

WAKING TO SEE CHRIST'S GLORY

NO. 2658

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 21, 1900
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 3, 1882

“And when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him.”
Luke 9:32

IT seems at first sight, a strange thing that the apostles should have been asleep at such a time, yet probably, if we think of the circumstances in which they were placed, and of the extreme excitement under which they must have labored, it will not appear at all a wonder that “Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep.” In the twenty-eighth verse it is written concerning our Lord, “He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening.”

We know that the Savior frequently retired to some quiet secluded spot for fellowship with His Father, and that sometimes, He spent the whole night in prayer. It is very probable that on this occasion, He had been engaged in earnest prayer for several hours before the transfiguration came, and it is worthy of note that He was transfigured while He was praying.

Every blessing comes to the great Head of the church, and to all the members of His mystical body, through prayer. There is nothing promised to us without prayer, but with prayer, everything is provided for us, and by prayer we shall ascend into glory. I cannot tell how long the Lord had been in prayer, but judging from His usual manner and custom, I should suppose that He had spent some hours in supplication. Even the three most highly favored apostles were not as spiritually minded as He was, and they grew weary while He was still full of holy vigor and fervor.

The most zealous amongst us might be tired of listening to the best man in the world if he were to keep on praying hour after hour, yet he himself might be enjoying a special baptism of the Spirit, and be quite unconscious of fatigue, and in his wrestling with God, might be all the while going from strength to strength. We, who were merely onlookers, would probably grow drowsy, and be unable to keep up the strain as he would keep it up, our spirit might be willing enough to sympathize with him, but the weakness of our flesh would make us, like the apostles, “heavy with sleep.” I wonder not, therefore, if the Savior's supplication was long-continued, and that His disciples grew weary, and fell into a state of slumber.

Probably, however, their sleeping was the result of the extraordinary excitement through which they had passed, for as in extreme pain, kind nature comes to the rescue, and causes a swooning or fainting fit by which the poor sufferer is relieved, so sometimes she comes in when there is a stress of mental excitement, whether joyous or grievous, and gives rest, even by unwilling slumber, to those who otherwise might have been exhausted.

You remember, dear friends, that these very persons fell asleep in Gethsemane. When their Master rose up from His agony of prayer, and came back to them, “He found them sleeping for sorrow.” They were themselves so depressed in spirit by His sufferings, that although they had true sympathy with Him, as far as they could have it, they fell asleep, and their Master, while gently chiding them, made excuse for them as He said, “What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

These apostles are not the only persons who have slept in the presence of the grandly supernatural. It happened so to Daniel—that seer with the burning eye, who seemed as if he could look right into the

glories of heaven without blinking or being blinded by the wondrous vision, yet we read in his eighth chapter, at the eighteenth verse, when an angel appeared to him, “Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground: but he touched me, and set me upright,” and further, in the tenth chapter at the eighth verse, we read, “Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground.”

These supernatural things are too much for mortal men to endure. The narrow compass of our mind cannot contain the infinite, and if, when we behold the glory of God to an unusual degree, we do not die, if our lives are spared after we have seen that great sight, at least the image of death must come upon us, and we must fall into a deep sleep.

I will not therefore, blame Peter, and James, and John, for sleeping on that memorable occasion, for I do not think that there was any sin in their slumbering under such circumstances. They were apostles, but they were only men, and being men they were feeble creatures, and when they came into those deep waters, they were altogether out of their depth, so they began to sink in the ocean of the divine glory, and soon were lost in the unconsciousness of sleep. Marvel not, therefore, brethren, that you find these three apostles slumbering even in the presence of their transfigured Lord.

But now—and this will be our first head—it *was necessary that they should be awake to see the glories of Christ*. Secondly, if you and I are to see the glories of Christ, *it is necessary that we also should be awake*, and that is more than can be said of all of us. I may say to some, “Let us not sleep, as do others,” for there are many who are so soundly sleeping that they are quite oblivious of the glories of Christ. When I have spoken on those two points, I want to close my discourse by showing you that *this doctrine of the necessity of our wakefulness explains many things*.

