

DARKNESS BEFORE THE DAWN

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A SERMON
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*“Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved,
and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.”*
Song of Solomon 2:17

THE spouse sings, “Until the day break, and the shadows flee away,” so the beloved of the Lord may be in the dark. It may be night with her who has a place in the heart of the Well-beloved. A child of God, who is a child of light, may be for a while in darkness, first, darkness comparatively, as compared with the light he has sometimes enjoyed, for days are not always equally bright. Some days are bright with a clear sunshine, other days may be overcast.

So the child of God may one day walk with full assurance of faith, in close fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, and at another time he may be questioning his interest in the covenant of grace, and may be rather sighing than singing, rather mourning than rejoicing. The child of God may be then, in comparative darkness.

Yes, and he may be in positive darkness. It may be very black with him, and he may be obliged to cry, “I see no signs of returning day.” Sometimes, neither sun nor moon appears for a long season to cheer the believer in the dark. This may arise partly through sickness of body. There are sicknesses of the body which in a very peculiar way touch the soul, exquisite pain may yet be attended with great brightness and joy, but there are certain other illnesses which influence us in another way.

Terrible depressions come over us, we walk in darkness and see no light. I should not like to guess how heavy a true heart may sometimes become, there is a needs-be that we be in heaviness through manifold trials. There is not only a needs-be for the trials, but also for the heaviness which comes out of them. It is not always that a man can gather himself together, and defy the fierce blasts, and walk through fire and through water with heavenly equanimity.

No, brethren, “a wounded spirit who can bear?” and that wounded spirit may be the portion of some of the very fairest of the sons of God, indeed, the Lord has some weakly, sickly sons who nevertheless, are the very pick of His family. It is not always the strong ones by whom He sets the most store, but sometimes, those that seem to be driven into a corner, whose days are spent in mourning, are among the most precious in His sight. Yes, the darkness of the child of God may be comparative darkness, and it may to a great extent be positive darkness.

But yet it can only be temporary darkness. The same text which suggests night promises dawn, “Until the day break, and the shadows flee away,” says the song of the spouse. Perhaps no text is more frequently upon my lips than is this one, I do not think that any passage of Scripture more often recurs to my heart when I am alone, and just now I feel that there is a gathering gloom over the church and over the world. It seems as if night were coming on, and such a night as makes one sigh and cry, “Until the day break, and the shadows flee away.”

I am going to speak upon three things which are in our text. The first will be *our prospect*. We have a prospect that the day will break, and the shadows flee away. Secondly, *our posture*, “until the day breaks, and the shadows flee away.” Thirdly, *our petition*, “Turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of division.” We are content to wait if He will come to us. If gladdened with His presence, the night shall seem short, and we can well endure all that it brings. Let the prayer of

our text be put up by any of you who are waiting in the darkness, and may it be speedily answered in your happy experience!

I. First of all, let us consider OUR PROSPECT.

Our prospect is, that the day will break, and that the shadows will flee away. We may read this passage in many ways and apply it to different cases.

Think first of *the child of God who is full of doubt*. He is afraid that, after all, his supposed conversion was not a true one, and that he has proved it to be false by his own misbehavior. He is afraid, I scarcely know of what, for so many fears crowd in upon him. He is crying to God to remove his doubts, and to let him once again—

*“Read his title clear
To mansions in the skies.”*

His eyes are looking toward the cross, and somehow he has a hope, if not quite a persuasion, that he will find light in Christ, where so many others have found it. I would encourage that hope till it becomes a firm conviction and a full expectation. The day will break for you, dear mourner, the shadows will yet flee away. While I say that I feel able to speak with great confidence, for my eye, as it looks round on this congregation, detects many brethren and sisters with whom I have conversed in the cloudy and dark day.

We have prayed together, dear friends—have we not? I have repeated in your hearing those precious promises which are the pillows of our hope, yet, at the time, it seemed as if you would never be cheered or comforted. Friends who lived with you grieved much to see you so sad, they could not understand how such as you, who have lived so scrupulously as you believed to be right, should nevertheless, come into sadness and despondency.

Well, you have come out of that state, have you not? I can almost catch the bright expression in your eye as you flash back the response, “It is so, sir, we can sing among the loudest now, we can leap as a hart, and the tongue that once was dumb can now sing praises to the Lord who delivered us.” The reason for this great change is that you did still cling to Christ even when it seemed to be no use to cling. You had a venturesome faith, when it seemed a risky thing even to believe, you did believe, and you kept on believing, and now the day has dawned for you, and the shadows have fled away.

