RENEWING STRENGTH

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A SERMON
SUITABLE FOR THE CLOSE OF THE YEAR
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"They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength."
Isaiah 40:31

HUMAN strength is of many kinds, but in any form it will spend itself in due time. God can lend to men immense *physical* force, but though a man had the strength of a lion and an ox combined, he would one day fail. The force of flesh must fade like the grass to which it is likened. Samson sometimes becomes exhausted, and he is likely to die of thirst, though he has slain a thousand men.

Yea, more, he must ultimately die, and his mighty thews and tremendous muscles must yield to the worm, and return to the dust of death. Since even granite and iron yield to constant wear and tear, assuredly man's frail body cannot long be a thing of strength.

"Our days a transient period run,
And change with every circling sun;
And while to lengthen'd years we trust,
Before the moth we sink to dust."

Mental strength is a noble possession, but it also fails its owner, for at best it is a finite power. The wisest of men by and by feel the infirmities of age creeping upon them, and frequently present the sad spectacle of second childhood. Death pays no regard to science or eloquence. The fool dies, and as surely dies the senator, the philosopher, the divine.

When you take up the skull of a sage, you find no weight of wisdom there, nor trace of all the curious movements of a potent brain. Knowledge, genius, imagination, prophetic fire all depart—even before death they often fail. Baffled by mysteries, balked by prejudice, blinded by pride, the man of great understanding may yet be driven to his wit's end.

So far as even *spiritual* strength is of the man, himself—so far as you can conceive of it apart from the immediate operation of the Holy Ghost—it also cannot be depended on. The most devout may grow lukewarm, the strongest believer may doubt, the most sanctified may backslide. It is a heavenly strength, but so far as it is transfused into our humanity and becomes a part of ourselves, it also may wax weak, though, blessed be God, it can never utterly die.

Every form of human strength must of necessity spend itself, for the world of which it forms a part decays, and by and by, like a worn-out vesture, the heavens and the earth shall be rolled up and put away.

Some signs of age, the creatures show already, but the time will come when their strength shall utterly fail. The reason is that all strength apart from God is derived strength, and is consequently measurable. Yea, apart from God it is not strength at all, and consequently must come to an end. The river runs on and the brook fails not, because they come from fountains that are not affected by drought—but cisterns are dried and reservoirs fail, because they have no springing well at the bottom of them—and if the pipes which supply them cease to flow, they are soon left dry as a threshing-floor.

Pools which are not self-supplied are always liable to be exhausted as the water is drained from them. Let every man know therefore that whatever his strength may be, of body, mind, or spirit—if it be his own, it will fail him one day.

Let him see to it therefore that he does not trust it—especially that he does not trust it with eternal hazards, or rest upon it for his soul's safety—for which it never can be equal. It will be a horrible thing to be leaning and to find your staff fail you when you are on the edge of a measureless precipice. It will be terrible to be building, and to find your foundation washed from under you, and all your handiwork carried away by the flood!

Yet so it must be if we are depending upon anything that comes of ourselves. Our own righteousness, our own thoughts, our own religiousness, our own prayers, resolves, attainments, achievements—everything that is of ourselves must sooner or later prove themselves to be but human—and over all things human it is best to write, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Mingled with all things human there are portions of that all-dissolving acid which fell upon man's nature when infinite justice said, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

On the other hand, what a contrast there is as to divine strength! That never fails. It seems almost a superfluity to say as much as that—it abides in joyous fullness, never in the least diminished. With God there are no years to make Him decline with age, no labors to tax His powers. With God our lives are but as the swing of the pendulum. A thousand years in His sight are passed away as a watch in the night. Millions of ages are nothing to Him.

He was God when as yet this sun, and moon, and all these stars slept in His thoughts like unborn forests in an acorn cup. And He will be God when all this brief creation shall melt back to nothing as a moment's foam dissolves into the wave that bore it and is lost forever.

God changes not in any degree whatever—the fountain of His almightiness still overflows. He made this world—no doubt He has made thousands more, and has still an undiminished power to create. All the worlds that we can see revolving in yonder sky are perhaps as a single chamber in the mansion-house of creation. They occupy an insignificant corner behind the door—compared to other and vaster worlds that He has made.