I. “When they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him.” So, first, **IT WAS NEEDFUL FOR THEM TO AWAKE TO SEE CHRIST’S GLORY.**

It was necessary, first, *that Christ’s transfiguration might be known to be a fact*—not a dream, nor a piece of imagination, which had no real existence, “When they were awake, they saw his glory.” It was a literal matter of fact to them. As surely as Christ was born at Bethlehem, as certainly as He toiled in the carpenter’s shop at Nazareth, as truly as His blessed feet trudged over the holy fields of Judaea, as truly as He healed the sick and preached the Gospel wherever He went, and as really as He did actually die upon the cross of Calvary, so it is a matter of plain fact that Jesus Christ did, on a certain mountain—what mountain we do not know—undergo a wonderful change for the time being, in which His glory was marvelously and distinctly displayed so that His three disciples could see it.

“And, behold, there talked with him two men”—Elias, who never died, and who was there with Him bodily, and Moses, who did die, and so may only have been there in spirit, unless that dispute, between Michael the archangel and the devil, about the body of Moses, may relate to the fetching away of that body that he might enjoy the same privilege as Enoch and Elijah did. Of that matter I know nothing, but those two men, Moses and Elias, were certainly there—not merely in appearance, but in reality, and our Lord Jesus Christ was really transfigured, “the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening.”

It is true that Peter did not know what he said, but he knew what he saw when he was wide awake. The Revised Version renders our text, “When they were fully awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him.” They had not imagined this scene while they were in a semiconscious state between sleeping and waking, it was no night vision or daydream, it was not something painted by fancy upon their eyeballs, and which had no actual existence, but it was a real meeting between their Lord and Moses and Elias.

They did see Christ and His two companions from the glory land, and they did hear the Father’s voice saying, “This is my beloved Son: hear him.” Peter did not know what he said, but he knew what he heard, he was wide awake enough to understand that message, and long afterwards, he recalled it

when he wrote concerning his Lord, "For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount." So you see, dear friends, that they had to be awake in order that they might be able to confirm all this as an actual occurrence, and to my mind, this is very pleasant.

I like to remember that the Lord Jesus, the Man of sorrows, let some beams of His glory shine out even while He was here below, and if, in His humiliation, His transfigured face appeared so bright, what must His glory be above, where His face shines brighter than the sun, and His eyes are as a flame of fire, and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace? What is now the matchless beauty of that visage which was marred more than that of any other man? When He did but for a moment withdraw the veil, His disciples were overwhelmed with the magnificence of the display, but what must it be to see His face forever in the glory land above?

Next, it was necessary that the disciples should be awake, *that they might see the real glory of Christ*. I trust they were spiritual enough to know that the splendor which they saw was not the essential glory of Christ's Godhead, for that no man can see. Neither was it that secret spiritual glory which Christ always had, for that is not a sight for human eyes to behold, but for loving hearts to think of with reverent affection. But it was a special glory which was, for the time, shed upon His humanity, and even upon the garments in which that humanity was arrayed, so that "His raiment was white and glistening."

The apostles then saw Christ in some measure as He will be by and by, and being fully awake, they knew that it was not a phantasm that they were looking upon, but that it was real glory which streamed from the Savior's face, and from every part of His most blessed and adorable person.

We are glad to know that Christ has no fictitious honors, and no empty pomp, but that there is about Him a real glory which our opened eyes may see, and which we may perceive without being fanatical or frenzied, such a glory as we can see in the time of our quiet, calm judgment, and earnest, deliberate thought, when every faculty is in full exercise, and our whole soul is in the enjoyment of the utmost degree of vigorous health.

I care little for the visions that need night, and curtains, and dreams, before they can be perceived, I prefer the glory which can be seen by a man when he is fully awake, and all his faculties are aroused so that he is able to discern between truth and fiction, and to detect any imposition that may be attempted to be played upon him.

