

DEADNESS AND QUICKENING

NO. 2521

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 13, 1897
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON
ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 29, 1885

*“Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way.”
Psalm 119:37*

DAVID, when he wrote these words, was in downright earnest. There were times with him when he grew lukewarm and cold, and then we remember that he soon fell into grievous sin. But at the time when he was penning this verse, his spirit was lively, and active, and energetic, and hence it was that he prayed thus carefully about himself, “Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way.”

If you read the preceding verse, you will notice that he was thinking of the reality and depth and power of true religion, for he prayed, “Incline my heart unto thy testimonies and not to covetousness,” by which he evidently wished that his whole soul might be set upon things divine, that, as misers seek after gold and store it up, and feast their eyes upon it, so he might be eager after the things of God and might store them up, making them to be his heavenly delicacies, his peculiar pleasure.

Dear friends, you know as well as I do that there are many sorts of Christians. I am sorry to say that there are some nominal Christians who are no credit to Christianity, they bear the name of Christians and though I will not say that they are dead, yet certainly they are very sickly and seem ready to die. They stand among the people of God and their names are put down in the church book, but if they are spiritually alive, theirs is a very feeble form of life. Their heart is not in God's ways.

They are active and energetic when they get into the shop, but they are half asleep when they are in the sanctuary. They leave “footprints on the sands of time” when they are devoting their attention to politics, but when they come to the things of God, they tread so lightly that we cannot tell that they have passed that way. It seems to me to be a horrible thing that many a man should give fifteen ounces out of the sixteen to the world and yet that he should label himself a Christian, because of that one odd ounce which he pretends to give to God. The major part of his being, his very self, runs to turn the mill-wheel of daily care and toil, but there is just a dribble that is supposed to be saved up for Christ.

Let it not be so with you, or with me, dear friends, but let us pray that our hearts may be inclined to the things of God, that the whole force of our nature may run in a heavenly, spiritual, gracious, holy direction, and that thus we may be epistles written by God's own right hand “known and read of all men.” It is only a man who is in this state of spiritual health and activity who will pray such a prayer as that of our text. It is only he who gets to be so careful about his eyes that he will not look upon sin, and so careful about his daily ways that he is lively and quick in the things of God.

Hoping and believing that I am addressing many such earnest active Christians, I suggest that we, dear brethren and sisters, consider this double prayer. First, it seems to me that *David here prays for deadness in one direction*, “LORD, make me dead to vanity.” And secondly, *he prays for life in another direction*, “Quicken thou me in thy way. Lord, make me alive to those things that are true and real, lasting and eternal!”

I. First, DAVID, HERE, PRAYS FOR DEADNESS IN ONE DIRECTION—deadness to the world, that he may be so dead to it that he will not even look at it. “Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.” He wants to be so clean delivered from the love of worldly things that he may not count them

worth even a glance. So far from pursuing them with his feet, or laboring for them with his hands, or going after them with his heart, he thinks them not worth a thought and prays God of His grace to turn away his eyes from even looking upon them.

What think you the psalmist mean here by vanity? I think he probably means four things, or one thing which may be seen under four aspects. Many a Christian prays, "Lord, turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity," that is, *frivolity*. To some men, life is all trifling. They are the butterflies of God's garden, alighting on flowers, but never sucking the honey out of them. They just dance their little hour in the sunbeam of existence, as the gnats do on a summer's evening. They come, they dance, they die, and that is an end of them so far as this life is concerned.

Even in our way there will frequently come frivolous things. I do not say that Christians are to disregard all trifles, and that there are not things, very trifling in themselves, which may be sanctified and used for purposes of restoration and recreation, and so be made beneficial to us., but I do say this, if a man, calling himself a Christian, should live for mere frivolity, if to him life should be all play and no work, a daydream and not a battle, if he should make his life to be, as the poet puts it,

*"Like ocean into tempest tossed,
To waft a feather, or to drown a fly,"*

it is a sad pity, it is a grievous evil that it should be so. I believe that there are many professing Christians who are spending their lives in drawing up buckets full of nothing because they let them down into dry wells. They have nothing particular to do and they do it very diligently, and they do nothing else. They spend their years, from the beginning of January to the end of December, like a tale that is told.

