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1 Samuel

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1 Samuel 3:9 The Child Samuel's Prayer

NO. 586

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth.”-1 Samuel 3:9.

IN the days of Eli the word of the Lord was precious, and there was no open vision. It was well when the word did come, that one chosen individual had the hearing ear to receive it, and the obedient heart to perform it. Eli failed to tutor his sons to be the willing servants and the attentive hearers of the Lord's word. In this he was without the excuse of inability, since he successfully trained the child Samuel in reverent attention to the divine will. O that those who are diligent about the souls of others, would look well to their own households. Alas, poor Eli, like many in our day, they made thee keeper of the vineyards, but thine own vineyard thou hast not kept. As often as he looked upon the gracious child, Samuel, he must have felt the heartache. When he remembered his own neglected and unchastened sons, and how they had made themselves vile before all Israel, Samuel was the living witness of what grace can work where children are trained up in God's fear, and Hophni and Phineas were sad specimens of what parental indulgence will produce in the children of the best of men. Ah, Eli, if thou hadst been as careful with thine own sons as with the son of Hannah, they had not been such men of Belial, nor would Israel have abhorred the offering of the Lord because of the fornication which those priestly reprobates committed at the very door of the tabernacle. O for grace so to nurse our little ones for the Lord, that they may hear the Lord when he shall be pleased to speak unto them.

Let us proceed at once to consider our short but very suggestive text in four aspects, and I pray that the Holy Spirit may speak to us through the word. We shall meditate upon this Scripture, first, as the prayer of a little child; secondly, as the cry of an anxious soul; thirdly, as the prayer of an earnest believer; and fourthly, as the spirit of a dying saint.

I. First of all we shall take our text As The Prayer Of A Little Child.

Samuel was blessed with a gracious father, and what is of even more importance, he was the child of an eminently holy mother. Hannah was a woman of great poetic talent, as appears from her memorable song- “My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, mine horn is exalted in the Lord; my month is enlarged over mine enemies, because I rejoiced in thy salvation.” The soul of poetry lives in every line; a brave but chastened spirit breathes in every sentence; even the Virgin Mary, the most blessed among women, could do no other than use expressions of a similar import. Better still, Hannah was a woman of great prayer. She had been a woman of a sorrowful spirit, but her prayers at last returned to her in blessing, and she had this son given her of the Lord. He was very dear to his mother's heart, and she, therefore, to show her gratitude, and in fulfillment of the vow which in her anguish she had vowed unto the Lord, would consecrate the best thing she had, and presented her son before the Lord in Shiloh-a lesson to all godly parents to see to it, that they dedicate their children unto God. How highly favored shall we be if our children shall all be like Isaac-children of the promise! What blessed parents should we be if we saw our children all rise up to call the Redeemer blessed. It has been the lot

of some of you to see all your children numbered with the people of God: all your jewels are now in Jehovah's casket. In their early childhood you gave them up to God, and dedicated them to him in earnest prayer, and now the Lord has given you your petition which you asked of him. I like our friends to hold little services in their own houses when their family is increased; it seems good and profitable for friends to assemble, and prayer to be offered that the child may be an inheritor of the promises, that he may be early called by mighty grace, and received into the divine family. You will perceive, dear friends, that as Samuel was put under the care and tuition of Eli, Eli had instructed him in some degree in the spirit of religion, but he does not appear to have explained to him the peculiar form and nature of those special and particular manifestations of God which were given to his prophets; little dreaming, I dare say, that Samuel would ever be himself the subject of them. On that memorable night, when towards morning the lamp of God was about to go out, the Lord cried, "Samuel, Samuel," the young child was not able to discern-for he had not been taught-that it was the voice of God, and not the voice of man. That he had learned the spirit of true religion, is indicated by his instantaneous obedience, and the habit of obedience became a valuable guide to him in the perplexities of that eventful hour. He runs to Eli, and says, "Here am I, for thou didst call me;" and though this is three times repeated, yet he seems nothing loath to leave his warm bed, and run to his foster-father, to see if he could get him any comfort that his old age might require during the night, or otherwise do his bidding- a sure sign that the child had acquired the healthy principle of obedience though he did not understand the mystery of the prophetic call. Better far to have the young heart trained to bear the yoke than to fill the childish head with knowledge, however valuable. An ounce of obedience is better than a ton of learning.

When Eli perceived that God had called the child, he taught him his first little prayer. It is a very short one, but it is a very full one- "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth." Many questions have been raised, as to whether children ought to be taught a form of prayer. As far as I can judge I think not, for I do not think that forms of prayer, although they may be allowed, and God may accept them, are ever of very great advantage to those who use them. Forms of prayer are something like the stilts of a cripple; if a man begins with them, it is very probable that he will never be able to do without them. They resemble the copious notes and manuscripts of certain ministers, who began with them, and are quite unable now to preach without them. Children who are taught a form of prayer, may perhaps by divine grace be enabled to use the form in all sincerity of heart: I hope they may; but I think they are more likely to understand the things of God, if instead of teaching them the form, you explain to them the meaning and the value of prayer. I take this to be the best plan. Let the Christian parent explain to the child what prayer is; tell him that God answers prayer; direct him to the Savior, and then urge him to express his desires in his own language, both when he rises, and when he goes to rest. Gather the little ones around your knee and listen to their words, suggesting to them their needs, and reminding them of God's gracious promise. You will be amazed, and, I may add, sometimes amused too; but you will be frequently surprised at the expressions they will use, the confessions they will make, the desires they will utter; and I am certain that any Christian person standing within ear-shot, and listening to the simple prayer of a little child earnestly asking God for what it thinks it wants, would never afterwards wish to teach a child a form, but would say, that as a matter of education to the heart the extemporaneous utterance was infinitely superior to the best form, and that the form should be given up for ever. However, do not let me speak too sweepingly. If you must teach your child to say a form of prayer, at least take care that you do not teach him to say anything which is not true. If you teach your children a catechism. mind that it is thoroughly scriptural, or you may train them up to tell falsehoods. Do not call the child up, and command him to say, "in my baptism, wherein I was made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of heaven." If you want to educate him for the gallows, teach him to utter untruths about sacred things; if you would make him an habitual deceiver, teach him the Church Catechism, and make him to say, "God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me, and all the elect people of God," when he is altogether unsanctified, and has no evidence of being elected. I pray you, if you would have an honest son, do not teach him to say that he thanks his heavenly Father, "who hath brought him into this state of salvation," when he knows, and you know, that he is not saved at all. Teach him nothing but the truth as it is in Jesus so far as he can learn it, and pray the Holy Spirit to write that truth upon his heart. Better to supply no sign-posts to the young traveler than to mislead him with false ones. The light of a wrecker's beacon is worse than darkness. Teach our youth to make untruthful statements in religious matters, and Atheism can scarcely do more to corrupt their minds. Formal religion is a deadly foe to vital godliness. If you teach a catechism, or if you teach a form of prayer to your little ones, let it be all true; and, as far as possible never put into a child's mouth a word which the child cannot truly say from his heart. Dear friends, we must be more careful about truthfulness and correctness in speech. If a child looked out of a window at anything going on in the street, and then told you that he saw it from the door, you ought to make him tell the tale over again, so as to impress upon him the necessity of being truthful in every respect. Especially in things connected with religion, keep your child back from any form until he has a right to be a partaker of it. Never encourage him to come to the Lord's Table unless you really believe that there is a work of grace in his heart; for why should you lead him to eat and drink his own damnation. Insist with all your heart that religion is a solemn reality not to be mimicked or pretended to, and seek to bring the child to understand that there is no vice more abhorrent before God than hypocrisy. Do not make your young Samuel a young hypocrite, but train up your darling to speak before the Lord with a deep solemnity and a conscientious truthfulness, and let him never to dare to say, either in answer to a catechismal question, or as a form of prayer, anything which is not positively true. If you must have a form of prayer, let it not express such desires as a child never had, but let it be adapted to his young capacity. At the same time, I would again say, that it would be infinitely better to leave the child alone as to the words, having earnestly inculcated upon him the spirit of prayer. Beloved, when we see any trace of good in our youth, then, like Eli, we should be the more

earnest to have them trained up in the faith. Let the child learn the Assembly's Catechism, even though he does not understand all that is in it; and as soon as the young heart can comprehend the things of Jesus, labor in power of the Holy Spirit to bring it to a simple dependence upon the great sacrifice. It is said of the Revelation John Angell James,

"Like most men who have been eminent and honored in the Church of Christ, he had a godly mother, who was wont to take her children to her chamber, and with each separately to pray for the salvation of their souls. This exercise, which fulfilled her own responsibility, was moulding the character of her children, and most, if not all of them, rose up to call her blessed. When did such means ever fail?"

I beseech you, the teachers of the Sunday-school-though I scarcely need to do so, for I know how zealous you are in this matter-as soon as ever you see the first peep of day in your children, encourage their young desires. Believe in the conversion of children, as children; believe that the Lord can call them by his grace, can renew their hearts, can give them a part and a lot among his people long before they reach the prime of life. Oh! that the Lord may give us to see many Samuels added to this Church, as we have seen them in days gone by. You that are little ones, when the Lord speaks to you, cry to him, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth;" and when in the class, or here in the Tabernacle, the Word of God is preached to sinners, remember it is preached to you quite as much as to the men who are six feet high; and do lift up your little hearts to God with the desire that while we are preaching God would speak to you. Do, dear children, expect the Lord to meet with you. Boys and girls have been saved.

"Many dear children are gathering there, For of such is the kingdom of heaven."

We have baptized many like you, at twelve, thirteen, and fourteen years of age, who have made a very clear profession of their faith; and rejoiced indeed shall we be if we see you. boys and girls coming forward and saying, "God has called us, has brought us to put our trust in Jesus; and here we are." Young Samuel, the Lord calls you; and thou art a privileged one to be called so soon, for early grace frequently becomes eminent grace; and those who begin early with God, are often preserved in this world to be of distinguished service in the courts of the Lord's house. May that be your lot and mine!

II. We have perhaps spoken enough upon this point, let us now consider the words as The Cry Of An Anxious Soul.

What an overwhelming sight is this vast crowd of immortal souls! What a joy would it be to me if I could hope that you were all anxious to find the Savior. Many of you who assemble constantly within these walls, though you have had serious impressions, are not yet saved. As you came in to-night this thought may have been uppermost- "Oh, that God would meet with my soul to-night." Some of you young woman have been in my sister's, Mrs. Bartlett's class, this afternoon, and it is very hard to be in that class long without receiving solemn impressions. God has been visiting your class just lately; he has removed a heavenly-minded and well-beloved sister; he has carried her aloft to the upper and better world. She could die singing and rejoicing in her Savior, for her usual frame of mind was set forth in these words, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth." Well, dear friends, this bereaving providence has had a loud voice to your class, God has wrought a solemn impression upon your mind by it, and you prayed as you entered the Tabernacle, "O God, save my soul this night!" Let me recommend you the use of this simple prayer now while you are sitting in the pew, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth." "Speak, Lord!" pray that first. "Speak, Lord!" While the minister is speaking, Lord do thou speak. I have heard the minister's voice, and sometimes it awakens me, but I am not saved, and I never shall be, Lord, if the minister speaks alone. Speak, Lord! My mother has talked with me; my earnest teacher has sought to lead me to the Savior; but I know that the words of blessed men and women will fall to the ground if they come alone. Speak, Lord! Thy voice said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. Speak, Lord! and make light in my bedarkened mind! Thy voice called Lazarus from the grave, though he had been dead four days. Speak, Lord! and make me live. Oh, let it be to-night a real work of grace in my soul! Let divine power come and operate upon me." My dear friend, cannot you follow me in such petitions as these? You know my soul is going up for you, and I am crying to God, "Speak, Lord!" and there are others here that you know of, and who are dear to you, who are even now in earnest wrestling with the angel of mercy, and they are saying, "Speak, Lord!" Oh! what would your father give if he should hear that God had spoken to your soul? How would your mother leap for joy if she did but know that God had come to deal with you in away of saving grace! "Speak, Lord!" let that be your prayer. Then put it next, Speak, Lord, to me? For if the Lord speak in a sermon, it may be to another, and then woe is me that I should be denied the priceless boon. I may be lying by Bethesda's pool, but another man may step in before me, and I may miss the mercy. Speak, Lord, to me, even to me. Say unto my soul, "I am thy salvation." May there be an unmistakable message to my heart. Thou hast taken away one that I knew. It is a marvel that then thou hast not taken me away. It is a wonder that I am spared- such a rebel as I have been. O how great is thy patience, that thou hast not dashed me in pieces, and cast me into hell! Lord, thou hast dealt graciously with me in sparing my life. Speak to me, Lord. If there be other souls in a like case with me, do thou deal graciously with them, but oh! do chiefly so with me, for if there be one heart that wants thee more than another I am that one. If there be one less likely than another to be saved-one who would give thee more praise than another if saved, I am that one. Lord speak to me!" Dear young friend, you need not go home to pray that prayer. While you are sitting there, I pray God the Holy Ghost to lead you to offer it in silence- "Lord, speak to me." Personal possession of

an interest in Christ Jesus is a blessing to be sought for with strong crying and tears: be not silent till the God of heaven shall grant it to you.

I will add another word to the prayer which I commend to you: it shall be the word of time. "Lord, speak to me now." How old are you? Perhaps you are young. Oh! but how well it is to let the Savior have the bud of our being-to consecrate to him the early morning of life! Blessed is the day of life when it begins with clear shining, and opens with a morning without clouds. "Lord, I am young, but not too young to die. Speak to me now!" But are there not some of you who are past your one-and-twenty, and are beginning to run into the ways of sin? It may be your feet have slipped. Have you wandered into evil? Are you living in the daily practice of outward vice? You know you have left the right path some of you, and the pangs of conscience are upon you just now. Pray: "Lord, let me have had the last of my sins; let me have done with them now. Sever, once for all, the bonds between me and Satan, and bind me to thine altar fast to-night!" Perhaps you have passed even the prime of life. It may be that your hairs are turning grey. An old sinner is an old fool. He who is out of Christ at sixty or seventy is devoid of understanding. The young may die, but the old must. To be careless in youth is to sleep in a siege; but to be worldly in old age is to sleep in an attack, when already the scaling ladders are at the walls. Take heed, ye who wear grey hairs, for if they be not crowns of glory to you, they will prove to be fools' caps. Woe unto you who have spent your threescore years and ten, and are yet the enemies of-God! What will ye do when he comes to require of you that which is past? O, what will ye do in the day when lie shall deal out to you who have followed the flesh, the corruption thereof? O, what will you do when the heavens are in a blaze, and the trumpet rings, and the dead awaken, and you are judged? I put this question to you in deep solemnity this night; and do, I pray you, ere you leave these walls, send up the cry, "Speak, Lord to me, and speak to me now!"

