

LUMINOUS WORDS

NO. 2549

A SERMON

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 26, 1897

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 28, 1884

*“Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind:
for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;*

that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

*For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles,
when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries.”*

1 Peter 4:1-3

OUR Lord Jesus Christ has suffered for sin and He has suffered to the utmost extent, for He has paid the death penalty on His people's behalf. Look at the eighteenth verse of the previous chapter, “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.” Christ has fought with sin to the bitter end. He has now done with sin, for He has died to it. He has borne the capital sentence pronounced upon the guilty, dying, “the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.”

Now, as many as have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ are one with Him. And what He did, He did representatively for them, so that they virtually did it in Him. Therefore, every believer ought to regard Himself as having been put to death on account of sin—as having undergone, in the person of His great Substitute, the capital sentence on account of sin.

And now, as a man who has been executed is clear of the guilt, so are we. And as a man who has been executed should not return, could he live again, under the old sin, so neither must we. “Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Now read between the lines of our text. In Christ we have died unto sin once, but now that we live, we live in newness of life, and we live unto God. We are as if we had actually died to sin and had passed into a new state and condition by virtue of our union with Jesus Christ our Lord. But while this is true, there is an experience of it which we have to undergo within our own spirits—hence the apostle says, “Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind.” As He has died to sin, we are to die to sin also.

This takes place—the commencement of it, at any rate—at the time of conversion. The man who formerly loved sin begins to hate it. The sin which he used to swallow greedily, he now loathes and shuns. There is such a change wrought by the Spirit of God in the heart of the believer that sin can no more have dominion over him. It is dethroned from the place which it occupied over his nature. It once put its foot upon his neck, but now he puts his foot upon its neck. He is dead to sin and he ceases from it—not only that—in the sight of the all-seeing JEHOVAH, he has his infirmities, his failures, and his sins, but still, as far as his heart is concerned, he has done with it.

There is not any sin which he would willingly do. There is no sin which he wishes to spare. “Destroy them all,” says he. “There is not one of them which is not a deadly viper which would cause my ruin. Sweep them all out, my happiness can never be complete till my character is perfect. O Lord, I can never have my heart's desire till—

“The dearest idol I have known,

Whate'er that idol be,

“shall be once and forever torn from off Thy throne, that I may—

“Worship only Thee.”

You see, dear friends, what a wonderful change it is that is wrought in those who are united to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is as though a man were made to be dead to all for which he once lived and were made to live for that to which he was aforesaid dead. He has passed from death unto life, from loving evil into loving righteousness, from hating that which is good to the following after it with all his heart and soul and spirit.

I am not going to enlarge upon that great truth except to say this. I beg you to remember that there is no getting quit of sin—there is no escaping from its power—except by contact and union with the Lord Jesus Christ. I may stand here and preach against the prevalent vices of the age, as I hope I never shall be ashamed to do, but no vice will be put down merely by my denunciation of it. I may charge this man to shake off his sins by righteousness and to escape for his life, but I have set him a task which is quite impossible to him unless I also tell him where the power is to be found by which this work is to be done.

You will not bring a man into the humor to break off his sin by merely telling him that it is his duty, or by warning him that he will be ruined unless he does so. No, but if you can lay that dead man at the foot of the cross—if you can bring the pierced hand of Jesus to touch that dead and powerless sinner—then he will live. If he does but look to Christ, a glance at Him will give that moral and spiritual power which shall enable the man to make a total alteration in his life, because inwardly there shall be made, by the Holy Ghost, a complete transformation in his inner self.

You may take a lantern which has no candle in it and you may clean the exterior as long as you like, but it will not guide you through the darkness. There must be a candle placed within, or else it will be useless to you, cleanse it as you may. And within man's secret nature there must be put the divine candle of faith in Christ, otherwise all his outward moralities will leave him a dark lantern still.

