

# THE SIGHT OF INIQUITY

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A SERMON  
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
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*“Why do You show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance?”*  
*Habakkuk 1:3.*

IN this discourse, it will be my endeavor to assign some reasons why God causes His people to see iniquity in themselves and in others

I. We will begin with the first part and enquire, WHY DOES GOD CAUSE US TO SEE INIQUITY IN OURSELVES? What is the reason of the discoveries which the Holy Spirit sometimes makes to us, of the evil of our hearts? It is well known, to all who love the Lord, that there are seasons when the Holy Spirit takes us into the darkest chambers of our being and there reveals to us evils which, perhaps, we had never suspected. “Son of man,” He says, “I will show you what great abominations there are within you.” He lays bare the loathsome kennel of the human heart and lets us look at all our deformity and depravity. He takes us to the rock from where we were hewn and to the hole of the pit from where we were dug. He bids us look with horror upon our natural state and see that awful and hideous corruption that still remains in our hearts—even though we have been regenerated by Him. Why does He do this? We will answer the question in several ways.

Sometimes, *He does it to confirm us in the Doctrines of Grace.* My Brothers and Sisters, Arminianism is the natural religion of us all. I think one of the surest ways in the world to put down all our self-sufficiency and all our erroneous views of the Gospel is for God, the Holy Spirit, to show us our own depravity. A man may talk glibly concerning free will as long as he knows nothing about himself—but when the Lord has shown him what he is by nature, he will say no more about that matter. Or if he talks about it as a mere theory, he will not believe it in his inmost spirit. A man untaught of the Spirit says that sinners, of their own free will, turn to God. He says that they do, by their own strength, at least to a great degree, though assisted by the Holy Spirit, keep themselves and that, to some extent, their final perseverance is dependent on their own diligence, and is not left entirely in the hands of God.

But I am sure that if the Spirit takes him into the secret chambers of his heart and lets him see his own iniquity, he may go on talking about his own free will, but he will come out singing of God's Free Grace, for he will say, “O Lord, if You had not begun the good work in me, it never

could have originated in such a filthy pool as my heart! And if You do not carry on the work from first to last, it will soon come to a standstill. If I am not robed in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, I must stand naked before Your bar. And if the work is not entirely Your own or if You are to be turned away by any sin or sinfulness in the creature, then, O Lord, I know I must perish!" And this right view of the subject will drive him to believe in discriminating Grace, in irresistible vocation, in Omnipotent keeping and in the Infallible perseverance of all the Children of God!

It is noteworthy how the belief of one of the Doctrines of Grace naturally leads to the belief of all the rest. The system of the Gospel is so logical, its Truths fit so well into one another, that you cannot get a right knowledge of one of them without, at once, or in a very short time, discovering the others! The Lord begins by teaching us His foundation Truth of our utter depravity—He burns it into our conscience by bitter experience and by terrible discoveries of our sinfulness—and He knows right well that the other doctrines will follow and that, when this Truth is really understood by us, it shall not be long before we have orthodox views of the whole Covenant of Grace and the great system of the Gospel of Jesus. This, I think, is one reason why the Lord gives His people revelations of their own iniquity and defilement, that they may be sound in the faith and may believe nothing but the Doctrines of Grace.

Moreover, I believe that He does this to *keep them humble*. If our Master did not sometimes let us have a look at ourselves, we would be fearfully proud. The old Puritans used to say that God has given the peacock black feet, that he may not be proud of his bright feathers and that, in like manner, he has allowed His people to have the black feet of their own sinfulness, that they may not glory in any of the Graces which God the Holy Spirit has given them. And that while they have those Graces, so bright and beautiful, they may still look down on their own natural depravity, and humble themselves before God. We are all, by nature, as proud as Lucifer. If any man thinks himself to be incapable of pride, he is very proud, indeed. "Ah," says one, "I know I can never be flattered." But, Sir, you flatter yourself to an extraordinary degree when you say that! Pride is natural to us all—it is woven into the warp and woof of our being. We shall never get rid of it till the worm has eaten up our flesh—nothing will ever cover up our pride except our winding-sheets—and when our bodies are wrapped up in them, and our souls are caught up to dwell with God, then, but not till then, shall pride be thoroughly cast out of us! Our communion with Christ, our progress towards Heaven, our increased knowledge, our good works—all these things have, through the evil heart of our unbelief, a tendency to puff us up, though, in truth, being all given to us by the Spirit, there is no legitimate cause for pride in any of us! And therefore, God, to keep His people in their right place, humbles them with discoveries of their own sinfulness. If their ships had all sail and no ballast, they would soon be wrecked. So, when God fills His people with abundant revelations, He also sends them a thorn in the flesh—the messenger of Satan is sent to buffet them that they may walk

humbly with God and bow their heads in submission before Him—knowing themselves to still be unclean, apart from the work of Christ Jesus their Lord, which He has worked out for them.

Beloved, you can bear me witness that when you have had sad discoveries of your own heinous guilt, you have been deeply humbled. Sometimes your good works have been a great evil to you because you have prided yourself upon them, and so brought yourself to the edge of the precipice of presumption. But manifestations of your guilt, brought home to your conscience by God's Spirit, have been of essential service to you by teaching you not to be high-minded, but rather to fear and to remember that your standing in Grace is not of yourself and, therefore, you must not boast. That is another good reason, if there were no other, why we may bless God for showing us our own iniquity.

A third reason why God sometimes shows His people their own wickedness is *to make them submissive in the hour of trouble*. A Pharisee, of all people in the world, would be the worst man to be in Job's position. If I must be in a hospital, I would rather be there as a publican, than as a Pharisee. For a Pharisee, nothing would be good enough—he would think his pangs and miseries were great, indeed, for so righteous a man to have to endure! He would think he had no right to suffer. But the poor publican would say, "I am a great sinner and these miseries are not a millionth part of what I deserve to suffer. These aches and pains are nothing compared with what I merit at the hand of God. Therefore I will bear them all with submission. Why should a living man complain? I am still out of Hell and, therefore, I must not murmur."

Ah, Brothers and Sisters, we have a great difficulty to keep murmuring down! There is very much meaning in that old English word, murmur. Just sound it—it is *mur-mer*. Any child can say that! It is one of the easiest words to speak and that is why, I think, we have that word for complaining and grumbling, because murmuring is such a very easy thing. Anyone can murmur, anyone can grumble, anyone can complain. Murmuring seems to have been bred in the bones of the children of Israel, for, in the wilderness, they were almost always murmuring—murmuring for water when they were thirsty, murmuring for bread, then murmuring for meat, murmuring because the Anakims were tall—murmuring first, for one thing, and then for another! They were always at it. They were continually murmuring for 40 long years in the wilderness.

Yes, and many of us are all too apt to imitate them. But the surest way to cure us of murmuring is to let us know our own evil. A man who has been taught to realize his own wickedness and his own evil disposition will be less likely to murmur than anyone else. The poor wretch who has had the rope round his neck and has been ready to be hanged, when he gets his pardon and goes his way—you will not find him murmuring at the fare that is provided for him! He will say, "Oh, it is such a wonder to me to be alive at all! It is such an act of mercy that I have had my life spared, that this dry bread becomes like royal dainties, and this cup of cold water tastes to me like the richest wine might do to another man." The Lord thus often take His children into the stripping-room and into

the starving-room, and lets them see that all their afflictions are less than they deserve—that their troubles are but as the small dust of the balance compared with the mountains of tribulation and anguish which they deserve to have received in Hell!

Again, when the Lord reveals to us our iniquity, it is *to put us on our watchtower*. When He shows us the sin that is in our heart, it is like a captain pointing to a few skirmishers who have just come before an army that is advancing. “There, my men,” says the captain, “you see those soldiers—they are the advance guard of the enemy. Look sharply after them, for there is a great army behind them, so be on your watch.” Thus the Holy Spirit points out to us our evil desires and corruptions. He wakes us up to see them and when we have seen them, he says to us, “Take care! This little that I have shown you is to warn you of a great army that is behind. These few evil ones that have just appeared to your vision are but the outriders of a host of black things that are ready to attack you, so, be always upon your watchtower, be constantly looking out for foes.” I think that soldiers need to have a few alarms on their march. If they had none, they might become careless and relax discipline—and then they might be enticed into a defeat—be surprised and cut off. But when they have a few enemies to harass them on the flank and rear, they are more likely to be watchful and to keep a sharp look-out, so that, in case of a sudden attack, they would be ready to repel the foe. The absence of enemies is apt to breed a slothfulness which disables—times of ease seldom suit God’s soldiers. Holidays ruined the army of Hannibal and it is for our good that God stirs up the Amalekites to make us ready for the battle lest we should be surprised by even worse adversaries!

I will give only one more answer to this first question and then I will pass to the other point. The Lord often shows us our iniquity *to make us value salvation all the more*. You know that the man who thinks the most of a doctor is generally the man who needs him most. When we are well, we often make jokes concerning doctors—we talk about their killing the people and so on—but when we get ill, we send for them! We laugh at them while in health, but we are glad to make use of them when sick. So it is with the Lord’s people—they may, perhaps, think lightly of Christ when they do not see or feel any present need for Him—but when they discover their own leprosy, then it is that they value the Great Physician! When they realize their own ruin, then it is that they prize the God-given remedy. It is a great service to us, sometimes, to show us our bankrupt schedule. Every man has had a bankrupt’s schedule because we are all bankrupts by nature. We set up in trade for ourselves and we soon became bankrupts. We never paid even a farthing in the pound, but our Lord Jesus Christ paid it all for us—yet we would not know how great was His Grace in doing so, did He not remind us of our debts and of how very poor we are in our own hopes of meeting debts so immense, so infinitely beyond all our powers to discharge.

God says to His children, “I brought you out of prison, but you do not think much of My deliverance, today, so I will take you back to prison and let you see once more what kind of place it is. And then you will

think more of the Breaker who broke your chains and set you free. I have opened a fountain that sparkles with Living Water. You have been drinking of it day by day till you are full, but you do not know its value. Come, I will put you in the hot, howling wilderness and you shall feel the pangs of thirst—you shall have all the water in your bottle spent—then you will know the preciousness of the rippling Fountain which Grace has opened for thirsty sinners! You have been feasting every day at My table. You have scarcely known what hunger is. I will put you, again, in the desert of conviction and make you hunger after righteousness—and then you will prize the bread that came down from Heaven, and think more of Jesus Christ, My Son, than you would have done had it not been for this showing of iniquity and grievance.”

All these things of which I have spoken are matters of *heart* experience to all true Believers. Many persons do not know the plague of their heart. But you who love the Lord will acknowledge that however quaintly I have put these things, there is great truth in them. It is even so—we have had very solemn times, all of us who believe in Jesus—since we first knew the Lord. There have been times when we could not tell our right hand from our left in spiritual matters. If anyone had asked us, “Are you the Lord’s?” we dared not have answered, “Yes, we are,” for our corruptions were so strong, and unbelief had become so rampant, and poor faith seemed to be so slumbering, like the fire in the ashes, that we could not tell whether there was any fire or not!

O Brothers and Sisters, do we not remember when we have sometimes knelt down in anguish, and cried, “O Lord, I long to have this point decided, “am I Yours, or am I not? If it is so, why am I thus? Why this wrestling of two armies in the Shulamite? Why is it that these contentions and these wars are carried on in my spirit? Show me why You contend with me, and why my sin contends with me! O Lord, show me where I am vile”? And have we not found that these times of sore conflict have been of essential benefit to us? We have grown strong by these griefs! The sight of iniquity has made us wiser, more cautious, more prudent, more humble, more affectionate—and made us more firm in our belief in our Savior than we had ever been before!

**II.** Now I will try to answer the question of the text in another sense. “Why do You show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance?”

Sometimes, the iniquity and grievance are not in ourselves but IN OTHERS. Some of you may not have much of this world’s goods. You, perhaps, live in a house where there are very ungodly people—down in your court the Sabbath is always broken. In the street where you reside, you seldom hear anything on the Sabbath except oaths, curses, profanity and everything which constitutes a breach of the day of rest. And others of you, by your very connections, are called to mix with evil companions whose speech, instead of being seasoned with salt, seems seasoned with brimstone, flavored only with blasphemy and having perpetually in it the very brogue of Hell! There are some of you who are called to labor with workmen who, instead of endeavoring to help you to Heaven, seem trying, like Christian’s neighbors and wife, of whom you read in, “*The Pil-*

*grim's Progress,*” to pull you back to the City of Destruction. You are, perhaps, asking this question, “O Lord, why am I in such a condition? Why has Your Providence put me where I am thrown into contact with evil men? ‘Why do You show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance?’” I will tell you three or four reasons why the Lord acts thus towards you.

The first is, *to let you see what you might, yourselves, have been.* John Bradford—you have probably heard the story a hundred times—when he used to see people going past his window, on the way to Tyburn, to be hanged, said, “There goes John Bradford, but for the Grace of God. If it had not been for the Grace of God, John Bradford, too, would have been hanged.” When you hear men swearing, you can say, “That is what I would have done if the Lord had not kept the door of my lips.” When you see men taken up for robbery, you can say, “That is what I might have been if God had not kept me from sin.” When you hear of the drunken brawl or the murderous affray, put your hand on your heart and say, “Ah, the same sort of evils might have come out of this heart of mine, for human hearts are very much alike. ‘As in water face answers to face, so the heart of man to man.’ There is not much difference, by nature, between one heart and another, so that man is a picture of what I might have been if the restraining hand of God had not kept me back from sin.”

You know that, sometimes, drunks help to make men sober. Occasionally, drunks are good Apostles of temperance, for, when they come reeling through the streets, in all their bestial stupidity, a man very naturally says, “What a fool that fellow makes of himself!” And it leads him to say, “I must avoid that evil thing because I would not make myself so foolish as he is.” I think it was the old Greek lords who used to make their slaves drunk in order to keep their children from the vice—by letting them see how disgraceful a drunk looked.

Thus, perhaps, God allows wicked men to come in our way *to make us see the evil of sin, that we may turn from it, pass by it, abhor it and not indulge in it.* I have no doubt that the wickedness of men may be employed under the Divine Wisdom and the overruling hand of God for the sanctification of His own people. Just as sometimes a book that is full of bad spelling is one of the best things for teaching a child how to spell well—by leading him to correct the mistakes in spelling—so the Lord permits us to see this other kind of bad spelling in order to teach us how to spell aright. We have to correct ourselves by the evils of others and to learn from their wrong-doing to avoid the sins into which they have fallen. Wrecks may sometimes be made into beacons—the ruin of one man may be a warning to another. It is so with the Christian, for he knows how to use his sight of iniquity and of grievance, as he beholds it in others, as a reason for avoiding the same iniquity in himself.

In the next place, God sometimes allows us to see the sins of others, *to teach us to admire His Sovereignty* which plucked us as brands from the burning. We look at our neighbors and see them drinking down sin as a greedy ox drinks down water, and we say, “What has made us to differ from them?” Grace—Free Grace. And then we ask, “Why has Grace

come to us, and not to them? Why have these favors been given to us, and not to the rest of mankind?" And we are obliged to say, with Christ, "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Your sight." When only one member of a family is converted, what a proof that is of Divine Sovereignty! When there is a holy mother with an ungodly husband, and wicked children, what an illustration that is of the Sovereignty of God, in that one is taken, and the others are left! And when, in a house, two women have been grinding at the mill, and one has accompanied her grinding with the songs of Zion, and the other has accompanied hers with the voice of cursing, what a proof there has been of the Sovereignty of God who, "has mercy on whom He will have mercy," for, "it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy."

Yes, Christian, God has put you in the very midst of sin to make His Grace the more conspicuous. If you ride in the country and you see a field of wheat, you will very likely not notice one of the ears at all. But as you are going along, you see a hedge and, by some chance or other, a grain of wheat has been dropped into the ground under the hedge—and from it a single ear of corn has grown up through the brambles—and there it stands alone. Very likely you nudge your friend who is riding with you, and say, "There is an ear of wheat growing up among the rambles." It seems the more astonishing and notable from the place where it is growing! So, I think a Christian in the Church of Christ is not a thing to be wondered at so much. The Sovereignty of God is not so much seen among the righteous by themselves as it is when we find the Christians growing up amid the bushes and brambles of an ungodly world—and proving themselves to be "blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation."

Whoever noticed glowworms in the daytime? But, in the night, you will see them shining among the leaves! They were there by day, I daresay, but nobody saw them! But in the night, with their little lamps glowing, everyone admires them. So the Christian, when he is in good company, is a blessed man and great instance of Divine Love—but when, in the order of Providence, he is put into a dark place where there is little of Gospel Light and Truth—then it is that his lamp begins to be most useful and he is more noticed than he ever was before. This is why the Lord sometimes puts His people there, to make His Sovereignty, His power, His might and His Grace the more apparent. Even as men sometimes set jewels in foils to show their brightness and put dark spots in their picture to make the lights more apparent, so the Lord, in His Providence, permits His people, sometimes, to sojourn in evil places. Like Lot, to dwell in Sodom, and like Abraham, to go down among the Egyptians, or with the Philistines, in order that Divine Grace may be displayed—and the Lord's name may be exalted!

I have another answer and, I think, a better one, to the question of the text—"Why do You show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance?" Why, my Brothers and Sisters, God shows us the sin of our fellow men, *that we may set more earnestly to work, and that we may be the means of saving souls and extending the Kingdom of Righteousness.* When a cap-

tain takes his soldiers out to look at the enemy, it is like what I heard of a celebrated Scotchman, whose words I am scarcely able to pronounce correctly. "Now, lads," he said, "there they are! If you dinna kill them, they'll kill you." That was their choice and so it is with us. God brings us to walk in this city, where harlotry and vice are to be seen on every side, almost at noonday. Now then, soldiers of the Cross, if you dinna kill them, they'll kill you. If you do not stand up for your Master and keep the banner of the Cross in the air, the enemy will be more than a match for you! I have been struck, sometimes, when I have looked in a window, and seen pamphlets full of all manner of obscenity and infidelity and wickedness—and they have had the most blessed effect upon my mind, for I have thought—"Well, if there is so much wickedness, so much the more reason is there why every minister should be in earnest, and why every Christian should seek with all his might to do good."

Some of you live in very nice villas in the country. You do not go among the poor people and you do not know what they are like. If you were to walk through some of the back slums and narrow alleys of London, you would say, "Oh, I never thought there could have been such places upon Earth!" And if you could go where I have sometimes gone, up an old creaking staircase where you have to stoop your head for fear of hitting it against a beam. And go into a room and see a whole family there. And go into another room and see a whole family there—and go a little further and see another family all crowded and packed together—and then hear their language and see their utter ignorance of everything concerning Christ, almost as unenlightened as the Hottentots in their kraals in Africa—you would go away after seeing them, and say, "There is great reason that we should all be in earnest. We ought to be up and doing, Sirs. We ought to be working well for our Master after such a sight as this!"

Oh, but instead we cover up our iniquity in this land a great deal! We border all London with fine streets so that when a foreigner rides through them, he says, "What a grand city it is!" A varnished hypocrisy! What is there behind those streets? What will you find behind those palaces at the West-End? The very lowest places upon earth, where the poor are stowed away together by hundreds! We border the city with something that looks respectable, but, alas, for the internals of this city—how much of wickedness and sin dwell there! I bless God that there are some of you who are obliged to live where you see the wickedness of this city. I thank God that some of you cannot go to your houses at night without seeing wickedness on the road. "Why," you ask, "do you bless God that there is this wickedness?" No, I do not, but I bless God that you have to see it, because you will be the people who will go to others and say, "Strive for the salvation of men. Work, I beseech you, to do good, because the world is still full of wickedness and the dark places even of this city are full of the habitations of cruelty."

It is a long time since I have made a good speech at a public meeting, but I do remember doing it once. I stepped out as one of the speakers was delivering a very pretty oration, and I went into a neighboring house

to speak with a woman who wished to join the church. It was not in London. When I entered the house, there was the husband horribly drunk. He had got his wife up in a corner and, with all his might, was trying to beat and bruise her—he was even tearing her arms with his nails till the blood freely flowed from her arms and face. Two or three friends rushed in and dragged him away. She said she had endeavored, in all meekness, to persuade him to allow her to go to the House of God that night, and the only reason why he treated her so badly was because he said she would be always going to that place of worship.

And when I had seen that sight and looked on the poor, bleeding woman, with tears in her eyes, I went back into the place and spoke like a man who had got his heart and his whole body full of fire! I could not help it—I was all on flame against the sin of drunkenness and sought, with all my might, to urge the members of the Church to do all they could to scatter the Light of the Gospel in a neighborhood which was so dark and black and filthy and abandoned. And I think it would do all of us good, when we are about to preach, if we were, sometimes, to be dragged through some of the worst parts of London—to let us see the wickedness of it. It would do our Sunday school teachers good, many of them, for they would then be more in earnest with their children. And I think it would do good to some of our old friends who sit and sleep through almost all the service and are never much more than sleeping partners in the concern! If they did but know how the battle was going on—how tough the struggle and how stern the conflict—they would wake up from their slumbers and go forth to the battle! And they would stand shoulder to shoulder and deal blow after blow against the common enemy of our Lord Jesus Christ and of the welfare of man!

Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, we need to know more of the evil of men, to make us more earnest in seeking their salvation! For if there is anything in which the Church is lacking more than in any other matter, it is in the matter of earnestness. Whitefield said, in one of his sermons “O my God, when I think how this wicked city is perishing, and how many are dying for lack of knowledge, I feel as if I could stand on the top of every hackney coach in the streets of London to preach the Gospel.” Why did he say that? Why was his zeal so burning? Because he had seen the sinfulness of men and marked their follies. We shall never be thoroughly in earnest till we are thoroughly aware of the evil that is before us. When the horse sees the precipice, he throws himself back and will not madly dash himself down. So is it with the Church of Christ—if she could see the evil that is before her, she would surely draw herself back, with energy, to save her own children from plunging into the yawning gulf!

Yes, Sirs, you have iniquity in your very midst and at your doors! You have iniquity everywhere round about you and yet, how few of you are striving to do anything for Christ! You are asked to help in this great battle, but you have so many other things to do, you cannot help us. You are asked to do something in this cause, to give it a little of your time—but you cannot manage it. You are asked to speak, but you have so little ability, you cannot do it. One half of the people who call themselves

Christians need to be asked 50 times to do a thing and then, when they agree to do it, they are not worth having, because they are only pressed men—they are not one half so good as volunteers! I would that all of us knew the evil state of this world and the wickedness of men—and then I think that all of us who love the Savior would start up from our seats and each one would say, “Here am I! Let me be a volunteer against the enemy! Let me, in my measure, whatever little measure that may be, go forth to serve my God, to practice virtue and, by a holy example and by every other means, seek to stem the raging torrent of the iniquity of the age.”

Now, my dear Friends, in closing, allow me just this one remark to another class of hearers. There is one who, but a little while ago, was an abandoned sinner. He could drink, he could swear, he could break the Sabbath and curse God. One day he stepped into the House of God and the Lord met with him, and now he is in misery—such as he cannot describe. His heart is all broken, his conscience is as if it had been lashed with the tenfold whip of the Law of God and as if salt had then been rubbed into his wounds. He is smarting all over with the wounds of his conscience, inflicted by the angry and fiery Law of God. He is crying, in his agony, “O Lord, I must perish, I know I must! I see such wickedness in my soul, that I must perish and be cast away.” No, poor Soul, no—that is not the right answer to the question of the text!

The question is, Why does the Lord show you iniquity? I will give you the right answer. *It is in order that He may deliver you from it.* If God has broken your heart, He has broken it on purpose to give you a new one. If He has killed you by the Law, He has killed you on purpose to make you alive by the Gospel. If He has wounded you in your conscience, He has done it that He may have room to pour in the oil and the balm of Christ Jesus. If He has stripped you, He has only pulled off your rags that He may put on you a perfect robe of spotless righteousness. And if He has cast you into the ditch, so that your own clothes abhor you, as Job words it, it is that He may take you to the Fountain filled with blood and give you a perfect washing!

