

“IS GOD IN THE CAMP?”

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**A SERMON
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*“And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said,
Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore.”*

1 Samuel 4:7

ISRAEL was out of gear with God. The people had forgotten the Most High, and had gone aside to the worship of Baal. They had neglected the things of God, therefore, they were given up to their enemies. When JEHOVAH had brought them out of Egypt, He instructed them how they were to live in the land to which He would bring them, and warned them that if they forsook Him they would be chastened. His words were plain, “If ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me; then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins.” In fulfillment of this threatening, the Philistines had been divinely permitted to make great havoc of the idolatrous Israelites, and to hold them in cruel slavery.

The only way for them to get out of their trouble was to return to God, who, by His judgments, seemed to say, “Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.” The only cure for their hurt was to go back with repentance, and renew their faith and their covenant with God. Then all would have been right. But this is the last thing that men will do. Our minds, by nature, love not spiritual things. We will attend to any outward duty, or to any external rite, but to bring our hearts into subjection to the divine will, to bow our minds to the Most High, and to serve the Lord our God with all our heart, and all our soul, the natural man abhors. Yet nothing less than this will suffice to turn our captivity.

Instead of attempting to get right with God, these Israelites set about devising superstitious means of securing the victory over their foes. In this respect most of us have imitated them. We think of a thousand inventions, but we neglect the one thing needful. I may be addressing some who, at this time, are passing through a sore trial, and who therefore think that they must have forgotten some little thing in connection with external religion, instead of seeing that it matters little what outward observance they may neglect, so long as they do not possess the faith, without which it is impossible to please God.

They forgot the main matter, which is to enthrone God in the life, and to seek to do His will by faith in Christ Jesus. Get right with God, confess your sin, believe in Jesus Christ, the appointed Savior, be reconciled to God by the death of His Son, then all will be right between you and the Father in heaven. We cannot bring men to this, apart from the Spirit of God.

In this sermon I shall have to show you how often, and in how many ways, men seek other methods of cure than the only one, namely, to take the case to God. They heal their hurt slightly. They cry, “Peace! Peace!” where there is no peace, and adopt a thousand devious devices rather than accept the only remedy provided by the Great Physician for sin-sick souls. Instead of seeking to become right with God, these Israelites thought that if they could get the ark of the covenant, which had been the symbol of JEHOVAH’s presence, and bring it from the tent of Shiloh into the midst of their camp, they would then be certain of victory.

So they sent and fetched the ark, and when it came into the camp, they were enthusiastic as if their banners already waved over a victorious host, they lifted up their voices so loudly that the earth rang again with their shouts, while the Philistines, hearing their exulting shout, and finding out the reason,

were greatly afraid. With fearful hearts, and trembling lips, already counting that all was lost, their enemies turned to one another and said, “God has come into the camp. Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore.”

In considering this subject, we will think, first, of *the great mistake* which both Israel and the Philistines made. In the second place, we will consider *the great truth* of which their mistake was a caricature. God *does* come into the camp when His people go forth to fight in His name, and when He really comes, the tide of battle is turned. When I have spoken on these two things, I shall close, as God shall help me, by speaking upon *the great lessons* which all this will teach us, lessons which lie almost upon the very surface of the narrative.

I. First, then, let us consider THE GREAT MISTAKE which both the Israelites and Philistines made.

The Israelites, instead of seeking to God Himself, went to Shiloh to fetch the ark of the covenant. The ark was the sacred place where God revealed Himself in the days when His people truly served Him, but it was devoid of power without the presence of Him who dwelt between the cherubim. The Israelites were mistaken, for they shouted long before they were “out of the woods.” Before they had won any victory, the sight of the ark made them boastful and confident.

The Philistines fell into an error of a different kind, for they were frightened without any real cause. They said, “God is come into the camp,” whereas God had not come at all. It was only the ark with the cherubim upon it, God was not there.