You may take a sow from the trough and you may wash it with much soap and expend much toil upon it—but whatever you may do, as soon as it is set free, the creature will go back to its wallowing and be as filthy as the rest of the swine. It can never be cleanly, like the sheep, unless an almighty hand shall transform the sow into a sheep, and in like manner, sinners are never really changed until they are born again.

It is a good thing for the sow to be washed, I have no doubt, it is all the better for it. It is a good thing for the lantern to be cleaned, though it has no candle—it is all the better for it. And so, it is a good thing for the drunk to become a total abstainer. It is a right thing for the thief to become honest. It is a wise thing for the impure to become chaste. All these things are good, but still, they fall short of what is wanted to enable a man to enter heaven.

And there comes down again this great Nasmyth hammer which, at every blow, crushes all self-righteousness. “Ye must—ye must—ye must be born again.” There is no escaping from the bondage of sin except by that wonderful means which God has ordained—“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” There is no way of getting the power with which we can smite sin, the great adversary of our souls, except by laying hold upon the conquering cross of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

That is the great truth I shall try to enforce all through my discourse, but I intend just to light up portions of my text as I have sometimes seen, at illuminations, a few oil lamps lit up, and not the rest. I am going to select a few words here and there, and to try to illuminate them by the light of the Holy Spirit.

I. The first words I want to light up are but two—“NO LONGER.” “That he *no longer* should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.”

Those words, “no longer,” strike me as exceedingly suggestive to some of you. If God the Holy Ghost shall open your eyes to see Jesus Christ as having died for you, and you shall look to Him and find life in that look, then you will “no longer” be what you are. You will “no longer” wish to do what you have been doing. You will not even ask for an hour’s furlough or respite, but this will be your cry, “No longer! No longer would I spend my time in the flesh to the lusts of men.”

It is near the end of the year, the last Sabbath evening in another year. My heart, have you been living to please yourself and have your own passions been your master? Then, O my God, help me to say that it shall be so no longer!

For, first, *it is a dishonorable thing* for a man to let his body, which is his baser part, rule his spirit, which is his nobler part. It is a disgraceful thing for a man to live only for the pleasures of the day and never cast a glance into futurity, and think about his immortal soul which will outlive the stars. Say to yourself, “Why should I act so dishonorably? Come, my spirit, wake yourself up.”

If you are indeed a man with intellect and soul within you, let your spirit take its right position and say to the body, “You shall no longer rule, but you shall be a drawer of wood and a drawer of water to my mind and my spirit, which shall henceforth come to the front, for no longer will I seek after the lusts of the flesh.”

And for this reason also, because it is not only dishonorable, but *it is wrong* “to live in the flesh to the lusts of men.” Are you not conscious, you who have never lived unto God, that you are living altogether a wrong kind of life? I do not mean, necessarily, that you are leading a vicious life, but is your Maker, your Creator, getting glory out of you, or does this complaint of God apply to your case—“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib, but Israel doth not know, my people do not consider.”

Have I not often put it to you that you would not keep a dog if it never followed at your heel? You would not care to have an engine that never worked according to your will. You would soon say, “I must get rid of this useless thing.” Yet here is God, who has created you and provided for you, and preserved you in being, and all this while you have scarcely thought of Him. You have never loved Him, you have never truly worshipped Him, and whatever kind of outward homage you have rendered to Him, you have had no real delight in it. You have been a trembling slave, but you have never been an obedient servant to Him.

Well, then, as this is all wrong, we must alter it. A man who *is* a man says, “If this course is wrong, I am going no further in it. If this is a dishonest thing, I will have no more to do with it. No longer! No longer! No, not a moment longer will I continue as I have been. If I can have an alteration made, that alteration shall be made at once, for this is my motto, ‘No longer.’”

Let me also say to you, dear friend, that you ought “no longer” to live “in the flesh to the lusts of men” because *the tendency is for you to get hardened in that evil state*. Remember that text on which I spoke to you, a fortnight ago? [Sermon #1821, Volume 31—*Cords and Cart Ropes*] “Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope.” As cords of vanity grow into cart ropes, so little evil practices consolidate into dreadful habits which hold a man as with bands of steel.