But the glorious Lord is just as ready to make more. He is still the same forever and forever. In your dire necessity you may draw largely upon Him, but you cannot exhaust Him. You may bring your boundless wants and have them all supplied, but you shall no more diminish His all-sufficiency than when an infant dips his cup into the sea, and leaves the sea brimming over upon ten thousand leagues of shore.

Oh, the glory of the strength of God! I cannot speak of it. I will not contrast it with the strength of man. It would be to contrast everything with nothing, and infinity with non-existence.

What then? These two things seem very far away—man with his faintness, his strength gradually drying up—God with His eternity and inexhaustible omnipotence. If we can bring these two together, if by an act of faith you that are human can be linked with the divine, what a wondrous thing will happen! Then the sacred words of the text will be fulfilled and your strength will be renewed.

Apt as it is to dry up, it will be renovated, freshened, filled up, increased, established. From the eternal deep that lies under—that deep of which Moses said that it "coucheth beneath"—from that measureless fountain shall you draw strength which all eternity will not exhaust.

You are weakness itself, but if you are united to the divine strength, you shall be infinitely strong. The cipher is nothing, but with a unit before it becomes ten. A man is nothing, but with God in him, he makes hell tremble.

Now that is just my text, "They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength." If they are apart from God, their strength will die out. But when they are linked to God, and wait upon God for everything—casting their nothingness upon His omnipotence—then shall they find their strength renewed. With God in him, though the man were dead, yet shall he live.

Job says, "My bow was renewed in my hand." Grass cut down shall grow again when heaven's dew shall quicken it. The brook that was ready to dry up shall flow again when heaven remembers it and unseals its treasures. The skies that burned like brass shall be cooled again, with clouds when the Lord

thinks upon them. When the heart drinks life from the heart of God, and man is at one with his Maker, then all is well.

"From God, the overflowing spring,
Our souls shall drink a flesh supply;
While those who trust their native strength
Shall melt away and droop and die."

I have now to speak from my text, *first, upon how a true church may be described*. "They that wait upon the LORD." Secondly, upon *what such a church needs* to renew its strength. And thirdly, *how such a church may renew its strength*, and that is by waiting upon the LORD. That which serves as a description *of* true believers serves also as a direction *to* true believers—They that wait upon the LORD are the men who may most hopefully be encouraged still to wait upon the LORD that their strength may be renewed.

I. First, then, here WE SEE HOW A TRUE CHURCH MAY BE DESCRIBED—"They that wait upon the LORD."

A church such as a church ought to be, consists of men who *depend upon the LORD alone*, for waiting signifies dependence. Their hope is in God. They rest in God's righteousness as their righteousness, and they receive the great sacrifice provided by God to be their atonement and their acceptance.

No man is really a Christian who finds his hope and confidence within himself—he must be looking out of himself to God in Christ Jesus. It is absolutely essential that it should be so. He that is God's beloved is a believer in God—that is to say, a truster in God, a waiter upon God. His one sole confidence is in God His Savior. This being so with each individual, the whole church can sing,

"Our spirits look to God alone,
Our rock and refuge is His throne;
In all our fears, in all our straits
Our soul on His salvation waits."

If Christians are what they ought to be, they depend upon God alone in their church capacity. God's Word is their only creed—they do not add to it anything whatever—no, not a sentence, a gloss, or a thought. They have greatly erred who look upon anything as the authoritative standard of faith but God's own Word.

I hear you say, "Do you not respect the Thirty-nine Articles?" However much or little I may respect them, it makes no difference to the fact that the church of God is not bound to any faith but that which God Himself has revealed. "But the Westminster Assembly's Confession?" It must be treated in the same manner. That summary of doctrine is very admirable, but human creeds, as such, have nothing on earth to do with me.

The point I have to do with is this, What does God say? What does His Word say? Within the covers of the Bible you find all theology. Nothing outside of this Book is binding on a Christian man as doctrine in the least degree whatever. The Bible and the Bible alone is the religion of Christians. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

This Word has life within it which rules in the souls of the Lord's elect. Blessed be the Spirit of God who dictated it. We yield implicit faith to all that He has revealed, and to nothing else. A true church of God will say, "We wait upon the Lord for teaching—this Word of the Lord is to us our infallible source of doctrine—and that alone."Those who wait upon the LORD for their creed shall never need to give up their faith for something better, but they shall renew their strength.