The mistake they made was just this, *they mistook the visible for the invisible*. It has pleased God, even in our holy faith, to give us some external symbols—water, and bread, and wine. They are so simple that it seems, at first sight, as if men could never have made them objects of worship, or used them as instruments of a kind of witchcraft. One would have thought that these symbols would only have been like windows of agate and gates of carbuncle, through which men would behold the Savior, and draw near to Him. Instead thereof, some have neither looked through the windows nor passed through the gates, but have ascribed to the gates and the windows that which is only to be found in Him who is behind them both. It is sad, indeed, when the symbol takes the place of the Savior!

Man is by nature both an atheist and an idolater. These are two shades of the same thing. We want, if we do worship at all, something that we can see. But a god that can be seen is no god, and so the idolater is first cousin to the atheist. He has a god which is not god, for he cannot be a god if he can be apprehended by human senses.

This ark of the covenant, which was but a chest of wood covered with gold, with angelic figures on the lid, was simply a token of the presence of God with His people, and these Israelites transformed it into a sacred object, to be highly revered, to be worshipped, and as it appears, to be trusted in. The elders said, “Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of Shiloh unto us, that, when *it* comes among us, *it* may save us out of the hand of our enemies.” They ascribed to the ark what could only be done by God Himself.

This is the tendency of us all. Anything which we can see, we pine after. Hence we lean upon the arm of flesh, we trust in man, though it is written plainly enough, “Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD.” Yet, still we want some symbol, some token, something before our eyes, and if it can be something artistic, so much the better.

We lay hold of something beautiful, that will charm the eye, and produce a kind of sensuous feeling, and straightway we mistake our transient emotion for spiritual worship and true reverence. This is the great mistake that many still make, they think that God has come into the camp merely because some outward religious rite or ceremony has been observed, or because some sacred shrine has been set up among them.

These Israelites fell into another mistake, which is also often made today, *they preferred office to character*. In their distress, instead of calling upon God, they sent for Hophni and Phinehas. Why did their hearts turn to them? Simply because they were priests, and the people had come to hold the sacred

office in such superstitious reverence that they thought that was everything. But these young men were sinners against the Lord exceedingly, they were not even moral men, much less were they spiritual men. They made the house of God to be abhorred, and dishonored the Lord before all Israel. Yet, because they happened to hold the office of the priesthood, they were put in the place of God.

Dear friends, this is a kind of feeling which many indulge. They think they shall be saved if they have a Levite for their priest. They imagine that the worship of God must be conducted properly because the man who conducts it is in the apostolic succession, and has been duly ordained. You shall see a man eminent for the holiness of his life, for the disinterestedness of his character, for the fidelity of his preaching, for his power in prayer, for the blessing that rests upon his ministry in the conversion of sinners, but he is counted a mere nobody, because he lacks the superstitious qualification which deluded men think is so necessary. Here are Hophni and Phinehas, two of the grossest sinners in all the land of Israel, but then, you see, they are in the line of Aaron, and so they are trusted, and indeed are put in the place of God.

Now, God forbid that we should say a word against the house of Aaron, or against any who speak the name of the Lord, whom God has truly called unto His work! But, beloved, this work is not a mere matter of pedigree, it is a question of the abiding presence of God with man and in a man. Unless God be with the minister whom you hear, to what purpose do you listen? If the leader of the church be not one who walks with God, where will he lead you? "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." The blind man may wear a badge on his arm to show that he is a certified guide, but will you be saved from the ditch simply because he belongs to the order of guides, and has his certificate with him? Be not led away by any such vain notion. Yet this is the error into which many have fallen in all ages of the church.

But these people who faced the Philistines made another mistake, *they confounded enthusiasm with faith*. When they saw the ark, they shouted so that the earth rang again. "These are the kind of people I like," says one, "people that can shout." If that is all you want, why do you not go among the bulls of Bashan, and make your home in the midst of them? They can make more noise than any mortal men can make.

These Israelites shouted, but there was nothing in their noise any more than there is in their modern imitators. Anyone who had passed the camp of Israel, that day, might have said that they had "a bright, cheerful, happy service, just the kind of service the people like, you know, nothing dull about it." Hark! how the glad sound rises! Surely these people must have great faith! No, they had not a scrap of the real article. They were under a mistake all the time, and shout as they might, they had very little to shout about, for in a short time their carcasses strewed the plain. The Philistines put an end to their shouting.