When the Lord pulls a man down, He does it in order that He may build him up again! When He breaks a man’s heart, it is not for the mere breaking’s sake—it is that He may make it anew! If you have misery in your conscience on account of sin, God has had dealings of love with you and He has purposes of love concerning you. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” If you are a convinced sinner, Jesus died for you, for He died for sinners. If you can truly say that you are a sinner, I can tell you that Christ Jesus hung upon the Cross for you. Look at Him there, bleeding—every drop of blood says to you, “I drop, poor Sinner, for *you*.” Look at that gash in His side, from where flows the double stream of water and blood—it say, “Sinner, this stream runs for *you*.” Are you a sinner? If so, Christ died for you and He has not died in vain—you shall be saved. If you do but know yourself to be a *bona fide sinner*, a real one, no mere complimentary sham sinner, but a real actual one who means what he says, when he declares himself to be guilty and vile—

then, as the Lord lives, Jesus Christ died for you on Calvary! You shall behold His face with joy! You shall be numbered with the Church of the first-born, whose names are written in Heaven, and you shall sing eternal hallelujahs around the Throne of God and the Lamb!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
JOB 1:1-5.**

**Verse 1.** *There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.* That was Job's character before the trial which made him famous. Perhaps if it had not been for that trial we would never have heard of him. Now, as the Apostle James wrote, "You have heard of the patience of Job." God, by great afflictions, gave to His servant that usefulness for which he had possibly prayed, without knowing how it would come to him. A long-continued life of prosperity may not so truly glorify God as a life that is checkered by adversity. And God, who intended to put honor upon His servant, did as kings do when they confer the honor of knight-hood—they strike with the back or flat of the sword—so God smote the Patriarch Job that He might raise him above his fellow men. The Lord intended to make him Job, the Patient One, but to that end He must make him Job the Sufferer.

From this Book I learn what Gospel perfection is. We are told that Job was perfect and upright, yet I am sure that he was not free from tendencies to evil—he was not absolutely perfect. As old Master Trapp says, "God's people may be perfect, but they are not perfectly perfect." And so it certainly was with Job. There were imperfections deep down in his character which his trials developed and which the Grace of God, no doubt, afterwards removed. But after the manner of speech that is used in Holy Scripture, Job was a "perfect" man. He was sincere, thorough-hearted, consecrated, and he was also "upright." He leaned neither this way nor that way—he had no twist in him, he had no selfish ends to serve. He was "one that feared God." Everybody could see that and, consequently, he hated evil with all his heart.

**2.** *And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters.* It was a great privilege to have such a family as this, but it brought to Job great responsibilities and many anxieties.

**3.** *His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east.* A man may be a good man and a rich man, but it is not usually the case. I am afraid that what Mr. Bunyan says is all too true—

***"Gold and the Gospel seldom agree—  
Religion always sides with poverty."***

Yet it should not be so, for God can give a man Grace enough to use all his substance to his Lord's Glory. I wish that it were more often the case that we could see a holy Job as well as a godly Lazarus—a company of men who would prove their consecration to God by never allowing their

wealth to become their master—but being master of all their substance and realizing constantly that it is all the Lord’s. This, after all, is the noblest heritage a man has with the exception of his God. Job, in adversity, could possess his soul in patience because, in his prosperity, he had not let his riches possess him, but he had possessed them.

4. *And his sons went and feasted in their houses, everyone his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them.* This showed that it was not drunken riotousness, or they would not have wanted their sisters—the sweet, gentle, delicate influence of their sisters would tend to keep their feasting what it should be. Besides, they were the sons of a man of God and so they would know how to keep their feasting within due bounds. Yet we are all mortal and fallible—and feasting times are dangerous times. The Puritans used to call fasting, “soul-fattening fasting”—but feasting they might call “soul-weakening feasting.” Solomon truly said, “It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting.” There is always a risk about feasting and Job was, therefore, a little afraid about how his sons might have behaved.

5. *And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all, for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts, Thus did Job continually.* They might have spoken unadvisedly with their lips. They might have even taken God’s name in vain. There might have been something about their conduct which was not altogether proper—so their father desired to put the sin of it away. Observe Job’s resort to burnt offerings. He lived before the Jewish law was given, yet he felt the instinct concerning the need of a sacrifice which every believing heart feels when it approaches the holy God. I pray you never give up that idea of coming to God by means of a sacrifice, for there is no other way of access. We may think as we will, but there is nothing else that will ever quiet the conscience and bring us near to God, but the Divinely-appointed Sacrifice. And Job knew this. He did not think that his sons could be cleansed by his prayers, alone, but he must offer burnt sacrifices according to the number of them all, that they might, each one, have a share in the blessings which those sacrifices typified.

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

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

# WATCHING TO SEE NO. 2622

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 14, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JANUARY 26, 1882.

*“I will stand my watch, and set myself on the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reprov'd. And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain on tablets, that he may run that reads it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.”  
Habakkuk 2:1-4.*

I KNOW that, on Thursday nights, there is a large number of friends here who are engaged in the work of the Lord, and sometimes it is meet to address them, mainly, because, if the bread be put into the hands of the disciples, they will pass it on to the multitude. In the day of battle, if the command is given to the officers, they will repeat it to the various sections of the army, and so the whole mass shall be moved forward with one aim and objective. Habakkuk was, like ourselves, called of God to labor for the good of the people among whom he dwelt. He was one of the later Prophets who came to warn God's ancient people before the Lord meted out their last terrible measure of chastisement. He saw, in vision, his country given up to the Chaldeans, and he pleaded with God about the matter. He had a burden on his heart which pressed very heavily upon him. He saw the nation crushed beneath the oppressors and he asked, “Why is this?” The Lord replied, “Because of the iniquity of the people.” Habakkuk understood that, but then it occurred to him that the Chaldeans, who were treading down the people, were themselves far greater sinners—that, certainly, in the matter of oppression and blood-thirstiness, they were a far more guilty people than those whom they came to punish! So he used this fact partly as an argument with God that He would withdraw the Chaldeans and overthrow them. And partly he set it before the Lord as a difficulty which troubled his mind. He said, “You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity: why look You upon them that deal treacherously and hold Your tongue when the wicked devours the man that is more righteous than he?” Habakkuk was puzzled, as David had been before him, and as many a child of God has been since. He felt as if he could not do his work rightly, so, in his perplexity, he came to consult God concerning it. And having laid

the case before the Lord, he made use of the memorable and instructive words which we are now to consider under the gracious guidance of the Holy Spirit.

**I.** So, first, dear Friends, we shall notice, in our text, THE ATTITUDE OF THE LORD'S SERVANT.

That is expressed in the one word, "watch." When you are puzzled—when you are troubled, when you do not know what to do, then may God help you to say, "I will stand my watch, and set myself on the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reprov'd." Before we can do any real service for God, we must first of all receive our commission from Him. We cannot teach others aright unless we are, ourselves, taught of God—and His truest servants are those who continue waiting upon Him that they may receive from Him the words which afterwards they are to speak to the people in His name. Habakkuk is a model to us in this respect. Troubled in heart, he resolves to set himself to watch his God and to listen for the message he is afterwards to deliver.

We learn from him that the attitude of the Lord's servant towards God is, first, *an attentive attitude*. "I will stand my watch, and set myself on the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me." If we have a deaf ear towards our Lord, we must not marvel if He gives us, also, a dumb tongue. If we will not hear what God speaks, we may not expect to be able, ourselves, to speak in His name. Or, if we pour forth a flood of words, yet we may not expect that they will be such as He will approve and bless. O dear Friends, if we would work for God in the right spirit, we must begin as Jesus did, of whom it was written in prophecy long before He came to the earth, "The Lord God has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakens morning by morning, He wakens My ears to hear as the learned. The Lord God has opened My ears and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back." In the fullness of time, Jesus came forth and taught to others what he had thus learned in secret, and, if we would teach others, we must first be taught by the Spirit of God.

How much more we might know if we were only willing to listen to the Lord's messages! There is, in the Word of God, a voice which is often inaudible because we are so engrossed with other things. There is, also, the voice of the Christian ministry which oftentimes speaks to us, but it is like the cry of one in a wilderness—it is not heard by us. There is, too, a voice in God's Providence. How much the Lord says to his flock by every stroke of his rod and by every blessing of His daily Providence! There is a voice from every grave—a message in every bereavement when friends are taken away. There are voices everywhere speaking to those whose ears are open. Above all, there is the blessed Spirit always waiting to communicate to us the things of God by that soft mysterious whisper which none know but those who are, themselves, spiritual—and which they know at once to be the very voice of God within their spirits. Brothers, we must be attentive! We must not allow a single sound from the Lord to escape us. Some men seem God must speak thunder and lightning before they will ever hear Him, but His true children sit at His feet

that they may catch the slightest movement of His lips and not let a single syllable from the Lord fall to the ground. The attitude of the Christian worker must be one of attention.

But, next, it must be a patient attitude. Observe what Habakkuk says, "I will stand my watch." Not merely, "I will be upon my watch for a moment," but, "I will take my place like a sentinel who remains on guard until his time of watching is over." Then the Prophet puts it again, "I will set myself on the tower"—as if he took his position firmly and resolutely upon the tower, there to stand and not to stir till he had seen and heard what God the Lord would have him see and hear. Do you think, dear Friends, that we are sufficiently resolved to know our Master's will? Do we frequently enough get upstairs alone and, with our open Bibles, search out what God would have us learn? And do we pray over the Word till we have wormed ourselves into the very heart of the Truth of God—till we have eaten our way into it, as the weevil eats its way through the shell, and then lives upon and in the kernel? Do we do this? Do we set ourselves upon the tower, determined that we will not go forth to speak for the Lord till the Lord has spoken to us, lest we go upon a fool's errand, to deliver our own inventions, instead of proclaiming the message that comes from God Himself?

Your attitude, my Brother, if you are a servant of the Lord, is that of attention and patience.

To which I may add that it is often *a solitary attitude*. "I will stand my watch." The Church has gone to sleep, but, "I will stand my watch." Like flocks of sheep, they lie all around us, the multitudes of souls for whom we have to care, but there are still shepherds keeping watch over their flocks by night, to whom the Glory of the Lord is often revealed when the sheep perceive it not. The city lies wrapped in slumber and no sound is heard among her ten thousand sleepers, but there is one who knows no sleep, nor gives slumber to his eyelids, for he is the appointed watchman of the night and he keeps to his tower and sets himself in his place, firmly resolved that till the morning breaks there shall be somebody to keep guard over the city. Well, sometimes, I say, watchmen have to be quite alone. O Brothers, it would be better for us if we had more solitude! It often becomes necessary to us because we cannot find kindred spirits that can watch with us a single hour. The higher you get up in the Church of God, the more solitary you will be. For the sheep, there are many companions, but even for an under-shepherd, there are but few. As for that Great Shepherd of the sheep, the Chief Shepherd and Bishop of souls, the Good Shepherd, you know that His most favored Apostles could not watch with Him even one hour, but He had to endure His terrible agony in Gethsemane alone. And such of His servants as He honors most will know best what is the meaning of Gethsemane, the olive press and the solitude which often accompanies the stern watch that the faithful servant of God must keep.

Never mind if all others around you say that you are hot-headed, zealous, enthusiastic, foolish and I know not what! Say to yourself, "I will stand my watch." What if they should think that you carry things much too far and have too much religion, or are too consecrated? Reply, "I will

set myself upon the tower, and will still watch, for that is my business even if I must attend to it alone.” The man who has God for his Companion has the best of company! And he that is a solitary watcher for the Most High God shall, one day, stand amidst yon shining legions of angels, and he will, himself shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of his Father. Expect, therefore, if you are a servant of the Lord, to sometimes have to watch alone—and be thankful for that position if God honors you by calling you to occupy it!

Observe, further, that the attitude of the child of God who is called to be a prophet to his people—as I know that many of you are—is one in which *the mind must be entirely engrossed*. The true servant of the Lord thinks of nothing else than this—“I will stand my watch, and set myself on the tower, and will watch to see what the Lord will say unto me.” He is wholly taken up with that one matter! Many of you have your secular callings to follow, but, without neglecting them, you can still, in spirit, be watching and waiting to hear the voice of God, for God speaks to us not only when we are in the study, or kneeling in prayer by our bedside, but He has ways of talking with us while we are going along the road and so He makes our hearts to burn within us. He can speak with us in the thick of the greatest throng and, perhaps, some of us were never more conscious of the voice of God than amid the rushing of ten thousand spindles, or in the midst of the crowded street! At such times, the noise and turmoil of this busy world have not been able to drown the gentle voice of God within our spirit. May you, Beloved, be thus engrossed! If you intend to serve the Lord, give your whole soul to the learning of His Truth and the hearing of what He has to say to you, that you may afterwards be able to tell to others what you have, yourselves, been taught of God.

Observe, also, that the Prophet was *entirely submissive to the will of God*. He put himself into this attitude, that he might hear whatever God would say to him, and that his only thought, all the while, should be, “What shall I answer when I am reprov’d?” We need to be, as much as possible, like clean white paper for God to write upon. Our mind is often far too much occupied and too prejudiced to receive a clear impression of the will of the Lord. How many make up their mind as to what *they will see in a text* and so they never learn what the passage would teach them if it were allowed to speak freely to them. If you would serve God, say to your soul, “I will stand my watch, and set myself on the tower, and I will give both my ears and all my heart to understand what God would have me know, and to learn what He would teach me.” May this be the happy privilege of us all!

The last remark I will make upon this first head is that the attitude of the Lord’s servant was *eminently practical*. The Prophet did not watch and wait merely that he might know the secrets of the future, or be able to prophesy, or show his wonderful knowledge. No, but he wanted to know what he should answer when he was reprov’d. He knew that when he went out into the world, men would begin to reprove him for being a Prophet—they would rebuke him for his zeal and his earnestness! And so he waited that he might have the right answer to give, with meekness

and fear, to all who opposed him. That should be your wish and mine, Beloved, for, if we serve God faithfully, we are sure to meet with objectors. Well, if this opposition is only against *us*, it does not matter much, but, alas, sometimes their critical and cruel remarks are against the Truth of God itself, and, worst of all, against our blessed Lord! In such a case it is well to have something with which we can stop the mouths of the snarling dogs. It is a blessing to have heard God's voice, for, if you repeat the message He speaks to you, even the echo of God's voice will break the rocks in pieces and cause the cedars of Lebanon to split in two! There is nothing that can stand against the Word of the Lord! In the 29<sup>th</sup> Psalm, David says, "The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty" and, if we have heard that voice, and know how, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to echo its mighty tones, they will strike the objector dumb! And even when he hates the Truth of God, he will still be compelled to feel what force there is in it. So the servant of the Lord says, "I will watch and wait to hear what God will say to me, for then I shall know what to answer when I am rebuked and reproached for the Truth's sake."

This, then, is to be the attitude of the children of God. Get away to your watchtowers, Brethren! Get away to your tower by the brook Jabbok and wrestle with the Angel! Get away to the top of Carmel and put your head between your knees and cry unto the Lord until the heavens are covered with clouds, and the thirsty earth is refreshed with rain! "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much," but they who do not hear God's voice cannot effectually pray, for God will not hear their voice if they will not hear His. If we have been deaf to Him, He will be deaf to us. The communion necessary to prevailing prayer renders it absolutely essential that we should first set ourselves to hear the voice of God and then, again, it shall be said that the Lord listened to the voice of a man, for the man first listened to the voice of the Lord!

**II.** The second part of our subject is, THE WORK OF THE LORD'S SERVANT.

We have seen what Habakkuk's attitude was. The next verse tells us about his work—"The Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tablets, that he may run that reads it." It was not long before the waiting Prophet heard God speak and if you and I wait upon Him, it will not be long before we hear something that will be worth our waiting for and, especially, we shall receive plain directions as to our duty!

Habakkuk was, first, *to see the vision*. The first name for a Prophet was, "a Seer." You, my Brother, cannot be a *teller* of the good tidings of salvation unless you are first a *seer*. Mind that you see well all that is to be seen. Use your eyes to the best advantage and also to be able to see what God sets before you. It is curious how the different senses are mingled in these verses. Did you notice the expression in that first verse, "I will watch to see what He will say unto me"? When God speaks to us, we can hear with our eyes as well as with our ears. There is an inner sense which sees the meaning of the Lord's language, and the inner ear hears

the very tones in which that meaning is expressed. So, the Prophet was first to be a *seer*—he was to wait to see what God would say unto him.

Then, next, he was to “write the vision,” that is, *to make it known* and, Beloved, when you and I have seen or heard anything which God has revealed to us, let us go and write it down or make it known by some other means. God has not put the treasure into the earthen vessel merely for the vessel’s own sake, but that the treasure may afterwards be poured out from it, that others may thereby be enriched! You have not been privileged to see, merely to make glad your eyes, and to charm your soul—you have been permitted to see in order that you may make *others* see—that you may go forth and report what the Lord has allowed you to perceive. God does not usually favor His servants with visions that they may keep them to themselves. Paul hid for 14 years one that he saw, but he was obliged to let it out at last and, I suppose, that if he had had more visions, he would not have been able to keep that one concealed so long. John no sooner became the seer of Patmos than he heard a voice that said to him, “Write.” He could not speak to others, for he was on an island where he was exiled, but he could write—and he did. And, often, he who writes, addresses a larger audience than the man who merely uses his tongue. It is a happy thing when the tongue is aided by the pen of a ready writer and so gets a wider audience and a more permanent influence than if it merely uttered certain sounds and the words died away when the ears had heard them. The first thing which you have to do, if God has called you to serve Him, is, after hearing what He has said to you, to make it known to somebody else—“Write the vision.”

And take care, dear Friends, that, in the spreading of the Truth of God, you *use as permanent a means of doing so as you can*. “Write the vision,” that is to say, if you cannot write with a pen, if you have not that special gift, yet write it on men’s hearts! Do not merely speak it, but seek to reach the inmost soul of your fellow beings and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, write the Truth there! God help you not merely to sound it in their ears, but to write it on the fleshy tablets of their heart—and to leave the Truth of God deeply engraved upon their memory! I have sometimes been greatly favored in this way. Indeed, it has often been the case, for I almost daily meet with persons who say, “We remember hearing you preach more than 20 years ago, and we remember what you said.” And they will quote something which they then heard. I remember visiting, in one of our hospitals, a man who had heard me years before. He said to me, “While I was lying here, one night, I thought I heard the very tones of your voice”—and he told me some similes that I had used when he listened to me. I am glad to be successful in producing permanent impressions upon my Hearers, but I wish I could be more so. Mr. Jay used to say that in preaching, we must say things that will “strike and stick.” It is well when we can do so and I urge you, who are the servants of the Lord, to be sure that when you teach the Truth, you so teach it that it shall be permanently learned under your instruction. “Write the vision...upon tablets.”

Then the next duty of the servant of God is to “*make it plain*.” I have sometimes thought that certain ministers fancied that it was their duty

to make the message elaborate—to go to the very bottom of the subject and stir up all the mud they could find, there, till you could not possibly see them, nor could they see their own way at all. I could not help, the other morning, comparing some preaching to a boy who was in front of me, one summer's day, wanting a penny, and sweeping the crossing for me in such a fashion that he enveloped me in clouds of dust in order to clear my way! Have I not seen preachers do just the very same thing? They tell people all the difficulties they have discovered in the Bible—which difficulties most of their Hearers would never have heard of unless their ministers had told them—and they raise a cloud of dust in order to make a pathway for a poor troubled soul! We would rather that they let the dust lie still, for we, ourselves, raise enough dust without their help!

“Write the vision, and make it plain.” I suggest that as a motto to you who preach in the open air and to you who speak in the lodging houses or anywhere else. “Make it plain.” It is wonderful how plain we must make the Gospel before some people will be able to understand it. They have no idea what we mean by many of the expressions that we use. The most common language among Christians is often an unknown dialect to worldlings—they cannot make heads or tails of it. You and I, speaking together of our Christian experience, perfectly understand one another, but if we were to say the same things outside to the majority of the people, we might just as well preach to them in Dutch! If you have a loaf of bread and you want to feed a hungry child with it, it is hopeless to try to put that loaf of bread inside the child just as it is. Crumble it up, Brother, crumble it up as small as you can! And pour over it some of the nice warm milk of your own hearty love—and in that way the child and the loaf will come into contact before long! There is no way of getting many great Truths of God in the lump into most people's minds—we must break them up into small pieces, or, to use the words of the text, when we “write the vision,” we must “make it plain.”

Another important point is to *make it practical*. I have heard this text misquoted a great many times, “that he that runs may read it.” Kindly look at the passage and see whether that is correct. It does not say, “that he that runs may read it,” but it does say, “that he *may* run that reads it.” That is a different thing and that is what we want to see. But I have known some people who have had the Gospel delivered to them and they have slept that heard it! There has been something about the prophet's very tone, and voice, and manner that has tended to fill the ears with somniferous influences. “Ah,” said one to me, “I cannot help believing in mesmerism and so would you if you could see how our minister mesmerizes the people all round the gallery every Sunday! They can sleep soundly enough after he has been preaching a little while.” Now, dear Brothers, if we want to do any good to our fellow creatures, we must hear God's voice ourselves—and that will not send us to sleep, but it will wake us up! and then we must go and tell the people very plainly what we have heard, and also tell it to them so earnestly “that he may run that reads it.” I believe that I could easily make some of you run if I were to take up a telegram from the table and read, “Mr. So-and-So's house is on fire. He is requested to hurry home as fast as possible.” Away he would go down

the aisle as soon as the words were out of my mouth! You see, that message is something that concerns him *personally*, something that may mean great peril to his property, so he runs that reads it, or hears it read! I wish I could always preach about the wrath to come in such a way that every unsaved man who heard me would take to his heels and run for his life from the City of Destruction! Or that I could so speak about the glories of Heaven and the preciousness of Christ, that men would straightway run to Him, even to the Holy One of Israel, whom God has glorified! Let us always try to write on men's hearts in a good running hand, that he that reads the message may at once begin to run to escape from judgment and to find the Savior and to enter into eternal life!

There, child of God, is your attitude, and there is your work.

**III.** Now, in the third place, the next verse brings out our difficulty, that is, THE TARRYING OF TRUTH, "for the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry."

We preach a Gospel whose chief glory lies in the future. The blessings which we proclaim have a most important bearing upon the present, but the stress and emphasis of them relate to the future and, therefore, it is that, oftentimes, men reject our testimony because, to them, the time is not yet, or they doubt its truth because they do not at once see the results produced which we foretell.

Brethren, *every promise of God's Word has its own appointed time of fulfillment* and every doctrine or privilege has its own allotted hour. There is an election of Grace, but we shall not know all who are included in it till we shall meet the whole company of the faithful at the right hand of God! There is a redemption by blood, but the fullness of that redemption will not affect these mortal bodies until the trumpet of the Resurrection has sounded out its mighty blast over land and sea! Then shall we see how Christ has redeemed the bodies as well as the souls of His chosen ones. Take any blessing that you please and the same rule applies. Although there is much in the Covenant of Grace to be enjoyed, today, there is much more that is yet to come.

The servant of God is still a prophet. He says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved"—that is a prophecy! He says, "Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain you"—that is a prophecy! He says, "They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever"—that is a prophecy! He says, "The hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation"—that is a prophecy! And the testimony of Jesus is still the spirit of prophecy and each prophecy has an appointed time in which it will be fulfilled.

And, further, *it is absolutely certain to be fulfilled*. There is no word which God's servant rightly speaks for his Lord which will not come true. Ye have not followed cunningly-devised fables and, therefore, you need not speak your Master's message as though you were old wives rehears-

ing the gossip of a country village! You are telling what God the Holy Spirit has revealed in the Word and applied to your own soul—therefore, tell it boldly! Now, then, you are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech sinners by you, and you are to go and pray them, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God! Do you not see, dear Brothers, the position you are to take up? May you be helped to take it up! You are a prophet and your prophecy has a time for fulfillment—and it is absolutely certain to come to pass!

But, *sometimes, it apparently tarryes*. You tell men of the blessedness that comes of true religion and they say, "There is such-and-such a Believer who is very sorrowful." "Oh, yes," you reply, "in his case the vision is tarrying." "There is such-and-such a child of God who does not enjoy the Light of the Lord's Countenance." Just so. We did not say that he always would, but we do say that he will, one day, walk in the Light of God. "Ah," says one, "I have been seeking the Lord for years, but I have not obtained peace and comfort." Just so—He did not promise that you would obtain the blessing immediately. It may be that, for a while, you shall "walk in darkness, and see no light," to test your faith. But, though the vision may seem to tarry, it will not really tarry—it will come in God's good time. Oh, how often have you and I, struggling to live by faith and to glorify God, geo into a maze and we have said, "We shall get out of it." But we did not get out of it for a long time. "Oh," we have said, "surely God will deliver us!" Yet, for a while, He did not deliver us. We even got into still worse trouble than before and then the arch-enemy began to whisper—

***"The Lord has forsaken you!  
Your God will be gracious no more"—***

and what little faith we had began to waver, for we said, "We did not think that we should be tried like this! We thought we would come out of the darkness much sooner than this." But now, Brothers and Sisters, in looking back upon those past exercises and experiences, what do you say of them? Did the Lord tarry, after all? "Well," you reply, "He tarried as I would like Him to always tarry—

***'He hid the purpose of His Grace,  
To make it better known.'***

He allowed the clouds to collect more thickly to give all the heavier shower of blessing, by-and-by. He did permit me to begin to sink. He did let me nearly go down, but it was only to make me know how weak I was, that I might the more firmly cling to His hand when He plucked me out of the waves and bade me stand still by His side."

