your sins shall never again rise up against you in judgment, for they have been cast into the depths of the sea! "In those days, and in that time, says the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none. And the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found, for I will pardon them, whom I reserve."

What "everlasting consolation" there is, also, in the great Doctrine of Adoption! We become the children of God when we are born-again. "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." A man's child is always his child and God's child is always His child. A man cannot "unchild" his own son or daughter! And if you are a child of God, you shall be a child of God throughout eternity! The life that God has put into you is not transient! As Jesus said concerning His sheep, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." What rich consolation there is for you in this blessed Truth of God! The very life which becomes yours by your adoption into the family of God is an everlasting life—it must, therefore, yield you "everlasting consolation."

Time would fail me to remind you of all the various forms of consolation which the Spirit of God applies to the heart of the Believer—and every phase of it is everlasting! Therefore, Brothers and Sisters, let us not be moved away from the hope of the Gospel. Let us not cast away our confidence, "which has great recompense of reward." Let us not be disturbed or disquieted—let not our hearts be troubled. If we have everlasting consolation, let our joy also be perpetual.

And then the Apostle, still further to comfort our hearts and establish us in every good word and work, tells us that God has given us “good hope through Grace.” You know what that good hope is—the hope that He will preserve us unto the end—the hope that we shall be raised from the dead in God’s good time—the hope that we shall be accepted in the day of Christ’s appearing—the hope that we shall be with Him where He is and shall behold His Glory and share it with Him forever and ever! This is a good hope because it has a good basis to rest upon. God has given this hope to all who believe in His Son, Jesus Christ. And as God is true, the hope is a good hope. A hope that is founded upon a lie is a vain hope, but a hope that is founded upon a promise of God is a good hope. It is a good hope because it is a hope of good things—so good, my dear Friend, that you cannot find anything to match them in the whole world. It may well be called a good hope, for it is the hope of perfection, the hope of being transformed into the image of Christ, the hope of everlasting delight. It is the best of all hopes and we cannot say more of it than that. It is a good hope because of its operation on the heart. “Every man that has this hope in him, purifies himself, even as Christ is pure.” For the man who has a good hope through Divine Grace longs to be purged from sin, to be waiting and watching for his Lord’s appearing and to have an abundant entrance into the Kingdom of God!

Now, Brothers and Sisters, since so much of what God has given to you is at present the subject of hope, do you not see how bound you are to remain in the posture of waiting and hoping—and to be neither discouraged, nor yet to turn deserters? May the Lord “comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work,” because you are saved by hope and the realization of that hope is not visible at present, for, if you saw it, you would not continue to hope for it. You are expecting greater things than you have ever realized! It is better than before, for your faces are toward the rising sun. We were told, some time ago, by a philosopher, that our nation had been shooting Niagara and taking a leap in the dark. Well, that may be, or may not be, but this I know, Believers in Christ are not descending Niagara, for they are ascending! And their leap, whenever they leap, is not into the dark, but into the Light of God—a Light that is brighter, and brighter still! Our progress is away from evil up to good, from good to better, and from the better to the best of all—an infinite progression, by the Divine impulse of the Grace of God—for it is by Grace! “Good hope through Grace.” We do not get this good hope through nature, or through our own free will—we get it through Divine Grace. Grace has given us what we have already received and Grace also gives us the hope of what we have not yet received. Grace lets us see the things that are ours at present and Grace enables us to realize the things that shall be ours in the future!

I hope you understand what the Apostle meant in setting all this before you. If I had the tongues of men and of angels, I could not tell you the heights, depths, lengths and breadths of these gracious words. Let me read them to you again—“Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, our Father, who has loved us, and has given us everlasting

consolation and good hope through Grace.” That is what we already have!

II. Now I want to clinch the nail by speaking of WHAT WE ARE TO HAVE as the result of what we already have.

Paul prayed for the Thessalonians, first, *that the Lord would comfort their hearts* and, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, may the Lord comfort *your hearts*! God does not wish you to be sad. A certain Persian king would allow no one to wait upon him if he had a sad countenance. It is not so with our Lord, for He looks with a tender eye upon those who are heavy of heart and He does not forbid them to come into His Presence. At the same time—

**“Why should the children of a king
Go mourning all their days?”**

If you have everlasting consolation, my dear Sister, what reason have you for such constant fretting? If you have a good hope through Grace, my dear Brother, why did you say, the other day, that you were tempted almost to give up all hope? May the Lord comfort your hearts! Perhaps you think it is a small thing for the Lord’s people to be comforted, but God does not think so. He said to His servants, the Prophets, “Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God.” It was not one alone whom He told to do this, but He said, “Comfort you My people,” as though He summoned all His servants and said to them, “Whatever you do in denouncing sinners and in stirring up My people to work for Me, never forget this part of your duty—‘Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God. Speak you comfortably to Jerusalem.’” Our Lord Jesus Christ did not think that it was a small thing for His people to be happy, for, on the very night in which He went forth to His passion, among the last words that He uttered were those blessed ones which have cheered millions of mourners—“Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me.”

The normal condition of a child of God—I mean, his healthy condition—is one of repose, rest, comfort and delight. Certainly, the Lord has given special promises to those who reach this state of mind—such as this, “Delight yourself also in the Lord; and He shall give you the desires of your heart.” He means, then, to give great things to those who honor Him by trusting Him so that they cease to be troubled and are comforted, whatever happens. What ails you, daughter of sorrow? Are you poor? So was your Lord! Yet I never read that He complained at what His Father willed. Why should you complain of the dispensations of Providence? Are you sick, my dear Brother or Sister? You will not be the first child of God who has pined away into Heaven if that should be your lot. Perhaps the Lord means thus gradually and gently to take down your earthly tabernacle, but, if so, remember what Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” “Ah,” you say, “but it is one who is very dear to me who is dying.” Yes, but when the Lord lent you your husband, or your wife, or your child, He did not tell you that any of them would live

forever! Be thankful that you have had these loans so long. After all, they are not really yours and if the Lord takes back what He lent to you for a while, why should you be so cast down? "I have lost all," cries one. Have you lost your God? "No." Then you have not lost your all. May the Lord comfort your heart, my dear Friends, because if you are unhappy, you dishonor your God by your doubts and fears, and you often hinder those who would enter into the Kingdom. They see your sad face and they say, "Christ's yoke must be a heavy one, and His burden must be intolerable! Look at the face of that Christian man or woman." I would rather that they should say to you, "we would gladly go with you, for there is a brightness about your face that we would like to have. We perceive that your Master is a good Master and that He cheers and comforts your hearts."

I believe that thoroughly happy Christians—those who really enjoy the things of God—are also among the most stable Christians. I think that is why Paul was guided to put the truth as it is in our text. You cannot get a man to give up that which is his daily delight. I never wonder when I hear of some professors giving up Christianity, for they have never experienced the joy of it—it was only a burden to them. When a poor fellow has a load on his back that does not belong to him and does not yield him any comfort, but only galls his shoulders, you are not surprised if he gets to one of those rests for porters in the city, he lays down his load and walks away and forgets it—and is very glad to forget it! But if it were his own property, his own treasure—you would not find him forgetting it, or going away and leaving it behind! The thing out of which you get the most joy will, in the long run, be the dearest thing to you! And if you continually rejoice in the Lord, your joy will greatly help you in resisting the many temptations to skepticism and superstition to which others will yield. You will stand fast in the Lord because you will be held there by the golden rivets of joy which God has given you in communion with Himself!

Then the Apostle adds, "and establish you in every good word and work." *He wants God's people to be established in every good word.* I suppose he mean that he would have us firmly fixed in our belief of the Doctrines of the Gospel and, Beloved, you may very well say that you will keep to them till somebody shows you something better, just as I have read that when the people of the State of Massachusetts wanted a set of laws, and they had not time to make them just then, they passed a resolution that they would be governed by the Laws of God until they had time to make better ones. We may believe the Doctrines revealed in the Word of God until we find better ones—and that we shall never do! Have those Doctrines converted you? Then, be established in them! Does your experience confirm the truth of them? Then, cling to them! It is one of the characteristics of the Doctrines of the Gospel that the older a man gets, the more he loves them. I always find that the older saints become more Calvinistic as they ripen in age—that is to say, they get to believe more and more that salvation is all of Grace. And whereas at first they might have had some rather loose idea concerning free will and the power of the

creature, the lapse of years and fuller experiences gradually blow all that kind of chaff away. Old saints get what is called “a sweet tooth.” They love the sweet things of the Covenant. They like their meat to have a rich savor. I am not old yet, but I confess that I get more and more fond of the sweet things of the Gospel of Grace and cannot endure the novelties that are so current and so exceedingly popular nowadays. Oh, no! Tell me of my Father’s eternal love, tell me of my Savior’s precious blood, tell me of the Spirit’s sacred indwelling and my heart is glad! But tell me anything short of this and my soul is not fed. I pray that you, Brothers and Sisters, who are members of this Christian Church, may know what you know and hold fast to it. May you drive your roots down into the rich soil of the Infallible Truths of God! May you not be as leaves of the forest, driven here and there by the winds because there is no life in you, but may you be “like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season,” whose “leaf also shall not wither.” God make you to be thus “established in every good word.”

The Apostle would also have those to whom He wrote *established in every good work*. Sometimes an attack of this kind is made upon us—“It is no use trying to teach the Gospel to children. We cannot suppose that they can understand its deep mysteries.” I heard that said only the other day. Well, I can say that we have tried it and we have found that whether you choose to call them great mysteries or not, children do understand the Gospel and seem, sometimes, to comprehend it better than their fathers do just because they are so childlike! This qualification for entering the Kingdom of Heaven is not fully-developed manhood, but rather that we should become as little children. And unless we do become childlike, we cannot enter the Kingdom. Dear Friend, do not be turned aside from your work by anything that is said concerning it. If people say that it is no use to go down to the lodging houses and talk to the poorest of the poor, be established in doing it because your Master did it and because the everlasting consolation which comes to you through the Grace of God makes you feel that to the most unworthy are the fittest objects for the Gospel of Jesus. Since you received consolation from God’s mercy, you may well be established in the belief that there is consolation in the mercy of God for the vilest of the vile!

Do not be turned aside from any part of your work, and especially from the blessed work of prayer. Some people tell us that prayer is useless, but what do they know about it? They have never tried it! But those of us who have tried and proved it, and who still practice it from day to day, know that prayer is heard. We may send a telegraphic message, yet it may never get where we want it to go. We may mail a letter, yet it may never reach its proper destination. But when we pray, we are sure that we are heard, for we have distinct answers to our petitions and our heart is filled with delight as we recollect the hundreds and thousands of times in which the right hand of the Lord has been stretched out to help us when we have cried unto Him in our time of need! Be established in every form of good work, you who are part of the Lord’s great army, meeting here for drill and for battle with the forces of

evil. I beseech you, Brothers and Sisters, let not your hearts grow faint, and do not so much as think of retreating in the day of conflict. Lo, our victorious Leader, “our Lord Jesus Christ Himself,” is coming! Therefore let everyone of us play the man for our coming King. The fight will not be long and woe be to the man who turns his back in the day of battle—but blessed shall he be who is found faithful even unto death. I speak thus to you, Beloved, though I am fully persuaded that He who has begun the good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ.

I wish that my sermon had a great deal more to do with some of you than it has, for I fear that there are many here to whom I have not been speaking. Therefore, my closing message shall be to the unsaved. My dear Friend, I cannot bid you be steadfast, and I cannot talk to you of everlasting consolation, for you have not yet believed in Jesus Christ to the saving of your soul. There is an awful text of Scripture which at present applies to you. The Apostle Paul, a cool-headed and warm-hearted man who loved sinners, once wrote this—“If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.” That is, accursed at the coming of Christ! O my dear Friend, that is what you will be if you love not our Lord Jesus Christ! And that is what you ought to be and what the warm-hearted lover of his race, who also loves his God, feels must be and ought to be your doom if you love not the Lord Jesus Christ. Think of that and I pray that the Holy Spirit may lead you first to trust in Jesus, and then to love Him, and so you shall be saved and shall bless Him forever!—

***“You sinners, seek His Grace,
Whose wrath you cannot bear!
Fly to the shelter of His Cross
And find salvation there.”***

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

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A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 6, 1910.

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

***“Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, who has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work.
2 Thessalonians 2:16, 17.***

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon, upon the same text, are Sermons, #1542, Volume 26—FREE GRACE A MOTIVE FOR FREE GIVING; #2363, Volume 40—COMFORT AND CONSTANCY and #2991, Volume 52—WHAT WE HAVE, AND ARE TO HAVE—
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ALL through his Epistles, Paul is continually expressing his best wishes for the friends to whom he writes. The Christian should be a well-wisher to all men. No cursing should ever come out of his mouth, but his lips should always distil blessings even upon his enemies—and much more upon his friends. Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus, it should be a part of our religion to be desiring the best of blessings for our fellow men. As the high priest of old blessed the people, so should those whom God has made to be priests and kings unto Himself—a privilege that pertains to all saints—exercise the function of blessing the people by desiring good things for them!

The blessing invoked in the text is very comprehensive, but although there is much to crave, there is much more to acknowledge with gratitude. Blessings already secured in the Covenant are the foundation of a rich expectancy for the supply of all our present needs. We may reasonably hope that God will do in the future what He has done in the past. Hence the Apostle speaks very plainly of what God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ have already bestowed—and then he couples therewith the kindest wishes as to the future of his friends at Thessalonica.

With as much brevity as possible, I shall first speak *on that part of the text which contains two positive facts*. And then *upon that part of it which expresses two holy desires*.

I. The 16th verse contains A VERY CLEAR STATEMENT OF THE TWO POSITIVE FACTS.

Paul, writing concerning believers in Christ at Thessalonica and everywhere else, says, “Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, who has loved us and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace.” From this we gather that every true Believer—everyone who rests upon Christ and is saved through the effectual working of the Holy Spirit—is, at the present moment, first of all, the

object of the love of God—"who has loved us." So, my Friends, Paul does not speak of God as though we were strangers to Him and He is a stranger to us, but he says, "who has loved us." Concerning this matter, he does not speak as one who was in doubt—with mingled hope and fear—but he says positively, "Our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father, who *has* loved us." He is quite sure of it! He is certain that these people to whom he is writing, and all believers in Jesus, are the objects of Divine Love!

Will you turn that Truth of God over in your minds, dear Friends, making a personal application of it at this moment? If you are now trusting in Jesus Christ, God loves you! That He should think of you is something! That He should pity you is more. That He should bear with you and have patience with you is no small thing—but think of God *loving* you! That Infinite Being whom the Heaven of heavens cannot contain, whose years are eternal, whose existence knows no limit nor shadow of a change—He loves you and yet you are, compared with Him, *nothing*—yes, *less than nothing* and vanity! Could you conceive of an angel loving an ant? Could you imagine one of the seraphs being in love with the gnat which dances in the sunbeam? It would be wonderful condescension for the august spirits to love such insignificant creatures, yet it would be only one creature loving another creature! And between one creature and another, the distance cannot be as great as between the Creator and the created one! That God, the Eternal, Infinite, Almighty I AM, should actually condescend to love *us*, who are but as *worms* compared with Him and who are but as things of yesterday, soon gone, oh, 'tis strange, 'tis passing strange, 'tis amazing! Yet though it exceeds marvel, it does not, thank God, exceed belief! But were it not that God has, Himself, revealed it, we might have cause enough to suppose it to be impossible that the Lord Jesus Christ and God, even our Father, should have loved us!