Further, these disciples were fully awake *that they might perceive somewhat of the greatness of Christ's glory*. Do you not envy these three holy men who saw our Lord in the holy mount? So glorious was He, that even the mountain itself was made "holy" wherein this transaction occurred, for so Peter called it, from that time it was as holy as Sinai itself, where God came down in terrible pomp of power to proclaim His law. Had not these apostles been wide awake, they would not have perceived how truly marvelous is Christ's glory.

What would not any of us give just now, for a sight of Christ with our eyes wide awake? What must He be like who is the very center of heaven's glory? All the grandeur of man is but external, but there is about Christ's very face a beauty of character which continually shines out—the luster of deity which gleams through His humanity, so that, to see Him as He is must be the fairest sight in the whole universe. To behold Him but for a moment, must be the most dazzling vision that ever fell to the lot of men.

Did you ever hear dying men and women talk about Him when they have begun to see Him? What strange words sometimes drop from their lips just as they are departing this life—giving us just a hint as to how grand He must be whose glory the apostles saw when they were with Him in the holy mount!

One thing which they were fully awake to see was this, *the singularity of the glory*. If you read the text you will notice that when they were awake, "they saw his glory"—and the glory of Moses and Elias? Oh, no! not at all. But did they not see Moses and Elijah? Yes, but mark how the text sinks, as it were, when it speaks of them, "They saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him." There is

nothing about any glory being around or upon them, they are nothing but “the two men that stood with him.” He is fairer than the children of men, greater than Moses, and greater than Elias, mighty as both of them were. I think that we never truly see Christ until we behold Him all alone, as we never see the sun and the stars at the same time. If you once see the sun flooding the sky with his glory, you will find that the stars have disappeared.

The apostles saw the greatest of the prophets, and the great lawgiver, after whom there was never the like till Christ Himself came, yet the inspired record concerning the event is, “They saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him.” May you never see any earthly representatives of the church of God in any higher place than this! In the church, and in all its ministers, may you see His glory and the men that stand with Him, and when you look upon those whose feet are beautiful because they proclaim the Gospel of Christ, yet may you only see His glory, and the men that stand with Him to speak in His name!

The apostles needed to be wide awake to discern this difference, and so do we, for many nowadays, seem to have no more respect for Christ than they have for His disciples. I trow that there are some who think more of a dogma, that was promulgated by Calvin, because it is Calvin's, than they do of that which Christ has preached because it is Christ's, and there are some who will refer everything they believe to “The Minutes of Conference,” or the sayings of Mr. Wesley, but some of the sayings of Christ do not seem to have as much weight with them.

As for us, I trust that we may always see the true and noble men who stand with Christ, but first of all, may we see His glory, because Christ has awakened us out of that sinful sleep in which we make no distinction between the Master and the servant! Happy are we if He has taught us that the greatest of His servants is not worthy to unloose the latchets of His shoes.

So much, then, upon the necessity for these three men being fully awake.

II. Now, brethren, let me speak to you upon the second part of our subject, which is, that IT IS NECESSARY FOR US ALSO TO BE AWAKE IF WE ARE TO SEE CHRIST'S GLORY.

We have not dreamt our religion, it has not come to us as a vision of the night, but when we were fully awake, we saw Christ's glory. We have seen His glory when we have been awake without weariness, awake without pain, awake without losses, awake without fears and trembling, in our coolest moments, when there was the least likelihood of our being deceived, we have seen His glory as our Savior, our Helper, our Keeper, our All in all. Set that fact down then, and stand to it before the face of every man who dares to speak a word against Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, that just as truly as “when they were awake, they saw his glory,” so have we seen it in our most wakeful and calm and quiet moments.

But dear friends, let me impress upon your minds the truth that in order to see the glory of Christ, it is necessary that we should be fully awake. Are we fully awake? Is there a man among us who has even one eye wide open? Is there not a corner of it still sealed? Are our mental and spiritual faculties really quickened to the utmost, or are we not still, to a large extent, as dreamers compared with what we ought to be in the presence of Christ?