Now, instead of acting thus, the man who leads the true life, the heroic life, the real life, makes everything sublime, and his prayer is that his eyes may be turned away from beholding frivolities. We have put away childish things, for Christ has made us men. We cannot be decoyed again into kindergarten, to learn those "beggarly elements of the world" that are only fit for tiny children.

We are on the confines of the eternal state, we are standing even now hard by the frontier of the glory-land. Christ has bought us with His blood and the trumpets of His coming are already sounding in our ears. God forbid that *we* should sleep, as others do, and toy and play, as so many around us do! Our prayer is, "Turn away our eyes from beholding vanity." We have something better to do than to make this world into a mere theater, and to let it be true of us that this life is only a play, with men and women as the actors in it. No,

"Life is real, life is earnest,"

now that we have been quickened by the Spirit of God and have entered into the life of God.

I think there is also another meaning in this word, vanity, namely, *carnality*. You know, beloved, that the things of this life belong to the flesh. They are seen, tasted, handled, and felt. But then, the things that are seen are temporal, the things that can be touched, and of which the senses are cognizant, are all passing away. These things that we see, and taste, and grasp, and hold, are but for time. They are all going.

Men think that spiritual things are dreams and that temporal things are realities, but it is the other way about. The things that are not seen are eternal, these invisible things shall last forever. When eyes are blind in the grave and ears are deaf beneath the sod, then shall the invisible become the more real to us, when eyes and ears and mere earthly senses have passed away from us.

Sometimes the Christian man gets into this state when he asks, "What shall I eat? What shall I drink, and wherewithal shall I be clothed?" I cannot and I do not want to be asking and answering those questions forever. "After all these things do the Gentiles seek." I am now of a higher race than the mere worldling, there is another life now flowing in my veins. I cannot live for these temporal things. I may

use them, but I must not abuse them. I may have them under my feet, but I must not permit them to crush me and to be above my head. I can float over them, as a ship sails over the sea, but I cannot let them into myself, for that were to sink the ship, as when the vessel ships a great sea, and begins to go down with the weight thereof.

I must not let my heart be troubled, even though my head may sometimes seem to be. No, a Christian man turns right away from what to other men seems the most important business of life, and he says, "Lord, it is all vanity to me." To children of God, these things seem so frail, so fleeting, as to be scarcely worth a thought. And we get away into our chamber and we shut to the door, and we speak in secret to our Father, who sees in secret. And then all things apart from Him grow to be mere vanity, and smoke, and folly, and sin. We cannot be always pestered with these daily cares. No, Lord, turn away our eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken Thou us in Thy way!

I think, however, that the psalmist means even more than that, and perhaps, still more forcibly, this third thing, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity," that is, *falsehood*, for that is what he means by vanity, that which seems to be something, but really is nothing. That bubble from the child's soap and pipe looks as if it were a solid creation of rainbows, but it is gone in almost less time than you can think.

And there are many things in the world just like that, especially at this present time. We have new doctrines being preached and new 'ologies being taught which are nothing but vanity. There is not as much real substance in them as there is in a soap bubble. When certain false doctrines are being preached, there are some people who are very anxious to know at once what they are. They are curious to see and to know everything. They would be much wiser if they would pray with David, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity."

If you can read a tainted book that denies the inspiration of the Scriptures, and attacks the truth of God, and if you derive any profit from it, you must be a very different being from myself. I have to read such books. I must read them sometimes to know what is said by the enemies of the Gospel, that I may defend the faith and help the weaklings of the flock, but it is a sorry business.

When those who are qualified to do so are reading these heretical works, if they are really doing it in the fear of God for the good of their fellow men, they remind me of Sir James Simpson and the two other doctors when they discovered the medical and surgical value of chloroform. They sat at the table, and scarcely knew what was going to happen, but they took a dose each, risking their lives by so doing, and when they came back to consciousness, they had certainly made a great discovery.

But dear friends, I do not feel that I am required to take all the drugs and poisons in the world, one after another, just for the sake of testing and trying them that I may come and tell you all about their effects. If I did so, probably one of these times I would not come back to you, and there would be an end to that business. It is all very well for Sir James Simpson and other eminent physicians and surgeons to make such experiments, for it is part of the duty of their profession, but it is not for the bulk of us to do so.