I can personally say, at the present moment, that I would not like to have had one ache less, or one depression of spirit less, or one affliction less of any sort. I would rather not have any more—as everybody says—but yet I am glad that my "rathers" count for nothing with God and that I have not any permission or need to manage for myself! How much better everything is arranged by Him! As for the past, it is all right and, blessed be His holy name, it has been so right that it could not be better! It has not only been good, but it has been better. Yes, it has been best of all! So shall every child of God find it. You may say, "This life of faith is difficult.

This hanging on so long, almost by one's eyelashes—will it not soon come to an end?" The end will come at the right time—

***"God is never before His time:  
He is never too late."***

Remember how Israel went out of Egypt at the appointed time? It is written, "And it came to pass the same day, that the Lord did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their armies," and on that same day when Infinite Wisdom and Infinite Grace shall know that it is better for you to be delivered, you shall be delivered to the praise of the glory of God's Grace!

**IV.** The fourth verse gives us our last point, but I will only just hint at what I would have said if there had been more time. THIS TARRYING OF TRUTH BECOMES A TESTING OF THE PEOPLE because that Gospel which we are to tell does not bring forth all its fruit at once to those who hear us. What then? Why, this is the winnowing-fan, this is the sieve, this is the way by which God discerns between the righteous and the wicked!

As for the wicked man, he says, "I do not see any present good coming out of religion. Look at that poor, miserable, sighing, groaning, poverty-stricken Christian over there! What good has his religion ever done him? I do not believe in it." Just so. Now we know who and what you are, for our text says, "His soul which is lifted up is not upright in him." He is so proud that he judges God's Word and condemns it! He will not have Christ to reign over him. He will not believe God. He will not wait for God and the reason is that his soul is not upright in him. Follow him home and you shall see, in his life, that his soul is not upright in him. The man who judges God is one whom God will judge and who shall not be able to stand in the Day of Judgment. I will not say that every man who rejects Christ is necessarily immoral, but I will say that, in nine cases out of ten, it is so and that when you trace an infidel's life, there is something there that accounts for his infidelity. He wants a cover on his unbelief for that is something he has good need to cover! There is something about his daily walk that does not agree with holiness—some darling sin that spoils his hope of being saved as a Christian. So he tries, as much as he can, to get a hope out of lies, out of contradicting God. "His heart is not upright in him."

But how does this test discern the righteous? Why thus—"The just shall live by his faith." You know that a Christian, a holy man, a just man, a justified man talks thus—"Yes, if God has spoken anything, it is true. If God has said that, it will be fulfilled. I will wait. Troubles may multiply, cares may come like a deluge, but I will wait. I am sure that God is true and I will wait and watch for the unfolding of His purposes. Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him. I will never give up reliance upon Him." Now, that man is a just man, and that is the man who will live! It is always well when these three things go together—righteousness, faith, life. They ought not to be found apart. They should always be together.

"The just man"—that is, the righteous man—"shall live." Ah, there is no true life without that righteousness! "Shall live by his faith"—and there is no true life without faith and no true righteousness without

faith. These three go together—may we all have them and may it be your joy and mine to keep on telling others what God has revealed to us, that we may thus gather out His own believing people, His elect and redeemed ones, while the graceless will, perhaps, despise and hate what they may see and so will ripen for the flames of Hell! God grant, of His Grace, that they may yet be delivered, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
HABAKKUK 2:1-11.**

**Verse 1.** *I will stand my watch, and set myself on the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.* “I shall look to God and I shall also look to myself. There shall be an expectation as I gaze upward to my Lord and there shall also be an examination as I look within at my empty, guilty, good-for-nothing self.”

**2.** *And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tablets, that he may run that reads it.* The Prophets were accustomed to write their messages upon wax tablets and the Lord bade Habakkuk thus write what he had seen. God would have both His Law and His Gospel plainly revealed to men so that they might know and understand His will. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “We use great plainness of speech.” And the Lord would have all His servants do likewise. It is not for us to bury the Gospel under a mass of fine words, but to set it forth in the simplest and clearest possible language—for it is not the power of human words that God blesses, but the Truth, itself, as it is applied to the heart by His Spirit.

**3.** *For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.* Is that a contradiction—“Though it tarry...it will not tarry”? No. To us it appears to tarry, but, in God's way of reckoning, it does not really tarry. To our impatient spirits it seems long in coming, but God knows that it will not be a moment beyond the appointed time.

**4.** *Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.* This grand text was quoted by Paul when he wrote his Epistles to the Romans, the Galatians and the Hebrews. It proves that Old Testament saints understood New Testament life! David and Abraham lived by faith, even as Paul and Peter and the other Apostles did.

**5.** *Yes also, because he transgresses by wine, he is a proud man, neither keeps at home, who enlarges his desire as Hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathers unto him all nations, and heaps unto him all people.* This was spoken of the Chaldeans, an ambitious nation so exceedingly greedy that it seemed as if the whole world would not be large enough to satisfy their voracious appetite. Their great kings enlarged their mouths like Gehenna and they seemed as insatiable as the very jaws of Death itself. They heaped up nation upon nation to make a huge empire for themselves.

**6.** *Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increases that which is not his? How long? And to him that loads himself with thick clay!* That which is said of ambition may also be said of covetousness. What an idle task it is for a man to go on perpetually hoarding—heaping together more than he can possibly enjoy, as if it were made for nobody but for one man, and he must grasp all the wealth of the world. There is scope enough for the loftiest ambition when you seek the nobler joys of Grace. There is room for a sacred covetousness when you “covet earnestly the best gifts,” but, in every other respect may these two things—ambition and covetousness—be always thrust far from us!

**7.** *Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite you, and awake that shall vex you, and you shall be for booty unto them?* So it happened to Chaldea that the nations which they had spoiled, by-and-by, grew strong enough to take vengeance upon them and to spoil them in their turn. Usually, when men do wrong, it comes home to them sooner or later. The chickens they hatch come home to roost at night, at any rate, if not before. Towards the end of life, a man begins to gather the fruit of his doings, or, if he does not reap it in this world, certainly he will in the world to come.

**8, 9.** *Because you have spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil you; because of men’s blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein. Woe to him that covets an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil!* He fancies, when he gets rich by oppressing others, that he will, himself, rise out of harm’s way. He says that he will make the main chance sure. He who has plenty of gold fancies that he will be able to preserve himself from sorrow, but this is what God has to say about that matter—

**10, 11.** *You have consulted shame to your house by cutting off many people and have sinned against your soul. For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.* These Chaldeans were great builders, as we know by the vast ruins that still remain. And most of their buildings were erected by labor exacted from the people whom they oppressed. They received no wages for their work, so even today, from the ruins, the stone cries out of the walls and the beams out of the timber answers it. Let all men know that, sooner or later, God will execute justice even upon the greatest nations! If they will be destroyers, they shall be destroyed. Their evil policy shall, by-and-by, sweep them away. “There is a something in the world,” says one, “that makes for righteousness.” Indeed there is, only it is more than a something—it is God himself who is always working in all things towards the vindication of His own righteous and holy Law.

### **HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—196, 700, 685.**

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

# A LUTHER SERMON AT THE TABERNACLE NO. 1749

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 11, 1883,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“But the just shall live by his faith.”  
Habakkuk 2:4.*

This text is three times employed by the Apostle Paul as an argument. Read Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11 and Hebrews 10:38—in each of these cases it runs, “The just shall live by faith.” This is the old original text to which the Apostle referred when he said, “As it is written, The just shall live by faith.” We are not wrong in making the Inspiration of the Old Testament to be as important as that of the New, for the truth of the Gospel must stand or fall with that of the Prophets of the old dispensation. The Bible is one and indivisible—you cannot question the Old Testament and retain the New. Habakkuk must be inspired, or Paul writes nonsense.

Yesterday, 400 years ago, [November 10, 1483] there came into this wicked world the son of a miner, or refiner of metals, who was to do no little towards undermining the Papacy and refining the Church. The name of that baby was Martin Luther—a hero and a saint. Blessed was that day above all the days of the century, which it honored, for it bestowed a blessing on all succeeding ages through “the monk that shook the world.” His brave spirit overturned the tyranny of error which had so long held nations in bondage. All human history since then has been more or less affected by the birth of that marvelous boy! He was not an absolutely perfect man—we neither endorse all that he said nor admire all that he did—but he was a man upon whose like men’s eyes shall seldom rest!

He was a mighty judge in Israel, a kingly servant of the Lord. We ought to more often pray to God to send us men—men of God, men of power. We should pray that, according to the Lord’s infinite goodness, His ascension gifts may be continued and multiplied for the perfecting of His Church, for when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive and received gifts for men. And “He gave some, Apostles; and some, Prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.” He continues to bestow these choice gifts according to the Church’s needs and He would scatter them more plentifully, perhaps, if our prayers more earnestly ascended to the Lord of the Harvest to thrust forth laborers into His harvest. Even as we believe in the crucified Savior for our personal salvation, we ought to believe in the ascended Savior for the perpetual enriching of the Church with confessors and evangelists who shall declare the Truth of God.

I wish to take my little share in commemorating Luther’s birthday and I think I can do no better than use the key of the Truth of God by which Luther unlocked the dungeons of the human mind and set bondage hearts at liberty. That golden key lies in the Truth briefly contained in the text before us—“The just shall live by his faith.” Are you not a little surprised

to find such a clear Gospel passage in Habakkuk? To discover in that ancient Prophet an explicit statement which Paul can use as a ready argument against the opponents of Justification by Faith? It shows that the cardinal doctrine of the Gospel is no new-fangled notion! Assuredly it is not a novel dogma invented by Luther, nor even a Truth of God which was first taught by Paul!

This fact, Justification by Faith, has been established in all ages and, therefore, we find it here, among the ancient things, a lamp to cheer the darkness which hung over Israel before the coming of the Lord! This also proves that there has been no change as to the Gospel. The Gospel of Habakkuk is the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ! A clearer light was cast upon this Truth of God by the giving of the Holy Spirit, but the way of salvation has, in all ages, been one and the same! No man has ever been saved by his good works. The way by which the just have lived has always been the way of faith. There has not been the slightest advance upon this Truth—it is established and settled—always the same, like the God who uttered it.

At all times and everywhere, the Gospel is and must forever be the same. “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever.” We read of “the Gospel” as of one—never of two or three gospels—as of many. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but Christ’s Word shall never pass away. It is also noteworthy that this Truth of God should be so old and should continue so unchanged, but that it should possess such vitality. This one sentence, “The just shall live by his faith,” produced the Reformation! Out of this one line, as from the opening of one of the Apocalyptic seals, came forth all that sounding of Gospel trumpets and all that singing of Gospel songs which made a sound like the noise of many waters in the world. This one seed—forgotten and hidden away in the dark medieval times—was brought forth, dropped into the human heart, made to grow by the Spirit of God and, in the end, to produce great results.

This handful of corn on the top of the mountains so multiplied that the fruit thereof did shake like Lebanon and they of the city flourished like grass of the earth! The least bit of the Truth of God, thrown anywhere, will live! Certain plants are so full of vitality that if you only take a fragment of a leaf and place it on the soil, the leaf will take root and grow. It is utterly impossible that such vegetation should become extinct, And so it is with the Truth of God—it is living and incorruptible—and, therefore, there is no destroying it! As long as one Bible remains, the religion of Free Grace will live! No, if they could burn all printed Scriptures, as long as there remained a child who remembered a single text of the Word, the Truth would rise again!

Even in the ashes of truth the fire is still living, and when the breath of the Lord blows upon it, the flame will burst forth gloriously. Because of this, let us be comforted in this day of blasphemy and of rebuke—comforted because though “the grass withers and the flower thereof falls away: but the Word of the Lord endures forever.” And this is the Word by which the Gospel is preached to you. Let us now examine this text which

was the means of enlightening the heart of Luther, as I shall explain to you, by-and-by.

**I.** I shall, at the outset, make a brief observation upon it—A MAN WHO HAS FAITH IN GOD IS JUST. “The just shall live by his faith.” The man who possesses faith in God is a just man—his faith is his life as a just man. He is “just” in the Gospel sense, namely, that having the faith which God prescribes as the way of salvation, he is, by his faith, justified in the sight of God. In the Old Testament (Gen. 15:6) we are told, concerning Abraham, that, “he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness.” This is the universal plan of justification. Faith lays hold upon the righteousness of God by accepting God’s plan of justifying sinners through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ—and thus she makes the sinner just.

Faith accepts and appropriates for itself the whole system of Divine righteousness which is unfolded in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus. Faith rejoices to see Him coming into the world in our nature and, in that nature, obeying the Law of God in every jot and tittle, though not Himself under that Law until He chose to put Himself there on our behalf. Faith is further pleased when she sees the Lord, who had come under the Law, offering up Himself as a perfect Atonement and making a complete vindication of Divine Justice by His suffering and death. Faith lays hold upon the Person, life and death of the Lord Jesus as her only hope—and in the righteousness of Christ she arrays herself. She cries, “The chastisement of my peace was upon Him and by His stripes I am healed.”

Now, the man who believes in God’s method of making men righteous through the righteousness of Jesus, and accepts Jesus and leans upon Him, is a just man! He who makes the life and death of God’s great Propitiation to be his sole reliance and confidence is justified in the sight of God and is written down among the just by the Lord Himself. His faith is imputed to him for righteousness because his faith grasps the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. “All that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.” This is the testimony of the Inspired Word—who shall deny it?

But the Believer is also just in another sense which the outside world better appreciates, though it is not more valuable than the former. The man who believes in God becomes, by that faith, moved to everything that is right, good and true. His faith in God rectifies his mind and makes him just. In judgment, in desire, in aspiration, in heart, he is just. His sin has been freely forgiven him and now, in the hour of temptation, he cries, “How, then, can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” He believes in the blood-shedding which God has provided for the cleansing of sin and, being washed therein, he cannot choose to defile himself again. The love of Christ constrains him to seek after that which is true, right, good, loving and honorable in the sight of God.

Having received, by faith, the privilege of adoption, he strives to live as a child of God. Having obtained, by faith, a new life, he walks in newness of life. “Immortal principles forbid the child of God to sin.” If any man *lives* in sin and *loves* it, he has not the faith of God’s elect, for true faith puri-

fies the soul. The faith which is worked in us by the Holy Spirit is the greatest sin killer under Heaven! By the Grace of God it affects the inmost heart; changes the desires and the affections; and makes the man a new creature in Christ Jesus. If there are on earth any who can truly be called just, they are those who are made so by faith in God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Indeed, no other men are “just” save those to whom the holy God gives the title—and of these the text says that they live by faith.

Faith trusts God and, therefore, loves Him. And, therefore, obeys Him. And, therefore, grows like He. It is the root of holiness, the spring of righteousness, the life of the just!

**II.** Upon that observation, which is vital to the text, I dwell no longer, but advance to another which is the converse of it, namely, that A MAN WHO IS JUST HAS FAITH IN GOD. Or else, let me say, he were not just, for God deserves faith and he who robs Him of it is not just. God is so true that to doubt Him is an injustice—He is so faithful that to distrust Him is to wrong Him—and he who does the Lord such an injustice is not a just man. A just man must first be just with the greatest of all beings. It would be idle for him to be just to only his fellow creatures if he did a willful injustice to *God*. I say he would be unworthy of the name of just. Faith is what the Lord justly deserves to receive from His creatures—it is His due that we believe in what He says—and specially in reference to the Gospel.

When the great love of God in Christ Jesus is set forth plainly, it will be believed by the pure in heart. If the great love of Christ in dying for us is fully understood, it must be believed by every honest mind. To doubt the witness of God concerning His Son is to do the sorest injustice to Infinite Love. He that believes not has rejected God’s witness to the unspeakable Gift and put from Him that which deserves man’s adoring gratitude, since it, alone, can satisfy the Justice of God and give peace to the conscience of man. A truly just man must, in order to the completeness of his justness, believe in God and in all that He has revealed.

Some dream that this matter of justness only concerns the outer life and does not touch man’s beliefs. I say, not so—righteousness concerns the inner parts of a man, the central region of his manhood—and truly just men desire to be made clean in the secret parts and, in the hidden parts, they would know wisdom. Is it not so? We hear it continually asserted that our understanding and beliefs constitute a province exempt from the jurisdiction of God. Is it, indeed, true that I may believe what I like without being accountable to God for my belief? No, my Brothers and Sisters! No single part of our manhood is beyond the range of the Divine Law! Our whole capacity as men lies under the sovereignty of Him that created us and we are as much bound to believe aright as we are bound to act aright!

In fact, our actions and our thoughts are so intertwined and entangled that there is no dividing the one from the other. To say that the rightness of the outward life suffices is to go clean contrary to the whole tenor of the Word of God. I am as much bound to serve God with my mind as with my heart! I am as much bound to believe what God reveals as I am to do what God enjoins! Errors of judgment are as truly sins as errors of life. It is a

part of our allegiance to our great Sovereign and Lord that we yield up our understanding, our thought and our belief to His supreme control. No man is right until he believes right. A just man must be just towards God by believing in God and trusting Him in all that He is, and says, and does.

I see not also, my dear Friends, what reason there is for a man to be just towards his fellow men when he has given up his belief in God. If it comes to a pinch and a man can deliver himself by a piece of dishonesty, why should he not be dishonest if there is no higher law than that which his fellow men have made? If there is no Judgment Seat, no Judge and no hereafter, why should he be concerned? A few weeks ago a man deliberately killed his employer, who had offended him. And as he gave himself up to the police, he said that he was not in the least bit afraid nor ashamed of what he had done. He admitted the murder and acknowledged that he knew the consequences very well. He said he expected to suffer about half-a-minute's pain upon the gallows and then that would be the end of him and he was quite prepared for that.

He spoke and acted in consistency with his belief or his non-belief—and truly there is no form of crime but what becomes logical and legitimate if you take faith in God and the hereafter away from man. That gone, break up your commonwealth—there is nothing to hold humanity together! Without a God, the moral government of the universe has ceased and anarchy is the natural state of things. If there is no God and no judgment to come, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. If necessary, let us steal, lie and kill!

Why not? If there is no law, no judgment and no punishment for sin—I forget—nothing can be sinful! If there is no lawgiver, there is no law! And if there is no law, then there can be no transgression! To what a chaos must all things come if faith in God is renounced! Where will the just be found when faith is banished? The logically just man is a believer in some measure or other—and he that is worthy to be called “just” in the Scriptural sense, is a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is made of God unto us righteousness!

**III.** But now I come to the point upon which I mean to dwell. Thirdly, **BY THIS FAITH THE JUST MAN SHALL LIVE.** This is, at the outset, a narrow statement. It cuts off many pretended ways of living by saying, “The just shall live by faith.” This sentence savors of the strait gate which stands at the head of the way—the *narrow* way which leads into eternal life. At one blow this ends all claims of righteousness apart from one mode of life. The best men in the world can only live by *faith*—there is no other way of being just in the sight of God! We cannot live in *self*-righteousness. If we are going to trust to ourselves, or anything that comes of ourselves, we are dead while we so trust—we have not known the life of God according to the teaching of Holy Writ.

You must come right out from confidence in everything that you are or hope to be. You must tear off the leprous garment of legal righteousness and part with self in any and every form. Self-reliance as to the things of religion will be found to be self-destruction! You must rest in God as He is revealed in His Son Jesus Christ and there, alone. The just shall live by

faith. Those who look to the works of the Law are under the curse and cannot live before God. The same is also true of those who endeavor to live by sense or *feeling*. They judge God by what they see—if He is bountiful to them in Providence, He is a good God. If they are poor, they have nothing good to say of Him, for they measure Him by what they feel, taste and see. If God works steadily to a purpose and they can see His purpose, they commend His wisdom. But when they either cannot see the purpose, or cannot understand the way by which the Lord is working unto it, straightway they judge Him to be unwise. Living by sense turns out to be a senseless mode of life, bringing death to all comfort and hope—

**“Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
But trust Him for His Grace,”**

for only by such trust can a just man live.

The text also cuts off all idea of living by mere intellect. Too many say, “I am my own guide! I shall make doctrines for myself and I shall shift them and shape them according to my own devices.” Such a way is death to the spirit. To be abreast of the times is to be an enemy to God! The way of life is to believe what God has taught, especially to believe in Him whom God has set forth to be a Propitiation for sin, for that is making God to be everything and ourselves nothing. Resting on an Infallible Revelation and trusting in an Omnipotent Redeemer, we have rest and peace. But, on the other unsettled principle, we become wandering stars for whom is appointed the blackness of darkness forever. By faith the soul can live—in all other ways we have a name to live and are dead.

The same is equally true of fancy. We often meet with a fanciful religion in which people trust to impulses, to dreams, to noises and mystic things which they imagine they have seen— all of it is fiddle-faddle! And yet they are quite wrapped up in it. I pray that you may cast out this chaffy stuff—there is no food for the spirit in it. The life of my soul lies not in what I *think*, or what I *fancy*, or what I *imagine*, or what I enjoy of fine *feeling*, but *only* in that which faith apprehends to be the Word of God! We live before God by trusting a promise, depending on a Person, accepting a Sacrifice, wearing a righteousness and surrounding ourselves with God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Implicit trust in Jesus, our Lord, is the way of life—and every other way leads down to death. It is a narrowing statement—let those who call it intolerance say what they please—it will be true when they have execrated it, as much as it is now!

But, secondly, this is a very broad statement. Much is comprehended in the saying—“The just shall live by his faith.” It does not say what part of his life hangs on his believing, or what phase of his life best proves his believing—it comprehends the beginning, continuance, increase and perfecting of spiritual life as being all by faith. Observe that the text means that the moment a man believes he begins to live in the sight of God. He trusts his God; he accepts God’s revelation of Himself; he confides, reposes, leans upon his Savior—and that moment he becomes a spiritually living man, quickened with spiritual life by God the Holy Spirit!

All his existence before that belief was but a form of death. When he comes to trust in God, he enters upon eternal life and is born from above.

Yes, but that is not all, nor half all—for if that man is to continue living before God; if he is to hold on to his way in holiness—his perseverance must be the *result* of continued faith. The faith which saves is not one single act done and ended on a certain day—it is an act continued and persevered in throughout the entire life of the man! The just not only commences to live by his faith, but he *continues* to live by his faith! He does not begin in the Spirit and end in the flesh, nor go so far by Grace and the rest of the way by the works of the Law. “The just shall live by faith,” says the text in Hebrews, “but if any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.”

Faith is essential all along every day and all the day, in all things. Our natural life begins by breathing and it must be continued by breathing. What the breath is to the body, that is faith to the soul. Brothers and Sisters, if we are to make advances and increase in the Divine life, it must still be in the same way! Our root is faith and only through the root comes growth. Progress in Grace comes not of carnal wisdom, or legal effort, or unbelief. No, the flesh brings no growth unto the spiritual life and efforts made in unbelief rather dwarf the inner life than cause it to grow. We become no stronger by mortifications, mourning, works, or striving, if these are apart from simple faith in God’s Grace—for by this one sole channel can nourishment come into the life of our spirit. The same door by which life came in at the first is that by which life continues to enter.

If any man says to me, “I once lived by believing in Christ, but I have now become spiritual and sanctified and, therefore, I have no longer any need to look as a sinner to the blood and righteousness of Christ,” I tell that man that he has need to learn the first principles of faith! I warn him that he has drawn back from the faith, for he who is justified by the Law, or in any other way beside the righteousness of Christ, has fallen from Grace and left the only ground upon which a soul can be accepted with God. Yes, up to Heaven’s gate there is no staff for us to lean upon but faith in the ever-blessed Savior and His Divine Atonement! Between this place and Heaven we shall never be able to live by merits, or live by fancies, or live by intellect—we shall still have to be as children taught of God—as Israel in the desert depending wholly on the great Invisible One. Ours it is, forever, to look out of self and to look above all things that are seen, for “the just shall live by his faith.”

It is a very broad sentence, a circle which encompasses the whole of our life which is worthy of the name. If there is any virtue; if there is any praise; if there is anything that is lovely or of good repute, we must receive it, exhibit it and perfect it by the exercise of faith. Life in the Father’s house; life in the Church; life in private; life in the world must all be in the power of faith if we are righteous men. That which is without faith is without life! Dead works cannot gratify the living God! Without faith it is impossible to please God. I beg you to notice, in the third place, what a very unqualified statement it is. “The just shall live by his faith.” Then, if a man has but a little faith, he shall live. And if he is greatly just, he shall still live by faith.