There are some of you who, if you mean to go to heaven, must begin at once. I feel that there are some here to whom God seems to say, “Now, or never!” I can hear the great pendulum of the clock of time and as it goes to and fro it says, “Now, or never! Now, or never! Now, or never!” Before, like Lot’s wife, you stiffen into a pillar of salt that can never move, I charge you, escape for your life, run to the only refuge set before you. May God help you to do so, looking unto Jesus! Let the words, “no longer,” enter into your heart as they now come forth from my mouth.

“No longer,” for if, dear friend, you have found out that Jesus has loved you, and that He gave Himself for you, you will say to yourself, “*No longer will I harbor His enemies.*” I pray the Holy Spirit to help me to lead you right away to Calvary, where Jesus hangs bleeding on the cross. Will you not sit down with me upon the ground and look up, and see Him die? Mark the precious blood flowing from

His many wounds and hear Him cry, "I thirst." "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Look unto Him.

Oh, that you would look, as I now do! I am looking unto Jesus and trusting myself entirely with Him to save me. And I feel in my heart that He has saved me. Now I cannot live as I once lived. I cannot sin as I once sinned. I must have done with sin if I have, indeed, trusted in Christ. Do you not feel the same? I am sure that if you do now look to Him, and live by Him, you will not want to have your sins spared you even until the end of this year, but you will say, "No. Bring them out. Hang them up. Let them all be put away forever. There is no darling sin that I would keep back. Let them all die, for no longer would I seek to find a perilous and poisonous enjoyment in them, but my delight shall consist in seeking to be holy, and in endeavoring to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ."

If you have received the new life into your soul, then I know that you will say, "No longer will I abide in sin." I have been charmed, this week, by some whom I have seen who have found the Savior just lately. And I am pleased to find that the Lord is at work in many ways bringing sinners to Himself. Why should He not bring *you*? And what better time could there be than just at the close of this year?

Remember that *it must be short work with every sin*. Your watchword must be, "No longer." There must be no parleying, no trifling. You have parleyed too long and trifled too long already. Now for the one deadly shot that shall penetrate the very heart of sin-love and make it fall slain within you.

It will have to be sharp work with some of you, as well as short work. It will be like cutting off your right arm or tearing out your right eye, but it must be done. It must be with you as it was with John Bunyan, "Will you have your sins and go to hell? Or will you give them up and go to heaven?" There is no other alternative. As God lives, it must be one of these two.

As it is short work and sharp work, *it will be saving work*, for, when you have parted with your sins, you will be joined to Christ. And when at Christ's feet you have laid down your love of sin, then you may go your way hearing the apostle's comforting message, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Trusting in Christ, you are saved, and you may sing of it, and bless the name of the Most High.

So much for these two words, "no longer."

II. Now I want you kindly to turn to my text, again, that I may light up five words in the second verse. They are these, "THE REST OF HIS TIME."

"The rest of his time." I do not know how much there may be, but, *in any case, it cannot be very long*. "The rest of his time," cannot be very long even with the longest-lived among us. Some have good constitutions and they are yet only in the beginning of their days, so they may live a considerable time. Still, they cannot be sure that it will be so.

God has been visiting this congregation very frequently of late. Every day, almost, somebody is taken away from us. Elderly persons have gone in immense numbers during the last two months. Some of our young friends are also going and we shall have to carry to the grave, this week, some who have scarcely reached middle life.

The hand of God is at work among us in a very marked manner, taking away one and another from our midst. "Who'll be next? Who'll be next?" One who was here on Sabbath week has now gone into the world of spirits. I know of one, there may be many more besides. Well, then, dear friends, it is clear that the rest of our time cannot be very long.