When you go home tonight, I should recommend you to eat for supper those kinds of food which you have been accustomed to eat and which your fathers ate before you, to the building up of the physical frame. And if anybody comes and says to you, "Here is some very wonderful food. There is no telling what effect it will have upon you, it may make you turn into horses." I do not know why you should not turn into horses if the doctrine of evolution be true—"here is food that is to evolve you into something very marvelous." But you say to the man, "Keep it yourself, my dear sir. I would not deprive you of it, for I am not at all ambitious of trying such things."

I do believe that it is good for a child of God, when he has found honey, to eat it. And if anyone calls out, "Here is something still sweeter," let him answer, "You may keep it for yourself. I am perfectly satisfied with what I have, honey is sweet enough for me."

If I had gathered manna in the morning in the wilderness and somebody had cried out to me, "Here, I have found a wonderful fungus, a brilliant agaric, and I am going to make my breakfast of it," I should

have replied, “Well, my friend, inasmuch as this manna came down from heaven, it came from the best place I know of, and I feel perfectly satisfied to eat angels’ food. It exactly suits me and it has suited me so long that I will not deprive you of all the agarics you can find. So far as I am concerned, you may have your fungi and fatten yourself up on them, or kill yourself with them if you are so insane as to eat them, but they are not fit food for me.”

In just that fashion, dear friends, my mind is made up about the things of God. And concerning all the poisonous novelties that are introduced so freely nowadays, I pray to the Lord, “Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way.”

I am sure also that David had a fourth meaning to the word vanity, and that it included, not only falsehood, but *wickedness* in every form. From that, we are to turn even our eyes away. Do you hear that anything is evil? Touch it not, taste it not, handle it not, look not upon it, keep far away from it. Is there a plague from hell let loose amongst the sons of men? My son, go not thou near the infected region. If it be the house of the strange woman, or any other haunt of vice, however enchanting the amusement, however alluring the attractions, turn not thou in that direction, do not even look that way.

With Peter, I would cry, “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.” Young man, I pray you, quit the place of danger, even though you must leave your garment behind you, as Joseph did, stay not even to see what it is that would fascinate you. One look from the basilisk’s eye may fix you to the spot where you shall be destroyed. Therefore I say to you, as the angels said to Lot, “Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.”

What have you and I to do, with such gunpowder hearts as ours, where the sparks of temptation are flying? Let us, if we can, keep wholly clear of the dangers of the present day. If there be but the smell of sin about anything, say thou at once, “This is not for me. I am a child of God and what another man might do, I could not do, I must not do, I will not do, I scorn to do. My Lord clothed me in the snow-white vestments of a priest unto the Most High God, on that day when He taught me to wash my robes in the blood of the Lamb, and the slightest speck will stain my new garment, which might not show upon another man’s apparel. Therefore, I must not, I dare not go near the mire, but I must stay clear of it and pick my way with care along the King’s Highway.”

Dear friends, look not towards any sin, for looking breeds longing, and longing begets lusting, and lusting brings sinning. Keep your eyes right and you may keep your heart right. If that first woman had not looked upon the forbidden tree and seen “that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise,” she would not have plucked and eaten of the fruit, and we should not have been the children of sorrow.

O Lord, turn away mine eyes, for if You will keep my eyes right, then shall I be right altogether. “The light of the body is the eye; if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light,” so that, if the eye be kept right, all is well. O Lord, keep mine eyes right. Turn them away from beholding vanity in all these forms, frivolity, carnality, falsehood, wickedness.

When the psalmist prayed this prayer, he *felt that his eyes were inclined to go this way*, otherwise he would not have said, “Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.” It is much as when a child is having his portrait taken and he is told by the photographer to look in one particular direction, but there is something in the street that amuses him and draws off his gaze that way. The soldiers are passing the window and he looks at them, and you have to fix his little head fast to get him to look the right way. So the psalmist seems to say, “Lord, make me to look the right way. Do not let me be attracted to look out there to spoil the picture of my life. Turn away mine eyes. Hold my head fast and make me look the right way. Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.”