Many a just man has come no further than striving after holiness, but he is justified by his faith—his faith is trembling and struggling and his frequent prayer is, “Lord, I believe; help You my unbelief”—yet his faith has made him a just man! Sometimes he is afraid that he has no faith at all! And when he has deep depression of spirits, it is as much as he can do to keep his head above water. But even then his faith justifies him. He is like a boat upon a stormy sea—sometimes he is lifted up to Heaven by flashing waves of mercy—and another he sinks into the abyss among billows of affliction. What? Is he, then, a dead man? I answer, Does that man truly believe God? Does He accept the record concerning the Son of God? Can he truly say, “I believe in the forgiveness of sins,” and with such faith as he has, does he cling only to Christ and to none beside? Then that man shall live! He shall live by his faith!

If the littleness of our faith could destroy us, how few would be numbered with the living? “When the Son of man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?” Only here and there and now and then, a Luther appears who really does believe with all his heart. The most of us are not so big as Luther’s little finger—we have not so much faith in our whole soul as he had in one hair of his head! But yet even that little faith makes us live. I do not say that little faith will give us the strong, vigorous and lion-like life which Luther had—but we shall live. The statement makes no distinction between this and that degree of faith, but still lays it down as an unquestionable Truth of God—“the just shall live by faith.” Blessed be God, then, I shall live, for I believe in the Lord Jesus as my Savior and my All! Do you not, also, believe in Him? Yes, and is it not singular that this unqualified statement should not mention any other Grace as helping to make up the ground on which just men live?

“The just shall live by his faith.” But has he not *love*? Has he not *zeal*? Has he not *patience*? Has he not *hope*? Has he not *humility*? Has he not *holiness*? Oh, yes, he has all these and he lives *in* them—but he does not live *by* them, because none of these so intimately connects him with Christ as does his faith! I will venture to use a very homely figure because it is the best I can think of. Here is a little child, a suckling. It has many necessary members, such as its eyes, its ears, its legs, its arms, its heart and so forth. And all these are necessary to it, but the one *organ* by which the tiny baby lives is its mouth, by which it sucks from its mother all its nourishment. Our faith is that mouth by which we suck in fresh life from the promise of the ever-blessed God. Thus faith is that which we live by! Other Graces are necessary, but *faith* is the life of them all. We do not undervalue love, or patience, or penitence, or humility any more than we depreciate the eyes or the feet of the baby. Still, the means of the life of the spiritual man is that mouth by which he receives Divine food from the Truths of God revealed by the Holy Spirit in sacred Scripture. Other Graces produce results from that which faith receives, but faith is the Receiver-General for the whole isle of man.

This, dear Friends, to proceed a little farther, is a very suggestive statement—“The just shall live by his faith”—because it wears so many meanings. First, the righteous man is even to *exist* by his faith. That is to

say, the lowest form of Grace in a righteous character is dependent upon faith. But, Brothers and Sisters, I hope you will not be so foolish as to say—"If I am but a living child of God, it is all I need." No, we wish not only to have life, but to have it more abundantly! See yonder man rescued from drowning? He is yet alive, but the only evidence of it is the fact that a mirror is somewhat bedewed by his breath—you would not be content to be alive for years in that poor fashion, would you? You ought to be grateful if you are spiritually alive even in that feeble way, but still, we do not want to remain in a swooning state—we wish to be active and vigorous!

Yet even for that lowest life you must have faith. For the feeblest kind of spiritual existence that can be called life at all, faith is necessary. The just who barely live, who are feeble in mind, who are scarcely saved, are, nevertheless, delivered by faith. Without faith there is no heavenly life whatever. Take the word, "life," in a better sense, and the same will apply—"The just shall live by his faith." We sometimes meet with very poor persons who say to us in a pitiful tone, "Our wages are dreadfully scant." We say to them, "Do you really live upon so small a sum?" They answer, "Well, Sir, you can hardly call it *living*, but we exist somehow." None of us would wish to live in that style if we could help it. We mean, then, by "life," some measure of enjoyment, happiness and satisfaction. The just, when they have comfort, joy and peace, have them by faith. Thank God, peace of heart is our normal state because faith is an abiding Grace. We sing for joy of heart and rejoice in the Lord and, blessed be the Lord, this is no novelty to us! But we have known this bliss and still know it by faith alone.

The moment faith comes in, the music strikes up—if it were gone the owls would hoot! Luther can sing a Psalm in spite of the devil, but he could not have done so if he had not been a man of faith. He could defy emperors, kings, popes and bishops while he took firm hold upon the strength of God, but only then! Faith is the life of life and makes life worth living. It puts joy into the soul to believe in the great Father and His everlasting love; in the efficacious Atonement of the Son and in the indwelling of the Spirit; in resurrection and eternal glory! Without these we were, of all men, most miserable. To believe these glorious truths is to live—"The just shall live by his faith." Life also means strength. We say of a certain man, "What life he has in him! He is full of life! He seems always alive." Yes, the just obtain energy, force, vivacity, vigor, power, might and life by faith.

Faith bestows on Believers a royal majesty. The more they can believe, the more mighty they become. This is the head that wears a crown! This is the hand that wields a scepter! This is the foot whose royal tread does shake the nations! Faith in God links us with the King, the Lord God Omnipotent! By faith the just live on when others die. They are not overcome by prevalent sin, or fashionable heresy, or cruel persecution, or fierce affliction—nothing can kill spiritual life while faith abides—"The just shall live by faith." Continuance and perseverance come this way. The righteous man, when he is put back a while, is not baffled. And when he is wounded by enemies, he is not slain. Where another man is drowned, he swims.

Where another man is trampled under foot, he rises and shouts victoriously—"Rejoice not over me, O my enemy! If I fall, yet shall I rise again!"

In the fiery furnace of affliction he walks unharmed through faith. Yes, and when his turn comes to die and, with many tears, his Brothers and Sisters carry his ashes to the tomb, "He, being dead, yet speaks." The blood of righteous Abel cried from the ground to the Lord and it is still crying down the ages, even to this hour. Luther's voice, through 400 years, still sounds in the ears of men and quickens our pulses like the beat of drum in martial music—he lives! He lives because he was a man of faith. I would sum up and illustrate this teaching by mentioning certain incidents of Luther's life. Upon the great Reformer, Gospel Light broke by slow degrees. It was in the monastery that, in turning over the old Bible that was chained to a pillar, he came upon this passage—"The just shall live by his faith." This heavenly sentence stuck to him, but he hardly understood all its bearings.

He could not, however, find peace in his religious profession and monastic habit. Knowing no better, he persevered in so many penances and mortifications so arduous, that sometimes he was found fainting through exhaustion. He brought himself to death's door. He must make a journey to Rome, for in Rome there is a fresh church for every day and you may be sure to win the pardon of sins and all sorts of benedictions in these holy shrines. He dreamed of entering a city of holiness, but he found it to be a haunt of hypocrites and a den of iniquity! To his horror, he heard men say that if there was a Hell, Rome was built on top of it, for it was the nearest approach to it that could be found in this world! But he still believed in its Pope and he went on with his penances, seeking rest, but finding none.

One day he was climbing upon his knees the Sancta Scala which still stands in Rome. I have stood amazed, at the bottom of this staircase, to see poor creatures go up and down on their knees in the belief that it is the very staircase that our Lord descended when He left Pilate's house! Certain steps are said to be marked with drops of blood—these the poor souls—I almost said, fools—kiss most devoutly. Well, Luther was crawling up these steps one day when that same text which he had met with before, in the monastery, sounded like a clap of thunder in his ears, "The just shall live by his faith." He rose from his prostration and went down the steps never to grovel upon them again. At that time the Lord worked in him a full deliverance from superstition and he saw that not by priests, nor priestcraft, nor penances, nor by *anything* that *he* could do was he to live, but that he must live by his faith.

Our text of this morning had set the monk at liberty and set his soul on fire! No sooner did he believe this than he began to live in the sense of being active. At this time a gentleman named Tetzl, was going about all over Germany selling the forgiveness of sins for so much ready cash. No matter what your offense, as soon as your money touched the bottom of the box your sins were gone! Luther heard of this, grew indignant and exclaimed, "I will make a hole in his drum," which assuredly he did—and in several other drums! The nailing up of his Theses on the church door was a sure way of silencing the indulgence music! Luther proclaimed pardon

of sin by faith in Christ without money and without price—and the Pope's indulgences were soon objects of derision.

Luther lived by his faith and, therefore, he who otherwise might have been quiet, denounced error as furiously as a lion roars upon his prey. The faith that was in him filled him with intense life and he plunged into war with the enemy. After a while they summoned him to Augsburg and to Augsburg he went, though his friends advised him not to go. They summoned him, as a heretic, to answer for himself at the Diet of Worms. And everybody bade him stay away, for he would be sure to be burned—but he felt it necessary that the testimony should be borne and so, in a wagon he went from village to village and town to town, preaching as he went! The poor people came out to shake hands with the man who was standing up for Christ and the Gospel at the risk of his life. You remember how he stood before that august assembly and though he knew, as far as human power went, that his defense would cost him his life, for he would, probably, be committed to the flames like John Huss, yet he played the man for the Lord his God?

That day in the German Diet, Luther did a work for which ten thousand times ten thousand mothers' children have blessed his name and blessed, yet more, the name of the Lord his God! To put him out of harm's way for a while, a prudent friend took him prisoner and kept him out of the strife, in the castle of Wartburg. There he had a good time of it, resting, studying, translating, making music and preparing himself for the future, which was to be so eventful. He did all that a man can do who is outside of the fray, but, "the just shall live by his faith," and Luther could not be buried alive in ease—he must be getting on with his lifework! He sends word to his friends that he who was coming would soon be with them, and all of a sudden he appeared at Wittenberg. The prince meant to have kept him in retirement somewhat longer, but Luther must live—and when the Elector feared that he could not protect him, Luther wrote him, "I come under far higher protection than yours; no, I hold that I am more likely to protect Your Grace than Your Grace to protect me! He who has the strongest faith is the best protector."

Luther had learned to be independent of all men, for he cast himself upon his God! He had all the world against him and yet he lived right merrily—if the Pope excommunicated him, he burned the bull! If the Emperor threatened him, he rejoiced because he remembered the Words of the Lord, "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together. He that sits in the heavens shall laugh." When they said to him, "Where will you find shelter if the Elector does not protect you?" He answered, "Under the broad shield of God." Luther could not be still! He must speak and write and thunder! And oh, with what confidence he spoke! Doubts about God and Scripture he abhorred! Melancthon says he was not dogmatic. I rather differ from Melancthon, there, and reckon Luther to be the chief of dogmatists! He called Melancthon the, "soft treader," and I wonder what we should have done if Luther had been Melancthon and had trod softly, too?

The times needed a firmly assured leader and faith made Luther all that for years, notwithstanding his many sorrows and infirmities. He was a Titan, a giant, a man of splendid mental caliber and strong physique, but his main life and force lay in his faith. He suffered much in exercises of the mind and through diseases of body. And these might well have occasioned a display of weakness, but that weakness did not appear, for when he believed, he was as sure of what he believed as of his own existence and, therefore, he was strong. If every angel in Heaven had passed before him and each one had assured him of the Truth of God, he would not have thanked them for their testimony, for he believed God without the witness of either angels or men! He thought the Word of Divine Testimony to be more sure than anything that seraphim could say! This man was forced to live by his faith, for he was a man of stormy soul—and only faith could speak peace to him.

Those stirring excitements of his brought on him, afterwards, fearful depressions of spirit—and then he needed faith in God. If you read a spiritual life of him, you will find that it was hard work, sometimes, for him to keep his soul alive. Being a man of like passions with us, and full of imperfections, he was, at times, as desponding and despairing as the weakest among us. And the swelling grief within him threatened to burst his mighty heart. Both he and John Calvin frequently sighed for the rest of Heaven, for they loved not the strife in which they dwelt, but would have been glad to peacefully feed the flock of God on earth and then to enter into rest. These men dwelt with God in holy boldness of believing prayer, or they could not have lived at all. Luther's faith laid hold upon the Cross of our Lord and would not be stirred from it. He believed in the forgiveness of sins and could not afford to doubt it.

He cast anchor upon Holy Scripture and rejected all the inventions of clerics and all the traditions of the fathers. He was assured of the Truth of the Gospel and never doubted but what it would prevail though earth and Hell were leagued against it. When he came to die, his old enemy assailed him fiercely, but when they asked him if he held the same faith, his, "Yes," was positive enough! They needed not to have asked him—they might have been sure of that. And now, today, the Truths of God proclaimed by Luther continue to be preached and will be till our Lord, Himself, shall come! Then the Holy City shall need no candle, neither light of the sun, because the Lord, Himself, shall be the Light of His people! But till then we must shine with Gospel Light to our utmost. Brothers and Sisters, let us stand to it that as Luther lived by faith, even so will we—and may God the Holy Spirit work in us more of that faith. Amen and Amen!

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# PRIDE THE DESTROYER

## NO. 2591

A SERMON  
**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 27, 1883.

*“Behold the proud, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him;  
but the just shall live by his faith.”*  
**Habakkuk 2:4.**

HABAKKUK had to prophesy to the people that God would eventually deliver them out of the hand of the Chaldeans and send them better times. But he warned them that although the vision would come and, as far as God was concerned, it would not really tarry, yet they would grow impatient under their suffering and they would say that the vision *did* tarry. And so, indeed, it would seem to do while they were suffering—and the Prophet here hints at the reason why God’s merciful deliverances may sometimes be delayed. The Lord is willing to give mercy directly, for He delights not in judgment. If it were according to wisdom, we would have nothing from God’s hand but that which is pleasant and sweet, for He would not cause any one of His creatures a needless pain—and He is full of gentleness and tenderness and mercy.

The reason why the vision tarried in Habakkuk’s day, and the mercy was slow in coming, was that the trials of the people might act as a test of their character. In order to separate the precious from the vile, God used the winnowing fan of affliction, that the chaff might be blown away and the pure wheat remain. Often, in national trials, the furnace is heated exceedingly hot and the fire is blown upon with a fierce blast in order that the gold may be divided from the dross. It is always God’s purpose to put a division between Israel and Egypt, between him that fears the Lord and him that fears Him not. You and I cannot make that division. In this world it is very dangerous work to try to pull up the tares, for we are very apt to pull up the wheat, also. When, at last, we shall haul our big net to shore, then may we begin to separate the contents and put the good into vessels and cast the bad away.

But now, if we were to try to sort the contents of the drag net, we would probably throw away as many of the good as of the bad, and save as many of the bad as of the good! We cannot do the separating work, but God is constantly doing it and often, in times of trouble, trial becomes a very searching test of men. Those who looked like true Believers while all was smooth and bright, have given up their confidence in God when trial has been fierce and long-protracted. This is the patience of the

saints, but, alas, this is often the *impatience* of mere professors—and God thus makes men see what they really are! They perceive what is in their hearts when they are exposed to long-continued and severe affliction. See, then, one reason why troubles come upon both the righteous and the wicked—that men’s true character may be discovered and that the secrets of their hearts may be revealed.

It happened in this case, and it happens in a great many other instances, that the fierce heat of the furnace of trouble separates men into two classes. One class is composed of men who are high and lifted up in heart. Our text says, “Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him.” Then there is another class, namely, the just. And of these the text says, “The just shall live by his faith.” My dear Friends, when trial comes on us—as it surely will—may you and I be able to bear it! May we prove to be men and women who can endure it and if it is so, we shall live by faith! That will be our distinguishing mark. But if any of us are proud and have lofty ideas concerning ourselves, “the day comes, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yes, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of Hosts.” Let us bear this great Truth of God in mind as we come to the direct consideration of our text.

**I.** I shall speak first upon these words of the Lord to Habakkuk as REVEALING A GREAT SIN. “His soul which is lifted up is not upright in him.” The great sin is the sin of pride, the lifting up of the soul in rebellion against the Lord.

This sin of pride is often forgotten and many persons do not even think it is a sin at all. Here is a man who says that he is absolutely perfect. Does he know what the sin of pride really is? What prouder being can there be than one who talks like that? “Oh, but,” he says, “I am humble.” Is there any soul living that is so proud as he is who says he is humble? Is not that the acme and climax of pride? Another says, “I hate flattery.” Did not one say to Julius Caesar that he hated flatterers, “being then,” as the world’s poet says, “most flattered”? Yes, assuredly, that soft silken voice that says, “You never give way to pride, you are of a lowly spirit, you are never lifted up. In fact, you hardly appreciate yourself highly enough and nobody else does because you are so humble!” Why, that is the worst kind of pride! It has only put on the sheepskin instead of coming out in its true wolfish garb!

Pride, to begin with, I am afraid, may be set down as *the sin of human nature*. If there is a sin that is universal, it is this. Where is it *not* to be found? Hunt among the highest and loftiest in the world and you will find it there. And then go and search among the poorest and the most miserable and you will find it there. There may be as much pride inside a beggar’s rags as in a prince’s robes and a harlot may be as proud as a model of chastity. Pride is a strange creature—it never objects to its lodgings. It will live comfortably enough in a palace and it will live equally at its ease in a hovel. Is there any man in whose heart pride does not lurk?

If anyone held up his hand and said, "I am one," I would answer, "That is Number One in the widest street of the whole city of Self-Conceit," for, when we fancy that we have clean escaped from pride, it is only because we have lost the sense of its weight through being surrounded with it! A man who bears a bowl of water feels its weight but if he goes right into the water, it will be all over him, and yet he will not notice the burden of it. He who lives in pride up to the neck—no, he who is over head and heels in pride is the most likely to imagine that he is not proud at all!

*Pride takes all manner of shapes.* You and I, I daresay, have very different forms of pride. Perhaps my pride does not hold any relationship to your pride and your pride, of course, is a very right sort of pride. "It is what I call a proper pride," says one. Yes, that is your sort of pride. Mine, I admit, is a very *improper* one. I frankly make that confession, I cannot and dare not think that it has any propriety about it at all—it is a miserable, wretched affair! So is yours, I think, and you would agree with me if you could but see it as it really is. But pride takes all manner of shapes. Have you ever seen it in the man of property? He is a very important individual. It may be that his property is not very large but, still, considering the village in which he lives, he is quite a big man—and on the vestry—why, he is as big as an emperor! You and I do not, perhaps, think much of him, but that does not matter to him, for in his own estimation he is a very great man. Then there is a London merchant. If he has succeeded in life, what a great man he is—how proud, how exclusive! How he looks down upon his fellow men! How could you, being of an inferior grade, venture into his pew and sit side by side with him? He carries his pride even into the House of God! We have seen it there and mourned over it, but it is easy enough for a man to become proud of his possessions.

Another man, with no possessions, is proud of his bodily strength. He is very strong. Let anybody wrestle with him and he shall see what a Samson he is! And, oh, how vain-glorious he grows, and how proud—proud of his strength of muscle and sinew and bone! Another man is proud of his talent. If he has not acquired any wealth by it, yet he ought to have done so. If the world has not yet recognized him as a genius, he has recognized himself most distinctly! He is a very first-class man in his own line of things. Listen to him as he boasts of what he has learned! We have known others boast of their character. When we have explained what "a sinner" means, they have been kind enough to say, in a complimentary sort of way, "Yes, we are all sinners." But they did not mean that they had really sinned at all. No, not they! They had a fine, splendid, unworn righteousness that was "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." You know the good people I mean, always able to glory that they have kept the Law of God from their youth up, and have done what they ought to have done—that is a form that pride very frequently takes.

Even in people who know the Lord, see what relics of pride there will often be! Remember what Mr. Bunyan said on one occasion—after he

had done preaching, a Brother came to him and said, "You have preached an admirable sermon." "Ah," said Bunyan, "you are too late! The devil told me that before I got down the pulpit stairs." A good Brother prayed at the Prayer Meeting very sweetly, very devoutly. And when he had finished, there came a soft whisper in his ear, "You have quite recovered that Prayer Meeting from its dullness—what a wonderful man you are!" And when we have not ventured to do anything of the sort in public, if we get five minutes' communion with God in secret prayer, then up comes Satan, again, and says, "Oh, you are growing in Grace! You are a wonderful Christian." If you cannot realize your Lord's Presence and you are humbled and bowed to the dust because you have not that enjoyment of God which you used to have, then Satan comes, and says, "How tender of conscience you are! How jealous of yourself! How watchful you have been!" And up go your topsails and all your flags of pride are flying in the breeze as you think what a fine saint you are! So, you see, it is as I said, pride takes many shapes.

Now, in all cases, *pride is most unreasonable*. There is never in a poor sinner any reason why he should be proud. Suppose a man is wealthy? Well, who gave that wealth to him? And having it, now, how much of it can he carry away with him? And is wealth always a testimonial to the character of its possessor? Is it not sometimes given to the very basest of mankind? And though it is, in some cases, the reward of honesty, of industry and of perseverance and self-denial, yet even then it does not always bring comfort to a man's heart—and we can ask him, "What have you that you have not received?" Of all forms of pride, this pride of wealth is one of the most wicked! Suppose a man boasts of his talent? For what has he to pride himself in that? Did he make his own talent? Suppose that his skull happens to be a little bigger than his neighbor's and that there are certain organs there more fully developed than in others—did he create his own brain? Did he give himself his own capacities? There is a great deal in our descent and in our birth gifts, but, being gifts, these are not things for us to pride ourselves upon—for them we must give all the glory to God, for certainly they come from Him! And what if a man has a spotless character? Yet he who is most honest to himself knows that there are, even within him, secret things opposed to his God—and things to be repented of.

And what if we have Grace? O my Brothers and Sisters, the worst thing in the world would be to be proud of our Grace, or of our Graces, because these come to us as a bare act of charity! Shall the beggar be proud because he is a bigger beggar than others? Will a man who is very deeply in debt say, "I have reason to be more proud than you because I owe ten times as much as you do"? Yet that is just the condition of every man who has any Divine Grace—he owes it all to God—and he who has the most Grace is the most in debt to his Lord! I think that the more God's glories strike our eyes, the humbler we shall be. And the more Grace we receive, the more we shall be like Peter when his boat was full

of fish and it began to sink—and he cried, under a sense of his own unworthiness—“Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” Yes, as we get weighed down with mercy, we shall begin to sink in our own esteem! There can never be any reasonableness in our dreaming that there is in us any cause for pride.

And to close this part of my discourse, let me remind you that *whenever pride is found, it is always hateful to God*. Why, pride is even hateful to men! Men cannot bear a proud man and, therefore, a proud man who has any sense left often sees that it is so, and he tries to affect manners of modesty. He will seem to be humble when he really is not, if he has the suspicion that all about him will dislike him if they know him to be proud. But God cannot stand pride—it is a part of His daily business to put down the proud. When He lifts up His hands, it is either to bless the humble or else to abase the proud. “He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their seats and exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent away empty.” He intends that the pride of all human glory shall be stopped, so He lifts His great battle-ax and crashes through the shield of the mighty. He fits His arrow to the bow and finds out the joints of the harness of the proud—and they fall before Him. God cannot endure them, for pride is a stab at Deity—it is an attack upon the undivided Glory of God. “My Glory will I not give to another.” He would as soon give it to graven images as to men! And He will not let either false gods or proud men have it! It is to Himself, and to Himself, alone, that all praise and honor and glory must come.

Thus much, then, about the great sin revealed in our text. Let us pause a moment or two for silent prayer before we pass on to the next part of our subject.

**II.** Now let us think how THIS GREAT SIN BETRAYS A SAD EVIL—“Behold the proud, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him.”

If he is a proud man, he is not an upright man. If he thinks highly of himself, there is something out of the perpendicular. If a man says, “I do not need to make confession of sin, I do not need to come to Christ as a guilty sinner,” then, Friend, I must tell you that *you do not know the truth*. If you knew certain things, truthfully, you would change your tune. For instance, a man who says, “I have kept the Law,” does not know what the Law means. Perhaps he supposes that those ten great Commandments only refuse him certain outward things—but he does not know that they are all spiritual—that, for instance, if the Commandment says, “You shall not commit adultery,” it is not merely the *act* of adultery that is forbidden, but every sin of the kind. Every tendency to lewdness—every unchaste word or thought—for so Christ explains it, “I say unto you, that whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart.” This makes the Law of God look very different from the mere casual reading of it that many give.

If it says, "You shall not covet," any thought of a desire to gain that which is my neighbor's, by unlawful means, in discontent with God's Providence comes under that Law. So is it with all the Commandments—they are spiritual, they are far-reaching and when a man understands their true character, he cries—"O my God, I have, indeed, broken Your holy Law! How could I have kept it? From the first moment when I sinned, my fallen nature has incapacitated me from ever keeping this thrice-holy Law of Yours."

If a man really knows the true character of the Law of God, it may be that he does not know the truth about himself—does not know that he is foolish—does not know that the very springs of his nature are corrupt—does not know that out of the polluted fountain of his unregenerate heart there can only come corrupt streams. When he really begins to know himself as he is in the sight of God, then he cries, "God be merciful to me a sinner." But not till then. Hence, our text says, "His soul which is lifted up is not upright in him." That is, it is not according to the Truth of God—he does not know the Truth, he does not judge according to the Truth—he judges according to a false standard.