Faithful to her Lord in doctrine, a true church also waits upon the LORD for grace, and has faith in the doctrines of grace as the testimony with which she is to work. What am I to teach to my people if I am a Christian minister? If a church is rightly constituted, it says to the pastor, "Teach what God has taught. Preach Christ crucified. Preach not your own thoughts, nor notions of your own inventing, but what is revealed by God—preach you that, for it shall be the power of God unto salvation." I am always sorry when, in order to promote a revival, false doctrine is preached. I will preach no false doctrine if I know it—no, not to save the world.

Of this I am assured that, if the truth will not save a man, a lie will not. If the bare unaltered truth of God will not break a man's heart, then it certainly will not break it when it is rounded and toned down, and made to look pretty so as to suit the prevailing taste. No, a church that waits upon the Lord uses only the doctrine of Scripture as its battle-axe and weapons of war.

A church that is waiting upon the LORD always knows where its strength lies, namely, in its God. What is the power with which men are to be converted? Eloquence, say some. The church of God says, "Not so. Not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the LORD."

I solemnly believe that so much of human oratory as there is in a sermon, so much there is of the weakness of the flesh—for all the power must be of God working with the truth, through the Holy Ghost. Therefore we should use great plainness of speech, and never speak for the sake of the language, but always for the sake of the truth we have to say, that God may bless it to the hearts of men.

No man in this world was ever converted except by the Holy Spirit, and never will any man be truly converted by any other power. Bang your drum, brother, and blow your brass instrument if you like, but neither cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, nor any other kind of music, will ever save a soul.

Deck your altar out as prettily as you like, and burn your most fragrant incense, but no soul ever finds heaven by the light of candles nor by the scent of censers. The Gospel has salvation in it when the Holy Spirit works by it—and no other doctrine can save. The Spirit of the Lord alone must bless the truth, and He will bless the truth alone. This is the church's sole power with souls.

Now, you Christian people that are trying to do good and glorify God, I pray you wait upon the Lord, and resolve that you will only go to God's work armed with God's truth and backed up by God's Spirit. Many in these days think that we want a great deal besides the Spirit of God, but they are in error. They think that the world is not to be converted and men saved in the old-fashioned way of preaching the Word of God with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. But let me assure you that it is to be converted in that way and in no other.

Human agriculture is capable of daily improvement, but as the plans of the great Husbandman are perfect from the first, you may be sure that there will be no change in them. You may go through the world ranting and raving, or you may go arguing and discussing, but you cannot touch a dead heart to make it alive either by excitement or by philosophy. You cannot breathe into the nostrils of a dead soul eternal life, though your winds should blow hot with fanaticism, or chill with rationalism.

Spiritual life can only come in God's way, and it is God's way by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. From the Gospel pulpit believing preachers work more miracles than your learned men will ever believe. God's Word will not return to Him void, but man's word is void when it goes forth—and void it remains to the end of the chapter.

The magicians and their enchantments cannot compare with the rod of Moses. One word of the Lord is stronger than all the rage of hell or the enmity of the world. We mean, whatever others do, keep to "waiting upon the LORD," going to work in the Lord's way, and depending upon the LORD's power, and upon that alone.

But waiting upon God means something more than dependence upon God, so I go a step farther—if we depend upon God, *our expectation is from Him*. We wait upon God as the birds in the nest wait upon the parent bird, expecting from her their food. Before she comes you hear their cries, and when she comes, if you look into the nest, you will see nothing but so many gaping mouths, all waiting expecting to be filled by the mother bird.

Now, that is just what a church of God ought to be—a company of wide-opened mouths waiting to be filled by the Lord alone. "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it," says the Lord. Do you not think that some churches, and some Christians, with very small expectations, have scarcely learned to open their mouths at all?

If the Lord were to convert a soul now and then, they would be pleased and express a grateful surprise. But do they expect to hear of hundreds added to the church at a time, or of thousands in a year brought to Christ? No, they think this may be done in some extraordinary instances in very large places, but they do not expect it in their gatherings.

Oh, friends, let us expect more of God, and we shall receive more. Does He not always come up to our expectations? Does He not amaze us with the blessings of His goodness? Is He not able to do exceedingly above all that we ask or even think? I find it such a blessing to have expecting people about me, for they make a flourishing church.

Some brethren here at this time are men of great expectations, for even now while I am preaching, they are planning whereabouts they will be in the aisle to talk with folk going out—they reckon that some will be converted by the Word, and they are on the look-out to pick them up.