It was David’s tendency to look that way, is it not your tendency and mine also? Oh, sadly let us confess that we are too much attracted by that which is foolish and vain! I know that I cannot remember good things as well as I can evil things—some abominable saying that I heard as I was passing along in

the street will stick by me for years, when many a gracious sentiment is blown away from me by the first breeze that comes.

If you do not feel the force of natural depravity in your heart, I think it must be through lack of power or willingness to feel. Alas, we seem to drink up sin readily enough, but we have to with care put good and true thoughts into our minds. This river of our life brings down plenty of snags, the old dead trees from the evil country come floating down the stream, but seldom do they bring to our door a log of the cedars of Lebanon. Such good wood is scarce in this river, but its torrent seems to bear along all that is base and vile.

We have need to cry much to God, for the set of the current of the old nature is all the wrong way. We find another law in our members, warring against the law of our mind, and bringing us into captivity to the law of sin and death, so that we have to cry with Paul, "O wretched man that I am!" and with David, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity."

The psalmist, in the next place, *knew the evil of a growing familiarity with vanity*. He prayed, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity," because he knew by experience that you cannot go near vanity without being drawn nearer, and then a little nearer, and then a little nearer still. For the most part, men do not fall into great sin by sudden surprises. It is sometimes so, but usually there are several descending platforms and the descent is made by slow degrees.

When King David walked upon the top of his house, that fatal evening, and saw Bathsheba washing herself, if he had been in a right state of heart, as in former times, he would, with all delicacy, have at once retreated from the sight. But he had grown cold and dull in spirit for months—perhaps for years—and that incident was but the match to fire the fuel which had been so long in the drying and which, once kindled, burned to such a fearful conflagration. The sin itself seemed to come upon him all of a sudden, but the preparation for the sin had been in the making long before.

O friends, if we begin to look upon iniquity, we shall almost certainly fall! There are some sins that we poor, frail creatures cannot endure to look at. We are as moths near a burning candle, the only safety for us is to get out of the room and fly into the open air. But if we stop near the light, we shall certainly burn our wings and perhaps even destroy ourselves. So we must take care that we do not get used to sin.

I believe that even the common reading in the newspapers of accounts of evil things is defiling to us, and if we habitually read such things, we shall come, at last, to think less and less of the coarser forms of vice than we ought to do. It is said that "familiarity breeds contempt." So it does where heavenly things become familiar to those who have no spiritual perceptions, but it also breeds a hardness of conscience—a sort of callousness where there ought to be delicacy.

I have heard of blind persons, accustomed to read by touch, who have had to pare the tips of their fingers in order to secure sufficient feeling to make out the raised letters. Familiarity with sin covers the fingers of the conscience with a hard skin, so that we do not feel as we ought. Do not some of you know, when you began to associate with worldly people—when, for instance, for the first time you went to an evening party—you came home and felt that you could not pray? And you said to yourself, "This will not do. I must keep away from such society in the future. But oh, how shall I get back to my God? I cannot bear to be in this state of heart."

But now, alas! you can go into such company and enjoy it, you are just as worldly as any of them. And yet your condition does not trouble you at all. I spoke with one who used to be a member of this church, a truly spiritual man he always seemed to me, but he had left to attend another ministry—a ministry, I am afraid, in which there was not much of the savor of Christ. And I said to him, "Well, you like your new minister?" "Yes," he answered. "And does your soul prosper?" I asked. "My dear sir," he replied, "I do not think, for these last three or four years, that I have known whether I had a soul or not." That is a dreadful state to get into. When this friend first of all united with us in church fellowship, he would have started back with horror from such a condition.

And you also can grow so thoughtless and careless that, at last, you will do things you never would have dreamed of doing before. Therefore, it is good to begin with such a prayer as this, "Turn away

mine eyes from beholding vanity, lest I look, and looking, I come to look with admiration, and looking further, I come to look with desire, and looking further still, I look myself into perdition.” Let your prayer begin at the root of the evil and have nothing whatever to do with it. Pluck out your eyes sooner than look at sin, for it were better for you to enter into life blind than that, having two eyes, you should bring yourself into hell-fire by your sin. So says the Savior and He cannot err.