This expression may also mean that *he does not seek the Light of God*. You can often notice that if a man has a high opinion of himself, he is extremely good and excellent and does not need to be saved by Grace. He does not want to be told too much about himself. He likes to go to a place of worship where they prophesy very smooth things and if he ever strays in where there is very plain talk, he says that the preacher is too personal. The Hindu thinks it is wicked to kill an insect, or to take life of any kind—and that he will surely not enter into his happy paradise if he does. When the missionary showed a Hindu, by means of a microscope, how many living creatures there were in a single drop of the water which was in a glass on the table, in order to convince him of the impossibility of avoiding the destruction of life if he drank the water, what did the Hindu do? Why, he smashed up the microscope! That was his way of answering it! And so, sometimes, if the Truth of God is put very plainly so that men cannot escape from the force of it, not wishing to know the uncomfortable Truth, they turn upon their heels and find fault with the preacher and refuse to hear any more from him!

Now, he that does not want to know all the Truth of God is not upright, for, as our Lord said to Nicodemus, "Everyone that does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." But he that is upright in heart courts the light! He invites the inspection, even, of God Himself, for he dreads above all things the possibility of being self-deceived. O dear Friends, this pride, if we have it, betrays its dire evil by a lack of uprightness in not desiring the Light of God!

And, yet further, there is another form of this lack of uprightness. A man whose soul is lifted up with pride has *his whole religion warped so that there is nothing upright about him*. Have you ever heard him pray? "God, I thank you that I am not as other men are." This is the sum and

substance of his prayer, for pride has warped it. If he praises God, it is not as a sinner saved by Grace—he sings something about what he has done and what he has become—and always the first point in his conversation is, “See what I am! See what I am!” Pride warps him everywhere, so that he cannot do a single action that is not affected by it. If he gives alms to the poor, he has his penny in one hand, but his other hand is holding to his mouth a trumpet so that he may blow it at the corner of the street so that everybody may know how generous he is! He spoils all that he does because his soul is lifted up with pride—which warps his whole life.

I believe, dear Friends, that *a heart of this kind will never stand the test of the coming days*. Have you ever noticed that when Paul quotes this verse in the Epistle to the Hebrews, he makes a very significant addition to it? He says, “The just shall live by faith: but if any man draws back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him.” That is a kind of hint to us that when the heart of a man is lifted up with pride, in due time he will draw back. I will tell you, dear Friends, what I have seen many times. I have seen men, members of Christian Churches, undoubtedly very earnest, very generous, indeed, all that you could wish them to be. They have prospered in worldly affairs, but where are they now? One of the severest tests that can be applied to any man is to let him be made wealthy! Well might our Savior say, as the rich young man turned away from Him, “How with much difficulty shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God.” The true children of God can bear even this test, but there are many professors who cannot. Wealth is a refining pot that tests the sincerity of their profession. This is how it acts. The man has grown too respectable to worship where he used to meet with a few poor godly people—he must go to some place where there is a higher class of society. It is true that there is no Gospel preaching where he goes and that there is all the hypocrisy of semi-Romanism, but the *elite* of the neighborhood go there and so must he! If he happens to meet any of his old friends with whom he seemed to be so glad to have communion in years past, he scarcely recognizes them! He does not know them in the Lord. He has gone clean away from them. Is not that often the case? And why is it so? Because the gentleman always was a person of importance and now, having grown wealthy, he is still more important! So he goes away from those who would be his best friends. That is because his soul is not upright in him.

I have also seen just the opposite of this man. I have seen persons grow very poor after being in circumstances of comparative comfort. Before they were poor, they seemed to be very earnest Christians, but, after a while, when poverty had overtaken them, they did not like to come among their old friends because their clothes were not quite as new and their house was not on quite as good a street—and they were going down in the world. Instead of clinging to Christ all the more. Instead of following after the Lord and making sure of a heavenly inheritance when the

world was slipping away from them, they have turned back and have renounced whatever semblance of faith they ever possessed. And the reason is because their soul was lifted up with pride and was not upright. They never were truly brought low and humbled before God and so, when the testing time came, away they went! Now, dear Friends, such a test as this will be applied to all of you. You will either go up or go down. Or else, if you remain in the same station of life, the test in your case will be time. You will grow weary in the ways of God. You will want some fresh thing unless the Lord has truly humbled you and brought you to live by faith in Him. But if the Lord has worked effectually in you, by His Grace, then He may make you as rich as He likes, or as poor as He likes, or let you live as long as Methuselah if He likes, but you will stand fast to your profession because the root of the matter is in you. God grant that it may be so!

**III.** Thirdly, and very briefly, PRIDE OF HEART DISCOVERS IN MEN A SERIOUS OPPOSITION. Let me read the whole of our text. “Behold the proud, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but—*but* the just shall live by his faith.” And the *but*, here, seems to imply that as long as a man’s soul is lifted up with pride, he will never truly know anything about faith and never come to live by faith.

For, first, the gentleman is *too great to live by faith*. He will not even give himself time to consider what faith means! He is so busy in the City. He has to look after such a number of things. He is so important a person that he cannot trouble his head about faith. Teach a Sunday school child, teach a servant girl, teach an old woman, teach a laborer if you please, but as for himself—well, to tell the whole truth, he does not care about religion. He says that he cannot bring his mind down to such a thing as that! His notion is that he is altogether too great a man to give himself to the consideration of this matter. Now, these are the people that destroy their own souls because they will not be candid enough to enquire and learn what the way of salvation is—

**“Were I so tall to reach the pole,  
And grasp the ocean with a span,”**

I would wish to know what God has to say to me. And if I could grow as holy as the archangel, I would still delight to sit at Jesus’ feet and hear what He has to reveal to me. But there are some who are too big for that kind of thing—they will never believe in Christ, for they are too great, even, to consider what faith is!

And, next, there are some who are *too wise to ever believe*. They read certain “high-class modern literature” and their minds have grown very expansive. They know how to sort out that which is philosophical and that which is not. They can judge their Creator—they are more infallible than the Holy Spirit—they sit in trial upon Prophets and Apostles—and upon the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself! They pick and choose what they will believe and what they will reject. Such people do not believe to the saving of the soul—of course they do not—for it is essential to faith that

you become as a little child. And until you do so, you cannot have true faith in Christ.

There are some who are not so much burdened with worldly wisdom, but *they fancy that they are too good to be saved*. I know that the notion with some people is that salvation is only for very wicked people—for those who have been to prison, those who have egregiously sinned against the rules of society. Do you not know, my dear Hearer, that there is the same way of salvation for you who have been amiable and excellent and moral, as there is for the drunk and the thief? Do you not know that there is only one gate to Heaven for the murderer, if he is saved, and for you who have kept the Commandments from your youth up? “You must be born again,” is a necessity for the children of saints as well as for the children of sinners! “You must be washed in the precious blood,” is as true for the very best of fallen humanity as for the very worst! By these stern Truths of God, the axe is laid to the very root of the tree of self-righteousness! Oh, that men did but think of this! But they are so good—so very good—that they cannot imagine that they are to be saved like the very chief of sinners! And so they reject the only way of salvation.

And I have known some, too, who are *now too “advanced” to continue to live by faith*. They do not want to come to Christ just as they did *at first*—they are so now “advanced” that they stand on a different footing from what they did. Well, I can only say to such that I believe that this is nothing but pride of heart. As for myself, I will, by God’s Grace, never go one inch beyond the position of Jack the Huckster—

***“I’m a poor sinner, and nothing at all,  
But Jesus Christ is my All-in-All.”***

This is the only ground upon which I dare set my feet! They always begin to slip and slide beneath me when I get beyond that. Christ for me, first and last, Alpha and Omega, the Beginner and Finisher of faith! I believe that every other ground of standing is a quicksand that will swallow a man up. “The just shall live by his faith” and if any are getting so proud that they are living by their *feelings*, or living on their old *experiences*, I think that we may stand in doubt of them and they have reason to stand in doubt of themselves! There was one who used to say that he was not half so much afraid of his sins as he was of what he conceived to be his good works, for his sins had humbled him full often, but what he thought were his good works had puffed him up and done him much more mischief. I am more afraid of a lofty pride of self than of anything else under Heaven. He that is down need fear no fall, but he that rises very high in his own esteem is not far from destruction! “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.”

**IV.** I close my discourse with this last point. Our text, after having spoken against pride, DIRECTS US TO A VERY PLEASING CONTRAST—“The just shall live by his faith.”

There is a man with an upright heart, an honest tongue, a careful hand, an obedient walk. *He is a really just man*. Are there such? There

are none that are perfectly just, but there are many who may be called just in the Scriptural sense of the term. They walk before God and are perfect, even as was said of Job, "That man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil." Blessed be God, there are tens of thousands of His people that are just men and women whom He has taught to serve Him to do as they would be done by, seeking to do to others as they would have others do to them! There are plenty of such. It is a beautiful sight to see a really just man. May we live in such company! May we die in such company!

Now, whenever you come to talk with these just men, you will find that *they are truly humble*. They do not live upon their works. The more holy a man is, generally the more he depreciates himself. You do not hear a just man saying, "I am living before God by my alms, by my prayers, by my repentance, by my fasting, by my Church attendance, by my Chapel attendance." You never hear anything of the sort—a just man disclaims his own righteousness, thinks nothing of it—and wraps himself up in the righteousness of Christ, and says that he is "accepted in the Beloved."

Our text says that this man "shall live by his faith." That is to say, when trial comes and the proud man dies, *the just man lives on*. Where is the man who had such a lofty idea of himself? Ah, where is he? He is gone, but this man of faith lives on. You know the story of the two martyrs. They had both witnessed a good confession and, at last, they were laid by the heels in prison to wait for a few days and then to be burnt. One of them said to his fellow, "I am so afraid lest, when I come to the stake, the sharp pain should make a coward of me and I should turn away, and deny my Savior." "Oh," replied the other, "I have no fears about that! My faith in God is so firm that I am sure He will help me through. I am confident in what I have believed. I shall die like a man. I am not at all afraid of the fire." "Ah," said the first, "I lie awake at night, for fire is a dreadful thing, and I wonder how I shall act when I begin to burn. I do love the Lord, I know. And I do trust Him. But if I turn aside, it will be an awful thing! I am so afraid, for my flesh is very weak." The other answered, "I cannot bear to hear you talk like that. Here I am, full of confidence and full of faith. I never have any such feelings as you have. You are very imperfect—I have gone far beyond you."

When they came to the stake, our poor tempted friend burned splendidly, blessing and praising and magnifying the Lord! And the great, self-confident boaster recanted—and saved his wretched life! His soul, which was lifted up, was not upright in him. But the just man lived, in the very best sense, by his faith, and triumphed even amidst the flames! I shall not be amazed if many who have their topsails up, are blown out of the water and into the water—and wrecked when the great winds of temptation are out—while many who are creeping along, afraid of the tempest, with nothing but bare poles, will outlive the storm!

It is not the man who is great in his own sight that is great in the sight of God. It is he that is broken and contrite, little and weak and trembling,

and yet who believes in Jesus and casts himself upon the great love of God in Christ who shall live. Yes, and he shall so live that when he comes to die, *he shall die full of life and he shall enter into eternal life*. I know that I am addressing some who say that they are afraid to die and they think that they cannot be God's people because of that fear. Do not distress yourself in that way, my dear Friends! Perhaps you are not called to die just yet and you have, therefore, not yet had Dying Grace given to you—but you will have it when the time comes! A dear Friend of mine had been for many years in great bondage because he thought that he was afraid to die. God brought him out of that bondage in rather a singular manner. He happened to be in a London printing office, one day, and, next door, a wholesale chemist's took fire. There were a great many explosions and the place was burning furiously. He was upstairs and others began running down to make their escape.

My old friend was as cool as possible—he walked downstairs, he was in no hurry and, though there was great danger and everybody thought that the whole place and all that were in it would be burnt, he was quite calm. He said that when he reached the street, he stood and looked at the fire and said to himself, “Now, when I seem to be in danger of death, I am perfectly calm and happy. So, when I really come to die, that is how I shall be—I am sure that I shall, for I have tested and proved it.” And you timid, nervous people, have you not found out for yourselves that if ever you get into an accident, you are often the bravest people there? You feeble trembling ones seem strengthened up at the moment and so shall it be when you come to die if you are Believers in Jesus Christ! He that loved you will not leave you in your last minutes! Would you leave your wife, would you leave your child, would you leave your husband, if you saw any of these dear ones in the agonies of death? No, if you were a thousand miles away, you would come home to them to wipe the death sweat from their brows and moisten their parched lips! And do you think that our blessed God will be absent when we come to die? No. “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.” He will be there and Jesus will be there and the Holy Spirit will be there—and so we who believe in Jesus shall die in peace.

Remember how rapidly our lives are passing away. One after another, from this congregation, goes into eternity every week. Do not go into eternity without Christ, I beseech you! “When shall I go?” you ask. Ah, that I cannot tell. You know how, all through the year, our friends keep on going. There is not a week passes without it being said to me, “So-and-So is gone.” I ask, “Did I know him? Whereabouts did he sit?” I look at the spot and I remember—“Yes, it was that gray-headed old man in that seat over yonder.” Or, “that young man with a wife and three or four children.” Yes, they are gone and if they were not saved, they are gone where hope can never reach them, where they are past all invitation, where they must forever wring their hands in anguish because they would not have Heaven and Christ on Free-Grace terms.

“Well, dear Sir, we are going to think about these things.” Are you? Will you tell me *when* you are going to think about them? I would rather that you stated a time, even if it were a year to come. It would be a dangerous thing to put it off so long, would it not? But, oh, if you keep your promise, I would rather that you said, “a year to come,” than that you should keep on, year after year, postponing your decision! Remember that you who are unsaved need three things. First, you need the pardon of sin—and it is scarcely necessary for me to repeat in your ears that you can only get it by coming to Christ. You desire also to be heard in prayer, your very heart sighs after that favor and you know there is but one Throne of Grace and only one Being who can present your petitions so that they shall be granted. And you also long to have a sight of God, a comforting sight of Him as your reconciled Father—and you know that you can never have that except through Jesus Christ.

These three things are to be found in Christ and they are not to be found anywhere else. If there is anyone here who wants Christ, I am so glad if he knows who Christ is and what are the treasures that are stored up in Him. It is a great thing to have this knowledge but, oh, it will be a terrible thing, bringing far greater responsibilities and involving sevenfold guilt, if you know *where* these things are and *what* they are—and yet do not seek to possess them yourselves. I leave with you the last words of my text, praying that they may describe you—“The just shall live by his faith.”

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

# THE MIDDLE PASSAGE

## NO. 1474

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 18, 1879,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

**(In commemoration of the completion of the 25<sup>th</sup> year of his  
Ministry over the Church meeting in the Tabernacle).**

***“O Lord, I have heard Your speech, and was afraid; O Lord, revive  
Your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years  
make known; in wrath remember mercy.”  
Habakkuk 3:2.***

HABAKKUK had the sadness of living at a time when true religion was in a very deplorable state. The nation had, to a great extent, departed from the living God. There was a godly party in the kingdom, but the ungodly and idolatrous faction was exceedingly strong. The Lord threatened judgment on the people on account of this and it was revealed to the Prophet that an invasion by the Chaldeans was near at hand. The Prophet, therefore, was filled with anxiety as to the future of his country because he saw its sinful condition and knew where it must end. The book of his prophecy begins with the earnest question of intercession, “O Lord, how long?” His spirit was stirred within him at the sin of the people and his heart was broken by a vision of the chastisement which the Lord had ordained.

It becomes all who bear witness for God to thus be stirred in soul when they see the name of God dishonored and have reason to expect the visitations of His wrath. A man without a heart of compassion is not a man of God. Yet Habakkuk was a man of strong faith, a happy circumstance, indeed, for him in evil times, for if faith is needed in the fairest weather, much more is needed when the storm is gathering! And if the just must live by faith even when the morning begins to break, how much more must they do so when the shadows are deepening into night? Those who have tender hearts to weep over the sins of their fellows also need brave hearts to stay themselves upon God.

Habakkuk's name, by interpretation, is *the embracer* and I may say of him that he truly was one who saw the promises afar off and was persuaded of them and embraced them. He took fast hold upon the goodness of the Lord and rested there. In reading his book, one is struck by the way in which he realized the Presence of God. Fitly does he entitle his book, “the burden which Habakkuk the Prophet *did see*,” for in the vividness of his apprehension he is eminently a “seer.” He perceives the Presence of God and bids the earth keep silent before Him. He beholds the Divine ways in the history of the chosen people and feels rottenness entering into his bones and a trembling seizing him.

God was very real to him and the way of God was very conspicuous before his mental eyes. Hence his faith was as vigorous as his reverence

was deep. It is in his prophecy that we read that wonderful Gospel sentence upon which Paul preaches many sermons, “The just shall live by faith”—and it is in this prophecy, too, that we find that notable resolution of Faith when, under the worst conceivable circumstances, she says or sings, “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the ‘God of my salvation.’”

Now, Beloved, it will be well for us if we have much of Habakkuk’s spirit and are grounded and settled by a strong confidence in God. If so, while we may have somber views, both as to the present and the future, we shall be freed from all despondency by casting ourselves upon Him whose ways are everlasting. His goings forth of old were so grand and glorious that to doubt Him is to slander Him! His Nature is so unchangeable that to reckon upon the repetitions of His gracious deeds is but to do Him the barest justice.

In the text which I have selected this morning with an eye to the celebration of the 25<sup>th</sup> year of our happy union as pastor and people, I see three points upon which I wish to dwell. The first is, *the Prophet’s fear*—“O Lord, I have heard Your speech, and was afraid.” The second is *the Prophet’s prayer*—“O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known.” And the third is *the Prophet’s plea*—“In wrath remember mercy,” coupled with the rest of the chapter in which he practically finds a plea for God’s present working in the report of what He had done for Israel in the olden times.

I. First, then, I want you to NOTICE THE PROPHET’S FEAR—“I have heard Your speech, and was afraid.” It is the fear of solemn awe—it is not dread or terror, but reverence. Read it in connection with the 20<sup>th</sup> verse of the preceding chapter—“But the Lord is in His holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before Him. O Lord, I have heard Your speech, and was afraid.” All else was hushed and then, in the solemn silence, he heard Jehovah’s voice and trembled. It is not possible that mortal men should be thoroughly conscious of the Divine Presence without being filled with awe. I suppose that this feeling in unfallen Adam was less overwhelming because he had no sense of sin, but surely even to him it must have been a solemn thing to hear the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.

Though filled with a childlike confidence, yet even innocent manhood must have shrunk to the ground before that majestic Presence. Since the Fall, whenever men have been favored with any special Revelation of God, they have been deeply moved with fear. There was a great Truth of God in the spirit of the old tradition that no man could see God’s face and live, for such a sense of nothingness is produced in the soul by consciousness of Deity that men so highly favored have found themselves unable to bear up under the load of blessing. Isaiah cries, “Woe is me! For I am undone; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts!” Daniel says, “There remained no strength in me.” Ezekiel declares, “When I saw it, I fell upon my face.” And John confesses, “When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead.”

You remember how Job cried unto the Lord, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eye sees You. Why I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Angels, who climb the ladder which Jacob saw, veil their faces when they look on God! And as for us who are at the foot of that ladder, what can we do but say with the Patriarch, "How dreadful is this place"? Albeit that it is the greatest of all blessings, yet is it an awful thing to be a favorite with God! Blessed among women was the Virgin Mother, to whom the Lord manifested such high favor, but for this very reason to her it was foretold, "Yes, a sword shall pierce through your own soul also." Blessed among men was he to whom God spoke as a friend, but it must be that a horror of great darkness should come upon him. It is not given to such frail creatures as we are to stand in the full blaze of Godhead, even though it is tempered by the mediation of Christ, without crying out with the Prophet, "I was afraid." "Who would not fear You, O King of nations?"

Habakkuk's awe of God was quickened by the "speech" which he had heard. "O Lord, I have heard Your speech," which is, by some, rendered, "report," and referred to the Gospel of which Isaiah says, "Who has believed our report?" But surely the meaning should rather be looked for in the *context* and this would lead us to interpret the "report" as relating to what God had *done* for His ancient people when He came from Teman, cleaving the earth with rivers and threshing the heathen in anger. The Prophet had been studying the history of Israel and had seen the hand of God in every stage of that narrative—from the passage of the Red Sea and the Jordan on to the casting out of the heathen and the settlement of Israel in Canaan.

He had heard the speech of God in the story of Israel in the silence of his soul. He had seen the deeds of the Lord as though newly enacted and he was filled with awe and apprehension, for he saw that while God had great favor for His people, yet He was provoked by their sins. And though He passed by their transgressions many and many a time, yet He did chasten them and did not wink at their iniquities. The Prophet remembered how God had smitten Israel in the wilderness till the graves of lust covered many an acre of the desert! He remembered how He had smitten them in Canaan, where tyrant after tyrant subdued them and brought them very low. He remembered the terrible judgments which the Lord had sent, one after another, thick and threefold upon His guilty people, fulfilling that ancient Word of His, "You, only, have I known of all the nations of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities."

He saw that burning text, "I the Lord your God am a jealous God," written in letters of fire all along the history of Jehovah's connection with His elect people and so he cried, "O Lord, I have heard Your speech, and was afraid." Probably, however, Habakkuk alludes to another source of apprehension, namely, the silent speech of God within his prophetic bosom, where, unheard by men, there were intimations of coming vengeance which intimations he afterwards put into words and left on record in the first chapter of his book. The Chaldeans, a people fierce and strong were coming up. They were a bitter and hasty nation, terrible and dreadful. They were swifter than leopards and fiercer than evening wolves.

These were hastening towards Judah as mighty hunters hurry to the prey and in the spirit of prophecy Habakkuk saw the land parched beneath the hoofs of the invading horses; princes and kings led away into captivity; the garden of the Lord turned into a desolate wilderness and Lebanon, itself, shorn of its forests by the hand of violence. The fear of this frightful calamity made him tremble, as well it might, for Jeremiah himself scarcely found tears enough to bewail the Chaldean woe!

Now, my Brethren, when the Lord leads His servants to look from their watchtowers and to guess the future by the past, we are also afraid. When we see God's chastisement of a sinful people in years gone by and are led to prognosticate the probable future of a sinful people in the *present* day, then do our hearts fail us for fear lest the Lord should avenge Himself upon the guilty nation in which we dwell! We are also afraid for ourselves with great fear, for we, also, have sinned. Thus, you see, the Prophet's fear was made up of these three things—first, a solemn awe inspired by the near Presence of the Lord who cannot look upon iniquity, lest haply He should break forth upon the people as a consuming fire. Secondly, an apprehension drawn from the past report of God's ways which He had made known to Moses and His acts to the children of Israel, lest He should again smite the erring nation. And then, thirdly, a further apprehension which projected itself into the future, that the Lord would execute the threats which He had so solemnly uttered by His Prophets and permit the Chaldeans to treat His people as though they were so many fishes of the sea to be taken in their net and devoured.

Putting those three things together, I advance to the Prophet's special subject of fear which has been generally overlooked but is very conspicuous in the text. The Prophet was afraid because of the particular period of national life through which his people were passing. They had come, if I read his prayer correctly, to "the midst of the years," or the middle period of their history. Habakkuk's ministry was not exercised in the first ages when Moses and Samuel prophesied, nor yet in these latter days wherein we live, upon whom the ends of the earth have come. He probably ministered 600 years before the coming of Christ—somewhere in the very center of human history—if that history is to make a week of thousands as to its years as many have imagined.

With regard to the Israelite people, they were now far removed from the day, "when Ephraim was a child." They were in their middle life when the best things ought to have been developed in them. The heroic age was gone and that unpoetical, matter of fact era was come in which men labored in the very fire and wearied themselves for very vanity and, therefore, like a tender intercessor, the Prophet cries, "O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known." The application to *ourselves* which I want to make this morning is drawn from the fact that we, also, as a Church, have reached "the midst of the years." Under the present pastorate we are like mariners in mid ocean, distant 25 leagues, or rather *years*, from the place of our departure and making all sail for the further shore.

As to any service we may expect, personally, to render, we are certainly in the midst of the years if not near to their end. In the course of Nature

we could not expect that more than another 25 years of service could be compassed by us [Brother Spurgeon died January 6, 1892, less than 13 years later.—eod] nor are we so foolish as to reckon even upon that! We have, at any rate, come to middle life in our Church relationship now that we celebrate our silver anniversary. Brothers and Sisters, there is about “the midst of the years” a certain special danger and this led the Prophet, as it shall lead *us* at this time, to pray, “O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known.”