But can you say, like Samuel, "Thy servant heareth?" Truly, I am afraid many of you cannot, for you do not hear God's word with your hearts. Mine eye runneth down with grief when I think of some of you who listen to my voice year after year, and yet do not hear. You hear me, but you do not hear my Master. Alas! how many have been the arrows out of God's bow which I have shot at you? Have they not been wasted? They have rattled upon your armor, but they have not pierced your hearts. I have run in vain, I have labored in vain for you. I have beaten the air so far as you are concerned. You would not hear. I can say solemnly I have sometimes stood in this pulpit, and have labored with your souls to the best of my power, and I have felt that I would have cheerfully resigned all I had on earth if I might but have brought you to Christ. If you, my hearers, who sit here constantly, might but be partakers of eternal life, I will leave my Master to do what he wills with me. Shame, contempt, obloquy-these shall be our joy and our crown for our faithfulness to God and your souls; but, oh! I must have you saved; I must have you lay hold on eternal life; I must see you look to Jesus; and my prayer is that you may this night look to a Savior crucified! Can you say, "Thy servant heareth?" "Yes," says one, "I can; if now the Lord would say a word in mercy to me I would gladly hear it." Then he will speak to thee, poor soul, ere long. If thou wilt hear it he will say it, for he never did give a hearing ear to any heart without intending to speak to it. I know how you want him to speak: you want him to speak with conviction. You want the broken and the contrite heart such as he will not despise. Well, ask for it-say, "Speak, Lord, with thy convincing voice, for I am ready to hear." But you want him to speak with a converting voice; you desire to be turned from your evil ways, and to follow the Lord. Cry to him then, "Speak, Lord, with the voice that turns men, and turn me now from darkness to light." Or it may be that you want a comforting word. Well, then, pray for it- "Speak, Lord, with thy voice of comfort: bind up my bleeding wounds, and let my soul rejoice in thee." Yet, truly, I do not know that he will speak anything more to you than this- "Look to Christ, and live." He will speak with power, but that is the substance of it. Jesus is the sum of mercy's message. He is the word of God. Do not expect to have any other gospel from God's lips than that which is revealed in God's word. The gospel of God's word is, "Believe, and live." There is life in a look at the crucified One; there is life at this moment for thee. If thou wilt not hear the voice of God when he saith to thee, "Trust Christ," remember he hath no other glad tidings. Effectual calling may speak this same thing more effectually, but the Holy Spirit never reveals any other gospel. There is no other way to heaven but just this- "Trust thy soul to Christ; thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou art saved."

I am loath to leave this point, because my heart is panting to know and to feel some inward emotion, which might make me feel confident that some of you had breathed this prayer. O may the good Master who alone can drive these nails home, use the gospel hammer now! I do conjure you, by the shortness of life, by the certainty of death, by the glories of heaven, by the terrors of hell, seek the Lord, and let this be now the voice of your seeking, "Speak, Lord; speak to me; speak now; for thy servant heareth."

III. We will turn to the third view of the text as the Prayer Of An Earnest Believer.

I was led to select this text, by finding it in the letter of one who has just been taken away from our classes, and from our Church. She was about to change her position in life in some degree, and the one prayer that seemed to be ever upon her mind, was a prayer for guidance, and she prayed, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth." She said she felt that God was about to do something for her, but she did not know what it was; she little dreamed that she was so near the kingdom and the glory, but yet that was the prayer, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth." This is a very appropriate prayer for the Christian when he is in providential difficulty. You may not know what you ought to do to-morrow; of two courses open to you, there may appear certain advantages connected

with each, and some friends have urged you to one plan, and other friends have urged you to the other. Now if you have used your best judgment, and have endeavored to direct your steps according to the Word of God, you may expect in answer to prayer, to have a distinct guidance from God — not perhaps from the mouth of man, though that sometimes happens, for even from this pulpit cases which we never heard of have been unravelled, and dilemmas with which the preacher was never acquainted have notwithstanding been solved by what seemed but a stray word, but what was meant by God to be a finger, pointing out to his children- “ This is the way, walk ye in it.” Take your difficulty to the God of wisdom; spread it out before him, and having divested yourself of your own will in the matter, having solemnly desired to know the will of God, and not your own wish, then you may expect by some means or other-and God has different ways of doing it-to have an answer from the Most High. Take you this as your prayer, “Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth.” We want in our daily life more fully to acknowledge God in all our ways. We are, I am afraid, in this age, in great danger of forgetting God. We ought to acknowledge him in the common transactions of the day, or else like the Israelites with the Gibeonites, we may be betrayed in the simplest transaction, and deceived to our lasting injury. Take thy matters before the God of Abraham, and the Urim and Thummin shall yet speak to thee. Domino Dirige nos, “Lord direct us,” is a good motto, not only for the City of London, but for the citizens of heaven. In points of doctrine this desire humbly uttered may bring us much light. God’s Word is not all of it alike plain; sometimes when you have heard conflicting views — this preacher earnestly declaring a doctrine, and another denouncing it-you may be somewhat nonplussed. My advice to you is, take your difficulty before God in prayer, and say, “Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth.” Do not ask God to confirm your opinion, but ask him to make your opinion conformable with his truth. Do not go to God’s Word to find texts to support your tenets, but go to Scripture for texts and tenets too. Remember that to a true Christian no doctrine has any force upon the conscience, except as it comes with “thus saith the Lord.” Follow the simple Word of God as you find it, and rest assured you shall have the light of the Holy Spirit streaming upon the sacred page, and as you read it you shall hear the Master say, “This is my Word.” He shall make it come to your soul with such power, that you shall have no doubt about it if your heart cries, “Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth.”

The same course should be adopted by every Christian in matters of practice. I am afraid there are many Christians who have stopped their ears up, that they may not hear the teaching of portions of the Word. There are certain Scriptures which they can never abide. I have heard of one who never would read the eighth or ninth chapter of Romans at family prayer. I have heard of another who invariably omitted that chapter in the Acts, about the Ethiopian eunuch-a very awkward chapter, I confess, for any one to read who has not accepted believer’s baptism. You will find many professed Christians in these day’s who do not like to meddle with certain questions, because they are more than half afraid that a little examination would prove them to be in the wrong. They cannot bear us to put a finger upon their Prayer Book, their creed, or their Church, for they know that they will not bear a close inspection. They will say, “Well, there are faults everywhere, let well alone;” the fact being that they do not care what truth is, so long as they can be comfortable and go with the fashion of the day. Some whom we faintly hope to be true Christians think truth unimportant, and are not prepared to “search the Scriptures whether these things be so or not.” Brethren, I should be afraid of my own doctrine, if I dare not test it both by Scripture and sound argument. If my foundation would not stand a good shaking, I should be afraid that it was not made of very solid material. Some people cry out if we say a word about their Church; it is a sign that their Church is hardly strong enough to endure an honest encounter. Pastors and tinsel always pray for peace and charity, but solid metal fears not the day of battle, Be it ours to court the sunlight, and above all let us beseech the Lord our God to be our light, for in his light we shall see light. Sitting at the feet of Jesus be our position! To receive of his words be our sweet employ! As melted wax is fitted to receive the impress of the seal, so let us be ready to accept the Master’s teaching. Let his faintest word bind us as with bonds of steel; and let his minutest precept be precious as the gold of Ophir. “To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams;” let it be our chosen privilege to be taught of the Lord, and to maintain his truth. Here, in this house of prayer let us offer the petition, “Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth .”

As for matters of duty again, be ye ever ready to follow the Master, and him alone. Not Luther, nor Calvin, neither Wesley, nor Whitfield, is to be your Rabbi; Jesus alone is Master in the kingdom of heaven. Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it, but where you have not his warrant, let no traditions or ancient customs make you stir so much as a single inch.

IV. We will close by observing that our text seems to us rightly to express

The Spirit Of A Departing Christian,

There he lies upon the bed;

his pulse grows fainter;

the many pains of death afflict him.

His eye is beginning to glaze, but a brighter light than that of earth has dawned upon him; and while the outward man decayeth, the inward man beginneth to renew his youth.

Methinks I see him when his pains are worst. He desireth to go, but he is willing to remain as long as his Master wills. He says sometimes, "I ill can brook delay," but the next moment he checketh himself, and he saith, "Not my will, but thine be done." He sits patiently upon the river's brink, expecting that his Master shall open the passage for him to pass over dryshod. He is praying, 'Speak, Lord, and the sooner thou wilt speak the more shall I rejoice.' Say unto me, 'Come up hither.' 'Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth 'heareth now better and more distinctly than he ever did hear before; he is now nearer to thee; the ear is almost closed to the din and bustle of the world, while in secret silence of the mind it waits the still small voice of thy lips. Speak, Lord, and say, "Plunge into the river," and I will cheerfully do so, if thou wilt but come and meet me. "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth." Methinks I hear that divine and mysterious voice, which, in fact, none can hear but those whose day of glory is dawning. The messenger has come and whispered in the ear of the dying saint, and I pray you mark his joy for you may see it; its light illuminates the countenance; the eye sparkles with supernatural glory. "Now," saith the man of God, "my journey is over, and I am almost home." "Now," saith the expiring sister, "it is victory, glory, triumph! The white horse is at the door: my Master bids me mount and ride in triumph, following my Lord Jesus, and all the conquering ones. The Master is come in his garments of salvation and calleth for me." The physician says lie could see the death-change, and the nurse bears the same witness, but the well-instructed believer calls it the life-change, and reads the true meaning of the mysterious transformation. He sees a something, which is a prognostic of the coming glory; he marks those beaming eyes, and that celestial smile. Now strange words drop from the lips-sometimes words that are scarcely lawful for a man to utter, by reason of the high and awful glory of their meaning. Now come the shouts of victory over death-now the note of defiance of the grave. The soul has left all care, all doubt, all fear behind. Its foot is not only on the Rock of Ages, but on that part of the rock which is on the other side of Jordan; and the soul cries with transport, "I am with him:

another moment I shall be in his arms! I see him. The angelic chariots await me; I step into them, and I ride to the kingdom.. 'Victory, victory, victory, through the blood of the Lamb!'" Something like this was the departing scene of our beloved friend who has gone home this week, and something like this, I trust, will be your departure and mine; but it will not, it cannot be thus with us, except we are resting upon Christ.

**"None but Jesus-none but Jesus-
Can do helpless sinners good."**

Lo! these fifteen years have I been preaching Jesus' name, and preaching nothing but his name, and it hath a savor about it sweeter than ever; and if I had but one word more to speak, methinks this should be it: none but Jesus, none but Jesus! Oh! fly to him, it ye would have a blessed death and a glorious resurrection. Look out of yourselves away from your frames and your feelings; look away from ceremonies, from priests, and from all men; look only to the bleeding wounds of my Master. Trust Jesus, expiring on the cross, and trust in him alone. You shall find eternal happiness in him. The Lord bless you with his richest blessing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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1 Samuel 17:36,37 The Lion-Slayer - The Giant-Killer

NO. 1253

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 5TH, 1875,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. David said moreover, the Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." —1 Samuel 17:36, 37.

WE have all thought a great deal of the courage of David in meeting giant Goliath, but probably we have not given him credit for his conduct in a previous contest. We have not sufficiently noticed that immediately before the encounter with the Philistine he fought a battle which cost him far more thought, prudence, and patience. The word-battle in which he had to engage with his brothers and with king Saul, was a more trying ordeal to him than going forth in the strength of the Lord to smite the uncircumcised boaster. Many a man meets with more trouble from his friends than from his enemies; and when he has learned to overcome the depressing influence of prudent friends, he makes short work of the opposition of avowed adversaries.

Observe that David had first to contend with his own brothers. I hardly think Eliab was so much swayed by envy as has been supposed. I fancy that Eliab had too much contempt for his young brother to copy him; he thought it ridiculous that a youth so given

to music and piety and gentle pursuits should dream of encountering a giant. He derided the idea of his being equal to such a task, and only feared lest in a moment of foolish enthusiasm he might throw his life away in the mad enterprise; and therefore Eliab somewhat superciliously, but still somewhat in the spirit natural to an elder brother who feels himself a sort of guardian to the younger members of the house, chided him and told him that only pride and curiosity had brought him there at all, and that he had better have remained with his sheep in the wilderness. Such a youth he thought was fitter among lambs than among warriors, and more likely to be in his place beneath a tree with his shepherd's pipe than in the midst of a battle. David met this charge in the very wisest way: he answered with a few soft words, and then turned away. He did not continue to argue, for in such a contest to multiply words is to increase ill feeling, and he who is first silent is the conqueror. Grandly did this young man restrain himself, though the provocation was very severe, and herein he won the honors of the man who restrains his spirit, and he is greater than the soldier who takes a city. I admire David as he selects his five smooth stones from the brook, but I admire him quite as much when he so gently replies where others might have been angry, and then so wisely turns aside from a debate which could not have been to the profit of either party.

Next, he is brought before Saul, and David enters upon a contest with a king, to whom he felt loyal respect, and with a soldier who had been a man of war from his youth up, and had wrought many famous deeds, one, therefore, to whom David looked up with not a little reverence. When king Saul said to him, "Thou art not able to fight with this Philistine, for thou art but a youth and he a man of war from his youth," it must have been somewhat difficult for the young hero to cope with the weighty judgment; and yet he did so, answering meekly, forcibly, and in all respects well. Did you notice how David said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail because of him." He did not say, "Let not thy heart fail thee;" he was too much of a courtier for that, he had too much delicacy of mind to insinuate that a royal heart could fear. When he proceeded to argue with the king it was in the most polite and deferential manners. He begins, "Thy servant kept his father's sheep"; he calls himself a servant of the king, and does not hesitate to own that he is only a shepherd who had no flock of his own, but served under his father. There was nothing like assumption, but the very reverse. Yet while he used soft words he brought forth hard arguments; he mentioned facts, and these are always the best weapons against carnal reasoning. Saul said, "Thou art not able to meet this Philistine;" but David replied, "Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear." He placed facts against mere opinions, and won the day. He did not quote Scripture to the king, for I suppose he knew Saul too well for that, and felt that he had not grace enough to be swayed by the promises and examples of Holy Writ; but he brought facts before him, knowing well how to give a reason for the hope that was in him with meekness and fear. His arguments quite overcame the opposition of Saul, which would have damped the enthusiasm of many, and Saul not only commissioned him to go and fight the Philistine, saying, "Go, and the Lord be with thee;" but he actually clothed him in his royal armor, which was of no small value, and which of course would have increased the honors of the Philistine champion had David fallen before him. Some little faith in David was kindled in Saul's bosom, and he was willing to trust his armor in his hands. Thus it is clear that David fought the battles with Saul as admirably as he afterwards conducted his duel with the giant, and he deserves no small honor for it; nay, rather unto God be honor who while he taught his servant's hands to war, and his fingers to fight, also taught his tongue to utter right words, by which he put to silence those who would have abashed him.

What was the pith of David's argument? What were the five smooth stones which he threw at the head of carnal reasoning? That shall be the subject of this morning's discourse. We will consider the way in which argued down all doubts and fears, and by the Spirit of God was nerved to go forth to deeds of sacred daring in the name of the Most High, for the same conquering arguments may, perhaps, serve our turn also.

Three things are before us in the text, recollections, reasonings, and results.