The psalmist, therefore, *would have none of this vanity*, and nothing whatever to do with it, because he could not tell how far he might be drawn if once he began to look upon evil. And observe, too, that *he craved divine help*. It shows the pitiful weakness of our nature and the way in which David, an eminent saint, felt that weakness when even he cried to God, “Turn away mine eyes.”

But man, can you not turn away your own eyes? Of course he can, yet let no man here trust to himself to turn away his own eyes from sin. Let him put the case into higher hands than his own, crying, “Lord, I am so frail, so fallible, so feeble, so liable to fall, that You must be the custodian of my eyes, or else my eyes will be my destruction. Superintend my eyes, Lord! Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.” I like this prayer of David, because it shows his perfect dependence upon his God.

Then observe that *he expects God to help him in a particular way*. “Turn away mine eyes.” He does not say, “Put out my eyes, O Lord!” But he prays, “Let me look another way—a better way.” The way not to be affected by sin is to look at something else. He that will see death and become familiar with the grave will learn to turn his eyes away from vanity. He that will see heaven and think of its splendors will turn his eyes away from vanity. He that will look at hell and the place appointed for the wicked will turn away his eyes from vanity.

But beloved, there is a better cure than any of these. If you have fixed your eyes on Christ the crucified, the risen, the exalted, the soon to come, if your eyes are taken up with Him, you shall find that passage true in many senses, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.” Salvation from a wandering, frivolous mind is to be found in looking at Christ by holy meditation. Nothing can keep us away from the fangs of error like falling into the embraces of Christ.

Looking unto Jesus is the great remedy against looking unto sin. Turn away mine eyes from vanity, my Lord, by filling them full with a vision of Your own self and holding me spellbound with that grandest spectacle that eyes of men, or angels, or even of God Himself did ever see—the spectacle of God Incarnate bearing our sin in His own body on the tree. Keep your eyes fixed there and all will be well.

II. So much, then, for David’s prayer for deadness. Now I have less time—as I intended—for the second division of my subject. Having prayed for deadness in one direction, DAVID PRAYS FOR LIFE IN ANOTHER DIRECTION.

About thirteen years ago, I preached from the latter part of this text and the sermon is still extant, so I can be all the briefer now. [Sermon #1072, Volume 18, *My Prayer*]. “Quicken me in thy way.” Let us dwell for a little on this prayer of David and try to pray it ourselves.

First, it is clear from this text that *the psalmist was in God’s way*. Dear friend, if you are not in God’s way, may He bring you into it at once! There is but one gate into that way. Over it is inscribed, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” As soon as you do that, you are in the way directly, for He is the way. He says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” The first thing is to get into God’s way, but that is not everything.

In the next place, those who are in God’s way are to pray that they may have *increasing life while they are in that way*. Little can be done in God’s way without life. His way is not a way of death, for “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” We must be living men, living in God’s way, if we would run in that way.

Suppose God’s way to be faith. We must not have a dead faith, otherwise we shall be deceived. The faith which works has life in it, it is that living faith which changes the life and produces good works. Lord, quicken me in my faith! Deliver me, O my God, from having a dead faith in a living Savior! O Lord, give me a living faith that shall operate on my whole life in all respects to Your glory!

There is God's way of service as well as God's way of faith and how can we serve the living God with dead works? How can a dead man serve God at all? I am afraid there is a good deal of dead preaching, and dead praying, and dead praising, but God does not count it as anything at all. It is only the living discourse that comes from the heart, and the living psalm that wells up from a grateful spirit, and the living prayer which comes from a soul that hungers and thirsts after God, that He can accept.

We must have life if we are to serve God. Quicken Thou me, O Lord, in the way of Your service! You, dear friend, are going to teach a Sunday school class next Lord's-day. Pray, "Lord, quicken me to teach the children! Let me do it in a living way." You, my dear brother, are going to stand up at the street corner and speak for Christ in the open air. Pray, "Lord, quicken Thou me in bearing living testimony to Your living truth!"