Well, so shall it be to all who are in like case if they will but trust in the Lord and stay themselves upon our God. Though they walk in darkness and see no light, yet by and by, the day shall break for them also.

This expression is equally applicable when we come into some *personal sorrow not exactly of a spiritual kind*. I know that God’s children are not long without tribulation. As long as the wheat is on the threshing floor, it must expect to feel the flail. Perhaps you have had a bereavement, or you may have had losses in business, or crosses in your family, or you have been sorely afflicted in your own body, and now you are crying to God for deliverance out of your temporal trouble. That deliverance will surely come. “Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.” “I have been young,” said David, “and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken.”

The Lord will yet light your candle, and surround your path with brightness. Only patiently hope and quietly wait, and you shall yet see the salvation of the Lord. “Many are the afflictions of the righteous.” Mark that, you know that part of the verse is true, and so is the rest of it, “but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.”

Clutch at that, for it is equally true. “In the world ye shall have tribulation.” You know that is true. “Be of good cheer,” says Christ, “I have overcome the world.” Therefore, expect that you also will overcome it through your conquering Lord. Yes, in the darkest of all human sorrows, there is the glad prospect that the day will break, and the shadows will flee away.

This is the case again, I believe, on a grander scale with reference *to the depression of religion at the present time*. Some of us are obliged to go sorrowing when we look upon the state of the church and the

world. We are not accustomed to take gloomy views of things, but we cannot help grieving over what we see. More and more it forces itself upon us that the old-fashioned Gospel is being either neglected or trampled in the dust. The old spirit, the old fire that once burned in the midst of the saints of God, is there still, but it burns very low at present.

We want—I cannot say how much we want a revival of pure and undefiled religion in this our day. Will it come? Why should it not come? If we long for it, if we pray for it, if we believe for it, if we work for it, and prepare for it, it will certainly come. The day will break, and the shadows will flee away.

The mockers think that they have buried our Lord Jesus Christ. So, perhaps, they have, but He will have a resurrection. The cry is, “Who will roll us away the stone?” The stone shall be rolled away, and He, even the Christ in whom our fathers trusted, the Christ of Luther and of Calvin, of Whitefield and of Wesley, that same Christ shall be among us in the fullness and the glory of His power by the working of the Holy Ghost upon the hearts of myriads of men. Let us never despair, but on the contrary, let us brush away the tears from our eyes, and begin to look for the light of the morning, for “the morning cometh,” and the day will break, and the shadows will flee away.

Let me encourage any friends who have been laboring for Christ in any district which has seemed strikingly barren, where the stones of the field have seemed to break the ploughshares. Still believe on, beloved, that soil which appears most unfruitful will perhaps repay us after a while with a hundredfold harvest. The prospect may be dark, but perhaps, dear friends, it is to be darker yet. We may have worked, and seemed to work in vain, possibly the vanity of all our working is yet to appear still more, but for all that, “the morning cometh.” “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.” We must not be in the least bit afraid even in the densest darkness, but on the contrary, look for the coming blessing.

I believe that this is to be the case also *in this whole world*. It is still the time of darkness, it is still the hour of shadows. I am no prophet, nor the son of a prophet, and I cannot foretell what is yet to happen in the earth, it may be that the darkness will deepen still more, and that the shadows will multiply and increase, but the Lord will come. When He went up from Olivet, He sent two of His angels down to say, “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.”

He is surely coming, and though the date of His return is hidden from our sight, all the signs of the times look as if He might come very speedily.

I was reading the other day, what old Master William Bridge says on this subject, “If our Lord is coming at midnight, He certainly will come very soon, for it cannot be darker than it now is.” That was written two hundred years ago, and our Lord has not come yet, and I might say much the same as Master Bridge did. Do not doubt as to Christ’s coming because it is delayed.

A person lies dying, and the report concerning him is, “Well, it does not look as if he could live many hours.” You call again, and they say, “Well, he still survives, but it seems as if he would scarcely get through the night.” Do you go away and say, “Oh, he will not die, for I have expected, for several days, to hear that he has passed away”? Oh, no! but each time you hear the report, you feel, “Well, it is so much nearer the end.”