Being spoken of in the past tense, I infer that *the love which God has for Believers is no novelty*. He did not commence to love them yesterday. Brothers and Sisters, we believe that as many as have been called by Grace have been the objects of a love that never knew a beginning! Long before the stars were lit, or the sun's refulgent ray had pierced through primeval shade, the heart of Deity had fixed itself upon the chosen! The prescient eyes of God had seen them when as yet they were not—and in His book all their names were written, which in continuance were fashioned when as yet there were none of them! They were not merely foreknown, but they were foreloved! They were the favorites of His heart, the dear ones of His choice. He "has loved us." Fly back as far as you will—till time has not begun, the work of Creation is not accomplished and God dwells alone—it was still true of all Believers, even then, that "God, even our Father, has loved us."

Is it not marvelous that we should have been the objects of a *love that has been so constant*? For, as there never was any beginning to it, so there never has been a period in which that love has grown dim towards those who were the objects of it! The river of God's Love has gone flowing on in one undiminished stream even until now! He "has loved us." He

loved us when our father Adam plunged us into the ruins of the Fall. He loved us when He spoke the first promise in the Garden of Eden, that the Seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head. He loved us all through the prophetic days when He was writing the Book of Love upon which our delighted eyes were afterwards to gaze. He loved us when He sent His Son, His only Son, to live our life and to die our death! He loved us when He exalted that Son of His to His own right hand—and in His Person exalted us there, too, and made us to sit in heavenly places together with Him. He loved us when we were little children, in the weakness of infancy hanging upon our mother's breasts. He loved us when, in the follies of our youth, we seemed determined to destroy ourselves while He was determined that we should be saved. He loved us when we loved not Him. He drew us with the cords of a man and with the bands of love—and now, even at this day—we can, each one of us, look up to Him and say, "Abba! Father! You are mine and I am Yours by the Spirit of adoption." Yes, we can say this! We can look back all along our past lives and right beyond our birth into eternity past, and we can thank Him that we can truly say, "God, even our Father, has loved us."

Now, my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, you must not be satisfied unless you can speak about God's love to you in the same positive terms as those which were used by the Apostle Paul. Never rest contented if you do not know that God loves you! Give no sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids until, by a living faith, you have been able to read your title clear to this love of God! It may be that you have lost the sensible presence of that love—then ask for Divine Grace to search until you find it again. You may be saved and yet you may not be happy, but you ought never be content unless you are certain that you are saved—and then such certainty will infallibly bring you peace and joy. If now your full assurance has departed and your faith is under a cloud, come and knock again at Mercy's door and cling to the posts thereof, looking up at the Crucified One. Turn your tearful eyes to Calvary, trusting afresh to Him whose wounds will give you healing and in the crimson lines of whose agonies you must read your acceptance. Go there, I say, and be not content till you can say with Paul, "Our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father, has loved us." This is the first positive fact which is here mentioned.

There is another fact which is equally positive—"and has given us *everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace.*" It is absolutely certain that God has given His people this double blessing. What a delightful blessing this is, "everlasting consolation"! There is music in the word, "consolation." Barnabas was called "the son of consolation." No, more than that, it is the name of One who is far greater than Barnabas, for the Lord Jesus is called "the Consolation of Israel." But God is here said to have given this blessing to His people in a very special form—"everlasting consolation." A man goes to work to make money and, after toiling hard for it, he gets it and it is a consolation to him. But it is not an *everlasting* consolation, for he may spend or he may lose all his mon-

ey. He may invest it in some company (limited or unlimited), and very soon find it vanish! Or he may be compelled by death to leave it. It cannot be, at the best, more than a temporary consolation. A man toils hard for knowledge. He acquires it. He becomes eminent, his name is famous. This is a consolation to him for all his toil, but it cannot last long, for when he comes to feel the headache or the heartache, his degrees and his fame cannot cheer him. Or when his soul becomes a prey to despondency, he may turn over many a learned tome before he will find a cure for melancholy. His consolation is but frail and fickle—it will only serve to cheer him at intermittent seasons—it is not “everlasting consolation.” But I venture to say that through the consolation which God gives to His people, they are unsurpassed for their endurance! They can stand all tests—the shock of trial, the bursting out of passion, the lapse of years—no, more—they can even endure the passage to eternity, for God has given to His people “everlasting consolation.”

What is this “everlasting consolation”? It includes a sense of pardoned sin. A Christian, when his heart is right, knows that God has pardoned his sins, that He has cast them behind His back, and that they will never be mentioned against him again. He has received in his heart the witness of the Spirit that God has blotted out, as a thick cloud, his transgressions and, as a cloud, his sins. Well, if sin is pardoned, is not that a consolation? Yes, and an everlasting consolation, too—one that will do to live with and that will do to die with—and that will do to rise again with! Oh, joy! My sins are pardoned! Now do what You will with me, my God! As my sins are put away, You have given me “everlasting consolation.”

This “everlasting consolation” also gives an abiding sense of acceptance in Christ. The Christian knows that God looks upon him as he is in Christ and, inasmuch as God put Christ into his place, and punished Christ for his sin, He now puts the Believer into Christ’s place and rewards that Believer with His love just as if he had been obedient unto death, as Christ was! It is a blessed thing to know that God accepts us and to be able to sing, with Hart—

**“With my Savior’s garments on,
Holy as the Holy One”—**

and this is a consolation which is abiding. It is, in fact, everlasting! Now let sickness come—the consolation still abides. Have we not seen hundreds of Believers as happy in the weakness of disease as they would have been in the strength of hale and vigorous health? Let death come—the consolation still remains. Have not these ears often heard the songs of dying saints as they have rejoiced because the love of God was shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit? Yes, a sense of acceptance in the Beloved is an “everlasting consolation.”

Moreover, the Christian has a conviction of his security in Christ. God has promised to save all those who trust in Jesus. The Christian does trust in Him and he believes that God will be as good as His word and will save him. He feels, therefore, that whatever may occur in Providence, whatever onslaughts there may be of inward corruption, or of outward temptation, he is safe by virtue of his union to Christ—is not this a

source of consolation? Why, some of you might freely give your eyes to know that you are saved! It would be a good bargain for men even to be lame or maimed if they did but enter into life. The Christian knows that he is secure—beneath the shield of the Divine Omnipotence he laughs at the rage of Hell, feeling that no fiery dart can ever pierce that sacred protection! Are you rejoicing in this everlasting consolation? If not, you should seriously question whether you know what true religion means. Do you find that your losses make you wretched? Do bereavements in your family make you murmur and complain? Are you never happy? Does not joy ever come into your spirit? Do you always hang your head like a bulrush? Have you no peace of mind, no sacred mirth? Do the bells of your heart never ring? Do the heart-strings of your soul never sound out the music of grateful praise? Then gravely question whether you can be a child of God, for concerning the children of God it is written, “God, even our Father, has given us everlasting consolation.”

I am sure there are many here who, if they were to speak from experience, would say, “Well, we are very poor, but we are rich in faith, and faith makes us rich toward God. We have not anything to spare, yet surely goodness and mercy have followed us all the days of our life. We are sick in body, yet our afflictions are so sanctified that we rejoice in deep distress. We are ridiculed and slandered by the ungodly, but we rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer anything for Christ’s sake. Yes, God has given us everlasting consolation!” John Bunyan said that the man who wears the flower, “heart’s ease,” in his bosom need not envy a king! And that is a flower which the Christian always wears in his button-hole—or if he does not always wear it there, it is his own fault, for God has given it to him—He has given unto us everlasting, unchanging, unfading, inexhaustible fountains of consolation!

Another thing which God has given us is “*good hope through Grace*”—a hope, a good hope—a “good hope through Grace.” What is the Christian’s hope? It is a hope that he shall be preserved in this life by God’s love and kindness. A hope that when he comes to die—for die he must unless the Lord shall come first—he shall have all-sufficient Grace to be able to play the man in the last solemn article. He has the hope that, after death, his soul, out-soaring sun, moon and stars, shall enter into the realm of spirits and be with Christ! He believes that the day shall come when his very body, though it has become food for worms, shall be quickened and called by the voice of the archangel from its bed of dust and its silent sleeping place. He believes that those bones of his shall live again and that his soul and body shall be re-united and that, when the Lord Jesus shall stand at the Last Day upon the earth, in his flesh he shall see God! So he sings with Toplady—

***“These eyes shall see Him in that Day,
The God that died for me!
And all my rising bones shall say,
Lord, who is like unto Thee?”***

This is the Christian’s hope, that he shall then live, world without end, in the perfection of enjoyment! That he shall have all spiritual joys in com-

munion with Christ—and all joys that shall be suitable to his new and spiritual body as he shall walk the golden streets and forever praise the love which brought him into an existence of perfect bliss! This is the Christian's hope and, consequently, the thought of death does not alarm him—rather, he looks forward to it with joy! As the toil-worn laborer does not dread the eventide when he shall put off his dusty robes, but longs for the night that he may rest in his bed, so the Christian, when he is in his right mind—

***“Longs for evening, to undress,
That he may rest with God.”***

He is willing to put off the cumbrous clay of his body and commit it to the purifying earth, that he may, as a disembodied spirit, depart to be “with Christ, which is far better,” expecting that, afterwards, body and soul together shall be forever gratified with Christ!

This is the Christian's hope and it is a *good* hope. It is good for what it brings us, but it is especially good for that upon which it is grounded. The reason why the Christian expects this eternal happiness is because God has promised it to him and has given him an earnest of it. He has Heaven in his heart even now. That is to say, he has within him the beginning of that life which shall, in due time, become the heavenly life. In olden times, when men bought an estate, it was customary for the seller to give to the purchaser a tuft of grass and a leaf from one of the trees on the land, signifying that the purchaser then had what was called *seizin* of the property, and they were proofs that it belonged to him. And when God gives true faith in Christ and enables a soul to have peace with God through the precious blood, this is the earnest of Heaven, a foretaste of its bliss and sure evidence that Heaven is, indeed, ours. I trust that there are many of us who have this earnest and feel comforted by it. We have a good hope because it is founded upon God's promise in His Word and upon the witness of the Spirit within our heart that we are born of God!

And it is said to be a good hope *through Grace*.” Ah, Friends, there is no good hope except “through Grace.” You cannot have a good hope through merit. If anybody expects to have a good hope through baptism, he is very much mistaken! Baptism is simply the *testimony* of a good conscience toward God—it cannot give any hope of Heaven. If we were to build upon such a foundation as baptism, confirmation, the Lord's Supper, or anything of the kind, we should be sad losers, for there is nothing in all these things put together to make a Christian's hope! Nor must we build our hopes on our prayers or our tears, or on anything that we can do, for if so, it will be a sandy foundation and when the time of trial comes, it will give way under us. But to have a good hope through Divine Grace—such a hope as this—that I, a poor unworthy sinner, have been invited by God to put my trust in His dear Son, and that He has promised that if I do, I shall be saved! I do trust in Jesus and, therefore, if God has promised truly, I shall be saved—this is indeed a foundation on which I may build without fear! Is not this, my Brothers and Sisters, the top and bottom of the Christian's hope, that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,” and that whoever believes in Him shall not perish,

but have everlasting life? You do believe in Him and, therefore, you can say that you do possess eternal life! I do solemnly declare that if I have ever at any time begun to say in my own mind, "I shall be saved, for I have preached the Gospel, I have experienced such-and-such enjoyments, I have drawn near to God in secret prayer"—if ever I have talked to myself like that, I have soon been led to see that if I had not something infinitely better than all that to trust to, I would be resting on a broken reed. But, oh, to come to Jesus just as one came, at the first, saying—

***"Nothing in my hands I bring—
Simply to Your Cross I cling.
Naked, come to You for dress.
Helpless, look to You for Grace.
Foul, I to the Fountain fly—
Wash me, Savior, or I die!"***

This is, indeed, to have a "good hope through Grace."

Now let us take these two statements, look at them again, and then lay them up among our choicest treasures. The one statement is that God has loved us. O Christian Friends, do try to drink in that great Truth of God! Do not be satisfied simply to hear the words repeated, but get them right into your very spirits—"Our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father, has loved us." O you angels, you have not even in Heaven a greater joy than this—to know that God has loved us! The other statement is that God "has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace." So we cannot be without consolation. Whatever your trouble may be, my dear Christian Friend, though you may have lost your dearest one, though your property may have melted as the snowflake melts into the sea, yet God has given you eternal consolation—and whatever you may have to fear concerning the future, you have a hope that is broader than your fears!—

***"This is the hope, the blissful hope,
The hope by Jesus given!
The hope when days and years are past,
We all shall meet in Heaven!"***

As I turned this text over, I could not help pitying those who have no hope, no good hope through Divine Grace. When I opened my letters this afternoon, on coming back from Liverpool, the first one I opened was to tell me of the death of one with whom I spent a very happy day about a fortnight ago. He seemed to me to be in perfect health when I spoke to him, then, but now he is gone to his eternal rest. The next letter I opened came from the deacon of a Church in Devonshire, to say that one of our students, who was settled there as a minister, had been suddenly taken ill and had just died. I did not care to open any more letters, just then, for fear that I would read of somebody else being gone. But I thought, "Well, both of these dear Brothers have served their generation by the will of God, and they have fallen asleep, and it is well." I could only look forward with hope to the day when somebody would read just such a letter about me—and could only trust that they would be there to say of me what I could say of these Brothers—"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."

But what a sad thing it is to live in this world and to have no hope! It would have been better not to have lived at all than to live without a “good hope through Grace.” I do not really know how some of you manage to live. I know you have your troubles—troubles at home and troubles in business—and I cannot make out how you manage to put up with this poor existence without the hope of a better one! Knowing what we do about a future state, if we had not a good hope concerning it, we really might wish that we had never been born. And we sometimes wonder how some of you can be so easy and so careless about the unknown state when you, perhaps, know that you will soon be in that state and also know that if it is not a better state than this one, it will be a very sad thing for you to have had an existence at all! Oh, “seek you the Lord while He may be found! Call upon Him while He is near.” A good hope can be had through Divine Grace and that Grace is free even to the chief of sinners! If we come to God on the footing of Divine Grace, He will never cast us out. Oh, that we might all have this infinite treasure of a “good hope through Grace”!

II. Now I can spend only a few minutes upon the second part of the subject in which we have TWO GOOD WISHES, TWO HOLY DESIRES. The first part of the text has told us what God has given us. The second part tells us what we ought to desire God to give us—“Comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work.”

I pray God for those who are about to be baptized and also for you who have long made a profession of your faith, that you may get the first blessing, namely, *Divine comfort*. May God comfort you! It is a bad case when a Christian is not happy, when he is not full of comfort. I know it is treated by some people as though it were a very insignificant matter whether a Christian is happy or not, but I am sure it is an exceedingly important matter that he should have comfort. A wretched, miserable Christian is, to a great extent, an injury to the Church, and a dishonor to the Cross of Christ, for worldly people will pick out such an one and say, “That is what your religion does for a man!” Now, genuine godliness gives peace and joy. In its first beginning, when a man is under a sense of sin, it does make him wretched to feel his sin, but when the soul is obedient to the command of Christ and trusts in Him, it gives him joy and peace. “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace”—and for a Christian not to have this fruit of the Spirit is to libel Christianity!