Come now, brother, are your highest powers thoroughly aroused? I believe that it was so with Peter, and James, and John, and that what little spiritual faculty they then possessed—for they were then but babes in grace—was fully aroused to learn all that could be learned from their Lord and Master in that mysterious manifestation of His glory.

Are we in such a condition as that? There are many things that tend to make the soul go off into sleep, so let us bestir ourselves, for unless all our powers of mind and heart are fixed upon our Lord, we shall not fully behold His glory, and if ever there was a sight that demanded and deserved all a man's powers of vision, it is the sight of the glorious Savior who stooped to die for us, and who now is at the Father's right hand interceding for us.

When you do hear the Gospel, hear it with both your ears, and with your whole heart and soul. When you are present in the assembly of the saints, be really there, and do not come, as some men do, leaving

their real selves at home or at their place of business. They sit here, and we think that they are here, but they are not. Their thoughts are far away over the seas, or in their shops, even when the preacher is proclaiming the glorious Gospel of the blessed God. You know that it is so with many, but we cannot expect to have a clear sight of Christ until we are fully awake as these three apostles were upon the mount.

But to what shall we be awake? Well, first, it is a good thing to be *awake to our present condition and circumstances*. Brothers, sisters, you would be in hell within an hour if God did not keep you from it by His grace. You who think you know Him best, need constant supplies of His grace, else you would fall into the most sorrowful condition. You are dependent upon Him every instant, and for everything—for consistency of life, for the smallest grain of faith, for hope, for love, for peace, for joy, for steadfastness, for courage, for everything, again I say.

Now, dear friend, are you fully awake to that fact? Do any of us really feel how weak we are—how sinful we are—what floods of depravity there are pent up within us ready to burst out at any moment? Do we realize what terrible volcanic fires are hidden within our thoughts, as if the fury of Gehenna had entered our nature? And who alone can save us, and who does save us?

Brethren, when you are thoroughly awake to your dangers, to your needs, to your weaknesses, then you will see Christ's glory. He is never rightly valued until we see ourselves to be utterly valueless. Low thoughts of self make high thoughts of Christ. Lord, awake us to know what we are, for then shall we begin to see the glories of Thy Son!

We must also be thoroughly *awake to the mercies that we are constantly receiving*. Thousands of blessings come to us when we are sound asleep in our beds, and oftentimes, we know nothing of many favors that come to us in broad daylight, we are asleep, as it were, concerning them. Think, dear Christian people, of your election, think of your redemption, think of your effectual calling, think of your cleansing by the precious blood, think of your washing by the Spirit with water by the Word, think how you have been held up, supplied, educated, comforted, strengthened.

Think of what yet remains for you of peace and joy in this life, and of the abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Let your mind contemplate all the mercies that are sure to come to you, and bless the Lord for them even before they do come, as faith reckons them to be hers already. When you are awake to all these mercies, then you will see your Lord's glory, all these blessings will make you see what a glorious Savior—what an infinitely gracious Lord—He is to you. Father of mercies; wake us up to a sense of Your mercies, that we may see the glory of Jesus in them all!

And dear friends, we ought also to be *awake to all manner of holy exercises*. For instance, when we are awake to prayer, then we see Christ's glory. What are our prayers often? At morning and night a few hurried sentences, when we are either half asleep or scarcely awake. I mean that, at night, we are ready to go to sleep over our devotions, and we nod even while we pray, and in the morning, when we get up, we have hardly time, through the demands of business, to spend a proper season in fellowship with our Lord. I bless God for our prayer meetings, for there is much that is good in them, but do we, even there, pray as we should? Those who speak for us are often graciously helped, but are not those of us who sit silent, and who should be praying to God, often thinking of a thousand things instead of our supplications? Yet we cannot expect to meet with Christ while we are in prayer unless we are wide awake in it.

Then think of our singing, praise is a blessed way of getting near to Christ, but sometimes people sing mechanically, as if they were wound up, like the old-fashioned organs that ground out a tune with painful regularity, the poor pipes knowing nothing, of course, about the sense or the meaning of the music, for there was no living hand to touch the keys. Yet we sometimes sing like that.