These brethren are grieved and surprised if after a service they do not meet with one or two inquirers or convicted sinners, that they may join with them in tearful prayer. They are believers in the power of the Gospel, and they act accordingly. When I fire the gun, they are on the alert to pick up the birds, for they believe in the killing power of the Word. They could not be content with ineffectual preaching—they expect that the Word will be fruitful, and so they bring their basket to put the fruit in.

Oh, if a church would but wait upon God in this sense of expecting great things from Him, it should have them. For He will never allow His people to complain that He has been a wilderness to them. He will never raise their hopes to dash them to the ground.

Is there any man alive who has believed in the Lord too largely, and expected too confidingly? Brother ministers, let us begin to expect more—not from *our* ministry because it is powerful, for it is nothing of the kind by itself—but from God's ministry through us, for if He speaks by us, why should not men yield to His voice though they will not yield to ours? If He be with us, can He not make us hammers that shall break the rocks in pieces? Can He not use even us to be as a fire to melt the iron hearts of men? So then, a true church depends upon God and expects from God—and in this sense answers to the description— "They that wait upon the LORD."

To make up waiting, I think there is a third thing, and that is *patience*—to hold out, and wait the Lord's time and will. The three together—dependence, expectation, patience—make up waiting upon the Lord.

This "patience" is to the uttermost desirable in a thousand matters, that we may endure affliction, persevere in holiness, continue in hope, and abide in our integrity. Patience is the long life of virtue, and sets on its head the crown of experience. It is no child's play to continue to suffer affliction with joyfulness, and to remain, for years, perfectly acquiescent in the will of the Lord, let that be what it may. It needs the eyes of faith to see God in the dark, to believe in His love when He is angry, and to rest in His promise when it tarries long.

That little word WAIT is a word fit for a father in Christ, and comes not out of the mouth of a babe in grace. Let us ask for grace to pronounce it aright.

"Wait, my soul, upon the Lord,
To His gracious promise flee,
Laying hold upon His Word,
'As thy day, thy strength shall be.'"

Some of my dear brethren in Christ are ardent followers of Christ, but they do not seem to have learned the meaning of that word "patience." They are working for Christ, and they are depending upon

the Lord, and they are looking for results—but when they do not quite see them immediately—straightway they are offended and depressed.

They are in such a hurry that they seem half inclined to cry, "Why should I wait for the LORD any longer?" I daresay that you were much the same when you were children—you wanted everything there and then, and waiting was dismal work to you. We are all impatient as long as we are imperfect. It is the mark of the child that he is in a violent hurry where men are steady.

Perhaps our father gave us some seed, and we hastened to sow it. We put in a little mustard and cress one morning, and then we thought that we would eat it for tea, but as we saw no sign of green, we went and turned over the earth to see if the seed was sprouting. We were greatly surprised to find that it had not grown up green and ready to cut—we did not understand that the husbandman waits.

We had a little apple tree and we put it in the ground. The planting of that tree was a grand affair, and we reckoned upon many puddings being made out of the apples gathered from it next year. We were sadly surprised to see that the apples did not come. Yes, that is the spirit of children—their name is Passion—and not Patience. They live in the present hour, and have no power to extend themselves into days to come.

The Lord sometimes sends us speedy results to our labors. It happens at times that the moment we speak, conversions are wrought—but at other times it is not so—the truth works slowly and surely, and effects all the more precious results. We must wait for seed to grow, and for fruit to ripen. If we really wait upon the Lord, we shall just keep on, resolved to abide in duty, determined to remain in prayer, undaunted in confidence, unmoved in expectation.

We shall not fly into a passion with the Lord, and refuse to believe Him any more. Neither shall we run off to novelties, and fall into the fads and crazes of the day—to try this and to try that—because God's own way is a failure. But we shall say, "I have done what God bade me. I have done it in dependence upon His Spirit, and I believe that good will come of it. And therefore I shall wait and watch. I shall be found moving when God moves, or sitting still when the Lord tarries. But I am sure that He will not fail the soul that waits upon Him—all will be well—the blessing will come."

What a sweet thing is the calm leisure of faith!—"He that believeth shall not make haste." Fret and worry, hurry and haste, are all slain by the hand of faith. God has plenty of time—nay, He fills eternity, and therefore He can bear with man's waywardness with much long-suffering. You and I are in feverish haste, but when we get to be linked with God, we also can wait, even as God waits to be gracious, and has patient compassion upon men.