When one’s heart is sad, it is not always best to show it. “When you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that you appear not unto men to fast.” Even if you have some sorrow of heart, tell it not at once to your neighbor, who may have quite enough trouble of his own to bear without having yours added to it! Do, Christian, seek to get the comfort of which the Apostle here speaks. Is there ever a position into which you and I can be cast where there is no comfort for us in the Divine promises? There is, in God’s Word, a key to open all the locks of trouble in Doubting Castle! If we will but turn over the sacred pages, we shall find there a promise exactly suited to our case. Do you lack comfort, Christian? How can you while there is a Mercy Seat to go to and One there

whose ears are always open to hear your petition and to relieve your trouble? Do you lack comfort while you can pray? Surely it must be neglect of prayer that makes your burdens so heavy. How can you be without comfort while your Savior lives? If Jesus Christ still bears your name upon His heart, that should be enough for you! Is it not really a comfort to think that the Father, Himself, loves you? My Father, who is in Heaven, knows my needs—ought not that to cheer me? Midst darkest shades, if I feel that He is with me—yes, even in the Valley of the Shadow of Death—if His rod and His staff comfort me, what have I to fear? Yes, Christian Friends, you have abundant ground for comfort, so be not content unless you enjoy that comfort! May God, even your Father, put you and keep you in a comfortable frame of mind!

I would say especially to young Christians—Do not imagine that as soon as you become believers in Christ, you are to cast away those cheerful looks and those bright eyes of yours. God forbid! If you were happy, before, be far happier now! You need not have levity—that is to be avoided—and the pleasure which consists in sin should be no pleasure to you, but now your joy should be deeper as it is purer, more lively as it is more sound!

“*And establish you in every good word and work.*” These are the two forms of establishment in good Doctrine and in good practice. When a Christian receives good words, the devil would like to drive them from him and to drive him from them. It is one of the masterpieces of Satan to try to spoil our faith. If he can lead us to believe falsely, he will the more easily lead us to *act* falsely. So may God “establish you in every good *word.*” You cannot help noticing, if you look upon the spiritual firmament just now, how like it is to what the natural firmament was the other night. It is said that there were thousands of shooting stars visible within an hour! And I might almost say that if you look out into the Christian world, you can see thousands of shooting stars within a minute! I do not know what new error we shall have within the next 24 hours. There are some people who are so fond of novelties that they have advanced pretty nearly every form of error that our poor imagination can conceive of, yet they seem to be studious to make fresh ones! We have new “isms” and “ites” of all sorts, but old-fashioned Truths of God, which we thought would never have been doubted, are, nowadays, contested! An age of great religious activity is pretty sure to be also an age in which error is active and, therefore, it is the more necessary that we should pray for Believers that they may be established in every good word!

I should like you who are members of this Church not only to believe the Truth, but to know *why you believe it* and to be so sure and certain of it that you cannot be shaken from it! I would have you be not like the dry leaves in autumn, which are carried away by the first wind because they have lost their vitality, but like the green leaves in spring which will bear the March winds and cannot be torn off because their sap is flowing in them and they are fresh and vigorous. I would that you were always able to give a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.

The faith which we have has been handed down to us by martyrs' hands all along the ages—not through the corrupt Church of Rome—but down along the line of martyrs and confessors who have sealed their testimony with their blood! And that testimony is still with us this day! Search God's Word and if we teach you anything that is inconsistent with it, then reject us as we would have you reject all false teachers! If we set before you anything which is of *our* making, and not of God's making, cast it to the dogs and have none of it! But if it is God's Truth, be established in it. Garner it in your soul. Hold it fast as for dear life and never let it go! Believe that the Truth of God as it is in Jesus, is worth the blood which martyrs have shed in its defense—and will be worth all that it can possibly cost you in holding it! May you be established in every good word—not merely in *some* good words—but in *every* good word! Believe all the Truths of God. Many Christians, alas, believe only one Truth or so. One man gets a hold of the Doctrine of Predestination and he is like a child with a doll—it is all the world to him! Another man gets a hold of the Doctrine of Human Responsibility and he looks at it, as Luther says, “like a cow at a new gate.” He stands staring at that and can see nothing beyond it! But I would have you see all the Truth and be always ready to receive anything that God has revealed! Be you steadfast “in every good word.”

But the blessing invoked by the Apostle is that you may be established in every good *work* as well as in every good word. Alas, there are some Christians who like the Word of God very well, though they do not like the work—but unless our godliness extends to our daily work, it is not godliness at all! May you, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, be established in every good work! May there be the good work of holiness in all the relationships of life! May you be the best of sons, the best of daughters, the best of parents, the best of husbands, the best of wives, the best of employers, the best of employees! Wherever your lot may be cast, may you be established in every good work in all the relationships of life!

Then, in this Christian Church, may you work in prayer, may you work in teaching, may you work according to the ability which God has given you—and may you be established in it! If there is any good work which you have not yet attempted, but to which you are called of God, may you have Grace to enter upon it and, once engaged in it, may you never take your hands from the plow till you have finished the task that God has sent you! O Beloved, I can pray this prayer from my heart for everyone of you! May you who have served the Master for years, still be kept serving Him! Oh, may none of you turn your backs in the day of battle! May you be faithful unto death and so obtain the great reward! May the Grace which has helped you forward up to now, impel you forward till your hairs are gray and until you throw yourselves back upon the couch of death to sleep with God! So may you be established in every good word and work! Every Christian ought to be a member of the established Church—I do not mean the church which is established by the English law—but the Church which is established by God! Oh, to be established by Divine Grace—to be established by knowing what we be-

lieve, by practicing it—and by being established in that practice! These Apostolic good wishes I leave with you—may you inherit them!

But remember that we must first come to Christ, or these good wishes will be only wishes. We must first trust the Savior, or else these blessings can never be ours! May Divine Grace bring us to Jesus and keep us at His feet—and Divine Grace shall have the praise forever and ever!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 THESSALONIANS 2.**

Verses 1, 2. *Now we beseech you, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto Him, that you be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.* In the Church of Christ, the teaching has always been that Christ is coming quickly and that teaching must never be withdrawn, for He is coming quickly, as He said to John in the Revelation. At the same time, this teaching has given an opportunity to certain presumptuous people to prophesy that at such-and-such a time, Christ will come. They know nothing about it and their prophecies are not worth the breath they spend in uttering them! And we have, today, what the Apostle wrote to the Thessalonians—

3. *Let no man deceive you by any means: for that Day shall not come, except there comes a falling away, first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.* I believe that to a large extent this has already happened and that the “man of sin” has been revealed. This “son of perdition” has had a long, dark and terrible reign over myriads of men, and he still sits on the seven hills of Rome, and rules over multitudes of his fellow sinners. Paul held that it was consistent to expect the Lord to come quickly and yet to know that certain events must occur before He did come. That is just the condition, I think, to which a man’s mind will come if he diligently and impartially reads the Scriptures—especially the prophetic parts of them. The Lord will come in such an hour as we think not, yet there are clear indications of certain things which are to happen before He does come.

4. *Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.* It has been said that the Pope of Rome is infallible, that his interpretation of Scripture, whatever it may be, is as valid as the Scripture, itself, and that whatever he chooses to decree must be obeyed by the faithful. Such are some of the pretensions, even at this day, of the “man of sin.”

5-7. *Do you not remember that when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity is already at work.* There were certain reasons why that gigantic iniquity should begin to be developed, even while the Roman Empire was in power to keep it in check.

And when that passed away, there was the opportunity for “the mystery of iniquity” to become the despot of the world!

7-10. *Only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of His mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. This is the last sin of all—that ungodly men do not receive “the love of the truth.” If they were, themselves, true, they would love the Truth of God. If the Grace of God was in them, His own precious Truth would be prized by them above everything else! But when men finally reject the Truth by which they might be saved, God visits them with terrible judgments!*

11-17. *And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleased in unrighteousness. But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God has, from the beginning, chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto He called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you have been taught, whether by word or our epistle. Now our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father, which has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work. So may it be, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.*

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

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

THE LOVE OF GOD AND THE PATIENCE OF CHRIST NO. 2028

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JUNE 17, 1888,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God,
and into the patient waiting for Christ.”
2 Thessalonians 3:5.*

FOR the moment, Paul in spirit is coasting the purple shores of the celestial country. With his Thessalonian friends he is making a joyful voyage within hail of Immanuel's land. The sail is bright with the sunlight and the keel is marking a silver track behind it. The Apostle's happy soul has left far in the stern the deceivableness of unrighteousness and the rocks of error. It comes into his heart that he would gladly steer his friends into certain of those lovely creeks which run up far into the inner recesses of the sacred fatherland. Shall he turn the helm that way? He pauses, for the navigation is difficult. One must be greatly expert to thread the streams which descend from the sunny fountains.

It is not given to all saints to follow safely all the windings of the rivers of delight. Paul had been with his Brethren at sea in the place where the Lord sank all their transgressions in the depths and he had been with them in sore affliction when neither sun nor moon appeared—and in all such seafaring he was in his element. But, brave pilot as he was, he could not pretend to penetrate all the richer and rarer experiences which bring elect souls nearest to the heart of the great Father. Therefore, instead of offering to be their pilot, he bowed his head and prayed, “The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patient waiting for Christ.”

The special entrance into the goodly land, which the Apostle desired for his friends, was one which mere insight, wit, knowledge, or instruction could never give them. If so, he would have directed their minds that way at once. But the perception of the heavenlies is only given to heavenly faculties. The attainments which Paul desired for his friends were not beliefs of the head but indwelling of the heart. To return to our figure of sailing up the creeks and rivers into the center of the glorious country—that delicious voyage was only possible to the more refined and spiritual powers of the soul. Those sweet waters could only be navigated by the heart and the heart itself would need Divine direction before it could find the entrance to them.

There is a path which the vulture's eye has not seen and the lion's whelp has not trod—only God sees and knows it. The Beulah country of spiritual wisdom, especially in its higher reaches, is a matter for personal Revelation from God to each one of His own. We are here hopelessly in the

dark if we have no light from above. And even with that light we do but see the difficult nature of our way and fail to enter upon it until the light becomes a force and He whom we desire to know directs our hearts into communion with Himself. Yes, yonder are the radiant coasts and the rivers of life up which our boat might sail into the center of “the island of the innocent.” Yet our great Apostle does not rush into the office of pilot but humbly acts as intercessor, crying, “The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God.”

All this whets our desires! Who would not wish to go where only choice spirits can enter and where these can only come as the Lord directs their hearts? Paul could give his converts external directions, he could guide his more advanced Brethren in the work, walk and warfare of life. And he did so with all simplicity and earnestness. He urged them to abound in this grace and to avoid that folly. But he felt that his exhortation would be inefficient unless their hearts were touched. Here he felt his own powerlessness and so he cast the grand matter of heart-work upon the Lord Himself. As the heart naturally baffles all physicians so spiritually it is far beyond our knowledge. Who among ministers can guide you? Therefore, may “the Lord direct your hearts.”

God alone knows the heart and God alone can rule it—for this ruling Paul makes request. “The Lord direct your hearts.” Let us borrow his prayer and turn it to our own personal use—“Domine dirige nos.” The place for God in reference to the heart is that of supreme director. When the Lord lays His hand on the heart, which is the helm of the ship, then the whole vessel is rightly directed—this, therefore, is what we beseech Him to do. When the Holy Spirit comes into the heart and takes supreme control of the affections, the whole life and conversation are after a godly sort, Oh, that He may prove this fact to each one of us! Some think much of liberty—I long far more to be in perfect subjection to the Lord my God. Oh, how I wish for a Master, a Dictator, a Director! Oh, that my Lord would take the reins and bring my every thought into captivity to His own will, henceforth and forever!

What a heavenly content I feel in yielding myself to the sacred Trinity! The God who made us may most fitly be called upon to govern us. When we recognize the glory of the whole Godhead we perceive the perfect suitability of such direction as will come from the Three in One God. Albeit that the Holy Spirit is not mentioned in this verse by name, He is mentioned by His operations, for it is the Spirit of God that deals with the hearts of Believers. I take rare pleasure in our text, because we have the blessed Trinity in unity in these few words, “The Lord”—that is, the Holy Spirit who dwells within Believers—“direct your hearts into the love of God (by whom I understand the Father) and into the patient waiting for Christ.”

May the Trinity in Unity work with us and fulfill in each of us this prayer of the Apostle that our hearts may be directed into the love of God and into the patient waiting for Christ! Paul would have his Thessalonian friends advance in a straight line. Our heart is to be as a vessel that is not

left to beat about, nor to come into harbor by a circuitous route, but is steered directly into the fair haven. May the Spirit of God take us and give us a straight tendency towards the holiest things and then at once bring us into the love of God and into the patient waiting for Christ.

But here we must do a little translating or interpreting. Observe in the Revised Version a difference of translation. There we read “into the patience of Christ.” This is a great improvement upon our former translation. But, although it is accurate, it is not complete—it does not take up the whole of the meaning. In our Authorized Version we have “the patient waiting for Christ,” but in its margin we find “into the patience of Christ”—showing that the earlier translators felt that “the patience of Christ” would be a good translation. And yet, after considering it in all its bearings, they thought that Paul did not quite mean the patience of Christ, but that he meant a patience which we exert towards Christ.

Is there not weight in this? Does not the context support it? As the love into which we are to be directed is love to God, so the patience into which we are to be directed must be a patience towards Christ. Our grand old translators expressed this Truth by language which may be inaccurate as mere wordings, but it is deeply correct as to its sense. Surely Paul did mean “the patience towards Christ which manifests itself in the patient waiting for Christ.” If you consider all this you will see that we have no infant-class lesson in the text before us! Here are nuts for young men who have cut their wisdom-teeth. May the good Spirit help us to reach the kernels.

Having turned the text over many times, I thought that we might be able to gather up a considerable amount of its real meaning if we thought of it thus—first, here are two precious things for us to enter into—the love of God and the patience of Christ. And, secondly, here are two eminent virtues to be acquired by us—the love of God, that is, love to God and the patience of Christ—the patient waiting for Christ.

I. To begin, then, here are TWO PRECIOUS THINGS FOR US TO ENTER INTO. We cannot enter into them except as the Lord directs our hearts. There is a straight entrance into them but we do not readily find it. It needs the Holy Spirit to direct our feet along the narrow way which leads to this great blessedness.

The first precious thing which we are to enter is the love of God. Beloved, we know the love of God in various ways. Many know it by having heard of it, even as a blind man may thus know the charms of an Alpine landscape. Poor knowledge this! Others of us have tasted of the love of God, have talked about the love of God, have prayed and have sung concerning the love of God. All very well, but Paul meant a dove of a brighter feather. To be directed into the love of God is quite another thing from all that we can be told of it. A fair garden is before us. We look over the wall and are even allowed to stand at the door while one hands out to us baskets of golden apples. This is very delightful. Who would not be glad to come so near as this to the garden of heavenly delights?

Yet it is something more to be shown the door, to have the latch lifted, to see the gateway opened and to be gently directed into the Paradise of God. This is what is wanted—that we may be directed *into* the love of God. Oh, that we may feel something of it while we meditate upon it! Beloved, we come, when we are taught of the Spirit of God, to enter into the love of God by seeing its central importance. We see that the love of God is the source and center, fountain and foundation of all our salvation, and of all else that we receive from God.

At first we are much taken up with pardoning Grace. We are largely engrossed with those royal robes of righteousness with which our nakedness is covered. We are delighted with the viands of the marriage banquet—we eat the fat and we drink the sweet. What else would you expect from starving souls admitted to the abundant supplies of heavenly Grace? Afterwards we begin more distinctly to think of the love that spread the feast, the love that provided the raiment, the love that invited us to the banquet and gently led us to take our place in it. This does not always come at first.