I. First, Recollections.

"Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear." These were noteworthy facts which David had stored up in his memory, and he now mentions them, for they exactly answered his purpose. We ought not to be unmindful of the way by which the Lord our God has led us, for if we are we shall lose much. Some saints have very short memories. It has been well said that we write our benefits in dust and our injuries in marble, and it is equally true that we generally inscribe our afflictions upon brass, while the records of the deliverances of God are written in water. It ought not so to be. If our memories were more tenacious of the merciful visitations of our God, our faith would often be strengthened in times of trial. Now, what did David recollect, for I want you to remember the same?

He recollected, first, that, whatever his present trial might be, he had been tried before, tried when he was but a young man, peacefully employed in keeping his flocks. A lion rushed upon his prey and he had to defend his sheep: — no small trial that for a young man, to have to meet a savage beast, strong, furious, and probably ravenous with hunger. Yet the ordeal had not destroyed

him, and he felt sure that another of the same kind would not do so. He had encountered that danger in the course of his duty, when he was in his proper place, and engaged in his lawful calling, and he had thereby learned that the path of duty is not without its difficulties and perils. He was keeping his flock as he ought to be, and yet a lion attacked him; and so you and I have met with trials which did not arise from sin, but, on the other hand, came to us because we conscientiously did the right, and would not yield to temptation. We must not think that we are out of the right road when we meet with difficulties, for we must expect through much tribulation to inherit the kingdom of God. Severe afflictions and afflictions arising out of holy walking are not new things to us, let us now remember our old encounters.

He remembered, too, that he had been tried frequently. He had been not only attacked by a lion, but also by a bear. He had been tried in different ways, for lions and bears do not fight exactly in the same manner, neither are they to be met with precisely the same tactics. David remembered that his trials had been of different sorts, and that in each case the battle had been hard. It was no small matter to fight hand to hand with a lion, and no child's play to rush single-handed upon a bear. We, also, in looking back, remember sharp encounters with foes of many kinds, which were terrible battles to us at the time. Brethren, some of us who have been for years in the ways of the Lord can tell of shrewd brushes with the enemy, and we can speak of wounds and ugly rents, of which we wear the scars to this day. Many have been our adversaries and furious, yet have we been upheld till now by Jesus, the Captain of our salvation. Wherefore, then, should we fear concerning the present fiery trial, as though some strange thing had happened to us. Is it a Philistine this time? Well, it was a lion before, and a bear on another occasion: it is only a little change of the same constant trial of our faith, and therefore let us not shrink from the conflict.

Next, David recollected that he had risked all in the prosecution of his duty. He was set to take care of the sheep and the lambs, and he did so. A lion had dared to leap into the fold and seize a lamb, and without a single thought of anything but the lamb and his own duty the young shepherd rushed upon the monster with all the ardor of youth, and smiting him with his crook compelled him to drop his prey. He had put his own life in jeopardy for the poor defenceless lamb. Can you not recollect, my Christian brethren, when you also took no thought as to what you should lose if you followed Christ, and cared not if it cost you your very life? With earnest honesty you desired to learn what you ought to do, and you did it, careless of the cost. Reproach, slander, misrepresentation, and unkindness you defied, so long as you could but clear your conscience and honor your Lord. O blessed recklessness! Do you remember those early days when you could cheerfully have gone to prison and to death for Christ's sake? For Scriptural doctrines, and ordinances you would willingly have suffered martyrdom. Perhaps some of you have on more than one occasion actually risked everything for the sake of integrity and for the honor of the Lord Jesus Christ, even as others have defied the utmost power of Satan, and the most virulent hatred of men for the sake of the Lord God of Hosts. You have felt that you could sooner die than deny the truth, and sooner perish from off the face of the earth than be craven to the trust which the Lord had committed to you. Look back upon your brave days, my brethren, not that you may be proud of what you did, but that you may be ashamed if you are afraid to do the like again. Blush if what you could do as a Tripling should appear too hard for you in riper years. These recollections have precious uses; they will lead us to bless God and humble ourselves in his presence.

Next he remembered that he had on that occasion gone alone to the fray. The antagonist was a lion, and a dozen men might have found themselves too few for the fight; but David remembered that in that contest he was quite alone: he had not called in the under shepherds to the rescue, but armed only with his crook, he had belaboured the lion till the monster found it convenient to leave his prey and turn upon the young shepherd. David was ready for him, seized him by his beard, dashed his head upon the rocks, and did not relinquish his grasp till the king of beasts lay dead at his feet. It was a grand incident, even had it stood alone, but a bear had supplied an equally memorable trophy. Some of us may well recall hours in our past lives when we were all alone, and, as we went forth to serve the Lord Jesus, our enterprise was regarded as Utopian and spoken of as sure to end in failure. Many a good man has gone forth for Christ's sake even worse than alone, for those who should have aided have done their best to criticise and prophesy disaster; but men whom God ordains to honor have shut their ears to critics, and pushed on till they have reached success, and then everybody has said, "We always thought so," and not a few have even claimed to have been ardent admirers all along. Brother, do you remember when every one said you were foolhardy and self-sufficient, and regarded your course as absurd and sure to come to an end? Six months were to see the end of your career, which was a mere bubble and would soon collapse? Ah, those were brave times when the Lord was with you and man's opinion weighed but lightly. It may be that for truth's sake your relatives turned their backs upon you, and no man would say you a good word, and yet in the name of the Lord God of Hosts you did the right and dared all results, and you have had no cause to regret it, but overflowing reasons to bless God that he strengthened you to "dare to be a Daniel and dare to stand alone." Look back at that courageous hour, and now that you are surrounded by a goodly company of friends, think whether you have as simple a trust in God now as you manifested then. If you judge that you have, prove by your actions that you can still dare to go forward under difficulties, unshackled by dependence on an arm of flesh. The discipline of desertion ought not to have been lost upon you, you ought to be all the stronger for having been compelled to walk alone. The friendship of your fellows has been a loss rather than a gain if you cannot now wage single-handed battle as you did in former times. Are you now become slavishly dependent on an arm of flesh? If so, chide yourself by the memories of braver days.

David also recollected that on that occasion when he smote the lion and the bear he had nothing visible to rely upon, but simply trusted his God. He had in his hand no sharp weapon of iron with which to smite the wild beast to the heart, but careless as to weapons, he thought only of his God, and rushed on the foe. He was as yet a young man, his muscles were not set and strong, neither did he seem fit for such a venturous deed; but his God was almighty, and, reliant upon the omnipotence of God, he thought nothing of his youth, but flung himself into the fray. What more in the way of help did he need, since God was with him? Oh, brethren, there were times with some of us when we commenced our work, when our sole reliance was the unseen Lord. We were cast upon the invisible power of God, and if that could fail us we must go. Our attempts were such as carnal reason could not justify, such indeed as only divine interposition could carry through. They were right enough if the divine power could be calculated on, but apart from that they were wed nigh insane. Glory be to God, he has been as good as his word, our faith has been justified by results, and unbelief has been struck dumb. The Lord taught us to rest in him from our youth up, and to declare his wondrous works, and now that we have tried and proved his faithfulness we dare not hide these things from the generation following. Our witness must be borne even though we should be charged with boasting. "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord." But can it be true that now we have begun coolly to calculate means and to rely upon methods and plans, whereas once we looked to God alone? Do we now trust in this friend and rely on that, and distrust the Lord if friends are few? Shame upon us if we do so, for this is to leave the way of victory for the path of defeat, to come down from the heroic track to the common highway of carnal reasoning, and so to fall into care, fretfulness, weakness, and dishonor. Happy is the man who trusts in the Lord alone by unstaggering faith, he shall go from strength to strength, but he who chooses to walk by sight shall utterly decay.

David recollected also that the tactics which he adopted on that occasion were natural, artless, and vigorous. All that he did was just to smite the lion and the bear with his staff, or whatever came first to hand, and then to fight as nature and the occasion suggested. He did what his courage prompted, without waiting to consult a committee of lion-slayers and bear-trappers. His whole art was faith; this was his science and his skill. He consulted not with flesh and blood, followed no precedents, imitated no noted hunters, and encumbered himself with no rules, but he did his best as his faith in God directed him. He threw his whole soul into the conflict, and fought vigorously, for his faith did not make him sit still, and expect the lion to die in a fit, or the bear to become insensible. He seemed to say to himself, "Now, David, if anything is to be done, you must be all here, and every muscle you have must be put to the strain. You have a lion to fight with, therefore stir up your strength, and while you rely upon God alone, take care to play the man this day for your father's flock." Courage supplied coolness; and energy, backed up by confidence, won the day. Do you remember, my brother, when in your own way you did the same? You were reliant upon God but not idle, you put your whole force of soul and energy into your Master's service, as if it all rested on you, and yet you depended wholly on him and you succeeded! How is it with you now? Do you now take things easily? Do you wonder that you do not succeed? If you are growing cold and careless, if you are getting sleepy and dull, rebuke your soul, and use your past experience as a whip wherewith to flog yourself into energy. Let it never be said that he who woke himself up to fight a lion now falls asleep in the presence of a Philistine.

David remembered that by confidence in God his energetic fighting gained the victory — the lion was killed, and the bear was killed too. And cannot you remember, brethren, what victories God gave you? When you were little in Israel and despised, yet his hand was upon you, and when few would bid you God speed, yet the Jehovah of Hosts encouraged your heart, and when you were feeble and but a youth, the Lord Jesus helped you to do exploits for him in your own way. Remember this, and be of good courage this morning in the conflict which now lies before you. David talked of his former deeds somewhat reluctantly. I do not know that he had ever spoken of them before, and he did so on this occasion with the sole motive of glorifying God, and that he might be allowed to repeat them. He ravished for permission from Saul to confront the Philistine champion, and bring yet greater glory to God. Brethren, whenever you talk of what God enabled you to do, mind you lay the stress upon God's enablings, and not upon your own doings; and when you rehearse the story of your early days, let it not be as a reason why you should now be exonerated from service, and be allowed to retire upon your laurels, but as an argument why you should now be allowed the most arduous and dangerous post in the battle. Let the past be a stepping-stone to something higher, an incentive to nobler enterprise. On, on ye soldiers of the cross, in God's name eclipse your former selves. As grace enabled you to pile the carcass of the bear upon the corpse of the lion, so now resolve that the Philistine shall increase the heap, and his head shall crown the whole, to the honor and glory of the God of Israel. So much for recollections. I pity the man who has none of them, and I pity yet more the man who having them is now afraid to risk all for his Lord.

II. Now for Reasonings.

David used an argument in which no flaw can be found. He said "The case of this Philistine is a parallel one to that of the lion. If I act in the same manner by faith in God with this giant as I did with the lion, God is the same, and therefore the result will be the same." That seems to me to be very clear reasoning, and I bid you adopt it. Such and such was my past difficulty, and my present trouble is of the same order: in that past trial I rested upon God, and acted in a right way, and he delivered me; therefore, if I trust in God still, and do as before, he is the same as ever; and I shall triumph yet again.

Let us now consider the case, and we shall see that it really was parallel. There was the flock, defenseless; here was Israel, God's flock, defenceless too, with no one to take up its cause. In all the camp there was not one single man who dared take up the foeman's challenge. David was a shepherd, and, therefore, as a shepherd, bound to defend his flock; and in the present instance he remembered, I doubt not, that Samuel had anointed him to be king over Israel, and he felt that some of the responsibility of the anointing rested upon him even then, and that if no man else would play the shepherd the anointed son of Jesse must do it, and so it looked to him like a parallel case — Israel the flock, and he the shepherd who must defend it.

He was alone that day when he smote the lion, and so he was this day when he was to confront his enormous foe. Of course it was one of the conditions of a duel that the Israelitish champion should go forth alone, and, besides that, there was no one in all the camp who was likely to wish to accompany him upon such an errand. So, now that he was all alone, the case was the more truly parallel.

As for that Philistine, he felt that in him he had an antagonist of the old sort. It was brute force before, it was brute force now: it might take the shape of a lion or a bear or a Philistine, but David considered that it was only so much flesh and bone and muscle, so much brag or roar, tooth or spear. He considered the Philistine to be only a wild animal of another shape, because he was not in covenant with God, and dared to put himself in opposition to the Most High. My brethren, a man who has God for a friend is higher than an angel, but a man who is God's enemy is no better than a beast: reckon him so and your fears of him will vanish. Goliath was mighty, but so was the lion; he was cunning of fence, but so was the bear; the case was only a repetition of the former combat. And as God was not with the lion, nor with the bear, so David felt that God was not with Goliath, and could not be, for he was the enemy of God's Israel; and as God had been with him when fighting the wild beasts, so he felt that God was with him now. It looked to him as if he had already twice gone through a rehearsal of all this when he was in the wilderness alone, and therefore he could the more easily go through it now. Perhaps there flashed on his mind the case of Samson, who learned to slay the Philistines by rending a lion when he was alone in the vineyard. So David felt, "I have killed my lion like Samson, and now like Samson I go to fight this Philistine, or a thousand like him, if need be, in the name of the Lord of hosts."

The whole argument is this, in the one case by such tactics are have been successful, trusting in God, and therefore in a similar case we have only to do the same, and we shall realize the same victory. Brethren and sisters, here is a fault with most of us, that when we look back upon past deliverances we do not draw this parallel, but on the contrary the temptation haunts us, to think that our present trial is clearly a new case. For instance, David might have said, "When I slew that lion I was younger than I am now, and I had more courage and vivacity, but those shrewd brushes have strained me somewhat, and I had better be more prudent." Just as you and I say sometimes, "Ah, what I did was done when I was a young man, I cannot do the like now. That trouble which I bore so patiently, by God's grace, was in other times, but this affliction has come upon me when I am less able to endure it, for I have not the elasticity of spirit which once I had, nor the vigor I formerly possessed." When we want to escape from some arduous work, we do it by trying to show that we are not under the same obligations as in former days. We know in our conscience that if we did great things when we were young we ought to do greater things now that we are older, wiser, more experienced, and more trained in war, but we try to argue our conscience into silence. If the Lord helped us to bear with patience, or to labor with zeal, after all the experience we have had, that patience and zeal should now be easier to us than before. Alas, we do not argue so, but to our shame we excuse ourselves and live ingloriously.

I know a man who to-day says, "Yes, what we did in years gone by are did in our heroic age, but we are not so enthusiastic now." And why not? We are so apt to magnify our former selves, and think of our early deeds as of something to be wondered at, but not to be attempted now. Fools that we are! They were little enough in all conscience, and ought to be outdone. Oh, dear brethren, this resting on our oars will not do, we are drifting down with the tide. David did not say, "I slew a lion and a bear, I have had my turn at such bouts, let somebody else go and fight that Philistine:" yet we have heard people say, "When I was a young man I taught in the Sunday-school, I used to go out preaching in the villages, and so on." Oh, brother, and why not do it now? Rethinks you ought to be doing more instead of less. As God gives you more knowledge, more experience, and more grace, surely your labors for him ought to be more abundant than they used to be, but, alas, you do not look on it as a parallel case, and so make excuses for yourself.