And so is our Master’s coming, it is getting nearer every hour, so let us keep on expecting it. That glorious advent shall end our weary waiting days, it shall end our conflicts with infidelity and priestcraft, it shall put an end to all our futile endeavors, and when the great Shepherd shall appear in His glory, then shall every faithful under-shepherd and all His flock appear with Him, and then shall the day break, and the shadows flee away!

As to the shadows fleeing, what are those shadows that are to fly at His approach? The types and shadows of the ceremonial law were all finished when Christ appeared the first time, but many shadows still remain—the shadows of our doubts, the grim mysterious shadows of our fears, the shadows of sin, so black, so dense—the shadows of abounding unbelief, ten thousand shadows. When He comes, these shall all flee away, and with them shall go heaven and earth—the heaven and earth that now are, for what are these but shadows?

All things that are unsubstantial shall pass away when He appears, when the day breaks, then shall everything but that which is eternal and invisible pass away. We are glad that it shall be so, and we pray that soon the day may break, and the shadows flee away. This then, is our prospect.

II. Now I want to occupy a few minutes of your time in considering OUR POSTURE “until the day break, and the shadows flee away.”

We are here, like soldiers on guard, waiting for the dawn. It is night and the night is deepening, how shall we occupy ourselves until the day break, and the shadows flee away?

Well first, we will wait in the darkness with *patient endurance* as long as God appoints it. Whatever of shadow is yet to come, whatever of cold damp air and dews of the night is yet to fall upon us, we will bear it. Soldiers of the cross, you must not wish to avoid these shadows, He who has called you to this service knew that it would be night time, and He called you to night duty, and being put upon the night watch, stay at your post.

It is not for any of us to say, “We will desert because it is so dark.” Has not the thought sometimes crossed your mind, “I am not succeeding, I will run away”? Have you not often felt, like Jonah, that you would go to Tarshish that you might escape from delivering your Master’s message? Oh, do not so! The day will break, and the shadows flee away, and until then, watch through the night and fear not the shadows.

Play the man, remembering through what a sevenfold night your Master passed when in Gethsemane, He endured even to a bloody sweat for you. When on the cross, even His mid-day was midnight, what must have been the darkness over His spirit? He bore it, then bear you it. Let no thought of fear pass over your mind, or if it does, let not your heart be troubled, but rise above your fear until the day break, and the shadows flee away. Be of good courage, soldiers of Christ, and still wait on in patient endurance.

What next are we to do until the day break? Why, let there be *hopeful watching*. Keep your eyes towards the East, and look for the first grey sign of the coming morning. “Watch!” Oh, how little is done of this kind of work! We scarcely watch as we ought against the devil, but how little do we watch for the coming of our Master! Look for every sign of His appearing, and be ever listening for the sound of His chariot wheels. Keep the candle burning in the window, to let Him see that you are awake, keep the door on the latch, that when He comes you may quickly open to Him. Hopefully watch until the day break, and the shadows flee away.

Then further, dear friends, while we maintain patient endurance and hopeful watching, let us give each other *mutual encouragement*. Men who have been shipwrecked will give each other a hand, and say, “Brother, perhaps we shall escape after all.” Now that it is midnight all around, let every Christian give his fellow soldier a grip of his hand. Courage, brothers, the Lord has not forgotten us. We are in the dark and cannot see Him, but He can see us, and He knows all about us, maybe He will come, walking on the stormy waters in the middle watch of the night when our little bark seems ready to be sunk beneath the waves by the boisterous wind.

I seem just now as though I were a soldier in this great guardroom, and as if we were sitting in these shadows, and perhaps in the darkness, and seemed very much dispirited, and I would say to you, my comrades, “Come, brothers, let us cheer up. The Lord has appeared to one and another of us. He has given to some of us the light of His countenance and He is coming back to welcome us all to Himself. Let us not be dismayed, our glorious Leader forgets not the weakest and feeblest of us, neither is any part of the battlefield beyond the reach of the great Captain’s eye. He sees which way the struggle is going, and He has innumerable reserves, which He will bring up at the right time.

I seem to hear the music of His horse’s hoofs even now. He is coming who shall turn the scale in the worst moment of the conflict, for the battle is the Lord’s, and He will deliver the enemy into our hand. Let no man’s heart fail him because of yonder Goliath, the God who has raised up men to slay the lion and the bear, will yet find a David and a smooth stone to kill this mighty giant. Wherefore, brothers, be of good courage.”

What further should we do in the dark? Well, one of the best things to do in the dark is to *stand still and keep our place*. “Until the day break, and the shadows flee away,” let us keep our place and firmly maintain our position.