But I pray that none of us may be long receiving the gifts of love without kissing the hand of love. That none of us may be content to have had much forgiven without coming and washing the feet of our forgiving Lord with our tears and declaring our deep and true love to Him. O saved soul, may the Lord fill you with personal love to that personal Savior through whom all blessings come to you! Remember, you have all good things because God loves you! Remember that every cake of the heavenly manna, every cup of the living water comes to you because of His great love wherewith He loved you. This will put a sweetness into what you receive even greater than that which is there intrinsically, sweet though God's mercies are in their own nature and quality. Oh, to enter into God's love by perceiving it to be the wellhead of every stream of mercy by which we are refreshed!

If we further enter into the love of God, we see its immeasurable greatness. There is a little word which you have often heard, which I beg to bring before you again—that little word “so.” “God so loved the world that He gave His only Begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Come, you surveyors, bring your chains and try to make a survey of this word “so.” No, that is not enough. Come here, you that make our national surveys and lay down charts for all nations. Come, you who map the sea and land and make a chart of this word “so.”

No, I must go further. Come here, you astronomers, that with your optic glasses spy out spaces before which imagination staggers, come here and encounter calculations worthy of all your powers! When you have measured between the horns of space, here is a task that will defy you—“God so loved the world.” If you enter into that you will know that all this love is to you—that while Jehovah loves the world, yet He loves you as much as if there were nobody else in all the world to love. God can pour the infinite love of His heart upon one object and yet, for all that, can love

ten thousand times ten thousand of His creatures just as much. O Heir of God, your store of love is not diminished because the innumerable company of your Brethren share it with you! Your Father loves each child as if He had no other. Peer into this abyss of love. Plunge into this sea. Dive into this depth unsearchable. Oh, that God might direct you into the immeasurable greatness of this love!

Neither be you afraid to enter into this love by remembering its antiquity. Some fight the great Truth of the eternal electing love of God. But to me it is as wafers made with honey. What music lies in that sentence—“Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love”! When this great world, the sun, and moon and stars, had not yet flashed the morning of their little day, the Lord Jehovah loved His people with an everlasting love. In the Divine purposes, which were not of yesterday, nor even of that date of which Scripture speaks as “In the beginning”—when the Lord created the heavens and the earth—God loved His own people.

He had chosen you, thought of you, provided for you and made ten thousand forecasts of loving kindness towards you before the earth was. Beloved Believer, you were engraved on the hands of Christ even then. Oh that the Lord would direct you into the antiquity of His love. It shall make you greatly prize that love to think that it had no beginning and shall never, never have an end.

Again—I pray that we may be directed into the love of God as to its infallible constancy. The unchangeable Jehovah never ceases to love His people. It would be a wretched business to be directed into the love of God only to find it a thing of the past. O believing Soul, you have not to deal with things which once were gems of the mine but now are dreams of the night. Oh, no! The love of God abides forever the same. When you are in darkness the Lord still sees you with an eye of love—

***“He saw you ruined in the Fall,
Yet loved you notwithstanding all.”***

When you were without strength, “in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” Since you have known Him He has never varied in His love. When you have grown cold He has loved you. When you have grown cruel He has loved you. You have grievously provoked Him till He has taken down His rod and made you smart. But He has loved you in the smiting. With God there is as much love in chastening as in caressing. He never abates in fervor towards His ancient friends. Has He not said, “I am the Lord. I change not. Therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed”? I pray the Lord to direct us into the immutability of His Divine love, for this is a great medicine in the day of soul-trouble.

When conscious of imperfection, when darkened by the shadow of a great fault, when trembling under apprehension of wrath it draws you back again if you can feel, “Still my Father is my Father, still will He receive His wandering child and press His prodigal to His bosom and rejoice over me and say, ‘This My son was dead and is alive again.’” O Child of God, your questionings of Divine love are grievous to your God. But if you

can learn this Truth and be led into it—that He loves you evermore the same—it will help you right graciously.

This love we ought to know and if the Lord will lead us into it we shall know that it is omnipresent. I mean by this, that whatever condition we may be in, the Lord is still active in love towards us. You are going across the sea to a far country but your Father's love will be as near you on the blue wave as on the greensward of Old England. You have come out tonight alone—time was when you did come to the House of God in company. But it may be that graves and desertions furnish sad reasons for your present solitude. Still, you are not alone, your Father's love is with you.

You are tonight, perhaps, in a very strange part of your spiritual experience—you have not gone this way before. But the road is not new to eternal love. Go where you may, the air is still about you—go where you may, your Father's love is all around you. Higher than your soaring, deeper than your sinking is all-surrounding love. You are going home, perhaps, to a bed from which you shall not rise for months. You have no apprehension just now of what lies before you in the immediate future. It is as well you should not know. I should be slow to lift the curtain of merciful concealment even if it were in my power to do so. There is no necessity to know details when one or two grand facts provide for all contingencies.

Trouble not yourself about the morrow. If you are to be sick or if you are to die, your Father's love will be with you still. Therefore go on and fear not. He cannot, will not, turn away from you. An omnipresent God means omnipresent love and omnipotence goes hand-in-hand with omnipresence. The Lord will show Himself strong on the behalf of them that trust Him. His love, which never fails, is attended by a power that faints not, nor is weary. Oh, may the Lord lead you into such love as this! May the Holy Spirit lead you into the innermost secret of this joy of joys, this bliss unspeakable.

And I would also wish that you may be directed into the love of God as to its entire agreement with His justice, His holiness, His spotless purity. I firmly believe that God loves sinners but I am equally sure that He hates sin. I do believe that He delights in mercy but I am equally clear that He never dishonors His justice, nor frustrates the sternest threat of His Law. It is our joy that a holy God loves us and does not find it needful to stain His holiness to save the unclean. We are loved by one so just, so righteous that He could not pardon us without atonement. Even today He will never spare our sins but He will drive the love of them out of us by chastisement, even as He has washed the guilt of them away by the precious blood of His dear Son.

O Beloved, we have a holy God who is determined to make us holy. He would have us love our wives. And he sets before us a holy model—"Even as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word." All true love goes towards purification. And the true love of God goes that way

with an invincible current that can never be turned aside. O Believer, your God loves you so well that He will not let a darling sin stay in your heart. He loves you so strongly that He will not spare any iniquity in you. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth. Therefore I will punish you for your iniquities." Out of His pure love He will chasten and refine till He has made us pure and able to abide in fellowship with His perfect nature.

I have thus spoken a little upon a vast theme. I fear it will seem to you mere surface-work. And yet I pray that it may lead you to deep knowledge of Divine things so that you may apprehend God's love as yours. And that you may feel the power, the unction, the savor which come out of His love. I pray this knowledge, by His Grace, will make your heart as sweet and aromatic as a chamber in which a box of precious ointment has been broken. Oh, that you might be led into the innermost secret of the Lord's love till it shall saturate you, influence you, take possession of you, carry you away! The Lord direct you into the love of God.

The second part of the prayer upon which we shall have to dwell is, "The Lord direct your hearts into the patience of Christ." Now, Beloved, I have another great sea before me, and who am I that I should act as your convoy over this main ocean? Here I am lost. I cannot take my bearings. I am a lone speck upon the infinite. I will imitate the wise Apostle and pray, "The Lord direct your hearts into the patience of Christ."

What a patience that was which Jesus exhibited for us in our redemption! To come from Heaven to earth, to dwell in poverty and neglect and find no room even in the inn! Admire the patience of Bethlehem. To hold His tongue for thirty years—who shall estimate the wonderful patience of Nazareth and the carpenter's shop! When He spoke, to be despised and rejected of men. What patience for Him whom Cherubim obey! Oh, the patience of the Christ to be tempted of the devil! One can hardly tell what patience Christ must have had to let the devil come within ten thousand miles of him, for He was able to keep him far down in the abyss below His feet.

There is not much in a patience which cannot help itself. But you well know that all the while Christ could have conquered all foes, chased away all suffering and kept off all temptation. But for our sakes, as Captain of our salvation, that He might be made perfect through suffering, His patience had its perfect work, right on to Gethsemane. Do you need that I tell you this? Golgotha, with all its woes, its "lama Sabachthani," its abysmal griefs—do I need remind you of the patience of Christ for us when the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all? Patient as a lamb, He opened not His mouth but stood in omnipotence of patience, all-sufficient to endure. You have heard of the patience of Job but you have need to enter into the patience of Jesus.

Oh, the patience within Christ Himself! God never seems so like a God as when He divinely rules Himself. I can understand His shaking earth and Heaven with His Word. But that He should possess His own soul in patience is far more incomprehensible. Marvel that omnipotent love

should restrain omnipotence itself. In the life and death of our Lord Jesus we see almighty patience. He was very sensitive—very sensitive of sin, very sensitive of unkindness, and yet, with all that sensitiveness He showed no petulance but bore Himself in all the calm grandeur of Godhead. He was not quick to resent an ill but He was patient to the uttermost. As I have said before, there went with His sensitiveness the power at any time to avenge Himself and deliver Himself but He would not use it.

Legions of angels would have been glad to come to His rescue but He bowed alone in the garden and gave Himself up to the betrayer without a word. And all the while He was most tender and graciously considerate of everybody but Himself. He spoke burning words sometimes—His mouth could be like the red lips of a volcano as He poured out the burning lava of denunciation upon “scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites.” But the resentment was never aroused by any injury done to Himself. When He looked that way it was always gentleness—He cried, “Father, forgive them. For they know not what they do.” Oh, the wondrous patience of Heaven’s own Christ!

Enter into His patience *with* us as well as *for* us. How He put up with each one of us when we would not come to Him! How He wept over us when we neglected Him! How He drew us with constancy of love when we tugged against the cords! And when we came to Him and since we have been with Him, what patience He has had with our ill manners! If I had been Christ, I would have discharged such a servant as I have been long ago. Often have I gone to His feet and cried, “Dismiss me not Your service, Lord.” I know how justly He might have stripped His livery from my back. But He has not done so. Have you not often wondered that He should still love you? He is affianced to you and He hates divorce.

But is it not marvelous that He keeps His betrothal with you and will do so, though you have often defiled yourself and forgotten Him? Blessed fact, the ring is on His finger rather than on yours and the marriage is as sure as His love. He will present you unto Himself, “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing,” one of these days. But oh, His patience with each one of us! How He has put up with our unbelief, our mistrust, our hard hearts, our indifference, our strange ways! Never lover so kind as He! On our part never return so unworthy. Blessed be the patience of our Best Beloved!

Now, Beloved, what is wanted is that we be directed into this patience of Christ. The choicest saints in different ages of the world have studied most the passion of our Lord. And although nowadays we hear from the wise men that it is sensuous to talk about the Cross and the five wounds and so forth, for my part I feel that no contemplation ever does me so much real benefit as that which brings me very near my bleeding Lord. The Cross for me! The Cross for me! Here is doctrine humbling, softening, melting, elevating, sanctifying. Here is Truth that is of Heaven and yet comes down to earth—love that lifts me away from earth even to the seventh Heaven.

Have you ever read the words of holy Bernard, when his soul was all on fire with love of that dear name of which he so sweetly sang—

***“Jesus the very thought of You
With sweetness fills my breast”?***

Why, Bernard is poet, philosopher and Divine, and yet a child in love. Have you studied Rutherford’s letters and the wondrous things which he says about his own dear Lord? For an hour at Glory’s gate commend me to heavenly Master Rutherford. Have you ever held fellowship with George Herbert, that saintly songster? Hear him as he cries—

***“How sweetly does my Master sound! My Master!
As ambergris leaves a rich scent
Unto the taster,
So do these words a sweet content,
An oriental fragrance, my Master!”***

O Friends, I can wish you no greater blessing than to be directed into these two things—the love of God and the patience of your Savior. Enter both at the same time. You cannot divide them—why should you? The love of God shines best in the patience of the Savior. And what is the patience of Christ but the love of the Father? “What God has joined together, let no man put asunder.” May the Lord lead us into both of them at this hour and continue upon us the heavenly process all the rest of our lives, in all experiences of sorrow and of rapture and in all moods and growths of our spirit!

II. But now I must ask your attention for the few minutes that remain to me to what is, perhaps, still the real gist of the text—HERE ARE TWO EMINENT VIRTUES TO BE ACQUIRED.

“The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God.” Beloved, let the love of God to you flow into your hearts and abide there till it settles down and bears on its surface the cream of love to God, yielded by your own heart. The only way to love God is to let God’s love to you dwell in your soul till it transforms your soul into itself. Love to God grows out of the love of God.

Well, now, concerning love to God—if you receive it fully into your souls it will nourish the contemplative life. You will want to be alone. You will prefer to sit silently at Jesus’ feet while others wrangle over the little politics of the house. You will give up being busy-bodies, talking in six peoples’ houses in an hour—quietude will charm you. You will love no company so much as the society of Him who is the Best and the Most. To be with God in quiet will be your highest enjoyment. You will not say, as some do, “I must have recreation.”

Contemplation of God is recreation to the child of God. It creates the soul anew. And is not this the truest recreation? Whenever God’s creation in us seems to have grown a little dim, love to God will gender and nourish the contemplative life and so make us come forth as new creatures, fresh from our Maker’s holy hand.

It will also animate the active life if you love God. You will feel that you must yield fruit unto your Lord. Your soul, when full of the love of God, will cry, “I must go after the wanderer. I must care for the poor. I must teach the ignorant.” You cannot love God and be lazy. Love to God will stir

you up. Contemplation teaches you to sit still and this is no trifling lesson. But after sitting still, you rise with greater energy to go about the one thing needful, namely, the service of your Lord's love.

Love to God will also arouse enthusiasm. We want more persons in the Church who will be a little daring—rash men and women who will do things which nobody else would think of doing, such as will make their prudent friends hold up their hands and say, "How could you? If you had consulted with me, I could have given you many a wise hint as to how it ought to have been done." This has been my lot of late. I have been surfeited with notions as to how I should have acted. Yes, my Friend, I know you of old. You have wisdom at your fingers' ends. But let me quietly whisper that you would have done nothing at all. You would have been too anxious to save yourself from trouble.

It is an easy thing to tell a man how he ought to have done it. And yet that man, perhaps, may be suffering intensely for having done bravely a well-meant deed. Instead of your showing sympathy with him, you treat him to the remark, "It might have been done better in another way." There was never a child that was near drowning but what the man that plunged in and drew him out of the river ought to have done it in a better way. He wetted himself too much. He waited too long. Or he handled the drowning one too roughly. Alas, for silly criticisms of gracious deeds!

If you come to love God with all consuming zeal you will not be hindered by criticisms. You will testify for Jesus freely, because you cannot help yourself. It has to be done—somebody has to sacrifice himself to do it and you say to yourself, "Here am I, Lord, send me. At every risk or hazard, send me. For Your dear love's sake I count it joy to suffer shame or loss. I count it life to suffer death that I may honor You." Love to God will arouse enthusiasm.

It will also stimulate holy desire. They that love God can never have enough of Him—certainly never too much. Sometimes they are found pining after Him. When we love the Lord, we chide the laggard hours which keep us from His coming. Time has not wings enough—

***"My heart is with Him on His Throne,
And ill can brook delay,
Each moment listening for the voice,
'Rise up and come away.'"***

A heavenly love-sickness sometimes makes God's handmaids swoon. For they long to see the Beloved face to face and to be like Him and to be with Him where He is. The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God in some such fashion as this. For it will make you sit loose by all things here below.