That is a description of what a Christian ought to be—"waiting upon the LORD"—depending upon God, expecting from God, and patiently tarrying for God, till He shall give the desired blessing.

II. But now, secondly, we see WHAT THE LORD'S WAITING PEOPLE NEED.

They need to *renew their strength*. Even those saints who wait upon God for everything, may grow faint, and require reviving.

And that is, first, because *they are human*. As long as you and I are mortal, we shall be mutable—as the world is full of changes, so are we. Some friends never seem to be either high or low in their feelings—their life has neither hills nor valleys in it, but is comparable to an unbroken plain—they traverse a perpetual level.

It is not so with others of us—we are all Alps and Andes. These favored pilgrims march steadily and evenly through the world, always at one pitch and pace. But others of us who mount up into the heavens in burning zeal and holy joy, go low, very low down, into the depths, till our soul sinks because of sorrow. The best and bravest of the saints are poor creatures.

Elijah on the top of Carmel, when he has brought fire from heaven, cries, "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape." Hear him, as he pleads with God, and unlocks the treasury of the rain. See him gird up his loins, and run before the chariot of Ahab. There is a man for you! If ever hero-worship might be tolerated, it is in the case of "this my lord Elijah."

Look not too closely at the champion, for within twenty-four hours he is afraid of Jezebel, and soon he is whining, "O Lord, take away my life; for I am no better than my fathers." Do you blame him? Do you fail to understand so sad a stoop from so great a height? Take heed of censuring a man so greatly approved of God as to be spared the pains of death. If you do as well as Elijah did, perhaps you may hear some nobodies blaming you in your hour of exhaustion.

But as for me, I cannot censure him, nor can any man who has ever enjoyed the heavenly delirium of high-strung zeal in the Master's service—and having been borne aloft on eagle's wings—at last falls upon the earth in absolute exhaustion. After high excitement, there will come reaction. Creatures whose home is on the earth cannot always live upon the wing—they must feel faint at times, and hence the necessity of this blessed promise—"They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength."

They will rise again. From their deepest depressions they will leap into supreme elevations. They shall dwell on the heights, they shall soar above the clouds. The very depths to which they dive are prophetic of the heights to which they will climb again. The Lord has said, "I will bring again from the depths of the sea."

They need renewing, also, because in addition to being human, *they are imperfect*. The sin that dwells in us drags us down. However high we have ascended, when we have walked in the light, still we have needed that the blood of Christ should cleanse us from all sin. Our natural corruption, and the imperfection and infirmity of our flesh are about us still. And these bring us down at times till we say with David, "I am this day weak, though anointed king."

What a blessing it is that failing, flagging, fainting, falling spirits, by waiting upon the Lord, shall renew their strength! Even those who actually fall shall be recovered. "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him up with his hand." Though our sands run very low, God shall fill the glass again, and the believing man shall again rejoice in the Lord, and have confidence in the God of his salvation.

Because we are human and imperfect, we cannot always be at our best. The sky is not always clear, the sea is not always at flood, the year is not always at summer, the sun is not always in the zenith, the moon is not always at her full, the tree is not always adorned with fruit, the vineyard does not always flow with wine, roses do not always blush, nor lilies always bloom. Creatures have their rises and their falls, and to us also there must be times when we need to renew our strength—and we shall renew it, for here the promise comes—"They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength."

Brethren, I will suppose that I am addressing some who have become weak and failing. You must renew your strength. It must be renewed, for otherwise *it will decline still further*, and this would be painful, dangerous, and dishonoring. The Lord would not have us utterly fail, nor fall prone upon the ground in the heavenly race. Therefore, to those who have no might, He increases strength.

We must renew our strength, for *it is for our honor, comfort, and safety*. It is not to a Christian's credit that he should be weak. The glory of a man is his strength, and especially is his spiritual strength his honor. It is not for your comfort to be weak. When a man is feeble, he becomes a burden to himself—his sadness makes him stoop—he is feeble-minded and ready to halt. "A wounded spirit who can bear?"

It is not for your usefulness that you should be weak. What can you do for others when you yourself can hardly stand? It is not for your safety that you should be weak, for you will be liable to many attacks, and open to many injuries from sin, and extremely likely to be overcome by temptation. Blessed is that man who is "strong in the LORD, and in the power of his might." To him the joy of the Lord is his strength. The Lord JEHOVAH is his strength and his song. He also has become his salvation.