Now, beloved, when you are worshipping God, shout if you are filled with holy gladness. If the outcry comes from your heart, I would not ask you to restrain it. God forbid that we should judge any man's worship! But do not be so foolish as to suppose that because there is loud noise there must also be faith. Faith is a still water, it flows deep. True faith in God may express itself with leaping and shouting, and it is a happy thing when it does, but it can also sit still before the Lord, and that perhaps is a happier thing still. Praise can sit silent on the lip, and yet be heard in heaven.

There is a passion of the heart too deep for words. There are feelings that break the backs of words, the mind staggers and trembles beneath the weight of them. Frost of the mouth often comes with thaw of the soul, and when the heart's great deeps are breaking up, it sometimes happens that the mouth is not large enough to let the torrents flow, and so it has to be comparatively silent. Do not, therefore, make the mistake of confounding enthusiasm with faith in judging the externals of worship, else you may fall into a thousand blunders.

He may worship God who shouts till the earth rings again, and God may accept him, but he may worship God as truly who sits in silence before the Most High, and says not even a word. It is the spiritual worship which is most acceptable to God, not the external in any form or shape. It is the heart that has fellowship with the Lord, and it needs little in the way of expressing itself, neither has God tied

it down to this way or that. It may find its own methods of utterance so long as it is truly “moved by the Holy Ghost.”

Another mistake these people made that day was this, *they valued novelty above Scriptural order*. “The Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore.” The Israelites probably made the same mistake, fixing their hope on this new method of fighting the Philistines, which they hoped would bring them victory. We are all so apt to think that the new plan of going to work will be much more effective than those that have become familiar, but it is not so. It is generally a mistake to exchange old lamps for new. “There hath not been such a thing heretofore.”

There is a glamour about the novelty which misleads us, and we are liable to think the newer is the truer. If there has not been such a thing heretofore, some people will take to it at once for that very reason. “Oh,” says the man who is given up to change, “that is the thing for me!” But it is probably not the thing for a true-hearted and intelligent Christian, for if “there hath not been such a thing heretofore,” it is difficult to explain, if the thing be a good one, why the Holy Ghost, who has been with the people of God since Pentecost, and who came to lead us into all truth, has not led the church of God to this before. If your new discovery is the mind of God, where have Holy Scripture been all these centuries?

Believing in the infallible Word and the abiding Spirit, I rather suspect your novelty, at least, I cannot say that I endorse it until I have tested it by the Word of God. “Oh, but we had such a meeting! There never was the like of it,” you say. Probably you ought to pray that there may never be the like of it again, for after all, the meetings in which hearts become broken before God, and in which men believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the same Savior who saved their forefathers, who have entered into glory, are no novelty.

Those meetings in which men come and give themselves up to God, where “the great transaction” is done, where they become the Lord’s, and He becomes theirs, are very old-fashioned things, they have been heretofore. “We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us what work You did in their days, in the times of old,” and if we could only see the like, we would not ask to be able to say, “There hath not been such a thing heretofore.”

Philistines may like a thing that has not been heretofore, but we like the thing that has been since the days of Pentecost, the things that come from Him who is “the same yesterday, and today, and forever,” the workings of that God who changes not, “with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” Let Him work His blessed will, and if He chooses to send a new thing on the earth, we will glorify His name, but because there are new things in the world, we will not ascribe them to Him, for they may come from quite another quarter.

We remember that, “Lo, here is Christ, or there!” was the cry against which our Lord warned His disciples. Concerning such a cry, the Savior said, “Believe it not.” To you, dear friends, I would say—“Stand fast by your great Leader, the blessed, unchangeable Christ, and by the faith once and for all delivered to the saints, or else you will be on the road to a thousand blunders.”

The mistake made on that battlefield is a mistake which nowadays is frequently imitated. It assumes many forms. We fall into their error when we *confound ritual and spirituality*. Now, every form of religion has its ritual. The Quaker, who sits still, and does not say a word, has a ritual so far, and he that has a thousand rites and ceremonies has a ritual so much farther. But if I have gone through the general routine of the worship of my church, and then think that I have done something acceptable to God, while yet my heart has not communed with Him in humble repentance, or faith, or love, or joy, or consecration, I make a great mistake.