Too often in our spiritual work we fix our mind upon the differences rather than upon the similarities. For instance, David might have said, "I would not mind another lion, I can manage lions; I would not be afraid of half-a-dozen more bears, I am used to bears; but this Philistine is a new sort of monster." No, David saw it was the same thing after all, a little different in shape but the same brute force, and so he went at it with courage. But we say, "Alas, there is a great difference; our present trials have an unusual bitterness in them." "I," cries the widow, "I lost my husband, and God helped and my son has been a stay to me; but now he too is gone, and I have no other son, and no one to fall back upon." She points out the difference, though the trouble is virtually the same; would it not be far better if she pleaded the same promise and believed in the Lord as she did before. One man will say, "Ah, yes, I did on such an occasion run all risks for God, but you see there is a difference here." I know there is, my dear brother, there is a little difference, and if you fix your eye on that you will drill yourself into unbelief; but difference or no difference, where duty calls or danger be never wanting there; and if you should be called to bear such an affliction as never befell mortal man before, yet remember God's

arm is not shortened that he cannot deliver his servants, and you have but to commit yourself to him, and out of the sevenfold adversity you shall come forth a sevenfold conqueror.

We are very apt, too, to look back upon the past and say, "I know that there are some grand things the Lord did for me, and my venture for his sake turned out well, but I do not know what I should have done if a happy circumstance had not occurred to help me just in the nick of time." We dare to attribute our deliverance to some very "happy accident." It is very base of us to do so, for it was the Lord who helped us from first to last, and the happy occurrence was a mere second cause; but cannot God give us another "happy accident" if necessary in this present trouble? Alas, unbelief says, "There was a circumstance in that case which really did alter it, and I cannot expect anything like that to occur now." Oh, how wrong this is of us! How we lose the force of that blessed reasoning from parallels which might have supplied us with courage! God grant we may break loose from this net.

Possibly our coward heart suggests "Perhaps after all this deed of courage may not be quite my calling, and I had better not attempt it." David might have said, "I am a shepherd, and I can fight with lions, but I was never trained to war, and therefore I had better let this Philistine alone." He might also have discovered that he was better adapted for protecting sheep than for becoming the champion of a nation. We must guard against the use of this plausible pretext, for pretext it is. Brethren, if we have achieved success by the power of God, let us not dote upon some supposed adaptation, but stand prepared to be used of the Lord in any other way which he may choose. Adaptation is unknown till the event proves it, and our Lord is a far better judge of that than we are. If you see before you a work by means of which you can glorify God and bless the church, do not hesitate, but enter upon it in reliance upon your God. Do not stand stuttering and stammering and talking about qualifications, and so on, but what your hand findeth to do, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus, who has bought with his blood. Prove your qualifications by bringing Goliath's head back with you, and no further questions will be asked by any one, or by yourself.

So, too, sometimes we frame an excuse out of the opinions of others. We are apt to feel that we really must consider what other people say. Our good brother Eliab may be a little crusty in temper, but still he is a man of a good deal of prudence and experience, and he tells us to be quiet and let these things alone, and perhaps we had better do so. And there is Saul; well, he is a man of great acquaintance with such matters, and he judges that we had better decline the task, and therefore upon the whole we had better exhibit that prudence which is the better part of valour, and not rush upon certain danger and probable destruction. This seeking advice and following cowardly counsel is all too common. We know that some strenuous effort is needed, and it is in our power, but we desire ease, and therefore we employ other men to weave excuses for us. It would be honester to say outright that we do not want to do any more. Were we more full of love to Jesus, this unworthy device would be scorned by us, and in sacred manliness of mind we should scorn the counsel which tendeth to cowardice. Others cannot bear our responsibility, we must each one give an account of himself unto God, why, then, yield to the judgments of men? Oh, brethren, fling this folly to the winds. Obey the dictates of the Holy Spirit, and close your ears to the advice of unbelief.

Men or women, consecrated to God, if the Lord impels you to do anything for him do not ask me do not ask my fellow church officers, but go and do it. If God has helped you in the past, draw a parallel, and argue from it that he will help you in the present. Go, and the Lord go with you, but do not fall a prey to that wicked unbelief which would rob you of your strength.

III. The last thing is Results.

The results were, first, that David felt he would, as he did before, rely upon God alone. Come ye to the same resolution, brothers and sisters. God alone is the source of power, he alone can render real aid; let us then rest in him, even if no other help appear. Is not the Lord alone enough? That arm which you cannot see will never be palsied, its sinews will never crack, but all the arms of mortals upon which you so much love to lean must one day turn to dust in the tomb; and while they live they are but weakness itself: Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength. David had found wisdom's self when he said, "My soul wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him."

David resolved again to run all risks once more, as he had done before. As he had ventured himself against the lion so he would put his life in his hand and engage the Philistine. Come wounds and maiming, come piercing spear or cutting sword, come death itself amid the taunts and exultations of his giant foe, he would still dare everything for Israel's sake and for God's sake. Soldiers of the cross, if you feel that you can do this, be not slow to put it in practice, throw yourselves wholly into the Lord's service, consecrate yourselves, your substance, and to the grand end of glorifying Christ, fighting against error, and plucking souls from destruction.

David's next step was to put himself into the same condition as on former occasions, by divesting himself of everything that hampered him. He had fought the lion with nature's weapons, and so would he meet the Philistine. Off went that glittering royal helmet, which no doubt made his head ache with its weight. Off went the cumbersome armor, in which he found it very hard to move. In such a metallic prison he did not feel like David a bit, and therefore he put all aside, and wore only his shepherd's frock.

As for that magnificent sword which he had just strapped by his side, he felt that it would be more ornament than use, and so he laid it aside with the rest of the trappings, and put on his wallet, and took nothing with him but his sling and stone. This was the old style, and he did well to keep to it, for the Lord saveth not with sword and spear. We are all too apt to get into fine harness and tie ourselves up with rules and methods. The art of getting rid of all hamper is a noble one, but few have learned it. Look at our churches, look at the church at large, is there not enough red tape about to strangle a nation? Have we not committees enough to sink a ship with their weight? As for patrons, presidents, vice-presidents, and secretaries, had not Christianity been divine it could not have lived under the load of these personages who sit on her bosom. The roundabouts are worrying straightforward action out of the world. We are organised into strait waistcoats. The vessel of the church has such an awful lot of top-hamper that I wonder how she can be navigated at all; and if a tempest were to come on she would have to cut herself free from nearly all of it. When shall we get at the work? If there should ever come a day when brethren will go forth preaching the gospel, simply resting in faith upon the Lord alone, I for one expect to see grand results; but at present Saul's armor is everywhere. When we get rid of formality in preaching we shall see great results; but the churches are locked up in irons which they call armor. Why, dear me, if we are to have a special service, one brother must have it conducted on the Moody method, and another can only have Sankey hymns. Who, then, are we that we must follow others? Do not talk to us about innovations, and all that; away with your rubbish! Let us serve God with all our hearts, and preach Jesus Christ to sinners with our whole souls, and the mode is of no consequence. To preach down priestcraft and error, and do it in the simplest possible manner, by preaching up Christ, is the way of wisdom. We must preach, not after the manner of doctors of divinity, but after the manner of those unlearned and ignorant men in the olden time who had been with Jesus, and learned of him. Brethren, some of you have too much armor on. Put it off: be simple, be natural, be artless, be plain-spoken, be trustful in the living God, and you will succeed. Less of the artificer's brass, and more of heaven-anointed manhood is wanted: more sanctified naturalness, and less of studied artificialness. O Lord, send us this, for Christ's sake. Amen.

The ultimate result was, that the young champion came back with Goliath's head in his hand, and equally sure triumphs await every one of you if you rely on the Lord, and act in simple earnestness. If for Christ, my sister, you will go forward in his work, resting upon him, you shall see souls converted by your instrumentality. If, my brother, you will but venture everything for Christ's glory, and depend alone on him, what men call fanaticism shall be considered by God to be only sacred consecration, and he will send you the reward which he always gives to a full, thorough, simple, unselfish faith in himself.

If the result of my preaching this sermon should be to stir up half a dozen workers to some venturesome zeal for God, I shall greatly rejoice. I remember when I commenced this work in London, God being with me, I said if he would only give me half a dozen good men and women a work would be done, but that if I had half a dozen thousand sleepy people nothing would be accomplished. At this time I am always afraid of our falling into a lethargic condition. This church numbers nearly five thousand members, but if you are only five thousand cowards the battle will bring no glory to God. If we have one David among us, that one hero will do wonders; but think what an army would be if all the soldiers were Davids — it would be an ill case with the Philistines then. Oh that we were all Davids, that the weakest among us were as David, and David himself were better than he is, and became like an angel of the Lord! God's Holy Spirit is equal to the doing of this, and why should he not do it? Let us call to him for help, and that help will come.

I must just say this word to some here present who lament that there is nothing in this sermon for them. Unconverted persons, you cannot draw any argument from your past experience, for you have none of a right kind; but you may draw comfort, and I pray you do so, from another view of this story. Jesus Christ, the true David, has plucked some of us like lambs from between the jaws of the devil. Many of us were carried captive by sin; transgression had so encompassed us about that we were unable to escape, but our great Lord delivered us. Sinner, why can he not deliver you? If you cannot fight the lion of the pit, HE can. Do you ask me, What are you to do? Well, call for his help as loudly as you can. If you are like a lamb bleat to him, and the bleatings of the lamb will attract the shepherd's ear. Cry mightily unto the Lord for salvation, and trust alone in the Lord Jesus. He will save you. If you were between the jaws of hell, yet, if you believed in him, he would surely pluck you out of destruction. God grant you may find it so, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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1 Samuel 20:17 Love Plighting Troth

NO. 2774

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Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.—1 Samuel 18:3.

“And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul.”-1 Samuel 20:17.

Many books have been written concerning that surly old prophet Jonah, yet here is a man with a name somewhat similar, Jonathan-but scarcely anybody has had much to say about him. Yet there was more sweetness in the little finger of Jonathan than in the whole body of Jonah. A wonderfully noble, lovable, magnanimous man was that heir apparent to the throne of Israel. I admire, beyond measure, the disinterested, unselfish affection, which he had for the young shepherd-hero. It must have been perfectly clear to Jonathan that David had supplanted him. Jonathan himself had been the bravest of the brave; accompanied only by his armor-bearer, he had gained a notable victory over the Philistines; and, now, here comes another young man, who becomes even more distinguished than himself, and who takes his place as commander-in-chief of the army. Most young men, in such a position as that, would have been very jealous of the newcomer, and something of the envy of Saul the father might very naturally have been begotten in the heart of Jonathan the son. But it was not so, for Jonathan loved David as he loved his own soul.

Moreover, Jonathan knew very well that David was ordained of God to mount the throne; that throne was his by hereditary right, yet he foresaw that neither he nor any of his descendants would sit upon it, but that David would occupy it. Yet there was no trace of jealousy, or envy, or malice towards David; but he loved him as he loved his own soul. It was a case of love at first sight, for he had no sooner looked upon David than “the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David;” and it was also a case of love that was strong as death, for he clung to David to the last; and David, on his part, loved him intensely, and, after he had fallen upon the fatal mount of Gilboa, lamented his death in sweetest strains of poetry.

But I am not going to talk much about the friendship of Jonathan and David; I want rather to use the union of heart that existed between them, and the consequences that resulted from it, as a lesson to those of us who have the sacred fire of love burning within our heart towards the Well-beloved, even our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, whose love toward us is marvelous, matchless, unspeakable, divine love, the like of which has ne'er been seen on earth.

There are two observations which I wish to make, and to emphasize; they are taken from our two texts. The first is, that great love desires to bind itself to the beloved one: “Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.” And, secondly, great love desires renewed pledges from its object: “Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul.”

I. Now, first, Great Love Desires To Bind Itself To The Beloved One.

I am going to speak of the greatest love that ever was,-the love of Jesus Christ to his chosen, and I want you to notice how the love of Christ to his people made him desire to bind himself to them. Think of this wondrous theme with all your hearts, so that, however feebly I may speak, the ardor of your imagination will put life into my poor words.

And, first of all, remember that Jesus bound himself to his people by covenant bonds. Of old, or ever the earth was, our Lord Jesus had set his heart upon a people whom he foreknew, and his delights even at that time were with the sons of men. He delighted to think upon them as a people that should be his for ever, and, there fore, he accepted them, to be his own, by a covenant gift from his Father's hand. His Father gave unto him all those who should thereafter believe on him, and his great heart of love was set upon all the chosen ones who were thus given over to him to be his portion and heritage for ever and ever. This was the first link between Christ and the Church.

Then, in the fullness of time, our Lord's great love to us led him into visible union with us; for, as he had undertaken, when his Father gave us to him, that he would save us, and keep us, he came into the world to begin that great work by taking upon himself our nature. That was a wondrous union with us when he, who had made all things, did hide himself away in the body of a babe;-when he, whose presence filled the heavens and the earth, deigned to find a dwelling place in this world in the form of a carpenter's son; for “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.” For this cause did the Son of God leave his Father's house, that he might be joined unto his Church, and they twain became one flesh. “This is a great mystery;” said the apostle, “but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.” Because he loved us as his own soul, nothing would satisfy him until he had partaken of the nature of those who had been given to him to become his portion and his heritage. “Bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh,” is the eternal Son of God now that he is also the Son of man, “for we are members of his body of his flesh, and of his bones.”

This being done, Jesus determined that the covenant between himself and his people should be kept up as an indivisible union right through.

“Yea, saith the Lord, with her I'll go

Through all the depths of care and woe;

And on the cross will even dare

The bitter pangs of death to bear.”

He had come into the closest possible union with his Church, because he loved her as his own soul, and he determined to maintain that union although it involved a life of toil, humiliation, poverty, and pain; and although it also involved death, “even the death of the cross.” But he would, at all costs, carry out the covenant that he had made with his Father to be the Surety and the Substitute for his own people: “Having loved his own, which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.”

Because of this close connection with his Church, our Lord Jesus Christ has bound himself to every believing soul by very definite promises. Christ so loves you, beloved, that he has said to each one of you, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” Up in heaven, he maintains your right, and defends your cause; and he has pledged his honor to secure your eternal safety, and has linked his own cause and kingdom, and his future success, with your being ultimately delivered from all sin and sorrow. It is wonderful to note how Christ, in entering into covenant with his people, has bound himself by every conceivable tie to those whom his Father gave unto him, and whom he has redeemed with his precious blood.

Then, next, Jesus would have us bound to him on our part. This kind of bond can never be all on one side, for true friendship leads to mutual love. To my mind, there is a measure of mystery in both my texts: “Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.” Which is the “he” and which is the “him” referred to in this verse? Is the “he” David, and the “him” Jonathan; or is the “him” David, and the “he” Jonathan! There is the same indefiniteness in the second text, there is a kind of mixing up of the pronouns; and I like that, because a true friend or a true lover is one’s other self; the two persons are so closely joined to one another that they have become one. So our blessed Lord Jesus, who has linked himself with us by many strong ties, would have us link ourselves with him by many ties also. Let us see whether we have bound ourselves to him in that way; how is it done?

Our first conscious love-union to Christ is when we come, and submit ourselves entirely to him, that he may save us. Have all of you done this? I remember when I first realized that there was nothing I could do to save myself, and that Christ had done it all, and I was quite content that he should be my Savior on those terms. Content, did I say! Nay, more than that, I was delighted just to lay myself down at his dear feet, that he might save me entirely.