Do you ever feel that your wings are growing? Do you ever sigh, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove! For then would I fly away and be at rest"? And this love, better still, will transform the character. It is wonderful what a difference love makes in the person that is possessed with it. A poor timid hen that will fly away from every passerby loves its offspring and when it has its chicks about it, it will fight like a very lion for its

young. And when the love of Christ comes into a timid Believer, how it changes him! It takes the love of sin away and implants a sublime nature.

Only God knows what a mortal man can yet become. Of women sunken in sin, what saints the Lord has made when He has filled them with His love! When the sun shines on a bit of glass bottle far away it flashes like a diamond. A little fleecy vapor in the sky rivals an angel's wing when the sun pours itself upon it. Our Lord can put so much of Himself, by means of His love, into the hearts of His people that they may be mistaken for Himself. John made a blunder in Heaven and fell at the feet of one of his Brethren, the Prophets—for he had come to be so much like His Lord that John could hardly tell the one from the other. Had he forgotten that word, "We shall be like He. For we shall see Him as He is"? It does not yet appear what we shall be but love is the transfiguring power in the hand of the Holy Spirit. If the heart is directed into the love of Christ, it is on the highway to holiness.

Lastly—I am sorry that time will fly so fast just now—we want our hearts to be directed into patience towards Christ. What a subject is this! Beloved, if our heart is directed into patience towards Christ we shall suffer in patience for our Lord's sake and we shall not complain. Those about us will say, "It is wonderful how resigned he seems." Or, "How gladly she bears grief for love of Christ!" And if it is the suffering of reproach and scorn for Jesus' sake, if we are directed into the patience of Christ, it will not seem to be any trouble at all. We shall bear it calmly and in our hearts we shall laugh at those who laugh at us for Jesus' sake.

Yet it is not all patience of suffering that we want. We want the patience of *forbearing*. We must learn not to answer those who blaspheme. "Bear and forbear and be silent." Chew the cud in peace. Put up with much. When reviled, revile not again. The Lord direct your hearts into the patience of Christ.

We shall also want the patience of working—working on when nothing comes of it—pleading on with souls that are not converted. Preaching when preaching seems to have no effect—teaching when the children do not care to learn. We need the patience of Christ who set His face like a flint and would accomplish His work, cost what it may. He never turned aside from it for a moment. The Lord direct our hearts into patient working.

Then there is the patience of watching in prayer—not giving it up because you have not received an answer. What? Did a friend say she had prayed for seventeen years for a certain mercy and now meant to ask it no more? Sister, make it eighteen years and when you have got to the end of eighteen make it nineteen. May the Lord direct our hearts into the patience of Christ in prayer! We long kept Him waiting—we need not complain if He makes us tarry at His leisure. Still believe. Still hope. Still wrestle, until the break of day.

Pray for the patience of waiting His will, saying, "Let Him do what seems Him good." Though it be for months, for years, wait on. Christ is glorified by our patience. Depend on it, the best way in which certain of us

can extol Him is by letting Him have His way with us. Even though He plunge me into seven boiling caldrons one after the other, I will say—Let Him do what He wills with His own and I am His own. I am sure that He does not make the furnace one degree too hot. If He means to give His servant ten troubles, let His heavy hand fall even to the tenth, if so He pleases.

We want to be directed into patience towards Christ and especially in patience in waiting for His coming. That, no doubt, is very justly inferred and so it is put in our translation very prominently—“Patient waiting for Christ.” He will come, Brothers. He will come, Sisters. It is true the interpreters of the Book of Revelation told us that He was to come three hundred years ago and there are thousands upon thousands of books in the British Museum which were very dogmatic upon this point and yet they have all been disproved by the lapse of time.

Men were as sure as sure could be that Christ would come just then. And He did not, for He is bound by His Word—not by their interpretation of it. He will come at the appointed hour. To the jots and tittles, God’s Word will stand. He will come to the tick of the clock. We know not when. We need not ask. But let us wait.

Just now some of you may be, as I am, troubled because the Lord does not yet appear to vindicate His cause. And there is noise and triumph among the priests of Baal. The Lord direct our hearts into the patience of Christ. It is all right. Clouds gather. The darkness becomes more dense. The thunder rolls, friends flee in confusion. What next? Well, perhaps before we have hardly time for dread, silver drops of gracious rain may fall and the sun may break through the clouds and we may say to ourselves, “Who would have thought it?”—

***“You fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds you so much dread
Are big with mercy and shall break
In blessings on your head.”***

May the Lord direct each one of us into the patient waiting for Christ! I am sorry, very sorry, that there are persons here to whom all this must seem a strange lot of talk. They know nothing about it. Dear Souls, you cannot at present know anything about it. You must first be born again. A total change of heart must come over you before you can enter into the love of God or the patience of Christ. May that change take place tonight, before you go to sleep!

If the Lord shall lead you to seek His face, this is the way to seek it—trust His dear Son. Lifted on the Cross is Jesus Christ, the great Propitiation for sin. Look to Him and looking alone to Him, you shall be saved. He will give you the new heart and the right spirit with which you shall be enabled to enter into the love of God and the patience of Christ. The Lord direct you at this very hour, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

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FACING THE WIND

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A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“But you, brethren, be not weary in doing good,”
2 Thessalonians 3:13

THE Christian church ought to be an assembly of holy men. Its members should, all of them, be eminently peaceable, honest, upright, gracious and Christlike. In the main and in spite of all our failures I trust these characteristics may be seen in the churches of our Lord Jesus Christ. But, still, from the beginning there has been a mixture. Judas in the sacred college of the 12 Apostles seemed to be a prophecy to us that there would always be troubles in Israel. It was so in the Church at Thessalonica to which Paul wrote two Epistles, part of the last of which we have just now been reading. There was evidently, then, a class of people who because the charity of the church was very large, imposed upon it and, under pretense of great spirituality, refused to work, busying themselves instead in doing mischief according to the old adage that—

*“Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do.”*

We sometimes complain of our churches now. I very greatly question whether an average church of Christ in modern times is not considerably superior to any church that we have read of in the New Testament—certainly very superior to some of them. In the Church at Corinth they tolerated a brother who lived in incest. I trust there is no Christian church, at least in our own denomination, that would endure such a thing for an hour! And when this man had been put out by Paul's command and proved penitent, then the Church at Corinth, which was a church that did not believe in ministry, you know, (there is a class of Christians of that sort, now, which resembles greatly these Corinthians), because they had once put him out, refused to receive him again though he was penitent and wanted to return.

I scarcely know a Christian church that would refuse to receive into its membership again, a brother who had erred if he showed signs of true repentance. The churches of today, compared with the early churches of Christ, can say that the Grace of God has been extended to us, even as unto them—and we now have no right to be continually crying down the operations of the Holy Spirit in the churches by making unfair comparisons between them and the churches of old. They had their

faults, as we have ours. They came short in many respects, even as we do. Instead of bringing a railing accusation against churches as they are, the best thing is for everyone of us to do his best in the sight of God to make them what they should be, by seeking our own personal sanctification and endeavoring that the influence of a holy life shall, in our case, help to leaven the rest of the mass.

Paul turns from the consideration of those who had grieved him in the church to speak to the rest of the brethren and says to them, "But you, brethren, be not weary in doing good." In expounding these words we shall, first, notice that our text contains a summary of Christian life—it is called, "doing good." Secondly, we shall see it gives out a very distinct warning against weariness and it hints at some of the causes of weariness in the Christian life. In the third place, I shall close the discourse by giving some arguments to meet the reasoning of our soul when, at times, it seems to plead its own weariness as an excuse.

I. First, then, Brothers and Sisters, our text contains A SUMMARY OF CHRISTIAN LIFE. It is "doing good." This is all you have to do—you that have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus and renewed in the spirit of your minds. You have to spend your lives in doing good!

Now this is a very comprehensive term and we are certain that it includes *the common acts of daily life*. You perceive the Apostle had been speaking of some who would not work—"working not at all," he says, and he commands them that they should labor and should eat their own bread. It is clear, then, from the connection, that the work by which a man earns his daily bread is a part of the doing good to which he is called. It is not only preaching and praying and going to meetings that are to be commended. These are useful in their place. But doing good consists in taking down the shutters and selling your goods, tucking up your shirt sleeves and doing a good day's work—sweeping the carpets and dusting the chairs if you happen to be a domestic servant. Doing good is attending to the duties that arise out of our relationships in life—attending carefully to them and seeing that in nothing we are eye-servers and men-pleasers—but in everything are seeking to serve God. I know it is difficult to make people feel that such simple and ordinary things as these are doing good. Sometimes stopping at home and mending the children's clothes does not seem to a mother quite so much "doing good" as going to a Prayer Meeting. And yet it may be that the going to a Prayer Meeting would be doing ill if the other duty had to be neglected. It is still a sort of superstition among men that the cobbler's lap stone and the carpenter's adze are not sacred things and that you cannot serve God with them—you must get a Bible and break its back at a revival meeting, or give out a hymn and sing it lustily in order to serve God.

Now, far am I from speaking even half a word against all the zeal and earnestness that can be expended in religious engagements. These things you ought to have done, but the other things are not to be left undone, or to be depreciated in any way whatever. When Peter saw the sheet come down from Heaven, you remember it contained all manner of beasts and

creeping things. God said even of the creeping things that He had cleansed them and they were not to be counted common—from which I gather, among a great many other things, that even the most menial of the forms of service—even the most common actions of life—if they are done as unto the Lord, are cleansed and become holy things and are by no means to be despised. Do not cry down your church, but make your house also your church! Find fault as you like with vestments, but make your ordinary smock-frock your vestment and be a priest in it to the living God! Away with superstition! Kill it by counting every place to be holy, every day to be holy and every action that you perform to be a part of the high priesthood to which the Lord Jesus Christ has called every soul that He has washed in His precious blood!

That these common things are doing good is very evident if you will only think of the result of their being left undone. There is a father and he thinks that to go to his work—such common work as his—cannot be especially pleasing in God's sight. He means to serve God and so he stays home! He is upstairs in prayer when the factory bell is ringing and he ought to be there. He hears that there is a conference in the morning, so he attends that—and then he has another period of prayer—he spends all the week like that and then on Saturday night there is nothing for his wife. Now, you see, directly, that he has been doing ill because it was his duty to provide for his own household. And if a man, being a husband and a father, neglects to find daily food for his wife and little children, all the world cries shame on him! Does not Nature, itself, say, "This man cannot be engaged in doing good"? It cannot possibly be so. Though at first sight the ordinary toil for daily bread looks to be a very commonplace thing, yet if you only suppose it to be neglected, the leaving of it out is no commonplace thing, but brings all manner of mischief.

Suppose, on the other hand, that the Christian woman were to become so very devout—so ashamed to be like Martha—so certain not to be cumbered with much serving that she would not serve at all in Martha's direction, but always sat still and read and prayed, and meditated leaving the children unwashed and nothing done for the household? The husband—perhaps a worldly man—may be driven away from the house by the lack of comfort in it and sent into ill company. He may, indeed, be ruined. You can all see that whatever pretence there might be of doing good about the wife's conduct, it would not, *it could not really be doing good*, for the first business of the Christian woman placed in that position is to see to it that her household is ordered aright, even as Jesus Christ would have it. Oh, dear Friends, it is an art to balance duties so as never to sacrifice to God one duty stained red with the blood of another duty that you have destroyed in getting this one ready for the sacrifice! Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's. Give to husband and child and to the household the share that is due and then—I will not say give God the rest—but give God that service and all besides! He would not have you bring robbery for burnt offering and He will accept that as done to Him

which you have, as a matter of duty, done to others. So then, common life is included in the term, “doing good.”

I think, also, from the connection, that anyone would conclude that *attending to the poor and doing good to all that are in need* is included in the term, “doing good.” The connection seems to say that there were certain persons in the Thessalonian Church who had abused Christian charity—living upon it instead of working and eating their own bread. The Apostle says, “But you, brethren be not weary in doing good.” Do not say, as some do, “There are really so many imposters that I shall give nothing at all. I have been deceived so many times and have given to persons who have only put my gift to bad use, that I do not intend to open my wallet any more, but shall keep what I have or lay it out in some other way.” “No,” says the Apostle, “you must not do that—be not weary in doing good.” It is the part of a Christian to seek as much as lies in him to do good unto all men—and especially to those of the household of faith. It is one of Christ’s precepts to “Give to him that asks of you and turn him not away who would borrow from you.” A general spirit of generosity to those in need is synonymous with the Gospel—the reverse may be suitable to the Law with its rigor—but not to the Gospel with its noble-hearted love! Christian Brothers and Sisters, you must remember those who are in need as being, as yourself, a part of the body of Christ! As much as lies in you, “comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient towards all men.”

So we see that within the range of “doing good” is included a kind and tender consideration of all those who are in need.

But, Brothers and Sisters, the circle of “doing good” which is to be the Christian’s life, though it makes a wide sweep, includes *the things that are nearer the center*. “Doing good” means that I love the Lord, my God, with all my heart—that I commune with Him—that I dedicate myself to Him and give all that I have to the extension of His Kingdom and to the honoring of His glorious name!

If you want to know what doing good is, I will give you a few hints and tests. *Everything is doing good that is done in obedience to a Divine command*. If you have God’s Word for it, it is doing good. Some may call you imprudent, but it is doing good if you do what God bids—and it is prudent, too. In the long run you shall find it so. When God says, “Do this,” let it be done at once—that is doing good. And if He says, “You shall not,” the doing good is fleeing from the accursed thing! Let not your own wisdom and prudence ever fly in the teeth of a positive command of God! When you are doing what God bids you, you are doing well—and you need have no difficulty in defending yourself. God will not allow that man ever to be confounded who makes the will of God to be the law of his life. So may it always be with us.

Taking the first condition for granted, in the next place *everything is doing good that is done in faith*. “Whatever is not of faith is sin.” That is to say, even though the thing you do is right, if you do not believe it to be right it is not right for you. There are many things that I may do that you

must not do because you do not think it would be right to do them. Therefore you must refrain. Even, I say again, if the thing is not in itself a wrong thing, yet if it *seem* wrong to you, it *will* be wrong to you—therefore do it not. Paul could eat the meat that had been offered to idols without being troubled in his conscience, but there were some who thought that if they ate it, they would be partakers with the idol. Paul did not think so and, moreover, he said, “An idol is nothing in the world. Whatever is sold in the shambles, I eat asking no question for conscience sake.” Still, “he that doubts is condemned if he eats.” If he has his doubts about it and thinks he should not do it, he must not do it. He will not be practicing the art of doing good if he does that concerning which his conscience raises any scruple. If you can say with Scripture warrant, “God permits this and I can do it, feeling that He permits it,” you are doing well in so doing.

Again, *everything that is done out of love to God is doing good*. Ah, this is a motive that sways no man till he is born-again. But when God, who is Love, has begotten us into His own likeness, then we love God and love becomes the motive of all our actions. I hope, Beloved, this is the mainspring of our doings and goings—that you would be God’s servants or God’s ministers because you love God—that you seek to bear up under poverty or to use with discretion and liberality the riches with which you are entrusted because you love God. If a man loves not God, how little there can be of doing good about him! Yes, he lacks the very root of it all if he has not love to God.

Doing good includes doing what we do in the name of the Lord Jesus. How this should stop some professors in a great many actions. Have we not the exhortation, “Whatever you do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus”? If there is anything you cannot do in the name of the Lord Jesus, do it not, for to do it will not be doing good! In the name of the Lord Jesus you may go to your daily labor, for He went to His for 30 years and worked in the carpenter’s shop. In the name of the Lord Jesus you may undertake all the duties of your calling if that calling is a right one. But if it is not, you have no right to be in it at all, but should get out of it at once! You may do in the name of the Lord Jesus all that men would do if you are a saved soul and your heart is right towards Him.