*“Hosannahs languish on our tongues,
And our devotion dies.”*

But oh! when we are thoroughly awake in our singing, then are we able to—

*“Behold the glories of the Lamb
Amidst His Father’s throne;”—*

and then also we—

*“Prepare new honors for His name,
And songs before unknown.”*

Many of us are coming presently to the table of our Lord, what will happen if we come there half awake? Well, we shall not see the glory of Christ in His ordinance. There will be bread and there will be wine, but to us, there will be nothing more, no body of Christ, no blood of Christ, to be our spiritual meat and drink. The Master will not come and sit down with a company of nodding disciples, all fast asleep around the table which is the special memorial of His great love to us. “When they were awake, they saw his glory,” and it must be the same with us also.

Now I want to press this thought home a little more closely. Brethren, if we are *fully awake to holy service*, then we shall see the glory of Christ. Those among you who live to win souls for Christ, whose soul is all on fire to try and carry the Gospel into some place where as yet it is not known, are certain to see the glory of Christ. While you serve Him, you shall see His face, as they do who are with Him in glory.

I have read a great many biographies of men and women who were full of doubts and fears, but when I have been reading about a man who was full of sacred zeal, one who was wholly consecrated to the service of his Savior, I have found very little about his doubts and fears. Those two seraphic men, Whitefield and Wesley, seemed to have no time for depression of spirits. They were always about their Master’s business. They flashed through the earth like flames of fire, they seemed to be so girt about by God with His strength that they rode upon the whirlwind, and consequently, as a rule, they enjoyed the presence of their Lord, and were full of holy delight in Him.

So I believe it will be with those of us who addict ourselves to our Master’s service with all our might. If you are doing nothing for Christ, you cannot expect to have His presence and blessing, but if you are serving Him with all your heart, not from the low motive that you may win something by it, but entirely out of love to Him, then will He come and manifest Himself to you as He does not unto the world. Some Christians walk so slowly that sin easily overtakes them, while Christ goes far before them, for He always walks a good honest pace, and likes not the sluggard’s crawling, and some professors seldom get beyond that pace, so they see but little of Him whom they call Master. If they were awake—awake to His service—then they would see His glory.

But above all, dear friends, we must be *awake with regard to our Lord Himself*. Oh, that our hearts were fully awake to His love! He says to each believer, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love.” Does our wakeful heart reply, “Yes, Lord, that You have”? Are we awake to remember all that He did by way of love even to the death for us? Are we so awake as to have continually before us His divine and human person—His blessed condescending life—His wondrous atoning death?

Are we wide enough awake to know that He is with us now? Do you not think that we are often like the disciples who saw Jesus standing by the sea, and knew not that it was Jesus? He comes to us in the way of sickness, in the way of bereavement, in the way of heart searching, we do not know that it is Jesus, yet it is. Our eyes are holden because of our sleeping, if we were awake, we would soon perceive His glory.

O blessed Savior, by Thy cross and passion, by Thy glorious resurrection and ascension, arouse all our spirits to perceive that Thou art not far from any one of Thy people, and that Thy word is still true, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

III. I must not keep you much longer, but I want to say that THIS DOCTRINE OF THE NECESSITY OF OUR WAKEFULNESS, IN ORDER THAT WE MAY SEE THE GLORY OF CHRIST, THROWS A LIGHT ON SEVERAL THINGS.

First, *it shows us why some see so little of the glory of Christ.* “Ah!” says one, “I used to see it, I could not get through a sermon without being moved at the thought of my Savior suffering for me, and rising for me, but now I do not seem to get any good out of all the services I attend.” Whose fault is that? It is not His, for He is unchanged. Is it mine? Perhaps so, and yet, since others do see Him, surely the blame cannot be all mine.