A Brother who sat at the back of me, twenty years ago, dropped in again recently to hear me preach, and he said to me after the service, that he had been back in America, and come over here again after twenty years, and he added, “It is the same old story Spurgeon, as when I was here before, you are sticking to the same old Gospel” I replied, “Yes, and if you will come in twenty years’ time, if God spares me, I shall still be sticking to the same old Gospel, for I have nailed my colors to the mast, and I do not mean to have anything to do with this new-fangled progressive theology.”

To me, the Gospel came to perfection long ago in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it can never go beyond that perfection. We preach nothing but that Gospel which has saved our own souls, and saved the souls of the myriads who have gone to their eternal rest, and we do not intend preaching anything else until somebody can find us something better, and that will not be tomorrow, nor the day after, nor as long as the world stands.

It is dark, very dark, so we just stay where we are, in steadfast confidence in the Lord who has placed us where we are. We are not going to plunge on in a reckless manner, we mean to look before we leap, and as it is too dark to look, we will not leap, but will just abide here hard by the cross, battling with every adversary of the truth as long as we have a right hand to move in the name of the Almighty God, “until the day break, and the shadows flee away.”

What else ought we to do? Keep up a *careful separateness* from the works of darkness that are going on all around us. If it seems dark to you, gather up your skirts, and gird up your loins. The more sin abounds in the world, the more ought the church of God to seek after the strictest holiness. If ever there was an age that wanted back again the sternest form of Puritanism, it is this age. If ever there was a time when we needed the old original stamp of Methodists, we need them now—a people separated unto God, a people that have nothing to do but to please God, and to save souls, a people that will not in any way bow themselves to the fashions of the time.

For my part, I would like to see a George Fox come back among us, ay, Quaker as he was, to bear such a testimony as he did in the power of the Spirit of God against the evils of his time. God make us to feel that now, in the dark, we cannot be as lenient as we might have been in brighter days towards the sin that surrounds us!

Are any of you tempted into “society” so-called, and into the ways of that society? Every now and then, those who read the papers get some little idea of what is going on in “society.” The stench that comes from “society” tells us what it must be like, and makes us wish to stay clear of it. The awful revelations that were once before made, which caused us to be sick with shame and sorrow, might be made again, for there is just the same foulness and filthiness beneath the surface of the supposed greater decency.

O Christian people, if you could but know, as the most of you ought not to know, how bad this world is, you would not begin to talk about its wonderful improvements, or to question the doctrine of human depravity. We are going on, according to some teachers, by “evolution” into something, if I might prognosticate what it is, I would say that it is into devils that many men are being evolved. They are going down, down, down, save where eternal grace is begetting in the heart of men a higher and better and nobler nature, which must bear its protest against the ignorance or hypocrisy which this day talks about the improvements of our civilization, and the progress that we are making towards God.

“Until the day break, and the shadows flee away,” keep yourselves to your Lord, and hear you this voice sounding through the darkness, the voice of wisdom that sees more than you see, “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 to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, said the Lord Almighty.” “Until the day break, and the shadows flee away,” lift your hands to heaven, and pledge yourselves to walk a separate pilgrim life, until He comes before whose face heaven and earth shall flee away.

III. Now I close by noticing OUR PETITION, “Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.”

I am not going to preach upon that part of our text, but only just urge you to turn it into prayer. We have to wait, brothers and sisters, we have to wait in the darkness, cheered here and there with the light from a golden lamp that glows with the light of God.

The world lies in darkness, but we are of God, little children, therefore this must be our prayer to our Well-beloved, “*Come to us.*” “Turn to me, O my Beloved, for You have turned away from me, or from Your church. Turn again, I beseech You. Pardon my lukewarmness, forgive my indifference. Turn to me again, my Beloved. O You Husband of my soul, if I have grieved You, and You have hidden Your face from me, turn again to me! Smile You, for then shall the day break, and the shadows flee away. Come to me, my Lord, visit me once again.” Put up that prayer, beloved.

The prayer of the spouse is in this poetic form, “*Come over the mountains of division.*” As we look out into the darkness, what little light there is appears to reveal to us Alp upon Alp, mountain upon mountain, and our Beloved seems divided from us by all those hills. Now our prayer is that He would come over the top of them, we cannot go over the top of them to Him, but He can come over the top of them to us, if He thinks fit to do so. Like the hinds’ feet, this blessed Hind of the morning can come skipping over the hills with utmost speed to visit and to deliver us.