"The rest of his time." *With some, it must be very short*—persons who are very sickly. Others who are very aged. And to some who are neither sickly nor aged, the bolt of death shall be let fly in a moment and they will be in the unseen world. Come, then, dear friends, let us think this matter over. I would like to think it over myself.

There is this consideration which we must not forget—while we are talking about the rest of our life—it is already going. Every moment that we are here, we are traveling at an immense rate, speeding onward to the great goal of death. We had need be in earnest, for while we are making up our minds to be earnest, our time is slipping away. We say that we will find a firm foundation to build on for eternity,

and while we are thinking and talking of the foundation, the earth is crumbling from underneath our feet and we are gradually gliding away. "It is time to live," said Anacreon, "for I grow old." And surely we may each one of us say, "It is time to live, since, whether old or not, my life is continually passing away."

I should like to cheer up some of you who are not yet converted, with the belief that although the rest of your time for serving the Lord cannot be as long as it would have been if you had been converted earlier, yet, if you yield yourself to Christ at once, there may be *enough time left to you to do good work for your Lord and Master*. I have known an aged man converted to Christ long after grey hairs have been upon him. Even when tottering to his grave, he has not been wholly useless, but he has still brought forth fruit in his old age to show that the Lord is upright.

It has been the happy lot of some of us to be working for our Lord and Master ever since our boyhood, but we have not yet done enough yet. We feel, indeed, hungry to do much more, and we have the satisfaction of hoping that we may be spared to do in the future more than we have ever done up to the present. Who knows? God may give us fresh health and strength, and we may be enabled to accomplish more even than in the past—we shall do so if it pleases Him.

But if any of you are converted in your old age, if you are brought to Christ at a period when your years must be few, yet take care to redeem the time, because the days are evil. It is wonderful how God can use even you—there is a testimony for you to bear yet, do bear it, and may God bless it very abundantly.

Meanwhile, as for the rest of our life, *it has immediate demands*, and I beg to impress that thought upon everybody here. The way to do a great deal is to keep on doing a little. The way to do nothing at all is to be continually resolving that you will do everything. Let that grand dream of yours, "baseless fabric of a vision" as it is, go where dreams must go. And begin to do the day's work in the day, ay, and tonight's work—the work of the hour upon which we have entered—do that while the hour is here.

I am sure that there are many of you professing Christian people, who do not bring anybody to Christ because, although you know how it ought to be done, you keep on finding fault with those that do it. Now, just leave your fellow servants alone and get to your own work. "Oh!" you say, "there is a person who is constantly trying to speak to others. He is really quite intrusive."

Yes, I know him very well, but instead of bothering your head about him, would it not be as well for you to do the work better yourself if you can? If you tried to do so, you would then not have any inclination to find any fault with your fellow servant. If we were all determined to do what we could, and to do it well, we should serve the Lord acceptably and be blessed in doing it.

"When I get home," says someone, "I know what I can do. I am a nursemaid and I shall hear the children say their prayers." Yes, hear them say their little prayers, but be sure to tell them something about "Gentle Jesus." "Oh, but!" says another, "I have such a number of children around me that I hardly ever get out. It is only now and then, on a Sunday evening, that I can come here. It seems as if there is nothing that I can do for Jesus."

"My dear good soul, you are the very person who has much to do for Christ. You have a great and precious charge entrusted to you—seek to bring all those dear children to the Savior." "Well," says another, "I really do not know what I can do." Now, for a person who lives in London to say that is really wicked. You know what Solomon says about our work, "Whatsoever thy *hand* findeth to do, do it with thy might."

I should have thought that he would have said, "Whatsoever thine eyes can see that needs to be done." No, he seems to say, "You may shut your eyes and put out your hand, and do the first thing that comes within your reach." In such a city as this, there is so much to be done that you may just put out your hand and do the first thing that comes within your reach—that is the best thing for you to do.