Youth has its perils, but these are past! Age has its infirmities, but these we have not yet reached! It is ours, then, to pray against the dangers which are present with us “in the midst of the years.” The middle passage of life with us as individuals and with us as a Church is crowded with peculiar perils. Have you never noticed how previous dispensations have all passed away in their prime, long before they had grown gray with years? Upon the golden age of Paradise and perfection the sun went down before it was yet noon! The Patriarchal period saw a few of its hoary fathers wearing the veneration of centuries, but in a few generations men with lengthened lives had grown so skilled in sin that the Flood came and swept away the age before it had yet begun to fade!

Then came the Jewish state with its judges and its kings—and scarcely have we read that Solomon built a great house for the Lord before we perceive that Israel has gained the zenith of her glory and her excellence declines. Even so was it in the Christian Church of the first ages, so far as it was a visible organization. It began well—what hindered it? It was in full health and strength when it defied the lions and the flames and laughed emperors to scorn! But before long Constantine laid his royal hand upon it and the Church became sick of the king’s evil—the cruelest of all diseases to the Church of God. This malady, like a canker, ate into her very heart and defiled her soul so that what *should* have been a spiritual empire chastely wedded to the Lord Christ became the mistress of the kings of the earth!

Her Middle Ages were a night of darkness which even yet casts its dread shade across the nations. It seems as if the middle passage of communities cannot be safely passed except by a miracle of Divine Grace. The morning comes with a dawn of bright beams and sparkling dews, but before long the sun is hot and the fields are parched, or the sky is black with clouds and the glory of the day is marred. This is a matter of constant anxiety to the lover of his race who knows the jealousy of God and the frailty of His people, lest in the midst of the years the people should turn aside from their faithfulness and forget their first love and, therefore, the Lord should be provoked to remove their candlestick and leave them to their own devices. O Lord, my God, grant this may not happen unto this, Your Church!

What, then, are the dangers of this middle passage? First, there is a certain spur and stimulus of novelty about religious movements which, in a few years, is worn out. I well remember when we were called, “a nine days wonder,” and our critics prophesied that our work would speedily collapse! Such excitement had been before and had passed away—and this would be one among other bubbles of the hour! The nine days have

lasted considerably longer—may nine such days follow them in God's infinite mercy! Now, whatever detractors might say, we know that there was then a life, an energy, a freshness about everything which was done by us as a Church which we could hardly expect to continue with us for all these years.

Youthful novelty has certainly gone and the danger is that a community should be greatly weakened by the ceasing of that force which, in some cases, has been all the power possessed. Lady Huntingdon, in a letter to Mr. Berridge, deplored the fact that every new work, after a season, seemed to grow lifeless. Berridge remarked that in this the primitive Churches were much like our own and that after the former rain which falls at seed-time there is often a dry interval until the latter rain descends. I fear the good man's remark is sadly correct. From an admirable fervor, many cool down to a dangerous chill! This is to be bemoaned where it has occurred and it is to be feared where, as yet it has not happened, for such is the natural tendency of things. Beloved Brothers and Sisters, I have prayed to God that when what is called the *esprit de corps* is gone from us, the *Esprit de Dieu* may still abide with us! I have prayed that when the spirit which grows out of our association with each other declines, we may be sustained by the Spirit which unites us all to the Lord Jesus!

The middle passage becomes difficult, then, because things grow ordinary and commonplace which before were striking and remarkable. I do not know that this would matter much if it were not too often the case that with the stimulus of novelty certain other excitements also vanish. We tremble lest the people who prayed mightily at first should restrain prayer before the Lord; lest those who made many self-sacrifices should think that they have done enough; and lest those who have consecrated themselves unto the Lord should imagine that they began upon too high a key and cannot keep up the music to such a pitch. We tremble lest a people who have loved the souls of men and have been like mighty hunters before the Lord after sinners, may suddenly dream that they are excused from more effort and may leave others to do mission work for their Lord. It is an ill day when a feeling of satisfaction begins to creep over us, but this is one of the perils of "the midst of the years." I pray the reliance on God in which we began should never depart from us.

It often happens, in the commencement of religious movements, that men are weak and few and feeble and despised—but they trust in God and so they grow strong—and their strength becomes their overthrow. The tendency of our proud nature is to cease from childlike confidence in God when once it feels strong enough to rely upon itself! The Lord says not by many nor by few—and if even for a *moment* we should glory in our numbers and think that now we are powerful for the achievement of any work which we may undertake—we shall grieve the Spirit of God and He may, in holy jealousy, leave us to barrenness. This is to be dreaded beyond all things!

My Brethren, it is a glorious thing to be *weak*, that we may have the strength of God resting on us! It is a glorious thing to be *poor* and *mean* and *despised*, that the Lord may take such weak instruments and get

unto Himself Glory by the use of them! But it is a grievous evil if in the mid-day of prosperity, the Church should vex the Spirit of God by self-confidence and cause Him to withdraw His sacred succors! Another danger arises out of the pride of *achievement*. When men are beginning to work for Christ, they feel that they cannot do anything without Him and they trust in God to give them strength—and He answers their humble cry and does great things by them. But when a good work is worked, we are apt to feel, “We have won our laurels. We have borne the burden and the heat of the day and we may now rest.” This is fatal to progress! We shall do no more when we imagine that we have done enough!

You know the story of the painter who broke his palette, put down his brush and told his wife that he would never paint again for the artistic faculty had departed from him? When she enquired how he was aware of the sad fact, he answered, “The last picture I produced realized my ideal and satisfied me and, therefore, I am certain that I have lost my power as a painter.” It certainly is so that we are fit for Christ’s service only as long as we feel that we have as yet done *nothing* and are merely at the beginning of our purposed service. Those who pine for greater exploits have not yet spent themselves, but the danger lies in saying, “I have finished my day’s work. Soul, take your ease.” From my heart I dread the middle hour of life’s day, both for myself and you, for therein so many think it no ill, like the Italians, to take a *siesta*, or mid-day sleep—and then it is that the enemy is upon them!

There is, too, a pride of experience which is apt to grow upon churches and individuals, like moss upon old trees, when men are “in the midst of the years.” They feel—“We are not now the young, simple, silly people that we once were. We are not now to be overcome by temptation or misled by error. We shall, beyond all doubt, remain sound in faith and pure in life even to the end.” It is from the egg of carnal security that the canker worm of backsliding is hatched—therefore we must mind what we are doing “in the midst of the years.” Besides, I think, dear Brethren, all Christians must be conscious that after a continuance in doing well we are apt to be assailed by weariness.

Apart from our Lord’s promised aid we faint—we die in the long race which He has set before us. Labor leads to lassitude, and suffering to impatience. Grace is needed to prevent the decays of Nature. When the natural spirits sink, we grow depressed and complain that our warfare is hard and our travail bitter. And with this there is apt to mingle a sense of disappointment because we have not achieved all that our sanguine hopes expected. We scarcely rejoice that something has been done because so much remains unaccomplished! When the mind is thus wearied, the spirit faints at the prospect of a further and, perhaps, a heavier strain—and this makes the central regions of life wonderfully trying to Zion’s pilgrims. We are apt to be slack in the service of God by reason of what we have already done, though, we must confess, that is very little. Satan knows how to take advantage of our fainting moments—to make cowards of us if he can. Therefore be aware of his devices.

If we have stood like watchmen on the walls for years, the tendency is to relax our vigilance. If we have borne a protest for many years, the

thought will suggest itself that it will be folly to be singular any longer and wise to yield to the current of the times. Then the enemy sneeringly whispers, "Who are you and what have you done with all your testifying and separate walking and Puritanical precisions? All that you have accomplished is insignificant enough! The world still lies in the Wicked One and error is still rampant! Give up the battle, for you cannot win!" In the midst of the years, what with weariness and lack of faith, the heart is apt to yield to the infernal suggestion! Therefore, Brothers and Sisters, let a mighty prayer go up from the whole Church to our Redeemer God, "O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known."

**II.** Thus have I indicated the prophet's fear and now I would conduct you, secondly, to consider THE PROPHET'S PRAYER—"O Lord, revive Your work." His first request is for *revival*. He means, "Lord, put new life into us. Your cause began with life, but the tendency of all around it is to make it die, therefore, Lord, quicken it anew, give it another birthday and restore all the force and energy of its first love. Give us a new Pentecost, we beseech You! Give all the spiritual endowments which came with the tongues of fire and so enrich us anew. Revive us! Help us to begin again! Start us anew in life."

That is the petition and it seems to me to be one of the wisest requests that ever fell even from a Prophet's lips! Let us use it. Lord, now that we have been 25 years together, let us feel as fresh as if the race were now beginning. Give us back the dew of our youth that we may do our first works and something more. Let us have, with the maturity of age, the freshness of youth! And let us run without weariness in Your ways because Your Spirit has quickened us. Our dependence is upon You, even for life itself! Breathe on us once more! And that life, as I understand it, is to come upon God's people themselves—"Revive Your work." What is God's work? Why, it is God's people! For we are His workmanship!

True revival must first come upon the Churches themselves. In all Churches there is much that is *not* God's work and we do not ask to have *it* revived, but rather that it may be put away. But wherever there is anything that is God's work—any of the mind of Christ any sincere prayer, faith, hope, love, consecration—we earnestly cry, "O Lord, revive Your work." Only living saints are, in the exact sense of the word, capable of revival—we can only revive those in whom life is already found. O Lord, quicken Your people! He means God's work in each one of us, for we each need revival—may the Lord send it to us now so that if gray hairs are upon us here and there, and we know it not, we may become young again through His free Spirit! If the fountain of our life runs low, may the Lord touch the secret springs and flood us again with holy zeal. To save us from the perils of "the midst of the years" we need to have life anew imparted to us.

But the Prophet also refers to God's work *by* His people as well as in them. May the Lord put new life into His cause. It is an awful thing to see a dead Church. I have seen such a thing with my own eyes. I remember very well preaching in a chapel where the Church had become exceedingly low and somehow the very building looked like a sepulcher, though

crowded that one night by those who came to hear the preacher. The singers drawled out a dirge while the members sat like mutes. I found it hard preaching—there was no go in the sermon—I seemed to be driving dead horses.

After the sermon I saw two deacons, the pillars of the Church, leaning against the posts of the vestry door in a listless attitude and I said, “Are you the deacons of this Church?” They informed me that they were the only deacons and I remarked that I thought so. To myself I added that I understood, as I looked at *them*, several things which otherwise would have been a riddle. Here was a dead Church comparable to the ship of the ancient mariner which was manned by the dead! Deacons, teachers, minister, people—all dead—and yet wearing the semblance of life—

***“The helmsman steered, the ship moved on,  
Yet never a breeze up blew;  
The mariners all began to work the ropes,  
Where they were known to do.  
They raised their limbs like lifeless tools  
We were a ghastly crew.”***

May the Lord save us from becoming such a ghastly crew! Now, to prevent our getting into that state, and we easily may—so that instead of devotion there shall be routine and instead of life and energy there shall be dead orthodoxy and dull propriety—we must cry, “O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years.”

The Prophet further asks for a fresh Revelation of the Lord—“In the midst of the years make known.” When You have made us live, then shall we have power to know and, therefore, make Your Truth known to us. Did he not intend by this petition that the Lord should make known that the work was His own? “Revive *Your* work in the midst of the years make known,” that men may not say, “this was only an excitement which the spirit of the people carried on for a few years,” but may be forced to confess that this is the finger of God because it continues and abides. O Lord, in our case make the world know that it is Your work because You do not forsake it!

Convert multitudes again! Build up the Church again! Increase the people again! Multiply the joy again! Pour out the Holy Spirit upon Your witnesses again with signs following! But I think he chiefly means make known Yourself. In the midst of the years make known Yourself, O Jehovah! Reveal in the midst of Your Church, Your power to save! Make known the Person and Sacrifice of the Well-Beloved in whom Your Grace and vengeance strangely join. Make known the power of the Holy Spirit who convicts of sin and afterwards comforts by leading the sinner to the Cross. Make known Yourself, Eternal Father, as You receive prodigals into Your bosom and kiss them with the kiss of love and make high festival concerning their return to You! The Prophet longed that God would be seen in the midst of His people and this, above all things, is our hearts’ desire!

Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, it is vain and idle for us to think that any good can come of human speech or human song or human worship of any kind apart from God Himself being there! There must be *supernatural* power put forth or men will never turn from darkness to light, nor rise

from death to life. What is the Church worth if the Lord is not known in the midst of her? Write *Ichabod* upon her walls, for the Glory has departed when her God has gone! The Prophet virtually prays that God would do again for His Church what He did for her in the olden times. We have just read the whole chapter—what a wonderful poem it is! We can only, in a very prosaic way, condense its meaning.

First, with the Prophet, we exult in the manifestation of the Divine Glory. “His Glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise, and His brightness was as the light; He had horns coming out of His hands.” Thus was Jehovah seen and our heart’s prayer is, “Lord, show Yourself in this way again! Once more display Your Glory. Stretch out Your hands which have the horns of power going forth from them. Exalt Yourself in the conversion and the salvation of men that the multitude may see how glorious is the Lord our God.”

Observe how the Prophet speaks of God’s power against His enemies. The Midianites came up upon Israel in such numbers that, like grasshoppers, they could not be counted. But the Lord smote them and utterly cut them off. Hear how the Prophet describes their overthrow—“I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.” And well they might, when Jehovah came forth to smite them! Now our prayer is that the Lord would shine forth so gloriously in the midst of His Church that the powers of superstition and skepticism may be made to tremble at His Presence! I have looked upon their tents and I have seen them multiplying their idols and their gods! I have looked upon their curtains within which they have spoken proud words of carnal wisdom against the Most High—and my heart has said, “Let the Lord dwell in the midst of His people and manifest His power as in former ages and these tents shall be in affliction and utterly pass away.”

Moreover, the Prophet sees all Nature and Providence subservient to God and so he grandly sings, “Was the Lord displeased against the rivers? Was Your anger against the rivers? Was Your wrath against the sea that You did ride upon Your horses and Your chariots of salvation? If God is with His people, all things are on their side—the stars in the heavens fight for them—the wheels of everlasting Providence full of eyes revolve with watchful wisdom, working out purposes of benediction. “All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” And all this, the Prophet says, was done for the saving of His people! Pharaoh and his horses were drowned in the sea, but as for Jehovah, when He went to save His people, the seas could not overwhelm Him, “You did walk through the sea with Your horses, through the heap of great waters.”

Can you not see the horses and the chariot plowing through the midst of the sea, while the Eternal King darts His arrows on either side that He may deliver His people? This is the language of imagery, but the facts surpass all poetry! God can be with a people and He can *leave* them—but when He is with them, their power is exalted by His power and majesty and the Truth which they uphold is as a banner borne aloft to continuous victory! Only we must wait upon the Lord in prayer and seek His face in

faith, crying from our hearts, “O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known.”

**III.** In the third place, let us consider THE PROPHET’S PLEA, that it may be our own this morning. He had first this plea—“Lord, it is Your work; therefore revive Your work.” We take the words out of his mouth and pray in like manner, “Lord, if this is our work, end it. If it is man’s work, break it down! But if it is *Your* work, revive it.” Have we not said unto our souls that we will preach and we will believe nothing but what is revealed of God in the Scripture? Have we not promised we will not yield one hair’s breadth to the opposers of Revelation because of their so-called science and thought? Is it not so?

We have lifted the old banner of our fathers and preached the doctrines of the Grace of God where the very center is Christ crucified, a Substitute for believing men! This has been our one theme, our staple subject in preaching and ministering at all times. Now, Lord, if this is not Your Truth, for Your name’s sake, blight it and let us follow it no more! But if it is Your Truth, set Your seal to it here and in every other place where the name of Jesus is proclaimed! This is good pleading! “It is Your work. We cannot do it! We will not attempt to do it, but Lord, if it is Yours, *You* must do it—we hold You to it by humble faith.”

But the best plea is the one he mentions, “In wrath remember mercy.” That is a plea which suits all of us! Mercy, mercy, mercy! You might well smite both the shepherd and the sheep, but have mercy! You might well take away the candlestick and leave us in the darkness, but in wrath remember mercy! You see the coldness of heart and the inconsistency of life of some of Your professed people and You might, therefore, give up Your Zion to desolation, but, Lord, remember mercy! Remember it, for You know it, for mercy is a dear attribute of Yours. Remember Your mercy in the Everlasting Covenant when You chose Your people. Remember Your mercy in the seal of that Covenant when Your only-begotten Son was given up to death! Remember all the mercy You have had upon us these many years of our provocation! Remember mercy and still favor us, not because we have any good thing in us or about us that can deserve Your love, but for Your mercy’s sake. Out of Your free rich Sovereign Grace, for mercy’s sake still “revive Your work in the midst of the years.” It is good pleading—be sure to use it.

One more plea is implied in the rest of the chapter, namely, “You have worked great wonders, O Lord, do this again in the midst of the years.” Here have You heard our prayers. Lord, hear our prayers in the midst of the years! Hear them now! Here have You helped the feeble against the strong. Lord, strengthen us again! Here have You brought the chief of sinners to Jesus’ feet. Lord, do the same again! That is our prayer. By all Your glorious marching through the wilderness when You led your people and scattered their foes before them; when the rocks gave them water and the heavens dropped with bread. By all the wonders of Your Grace to Your people of old, since they are still Your people, “revive Your work in the midst of the years.”

With this I finish, observing that when the Prophet had pleaded and his soul was at rest, he sat down and there were three things which remained

upon his mind. Peering into the future he saw the sheen of the Chaldean helmets and the brightness of their cruel swords. He saw the whole land turned into a wilderness—and as he watched, he saw that the fig trees did not blossom, the vines brought forth no fruit, the olives withered. He heard no lowing of cattle, bleating of sheep. He saw that famine covered all the land and he said, “Lord, let it all come as I have seen; but Your ways are everlasting, and in the thick darkness You have always worked Your will. You have never been defeated and You have never failed Your people. Therefore, as for me, I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

That is the posture in which I want you all to be found. We have been assured by people who think they know a great deal about the future that awful times are coming. Be it so. It need not alarm *us*, for the Lord reigns! Stay yourself on the Lord, my Brothers and Sisters, and you can rejoice in His name. If the worst comes to the worst, our refuge is in God! If the heavens shall fall, the God of Heaven will stand! When God cannot take care of His people under Heaven, He will take them *above* the heavens and there shall they dwell with Him! Therefore, as far as you are concerned, rest, for you shall stand in your lot at the end of the days.

And then there came over Habakkuk a second spirit. Now, he said, seeing God has worked all these wonders of old, and is capable of doing them over again, I will go back to my work despite the lowering clouds, for, “the Lord God is my strength and He will make my feet like does’ feet”—like the gazelle’s feet upon the crags of the mountains—“and He will make me to walk upon my high places.” O for this assurance of safety and strength in the Lord! We are in the middle passage, but if we have faith in God all is safe! We may go and leap in our duties over the mountains and the hills and not be afraid that our foot shall slip!

We fall without our God, but with God our feet shall never slide! He keeps the feet of His saints and when the wicked shall be silent in darkness, then shall the strength of the Lord be seen! Having thus felt that he could always trust God whatever might happen and that he should be upheld whatever might occur, what does Habakkuk say? He goes home about his business and what is the one business he is set upon? He indicates it in his last sentence, which is not a sentence at all, but the final words of his prayer. “To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.” He seems to say, “All that remains for me is but to love and sing and wait until the angels come to bear me to their King.” “All that I have to do, now,” he seems to say, and I want you to say the same, “is just to feel that all is safe in the Eternal hands.”

As for me—

***“I’ll praise Him while He lends me breath,  
And when my voice is lost in death,  
Praise shall employ my nobler powers!  
My days of praise shall never be past,  
While life, and thought, and being last,  
Or immortality endures.”***

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

# **SPIRITUAL REVIVAL—THE NEED OF THE CHURCH NO. 2598**

**A SERMON  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT WHITEFIELD'S TABERNACLE, TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD,  
AT THE CENTENARY COMMEMORATION,  
ON TUESDAY AFTERNOON, NOVEMBER 11, 1856.**

***“O LORD, revive Your work.”  
Habakkuk 3:2.***

ALL true religion is pre-eminently the work of God. If He should select out of His works that which He esteems most of all, He would select true religion. He regards the works of Grace as being even more glorious than the works of nature and He is, therefore, especially careful that this fact shall always be known, so that, if any dare to deny it, they shall do so in the teeth of repeated testimonies that God is, indeed, the Author of salvation in the world and in the hearts of men, and that religion is the effect of Grace and is the work of God. I believe the Eternal might sooner forgive the sin of ascribing the creation of the heavens and the earth to an idol, than that of ascribing the works of Grace to the efforts of the flesh, or to anyone but Himself. It is a sin of the greatest magnitude to suppose that there is anything in the heart which can be acceptable to God except that which He, Himself, has first created there. When I deny God's work in creating the sun, I deny one Truth of God, but when I deny that He works Grace in the heart, I deny a hundred Truths in one, for, in the denial of that one Truth that God is the Author of good in the souls of men, I have denied all the Doctrines which make up the great articles of faith—and I have run in direct opposition to the whole testimony of Sacred Scripture!

I trust, Beloved, that many of us have been taught that if there is anything in our souls which can carry us to Heaven, it is God's work and, moreover, that if there is anything that is good and excellent found in His Church, it is entirely God's work from first to last! We firmly believe that it is God who quickens the soul which was dead, positively “dead in trespasses and sins.” That it is God who maintains the life of that soul and God who consummates and perfects that life in the home of the blessed, in the land of the hereafter. We ascribe nothing to man, but all to God! We dare not, for a moment, think that the conversion of the soul is effected either by its own efforts or by the efforts of others. We know that

there are means and agencies employed by God, but we also hold most firmly that the work is, from its alpha to its omega, wholly the Lord's. We believe, therefore, that we are right in applying our text to the work of Divine Grace, both in the heart of man and in the Church at large. And we think that we can have no subject more appropriate for our consideration than the prayer of the text—"O Lord, revive Your work."

Trusting that the Spirit of God will help me, I shall endeavor to apply the text, first, *to our own souls personally*. And, then *to the state of the Church at large*, for it greatly needs that the Lord should revive His work in its midst.

**I.** First, then, I will apply the text TO OUR OWN SOULS PERSONALLY.

In this matter, we should begin at home. We too often flog the Church when the whip should be laid on our own shoulders. We drag the Church, like a colossal culprit, to the altar. We bind her hands fast and try to execute her at once, or, at least, we find fault with her where there is none and magnify her little errors, while we too often forget our own imperfections. Let us, therefore, commence with ourselves, remembering that we are a part of the Church and that our own need of revival is, in some measure, the cause of that need in the Church at large. I directly charge the great majority of professing Christians in these days—and I also take the charge to myself—with a need of revival of piety. I shall lay the charge very peremptorily, because I think I have abundant grounds to prove it. I believe that the mass of nominal Christians in this age need a revival! And my reasons are these.

In the first place, look at *the conduct* of too many who profess to be the children of God. It ill becomes any man who occupies the pulpit to flatter his hearers and I shall not attempt to do so. The evil lies with those who unite themselves with Christian Churches and then practically protest against their own profession. It has become very common, nowadays, to join a church—go where you may, you find professing Christians who sit down at some Lord's Table or other, but are there fewer cheats than there used to be? Are there less frauds committed? Do we find morality more prevalent? Do we find vice entirely at an end? No, we do not! The age is as immoral as any that preceded it. There is still as much sin, although it is more cloaked and hidden. The outside of the sepulcher may be whiter, but within, the bones are just as rotten as before—society is not improved one whit! Those men who, in our popular magazines, give us a true picture of the state of London life, are to be believed and credited, for they do not stretch the truth—they have no motive for so doing—and the picture which they give of the immorality of this great city is positively appalling! It is a huge criminal, full of sin, and I fearlessly assert that if all the profession in London were true profession, it would not be nearly such a wicked place as it is! It could not be, by any manner of means.

My Brothers and Sisters, it is well known—and who dares deny it who is not too partial, and who will not speak willful lies—it is well known that it is not in these days a sufficient guarantee even of a man's honesty that he is a member of a church! It is a hard thing for a Christian minister to say, but I must say it. Someone must say it and if friends do not say it, enemies will—and it is better that the truth should be spoken in our own midst, that men may see that we *are* ashamed of it, than that they should hear us impudently deny what we must know to be true! O Sirs, the lives of too many members of Christian Churches give us grave cause to suspect that there is none of the life of godliness in them at all! Why that reaching after money, why that covetousness, why that following of the crafts and devices of a wicked world, why that clutching here and grasping there, that grinding of the faces of the poor, that treading down of the workman and such like things, if men are truly what they profess to be? God in Heaven knows that what I speak is true—and too many here know it themselves! If they are Christians, at least they desire revival! If there is any spiritual life in them, it is but a spark that is covered up with heaps of ashes! It needs to be fanned, yes, and it needs to be stirred, also, that hopefully some of the ashes may be removed and the spark may have a place to live!