You may keep on with your religious performances for seventy years or more, you may never miss what our Scotch friends call, “a diet of worship,” you may not neglect a single rubric in the whole ritual, but it is all nothing unless the soul has fellowship with God. Godliness is a spiritual thing, for “God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

So far as our forms or worship help us towards this spiritual communion, they are good, but no farther. "Oh, well," says one, "I never worship beneath a cathedral roof, I am quite content to meet with a few friends in a barn." Do not suppose, my friend, that the meagerness of your accessories has necessarily secured true worship. If you have met God in the barn, it is well, and if your brother has met God in the cathedral, it is also well, but if neither of you has really come to God in the right spirit, I care but little for your barn, and I care even less for his cathedral. What does it signify how you have garnished your offering if it be not a living sacrifice, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ?

A dead thing must not be brought to the altar of God. Remember that, under the Jewish law, they never offered fish upon the altar, because they could not bring it there alive. Everything brought to God as a sacrifice must be alive. Its blood must be poured out warm at the altar's foot. Oh, that you and I might feel that lifting of the soul to God, and that buoyancy of heart, which true spiritual worship alone can bring to us! May our ritual, whether we have much or little, be our guide to God, and not our chain to hold us back from God!

We fall into the same blunder that the Israelites and the Philistines made if we *consider orthodoxy to be salvation*. We have secured much that is worth keeping when we have, intellectually and intelligently, laid hold on that divinely-revealed truth, "the gospel of the grace of God," but we have not obtained everything even then.

O sirs, if it were possible for you to believe every word of Christ's teaching, if it were possible to hold with only an intellectual faith the teaching of the apostles, rejecting all besides, and to hold it with an accuracy so great that in no jot or tittle you had made a mistake, it would profit you nothing, for "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." He may understand these things so as to be a theologian, but he must have them wrought into his soul by the Holy Ghost so as to make him a saint, or else he has not really understood them at all. Unless these are your meat and your drink, they are nothing to you, unless you find Christ in them, you will find in them your ruin, they shall be the "savor of death" to you.

Remember, it was a beautiful tomb in which the dead Christ was laid, but He left it, and there was nothing there but grave clothes after He had gone, and in like manner, the best-constructed system of theology, if it has not Christ in it, and if he who holds it be not himself spiritually alive, is nothing more than a tomb in which are trappings for the dead. It is nothing better than a gilded ark, without the presence of God, and although you may shout, and say, "God is come into the camp," it will not be so.

We fall into the same error if we *regard routine as security*, and think that because we have often done a thing, and have not suffered for it, therefore it will always be well with us. We are all such creatures of habit that, at length, our repeated actions seem to be natural and right. Because sentence against their evil works is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. But though Pompeii may slumber long at the foot of Vesuvius, at length it is overwhelmed.

It behooves every one of us to try our ways, and specially to call in question things which have become a sort of second nature to us. This is the fault of which Peter gives warning concerning the scoffers of the last days, who will say with regret to the blessed truth of Christ's second advent, "Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." The apostle says of such that, "they willingly are ignorant," and therefore are they willfully ignorant of the terrible and unalterable doom that awaits them at the coming of their Judge.

Thus, like the Israelites, we may shout as we see the ark of the covenant, although our sins have driven the Lord far from us, or like the Philistines, we may say, "God has come into the camp," and yet He may not be there at all in the sense in which they meant. Thus I might continue to illustrate my text, but time would fail me, and I have yet to speak upon two other points.

II. Having considered the great mistake these people made, I will draw your attention, in the second place, to THE GREAT TRUTH of which their mistake is a caricature.

Though what the Philistines said, and what the Israelites thought, on this occasion, was false, it is often true. God does come to the camp of His people, and His presence is the great power of His church. O brethren, what joy comes to us at such a time! I will briefly sketch the scene that takes place when God comes into the camp.