"The rest of his time." I have tried to light up those words and I want every Christian and every unconverted person also to go away thinking in some such fashion as this, "The rest of my time—let me use it, Lord, for You. Let me work at double-quick speed. Lord, help me to make forced marches for

You. Lord, help me to do thoroughly what I do. Enable me to throw my whole soul into it, and by Your divine Spirit, so inspire me, so fill me with Your own power and grace, that what I do may be done effectually and efficiently.”

Know you not that you are laborers together with God, and that what you do aright, God does through you? If you can but realize this, how honorably and gloriously will the rest of your life be spent!

III. Now, to close, I would throw the lamp-light on six words in the third verse. The words are these—“THE TIME PAST OF OUR LIFE.”

“The time past of our life.” Well, *that has gone past recall*. Oh, if you could only get your life back again! But you cannot—not even a *moment* of it. What is done can never be undone.

*“Could your tears forever flow,
Could your zeal no respite know,”*

you cannot undo anything that is done. There your past life will always stand.

If you are a believer in Jesus, the sin of your past life is forgiven. Still, it was your sin. The penalty of it will never be executed. Still, you did have that evil feeling, you did think that rebellious thought, you did say that word, you did commit that transgression, you did omit the keeping of that precept. There it is and it cannot be altered.

And further, *there is no way of making up for the past of your life*. The duties of today are not the duties of ten years ago. If I live unto myself during the first twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty years of my life, I had need to be doubly zealous in the ardor of my service for God in the future. But still, that does not fill up the void in the past. That does not remove the fact that all those fields behind me lay untilled through many a year, bringing forth nothing but thorns and thistles—no acceptable harvest for my God.

Ah, me! this makes “the time past of our life” appear very solemn. Certainly it is true that it has sufficed “to have wrought the will of the Gentiles.” There is no man here whom God has converted by His grace, who wishes that he had spent more of his life in sin. No doubt, it has given him a knowledge of the world, but it is a knowledge of the world which those who have would be glad to be rid of.

I know many a child of God who, when he is in prayer, will have suggested to him, even by the words he uses, some lascivious song. And even what the preacher says, though perfectly pure, may raise before the mind some impure thought, some unhallowed act. It is a blessed thing for a man who has been steeped up to his throat in the bogs of devilry, to be converted, but he who has never seen the world at all has seen quite enough of it. He who has never seen even the hoof of the devil, nor a print which he has made in the earth has seen enough of him.

The time past may well suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles. If we were converted to God in boyhood, we had had quite enough of sin. Enough, did I say? Far too much, for a single drop of that burning acid will leave a scar upon the flesh even after it has no longer any power to destroy the spirit.

“The time past of our life” seems to me to be *a matter of humiliation* to us all without exception, but most of all to those who are newly converted. I never mind hearing a man tell that he is converted, but I must confess to feeling a kind of sickness come over me when I have heard some people tell what they used to do before they were converted. I have thought, “I wish that brother would get away in a corner somewhere and tell that story where nobody could hear it.” I have heard some men tell the tale of their past lives as if it really was very grand and very creditable to them to have done such abominable things.

A man gets up in a meeting and says, My dear friends, I have done that which, if it had been known, would have brought me to the gallows.” “Then sit down,” says someone, “sit down.” A very sensible thing to say, because perhaps the man might die on the gallows if he went on with his story. But some fellows will get up, and under the pretense that they are going to glorify God, will tell of all manner of filthiness and vice which cannot do any good to anybody. Stand up and cry, Brother, that is the best thing you can do. Or else, sit down, and cover your face, and say, “Concerning those things whereof I

am now ashamed, I only pray God, as He has blotted them out of His memory, to put them out of my own also.”

“The time past of our life” ought to also come before us as a *matter of contrast*. A Christian should say, “I cannot do this or that. I used to do it, but that is the very reason why I cannot do it now. I cannot make the angry answer that I once would have done to a man who injured me. The time was when my blood would have been up and I would soon have let him know that he could not insult me in that fashion. But now he may insult me if he pleases, for I am changed, and I have become a Christian. Time was when, in my business, I should not have minded how the weights went, but now I would far rather defraud myself than injure another.” The Christian should recollect the time past to make his present converted life to be a strict contrast to it.