Is it not your fault, friend? You are not as wide awake as you used to be. It is a curious thing when a man says, “I do not know how it is that I cannot see as I used to.” Why, he has not got his eyes open! Foolish man, let him rouse himself, and when he is thoroughly awake, then his eyes will be as good as ever, and he will see as much of his Lord's glory as he used to do. Old age has not come upon you yet, my brother, though you sorrowfully sing—

*“Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?”*

Let me alter one line of the hymn, and then you may sing—

*“Where is the wakefulness I knew,
When first I saw the Lord?”*

When you first joined the church, you were all alive, every power of your being was full of zeal and earnestness. Do you recollect how you stood in the aisle, and never seemed to get tired? You wished that the preacher would keep on for another half hour. You remember how you could walk several miles to the service then, and when the minister said, “I think you live too far away to worship with us,” you replied, “Oh, no, sir! The distance is nothing when I get such food for my soul as I find here. I am glad of the walk, it does me good.”

Now you write a little note to say that you live so far off that you cannot often come to the services. It also happens that you live far from every other place of worship too, so you begin to stay away from the house of God, and then you wonder that you feel no power and no delight in your Lord? Of course you do not, for you are sound asleep, when you again awake, you will see Christ's glory.

Oh! for wakeful piety, earnest religion, and plenty of it—no mere sprinkling of grace, but a thorough immersion into the very depths of it! May the Lord, in His mercy, cause you to be filled with all the fullness of God, by the power of His Spirit, till you shall be carried right away into a holy life that shall write over the natural life of your manhood, “I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me.”

Next, does not this fact explain why, *in trials, we often get our sweetest fellowship with Christ?* If I might mark out the happiest periods of my life, I should not choose those in which outward mercies have been multiplied, and success has followed success, but I think that I should especially note those times when abuse followed abuse, when I could hardly say a word without its being misrepresented, and something horrible being made out of things which were as good as good could be—when lies flew about me as bullets whistle round the warrior's ears in the midst of the battle—then it was that I kept close to Christ, and lived on Him alone, and I was among the happiest of the happy.

When the dog barks, then the inmates of the household wake up, and the burglars will not be likely to get in, and sometimes, our troubles are the very best things that can happen to us, because they wake us up, and drive Satan away, and fit us to see Christ's glory. We got into a careless, drowsy condition when we were rich and increased in goods, and then we went to sleep, so our Master came, and pulled the bed from under us, and made us feel the cold, then we woke up, and found that Christ was close beside us, and our heart was glad. Thus, affliction or trial is often a blessed means of grace, because it wakes us up, so that we see Christ's glory.

This fact also explains why *dying saints often declare that they have such blessed sights of Christ*. Is it not because, as they die, they really begin to live? They shake off the dull encumbrance of this house of clay, and they get into a clearer light, and so they truly live. They wake up when they die. All their lifetime, their business engagements or other cares occupied their thoughts, but now they have done with business, and with care, and they begin to awake, for the morning cometh—the blessed, everlasting morning that shall never know an eventide, and they awake, and see the glory of their Lord, and we, who sit by their bedside, are often amazed, we cannot understand what they describe, for we are the sleeping ones, and they are the wakers, waking up to see Christ's glory.

But suppose that I were to take my text for just a minute, and project it a little way into the future. We shall soon fall asleep, brothers and sisters. Some of the older ones among us will certainly do so, others of us very probably will do so, and all of us, unless the Lord shall come first, shall soon fall into that last quiet slumber which we call death.

But what a waking there will be, first of our soul, when we shall see our Lord as He is! What must the first five minutes in heaven be, if there are any minutes where time is swallowed up in eternity! What must be the joy when, for the first time, we enter that land where “they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light”! When we shall see the saints in heaven, I suppose that we shall not say much about them, they will be like Moses and Elias, “the two men that stood with him.”

But oh! When we shall get our first glimpse of Jesus on His throne, what a sight that will be, ravishing beyond all conception! And then, when the next awakening comes, when the trumpet sounds its mighty blast, and these poor limbs arise out of their beds of clay, when we are awake, we shall see His glory. Then shall we be satisfied, when we awake in His likeness, and then shall His prayer be answered, “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory.”