Then, *the truth of the Gospel becomes vital*. The doctrines of grace have then with them, the grace of the doctrines. Then is Christ not only to us the Truth, but He is also the Way and the Life. The Gospel then becomes a sword with two edges, and it does marvelous execution. The Word of God then shows itself to be both a hammer and a fire, smiting and melting those upon whom its power is proved. Whoever preaches the Gospel, when God has come into the camp, speaks with power. He may have little eloquence and less learning, but if God is with him, and if his heart is all aglow with divine love, he will speak with power, and the people will say, "Surely, God is in this place, and we know it."

When God comes into the camp, *new life is put into prayer*. Instead of the repetition of holy phrases in a cold, feeble, lifeless fashion, the soul empties itself out before the Lord, like water flowing from a fountain, and men and women cry mightily unto Him, laying hold upon the horns of the altar, and they come away with both hands full of heaven's own blessing, for they have prevailed with God in mighty wrestling.

By the presence of God in the camp *fresh energy is thrown into service*. There is a way of serving the Lord in which men do the proper thing while they are fast asleep. I am afraid much of our service for God is done when we are asleep, and that it is accompanied by a kind of celestial snoring, instead of being performed when our spiritual faculties are all alert, and the whole man is wide awake.

But when God comes into the camp, how He shakes men up, and awakens the slumberers from their dreams! What a quickening, what a vivifying, the presence of God gives! I remember a picture on the Continent that strangely represents the resurrection. Some of the people, who are pictured as being raised from the dead, have some of their bones coming together, others have their heads covered with flesh, but the rest of the body is a skeleton, and nothing seems complete in this strange, wild conception of a mad artist.

But there are hundreds of Christian people who seem to be spiritually in as incomplete a stage as those people were supposed to be. They are, I hope, quickened from the dead, but they are not yet fully alive into God. Some of them are still dead in their head, their intellect has not yet been sanctified, some of them are dead at their hands, they cannot get them into their pockets, or if they manage so much as that, they cannot get them out again, some of them are dead at heart, they seem to know things very well with the brain, but not to feel them in the soul. But when the Lord comes to us with power, He makes us alive all over, every part of the man is quickened with a divine energy! Then men really work for Jesus, and work successfully too.

When God comes into the camp, His presence *convinces unbelievers*. Sinners turn to the Lord on the right hand, and on the left, in so marvelous a way that our weak faith is often quite astonished. The last persons in the world that we expected to be converted, come to our services, and there find Christ, and many who have been hearers for years, but seem harder than the lower millstone, become soft as wax to the divine Word. When God comes into the camp, the Holy Ghost convinces men "of sin, of righteousness, and of judgement." The arrows of conviction fly fast and far, and pierce the hearts of the enemies of the King, and the slain of the Lord are many.

The presence of God, moreover, *comforts mourners*. When God comes into the camp, those who are troubled and tried begin to wipe away the tears of sorrow, and feel strengthened to bear their burdens, or better still, they cast their care on Him who is so manifestly near. Our hearts are also cheered by seeing anxious sinners turn their eyes towards the cross of Christ. Then Jesus reveals His love to them, and they perceive it, they fly into His arms, and find salvation there. Oh, what joyful times we have had of late in talking with many who have yielded themselves to Christ, and taken Him to be all their salvation, and all their desire! May God stay in the camp with us till every sinner that comes within our ranks, and many also who are outside, shall come to Jesus, and be saved!

When God is in the camp, His presence *infuses daring faith*. Feeble men begin to grow vigorous, young men dream dreams, and old men see visions. Many begin to plot and plan something for Jesus which, in their timid days, they would never have thought of attempting. Others reach a height of consecration that seems to verge on imprudence. Alabaster boxes get broken, and the precious ointment is poured out upon the Master's head, even though Judas shakes his moneybag, and cries, "To what purpose is this waste?"

Adventurers for God are raised up—men like the Portuguese navigators, who passed the Cape of Storms, and called it ever afterwards the Cape of Good Hope. Men begin to mission the slums, the lodging houses, the dark streets, and after a while those very places become happy hunting grounds for other Christian workers. Because God is in the camp, many take up the work which at first only the truly brave believer dared to try!