It is all-important not to serve God half-asleep. It can be done very easily. I believe that, if it were proper, I could preach a very dull, sleepy sermon—snore it, in fact—and then I believe that I should set all of you snoring most devoutly all through the place. I have seen the thing done, figuratively, if not literally. The minister asleep, deacons asleep, the members asleep, the hearers asleep, everything done very properly, very regularly, very orderly, never a jar or a jolt, but all sound asleep. God save us from ever coming to that condition! Let the prayer of each of us be, "Quicken Thou me in the way of Thy service, O LORD."

"Quicken me, also, in the way of devotion." It is a sad thing to try to pray when you feel sleepy in prayer, then is the time to cry, "Lord, help me to pray as if I were carrying the gates of heaven by storm! Help me to draw near to You with my whole heart and soul. If I am alive at anything, let it be in my devotions. If I am dead anywhere, let it be in the world. But if I am alive anywhere, let it be when I draw near to You, my God!"

This ought to be the prayer of each of us, "Quicken me, O Lord, in the way of devotion!" And as to God's way of holiness, may you and I be made so thoroughly alive in it that we shall do nothing that has not upon it the mark of, "Holiness unto the LORD!"

Yet once more, observe that *nobody but God can give us this life in God's way*. All life comes from Him, but especially is this the case with spiritual life. The sculptor can make the marble seem to breathe, but he cannot breathe life into it. And you and I may do and ought to do much for ourselves, but in the matter of real life, that must come from God alone. Let us, then, cry unto Him, "Quicken thou me in thy way, O LORD."

Lastly, *we need this quickening often*. They who were thus quickened yesterday need to be quickened again today. He who burned with zeal a week ago, needs to have fresh oil poured into his lamp continually, else it will soon burn dim. There was never a man, yet, who had such a store of grace that he could afford to do without constantly resorting to God for more.

"Quicken me, quicken me, quicken me," is the prayer of the soul when it first begins to live. It is the prayer of the Christian when he gets into the stern struggles of life and the poisonous damps of the world. And the prayer of the Christian when he is about to die is still, "Quicken me, O Lord, quicken thou me in thy way! O Life of life, be life to me! O Spirit of God, breathe into me power, vigor, force, energy! Give me all these by giving me Yourself to be my life."

I invite each one of you personally to offer this prayer, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way." It is the preacher's prayer. Let each of us who preach the Gospel ask God to keep the dust out of our eyes and make us full of spiritual life, for, if we are not filled with heavenly life, we shall be a curse to our people instead of a blessing.

This prayer is also most suitable for you who are workers for Christ, "Quicken thou me in thy way." You know how I sometimes illustrate the truth that hard work cannot be done except by strong people. If we were going to make a railway tunnel through a hill, the contractor would not go to Brampton Hospital and pick out a hundred poor consumptives.

Just imagine you see him trying to do it. He says, "There, my men, are the picks and the spades, go and tunnel through that hill." Why, they are panting and groaning in the effort to carry the tools! They

will never get through that hill, all the picks and all the spades will be of no use to them. But let the man get a hundred good strong English navvies and they seem to bore a way through the hill while you are talking about it. And before long, the whole work is done and the train is puffing through the tunnel.

So, if you Christian workers keep up to the mark, “strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might,” you will tunnel a way through the mass of London’s sin. But if you are not spiritually strong, what can you do against the enormous evils of London, of England, and of the whole world? We shall have to be getting elixirs and tonics to strengthen you, and all the time of the church will be taken up in patting you on the back and trying to comfort you. You had better go back to the hospital and pray, “O Lord, quicken thou me in thy way!” May God speedily make you stronger! But while you are so weak you cannot do this great work, for it needs those who are spiritually strong to serve the Lord with the utmost vigor.

Yet, if any are sufferers rather than workers, each of them also needs to pray this prayer, “O Lord, quicken thou me in thy way!” You can endure pain, you can bear poverty, you can suffer almost anything when God quickens you in His way. But these burdens grow more heavy when the soul is at a distance from the Lord. Have any of you backslidden? Have you stolen in here after having long wandered away from your Lord? Well, here is a prayer for you, also, “Quicken me in thy way.” Have any of you felt this week that you are getting into the rear rank of the army of life and that your life is ebbing away? Then cry to the Lord, “Quicken thou me. Quicken thou me.” “Oh!” says one, “I am full of doubts.” Yes, when you are sick and ill, you begin to doubt, but pray, “Quicken thou me. Quicken thou me.”