The Church as a whole needs revival in the persons of its members. The members of Christian Churches are not what they once were. It is now fashionable to be religious—persecution is taken away and, ah, I had almost said that the gates of the Church were taken away with it! The Church has, with few exceptions, no gates now—persons come in and go out of it just as they would march through St. Paul's Cathedral and make it a very place of traffic, instead of regarding it as a select and sacred spot, to be apportioned to the holy of the Lord, and to the excellent of the earth—in whom is God's delight. If this is not true, you know how to treat it. You need not confess to sin you have not committed. But if it is true, and true in your case, oh, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God! Ask Him to search and try you, that if you are not His child, you may be helped to renounce your profession lest it should be to you but the gaudy pageantry of death—and mere tinsel and gewgaw in which to go to Hell! If you are His, ask that He may give you more Grace, that you may abandon these faults and follies and turn to Him with full purpose of heart, as the effect of a revived godliness in your soul.

Again, where *the conduct* of professing Christians is consistent, let me ask the question, does not *the conversation* of many a professor lead us either to doubt the genuineness of his piety, or else to pray that his piety may be revived? Have you noticed the conversation of many who think themselves Christians? You might live with them from the first of January to the end of December and you would never be tired of their religion by what you would hear of it. They scarcely mention the name of Jesus

Christ at all! On Sabbath afternoon, all the ministers are talked over—faults are found with this one and the other—and conversation takes place which they call religious because it is concerning religious places and Christian people. But do they ever—

**“Talk of all He did, and said,  
And suffered for us here below.  
The path He marked for us to tread,  
And what He’s doing for us now”?**

Do you often hear the question addressed to you by your Christian Brother, “Friend, how does your soul prosper?” When we step into each other’s houses, do we begin to talk concerning the cause and Truth of God? Do you think that God would now stoop from Heaven to listen to the conversation of His Church, as once He did, when it was said, “The Lord hearkened and heard it, and a Book of Remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name”? I solemnly declare, as the result of thorough and, I trust, impartial observation, that the conversation of Christians, while it cannot be condemned on the score of morality, must often be condemned on the score of Christianity! We talk too little about our Lord and Master!

That ugly word, “sectarianism,” has crept into our midst and we must say nothing about Christ because we are afraid of being called sectarians! Well, Brothers and Sisters, I am a sectarian and hope to be so till I die and to glory in it, for I cannot see, nowadays, that a man can be a Christian, thoroughly in earnest, without winning for himself that title! Why, we must not talk of this doctrine because, perhaps, such an one disbelieves it! We must not mention such-and-such a Truth in Scripture because such-and-such a friend doubts or denies it! And so we drop all the great and grand topics which used to be the staple commodities of godly talk and begin to speak of anything else because we feel that we can agree better on worldly things than we can on spiritual! Is not that the truth? And is it not so common a sin with some of us that we have need to pray unto God, “O Lord, revive Your work in my soul, that my conversation may be more Christ-like, more seasoned with salt and more pleasing to the Holy Spirit”?

My third remark is that there are some whose conduct is all that we could wish, whose conversation is for the most part as becomes the Gospel of Christ and savory of truth—but even they will confess to a third charge, which I must now sorrowfully bring against them and against myself, namely, that *there is too little real communion with Jesus Christ*. If, thanks to Divine Grace, we are enabled to keep our conduct tolerably consistent and our lives unblemished, yet how much have we to cry out against ourselves because of our lack of that holy fellowship with Jesus which is the mark of the true child of God! Brothers and Sisters, let me ask you how long it is since you have had a love-visit from Jesus Christ? How long since you could say, “My Beloved is mine, and I am His; He

feeds among the lilies”? How long is it since He brought you into His banqueting house and His banner over you was love? Perhaps some of you will be able to say, “It was but this morning that I saw Him. I beheld His face with joy and was ravished with His Countenance.” But I fear the most of you will have to say, “Ah, Sir, for months I have been without the shining of His Countenance!” What have you been doing, then, and what has been your way of life? Have you been groaning every day? Have you been weeping every minute? “No.” Then you ought to have been! I cannot understand how your piety can be of any very brilliant order if you can live without the sunlight of Christ and yet are happy.

Christians will sometimes lose the realization of Jesus. The connection between themselves and Christ will be, at times, severed as to their own conscious enjoyment of it, but they will always groan and cry when they lose that Presence. What? Is Christ your Brother and does He live in your house and yet you have not spoken to Him for a month? I fear there is little love between you and your Brother if you have had no conversation with Him for so long. What? Is Christ the Husband of His Church and has she had no fellowship with Him for all this time? Brothers and Sisters, let me not condemn you, let me not even judge you, but let your own conscience speak! Mine shall and so shall yours. Have we not too much forgotten Christ? Have we not lived too much without Him? Have we not been content with the world instead of desiring Christ? Have all of us been like that little ewe lamb that drank out of its master’s cup and fed from his table and lie in his bosom? Have we not rather been content to stray upon the mountains, feeding anywhere but at home? I fear that many of the troubles of our heart spring from lack of communion with Jesus. Not many of us are the kind of men who, living with Jesus, learn His secrets. Oh, no, we live too much without the light of His Countenance and are too content when He is gone from us! Let us, then, each of us—for I am sure we have, each of us, need in some measure—put up the prayer, “O Lord, revive Your work.”

Ah, I think I hear one professor saying, “Sir, I need no revival in *my* heart. I am everything I wish to be.” Down on your knees, my Brothers and Sisters, down on your knees and plead for that poor soul! He is the man who most needs to be prayed for! He says that he needs no revival in his soul, but he needs a revival of *humility*, at any rate! If he supposes that he is all that he ought to be and if he knows that he is all he wishes to be, he has very mean notions of what a Christian is, or of what a Christian should be—and very untrue ideas concerning himself! Those are in the most hopeful condition who, while they know they need reviving, yet groan under their present sad state and pray to the Lord to revive them.

Now I think I have in some degree substantiated my charge—I fear with too-strong arguments—so now let us notice that the text has something in it which I trust that each of us has. There is not only an evil im-

plied in these words, “O Lord, revive Your work,” but there is an evil evidently felt. You see, Habakkuk knew how to groan about it. “O Lord,” he said, “revive Your work.” Ah, we, many of us, need reviving, but few of us feel that we need it. It is a blessed sign of life within when we know how to groan over our departure from the living God. It is easy to find hundreds who have thus departed, but you must count by ones and twos those who know how to groan over their departure! The true Believer, however, when he discovers that he needs revival, will not be happy. He will begin at once that incessant and continuous strain of cries and groans which will, at last, prevail with God and bring down the blessing of revival! He will, days and nights in succession, cry, “O Lord, revive Your work.”

Let me mention some groaning times which will always occur to the Christian who needs revival. I am sure he will always groan *when he looks upon what the Lord did for him of old*. When he recollects the Mizars and the Hermons, and those places where the Lord appeared of old to him, saying, “I have loved you with an everlasting love,” I know he will never look back to them without tears. If he is what he should be as a Christian, or if he thinks he is not in a right condition, he will always weep when he remembers God’s loving kindnesses of old. Whenever the soul has lost fellowship with Jesus, it cannot bear to think of “the chariots of Amminadib.” It cannot endure to remember the King’s banqueting house, for it has not been there for so long! Or when it does think of them, it says—

***“Where is the blessedness I knew  
When first I saw the Lord?  
Where is the soul-refreshing view  
Of Jesus and His Word?  
What peaceful hours I then enjoyed!  
How sweet their memory still!  
But now I find an aching void  
The world can never fill.”***

When one who is in this state hears a sermon which relates the glorious experience of the Believer who is in a healthy condition, he puts his hand upon his heart and says, “Ah, such was my experience once, but those happy days are gone. My sun has set and those stars which once lit up my darkness are all quenched. Oh, that I might again behold my Lord! Oh, that I might once more see His face! Oh, for those sweet visits from on high! Oh, for the grapes of Eshcol once more!” If this is your condition, my Friend, you will sit down and weep by the rivers of Babylon, you will mourn when you remember your goings up to Zion when the Lord was precious to you, when He laid bare His heart and was pleased, also, to fill your heart with the fullness of His love. Such times will be groaning times, when you, “remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.”

Again, to a Christian who needs revival, *ordinances* will also be groaning times. He will go up to the House of God, but he will say to himself when he comes away, “Ah, how changed it all is! When I once went with the multitude that kept holy day, every word was precious. When the song ascended, my soul had wings and up it flew to its nest above the stars! When the prayer was offered, I could devoutly say, “Amen.” The preacher now preaches as he did before, and my Brothers and Sisters are as profited as they used to be, but the sermon is dry and dull to me. I find no fault with the preacher. I know the fault is in myself. The song is just the same—as sweet the melody, as pure the harmony—but ah, my heart is heavy, my harp strings are broken and I cannot sing.” So the Christian will return from those blessed means of Grace, sighing and sobbing because he knows he needs revival.

More especially at the Lord’s Supper he will think, when he sits at the Table, “Oh, what seasons of communion I once had here! In breaking the bread and drinking the wine, my Master was most blessedly present.” He will remind himself how his soul was lifted even to the seventh Heaven and the building became to him “the House of God, and the gate of Heaven.” “But now,” he says, “It is only bread, and dry bread, to me. It is simply wine and tasteless wine, with none of the sweets of Paradise in it. I drink, but it is all in vain, for I have no precious thoughts of Christ. My heart is so heavy that it will not rise. My soul cannot heave a thought even half way to Him!” And then the Christian will begin to groan again, “O Lord, revive Your work.”

Those of you who know that you are in Christ, but who feel that you are not in a healthy spiritual condition because you do not love Him enough, and have not that faith in Him which you desire to have, I would just ask you this—Do you groan over it? Are you groaning over it now? When you feel that your heart is empty, is it, “an aching void?” When you see that your garments are stained, are you ready to wash those garments with tears if that would do any good? When you realize that your Lord is gone, do you hang out the black flag of sorrow and cry, “O my Jesus, my precious Jesus, are You gone forever?” If you can, then I bid you do it, and may God be pleased to give you Grace to continue to do it until a happier era shall dawn in the reviving of your soul!

I remark, in the last place upon this point, that the soul, when it is really brought to feel its own sad state because of its declension and departure from God, *is never content without turning its groaning into prayer* and without addressing the prayer to the right quarter—“O Lord, revive Your work.” Some of you, perhaps, will say, “Sir, I feel my need of revival. I intend to set to work this very afternoon, as soon as I shall retire from this place, to revive my soul.” Do not say it and, above all things, do not try to do it, for you will never do it! Make no resolutions as to what *you* will do—your resolutions will as certainly be broken as they are made—and your broken resolutions will but increase the number of your sins! I

exhort you, instead of trying to revive yourself, to offer prayer to God. Say not, “I will revive myself,” but cry, “O Lord, revive *Your* work.” And let me solemnly tell you, you have not yet felt what it is to decline, you do not yet know how sad is your state, otherwise you would not talk of reviving yourself! If you knew your own position, you would as soon expect to see the wounded soldier on the battlefield heal himself without medicine, or convey himself to the hospital when his limbs are shot away, as you would expect to revive yourself without the help of God! I bid you not do anything, nor seek to do anything until, first of all, you have addressed Jehovah, Himself, by mighty prayer and have cried out, “O Lord, revive *Your* work.” Remember, He that first made you, must keep you alive. And He that has kept you alive can alone impart more life to you! He that has preserved you from going down to the Pit when your feet have been sliding, can alone set you again upon the Rock and establish your goings. Begin, then, by humbling yourself—giving up all hope of reviving yourself as a Christian! But also begin at once with earnest supplication to God, saying, “O Lord, what I cannot do, You do! O Lord, revive *Your* work!”

Christian Brothers and Sisters, I leave these matters with you. Give them the attention they deserve. If I have erred, and in anything judged you too harshly, God shall forgive me, for I have meant it honestly. But if I have spoken truly, lay it to your hearts and turn your houses into a Bchim. Weep as in the olden time—men apart, and women apart, husbands apart, and wives apart. Weep, weep, my Brothers and Sisters, for it is a sad thing to depart from the living God! Weep, and may He bring you back to Zion, that you may one day return like Israel, not with weeping, but with songs of everlasting joy!

**II.** And now I come to the second part of the subject, upon which I must be more brief. In **THE CHURCH ITSELF**, taken as a body, this prayer ought to be one incessant and solemn liturgy—“O Lord, revive *Your* work.”

In the present era there is *a sad decline of the vitality of godliness*. This age has become too much the age of form, instead of the age of life. I date the hour of life from this day one hundred years ago, when there was laid the first stone of this building in which we now worship God. Then was the day of life Divine and of power sent down from on high! God had clothed Whitefield with power. He was preaching with a majesty and a might of which one could scarcely think mortal could ever be capable! Not because he was anything in himself, but because his Master girded him with strength. After Whitefield, there was a succession of great and holy men. But now, Sirs, we have fallen upon the dregs of time. Men are the rarest things in all this world—we have hardly any men in the government to conduct our politics—and we have scarcely any men in religion. We have the *things* that perform their duties, as they are called. We have the good and, perhaps, the honest things who, in the regular routine, go on like pack horses with their bells in the old style. But men who

dare to be singular, because to be singular is generally to be right in a wicked world, are not very many in this age. Compared even with the Puritan times, where are our divines? Could we marshal together our Howes and our Charnocks? Could we gather together such names as I might mention about 50 at a time? I think not. Nor could we bring together such a galaxy of Grace and talent as that which immediately followed Whitefield. Think of Rowland Hill, Newton, Toplady and numbers of others whom time would fail me to mention! They are gone. Their venerated dust rests in the grave. Where are their successors? Ask where and echo shall reply, "Where?" God has not yet raised them up, or, if He has done so, we have not yet found out where they are.

There is, nowadays, much preaching, but how is it often done? The preacher says, "O Lord, help Your servant to preach and teach him by Your Spirit what to say!" Then out comes the manuscript and he reads it! We have other preaching of this order—it is speaking very beautifully and very finely, possibly eloquently, in a sense—but where is there, now, such preaching as Whitefield's? Have you ever read one of his sermons? You will not think him eloquent—you cannot think so. His expressions were rough and frequently unconnected—there was very much declamation about him, it was a great part, indeed, of his speech—but wherein lay his eloquence? Not in the words he uttered, but in the tones in which he delivered them! In the earnestness with which he spoke them, in the tears which ran down his cheeks and in the pouring out of his very soul! The reason why he was eloquent was just what the word means—he was eloquent because he spoke right out from his heart—he caused the Truth of God to flow out of the innermost depths of his soul. When he spoke, you could see that he meant what he said. He did not speak like a mere machine, but he preached what he felt to be the Truth of God and what he could not help preaching! If you had heard him preach, you could not but help feeling that he was a man who would die if he could not preach—and that with all his might he called to men, "Come to Jesus Christ, and believe on Him."

That kind of preaching is just the lack of these times! Where is earnestness now? It is neither in the pulpit nor yet in the pew in such a measure as we desire it. And it is a sad, sad age when earnestness is scoffed at, and when that very zeal which ought to be the prominent characteristic of the pulpit is regarded as enthusiasm and fanaticism! I pray God to make us all such fanatics as most men laugh at, such enthusiasts as many despise. To my mind, it is the greatest fanaticism in the world to go to Hell—and the worst folly upon earth to love sin better than righteousness! And I think that they are anything but fanatics who seek to obey God rather than man, and to follow Christ in all His ways. To me, one sad proof that the Church needs revival is the absence of that solemn earnestness which was once seen in Christian pulpits.

*The absences of sound doctrine* is another proof of our need of revival. We can turn back to the records of our Puritan forefathers, to the Articles of the Church of England and to the preaching of Whitefield, and we can say of their doctrine, it is the very thing we love! And the doctrines which were then uttered are—and we dare to say it everywhere—the very same doctrines that we proclaim now! But because we proclaim them, we are thought singular and strange! And the reason is because sound doctrine has, to a great degree, been abandoned! It began in this way. First of all, the Truths of God were fully believed, but the angles of them were taken off a little. The minister believed in election, but he did not use the word for fear it should, in some degree, disturb the equanimity of the deacon in the green pew in the corner. He believed that all were, by nature, depraved, but he did not say so positively, because if he did, there was a lady who had subscribed so much to the Chapel who would not come again! So, while he surely did *believe* it and did preach it in some sense, he rounded it off a little.

Afterwards, it came to this—ministers said, “We believe these doctrines, but we do not think them profitable to preach to the people. They are quite true. Free Grace is true. The great Doctrines of Grace that were preached by Christ, by Paul, by Augustine, by Calvin and down to this age by their successors, are true—but they had better be kept back—they must be very cautiously dealt with. They are very high and dreadful doctrines and they must not be preached! We believe them, but we dare not speak them out.” After that, it came to something worse. They said within themselves, “Well, if these doctrines will not do for us to preach, perhaps they are not true, after all.” And going one step further, they did not actually say so, perhaps, but they began to hint that they were *not true*—and then they went on to preach something which they said was the truth. And now, if they could, they would cast us out of the synagogue, as if they were the rightful owners of it and we were the intruders! So they have gone from bad to worse. And if you read the standard divinity of this age and the standard divinity of Whitefield’s day, you will find that the two cannot, by any possibility, be made to agree together! We have, nowadays, what is called a “new theology.” New theology? Why, it is anything *but* a *Theology*—it is an *ology* which has cast out God and enthroned man! It is the doctrine of man—not the doctrine of the everlasting God. Therefore, we need a revival of sound doctrine once more in the midst of the land.

And the Church at large also needs *a revival of downright earnestness in its members*. You are not the men to fight the Lord’s battles—you have not the earnestness, the zeal which the children of God once had! Your forefathers were oak men, but you are willow men. Our people, what are they, many of them? Strong in doctrine when they are with strong doctrine men, but they waver when they got with others—and they alter as often as they change their company! They are sometimes one thing and

sometimes another. They are not the men to go to the stake and die for the Truth of God! They are not the men who know how to die daily and so are ready for death whenever it comes.

Look at our Prayer Meetings, with only here and there a bright exception. There are, possibly, six old women present—scarcely ever do enough male members come to pray four times. Prayer Meetings they are called—*spare* meetings they ought to be called, for sparely enough are they attended! And very few there are who go to our Fellowship Meetings, or to any other meetings that we have to help one another in the fear of the Lord. Are they attended at all as they should be? I would like to see a newspaper printed, somewhere, containing a list of all the persons who went to those meetings during the week in any of our Chapels. Ah, my Friends, if they should comprise all the Christians in London, you might find that a very few Chapels would hold them all! We have not earnestness, we have not life as we once had! If we had, we would be called worse names than we are now—we would have viler epithets thrown at us if we were more true to our Master! We should not have all things quite so comfortable if we served God better. We are getting the Church to be an institution of our land—an honorable institution. Some think it a grand thing when the Church becomes an honorable institution, but it shows that the Church has swerved from the right course when she begins to be very honorable in the eyes of the world! She must still be cast out, she must still be called evil and still be despised until that day when her Lord shall honor her because she has honored Him—when He shall honor her, even in this world, in the day of His appearing!

Beloved, do you think it is true that the Church needs reviving? Yes, or no? “No,” you say, “at least not to the extent that you suppose. We think the Church is in a good condition. We are not among those who cry, ‘The former days were better than these.’” Perhaps you are not. You may be far wiser than we are and, therefore, you are able to see those various signs of goodness which are, to us, so small that we are not able to discover them. You may suppose that the Church is in a good condition. If so, of course you cannot sympathize with me in preaching from such a text and urging you to use such a prayer as this, “O Lord, revive Your work.” But there are others of you who frequently cry, “The Church needs reviving.” Let me bid you, instead of grumbling at your minister, instead of finding fault with the different parts of the Church, to cry, “O Lord, revive Your work.” “Oh,” says one, “that we had another minister! Oh, that we had another kind of worship! Oh, that we had a different sort of preaching!” Just as if that were all—but my prayer is, “Oh, that the Lord would come into the hearts of the men you have! Oh, that He would make the plans you use to be full of power!” You do not need fresh ways or new machinery—you need *life* in those that you have!

There is an engine on the railway, but the train will not move. “Bring another engine,” says one, “and another, and another.” The engines are

brought, but the train does not stir. Light the fire and get up steam, that is what you need—not fresh engines! We do not need fresh ministers, or fresh plans, or fresh ways, though many might be invented to make the Church better—we only need life and fire in those we have! With the very man who has emptied your Chapel, the same person that brought your Prayer Meeting low, God can yet make the Chapel to be crowded to the doors and give thousands of souls to that very man! It is not a new man that is needed—it is the life of God in him! Do not be crying out for something new—it will no more succeed, of itself, than what you have! Cry, “O Lord, revive Your work!”

I have noticed, in different churches, that the minister has thought first of this contrivance, then of that. He tried one plan and thought that would succeed. Then he tried another, but that was no good. Keep to the old plan, my Friend, but seek to get life into it! We do not need anything new—“the old is better”—let us keep to it, but we need life in the old. “Oh,” men cry, “we have nothing but the shell.” And they are going to give us a new shell. No, Sirs, we will keep the old one, but we will have the life in the shell! We will have the old plans, but we must, or else we will throw the old away, have the life in the old! Oh, that God would give us life! The Church needs fresh revivals. Oh, for the days of Cambuslang again, when God’s Word was preached with power! Oh, for the days when, in this place, hundreds were converted under Whitefield’s sermons! It has been known that 2,000 credible cases of conversion have happened under one solitary sermon! Oh, for the age when eyes would be strained and ears would be ready to receive the Truth of God and when men would drink in the Word of Life, as it is, indeed, the very Water of Life which God gives to dying souls! Oh, for the age of deep feeling—the age of thorough-going earnestness!

Let us ask God for it! Let us plead with Him for it! Perhaps He has the man or the men somewhere who will yet shake the world! Perhaps even now He is about to pour forth a mighty influence upon man which shall make the Church as wonderful in this age as it ever was in any age that has passed. God grant it, for Christ’s sake! Amen,

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

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

# A MESSAGE FROM GOD TO HIS CHURCH AND PEOPLE

## NO. 725

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 16, 1866,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“O Lord, I have heard Your speech, and was afraid: O Lord, revive  
Your work in the midst of the years! In the midst of the years  
make it known; in wrath remember mercy.”  
Habakkuk 3:2.***

“O LORD, I have heard Your speech!” This is the language of reverent obedience and is a fit preface to a fervent prayer. If we are not willing to hear God’s voice, we cannot expect Him to hear our voice. It is an admirable preparation for prayer, first to hearken diligently to what God the Lord shall speak, and then to be obedient to His commands. He who would hear God speak needs not to wait long, for God speaks to men continually by the Scriptures, which are given to us by Inspiration. Alas that we should be so deaf to its teachings! This wonderful volume, so full of wisdom, is so little read that few of us could dare to gaze upon its pages and say, “O Lord, in this Book I have heard Your speech.”

At other times, the Lord speaks by Providence. Both national Providences and personal Providences have a meaning. Providences that are afflicting, and Providences which are comforting all have a voice. But, alas, I fear that oftentimes to us Providence is dumb because we are deaf. How often, in our stubbornness, we are like the horse and the mule which have no understanding, and when God speaks to us we do not regard Him? He therefore multiplies our afflictions, and holds us in with the bit and bridle of adversity because we will not be governed by gentler means. Look, my Brethren, at the Providence of God throughout the whole of your lives, and I am afraid few of you can say of it, “O Lord, in Providence I have heard Your speech.”

The God of Heaven speaks to men by His Holy Spirit. He does this, at times, in those common operations of the Spirit upon the ungodly, which they, as did also their fathers, resist. The Spirit strives with men. He calls, and they refuse. He stretches out His hands, and they regard Him not. The unregenerate man is like the deaf adder that will not hear, charm we ever so wisely. Even when the Holy Spirit speaks to us, His people, we are not always willing and obedient. And though we have ears to hear we frequently quench the Spirit. We grieve Him. We neglect His monitions, and, if we do not despise His teachings, yet too often we forget them, and listen to the follies of earth instead of regarding the wisdom of the skies. I am

afraid that in looking into our own hearts and studying them in connection with the operations of the Holy Spirit, not one of us could dare to say, without exception, "O Lord, I have heard Your speech."

In the text before us we meet with a Prophet whose ears had been spiritually opened and who, therefore, heard the still, small voice of Jehovah where others perceived neither sound nor utterance. There are times even with us when, being under the influence of the Holy Spirit, we hold near communion with our God. Then are our hearts like wax to His seal, receiving the impression of the Divine Mind! Are you not conscious of having been in such a state? It must be so, dear Hearer, in a measure, with all the Lord's servants! But especially must it be often so with those of us who are called to bear His messages to the people!