And he should sometimes recollect it that it may be a *stimulus to him*. I remember a man who came a considerable distance to worship with us in the house of God, as some of you do. I often notice, when you come to join the church, if you have to walk five miles here and five miles back, and I say to you, “It is a very long way,” you exclaim, “Oh, it is nothing, sir! It does me good and I like a walk on Sundays.”

After you have been here a few years, if you get lukewarm or cold in spirit, those same miles grow terribly long—do they not? And you go somewhere nearer home. There is a great difference between a mile and a mile—as much difference as there is between a heart and a heart. And when the heart alters, the length of the miles increases directly.

Well, this man, of whom I was telling you, one day was going to this place of worship and he felt very tired, and his legs said, “Don’t go this morning.” So he just pulled up and said, “Ah, you old rascals, you used to go further than that to the theater, and I will make you go to the Tabernacle.” So, on he walked.

And sometimes, it is a good thing to put it to yourself, “Why, I have stood up in the gallery of the theater among the ‘gods’ when it has been hot enough to bake me. And I will go, though the place is hot, or though the place is cold, to hear the Gospel!” Some of you would have sat on a very bare seat in the days of your flesh to take your enjoyment, and paid your money down as freely as possible to see what only did you hurt. But now it often happens that in a place of worship you must have a very soft cushion, and be very comfortable, and everybody must be very polite to you, or else you get sick and tired of it.

O friend, recollect the past, in order to chide yourself about the present, and say, “I went through thick and thin for the devil and I will go through thick and thin for Christ. I was never ashamed to acknowledge my old master, I could swear and curse among the worst of his servants. And surely I will not be ashamed to own Christ, but I will sing to His praise and avow that I belong to Him.”

I would like you all to take up these three threads—“No longer,” “The rest of his time,” “The time past of our life.” Wind them round your finger and keep them in your memory, and may God grant that we may all start afresh from this time, to the praise of the glory of His grace! Amen and amen.

EXPOSITION OF C. H. SPURGEON

I PETER 4

Verse 1. *Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind:*

Accepting this great truth, that it is well that the flesh should die that the spirit may triumph, even as it was with Christ.

1. *For he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.*

If he has indeed died with Christ, and the power of Christ’s sufferings has made him dead to sin, he has ceased from it.

2-4. *That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you:*

For the very thing in which they ought to speak well of you, men will speak evil of you. If you will not drink as they do, if you will not follow after sinful pleasures as they do, if you will not sing their songs, or use their language, then straightway they will hate you and call you a hypocrite. It is a pity that, if we are not willing to go into sin as they do, they should for that reason speak ill of us, yet this is what we must expect.

5. *Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.*

There will be a day when those who are alive at the coming of Christ will be judged. And those who were dead long before that time will not escape the judgment—for they shall be raised from their graves to appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

6. *For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.*

Men who heard the Gospel and believed it, and are now dead. They have undergone the sentence of death like other men, but still, they are living “according to God in the spirit.”

7. *But the end of all things is at hand:*

We are never told the exact date of the times or seasons which are yet to come. It is the evident aim of the Holy Spirit to keep us on the tiptoe of expectation. We are always to be as men whose Lord may come at any minute of the day or night. “The end of all things is at hand:”

7. *Be ye therefore sober,*

Do not get intoxicated with anything, neither with pride, nor with covetousness, nor with the cares of this world. Maintain your equilibrium. Stand steadfast and firm. “Be ye therefore sober,”

7-8. *And watch unto prayer. And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves:*

For, when Christ comes, He will know you as His disciples if you love one another. But if there is an absence of Christian affection when He comes, He will say at once that you have missed the main mark of discipleship.