Still further, *doing good includes that which we do in Divine strength*. There is no doing good except we get power to do it from the Holy One of Israel. The Spirit of God is the Author of all true fruit in the Christian life. Except we abide in Christ and receive the sap of the Sacred Spirit from Him, we cannot bring forth fruit, for, “without Me,” He says, “you can do nothing.” But to work in the Divine strength is doing good. Poor and feeble though it is, if I do it out of love to Christ and with the little strength I have, acknowledging that I would not even have that but for His Grace, my act is an act of doing good. Even though I have to mourn my failures and mistakes, nevertheless I may feel that with a true heart I am striving to glorify God and that I am surrendering myself to the

Divine impulses so as to be ready to do everything as unto my Master. Then am I living as a Christian should live in doing good.

Brothers and Sisters, we are very great at wishing well and “if wishes were horses, beggars might ride.” If wishing well meant anything, there would be some very great saints about! But the practice of a Christian should be to do what he knows should be done—doing good. Resolving well is a very common habit. Suggesting well and criticizing well are tempers of mind familiar to most of us. Some of you could take a high degree in admirably criticizing everybody else that does anything—and putting your own hands into your pockets and keeping them there! Talking well is also a great deal more common than doing good. But the Christian life lies in none of these things. If God has given you the life of the Spirit, you will not bring forth only buds and blossoms and flowers, but there will be fruit—the fruit of doing good!

So much concerning the first point.

II. Now let us turn to the second point which is this—there is A WARNING AGAINST WEARINESS IN DOING GOOD. Is it possible, you say, “that a child of God can ever grow weary of doing good?” I suppose so, for I remember another text which says, “Let us not be weary in doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.” And the marginal reading of this text, itself, is, “Faint not.” I suppose that blessed as it is to be doing good and to be living unto God, yet while the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak and there is a danger of our getting weary in the most happy exercise.

The first danger is mentioned in the context. There is a tendency to cease from doing good *because of the unworthy receivers of our good deeds*. As I have already said, there were those in the Thessalonian Church who received the gifts of the faithful and who sat still and did nothing that was of any good. They became a pest and nuisance to their neighbors. Now, the natural tendency of others in the Church would be to say, “Well, I do not know what others think about it, but I shall give no more.” “No,” says the Apostle, “be not weary in doing good.” It is bad that that man should make a bad use of your gifts, but it will be worse, still, if he should induce you to harden your heart! It is a loss, perhaps, to give to a man who wastes, but it will be a greater loss not to give at all! I remember one who spoke on the missionary question one day saying, “The great question is not, ‘Will not the heathen be saved if we do not send them the Gospel?’ but, ‘Are we saved, ourselves, if we do not send them the Gospel?’” And so it is with regard to Christian gifts. It is not so much a question how far this or that man is benefitted or hurt by what we give, but what about ourselves if we have no heart of compassion for a Brother or Sister who is in need? What about the hardening influence on our own soul if we get, at last, into a condition that we say, “I am weary in having done what I have done because I see to what an ill use it is turned”? I believe that to be a common temptation of the present age and I see that all the political economists and the newspaper men almost as good as tell us that it is one of the most wicked things we can ever do,

to help the poor at all—it is indeed a dreadful thing unless we do it through that blessed machinery of the poor Law which seems to be the next thing to the Kingdom of Heaven in their estimation! There seems to me to be, however, a very long distance between them and I trust that Christians will continually, by their actions, bear their protest against the steeling of the believing Christian's renewed heart against their fellow men because they seem to pervert the doing good into evil.

We have need of warning *because idle examples tempt others to idleness*. If there were in the Church at Thessalonica some who did not work, there would no doubt be others who would say, "We will do the same. Since that fellow never does a hand's-turn, but only goes about and talks and makes a good thing of it, why should not I do likewise?" "No," says the Apostle, "be not weary in doing good. Do not give up your daily work. Do not give up any form of service because others have done so, for you can see, if you look at them, that they turn out to be busybodies. You do not need to become mischief-makers such as they are! Therefore shun their conduct—avoid it with all your might—and do not weary in doing good even if you see others who apparently prosper by doing nothing at all."

Again, I think the Apostle would say to us, "Be not weary in doing good *because of unreasonable and wicked men*." We read about them just now and I made a remark about them. [In the *Exposition* printed at the end of the sermon.] Whenever anybody gets very earnest for Christ and lays himself out for God's Glory, there is sure to be a little lot of unreasonable and wicked men who get round him. The birds go flying through the orchard and they do not say a word to one another till they come to a cherry tree where the cherries are very sweet and ripe. Then they all fall at once and begin to peck away with all their might! So of an ordinary Christian who is doing little for his Master—nobody says much, except, perhaps, "He is a very good respectable man. Never bothers anybody with his religion." But let him become earnest—let his fruit be ripe and sweet before the Lord and, believe me, more birds than you ever thought were about will come—and they will peck at the ripe fruit. That which God approves most will be just that which they most violently condemn! If you get into such a case as that, my Brothers and Sisters, be not weary of doing good because of your critics. Does it matter, after all, what men think of us? Are we *their* servants? Do we live on the breath of *their* nostrils? Do they think that their praises inflate and exalt us? Do they dream that their censures can make us sleep a wink less or even ruffle our spirits? I trust, if we know the Lord aright, we are of the mind of Ann Askew, who, after she had been racked, sat up with every bone out of joint and, as full of pain as she could live, said to her tormentors—

***"I am not she that lists
My anchor to let fall
For every drizzling mist.
My ship's substantial."***

And she bore out the storm and did not intend to cast anchor because of her persecutors! Glory be to God when He shall have delivered you altogether from the bleating of the sheep and from the howling of the wolves, too, and make you willing to let your enemies say their say—and say it over again as long as it pleases them—but as for you, your heart is fixed to go on in what you know to be doing good till your Master, Himself, shall say to you, “Well done!”

Once more. There is a temptation to cease from doing good not only because of unreasonable and wicked men outside the church, but, according to the context—and I am keeping to that—*because of busybodies inside the church*. Some of these are men—some of them are not. There are busybodies about everywhere. They do not speak out very distinctly—they whisper and they do it with a sigh! Perhaps nothing is said, but there is a shrug of the shoulders. “So-and-So is an excellent woman.” “What a wonderful work she is doing for Christ!” “Well—yes, but—such-and-such a man! How greatly God honors him in the winning of souls.” “Yes—ah, yes—I *suppose* it is so.” That is the style. And then straightway there are ambiguous voices sounding abroad and depreciating things said! I have known some of tender heart that have suffered—I dare not think how much—from the insinuations of idle people who, I hope, did not know the suffering they were causing or they would have run to give help instead. But there is so much of this thoughtless babbling of innuendos even among those who, we trust, are God’s people, that if any such are here I would earnestly entreat them to give up that bad business! And if any Brother or Sister here has suffered from such people, do not suffer more than you can help it, for this idle chatter is not worth a thought!

Do not let it prey upon your mind because, well, there is nothing in it! All the dirt that people can fling will brush off when it is dry. You do not expect, do you, to go to Heaven on a grassy path that is mowed and rolled for you every morning with all the dew swept off? If you expect that, you will be mistaken. You may even learn something from what these busybodies say about you. It is not true, of course, but, Brother, if they had known you better, they might have said something worse that *was true*! They picked a fault where there was none. Well, but you know there *are* some faults that they do not know and had not you better amend them lest they should pick those next time? The eagle eyes of envy and malice should even be sanctified to our good to keep us the more watchful—and to make us more earnestly seek to be diligent in doing good. Courage, faint heart—it will all be over, by-and-by, and we shall be before that Judgment Seat where the talk of friends and the threat of foes will go for nothing! We are being examined here by this and that, but what matters the result of the examination? The Lord weighs the spirits and if in those great scales we shall, at last by Divine Grace, escape from having the sentence pronounced, “You are weighed in the balance and found wanting,” it will be a theme for everlasting joy! Let us look to that verdict and not care for the praise or blame of men.

III. Now I am going to close by bringing up A FEW ARGUMENTS TO KEEP MY DEAR BRETHREN WITH THEIR FACES TO THE WIND. I want you that are going uphill for Christ and find the wind blowing very sharp, to set a hard face against a strong wind and to go right straight on all the same. If you have to fight your way to Heaven through every inch of your life, I would encourage you to keep on. May God's Spirit give you strength to do so!

And first, you say, "Oh, but this service—keeping your garments always white—is hard work. *Doing good needs so much effort.* I am afraid I shall be weary." Now, I would ask you to remember that when you had just begun business and you needed to make a little money, how early you rose in the morning, how many hours you worked in the day! Why, you that are getting gray now knew that in those days everybody wondered at you because you threw such strength into everything—you did the work of two or three men! What was all that effort for? For yourself, was it not? My dear Brother, can you put all those exertions forth for yourself and cannot you put out as much effort for Christ? That was only for the worldly things—shall there not be something like that in the spiritual things? It is enough to shame some people—the way they toil to get on in business and then the little energy they show in the things of Christ!

I used to tell a story of a Brother I once knew who, at the Prayer Meeting, was accustomed to pray in such a way that I was always sorry when he got up, for nobody could hear him. And I always thought that he had a very feeble voice. I had indistinctly heard the Brother mutter something to God and I felt that we had better not ask him again, for his voice was so thin. But I stepped into his shop one day—he did not know that I was there and I heard him say, "John, bring that half-hundred weight." "Oh," I thought, "there is a very different tone in the business from what there is in the Prayer Meeting!" It is symbolical of a great many people. They have one voice for the world and another voice for Christ. What weight they throw into the ordinary engagements, but what little force and weight there is when they come to the things of God! If that should touch any Brother here, I hope he will carefully take it to himself. I am afraid it has to do with a great many of us and I put it thus—if for the poor things of this world we have often manifested so much vigor, what ought to be expected of us—of us who are under such obligations to Divine Grace—in the service of such a Master in reference to eternal things?

"But," says one, "such *doing good requires so much self-denial.* I trust I am a Christian, but I sometimes hesitate because to deny one's self again and again and again and to lead a life of constant self-denial is, I am afraid, too much for me." Yes, but, dear Brother, recollect what Paul bids you remember. He was thinking of the men that went to the boxing matches and the men that went to the races among the Greeks—how they had to contend for a crown that was only of parsley or laurel. Weeks and months before they ran, they kept under their body, brought it into

subjection and denied themselves all sorts of things they would have rejoiced in, till they got the muscles well out and by degrees pulled the flesh off their bones to get them into condition to enter into the arena. Now, says the Apostle, they do it for a corruptible crown, but we for an incorruptible! I am sure the hardships to which some of those champions in the public games put themselves were enough to make the cheek of professors mantle with crimson when they think that the little self-denials of their life are often too severe for them! May God in Infinite Mercy help us not to be weary in doing good since these stand before us as examples!

“Yes,” says one, “but I grow weary because, though I could deny myself, continued *doing good brings such persecution*. I am surrounded by people who have no sympathy with me. On the contrary, if they could stamp out the little spark of spiritual religion that I have in me, they would be glad to do it.” Now, my dear Brother, be not weary in doing good because of this, but look up yonder! I can see in vision a white-robed throng. Each one bears a palm branch and together they sing an exultant song of triumph. Who are these that thus wear a ruby crown?—

**“These are they who bore the cross,
Faithful to their Master died,
Suffered in His righteous cause,
Followers of the Crucified!”**

Take down Master Fox’s *Book of Martyrs* and read a dozen pages—and after that see whether you are able to put yourselves on a par with the saints of old. “You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.” Your persecution is only a silly joke or two against you, a bit of frivolous jesting—that is all. These things break no bones! O Sirs, ask Divine Grace to enable you to rejoice and to be exceedingly glad when they say all manner of evil against you falsely for Christ’s sake! For so they prosecuted the Prophets that were before you—therefore be not dismayed.

But another says, “No, Sir, I could bear anything for Christ, but do you know I have been trying to do good to my neighbors, to the children of my class, and to the others—and I really think that the more I try to do good to people, the worse they are—*doing good is followed by so little result*. I have labored in vain and spent my strength for nothing and, you know, Sir, that hope deferred makes the heart sick. They seem to refuse and reject my message though I put it very kindly.” Now listen to me, if ever you listened in your life! You must not—you *dare not* complain of this because—and I know you well, there once came to your door one who loved you better than you love these people—He knocked with a hand that had been pierced for you and you refused Him admission! He knocked and knocked again, and said, “Open to Me, for My head is filled with the dew and My locks with the drops of the night.” But you would not open to Him. Then He went His way and you were much worse than before. Sometimes you said you would open, but you did not. And by the month together—ah, perhaps I do not exaggerate when I say, by the *year* together—“that Man of Love, the Crucified,” came to you again and again

and again and pleaded His wounds and blood with you and yet you refused Him! You have now admitted Him, but no thanks to you—you would never have done it if He had not put in His hand by the hole of the door and then your heart was moved for Him. Then He came into your soul and He is still supping with you. Now, after that, you must never say a word when they shut the door against you! You must, say, “This is how I treated my Master. It has come back to me and in good measure, but not pressed down or running over. And so I am well content to bear rebuffs for His sake since He bore them from me, even from me.”

“Still,” says one, “I have gone on and on, trying to do good in my sphere. I have given much and I still desire to do the same, but I do not appear to get much return—*doing good does not earn much gratitude*. If I had some thanks I would not so much mind. Indeed, I do not seem to be doing any good, either. If I saw some results I would not be weary.” Once more I speak and then I am done. Do you not know that there is One who thus every day bade the showers descend upon the earth? And when they fell, He did not say to the raindrops, “Fall on the crops of the grateful farmers and let the Christian men have all the benefit of the shower.” No, He sent the clouds and they poured out the rain that fell on the churl’s land and watered his property! Tomorrow morning when the sun rises, it will light the blasphemer’s bed as well as the chamber of the saint. And tonight God lends His moon to those that break His Laws with a high hand and defile themselves as well as to those who go forth on ministries of mercy. He stops neither rain nor sun nor moon, nor makes a star the to shine less, nor sends less oxygen into the atmosphere, or less health in the winds because man sins!

And there are whole nations where, when God gives His bounties, idols and images are thanked and not the gracious Giver! There are other nations where, when God makes the vine to produce its fruit, the people turn it into drunkenness. And when He bids the corn be multiplied, they turn it into gluttony and surfeit and pride. Yet He does not restrain His gifts. Therefore you keep on even as the great God continues to work unweariedly. He has done good to you and to thousands like you. If you were to skip doing good to men, what would you be saying to God? “Lord, this race does not deserve that You should do it any good. Do not do any more good.” Your conduct in saying that your fellow creatures do not deserve that you should do them any good says, in the most emphatic manner, that you do not think God ought to do them any good, either, for if God should do them good, much more should you who are so much less than He. And if you stop your hand and say, “It is no use doing any more good,” you, in effect, pray God never to do any more good to your fellow men! That is an inhuman prayer and tempts God. I pray you let not the action which incarnates such a prayer ever spring from us again!

Come, Brothers and Sisters, the Lord Jesus Christ has blotted out our sins. He has bought us with His blood! We belong to Him and whatever service He gives us to do, He will give us the strength to do it! So let us go back to our work with joy. If we have been grumbling—if we have

complained at all—let us ask His forgiveness and buckle our harness on anew, saying, “Master, You shall not find me skulking, but as long as the day lasts and You give me strength, I will reap in Your fields, or work in Your vineyards according to Your bidding, thankful for the great honor of being permitted to do anything for You and even for having to put up with inconvenience for Your sake. Seeing that You did endure so much for me, why should I not bear something for You?”