I have most solemnly sought to hear the speech of Jehovah in my own soul before I came into this pulpit, and pray that His Divine power may enable me to convey that speech to you. I have been afraid, this week, as I have heard the voice of God in this land. Trembling has taken hold upon me as Jehovah has spoken in thunderclaps and made the whole land to echo with His terrible accents! I may be to some of you as an interpreter, and you who are spiritual men, you will discern and judge whether I have heard the speech of God or not. If you shall find it to be God's voice to you, I hope you will be led to the farther carrying out of the language of the text in that much-needed prayer, "O Lord, revive Your work."

There are three things in the text—an alarming voice, an appropriate prayer, and a potent argument—"in wrath remember mercy."

**I.** Hear, with solemn awe, THE ALARMING VOICE! The speech of God demands your humblest attention. We need not enter into particulars of the heavy tidings which came to the ear of Habakkuk when he set upon the tower and watched to see what the Lord would say to him.

Our business, this morning, is to tell you, in all solemnity, what the voice of God has been saying to *us*. In my lonely meditations I heard a voice, as of one that spoke in the name of the Lord. I bowed my head to receive the message, and the voice said, "Cry," and when I said, "What shall I cry?" the answer came to me as to Isaiah of old, "All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withers, the flower fades: because the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass."

Then I thought I saw before me a great meadow reaching far and wide, and it was like a rainbow for its many colors, for the flowers of summer were in their beauty. In the midst of it I marked a mower of dark and cruel aspect, who with a scythe most sharp and glittering, was clearing mighty stretches of the field at each sweep and laying the fair flowers in withering heaps. He advanced with huge strides of leagues at once, leaving desolation behind him, and I understood that the mower's name was Death!

As I looked I was afraid for my house, and my children, for my kinsfolk and acquaintance, and for myself also—for the mower drew nearer and

nearer—and as he came onward a voice was heard as of a trumpet, “Prepare to meet your God.” Moreover, as I mused on I heard a rumbling in the bowels of the earth, as though the Destroyer were traversing the dark pathways which the miner has dug, and doing his fearful work among the stones of darkness which are at the roots of the mountains. I wondered with sore amazement, and behold, there came up from the mouth of the pit a thundering cloud of vapor, of smoke and fire, and dust, and rushing whirlwind, which told to wailing women that they were widows and their children fatherless! And the Angel of Death again cried in my ears, “All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withers, the flower fades: because the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass.”

I have come here this morning sorely afraid and much bowed down because of the mortality of man, and the certainty of death. We shall soon be gone, every one of us, to his grave. If not by such an alarming catastrophe as that which has amazed and troubled us during this week, yet by the common processes of decay. You whom I now see before me are the meadows, and death is in your midst! You are the flowers, and I hear the terrible blast, which, alas, must wither even you! I see you, but there is no joy in my eyes, for the cheek of beauty shall pale, and the eyes of youth shall grow dim, and the sinews of the strong shall fail them, and the arms of the mighty shall be powerless in the tomb!

As the autumn leaves are gone, so are our fathers! And as the floods hasten to the ocean, even so are we hastening away. An irresistible torrent hurries us to our doom! A mighty wind from the Lord sweeps us forever onward. While we thus quietly consider it, the great mystery is being enacted—a thousand graves are being dug and a thousand corpses are being laid in new-made sepulchers! At this moment hundreds are wading into the cold, chill stream of Jordan—passing into the disembodied state to hear the judgment of the Great King.

As I thought upon this matter, and desired to hear God’s speech therein, I saw a precipice whose frowning steep overhung a sea of fire. Leading up to its brink I saw a road exceedingly broad. A road which was crowded from side to side with a thronging multitude who pressed and trod one upon another in their raging zeal to reach the summit of the crag. They went gaily on, merrily laughing, singing to sprightly music, many of them dancing, some of them pushing aside their fellows that they might reach sooner than was imperative upon them the end of which they knew so little. As I looked at that end which none of them could see, I saw a waterfall of souls falling in ceaseless, headlong stream into depths unutterably profound!

As the crowd came on, rank by rank, to the edge of this precipice, they fell, they leaped over, or were dashed from the treacherous crag and descended amid cries and shrieks surpassing all imagination into a lake of fire where they were submerged with an everlasting baptism—

overwhelmed with destruction from the presence of the Lord! I thought I heard their groans and moans, their shrieks and sighs as they first caught sight of the terrible abyss and would have shrunk back from it but were quite unable, for the time to pause was past.

Even now I see before my eyes that terrific Niagara of souls descending by thousands every hour into the gulf unknown. This is the broad road of which we had heard so often, where multitudes delight to walk. "Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many are they that go in it." Sure and terrible is the doom of everyone who treads there. Oh that men would forsake it at once and forever! Alas! Alas! Are not the great mass of our fellow citizens beneath the scepter of our Queen traveling on this broad road? Even if we could conceive that *all* who attend the places of worship were in the narrow way that leads to eternal life—if we could be charitable enough to believe that—yet look at the multitude of outsiders!

Look at this city, with far more than a million for whom the sound of the church-going bell is meaningless! They know not God, neither regard Him! To them the name of Christ is but a word to curse or to ridicule! They are going, my Brethren, men of the same country as yourselves, men of the same race and tribe, speaking our own language—they are going downward to destruction! Among them your own children! Perhaps your wives, your husbands, your sons, your daughters, your parents—going in that motley crew, onward, swiftly onward, towards their dreadful end! My God will cast them away! Their end will be destruction! They will be driven from the Presence of the Lord forever!

Let these two thoughts, my Brethren, burn in your souls until all coldness and indifference are consumed. Men die, and their souls are lost! Men die and their bodies are laid in the grave, but their souls descend into Hell! Scarcely were the first death a thing to be mourned over, if it were not for the second! It might be superfluous to shed so much as a single tear for all the men that died if we knew that they rested in the arms of Jesus and were forever blessed. But this is the sting of death, its bitterness, its wormwood and its gall—that sinners are condemned by Justice, and driven by Vengeance from the Presence of Mercy into the place where hope can never follow them! Christian Brothers and Sisters, hear this voice of God and be afraid!

Over and above all this, there came upon me a horror of great darkness as I perceived something even more terrible than this! You will say to me, "How can it possibly be more terrible?" In certain aspects it seemed so to me. Hear it and judge. What if it is true that within the last twelve months the Church of the living God has scarcely made the slightest approach to an advance? What if this is true as respects a far *longer* period? Let the first sad fact rise before us with its proof. For the last twelve months no apparent increase has been made to the number of professed disciples of the Lord Jesus.

Do you ask me for the proofs? I can prove it, alas, too surely. Our own body, the Baptist denomination, is, upon the whole, and all things considered, in as sound and healthy a state as any Christian community now existing. I am persuaded that in some respects it is more sound and more healthy. But do you know what will have been the increase during the twelve months of the entire denomination in England, Scotland, and Ireland, so far as we can ascertain it? Well, with the exception of London and the county of Glamorgan, in Wales, there will be no increase worthy of the name. In many parts of Wales, where we are strongest, there will be a positive *decrease*, and I think, in fifteen counties of England, we shall have lost numbers instead of making any advance!

And when the whole are put together, the good with the bad, and this London of ours, wherein God has greatly blessed us of late, is counted with the rest, our entire increase for all the Churches with all their ministers will not make up four thousand souls. It is true that our statistics are not very accurate, but if they were more accurate I believe the result would be more unfavorable. This is the more fearful to me to contemplate, because the increase of the denomination, which, by God's Grace, we might naturally look for merely from the increase of population, should have been very much more than this.

If other Christian Churches have not increased more, and I am persuaded that most of them have increased less, far less than we have, then I am correct in saying that positively the Church of God in Great Britain and Ireland, instead of making any real advance, has, in proportion to the increase of population, absolutely gone back! And I believe it would be accurate and truthful, and could be borne out by statistics, that if at this day there were taken a census of the number of persons who commune at the Lord's Table, it would be found to be smaller instead of larger than the number at the corresponding period of last year.

As for abroad, what have our missions done? Brethren, if there were but one soul we ought to rejoice, but the result of missions has been of late so terribly little as to call for great searching of heart. Is it not a fact that there are missionaries of ten years' standing who have never had a convert? Is it not also a sad fact that the number of members in all our native Churches is probably less now than it was twelve months ago? Where is the nation that has been born in a day in this year one thousand eight hundred and sixty-six? Where are the kings that have bowed down before King Jesus? Where are the nations that have called Him "Blessed"?

Is there so much as one little tribe, however insignificant, that has owned Christ during the past year? Not one, not one! There has been no visible advance! The armies of the living God have rather suffered a repulse than gained a victory, and instead of the morning coming and the light arising, and the sun advancing to a noonday height, it seems as though at the best he stood still, if the light did not even retrograde. Surely there is a voice from God here, and as I hear it I am afraid.

Meanwhile, what kind of an age has this been in which we have lived? Is it so impassive and thoughtless that progress is impossible? Are we living in one of those dark ages in which mind is rocked to sleep and the soul is stupefied? Has this last year been one in which the sleepiness of the human intellect has prevented our presenting the Truth of God to the sons of men? I think not! I believe, Brethren, that this year has been one of the most wakeful in the annals of human history! At this moment London is like the city of which the Prophet said, "It is full of stirs." There are political stirs in which the Christian minister finds no theme for sorrow, for when men's minds are but awake for *anything* there is then an opportunity for the propagation of the Truth of God.

Truth dreads nothing so much as a sleepy audience! Give her but minds on the wing, and she will train them to the skies. This has been a year in which both upon politics and religion the human mind has been active, and had the Christian Churches been filled with the Spirit, and therefore zealous and faithful, I cannot comprehend that she would, at the close of the year, have had to cry, "Who has believed our report?" We have indulged the fancy that we have had a general revival, and that our churches are in a healthy state, but is it so? Let our non-success answer the question! In the meantime, while truth slumbers, the legions of evil spirits cease not their mischievous endeavors.

How swiftly have the locusts of priest-craft ascended from the smoke of the bottomless pit and covered the land! While we are compelled to fear that evangelical Truth has made no advance, we cannot say this of *ritualism*, for its progress has been perfectly astounding! Though a Prophet should have told us that this Anglican Popery would have made so great an advance in so short a time, we would have said, "Impossible! England is soundly Protestant! She will never bear to have incense smoking under her nose, and to see the millinery of the Church of Rome flaunted before her face!"

But she *has* borne it, and she likes it well. Despite much that has been said concerning Puseyism being non-English, we are inclined to question the statement. Where are the greatest crowds in the Establishment? Are they not at the feet of these priests of Baal? Do not rank and fashion gather most readily in those places where their senses are delighted while their souls are deluded? Yes, through the means of our Popish establishment there has been an onward rush of error which is perfectly appalling! Watchman, when they ask you, "What of the night?" can you say, "the morning comes"?

You that love the Savior, will you open your ears to catch the meaning of all these things? Men dying! Men perishing! The Church slumbering and error covering the land—does not God say something in all this? Do you not hear out of this thick darkness the voice saying, "O My people, I have somewhat against you"? Did I not hear the Lord saying, "They shall perish, but their blood will I require at the watchman's hands?" I saw the

Church of God folding her hands, given to slumber, saying, "I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing."

And all the while she was suffering multitudes to perish for lack of knowledge, leaving the banner of Truth to be moth-eaten, or to be trailed in the mire, and permitting the friends of error to ride roughshod over all the land! As I saw her thus I said within my heart, Surely the Lord will chasten such a people as this! And I feared that He would send judgments upon His Church, and perhaps take away her candlestick out of the place, and give the light unto another people that might serve Him more faithfully!

Then I felt as Habakkuk did. I heard the voice of the Lord, and I was afraid. I was afraid for my fellow men, thinking of the multitudes of them that had already gone beyond recall to the land of darkness and to the regions of doom, and for the millions hastening to the same end! I was afraid for the Christian Church, lest it should have a name to live and be dead, lest the Lord should give up the Church in Britain as He did His Church in Shiloh, of which He said, "Go you now unto My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of My people Israel."

I feared lest He might do for the Church in Britain as He has to the church in Rome—given it over to become an antichrist, and an abomination before the eyes of God and men! I was afraid, with exceedingly great fear, for my fellow ministers, for I feared that all this people could not have perished without their being guilty of *some* of their blood! How could all this ignorance have remained in this land if the preachers had been faithful? I fear that the blood of souls will be required at the hands of many a minister. What do I see? A gathering of ministers. And what is this I see upon their garments? I see blood on them!

I see blood sprinkled on gray heads, and alas, I see blood upon the brows of young men who have but lately entered into the work—blood upon them all! Here do I much fear for myself, lest I, also, addressing this multitude so constantly, should have much blood upon my clothes because of my many responsibilities! O God! It is enough to make us afraid! Why look, my Brethren, when God's servants were truly active, as the first twelve were, did the cause stand still? Did they win here and there a soul, and have now and then a conversion? Did the cause of Christ go back like an army put to the rout? On the contrary, did they not as soon as ever they received the Truth of God use it like a fire-brand to set the nations on a blaze?

They met with persecutions which do not stand in our way. They were assaulted by threats of death which we have not to brave, and yet nothing could stand against their indomitable zeal! The Omnipotence of the Holy Spirit rested on them and they went on conquering and to conquer! And what are we? Oh we are cold and dead where they were full of fire and life! We are the degenerate sons of glorious fathers. Do you think the Church

could have had it said that she remained a year without increase if there were not blame *somewhere*? You may remind me of Divine sovereignty, if you will, but I remember that Divine sovereignty always acts with wisdom and with love, and that the Lord has not said to us, "Labor in vain." If we had labored, and if all the Christian Church had labored as they should have labored, I believe the promise would have been proved, "Your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

**II.** When one is thus bowed down with the voice of God, the most natural prompting of the regenerate soul is to *pray*. So we turn to the second part of the text which has in it AN APPROPRIATE PRAYER. I wish I had power this morning to make you feel the weight of what I have already brought before you! I know I have not put it in such language as I should have chosen, but it seems to me to be perfectly dreadful that there should be this constant dying, this constant ruin, this constant spread of error—and no progress in the Church. I am sure when I heard it, if a messenger had told me that I was a beggar, that I had lost everything on earth, I would have been more pleased with such an announcement than to know that God's Church had not increased in the space of twelve months.

It seems to me to be a thing to mourn over, a thing to make us go to God with a humble heart and to feel as if one had been sorely chastened by the Most High. For the Lord knows some of us have worked with all our might, and we hope it is not pride when we say the blame does not rest with us, and yet the question must go to us all. We must deal faithfully with ourselves and not be flattered. We would honestly enquire, How much of this lies at *my* door? How much of this burden of God ought I to bear today?

Certainly enough to lead us to such prayer as that before us! Habakkuk, being bowed down, first turns himself to God. His first word is, "O Lord." To the Most High we must carry both our own and our Church's troubles. Habakkuk turns not to another Prophet to ask of him, "My Brother, what shall we do?" He turns to the Master, "O Lord, what will *You* do?" It will be well for us to confer with one another as to the causes of defeat and the means for securing success, but all conference with flesh and blood is idle unless it be preceded by solemn conferences with God. For God's Church, God is needed! For God's work, God's own arm must be made bare!

Is it not delightful to notice how heavy trials drive us to God when we might not have gone to Him otherwise? The little child, when walking abroad, runs before his father. But if he meets some strange man of whom he is afraid, he runs back and takes his father's hand—so should it be with us. If God had prospered all our Churches, and everything had gone on as *we* had desired, we might, perhaps, have grown self-confident, and have said, "O Lord, You have given us power in ourselves."

But now that we see the contrary, let us run back to closer fellowship and nearer communion with our God than ever! And taking hold upon the

arm of *His* strength, let us stir Him up by our continued and fervent prayers. Notice next that the prayer of Habakkuk is about *God's* Church. He knew that there were dark days coming over Palestine, but he does not pray about that land in particular. "O Lord," he said, "revive *Your* work." Certain would-be prophets tell us that many wonders will occur in 1866 and 1867, though I notice a propensity to postpone the whole business to 1877. Is this postponement intended that there may be ten years longer in which to sell their books?

But whatever is to come—whether the Turkish empire is to be destroyed, or Louis Napoleon is to annex Germany or whether Rome is to be swallowed up by an earthquake—it does not seem, to me, to matter so much as the turn of a button! The great thing to a Christian is not the fate of earthly empires, but the state of the *heavenly* kingdom. As to what is to become of this principality or that empire—what have you and I to do with these things? We are the servants of a spiritual King whose kingdom is not of this world! Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth, and break each other as they will—our business is with King Jesus and His throne!

It is delightful to see the Prophet rising beyond the narrow range of the Jew, getting out of nationalities and praying, "O Lord, revive *Your* work." That is the one ship we care for in the storm, that one vessel in which Jesus Christ is riding at the helm, the Captain of salvation, and the Lord High Admiral of the seas. Let the nations mix in dire confusion as they will, God rules over all and brings out His Church in triumph from all the strife of earth. The one anxiety of our souls should be the blood-stained banner of the Cross! Will it wave high? Will King Jesus get to Himself the crown, for we have neither will nor wish beyond that.

So, Christian men, if you have heard God's voice in the great judgments that are abroad, let those judgments lead you to pray, "Lord, remember *Your* Church—*Your* Church in England, *Your* Church in America, *Your* Church in France, *Your* Church in Germany, *Your* Church anywhere, *Your* Church everywhere. O God, look upon *Your* elect ones! Let the separate ones, scattered through all nations, receive of *Your* benediction! As for all else, in Providence, we leave it to *Your* will, for *You* know what is best."

Observe next that the Prophet uses a word which is singularly discriminative: "O Lord, revive *Your* work." He does not say, "Lord, prosper *my* work." How often do I go to God in concern about the work that is going on in this Tabernacle! I am thankful for all the blessing we have seen, and I grow increasingly anxious lest the Lord should withdraw His hand. But when one looks abroad upon the *world*, and upon all the Lord's people in different denominations, one cannot pray, "Lord, prosper *my* work!" At least, one can pray that, but then cover that over with another—"O Lord, revive *YOUR* work."

For what about my work? Well, as far as it is mine it is very faulty. And what about the work of the Baptists? Well, there is doubtless much that is wrong about it. And what about the work of the Methodists, and the work of the Congregationalists, and so on? May God prosper them according as they walk in His Truth! But the way to come to the core of our prayer is to cry, “O Lord, revive *Your* work! Whatever is of You, whatever is Your Truth, whatever is Your Spirit’s work in the hearts of men, whatever is genuine conversion and vital godliness—Lord, revive it!”

Cannot you, dear Friends, in the presence of death which we have been speaking of, and in the presence of judgment, and in the presence of the fact that the Christian Church has not been increased these twelve months, shake off all the bitterness of everything that has to do with *self*, or with *party*, and now pray, “Lord, revive *Your* work, and if Your work happens to be more in one branch of the Church than in another, Lord, give that the most reviving! Give us all the blessing, but let Your own purposes be accomplished, and Your own glory come of it and we shall be well content, though we should be forgotten and unknown. ‘O Lord, revive Your work.’ ”

Note that the particular blessing he asks for is a revival of God’s work, by which we mean, in our time, that there should be a revival of the old Gospel preaching. We must have it back! It comes to this—our ministers must return to the same Gospel which John Bunyan and George Whitfield preached. We cannot get on with philosophical gospels—we must bring together all these new geological gospels and Neological gospels, and semi-Pelagian gospels, and do with them as the people of Ephesus did with the books—we must burn them, and let Paul preach again to us! We can do without modern learning, but we cannot do without the ancient Gospel! We can do without oratory and eloquence, but we cannot do without Christ Crucified! Lord, revive Your work by giving us the old-fashioned Gospel back again in our pulpits!

It is to be lamented that there are so many who are considered not to be bad preachers who scarcely ever mention Christ’s name, and are very loose concerning atonement by His precious blood. You will hear people say they have gone to such-and-such a Chapel, and whatever the sermon might have been about it certainly was not about the Gospel. Oh may that cease to be the case! May our pulpits ring with the name of Jesus! May Christ be lifted up and His precious blood be the daily theme of the ministry! Oh that thousands might be brought to put their trust in the Lamb slain, and to find salvation by faith in Him whom God has appointed to be the Savior of men!

This, however, would *not* bring back a revival unless there came with it a revival of the Gospel spirit. If you read the story of the Reformation, or the later story of the new Reformation under Whitfield and Wesley, you are struck with the singular spirit that went with the preachers. The world said they were mad! The caricaturists drew them as being fanatical be-

yond all endurance. But there it was, their *zeal* was their power! Of course the world scoffed at that of which it was afraid. The world fears enthusiasm—the sacred enthusiasm which love to Christ kindles—the enthusiasm which is kindled by the thought of the ruin of men and by the desire to pluck the firebrands from the flame! The world fears the enthusiasm which believes in the Holy Spirit, which believes that God is still present with His Church to do wonders! This is what the world dreads, and what the Church wants. Pray for it! Pray to be baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire! O Lord, send forth Your unconquerable Spirit! O God, revive Your work!

You perceive that the Prophet desires this gift at once. He does not say, “at the end of the years,” but “in the midst of the years.” His prayer is for a *present* and immediate revival of genuine religion. Let it be ours, not from the teeth outward but from the heart outward to pray for revival! Let us long for it with heart and soul and strength, and God will give it to us! Once more note that the prayer of Habakkuk is a very intelligent one, for he indicates the means by which he expects to have it fulfilled—in the midst of the years make known. It is by making known the Gospel that men are saved, not by mere thumping of the pulpit and stamping of the feet, but by telling out something which the understanding may grasp and the memory may retain.

To publish the doctrine of a reconciled God! To tell men that the Lord has laid Hell upon Jesus by punishing Him instead of us! To proclaim that there is life in a look at the Crucified One! To tell them that the Holy Spirit creates men new creatures in Christ Jesus! To give a full and comprehensive view of the Doctrines of Grace—these are some of the surest ways, under God, of promoting a revival of religion! I cannot talk to you but I think I could pray to God, and I hope many of you will do so today. O God, send us a revival! This will purge the blood of souls from our garments—nothing else will! This will roll back the tides of error—nothing else can! This will give to the Christian Church triumph of an unusual kind! This will cover the earth with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the deep—nothing else can or will!

Gracious God, revive Your work!

**III.** And now we close with A POTENT ARGUMENT. He uses the argument of mercy—“in wrath remember mercy.” If God were to say to the Churches in England, “I will have nothing to do with you. You have been so idle, so worldly, so purse-proud, so prayerless, so quarrelsome, so inconsistent that I will never bless you again.” If God were to say that, the churches of God in England might remain as astounding monuments of the justice of God towards the people who forsake His ways.

Sorrowfully, not wishing to be an accuser of the Brethren, it does seem to me that considering the responsibilities which were laid upon us, and the means which God has given us, the Church generally, (there are blessed exceptions!), has done so little for Christ that if “Ichabod” were

written right across its brow, and it were banished from God's House, it would have its just deserts. We cannot, therefore, appeal to *merit*—it must be to *mercy*. O God, have mercy upon Your poor Church, and visit her and revive her. She has but a little strength. She has desired to keep Your Word. Oh, refresh her! Restore to her Your power, and give her yet to be great in this land.

Mercy is also wanted for the land itself. This is a wicked nation, this England. Its wickedness belongs not to one class only, but to all classes. Sin runs down our streets. We have a fringe of elegant morality, but behind it we have a mass of rottenness. There is not only the immorality of the streets at night, but look at the dishonesty of business men in high places! Cheating and thieving upon the grandest scale are winked at. Little thieves are punished, and great thieves are untouched! This is a wicked city, this city of London, and the land is full of drunkenness, and the land is full of fornication, and the land is full of theft, and the land is full of all manner of Popish idolatry!

I am not the proper prophet to take up this burden, and to utter a wailing. My temperament is not that of Jeremiah, and therefore am I not well-called to such a mission. But I may at least, with Habakkuk, having heard the Lord's speech concerning it, be afraid and exhort you to pray for this land, and be asking that God would revive His work in order that this drunkenness may be given up. That this dishonesty may be purged out. That this great social evil may be cut out from the body politic as a deadly cancer is cut out by the surgeon's knife.

O God, for mercy's sake, cast not off this island of the seas! Give her not up to internal distraction! Leave her not in darkness and blackness forever, but "revive Your work in the midst of the years! In the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy." While I have been addressing Christians, my object has been to bless the ungodly, too, and I do trust that some here who are not converted will enquire, "What, then, is God's voice to *me*?" May you be led to seek salvation, and remember you shall find it—for whoever trusts Christ shall be saved!

If there is a man, woman, or child among you who will now humble himself under the hand of God and look to the crucified Savior, you shall not perish! Neither shall the wrath of God abide upon you, but you shall be found of Him in peace in the day of His appearing. God accept this humble weak testimony for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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