After that submission to him, there came into my soul, next, an ardent love to him. I feel sure that it was so with all of you who have believed in him; when you realized that he had saved you, you felt so glad and so thankful that you could not help loving him who had done so much for you. That is the kind of union that Christ desires on our part toward himself—that we should be grateful for his redeeming love, grateful for the forgiveness of our sin, and then that we should love him in return. You did feel that love once, did you not? Do you feel it now? Let me stop a minute, and ask you to think of Christ as actually here. He is a real Christ you know;—no dream, no mere imaginary personage, who has simply figured in the pages of fiction. He is a real, living Christ; and if you have submitted yourself to him to save you, he has saved you. Then, do you not love him? Give your love an opportunity of expressing itself; look your Savior in the face, and say to him,—

“Do not I love thee, O my Lord?

Behold my heart and see.”

And if you can truthfully do it, let your soul as well as your voice sing those well-known words,—

“My Jesus, I love thee, I know thou art mine,

For thee all the follies of sin I resign;

My gracious Redeemer, my Savior art thou,

If ever I loved thee, my Jesus, ’tis now.”

Because Jesus loves you as his own soul, he wants you to avow your union with him by expressing the love, which you really feel in your heart towards him. That love should constrain us to confess that we belong wholly to him, with all we are and all we have. There is not anything about us which is not our Lord’s; from the crown of our head to the sole of our foot, he has redeemed us with his precious blood. So let us own that we are “bought with a price.” Because Christ loves us, he wants us to own that we are his as surely as that he is ours; and not only to admit this in our own heart, but also to confess it before men by casting in our lot with his people. Has my Lord Jesus a visible Church anywhere on earth? Then, let me share the lot of those who are its members. What are its fortunes? Let them be mine. Is the Church dishonored and despised, maligned and persecuted? Then, let me take the rough

side of the hill with her, and bear the brunt of the storm with her, rather than, in a cowardly manner, be ashamed of my Master, and shrink from avowing that I belong to him. Because he loves you as his own soul, he wants you openly to declare that you are really his. In the presence of men and angels, or in the presence even of legions of devils, be not ashamed to let it be known that you belong to Jesus, just as Jonathan and David were not ashamed to let it be known that they were fast friends to one another.

Then, beloved, it will delight Christ's heart if you show kindness to all who belong to him. You remember how David looked after poor Mephibosheth, the lame son of Jonathan; when he found him, he took care of him for Jonathan's sake. So, dear friends, look after Christ's lame people, Christ's poor people, Christ's despondent people, and Christ's sick people. Visit them in their affliction, relieve their distresses, comfort their hearts; and do it all for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake.

And because Jesus loves you, he wants you, beloved, to merge all your life's interests more and more in his, and to find your gain in advancing his honor. He wants you to come to this point,-that you will be rich when his cause prospers,-that you will be poor when his Church declines,-that you will be happy when Christ is honored, and that you will be sad when he is not loved. It will be to him a great joy when he shall see you more and more entering into covenant with him, as he has already, to the fullest possible extent, entered into covenant bonds with you.

If this be our Lord's desire, shall we not fulfill it? I think I hear some of you say, "We know all this, and we have done all this." Then keep on doing it. As you sit in your pews, try to feel, more really than you have ever done before, the bonds of love which bind Christ to you and which also bind you to Christ. Say, with the apostle, "We love him because he first loved us."

These bonds are mutual and they are indissoluble. With confidence we may repeat the apostolic challenge, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" For we know that nothing can make him leave off loving us, and nothing can make us leave off loving him.

Further, as David accepted Jonathan's presents, we accept, O gracious Savior, all the priceless gifts that thou dost bestow upon us! We see thee taking off thy royal robe, and girding it around us. Thou didst lay aside all thy bright array, that we might be clothed as princes of the blood-royal of heaven. "Even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle," did Jonathan give to David; and our Lord Jesus has done the same for us, so that we have "the sword of the Spirit," with which we may "fight the good fight of faith;" and from his bow we may shoot upward the pointed arrows of prayer; and that we also may be girt about with the girdle of truth. There is nothing, O Lord, which thou hast that thou hast not given to us; and with both our hands we do accept of that which is thine, and of thyself also, for thou, too, art given to us; and, in return, we give ourselves to thee, "'Tis all that we can do." Let it really be so with us now; let our love embrace the Well-beloved; let this be a time of love with us. Look up at his blessed face, and then ask, "Was there ever any other so fair as he is?" Then look into his heart, and enquire, "Was there ever another heart so tender, so true, so kind, as his?" Then count his royal and divine honors, and see whether any other lover ever wooed with such bejewelled hands, and such a crown of glory as he wears upon his blessed brow. Ay, look him all over, and see if there ever was such incarnate love in any other as you behold in him. Did any other man ever love so intensely, or did any woman ever expend such a wealth of love as he hath bestowed on us in stooping from the highest heavens to the lowest depths of misery and shame, and even to the grave itself, that he might lift us up to sit for ever with him on his throne? O heart! heart! heart! thou oughtest to be smitten till thou didst break into a thousand fragments if thou dost not love the Well-beloved! What art thou at, cold soul, lukewarm soul, that thou dost not burn and glow with such good matter as this when thou art speaking of the things which concern the King I Come, beloved, let us love our Lord, or die. If we really are Christians, our hearts would sooner cease to beat than cease to love our blessed Savior.

Thus much, but all too poorly said, upon the truth in our first text, great love desires to bind itself to the beloved one.

II. Now, secondly, we learn from our second text that Great Love Desires Renewed Pledges From Its Object: "Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul."

It was not out of distrust, but by reason of a sort of sacred jealousy, that "Jonathan caused David to swear again." He did not fear that his friend would prove untrue, but he' wanted to have every possible' confirmation that he could of the covenant of love which they had made with one another. And, believing soul, though Christ does not distrust thee, he knows what is in thee, and he is jealous of thee. Our Savior is as jealous of us as his Father is; the immeasurable greatness of the love of Jesus Christ to us moves him to feel an infinite jealousy of us. He loves us so much that he will have all our love; and, if you are really his beloved ones, he will adopt ways and means of extracting from you the last particle of your love, that he may have it all for himself. As Rutherford said to a noble lady, who had lost a number of children, one after the other, "The Lord Jesus loves you so much that he will not let one drop of your love go in any other direction than towards himself." And though he' may not deal in that way with us, by taking away our friends and kindred, yet I am sure that, where he loves us much, he will have the whole of our love. He cannot bear that our heart should be divided, or in any measure taken off from him; so, again, and again, and again, he causes us to renew our vows and our covenant with him. So would he have us again renew our love to him.

Further, this is the only return we can make for his love. Your little children, on your knee, cost you much care and anxiety; and when they kiss you, and fondle you, and tell you how much they love you, they may we'll do so, for that is all they can do. They cannot help you in your daily toil, or bear any share of your heavy burdens; and, in like manner, all that we can do for Christ is to love him. Alas! that we do so little of that. I fear that, sometimes, we are more ready to preach, or teach, or give away tracts, or do something in the way of active service for Christ; but, after all, the acceptableness of these things is to be measured by the love to our Lord that is in them. To love him is the chief thing; it is our love that Christ longs for above everything else. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind." This is the first and greatest commandment of all, and therefore does our Savior wish us again and again to renew our vows of love to him.

Besides, it is for our highest benefit that we should do this. Our love is often so feeble and cold that it needs to be stirred up again. The fire in our heart so continually burns low that we need constantly to have the flame fanned, and fresh fuel put on, that we may love our Lord more and more.

And chilly as we are in ourselves, we are often tempted and allured by other loves, and are apt to lend a listening ear to the charmer's fascinating voice. You know that it is so, beloved; we are not true to our Lord as we ought to be, and therefore does he ask us again, and again, and yet again, "Lovest thou me? Lovest thou me? Lovest thou me?" And if we are grieved that, a third time, he puts to us the question, "Lovest thou me!" we ought to remember that we have grieved him many more than three times, and it is our unfaithfulness to him that lays upon him the necessity of putting this enquiry to us so often.

It is also for our benefit that we should often renew our pledges of love to our Lord, because we cannot be happy unless we are wholly taken up with love to him. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," said Solomon; and we may well say the same. There is nothing upon earth that can give solid satisfaction to a Christian apart from Christ. You may make him rich, you may lavish upon him all conceivable delights; but these things will all mock him, like the mirage of the desert, unless his heart is right with Christ, and is filled with the love of Jesus, and the sunlight of the divine presence is there. I am sure that it is so. You unconverted people may be happy enough in your way, without Christ; but a true-born child of God cannot have any bliss apart from his Lord. If you mean to be a Christian, you must recollect there remains but one source of true delight to you, but that one source of delight contains more than all other springs of joy put together. If you do but drink of it, you shall be more than satisfied; but if you turn aside from that fountain of living waters, your soul must thirst and faint. It is God's decree that you shall mourn until you come back to the Beloved, and yet again swear allegiance unto him, for he will have you do it because he loves you as he loves his own soul. I wish that all of us, who do love the Lord, would at once renew our covenant with him. It may help us to do so if I remind you of the past times when we have given ourselves up to him. I recollect well the first surrender of my soul to my Savior; do not you remember the like hallowed season? Turn over the leaves of your diary till you come to the record of it. "On such a day, I was born again. On such a day, I was married to Christ. My heart was wholly given to him, and I rejoiced in him." Recollect that solemn surrender; and, as you recall it, say over again, as you said then,-

"Here, Lord, I give myself away;

'Tis all that I can do."

Do you recollect your baptism;-you who were, in Scriptural fashion, buried with Christ in baptism? I recollect mine. What did I mean by it? I meant that, as I gave up my body to be temporarily buried in the river,-as the water rolled over me, and I was as one dead and buried, so did I declare that I was dead to sin, dead to the world, and buried to it all;-and I also meant that, as I rose again from the stream, so would I live for Christ alone, in newness of life, as one who had been dead, and buried, and had risen again. To me, that was the most solemn day of my life. I recollect rising early; at break of day, that I might have some hours of prayer before starting, for I had some miles to walk along a country road, and all the way I was thinking of the public dedication of myself to my Master. I meant that to be my funeral day to all except himself and the day of my resurrection with him; and I hope it was, and also hope it was the same with you. If so, I pray you, do not belie your baptism. I charge you, who have been buried with Christ, that you bear in your body the marks of the Lord Jesus, not in one place only, as was the fashion under the old law,-but in your entire body, that you may be wholly Christ's, completely Christ's, henceforth and for ever.

Since that time of our baptism, how often have we renewed our vows of love to our Lord as we have come to his table! We have partaken of the bread and the wine as the memorials of his love to us; and I think that, there, we have often given ourselves up to him again. Do so again, beloved, as you come presently to the communion; come as if you were coming for the first time. Say, "My Savior, I take thee unto myself, to be my life, and the food of my life; and I will, by thy grace, live to thee and to thee alone."

Some of us have a further reason for renewing our vows of love to our Lord, because we have lately risen from a sickbed. Shall not the life that has been prolonged be wholly the Lord's? If he has taken away from us the heavy burden of terrible pain,-the iron yoke of deep depression of spirit,-do we not feel bound to yield ourselves up to him as though we were beginning our Christian life over again? And I think that others of you, who have not been in pain, and have not been depressed in spirit, ought to feel as though, because of God's great mercy to you in keeping you out of such trials, you should yield yourselves anew to him.

Some of you may have reached another anniversary of your birthday, or you may have come to some other period of your life that is memorable; perhaps you have taken a new business, or have gone to live in another house;-well, I hardly like to think of going into a new house, or even sleeping in another room, without once more saying, "Come here with me, my Lord. I am thine, wherever I am, on land or sea, in this country or in a foreign land; I am eternally joined to thee, and thy servant would I be at all times." It would not be amiss to renew your covenant with your Lord every morning when the day breaks, and to renew it yet again every night as you fall asleep; for, oh! it is most helpful to the spirit to ' be often coming to Christ,-to be constantly committing your soul into his dear hands.

I am sure that Christ is pleased with you when you do this, for he loves you as he loves his own soul. He is never tired of hearing you tell him how much you love him; you never continue speaking on that theme so long as to weary him by your confession of love to him. You never praise him until he is tired of your song. You never implore his mercy till he is weary of your prayers. That can never happen; and when you come, and bring yourself,-poor, poor self, as it is,-to Christ, he never disdains your love. A little child delights to caress its mother, and as the mother is never happier than when she is receiving the child's love, so, believe me, it is with Christ. Yet some of you seem to think that he does not want your affection; or you fancy that it does not signify how you express' your love,-that a few hurried words of prayer will suffice, or a dull, formal hymn of praise; but it is not so. Do you not want to make him happy? My brother, in his prayer, thanked God that it was possible for us to add even to the bliss of Christ in heaven, and it is so. The shepherd rejoices when he finds the sheep that was lost, but does his joy end when he finds it? Oh, no! The father had great joy when the prodigal returned, but did his joy end when his boy came home? Oh, no! Christ is always glad of converse and communion with his beloved ones, so give him much of it. Say to him some times,-

"With thee all night I mean to stay,

And wrestle till the break of day."

And sometimes, hour by hour, do nothing but commune with him. Yea, always, when about your business, or whatever else you have to do, abide in him, for he would have you so to do.

In closing, I would earnestly urge those who love the Master to take frequent opportunities of getting alone with their Beloved, that they may express their love to him. Do you often do that, dear friends? To my mind, that is one of the choicest forms of devotion,- just to tell the Savior how you love him,-to sit down, or kneel, or stand, or walk, and say, "My gracious Lord, I do love thee; teach me to love thee more." Tell him why you love him; rehearse his deeds of grace towards you. Keep on at that theme till your heart burns within you with a vehement flame of love to your Lord.

Another acceptable thing to do is, every now and then, to do something specially for Christ himself or to give something directly to Christ himself,-as directly as it can be done. As the woman washed his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the flowing tresses of her head, and kissed them unceasingly, and anointed them with the precious ointment, so do you something to him. Some will think it wasteful to break the alabaster box, and to anoint him thus; but do it, whatever they may say. There is nothing too precious to be lavished upon Christ. Possibly, you can find out some poor saint to whom you will do some great deed of love because you are doing it for Christ. Or you may know of some part of the work of Christ that needs help that will cost you much self-denial to render. Do it, but tell nobody about it; never let your name be seen in the matter, but do it unto him. If you do really love him, and he is All-in-all to you, you will not need any urging to do this. When we are in love, we need no one to urge us to give tokens and pledges of love; it is a joy to us to do anything that will give pleasure to our beloved. It is no misery to the tree to produce its luscious fruit, and it is no severe task to a Christian to perform deeds of love to Christ, so I will not urge you to it, but leave the matter with you, and with the Well-beloved of your souls.

But what shall I say to those who do not love Christ? Do not love Christ! O ye blind, ye dead, ye foolish ones! The Lord have mercy on you! If he does not, remember that this is the text that belongs to you, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha,"-"let him be accursed, for the Lord cometh." And every godly soul must say "Amen" even to that dreadful sentence, for he who loves not the blessed Lord must be accursed. God save you all from that terrible doom, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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1 Samuel 21:9 Craving the Best Things

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“And David said, There is none like that; give it me.”— 1 Samuel 21:9.