Perhaps some poor sinner here is saying, “I wish I could be saved.” Well, this text may be a guide to you. Keep far off from everything that is sinful, get out of the way of Satan, and pray to the Lord, “Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way.” Do not come and hear sermons and then go into places of amusement where you forget them, but let each one of us bow before the living Christ and pray, “O Lord Jesus, quicken me by Your blessed Spirit! There is such a thing as spiritual life, breathe it into me. I am a poor dead soul. If I have any life at all, I have only enough life to perceive that I am as one dead.

*“If aught is felt, ’tis only pain
To find I cannot feel.*

*Oh make this heart rejoice or ache!
Decide this doubt for me;
And if it be not broken, break
And heal it, if it be.”*

‘Quicken me, O Lord, quicken me!’” And He will do it, for He has declared, “Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.” May we all come to Him, now, and then shall we all meet in the glory-land by-and-by, through His grace! Amen and Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

PSALM 119:33-40

We have here some of the jottings from David’s pocketbook, the notes of his experience as recorded in his diary. The whole Psalm is a great casket full of golden rings. They all fit one into the other, but each ring is also perfect in itself.

Verse 33. *Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end.*

We forget what others teach us, but we never forget what God truly teaches us. He who has been graciously taught will finally persevere.

34. *Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.*

This is the great point as to thorough godliness—to observe God’s law with our whole heart. In these days, there is much slurring in religious matters, but they who love God aright love Him with their whole heart, and they are careful even in what others call, “little things.” Live unto God with the utmost heartiness, exactness, and precision, every moment. “The Lord thy God is a jealous God.” Therefore, serve Him with great jealousy and sincerity of spirit.

35. *Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight.*

And when a man delights to do that which is right, God will help him to do it. The psalmist seems to speak like a little child who has not found the use of his limbs yet. He says, “Make me to go. Take hold of me, as a nurse does of her charge, and enable me to take my first trembling, tottering footsteps. Make me to go, for I delight to go. Lord, help me to carry out my soul’s desire.”

36. *Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.*

“Make me covetous for holiness. Let that passion which, in other men, goes after gold and silver, in me run after obedience and fellowship with You, my God. Incline my heart in another way than nature would incline it. Nature puts it on the left hand and makes me covetous. My God, put my heart on my right side, that I may seek only after You and after holiness.”

37. *Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way.*

The psalmist commends all his nature to the care of his God. Just now he prayed about his feet. Then, about his heart. Now, about his eyes. We need the sanctifying grace of God in every faculty of our spiritual manhood, lest we go astray one way when we are watching against sin in another direction. It matters little at which gate a city is captured, if it be taken at all, it is taken. Oh, for grace to watch every portal of the town of Mansoul, lest we be overcome at any point!

38. *Stablish thy word unto thy servant, who is devoted to thy fear.*

“Lord, make Your Word to stand fast to me, for I do love You, I am in Your fear. Your fear has become part of myself.” If you notice, the words “*is devoted*” are put in by the translators. The verse should read, “Who to thy fear,” as if his whole self had run into the mold and shape of a God-fearing man. He asks God therefore to establish His Word unto him, and so He did. What David asked, David’s God gave.

39. *Turn away my reproach which I fear: for thy judgments are good.*

“Lord, never let me sin so as to bring a reproach upon Your holy name! Keep me from doing anything that would grieve You and cause Your enemies to blaspheme.”

40. *Behold, I have longed after thy precepts:*

That is a sure sign of a true child of God. Hypocrites may long after the promises, but only the true-born child of God longs after the precepts. If your chief desire is to be holy, that is a desire which comes from the Spirit of God. A bad man may desire to go to heaven, a desperately wicked man may wish to die the death of the righteous, but he who intensely longs to live a godly, righteous life is indeed the subject of divine grace. I am sure that there are some of us here who can say that we have made no bargains with God, nor put in any conditions whatever, if He will but help us to live holy lives, He may do what He wills with us. Our one desire is this, “Behold, I have longed after thy precepts.”

40. *Quicken me in thy righteousness.*

Let that be the prayer of every one of us. Amen.

HYMNS FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK—72 (SONG 2), 463, 465

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.