Make this your prayer, “Great Master, sweetly-beloved One, come over the mountains of division, and come quickly, like a roe or a young hart. Come easily, come unexpectedly, as roes and harts let no man know when they will come, so come Thou to me.” I wish that even while we are sitting here, our Divine Lord would come to our spirits with all His ravishing charms, so that we might cry, “Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.”

Have you never felt an influence steal over you which has lifted you out of yourself, and made you go as on burning wheels with axles hot with speed, where before you had been sluggish and dull? Our Well-beloved can come and visit us all on a sudden, without any trouble to Himself. It cost Him His life’s blood to come to earth to save us, it will cost Him nothing to come just now to bless us.

Remember what He has already done, for having done so much, He will not deny you the lesser blessing of coming to you. Are you saved by His grace? Then do not think that He will refuse you fellowship with Himself. Pray for it now. Before we come to the communion table, pray for it, and while you are sitting there, let this be your cry, “Come to me, my beloved, over the hills of division; come as a roe or a young hart,” and He will come to you. Put up your prayer in the sweet words we sang just now—

*“When wilt Thou come to me, Lord?
O come, my Lord most dear!
Come near, come nearer, nearer still,
I’m blest when Thou art near.*”

*“When wilt Thou come to me, Lord?
Until Thou dost appear,
I count each moment for a day,
Each minute for a year.”*

Oh, that this might be one of those happy seasons when you shall not be fed by the preacher’s talk, but by the Master revealing Himself to you! May God graciously grant it!

I may be addressing some who long to find the Savior. This morning, I got from a friend who came in to see me, an illustration which I will give to you. He told me—and oh, how he made my heart rejoice!—that six years ago he was, as the apostle says, “going about to establish his own righteousness.” He is a man of reputation, and when a friend sent him some of my sermons to read, he thought to himself, “What do I want these sermons for? I am as good as any man can be.”

But he did read them, and the friend asked him, "Have you read those sermons of Mr. Spurgeon's that I sent you?" "Yes," he replied, "I have, but I have got no good out of them." "Why not?" "Why," he said, "he has spoiled me, he has dashed my hopes to the ground, he has taken away my comfort and my joy, I thought myself as good as anybody living, and he has made me feel as if I were rotten right through." "Oh!" said his friend, "that medicine is working well, you must take some more of it."

But the more of the sermons he read, the more unhappy he became, the more he saw the hollowness of all his former hopes, and he came into a great darkness, and the day did not break, and the shadows did not flee away. But on a sudden, he was brought out into the light. As he told me the story this morning, his eyes were wet, and so were mine. This is how the Lord led him into peace, I wish the telling of it might bring the same blessing to some of you.

He said, "I went with my friend to fish for salmon in Loch Awe. I threw a fly and as I threw it, a fish leaped up and took it in a moment." "There," said the friend to him, "that is what you have to do with Christ, what that fish did with your fly. I am sure I do not know whether the fly took the fish, or the fish took the fly, it was both, the bait took the fish, and the fish took the bait. Do just so with Christ and do not ask any questions. Leap up at Him, take Him in, lay hold of Him."

The man did so, and at once he was saved, I wish that somebody else would do the same. I never ask you to answer the question whether it is Christ who takes you or you who take Christ, for both things will happen at the same moment. Will you have Him? Will you have Him? If you will have Him, He has you. If you are willing to have Christ, Christ has already made you willing in the day of His power. Throw yourself upon Christ, as the salmon opened his mouth and took in the bait, so do you take Christ into your very soul.

Writing to the Romans, Paul says, "The word is nigh you, even in thy mouth." What is the thing to do with that which is in your mouth when you want to keep it? Why, swallow it, of course! Do so with Christ, let Him go right down into your soul. I put Him into your mouth, as it were, while I am preaching. Accept Him, receive Him, and He is yours directly. Then shall the day break, and the shadows flee away, and your Beloved shall have come to you over the mountains of division, never to leave you again, but to abide with you forever. God bless you! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

LUKE 12:22-48

Verses 22-23. *And he said to his disciples, Therefore I say to you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.*

If you are God's servants, He will clothe you. There is no servitor of the Lord of hosts who will have to go without his livery, and not one who belongs to His vast household, even though he is but a menial in God's kitchen, who will ever be permitted to starve.