Perhaps you remember the circumstances under which these words were spoken. David had been warned by Jonathan that Saul sought his life, and therefore he left the court in a hurry, and fled. He appears to have gone in such haste that he did not take proper provision with him, and he did not even take his sword. Coming to Nob, where the priest dwelt, he received the sacred bread which had been offered to God as the shewbread, and he and the men with him ate thereof. And when he asked Ahimelech if he could furnish him with a weapon, he said there was no sword there save one, “the sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom thou slewest in the valley of Elah, behold, it is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod: if thou wilt take that, take it: for there is no other save that here.” And David said, “There is none like that; give it me.”

I am not going to spiritualize my text. I want to do nothing unfair. Let me use it as a motto. You will all allow that apt words may be employed at sundry times, and in divers manners. I will simply say that, as a general principle, the conviction of excellence leads us to desire possession. “There is none like that,” is the conviction of excellence; “give, it me,” there is the desire so possess. I shall illustrate this truth in spiritual things upon some six or seven matters.

I. Speak ye of “the sword of the Spirit, which is The Word Of God,” and ye may well say, “there is none like that.”

It is incomparable in its authorship. We are persuaded that he who inspired the Scriptures is none other than he who made the heavens and the earth, the God that cannot lie. All other books are but human at the best; let the authors be never so refined, they cannot pretend to write as God writeth. “There is none like that” for authorship.

Nor is there any like it for style. You may read the Word of God through a hundred times, but you will like it best the hundredth time, for its stores are inexhaustible, and its variety is charming. The style of any one man wearies you with its monotony till you want a change but the spiritual mind never was, and never could be, wearied with the style of the Scriptures. It is sometimes simple, at other times majestic; here you have mystery profound, and there the homeliest proverbs. It is all through, however, so full of holiness, and of divinity, that there is none like it for style.

And certainly there is none like it for matter. What other book contains such a revelation as this concerning Christ, God, time, life, death, eternity, heaven, hell? There is more matter, often, in a single page of Scripture than there is in a whole volume of human writing. And that matter is so true, so necessary for us to know, and withal so comfortable, so rich, so blessed, that when we have searched the Word, and gained a knowledge of God’s testimonies, we can say with regard to the matter of it, “There is none like that.”

As for the effect of God’s Word in quickening the soul, in fetching back the wanderer, in giving peace to the troubled conscience, in cheering the Christian, in anchoring his spirit in time of storm “there is none like that.” Whether you consider the Author, the style, the matter, or the effect, in all points the Word of God stands first and foremost.

The conclusion, therefore, that I draw is, “Give it me.” Oh, give it me that I may read it constantly night and day! Give it me, that I may understand it, prying into its secrets! Give it me! O Holy Spirit, re-write thy Book upon the fleshy tablets of my heart! Give it me, that I may call it mine, grasping it with the hand of faith! Give it me, that I may feed upon it with the lips of love, that I may receive it into my experience! Give it me, that I may carry it out with faith in the actions of my life! There are some who are bent on taking away the Word of God. Well, if they discard it, “Give it to me.” There are some who want to put it up on the self, as a thing that has seen its best days. They suppose the old sword is rusty, and worn out, but we can say, “There is none like that; give it me!”

II. I shall have no time to enlarge upon this subject, so must give you much in little. Therefore I pass on to another instance of the conviction of excellence with regard to The Salvation Which Is Provided In Christ Jesus.

All of you who are acquainted with the salvation that is in Christ will confess that “there is none like that.” Beginning with that which always must lie at the root of all gospel, the precious blood of Jesus, where can there be found anything like that? The blood of the Son of God, shed in so remarkable a manner, with sufferings so extraordinary, having about it a voice so loud, which “speaketh better things than that of Abel;” the blood which, when sprinkled upon us, enables us boldly to enter into that which is within the veil; the blood which, when sprinkled upon our door posts, preserves us from the destroying angel; the blood in which, if we be washed, it leaves us whiter than snow, so that “neither spot nor wrinkle” can remain on those who have received the atonement of our Lord;—there is no blood like that. Search the world round, and you will find that there is no truth so consolatory as the truth of the substitution of Christ, and his suffering, “the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.”

Then, as for his righteousness; which is as much concerned in our salvation as his blood, "there is none like that." The righteousness of Adam in the garden, with all its perfection, was still liable to come to an end, but the righteousness of Christ can never be altered. The former was only human righteousness at the best, but ours is divine righteousness, "the Lord our righteousness;" Jehovah-Tsidkenu. Oh, the beauties of that! Saints in heaven sparkle like the sun when they put on this glorious array. Not Christ himself on Tabor's mountain shone more lustroously than will poor sinners shine when they are covered with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. "There is none like that."

And then, where the blood of Christ has washed, and where the righteousness of Christ is imputed, there comes as a matter of necessity, "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding." Those who are in the enjoyment of this peace, will tell you that "there is none like that." The peace which comes from carelessness is without foundation; the peace that comes from ceremonies soon departs in the day of trouble; the peace that rests upon self-righteousness is based upon the sand; but the peace that rests upon the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ will outlast all time, endure the shock of trouble, and land us in heaven to enjoy peace for ever.

Sometimes this peace breaks forth into joy; and I may say especially of the joy of new converts, "there is none like that." If you ever walk down the streets of Mansoul on the day when the King Emmanuel is coming out you will see the banners waving from every window, and the bells in every steeple making the spires to rock, you will see the people with gladness in their faces wearing "beauty for ashes, and the oil of joy for mourning," and then will you say, as you hear them, clap their hands and shout together, "The King is coming," "There is no joy like that." But always in "the love of our espousals," we thank God that we do find it joyous. There is no joy out of heaven that is like the joy of pardoned sin, the joy of finding Christ, the joy of having our feet upon a rock. Then, do you not say directly, "Give it me"? Some of you have got it, and I know your prayer is still, "Give it me, give it me to know more of it; give it me to enjoy it more; give it me every day; let me have it like the manna from heaven every morning, give it me in all its fullness. Lord, there is none like that, give it me!" And are there not some of you who have never had it? Do you not agree with me that, to be covered with Christ's perfect righteousness, to have peace with God, and to rejoice in our Lord Jesus Christ, is a most precious thing? Do you not say, "Now, give it me"? Well, then whisper it in the Master's ear; say to him, "Lord, give it me; here is an empty hand waiting for it, fill it. Here am I, Lord, sinful and black; but thou hast precious blood; give it me, and make me white. I am naked, I have nothing to cover myself with; but thou hast a perfect robe, give it me. Cover me with it. Here I am, Lord, heavy-laden, bowed down with grief; but thou hast peace to give; Lord, give it me. Here is my heavy heart, like a broken lily, withered and dying; Lord, thou canst freshen it up, and give me joy instead of sorrow; Lord, give it me!" You see, this is not a prayer for a number of people. It is a personal prayer for each one to pray, and I hope each one of you will pray it now.

III. But we must past on to a third illustration of the principle of the conviction of excellence which leads us to desire to possess. The third illustration shall be found in Unstaggering Faith.

Those of you who have ever enjoyed this will know that there is nothing like it in all the world. For, first, unstaggering faith grasps the promises. Ah, how often have I wished I could do so! I have seen some Christians taking hold of God's Word just as they found it, being, as the saying is, "as happy as the birds in the air," and never troubled about its providential arrangements. Now, unstaggering faith, when it gets a promise, treats it as a winepresser does the grape, when he treads upon it till the sweet juice comes forth.

This mighty faith, when it comes to prayer, takes a promise with it, and makes a step in advance; it gets the petition which it desires. Unstaggering faith comes down from the closet crying, like Luther, "Vici, vici; I have overcome, I have conquered!" God grants the desire of unstaggering faith. It delights itself in the Lord, so the Lord grants it the desire of its heart. There is nothing like faith to pray with; it handles the promise in a masterly manner, and gets its desire.

The consequence is, that unstaggering faith, in daily life, practically removes every difficulty. "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." Where Little-faith is stumbling over every straw, Great-faith is not afraid to go through the river, since Christ is with it, nor afraid to climb the mountain, since God beats the mountain as small as chaff when faith uses the flail.

And, certainly, as difficulties are removed, this unstaggering faith preserves a perpetual serenity. Let —

"Earth be all in arms abroad,

Faith dwells in perfect peace."

It leans upon its God, with a sense of his unfailing goodness when the desert around is dry, while the parched souls that lean upon an arm of flesh become like the heath of the wilderness.

I think, if I had mentioned only these four things concerning unstaggering faith, you would say, "There is none like that." It grasps promises, wins positions, overcomes difficulties, and lives in perpetual peace. What then? Why, "give it me." O Little-faith, do you not say, "Give it me"? Perhaps you have been in Giant Despair's castle, and you have thought he would surely devour you; but; if you could get hold of this Goliath's sword, you might soon have the giant's head in your hand. If you keep better company, if your spiritual lungs take in more of the air of heaven, there is no reason why that little trembling faith of yours should not grow into strong faith; for the promise is as true to you as to any other. You are as much a child of God as any other. God is as willing to answer your prayer as the prayer of any of his people. He is as true to you as he is to others. He "waiteth to be gracious." I hope, before you go home you will say of this strong faith, "There is none like that; give it me."

IV. The fourth thing is one which I think equally as precious as any I have spoken of, and that is, A Life Of Near And Dear Communion With Christ.

There may not be many here who have enjoyed it, for it is not given to all God's people to live in this center of true religion. The higher life is neither known nor possessed by all the saints, but those who do know and possess it will tell you that "there is none like that." A man who gets into close communion with Christ is sure that his soul is saved. He does not sing, —

"'Tis a point I long to know."

He used to sing that once, but now he knows better. He knows he is beyond that, and now he can sing, —

"Now rest, my long-divided heart;

Fix'd on this blissful center, rest."

He no longer has to question whether he has repented or whether he has believed. He has brought forth "fruits meet for repentance," and his belief is proved by his works. He has attained to the full assurance, not of hope, though that is a good thing, nor of belief, though that is also a good thing;—but the full assurance of understanding, and there he stands, enjoying the confidence of his union with Christ.

Next to this assurance of his soul's safety, there comes the enjoyment of Christ's love. He not only knows that Christ loves him, but he feels it. The love of God is not now like "precious ointment" within the case, but it is "shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost." It is like the ointment from Mary's alabaster-box when it was broken. He can feel the love of God in his heart. He has no more doubt now of the love of God to him than of his own love for his child. As times, it seems to weave itself into his very consciousness, and he can say, "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love." He has tasted, and known, and felt the dearest communion of the Savior's love, and he can truly say, "There is none like that."

Some of you have, — perhaps, read the life of Madame Guyon, and have said, "Ah, there is none like that." You may have read the spiritual letters of Rutherford, and said, "There is no life like that;" or the works of George Herbert, and felt inclined to say, "There is no spirit like that; give it me."

Your spirit has often said, "Give it me." Oh, that I might get it! I would rather lie sick upon a bed of pain from now till my Master's appearance than be employed in the preaching of God's Word if I cannot have my Master's presence with me. I can hardly look upon some hours that I have spent upon earth as being a part of my mortal life at all. They seem to have been fragments of my immortal existence, droppings up of the new life, little pieces of heaven, stray notes from angelic harps, suffered to wander here below as earnest of the "rest which remaineth for the people of God." Let us each one pray, "Savior, give it me. There is none like that; give it me."

V. But I must pass on.

The bee is in a field that has many flowers in bloom, and must fly from one to another. The Possession Of Spiritual Power-The Power And Indwelling Of The Holy Ghost-is another most precious thing, concerning which, I trust, we have a conviction of excellence which will lead us to desire its possession.

Do you know persons who possess this spiritual power? If you do not, I will tell you where you will observe it. There is a secret, mysterious power about their private lives; not that they expose their private lives to observation, for they have a hidden life which they know cannot be seen, and which they desire to be hid with their Master. Still, in their families, in their most private actions, there is a shadow which you can see; and, if that shadow, like the shadow of Peter, has healing influence about it when it falls upon

you, you must observe it, and wish your influence were at all like to it. You perceive by it that they have "been with Jesus," and have learnt of him.

This power shows itself in their public work. They may be preachers, and if God has given them spiritual power, their ministry is very fruitful in conversions, and generally blessed in edification. When you listen to them as they speak upon a point of doctrine, you feel that they are dealing with a thing which they have handled, and tasted, and felt. They have seen the evidence of these things in the Holy Word, and they speak what they do know, and testify what they have seen. If they happen to be Sunday-school teachers, if they happen to be missionaries, or whatever is their occupation, you see that, whilst others are using little hammers, tapping the nail on the head, and failing to drive it home, these have energy and might, and drive the nail home almost with a single stroke, and clinch it at the second. While others are talking of what they would like to do, these men do the thing. God is with them. They are "workers together with God," and you can see the result of their work, because there is power—such power as God gave to the apostles at Jerusalem—resting upon them.

This power often shows itself in a church. I want to get you to pray for a public blessing, for a whole church may get this spiritual power. Look at the prayer-meetings, how well they are attended, look at the various societies, how earnestly they are conducted; how the young men and women are seeking to bring in others; how the matrons are mothers in Israel; how the old men are fathers in Christ. Oh, it is a blessed thing when a whole church gets alive! One may blow the coals so well that they may touch a prophet's lips, but a whole mass of coals together, what a conflagration of divine grace may this cause throughout the world! Oh, that all our churches had power from on high! Then would come revival seasons, true revivals, when everything would be full of holy joy and vigor, and the kingdom of Christ would grow, and his arm be revealed. You are sure to see the effect of this power in the church in the blessing of the world, for the church that is revived soon tells upon the neighborhood. If there is a great fire, you may see the blaze of it a long way off; and so, if there be a fire in the Church of God, the blaze of it must be seen by the world! You bless the neighborhood where you are blessed in yourselves. With regard to this spiritual power "there is none like that." We may preach new doctrines, or use fine music, or try to build our edifices so as to make them attractive; but, oh, when we come to spiritual power, "there is none like that." I think I can hear all the members of this church and members of other churches who are here, say, "Give it us. Lord, do give it us now." I am persuaded that we might exercise this power more, but we sometimes think that this sword of Goliath is laid up before the Lord, and is never to be used, that this shaking of the dry bones, this fire from heaven running along upon the ground, is a thing to be read about and dreamt of, but not to be possessed and seen. O God, show that thou hast not changed thine ancient prowess! O arm of the Lord, be thou made bare again! Let this be our constant prayer, "There is none like that; give it me."

VI. I want to speak so as to touch some who are not yet converted, and I think I must use another illustration of the principle which leads wise men to desire possession, namely, The Privilege Of The Christian.

Every Christian who possesses this privilege will tell you that there is nothing like it in all the world. What is a Christian? Well, first, he is a son of God, an heir of heaven, a prince of the blood imperial, one of God's aristocrats, soaring right above the common level. He is as much above other men as other men are above brutes. He is a man of a new race; he does not belong to this world; he is an alien, a stranger here; his citizenship is in heaven; he can look up to God, and say, "My Father." The Spirit of adoption is in his heart.