The fact of God being in the camp cannot be hidden, for in a delightful way it *distils joy into worship*. People do not think sermons dull when God is in the camp, and prayer meetings are not then called, "stupid affairs." The saints enjoy fellowship with one another, and when Christian people meet each other, and God is in the camp, they have many a happy word to exchange concerning their Master.

Many such seasons we have enjoyed. It has been with us as with the people mentioned by the prophet Malachi, "Then they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another, and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrances was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name." They had such holy talk that God Himself turned eavesdropper to listen to what they had to say, He liked it so well that He put it down, and He thought so much of it that He said that He would preserve it, and a book of remembrances was made for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name. May there be many more such books of remembrances in our day!

I cannot tell you what innumerable blessings come to the camp of the spiritual Israel when God is there. I hope that we know a little of this even now, and I am sure we want to know a great deal more of it. It is hard work preaching when God is not in the camp. It must be slavery to teach in the Sunday school when God is not in the camp. And any of you that are seeking souls must have a heavy drag on your spirits when the Lord is away. We might pray on Sabbath mornings, indeed, every day, and before every duty, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence," but if the Lord be in the camp, then the wheels no longer drag heavily, but like the chariots of Amminadib, we fly before the wind. Everything is done gladly, happily, thankfully, believingly, when "God is come into the camp." May He abide in our midst, and may our eyes be opened to see Him!

*"Thrice blest is he to whom is given
The instinct that can tell
That God is in the field, when He
Is most invisible."*

III. Now, in closing our meditations upon this passage, let us try to learn THE GREAT LESSONS which this incident teaches us.

The first lesson is that which I have been insisting upon all through, *the necessity of the divine presence*. Dear friends, you acknowledge this. There is not one among us who does not know that the Holy Ghost is needful to effect any work. But I am afraid that it is something which we know so well, that we have put it up on a shelf, and there it lies unheeded. But it must not be so with you, my brother, nor with me. We must pray in the Holy Ghost, or else we shall not pray at all, and we must preach under the influence of the Holy Ghost, or else we shall chatter like sparrows on the window-sill in the morning, and nothing will come of the chattering.

Only the Holy Ghost can make anything we do to be effectual. Therefore never begin any work without the Holy Ghost, and do not dare to go on with the impetus that you have gained, but cry again for the Holy Spirit. The "amen" of the sermon needs to be spoken in the power of the Holy Ghost just as

much as the first word of the discourse, and every word between the first and the last. Let all your service for God be in the Spirit, or else it is all good for nothing.

Learn, next, that *we should do all we can to obtain the presence of God in the camp*. If there are any preparations which we can make for His coming, let us set about them at once. You who are out of Christ must not think that there is anything for *you* to do before you receive Christ. All the doing has been done.

*“Jesus did it, did it all,
Long, long ago.”*

But I am now addressing the people of God, and if we would have God to come very nigh to us, we must prepare the way of the Lord, and make straight in the desert a highway for our God. What can we do to obtain the presence of God in our midst? My time has so far gone that I can only give you a few hints as to what we ought to do if we want to secure that end.

We must confess our helplessness without God, and honestly mean the confession. The first thing that is required of us is to bemoan the fact that, by and of ourselves, we can do nothing, even as our Lord said to His disciples, “Without me, ye can do nothing.” The sooner we recognize this truth, the better. Our half-doing is our undoing, but when we cease from self, then we make way for God.

We must, next, have a universal desire for the presence of God with us. I mean by that, that every Christian man and every Christian woman must agonize with God that He would come into the camp, not merely some few of us desiring it, but all of us vehemently crying unto the Lord, “Come, LORD, and tarry not.”

We must also be very careful in our lives. God will not come to an unholy church. The sacred Dove will never come to a foul nest. There must be a purging and a cleansing, or else He will not come.