8. *For charity shall cover the multitude of sins.*

Not your own sins, but the sins of your friends, so that you will not see them. Where love is thin, faults are always thick. Wherever there is true love in the heart, we make many apologies and allowances for the weaknesses and infirmities of our friends. Often we cannot see the faults in them and when we know they are there, we go backward, like the godly sons of Noah, and cover the nakedness upon which we will not think of looking—“for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.”

9. *Use hospitality one to another without grudging.*

Whenever saints of God traveled in those days, there were few public inns available for their accommodation, so they stayed with brethren in Christ as they went on their way.

10. *As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

God’s grace takes many shapes, it is manifold, and He gives to one brother one form of grace, and to another quite a different form. And to a third, yet another form of His blessing. Now, as nations increase their wealth by mutual commerce, so do Christians increase their grace by a sweet fellowship in the good things with which God has entrusted them.

11. *If any man speak,—*

Let him speak thoroughly well, but in order that he may do so, what shall be his model?

11. *Let him speak as the oracles of God;*

As truthfully, carefully, solemnly, as the Book itself speaks. “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.”

11. *If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth.*

“If any man minister,” or serve—if he is called to serve the church in any capacity—“let him do it as of the ability which God giveth.”

11. *That God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

Note how Peter has the same spirit in him as that which burned in the breast of Paul, for he stops in the middle of a letter, lays down his pen, and lifts up his heart to God in an adoring strain of thanksgiving—“to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

12. *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:*

In Peter’s day, the Christians were called, not only to what might be metaphorically termed, “the fiery trial,” but they had literally to suffer thus for Christ’s sake. Nero had multitudes of Christians brought to his gardens and tied to stakes, that he might light up his midnight revelries by the burning of these godly men and women smeared with pitch. They had to bear even that fiery trial for the name of Christ. Many periods of martyrdom have passed since then, in which the saints of God have willingly died rather than deny their Lord. We have fallen upon comparatively silken times—a jest, a slander, a calumnious observation—these are the only weapons with which our enemies can smite the most of us.

13-14. *But rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ’s sufferings, that, when his glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye are reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye.*

Did not your Savior say, “Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man’s sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.” So, be glad about it.

14. *For the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.*

Whenever they speak against you that which is not true, they think that they shall slander the name of God by slandering you, but they do no such thing. As far as they are concerned, God is evil spoken of, but then that is all you could have expected from such people. “But on your part”—and that is the thing you have to look to—“on your part he is glorified.”

15. *But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters.*

A curious mixture that—is it not? A murderer is classed with “a busybody in other men’s matters.” But really, people of this latter sort are very obnoxious. There are some who seem as if they cannot mind their own business. I have heard that it is for two reasons. First, because they have not any business to mind, and secondly, they have no mind at all with which to mind their business. But these very people think they can mind other people’s business and the more is the pity. See how strongly Peter condemns them and asks that none of those to whom he writes may have to suffer because of such wrongdoing.

16-17. *Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God;—*

Trial and testing must begin there. We must not expect to have our religion taken for granted and ourselves to be saved simply upon our own warranty. We must be tried—“The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.” “The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God.”

17. *And if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?*

If the wheat is winnowed, what is to become of the chaff? If God puts even the gold into the fire, what is to become of the dross? If that which is really valuable yet has to be tested, what is to be done with the mire and the clay? Oh, that all who have no part or lot with Christ would consider this solemn truth!

18. *And if the righteous scarcely be saved,—*

If they are saved with difficulty,—

18. *Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?*

If even men who live godly lives are often hard put to it to know whether they shall be saved or not—if they raise the question again and again with a terrible seriousness, “where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?”

19. *Therefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.*

The whole run of the chapter is that we are to prefer any suffering of the flesh to the sin of the spirit and we are to be prepared to endure whatever trial or pain may come upon us for Christ’s sake, and to bear it joyfully, rather than to seek the pleasures of sin and to be plunged under the waves of the wrath of God. May He give us the grace thus to glorify Him, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

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

END OF VOLUME 43