It is for God's glory, and for our own usefulness, that we should be strong—and if we fall into decline and weakness, pray do not let us stop there. Let us try to escape from a spiritual consumption. If I address believers, who lament that the whole church with which they are connected is getting weak, I charge them not to suffer it to be so with themselves.

Brothers, shun a spiritual wasting away. A pining sickness is an awful disease for a church to die of. Do not linger in such a state. Up with you and cry mightily unto the Lord—and you shall yet be restored, for it is written—"They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength."

At this time I should be very glad if this dear church, over which the Holy Ghost has made me an overseer, would have its strength renewed. Our ministry wants renewal that it may be fuller of power and grace. How weak it is if God is even a little withdrawn!

Our Sunday school work requires constant renewal. Everything around us needs to be renewed, and revived, and refreshed. And just at this time I wish that it might be laid on the hearts of the members of the church to pray that we might renew our strength. Your minister grows old—not very old in natural age, it is true—but thirty years of continuous labor in preaching to so vast a congregation has taken much more out of his strength than almost any other form of service would have done. And therefore he needs to be invigorated again—physically, mentally, and spiritually.

Many of you are in a like condition, and need that your strength be renewed like the eagle's. This can be done for us all by that great Master, in whose hand the residue of the Spirit abides. He can lay His hand on us, and say, "Be strong. Fear not."

He can strengthen us to a degree of force far beyond our previous experience. The members of the church and the officers of the church all desire, I know, that they should renew their strength just now—it is well that such a desire is on them. May this desire for renewal become an insatiable craving with those of you who live near to God, and have power in prayer—then through your importunate intercessions the Lord may make good His promise, that this waiting congregation may renew its strength.

After thirty years of unflagging prosperity, we are as weak as ever apart from God, and need constant renewal of strength. I see many reasons why it is imperative that we should have it at this present time. Join, I pray you, in fervent prayer for it.

It is promised, and therefore if we do not have it, it is our own fault. God's promises are our precepts. What He promises to give, it is our duty to seek. And if He promises that we shall renew our strength, why not let us have the promise fulfilled to our faith?

I wish that it might come to pass that my dear brethren and sisters in Christ here—men and women who are working for Him, and are a little weary and faint—may be encouraged, cheered, refreshed, and led to say, "From this time on we will serve our Lord with all our youthful vigor, and with a great deal more. We will labor in the service of the Lord our God with all our might, not slackening our right hand nor withholding the fullness of our strength, but giving our all to God."

O blessed Spirit, rouse Your children to renewed consecration, renewed zeal, renewed delight in holy service, and renewed hope of victory!

III. So I close with the third point, which is this—HOW ARE WE TO RENEW OUR STRENGTH?

If we are God's people, we must renew our strength *by continually waiting upon God*.

When a man wants his bodily strength renewed, his purpose may be effected by eating a good meal. He has grown empty through hunger, and there is nothing in him. He must be filled up with substantial nourishment, and then the human engine will generate fresh force. Oh, you who are weak in spirit, come and feed upon Christ! They that wait upon the Lord in that way, by feeding upon the body and blood of Christ, shall find Him to be meat indeed, and drink indeed, and so they shall renew their strength.

Sometimes a man may renew his strength by taking a little rest. He has grown weak through stern labor and long fatigue, and he must be quiet, and repose till he recovers. Oh, you weary, heavy-laden, where is there rest for you except in the Christ of God? Oh, come to God, and rest in Him, and wait patiently for Him! Then shall your peace be as a river, and then shall your strength be restored right speedily.

We have known strength to be restored by a bath. A weary one has plunged himself into the cool flood, and he has risen quite another man. Oh, for a baptism into the Spirit of God! Oh, to plunge into

the Godhead's deepest sea—to throw one's self into the might and majesty of God—to swim in love, upborne by grace!

We have known men's strength renewed by breathing their native air. They have risen out of a hot and fetid atmosphere into the cool breeze of the mountainside, and the bracing breeze has made them strong again.

Oh, to have the breath of the Spirit blowing upon us once again! By Him we were born, by Him we were quickened, by Him we have been revived from former faintness, and it is by breathing His divine life that we shall be filled with life again. Oh, that at this moment we might each one feel the power of the Lord entering into us!