The Christian knows that he is "accepted in the Beloved;" he knows that, whatever he does that is right, God accepts through Jesus Christ; that his prayers are accepted, that his vows are accepted, that his good works are accepted, that his very sighs, and groans, and tears, and wishes, and heart-broken desires, are all accepted. God accepts them all as men accept love-tokens from dear friends. He takes our poor withered forget-me-nots, and treasures them up. We are accepted, altogether accepted, in the Beloved.

The Christian is a man who is quite secure. There is no fear of his ever sinking into hell. A jewel of the Redeemer's crown shall never be cast unto the swine, that they may tread it under foot. Christ's blood-bought one is safe for ever. Therefore he is not afraid. He believes that he has entered into the heavens with Christ and taken his seat at the right hand of Christ, his covenant Head, with whom he is in personal union. There is no life in the world like a Christian's; there is no standing like his; there is no position like his. There is no person in the world that you can imagine who has such a life as his, watched over by angels, provided for by the bounty, and guarded by the omnipotence of heaven, what more can he want? "There is none like that."

And now, sinner, does not thy heart say, "Give it me. Let me be treated as thou treatest the rest of the family. Do unto me as thou usest to do unto them that fear thy name"? There is a gate to God's heart, and that gate is not shut; and by the way we came into that heart, dear sinner, thou mayest also come in. "I am the Way," saith Christ. If thou lookest to him bleeding, suffering, bearing the guilt of man, thou art accepted; for looking to Jesus is a token of thy being "accepted in the Beloved." But never be satisfied with merely knowing what is the privilege of a Christian, try to get it. "There is none like that; give it me."

VII. Only once more on this point. Mark The Christian's Hope, and may we not justly say, "There is none like that"?

What is the Christian hoping for? He is hoping for the Lord's coming. He is hoping that the Master will reign upon the earth right gloriously. And sometimes he thinks that perhaps he may never see death, for he knows that there are those who will remain on the earth at the coming of the Lord, and who shall not fall asleep. But if he anticipates death, yet he has a good hope that they also who sleep in Jesus will the Lord bring with him. His hope is that his disembodied spirit will see the Savior before his body shall rise from the dead, and that in the intermediate state between now and the resurrection his soul will be in paradise. As to his body, he has a hope that the Judge will come, and the trumpet sound, and he even says within himself, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." He has a hope of return for his soul, and of resurrection for his body; and after death and after resurrection comes the judgment. But he has a good hope even concerning that, for he hopes to hear the Master say, "Come, ye blessed!" He hopes to stand at the right hand of the Judge, and to sit with Christ upon his throne, to dwell for ever with the Lord; and his soul often sings,

"Amen, so let it be,

Life from the dead is in that word,

'Tis immortality."

And I know that every one, saint, or sinner, even though he be as base as the wicked prophet Balaam, will say, "There is none like that; give it me." But you cannot die the death of the righteous unless you live the life of the righteous. Nor must you expect your last end to be like his unless you begin where he began, -with Christ. I would to God we had half as much desire for this best of all things as we have for the things of this world. If there was an advertisement in the newspapers, saying that there were guineas to be given away at a certain chapel to-morrow morning, what a crowd we should have; but now, when information has been spread abroad that salvation is to be had, though it is admitted on all hands "that there is none like that," yet how few say, "Give it me; give it me!" But oh! if you do say so from the heart, you shall hear God's answer, "I have given it; take it, and go thy way!"

And now, dear friends, will you follow, me a little further while I point out that as the conviction of excellence leads us to desire possession, so Special Seasons Intensify This Desire?

David particularly wished for Goliath's sword, on this occasion, because he had not got any other. He was quite willing to take this sword because the priest very significantly said, "There is no other save that here." Therefore David was the more ready to appreciate the excellence of the sword because it was the only one there was, and to say at once, since he, needed it so greatly, "Give it me."

In times of conviction of sin, in times, too, of a sense of ignorance, a man says of God's Word, "Give it me." As long as you think you are very wise, you will do without this Book. When you begin to be wise, and find out that you are a fool, then you will say, "There is none like that; give it me." You will be satisfied with other men's books till you find out that they are false; and when you have found that out, you will turn with love towards this volume, and say of this gospel truth, "There is none like that; give it me." In times of conviction of sin, you will feel regard for the revelation of Jesus Christ. That man who does not value Christ can never know his own condition. I say, sirs, if God would strip you; if he would lay the terror of the law upon you, if he would tie you up to the halberts, and beat you with the ten-thonged whip of the law, and seell schub you with the brine of conviction of sin, and make your flesh tingle with anguish, cast you into prison, and break your back with Giant Despair's crab-tree cudgel, it would bring you to know your own condition and you would say, "There is none like that." A naked man prizes a good suit of clothes, and a hungry man hath a keen appetite for a good feast; and so, when a soul gets a sense of sin, oh, how he prizes the Savior! He then says, "Christ, for me;" "there is none like that; O God, give it me!"

In times of trial, too, the Christian knows the value of the faith of which I spoke to you. A man without trials may live without faith; with a good fixed income coming in, a prosperous business, the children all healthy, and everything going on as you could wish it, you can put faith by in its scabbard, and let it rust a bit. But when business declines, a child dies, you yourself are sickly, troubles gather around your head, and you know not whither you yourself may soon have to fly, you say, "Ah, now I must seize faith." You are glad of your umbrella when it rains, and times of trial make us cling to our faith.

If ever you get into spiritual darkness, dear friends, it is then that you begin to prize communion with Christ. When the Lord hides his face from you, then, like the spouse, you begin to seek him through the streets, and to say, "My Beloved, where is he?" While in the enjoyment of Christ's presence, you grow secure, and when he comes knocking at the door, you say, "I have put off my clothes," and you let him stand outside till his locks are wet with dew; but when your Beloved withdraws himself, and goes away, then you

seek him, beating your bosom, and crying, "Oh that I knew where I might find him!" Ah saints! if we once get into the darkness, then we know the value of the Sun of righteousness; and when the night is dreary and grim, it is then that the Star of Bethlehem becomes "our life, our light, our all," and "conducts us to the port of peace."

I think it is also in the times of labor that the Christian knows the value of spiritual power. If he has much to do, and but little strength to do it with; if he does not see success attending his efforts, then he begins to cry out for the power he sees in others. "O Master," he says, "I have been sowing seed, but it never comes up," and then it is that he cries for spiritual power. He then seems to have Baxter's disease, and would like to have Baxter's power, and he would take Calvin's seventy sicknesses at once if he might have Calvin's seventy times powerful heart. He feels that he would give up all pleasures if he might but be endowed with spiritual energy. "There is nothing like that," says he; "give it me."

And it is also in times when the soul is impressed as to the vanity of mortal things, that it rejoices in Christian privileges; and those times are growing with some of us. I am young compared with many of you, but I feel old to what I was a little while ago. I have a sense of death about me every day. I do not think there have been five minutes during the past year that I have been without a sense of mortality, then I have begun to look at everybody who goes by as a wonder that he is alive, and to look upon all the world as not being worth anybody's caring for. I would not live here always. I have a strong appetite for heaven, and I think many of God's saints, as they grow in age, find it so. They care less and less for this world because they recognize that there is nothing here worth caring for. At such a time, I am sure you can say of Christian privileges, adoption, acceptance, and union with Christ, "There are none like these; give them to me." There, dogs, you may have the world if you like, and snarl over that marrowless bone; but as for me, give me Christ; give me to know true union with the Lord Jesus Christ. "There is none like that; give it me." I rejoice more in the Lord my God than in all the corn, and wine, and oil, which make the rich so glad, and the proud so happy. There is nothing like spiritual privilege; give it me.

It is also in the time of death, or sickness supposed to be fatal, that we begin to see the value of the Christian's hope, and to say,

—
"When the death-dew lies cold on my brow,

If ever I loved thee, my Jesus, 'tis now!"

You cannot look forward to dying in itself without a shiver. Death is not, and never can be, congenial to our nature. We are —

"Fond of our prison and our clay."

I have heard of one of whom a minister said, "She died full of life." That is the way to die, full of life and immortality; having so much of life that it swallows up death. "Death is swallowed up in victory." One of our grand old Puritan divines, when he was close upon dying, was busy working at his book, and his friends said, "You are dying," and advised him to rest; but he said, "No, I will not slip to bed to die; I will die in my chair;" and he sat up and sang to the last. Haliburton seemed to be anticipating the time of his death when he exclaimed, "Have at thee, death, have at thee! I have no fear of thee!" It is then when we shall feel, concerning the Christian's hope, "There is none like that; give it me."

Well, dear friends, many of you endorse the prayer, "Give it me;" but some of you start, the question, "Shall we get it?" Let me, therefore, put before you a few of the many Encouragements That Support Us In The Belief That The Desire Will Be Granted.

Why is it that we believe our desire will be granted? Let every Christian and every unconverted person who is seeking the Lord listen to these few remarks. Other saints have received that which you are desiring. They have received salvation, strong faith, communion with Christ, and spiritual power. When another receives those blessings, that should so an argument and encouragement for you to press your suit. A man who never gives anything is the worst person in the world to beg of, but he who has given in the past will probably continue to give. There is no heart so generous as the heart that has already given; it will still give. God has blessed millions of others, -hosts beyond all counting, then why should he not bless you? Lord, thou gavest to others, give to me also.

Evidently, the gifts we are seeking are supplied in the covenant of grace. There is provision made of all the matters I have been talking about. It pleased the Father that in Christ should all fullness dwell; so that there are in Christ, not only the common gifts, but the special gifts of which I spake just now, and they are all in him in full measure; then why should they not be given to you?

Since they are all provided, doubtless they are not provided in vain. It is just what common sense would teach us, if a man provided a large quantity of soup in his kitchen, anybody would imagine he intended to give it away; and if a lady, like Dorcas, was busy making a large number of garments, you would at once infer that she did not want them for herself, but intended to give them away. Now, since there is a provision made of all these good and precious things of which I have spoken, it is to be concluded that they were made to be given to those who need them. Surely, when I pray, "Give it me," he will give it me, for he has provided it in

order to give it. He has made a fountain, and water in the fountain, what is it for? The light that is in the sun is not there for the sun's sake, but for somebody's use. And so, the treasures hid in Christ must be there for those who need them. They must be there for you and me. There is provision made for as many as will receive it.

Then it is for God's glory to give me what I ask. If I am a sinner, it is God's glory to forgive my sins.

“This is his great prerogative.”

If he gives us great faith, therefore, he will get the glory of it. It is God's glory to make us live near to Christ. “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.” Do you not think that he will give you these great blessings? His actions, ever since he first revealed himself to man, have always been for his own glory, and surely you have a mighty argument to encourage your confidence in this fact that, to bless you with this wondrous blessing, will be to his glory.

Then, again, he has promised to do this, and that is the best of all encouragements. “Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.” “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” “The desire of the righteous shall be granted.” Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.”

And as for you, sinner, he has told you to come to him. I spoke of rest just now as being enjoyed by those who find him, He says, “Come unto me, and I will give you rest.” Whatever it is that your soul desireth, is there not a promise for it? And if there be, there is a faithful God at the back of every promise who will make that promise good.

But we have even more than that. We have a living Savior to plead the promise on our behalf. “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” We have the promise of God, and then we have the plea of Christ to make that promise effective. I remind you believers who are asking for more grace, and you sinners who are asking for pardon, that God has made a great supply, and that supply must be intended to be used; it is to God's glory that it should be used. He gives a promise that he will hear your prayer; Jesus Christ stands up to plead that promise; “let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” “There is none like that, give it me.” Give it me now! Give it me now, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

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DEVOTIONALS

C H Spurgeon

Morning and Evening

Faith's Checkbook

1 Samuel 1:27 (Morning and evening)

“For this child I prayed.” — 1 Samuel 1:27

Devout souls delight to look upon those mercies which they have obtained in answer to supplication, for they can see God's especial love in them. When we can name our blessings Samuel, that is, “asked of God,” they will be as dear to us as her child was to Hannah. Peninnah had many children, but they came as common blessings unsought in prayer: Hannah's one heaven-given child was dearer far, because he was the fruit of earnest pleadings. How sweet was that water to Samson which he found at “the well of him that prayed!” Quassia cups turn all waters bitter, but the cup of prayer puts a sweetness into the draughts it brings. Did we pray for the conversion of our children? How doubly sweet, when they are saved, to see in them our own petitions fulfilled! Better to rejoice over them as the fruit of our pleadings than as the fruit of our bodies. Have we sought of the Lord some choice spiritual gift? When it comes to us it will be wrapped up in the gold cloth of God's faithfulness and truth, and so be doubly precious. Have we petitioned for success in the Lord's work? How joyful is the prosperity which comes flying upon the wings of prayer! It is always best to get blessings into our house in the legitimate way, by the door of prayer; then they are blessings indeed, and not temptations. Even when prayer speeds not, the blessings grow all the richer for the delay; the child Jesus was all the more lovely in the eyes of Mary when she found him after having sought him sorrowing. That which we win by prayer we should dedicate to God, as Hannah dedicated Samuel. The gift came from heaven, let it go to heaven. Prayer brought it, gratitude sang over it, let devotion consecrate it. Here will be a special occasion for saying, “Of thine own have I given unto thee.” Reader, is prayer your element or your weariness? Which?

1 Samuel 2:7 (Faith's Checkbook)

He Lowers to Raise

"The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up." 1 Samuel 2:7

ALL my changes come from Him who never changes. If I had grown rich, I should have seen His hand in it, and I should have praised Him; let me equally see His hand if I am made poor, and let me as heartily praise Him. When we go down in the world, it is of the Lord, and so we may take it patiently: when we rise in the world, it is of the Lord, and we may accept it thankfully. In any case, the Lord hath done it, and it is well.

It seems that Jehovah's way is to lower those whom He means to raise, and to strip those whom He intends to clothe. If it is His way, it is the wisest and best way. If I am now enduring the bringing low, I may well rejoice because I see in it the preface to the lifting up. The more we are humbled by grace, the more we shall be exalted in glory. That impoverishment which will be overruled for our enrichment is to be welcomed.

O Lord, thou has taken me down of late and made me feel my insignificance and sin. It is not a pleasant experience, but I pray thee make it a profitable one to me. Oh, that thou wouldst thus fit me to bear a greater weight of delight and of usefulness; and when I am ready for it, then grant it to me, for Christ's sake! Amen.

1 Samuel 2:9 (Faith's Checkbook)

Care of Our Feet

"He will keep the feet of his saints." 1 Samuel 2:9

THE way is slippery, and our feet are feeble, but the Lord will keep our feet. If we give ourselves up by obedient faith to be His holy ones, He will Himself be our guardian. Not only will He charge His angels to keep us, but He Himself will preserve our goings.

He will keep our feet from falling so that we do not defile our garments, wound our souls, and cause the enemy to blaspheme.

He will keep our feet from wandering so that we do not go into paths of error, or ways of folly, or courses of the world's custom.

He will keep our feet from swelling through weariness or blistering because of the roughness and length of the way.

He will keep our feet from wounding: our shoes shall be iron and brass, so that even though we tread on the edge of the sword or on deadly serpents, we shall not bleed or be poisoned.