24-26. *Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls? And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?*

How little you can do for yourself after all! Therefore, leave the whole with God.

***"Make you His service your delight,
He'll make your wants His care."***

The best cure for the cares of this life is to care much to please God. If we loved Him better, we should love the world far less, and be less troubled about our portion in it.

27-28. *Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of those. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?*

What a title to address us—"O ye of little faith!"—but depend upon it, we deserve it when we are full of anxious care. Much care argues little faith. When faith is strong, she casts all her care on Him who cares for us. Oh, that we could but be rid of that which, after all, is not our business, and give our whole mind, and heart, and soul, to what is our business, namely, to please our Creator, our Redeemer, our Friend!

29-30. *And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.*

Is not that a sweet word? "Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." There used to be a hymn which was sung a good deal at revival meetings, it had a very sweet refrain, "This my Father knows." If you cannot yourselves understand your case, your Father knows all about it. If you cannot make other people comprehend it, yet your Father knows all that needs to be known. Whatever you really require, even for the present life, need not be any cause of anxiety to you believers, for "your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." There is no need therefore, for you to seek "what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink."

31-32. *But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

He gives others a good many things, but He will give you the kingdom. Just as Abraham gave portions to the sons of Keturah, and sent them away, but Isaac had the covenant blessing, so, "it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

33. *Sell that ye have, and give alms;*

Not only give to the poor till you pinch yourself, but even pinch yourself to do it.

33-35. *Provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning.*

Never be undressed, as it were, in a moral or spiritual sense, "Let your loins be girded about." Never be in the dark spiritually. Keep in the light, let your lamp be ever burning. Not only walk in the light of God, but let your light shine before men.

36. *And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open to him immediately.*

Brethren, whatever theory we hold about the future, may God grant that it may never prevent our looking for the coming of Christ as an event which may happen at any moment, and being on the watch for it as a matter the date of which we do not know! The practical essence of all Scriptural teaching upon that subject is just this, "Ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding."

37. *Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.*

I will not attempt to fully explain this passage of Scripture in the few moments which I can give to it, but it is very wonderful. Our Lord has been here once, and girded Himself to serve us, but is it not extraordinary that here is an intimation of a second girding of Himself that He may serve us? Oh, how fond is Christ of being the servant of servants, ministering unto those who delight to minister unto Him! What an honor does the Captain of our salvation put upon the meanest soldiers in this war when He declares that if we are found faithful, He will gird Himself, and come forth and serve us!

38-40. *And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the*

thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

Peradventure He will not come when the modern prophets say that He will appear, but He will come when least of all He is expected. Therefore, expect the unexpected, look for your Lord to come when the many go to sleep. Perhaps, while yet I am speaking, ere this gathered assembly shall disperse, there may be heard the cry, “Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.” Are our loins girded? Are our lamps burning? God bless His own truth to the effecting of both those ends!

41-43. *Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speak speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all? And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.*

Distributing the bread of life, giving milk to babes and meat to strong men, not behaving as if he were master, but acting only as a steward who serves out, not his own, but his master’s stores. Oh, that we who are ministers of Christ may be always doing this! So shall we obtain the blessing promised to “that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.”

44-45. *Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath. But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken;*

First he becomes lordly, he acts as if he were master, beats his fellow servants, he is harsh and ungenerous and assumes great dignity and gives himself airs. Let him mind what he is at, for his Master will come, and catch him usurping his place. The next danger is that he begins to enjoy himself, to be voluptuous, self-indulgent, “To eat and drink, and to be drunken.” He becomes intoxicated with pride, he is carried away with divers errors, in making much of himself he loses his head and acts like a fool.

46. *The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.*

Truly, our Lord uses very strong words, the Savior is not one of your effeminate preachers, like those of modern times, who seem as if the very word “hell” would burn their lips, and who will not warn men to flee from the wrath to come. It is an unkind and heartless lack of humanity which prevents their being faithful to the souls of men. The great Lord, who is full of tenderness, does not hesitate to use the sternest figure, and the most terrible language, simply because He does not consult His own feelings, but aims at the highest good of those with whom He deals.

This is a terrible word for us if we are unfaithful at the last, “He will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.” It is an awful thing that the unfaithful servant gets his portion with those who do not believe in Christ. The Lord preserve all of us from such a doom!

47-48. *And that servant, which knew his lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.*

Under the shadow of such solemn texts as these, let us draw near to God in earnest prayer.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—810, 766

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