In a word, if a church wants reviving; if saints individually want reviving, they must wait upon God––first in *prayer*. Oh, what a blessing a day's prayer might be! When Archbishop Leighton used to go into his room, his servant said that he would remain there for two or three hours, having locked the door, and having nothing with him but his Bible and a candle.

Ay, then he came out to speak those gracious words which still linger in his works like the echoes of music. His Bible and candle were the only earthly illumination that he needed, for prayer brought him light divine.

Get with God, brother. Be much with God. I am sure that we, none of us, are enough alone with God. But in prayer, laying hold upon the invisible, we shall win strength for service.

Add to that a *re-dedication* of ourselves to the Lord who bought us. This often helps us to renew our strength. Go over, again, that blessed covenant which has made you one of the covenanted ones with God. You gave yourself years ago wholly up to your Lord, and you sometimes sing—

"High heaven that heard that solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear."

Let this day hear the renewal of it—let your covenant be solemnly rehearsed. Consecrate yourself anew to God.

Then afresh realize your *entire dependence* upon God. Put yourself into the Lord's hands absolutely. Be like the sere leaf that is carried by the breath of the tempest. When you have submitted yourself completely and trusted entirely, setting both your strength and your weakness on one side, and giving yourself up for God to use you, oh, then you shall renew your strength.

Then go forward to *renewed action*. In renewing your strength, ask the Lord that you may undertake fresh work, and that this work may be done to a nobler tune—that you may have more expectancy, more confidence, more faith, more God-reliance. What things are done by men in common life with *self*-reliance! But with *God*-reliance we work impossibilities, and miracles fly from us like sparks from the anvil of a smith. When a man learns to work with God's strength and with that alone, he can do all things. So would I stir my brothers up one by one, and then as a body, to work for God with renewed energy.

I have almost done. I know that there are some here to whom this appears to have very slight reference. Yet if you are an unconverted man, my dear friend, after all, this is a lesson for you. For the pith of it all is that if ever you are to be saved you must get away from yourself into God—and your confidence must be in Christ the Son of God, and not in your own strength.

One of my greatest delights is to see how our people die. I have never, for years, visited the dying-bed of a single member of this church in which I have seen a shade of doubt, or the least suspicion as to their triumphant entrance into the kingdom. I have been somewhat astonished to find it always so.

I just now sat by the bedside of one of our brethren who is melting away with consumption—and it was sad to see his wife lying by his side almost equally ill. But when I spoke with him who was so soon to be with God, he said, "As for my faith, dear sir, it never wavers in the least degree. I have my times of depression of spirit, but I take no notice of that. You have told us not to look to feelings, but simply to

trust in the infallible Word of a faithful God. Fifteen years ago, sir," he said, "one Thursday night I dropped into the Tabernacle to hear you preach, and blessed be the day, I looked to Christ and found salvation.

"I have had plenty of ups and downs, but Jesus has never left me nor forsaken me, and I am not going to think that He will do so now. His Word stands fast forever. My strength is in my God." He added, "I am not resting upon man in any degree or measure, but wholly upon the faithful promise of God, and the precious blood of Christ."

I wished that I could get into his place, and not come here tonight, but just slip off to heaven as he is doing. It makes one sure of the Gospel when you see men dying so. It gives me courage to come and tell it out again to men and women. The Gospel which I preach to you is good to live upon, and good to die upon.

If you will but trust my Lord, you shall find it a blessed thing to depart out of this world, and be forever with the Lord. Death shall lose every air of dread—every ghastly gloom shall be taken from it. It shall be but undressing to go to bed, that you may wake up in the morning in royal robes as a courtier of the King of kings.

Only you must have done with yourself, and commit yourself to Christ. Say today in life what you will want to say when you come to die—"Father, into Thy hand I commit my spirit." That is a Gospel prayer. If you are waiting upon the Lord in the sense of complete reliance upon the merit of Jesus, you shall in dying renew your strength, and leap out of your frail body into the presence and glory of God.

In due time also you shall re-assume your body—but it shall be made like unto Christ's glorious body—and in its resurrection you shall emphatically renew your strength.

Blessed be His name that He has taught many of us to wait upon the Lord! May He teach you all to do so, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 40

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—676, 677, 957

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.

END OF VOLUME 29