You may have to face a gale of wind, but you may face it gaily in the strength of your Lord! Keep on and keep on keeping on! You shall be more than conquerors through Him that loved you, over all the oppositions of men. Why, be comforted, beloved fellow laborers, and let no Brother’s heart fail him because of anything that has happened to him. Let no Sister’s hands hang down, but, “be you steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” I pray God to lead many others to enlist in this service, but they must first believe in Jesus Christ. When they have done so, then they may also come and share in the blessed warfare—and they shall have their reward! The Lord bless you, for Christ’s sake.

—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.**

THE JEWEL OF PEACE

NO. 1343

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 18, 1877,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Now the Lord of Peace Himself give you peace always
by all means. The Lord be with you all.”*
2 Thessalonians 3:16.

WHEN the heart is full of love it finds the hand too feeble for its desires. Therefore it seeks relief in intercession and benediction—wishing, praying and blessing where it cannot actually effect its loving purpose. The Apostle would have done for the Thessalonians all the good that was conceivable had it been in his power, but his wishes far outstripped his abilities and, therefore, he betook himself to interceding for them and to invoking upon them the blessing of the Lord and Master whom he served. Here is a lesson for us in the art of doing good—as we lengthen the eyesight with the telescope, as we send our words afar by the telegraph—so let us extend our ability to do good by the constant use of intercessory prayer.

Parents, when you have done all you can for your children, be thankful that you may introduce them to a further and greater blessing by commending them to the care of the great Father in Heaven! Friends, do your friends the best possible deed of friendship by asking for them the friendship of God. You who love the souls of men, when you have poured out all your strength on their behalf, bless God that there is still something *more* which you can do, for by entreaties and supplications you may bring down from on high the earnest and the effectual energy of the Holy Spirit who can work in their hearts that which it is not in *your* power to accomplish!

The Apostle saw that the Thessalonians were much troubled and he wrote the most encouraging words to cheer them. But he knew that he could not take the burden from off their hearts and, therefore, he turned to the God of all consolation and prayed *Him* to give them peace always by all means. The slenderness of our power to bless others will be no detriment to them if it leads us to lay hold upon the eternal strength, for that will bring into the field a superior power to bless—and our infirmity will only make space for the display of Divine Grace. Let us look, first, at the many-sided blessing which the Apostle invokes—peace. And then let us note the special desirableness of it. Thirdly, let us observe from whom, alone, it comes. And fourthly, note the wide sweep of the Apostolic prayer.

I. First, then, let us look at THE MANY-SIDED BLESSING—“The Lord of Peace Himself give you peace.” Some have thought to restrict the expression to peace within the Church since disorderly members were evidently increasing among the Thessalonians. But that is a very straitened and cowardly interpretation and it is never wise to narrow the meaning of God’s Word. Indeed, such a contracted explanation cannot be borne, for it

does not appear that the disorderly persons mentioned in the chapter had, as yet, created any special disturbance—they had been quietly fattening at the expense of their generous Brethren and would not be very eager to quarrel with the rack from which they fed.

Although, no doubt, Church quiet is included as one variety of peace, yet it would be a sad dwarfing of the meaning of the Spirit to consider one phase of the blessing to the neglect of the rest. No, the peace here meant is “the deep tranquility of a soul resting on God”—the quiet restfulness of spirit which is the peculiar gift of God and the choice privilege of the Believer. “Great peace have all they that love Your Law, and nothing shall offend them.” The peace of the text is a gem with many facets, but in considering its many-sidedness we must remember that its main bearing is toward God. The deepest, best, and most worthy peace of the soul is its rest towards the Lord God, Himself.

I trust we know this and are enjoying it at this moment. We are no longer afraid of God—the sin which divided us from Him is blotted out and the distance which it created has ceased to be. The Atonement has worked perfect reconciliation and established everlasting peace. The terrors of God’s Law are effectually removed from us and, instead thereof, we feel the drawings of His love. We are brought near by the atoning Sacrifice and have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. We know that all His thoughts to us are thoughts of love and we bless His name that our thoughts toward Him are no longer those of the slave towards a taskmaster, or of a criminal towards a judge, but those of a beloved child towards a kind and tender father.

Fervent love reigns in our hearts, casting out all fear and causing us to joy in God by our Lord Jesus Christ. This is a great blessing! It is surely a choice delight for a man to know that whether he prospers or is afflicted, whether he lives or dies, there is nothing between God and him but perfect amity, for all that offends has been effectually put away. Beloved, when the Apostle wishes us peace in the words of our text, he no doubt means that our hearts should be at *perfect* peace by being placed fully in accord with the will of God. But, alas, we have known some who we hope are forgiven and are God’s children, who, nevertheless, quarrel with God.

They are not pleased with what He does and even complain that He deals harshly with them—they are naughty children and carry on a sort of sullen contention with their heavenly Father because He does not indulge them in all their whims and fancies. Now, may the Lord of Peace put an end to all such grievous warfare of heart in His people! May you love the Lord so well and trust Him so fully that you could not pick a quarrel with Him even if He smote you and bruised you and broke your bones! Whatever He does is not only to be accepted with submission, but to be rejoiced in. That which pleases Him should please us. We have perfect peace when we can magnify and praise the Lord even for the sharp cuts of His rod and the fierce fires of His furnace! May the Lord bring us into this state, for there is no joy like it—perfect peace with God is Heaven below!

Yes, Brothers and Sisters, we reach a little further than reconciliation and submission, for we come into the enjoyment of conscious *compla-*

gency. There are men who are at peace with God as to the forgiveness of sin and, in a measure, are in accord with His will, but they are not walking carefully in the path of obedience and so they are missing the sense of Divine Love. God is their Father and He loves them—but He hides His face from them. They walk contrary to Him and so He walks contrary to them. We cannot consider such a condition to be one of fullest peace. The truly restful state of mind is enjoyed when the heart and life are daily cleansed by Grace so that there is nothing to grieve the Spirit of God and, therefore, the Lord feels it right to favor His child with the light of His Countenance in full meridian splendor!

O how blessed to bask in the sunlight of Jehovah's love, free from all doubt and being no more conscious of sin! In that sense of conscious favor lies the rest of Heaven. May the Lord of Peace Himself give us this peace! This peace, because sin is forgiven, is the sweet fruit of justification—"therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God." This peace, because the heart is renewed and made to agree with the will of God, is the blessed result of sanctification, for "to be spiritually-minded is life and peace." This peace, because the soul is conscious of being the object of Divine Love, is a precious attendant upon the spirit of adoption which is the very essence of peace! Brothers and Sisters in Christ, may this threefold peace with God be with you always!

Now we look further and note that this peace spreads itself abroad and covers all things with its soft light. God is great and fills all things. He who becomes at peace with Him is at peace with all things. Being reconciled to God, the Believer says—"All things are mine, whether things present or things to come. All are mine, for I am Christ's and Christ is God's." Behold, the Lord has made us to be in league with the stones of the field and the beasts of the field are at peace with us! Providence is our pavilion and angels are our attendants. All things work together for our good, now that we love God and are the called according to His purpose. No longer are we afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction which wastes at noonday!

Behold the Lord God covers us with His feathers and under His wings do we trust! His Truth is our shield and buckler. Because we have set our love upon Him, He delivers us and He sets us on high because we have known His name. At peace with the Lord of Hosts we are at peace with all the armies of the universe, in alliance with all the forces which muster at Jehovah's bidding! Though we must be at war with Satan, yet even *he* is chained and made as a slave to accomplish purposes of good contrary to his own will. There is neither in Heaven nor earth nor Hell, anything that we need fear when we are once right with God! Settle the center and the circumference is secure—peace with God is universal peace.

This practically shows itself in the Christian's inward peace with regard to his present circumstances, be they what they may. Being at peace with God, he sees the Lord's hand in everything around him and is content. Is he poor? The Lord makes him rich in faith and he asks not for gold. Is he sick? The Lord endows him with patience and he glories in his afflictions.

Is he laid aside from the holy service which he so much loves? He feels that the Lord knows best. If he might be actively engaged in doing God's will, he would be very thankful and run with diligence the race set before him.

But if he must lie in the hospital and suffer rather than serve, he does not wish to put his own wishes before the will of his Master—he leaves himself in the Lord's hands, saying—"Lord, do as You will with me. I am so at peace with You that if You use me, I will bless You. And if You lay me aside, I will bless You. If You spare my life, I will bless You, and if You bring me down to the grave I will bless You. If You honor me among men, I will bless You, and if You make me to be trod under foot like straw for the dunghill, I will still bless You—for You are everything and I am nothing—You are all goodness and I am sin and emptiness."

The soul which thus has perfect peace as to all its personal surroundings is, indeed, happy! It is lying down in green pastures beside the still waters. Blessed be God, this peace is mainly to be found in the soul, itself, as to its own thoughts, beliefs, hopes, expectations and desires. We have not only peace towards the outer world, but peace within! After all, happiness and peace lie more *within* the man than in anything around him. Heaven lies more in the heart than in golden streets—and Hell's flame consists rather in man's tortured conscience than in the Tophet fire which the breath of God has kindled. So the peace which Jesus gives is within us—"the good man is satisfied with himself."

Some minds are strangers to peace. How can they have peace, for they have no faith? They are as a rolling thing before the whirlwind, having no fixed basis, no abiding foundation of belief. These are the darlings of the school of modern thought, whose disciples set themselves as industriously to breed doubt as if salvation came by it. "Doubt and be saved," is their gospel and who does not see that this is *not* the Gospel of peace? Indeed, they are receptive and are peering about for fresh light, though long ago the Sun of Righteousness has arisen! Such uncertainty suits me not! I must know something or I cannot live—I must be sure of *something* or I have no motive from which to act!

God never meant us to live in perpetual questioning. His Revelation is not and cannot be that shapeless cloud which philosophical divines make it out to be! There must be something true and Christ must have come into the world to teach us something saving and reliable! He cannot mean that we should be always rushing through bogs and into morasses after the will-of-the-wisp of intellectual religion. There is assuredly some ascertainable, Infallible, revealed Truth for common people! There must be something sure to rest upon. I know it is so and declare unto you what I have heard and seen! There are great Truths of God which the Lord has engraved upon my very soul, concerning which all the men on earth and all the devils in Hell cannot shake me!

As to these vital doctrines, an immovable and unconquerable dogmatism has laid hold upon my soul and, therefore, my mind has peace! A man's mind must come to a settlement upon eternal Truths by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, or else he cannot know what peace is. I would pray

for every one of my Brothers and Sisters that they may find an anchor of mind and heart and never leave it! We have been often spoken of as an old-fashioned Church and your minister is said to be *Ultimus Puritanorum*, the, "Last of the Puritans," a man incapable of any thought beyond the limit of the old-fashioned theology. I bless the Lord that it is so! I am, indeed, incapable of forsaking the Gospel for these new-fangled theories! Down went my anchor years ago! It was a great relief to me when I first felt it grip and it is a growing joy to me that I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him.

Pretensions to original thought I have never made! I invent nothing! I only tell the old, old story as God enables me. "Ah," said a certain Divine to me one day, "it must be very easy for you to preach because you know what you are going to say—your views are fixed and stereotyped. As for me," he said, "I am always seeking after truth and I do not know one week what I may preach the next." Thus speak the teachers—do you wonder if the disciples wander into skepticism?! Has the Lord taught the man nothing of the sure Truths of God? Then let him wait till he has received His message. Till he knows the Gospel in his own heart, experimentally, as the power of God unto salvation, let him sit on the penitent form and ask to be prayed for, but never enter a pulpit!

What are Churches doing to tolerate these sowers of infidelity? Time was when the fathers in our Israel would have chased from their pulpits those who glory in the unbelief which is their shame! May the Lord of Peace, Himself, give you peace as to your personal beliefs and convictions—and then when you get into deep waters of trial and sorrow you will say, "Ah, I did believe the right doctrine after all! I can feel the grip of my anchor on the things unseen. I have not been deceived. I have not followed cunningly devised fables, for the promise is true and I feel the power of it! It sustains and cheers and comforts me under all my trials and I know that it will do so even to my dying hour." May every troubled thinker find the peace of faith and never lose it!

Many minds are forever restless as to their fears. It is a great thing to know why you tremble, for when you know what you fear, your fear is half gone! The indefinable shape, the mysterious hand which has no arm but writes upon the wall in strange characters—the cloudiness of all things dreaded makes the mind more restless. But blessed is the man to whom the Lord has taught His fear—so that he knows what he fears and does not permit his hopes to be in perpetual eclipse. Of this many-sided peace we must say something more. The Thessalonian Church had been troubled three ways. They had been persecuted from without. That is not a pleasant thing, but the Apostle says, "You that are troubled rest with us."

Now, when the Lord Jesus Christ says to a persecuted saint, "I am with you: all the evil which is done unto you is done unto Me, and you are bearing it for My name's sake," then, Beloved, *no* persecution can break the peace of the soul! But rather, the sufferer rejoices and is exceedingly glad that he is counted worthy, not only to believe in Christ, but to suffer for His sake!

Next, the Thessalonian Church was annoyed by certain false teachers. They did not absolutely teach novel doctrine, but upon a basis of the Truth of God they erected an edifice of error. They exaggerated one special Truth and carried its teaching to extravagance. They said, "Christ is coming, therefore the day of the Lord is immediately at hand." They belonged to that order of fanatics who are always raving about "the signs of the times" and pretending to know what will happen within the next 20 years. There were impostors of that sort in Paul's day and there are such impostors now. Believe them not! They can see no more of the future than blind horses! I put them all together as impostors, whether they are preachers or literary hacks, for no man knows the future and no man can tell his fellows about it.

I care no more for their explanations of prophecy than for the pretended winking of the eyes of the Madonna—yet they will continue the scam and will be saying one thing this time and another that—that this and that wonder shall happen—and that terrible judgments shall overwhelm our nation. The Apostle would not have the Thessalonians disturbed in their minds by fears about the future. Brethren in Christ, the most terrible fact of the future can be no just cause of alarm to a true Believer! The Lord comforts His people and there is nothing in His plans or purposes which is intended to disquiet them. You may rest assured that if any doctrine in the Bible prevents a godly man from enjoying peace it must be because he has not yet understood it fully, or else has mistaken its bearing towards himself.

The Truths of God must minister peace to true men. All Truths of God, whether doctrinal or prophetic, are on the side of the children of God! How can it be otherwise? The Apostle tells the Thessalonians not to be disturbed about the coming of Christ. "The Lord be with you all," he says, and if the Lord is with us, what does it matter to us whether He personally comes at once or chooses to delay? We should be looking for His coming, but not with alarm, for the fact that He has come, already, is a well-spring of delight! We glory in His first advent and do not dread the second. Since we are already raised up into the heavenly places to sit with Him by faith, what does it matter to us whether He is up there or down here—or whether we are in Heaven or on earth—so long as we abide in Him?

There may arise, possibly there *will* arise, wild fanatics who will again spread alarming news about wars and rumors of wars and select some fatal year as the end of all things. Well, if such things should be, if crowds should go into the wilderness or into the city to look for the coming of Christ, believe them not, but sit still in peace and tranquility of spirit and say, "My soul loves Him and He loves me. He cannot mean ill to me whether He destroys the earth or spares it. Though the heavens pass away and the earth, itself, melts with fervent heat, my heart is resting in her Lord and knows herself to be secure." Thus the Lord saves His people from the disturbance caused by false teaching.