He will also pluck our feet out of the net. We shall not be entangled by the deceit of our malicious and crafty foes.

With such a promise as this, let us run without weariness, and walk without fear. He who keeps our feet will do it effectually.

1 Samuel 3:15

The Dilemma of Obedience -

Samuel was afraid to tell Eli the vision —1 Samuel 3:15

God never speaks to us in dramatic ways, but in ways that are easy to misunderstand. Then we say, "I wonder if that is God's voice?" Isaiah said that the Lord spoke to him "with a strong hand," that is, by the pressure of his circumstances ([Isaiah 8:11](#)). Without the sovereign hand of God Himself, nothing touches our lives. Do we discern His hand at work, or do we see things as mere occurrences?

Get into the habit of saying, "Speak, Lord," and life will become a romance ([1 Samuel 3:9](#)). Every time circumstances press in on you, say, "Speak, Lord," and make time to listen. Chastening is more than a means of discipline— it is meant to bring me to the point of saying, "Speak, Lord." Think back to a time when God spoke to you. Do you remember what He said? Was it [Luke 11:13](#), or was it [1 Thessalonians 5:23](#)? As we listen, our ears become more sensitive, and like Jesus, we will hear God all the time.

Should I tell my "Eli" what God has shown to me? This is where the dilemma of obedience hits us. We disobey God by becoming amateur providences and thinking, "I must shield 'Eli,' " who represents the best people we know. God did not tell Samuel to tell Eli — he had to decide that for himself. God's message to you may hurt your "Eli," but trying to prevent suffering in another's life will prove to be an obstruction between your soul and God. It is at your own risk that you prevent someone's right hand being cut off or right eye being plucked out (see [Matthew 5:29-30](#)).

Never ask another person's advice about anything God makes you decide before Him. If you ask advice, you will almost always side with Satan. "... I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood ... " ([Galatians 1:16](#)). (Oswald Chambers - My Utmost for His Highest)

1 Samuel 7:12 (Morning and evening)

"Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." — 1 Samuel 7:12

The word "hitherto" seems like a hand pointing in the direction of the past. Twenty years or seventy, and yet, "hitherto the Lord hath helped!" Through poverty, through wealth, through sickness, through health, at home, abroad, on the land, on the sea, in honour, in dishonour, in perplexity, in joy, in trial, in triumph, in prayer, in temptation, "hitherto hath the Lord helped us!" We delight to look down a long avenue of trees. It is delightful to gaze from end to end of the long vista, a sort of verdant temple, with its branching pillars and its arches of leaves; even so look down the long aisles of your years, at the green boughs of mercy overhead, and the strong pillars of lovingkindness and faithfulness which bear up your joys. Are there no birds in yonder branches singing? Surely there must be many, and they all sing of mercy received "hitherto."

But the word also points forward. For when a man gets up to a certain mark and writes "hitherto," he is not yet at the end, there is still a distance to be traversed. More trials, more joys; more temptations, more triumphs; more prayers, more answers; more toils, more strength; more fights, more victories; and then come sickness, old age, disease, death. Is it over now? No! there is more yet-awakening in Jesus' likeness, thrones, harps, songs, psalms, white raiment, the face of Jesus, the society of saints, the glory of God, the fulness of eternity, the infinity of bliss. O be of good courage, believer, and with grateful confidence raise thy "Ebenezer," for—

He who hath helped thee hitherto
Will help thee all thy journey through.

When read in heaven's light how glorious and marvellous a prospect will thy "hitherto" unfold to thy grateful eye!

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A good old woman used to hear people speak about their Ebenezers, or stones of help, in remembrance of God's mercy. But she said that when she looked back on hers, she thought she was looking back on a wall. They were set so closely together that they seemed to make a wall on theright hand and on the left of all her pathway. Well, that is just like mine. I am such a debtor to divine mercy that if I could but pay half a farthing to the pound, I should need to give 50 million times more than I am, or ever hope to be worth. Oh, what I owe him!

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At evening time the Christian has many lights that he never had before, lit by the Holy Spirit and shining by His light. There is the light of a bright experience. He can look back, and he can raise his own Ebenezer saying, "**Thus far the Lord has helped [me]**" (1 Samuel 7:12). He can look back at his old Bible, the light of his youth, and say, "This promise has been proved to me. This covenant has been proved true. I have thumbed through my Bible many a year, but I have never yet thumbed a broken promise. The promises have all been kept to me. Not one good thing has failed."

1 Samuel 2:30 (Faith's Checkbook)

Honor God

"Them that honor me I will honor." 1 Samuel 2:30

DO I make the honor of God the great object of my life and the rule of my conduct? If so, He will honor me. I may for a while receive no honor from man, but God will Himself put honor upon me in the most effectual manner. In the end it will be found the surest way to honor to be willing to be put to shame for conscience' sake.

Eli had not honored the Lord by ruling his household well, and his sons had not honored the Lord by behavior worthy of their sacred office. Therefore the Lord did not honor them, but took the high priesthood out of their family and made young Samuel to be ruler in the land instead of any of their line. If I would have my family ennobled, I must honor the Lord in all things. God may allow the wicked to win worldly honors; but the dignity which He Himself gives, even glory, honor, and immortality, He reserves for those who by holy obedience take care to honor Him.

What can I do this day to honor the Lord? I will promote His glory by my spoken testimony and by my practical obedience. I will also honor Him with my substance and by offering to Him some special service. Let me sit down and think how I can honor Him, since He will honor me.

1 Samuel 10:6

I do not think that Saul ever did really in his inmost soul know the Lord. After Samuel anointed him, he was "turned into another man," but he never became a new man, and the sense of God's presence that he had was not comparable to that presence of God which a true saint enjoys.

1 Samuel 13:20 (Morning and evening)

"But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his share, and his coulter, and his axe, and his mattock."
— 1 Samuel 13:20

We are engaged in a great war with the Philistines of evil. Every weapon within our reach must be used. Preaching, teaching, praying, giving, all must be brought into action, and talents which have been thought too mean for service, must now be employed. Coulter, and axe, and mattock, may all be useful in slaying Philistines; rough tools may deal hard blows, and killing need not be elegantly done, so long as it is done effectually. Each moment of time, in season or out of season; each fragment of ability, educated or untutored; each opportunity, favourable or unfavourable, must be used, for our foes are many and our force but slender.

Most of our tools want sharpening; we need quickness of perception, tact, energy, promptness, in a word, complete adaptation for the Lord's work. Practical common sense is a very scarce thing among the conductors of Christian enterprises. We might learn from our enemies if we would, and so make the Philistines sharpen our weapons. This morning let us note enough to sharpen our zeal during this day by the aid of the Holy Spirit. See the energy of the Papists, how they compass sea and land to make one proselyte, are they to monopolize all the earnestness? Mark the heathen devotees, what tortures they endure in the service of their idols! are they alone to exhibit patience and self-sacrifice? Observe the prince of darkness, how persevering in his endeavours, how unabashed in his attempts, how daring in his plans, how thoughtful in his plots, how energetic in all! The devils are united as one man in their infamous rebellion, while we believers in Jesus are divided in our service of God, and scarcely ever work with unanimity. O that from Satan's infernal industry we may learn to go about like good Samaritans, seeking whom we may bless!

1 Samuel 14:27

No honey was sweeter than that which dropped from the end of Jonathan's rod. But that is nothing to the sweetness of the consolation which comes through Jehovah's rod. Our brightest joys are the birth of our bitterest griefs. When the woman has her travail pangs, joy comes to the house because the child is born; and sorrow is to us also often the moment of the birth of our graces.

1 Samuel 15:22 (Morning and evening)

“Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice.” — 1 Samuel 15:22

Saul had been commanded to slay utterly all the Amalekites and their cattle. Instead of doing so, he preserved the king, and suffered his people to take the best of the oxen and of the sheep. When called to account for this, he declared that he did it with a view of offering sacrifice to God; but Samuel met him at once with the assurance that sacrifices were no excuse for an act of direct rebellion. The sentence before us is worthy to be printed in letters of gold, and to be hung up before the eyes of the present idolatrous generation, who are very fond of the fineries of will-worship, but utterly neglect the laws of God. Be it ever in your remembrance, that to keep strictly in the path of your Saviour’s command is better than any outward form of religion; and to hearken to his precept with an attentive ear is better than to bring the fat of rams, or any other precious thing to lay upon his altar. If you are failing to keep the least of Christ’s commands to his disciples, I pray you be disobedient no longer. All the pretensions you make of attachment to your Master, and all the devout actions which you may perform, are no recompense for disobedience. “To obey,” even in the slightest and smallest thing, “is better than sacrifice,” however pompous. Talk not of Gregorian chants, sumptuous robes, incense, and banners; the first thing which God requires of his child is obedience; and though you should give your body to be burned, and all your goods to feed the poor, yet if you do not hearken to the Lord’s precepts, all your formalities shall profit you nothing. It is a blessed thing to be teachable as a little child, but it is a much more blessed thing when one has been taught the lesson, to carry it out to the letter. How many adorn their temples and decorate their priests, but refuse to obey the word of the Lord! My soul, come not thou into their secret.

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Be it ever in your remembrance, that to keep strictly in the path of your Savior’s command is better than any outward form of religion and to hearken to His precept with an attentive ear is better than to bring the fat of rams or any other precious thing to lay upon His altar. If you are failing to keep the least of Christ’s commands to His disciples, I pray that you will be disobedient no longer. “To obey,” even in the slightest and smallest thing, “is better than sacrifice” (1 Sam. 15:22). It is a blessed thing to be teachable as a little child, but it is a much more blessed thing when one has been taught the lesson to carry it out to the letter (Daily Help)

1 Samuel 17:37 (Faith's Checkbook)

Past Deliverance Begets Faith

“David said moreover, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.” 1 Samuel 17:37

THIS is not a promise if we consider only the words, but it is truly so as to its sense; for David spoke a word which the Lord endorsed by making it true. He argued from past deliverances that he should receive help in a new danger. In Jesus all the promises are “Yea and Amen” to the glory of God by us, and so the Lord’s former dealings with His believing people will be repeated.

Come, then, let us recall the Lord’s former lovingkindnesses. We could not have hoped to be delivered aforetime by our own strength; yet the Lord delivered us. Will He not again save us? We are sure He will. As David ran to meet his foe, so will we. The Lord has been with us, He is with us, and He has said, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” Why do we tremble? Was the past a dream? Think of the dead bear and lion. Who is this Philistine? True, he is not quite the same and is neither bear nor lion; but then God is the same, and His honor is as much concerned in the one case as in the other. He did not save us from the beasts of the forest to let a giant kill us. Let us be of good courage.

1 Samuel 18:17 (Morning and evening)

“Fight the Lord’s battles.” — **1 Samuel 18:17**

The sacramental host of God’s elect is warring still on earth, Jesus Christ being the Captain of their salvation. He has said, “Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” Hark to the shouts of war! Now let the people of God stand fast in their ranks, and let no man’s heart fail him. It is true that just now in England the battle is turned against us, and unless the Lord Jesus shall lift his sword, we know not what may become of the church of God in this land; but let us be of good courage, and play the man. There never was a day when Protestantism seemed to tremble more in the scales than now that a fierce effort is making to restore the Romish antichrist to his ancient seat. We greatly want a bold voice and a strong hand to preach and publish the old gospel for which martyrs bled and confessors died. The Saviour is, by his Spirit, still on earth; let this cheer us. He is ever in the midst of the fight, and therefore the battle is not doubtful. And as the conflict rages, what a sweet satisfaction it is to know that the Lord Jesus, in his office as our great Intercessor, is prevalently pleading for his people! O anxious gazer, look not so much at the battle below, for there thou shalt be enshrouded in smoke, and amazed with garments rolled in blood; but lift thine eyes yonder where the Saviour lives and pleads, for while he intercedes, the cause of God is safe. Let us fight as if it all depended upon us, but let us look up and know that all depends upon him.

Now, by the lilies of Christian purity, and by the roses of the Saviour’s atonement, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, we charge you who are lovers of Jesus, to do valiantly in the Holy War, for truth and righteousness, for the kingdom and crown jewels of your Master. Onward! “for the battle is not yours but God’s.”

1 Samuel 27:1 (Morning and evening)

“And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul.” — **1 Samuel 27:1**

The thought of David’s heart at this time was a false thought, because he certainly had no ground for thinking that God’s anointing him by Samuel was intended to be left as an empty unmeaning act. On no one occasion had the Lord deserted his servant; he had been placed in perilous positions very often, but not one instance had occurred in which divine interposition had not delivered him. The trials to which he had been exposed had been varied; they had not assumed one form only, but many—yet in every case he who sent the trial had also graciously ordained a way of escape. David could not put his finger upon any entry in his diary, and say of it, “Here is evidence that the Lord will forsake me,” for the entire tenor of his past life proved the very reverse. He should have argued from what God had done for him, that God would be his defender still. But is it not just in the same way that we doubt God’s help? Is it not mistrust without a cause? Have we ever had the shadow of a reason to doubt our Father’s goodness? Have not his lovingkindnesses been marvellous? Has he once failed to justify our trust? Ah, no! our God has not left us at any time. We have had dark nights, but the star of love has shone forth amid the blackness; we have been in stern conflicts, but over our head he has held aloft the shield of our defence. We have gone through many trials, but never to our detriment, always to our advantage; and the conclusion from our past experience is, that he who has been with us in six troubles, will not forsake us in the seventh. What we have known of our faithful God, proves that he will keep us to the end. Let us not, then, reason contrary to evidence. How can we ever be so ungenerous as to doubt our God? Lord, throw down the Jezebel of our unbelief, and let the dogs devour it.

1 Samuel 30:13 (Morning and evening)

“To whom belongest thou?” — 1 Samuel 30:13

No neutralities can exist in religion. We are either ranked under the banner of Prince Immanuel, to serve and fight his battles, or we are vassals of the black prince, Satan. “To whom belongest thou?”

Reader, let me assist you in your response. Have you been “born again”? If you have, you belong to Christ, but without the new birth you cannot be his. In whom do you trust? For those who believe in Jesus are the sons of God. Whose work are you doing? You are sure to serve your master, for he whom you serve is thereby owned to be your lord. What company do you keep? If you belong to Jesus, you will fraternize with those who wear the livery of the cross. “Birds of a feather flock together.” What is your conversation? Is it heavenly or is it earthly? What have you learned of your Master?—for servants learn much from their masters to whom they are apprenticed. If you have served your time with Jesus, it will be said of you, as it was of Peter and John, “They took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.”

We press the question, “To whom belongest thou?” Answer honestly before you give sleep to your eyes. If you are not Christ’s you are in a hard service—Run away from your cruel master! Enter into the service of the Lord of Love, and you shall enjoy a life of blessedness. If you are Christ’s let me advise you to do four things. You belong to Jesus—obey him; let his word be your law; let his wish be your will. You belong to the Beloved, then love him; let your heart embrace him; let your whole soul be filled with him. You belong to the Son of God, then trust him; rest nowhere but on him. You belong to the King of kings, then be decided for him. Thus, without your being branded upon the brow, all will know to whom you belong.