Moreover, there must be a conscientious obedience to His Word, a strict adherence to His truth, His doctrine, His precepts, to the whole of Christ’s rule and law. He will not prosper us unless we are careful to follow every step that He has taken. God help us to have this conscientious care, this coming out from those who may not be thus careful, according to His Word, “Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the LORD, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”

If we desire this special sense of God’s presence, there must be unbroken union. The Spirit of God does not love fighting. He is a dove, and He will not come where there is constant strife. We must be as one man in our love to one another. It was when the disciples were “with one accord in one place” that the Holy Spirit was given on the day of Pentecost, and thus it is in all our Pentecostal seasons. Often a stone seems to lie at the well’s mouth of our choicest blessings, and it cannot be rolled away “until the flocks be gathered together.”

To crown all, there must be a hearty reliance upon God, and a childlike confidence in Him. I would recommend you either believe in God up to the hilt, or else not believe at all. Believe this Book of God, every letter of it, or else reject it. There is no logical standing place between the two. Be satisfied with nothing less than a faith that swims in the deeps of divine revelation, a faith that paddles about the edge of the water is poor faith at the best, it is little better than a dry-land faith, and is not good for much. Oh, I pray you, do believe in God, and His omnipotence!

Such are the conditions of obtaining the blessing of God’s abiding presence. If these things be in us and abound, we shall be able to shout without making any mistake about the matter, “God has come into the camp.”

When God does come to us, *we should seek by all means to retain His presence*. How can this blessing be secured?

First, by humble walking with God. If we grow proud because we are honored by our King’s company, and begin to think that there must be, after all, something in us to attract God to us, and cause

His face to shine upon us, we shall not long have the Lord among us. Seek, then, to be lowly in His presence.

Next, let much grateful praise be given to Him from loyal hearts. If God is saving sinners, let us give Him the glory of it. If He is at work among us, let us not go and talk about what *we* have been doing, but let us tell to men and angels too, what HE has done. Let us never dare to handle God's jewels as if they were our own.

Moreover, there must be perpetual watchfulness. If God be with us, He may give us a great victory, and yet, tomorrow we may be defeated because Achan has hidden the goodly Babylonian garment and the wedge of gold. Unless we are sober and vigilant, we may sadly have to mourn that the Lord has withdrawn His presence from us. There is a fierce light that beats around His throne. "Our God is a consuming fire." "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" The Scriptural answer is, "He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly." May God make us men of such caliber as can endure that heat!

And lastly, there must be an individual fellowship with God on the part of each one of us. It is hard work for the whole church to walk with God every day and all the day, but if each member will see to it that his own personal life is right, the church, as a whole, need fear nothing. Let each one look after his own life, and see that all is right there, then the life of the church will soon be at flood tide, and when we go forth to the battle, the Philistines will know of a truth that "God is come into the camp." May God speedily raise us all up to this point of personal consecration!

Dear friends, we are having sinners saved in our midst, pray for them. Some are struggling towards the light, seek to help them. If you meet with any such, love them, and cherish them, as a father does his child. I cannot speak longer. Your hearts must tell you what to do. Go on serving the Lord. May He abide with us in power for evermore! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 SAMUEL 4

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—968, 448, 992

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON

BELOVED FRIENDS—The one need of the church in these times is indicated by the title of this sermon. The presence of God, in saving power, in the church, will put to end the present plague of infidelity. Men will not doubt His Word when they feel His Spirit. It will be the only security for the success of the missionary effort. If God be with His people, they will soon see crowds converted and added to the church. For a thousand reasons, we need that JEHOVAH should come into the camp, as aforetime He visited and delivered His people from bondage in Egypt.

Could we not all unite in prayer for this as fervently as all united in prayer for my life? It is a far greater and more necessary subject for intercession, and the Lord will not be slow to hear us. Come to Thy church, O Lord, in fullness of power to save! If the Great Advent is not yet, indulge us with outpourings of grace, and times of refreshing!

Oh, that all Christendom would take up this pleading, and continue it until the answer came!

Receive, dear readers, my hearty salutations. Personally, I scarcely make progress during this broken weather, but the doctor says I hold my own, and that is more than he could have expected. Whether I live or die, I would say, in the words of Israel to Joseph, "God shall be with you."

Yours ever heartily,

C. H. SPURGEON

Menton, Jan. 9, 1892

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. 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.