There were, also, in the Church, disorderly characters—people that went about spreading idle tales and gossiping. They would not do anything for a living and so they set people by the ears. But when the Lord

gives a Christian deep spiritual peace within, he soon puts aside the small nuisances of idle tongues and disorderly deeds. He refuses to be worried. Mosquitoes buzz around every Christian Church and blessed is the man who does not feel their bite or heed their buzzing! His soul shall dwell at ease.

Peace from Church troublers is a great blessing and we ought to praise God for it when we are in the enjoyment of it, for strife within the Church, like civil war, is the worst of warfare. O to live in holy love and unbroken concord in reference to all our fellow Christians! May the Lord of Peace grant us this! Thus, you see, the peace which is here spoken of has many sides to it. May you possess it in all its forms, modes, and phases—and may your spirit enter into the peace of God which passes all understanding!

II. Now, secondly, let us note THE SPECIAL DESIRABLENESS OF PEACE. It is a very great thing for a soul to realize perfect peace, for if it does not do so, it must miss the joy, comfort and blessedness of the Christian life. God never meant His children to be like thistledown, blown about with every breath, nor as a football, hurled to and fro by every foot. He meant us to be a happy, restful, established people. The cattle eat the grass, but they are not fattened till they lie down and ruminate in peace—the Lord makes His people to feed and to lie down in quietness.

You do not know the Gospel, dear Friends, if you have not obtained peace through it! Peace is the juice, the essence, the *soul* of the Gospel! Doctrines are clusters, but you have never trod them in the winepress—you have never quaffed the flowing juice of their grapes if you have not peacefully considered Divine Truth in the quiet of your heart. Without peace you cannot grow! A shepherd may find good pasture for his flock, but if his sheep are hunted about by wild dogs, so that they cannot rest, they will become mere skin and bones. The Lord's lambs cannot grow if they are worried and harried—they must enjoy the rest wherewith the Lord makes the weary to rest.

If your soul is always sighing, moaning and questioning its interest in Christ. If you are always in suspense as to what doctrine is true and what is false. If there is nothing established and settled about you, you will never come to the fullness of the stature of a man in Christ Jesus. Neither without peace can you bear much fruit, if any. If a tree is frequently transplanted you cannot reasonably look for many golden apples upon its boughs. The man who has no root-hold—who neither believes, nor grasps, nor enjoys the Gospel—can never know what it is to be steadfast and unmovable. And neither will he be always abounding in the work of the Lord.

We know, too, some who, because they have no conscious peace with God, lack all stability and are the prey of error. That doctrine can soon be driven out of a man's head which affords no light and comfort to his heart. If you derive no sweetness from what you believe, I should not marvel if you soon begin to doubt it. The power of the Gospel is its best evidence to the soul—a man always believes in that which he enjoys. Only make a Truth of God to be a man's spiritual food—let it be marrow and fatness to him—and I guarantee you he will believe it. When the Truth of God be-

comes to a proud carnal mind what the manna became to murmuring Israel, namely, light bread that his soul abhors, then the puffed up intellect cries after something more pleasing to the flesh!

But to the mind which hungers and thirsts after righteousness, the Gospel is so soul-satisfying that it never wearies of it. Brothers and Sisters, you must have peace for your soul's health! What a difference there is between a soul at peace and a soul continually tossed about! I have seen one man's heart like a country whose hedges are broken down, whose walls are laid level with the ground, where irrigation is neglected, where tilling has ceased, where the vines are untrimmed, where the fields are unplowed—and all because there is a perpetual sound of war in the soul—the song of peace is never heard! Such a soul may be likened to the Holy Land beneath Turkish rule where no man has rest and, consequently, the highways lie waste and the gardens are a desert.

But I have seen another man's life which has grown up under the influence of holy peace, from whom God has kept back the wandering Arabs of doubt and fear—and to whom He has given a settled government of Grace and an establishment in steadfastness and quiet assurance and, lo, that man has been as the land which flows with milk and honey! As war spends and peace gathers the riches of nations, so does inward strife devour us, while spiritual peace makes the soul fat. Even as Palestine, when it abounded in corn and wine and oil, could nourish Tyre and Sidon, which it borders, even so does the man who is rich towards God, through internal peace, become a feeder of other souls till even they who are but borderers upon Immanuel's land obtain a blessing!

Beloved, I would that every Christian knew this soul-enriching peace to the fullest! I am sorry to meet with so many who “hope” they are Believers, and “trust” they are saved, but they are not sure. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, in these matters we must get beyond mere hopes! We must reach to certainties. “Ifs” and “buts” are terrible in the things which concern the soul and eternity! We must have plain and unquestionable security here—Divine security applied to the soul, itself, by the Holy Spirit. Friend, you are either saved this morning or you are not saved! Either you are in the love of God, or you are not! Either you are secure of Heaven, or you are not—one of the two! I beseech you, do not let these things be in jeopardy—chance *anything* rather than your soul! Cry mightily to God that you may have these things fixed, certain, positive, beyond all dispute—for then shall your soul enjoy peace with God—and so shall you become strong, useful and happy.

III. Now, thirdly, we shall get into the very heart of our text while we consider for a minute or two THE ONLY PERSON FROM WHOM THIS PEACE MUST COME—“Now the Lord of Peace Himself give you peace.” Who is this “Lord of Peace” but the Lord Jesus, the Prince of Peace, born into the world when there was peace all over the world? It was but a little interval in which the gates of the temple of war were closed, and lo, Jesus came to Bethlehem and angels sang, “Peace on earth.” He came to establish an empire of peace which shall be universal and under whose influence they shall hang the useless helmet high and study war no more.

“The Prince of Peace!” How blessed is the title! So was it written of old by Isaiah, and Paul, the true successor of Isaiah, changing but a word, now speaks of, “the Lord of Peace.” This is He who, being in Himself essential peace, undertook to be the Father’s great Ambassador. And having made peace by the blood of His Cross, ended the strife between man and his offended Maker. This is He who is our Peace—who has made Jew and Gentile one—and has broken down the middle wall of partition which stood between us. This is the Lord who, when He stood in the midst of His disciples, gave them peace by saying, “Peace be unto you.” And this is He, who, in His departure, made His last will and testament and wrote therein this grand legacy—“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world gives give I unto you.” This is that Lord of Peace to whom it is part of His Nature and office to give peace!

I want to call particular attention to the Apostle’s words in this place. He does not say, “May the Lord of Peace send His angel to give you peace.” It were a great mercy if He did and we might be as glad as Jacob was at Mahanaim, when the angels of God met him. He does not even say, “May the Lord of Peace send His minister to give you peace.” If He did we might be as happy as Abraham when Melchizedek refreshed him with bread and wine. He does not even say, “May the Lord of Peace at the communion table, or in reading the Word, or in prayer, or in some other sacred exercise give you peace.” In all these we might well be as refreshed as Israel was at Elim where wells and palm trees gladdened the tribes. But, no, he says, “the Lord of Peace Himself give you peace,” as if He, alone, in His own Person, could give peace, and as if His Presence were the sole means of such a Divine Peace as he desires. “The Lord of Peace Himself give you peace.”

The words are inexpressibly sweet to me. If you will think, for a minute, you will see that we never obtain peace except from the Lord, Himself. What, after all, in your worst times will bring you peace? I will tell you. “This Man shall be the peace.” To me it has often afforded great peace to think of His mysterious Person. He is a Man tempted in all points like as I am, a Man who knows every grief of the soul and every pain of the body—therefore His tender sympathy and power to succor. Have you not often derived peace from that sweet reflection? You know you have! His Person, then, is a source of peace.

And have you not been rested in your soul by meditating upon His death? You have viewed Him wounded, bleeding, dying on the tree—and, insensibly to yourself—a wondrous calm has stolen over your heart and you have felt pacified concerning all things. Yes, Jesus is, Himself, that bundle of myrrh and spice from which peace flows like a sweet perfume! When He comes very near your heart and lays bare His wounds, and speaks His love home to you, making you feel its Divine fervency. When He assures you that you are one with Him, united to Him in an everlasting wedlock which knows of no divorce—*then* it is that your soul is steeped in peace! This is an experimental business and no mere words can express it. “The Lord of Peace Himself give you peace”—this, I say, He does mainly by manifesting Himself to the heart of His servants.

Then notice that the text says, “give you peace,” not merely *offer* it to you, or argue with you that you ought to have peace, or show you the grounds of peace, but, “give you peace.” He has the power to breathe peace into the heart, to create peace in the soul and lull the spirit into that sweet sleep of the beloved which is the peculiar gift of Heaven. “I will give you rest,” He said, and He can and will do it. “The Lord be with you all”—as much as to say, “That is what I mean.” I pray that Jesus may be with you, for if He is present, you must enjoy peace! Let the sea rage and let every timber of the ship be strained—yes, let her leak till between each timber there yawns a hungry mouth to swallow you up—yet when Jesus arises He will rebuke the winds and the waves, and there will be a great calm! “It is I, be not afraid,” is enough to create peace at once. May you always know this peace which Jesus, alone, can give.

IV. Now I must conclude with the fourth head which is a consideration of THE SWEEP OF THE PRAYER—“The Lord of Peace Himself give you peace always.” What? Always at peace? Yes, that is what the Apostle desires for you. May you have peace given you always. “Well, Sir, I feel very happy on the Sabbath. I have such peace that I wish I could have a week of Sundays.” May the Lord Himself give you peace always, on all the weekdays as well as on Sundays. “Truly, I have been very happy of late,” says one, “God has prospered us and everyone has been very loving in the family. But I do not know how I should be if I had an awkward husband and unruly children.”

Sister, I will tell you what I want you to be—I would have you restful under *all* circumstances—“The Lord of Peace give you peace always.” “I enjoy such peace in the Prayer Meeting,” says one. I want you to have peace in the workshop, also. “I have peace when I get alone with my Bible,” cries another. We pray that you may have equal peace when you are troubled with the ledger, tired with those unpaid bills, dull trade and all the crosscurrents of business. You need peace always. Our Friends who are commonly called Quakers have, as a rule, set us a fine example of calm, dignified quietness and peace. How undisturbed they generally appear! Whatever they fail in, they certainly excel in a certain peacefulness of manner which I hope is the index of calm enjoyed within.

Numbers of professors are very fretful, excitable, agitated, hasty and fickle. It should not be so, Brothers and Sisters—you ought to have more weight about you, more Grace, more solidity. Your *soul's* affairs are all right, are they not? All is right *forever*—everything is signed, sealed, and delivered—the Covenant is ordered in all things and sure, and everything is in Divine hands for our good. Well, then, why not let us be as happy as the angels are? Why are we troubled? Is there anything worth shedding a tear for, now that all is well for eternity? Our lack of peace arises from the fact that we have not realized the fullness of our text. “The Lord of Peace Himself give you peace always.” He can always give you peace, for He never changes! There is always the same reason for peace. You may always go to Him for peace and He is always ready to bestow it. Oh that we might always possess it!

Notice, again, it is written—“May the Lord of Peace Himself give you peace always by all means.” Can He give us peace by all means? I know He can give us peace by *some* means, but can *all* means be made subservient to this end? Some agencies evidently work towards peace, but can He give us peace by opposing forces? Yes, certainly! He can give peace by the bitter as well as by the sweet! He can give peace by the storm as well as by the calm! He can give peace by loss as well as by gain, by death as well as by life!

Notice there are two grand ways of giving us peace—one is by taking away all that disquiets us. Here is a man who frets because he does not make money, or because he has lost much of his wealth. Suppose the Lord takes away from him all covetousness, all greed of gain, all love of the world—is he not, at once, filled with peace? He is at peace not because he has more money, but because he has less of grasping desires. Another man is very ambitious. He wants to be somebody. He must be great and yet he never will be and, therefore, he is restless. Suppose the Grace of God should humble him and take away his lofty aspirations so that he only wishes to be and to do what the Lord wills? Do you not see how readily he rests?

Another man has an angry temper and is soon put out—the Lord does not alter the people that are round about him, but He changes the man, himself—makes him quiet, ready to forgive and of a gentle spirit. What peace the man now feels! Another person has had an envious eye—he did not like to see others prosper—and if others were better off than he, he always thought badly of them. The Lord wrings that bitter drop of envy out of his heart and now see how peaceful he is—he is glad to see others advanced and if he is tried, himself, it helps to make him happy to think that others are more favored. It is a great blessing when the Lord removes the disturbing elements from the heart!

Even curiosity may be a source of unrest. Many are a great deal worried by curiosity. I have sometimes wanted to know why the Lord does this and that with me. Blessed be His name, I am resolved not to question Him any more in that fashion! Somebody prayed the other day that I might see the reason why the Lord has lately afflicted me. I hope the Brother will not pray that any more, for I do not want to know the Lord’s reasons—why should I? I know He has done right and I will not dishonor Him by catechizing Him and wanting Him to explain Himself to a poor worm. This is where the mischief has been with most of us—that we have needed to see how this and that can be right. Why should we? If God conceals a thing, let us be anxious to keep it concealed.

A servant was passing through a street with a dish that was curiously covered. There met him a fellow who said, “I am most anxious to know what your lord has put in that dish, for he has so carefully covered it.” But the servant said, “Therefore should you not desire to know, for seeing my lord has so carefully covered it, it is clear that it is no business of yours.” So whenever a Providence puzzles you, take it as a sign that the Lord does not mean you to understand it—and be content to take it upon faith. When curiosity and other restless things are gone, peace is enjoyed.

Then the Lord has ways of giving us peace by making discoveries of Himself. Some of you do not know, as yet, the things which would give you peace. For instance, if you did but know that He loved you from before the foundation of the world and that whom once He loves, He never leaves, you who are now afraid that you have fallen from Grace would obtain strong consolation! Yes, and if you understood the grand doctrine of the Divine Predestination and saw that the Lord will not fail nor be discouraged, nor turn aside from one jot or tittle of His purpose, then you would see how you, poor insignificant Believers though you are, are one stitch in the great fabric that must not be suffered to drop or else the whole fabric would be marred! You would understand how the eternal purpose ordered in wisdom and backed up with Sovereign power guarantees your salvation as much as it does the Glory of God—and so you would have peace.

Many a soul has not the peace it might have because it does not fully understand the atoning blood. The great doctrine of Substitution is not seen in all its length and breadth by some minds. But when they come to see Christ standing in the place of His chosen, made *sin* for them and the chosen standing in Christ's place, "the righteousness of God in Him," then will their peace be like a river! The grand Truth of the union of the saints with Christ, if it is once understood, what a means of peace it is! He that believes in Christ is one with Him, a member of His body, of His flesh and of His bones! He is one with Christ by eternal and indissoluble union, even as the Father is One with the Son! If this is known, together with the doctrine of the Covenant, the attribute of immutability, the eternal purpose and the marriage union between Christ and His elect, deep peace must be enjoyed, like the calm of Heaven, like the bliss of immortality!

But there are some to whom this peace cannot come, some concerning whom the Lord says "What have you to do with peace?" "There is no peace, says my God, unto the wicked." Your works, your prayers, your repentances—none of these can bring you peace! As for the world and the pleasures thereof, they are destructive to all hope of peace. Come this day and believe in the great Sacrifice which God, Himself, has prepared in the Person of His crucified Son! Come look into Emanuel's face and read where peace is to be found! Come to the great gash in Jesus' side and see the cleft of the rock where God's elect abide in peace! Trust in Jesus and you shall begin a peace which shall widen and deepen into the peace of God which passes all understanding, which shall keep your hearts and minds by Christ Jesus. Amen.

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