Well, beloved, be content to go to bed when there is such a waking in store for you. Learn to die every day, regard your bed as a tomb, and every time you give yourself up to unconsciousness, and the image of death is upon you, be practicing the art of dying, so that when, for the last time, you must go upstairs, and lie down once again, it may be very, very sweet to feel, “I shall awake in the morning, the everlasting morning, when all these shadows of this night of grief and toil shall eternally have fled away. When I am awake, I shall see His glory.”

The Lord grant to you and to me, dear friends, to know all the bliss of awakening to behold His glory! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

MATTHEW 17:1-5

[Mr. Spurgeon does not appear to have commented on the chapter read before he preached the foregoing Sermon. It has, therefore, been decided to insert his exposition of the parallel passage in Matthew, as he wrote it for *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. This will enable his sermon readers, who do not possess his last literary work, to judge as to the contents of the volume upon which he was at work, just eight years ago, within a few days of receiving the home-call. It is one of the most precious of the many memorials of the “promoted” Pastor.]

Verses 1-2. *And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.*

Were these “six days” a week's quiet interval, in which our Lord prepared Himself for the singular transaction upon the “mountain apart”? Did the little company of three know from one Sabbath to another that such an amazing joy awaited them? The three were elect out of the elect, and favored to see what none else in all the world might behold. Doubtless our Lord had reasons for His choice, as He has

for every choice He makes, but He does not unveil them to us. The same three beheld the agony in the garden, perhaps the first sight was necessary to sustain their faith under the second.

The name of the "high mountain" can never be known, for those who knew the locality have left no information. Tabor, if you please, Hermon, if you prefer it. No one can decide. It was a lone and lofty hill.

While in prayer, the splendor of the Lord shone out. His face, lit up with its own inner glory, became a sun, and all His dress, like clouds irradiated by that sun, became white as the light itself. "He was transfigured before them," He alone was the center of what they saw. It was a marvelous unveiling of the hidden nature of the Lord Jesus. Then was, in one way, fulfilled the word of John, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory."

The transfiguration occurred but once, special views of the glory of Christ are not enjoyed every day. Our highest joy on earth is to see Jesus. There can be no greater bliss in heaven, but we shall be better able to endure the exceeding bliss when we have laid aside the burden of this flesh.

3. *And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.*

Thus the law and the prophets, "Moses and Elias," communed with our Lord, "talking with him," and entering into familiar conversation with their Lord. Saints long departed still live, live in their personality, are known by their names, and enjoy near access to Christ. It is a great joy to holy ones to be with Jesus, they find it heaven to be where they can talk with Him. The heads of former dispensations conversed with the Lord as to His decease, by which a new economy would be ushered in.

After condescending so long to His ignorant followers, it must have been a great relief to the human soul of Jesus to talk with two masterminds like those of Moses and Elijah. What a sight for the apostles, this glorious trio! They "appeared unto them," but they "talked with him," the objective of the two holy ones was not to converse with apostles, but with their Master. Although saints are seen of men, their fellowship is with Jesus

4. *Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.*

The sight spoke to the three beholders, and they felt bound to answer to it. Peter must speak, "Then answered Peter." That which is uppermost comes out, "Lord, it is good for us to be here." Everybody was of his opinion. Who would not have been? Because it was so good, he would fain stay in this beatific state, and get still more good from it.

But he has not lost his reverence, and therefore he would have the great ones sheltered suitably. He submits the proposal to Jesus, "If thou wilt." He offers that, with his brethren, he will plan and build shrines for the three holy ones, "Let us make here three tabernacles." He does not propose to build for himself, and James, and John, but he says, "One for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias."

His talk sounds rather like that of a bewildered child. He wanders a little, yet his expression is a most natural one. Who would not wish to abide in such society as this? Moses, and Elias, and Jesus, what company! But yet how unpractical is Peter! How selfish the one thought, "It is good for us"! What was to be done for the rest of the twelve, and for the other disciples, and for the wide, wide world? A sip of such bliss might be good for the three, but to continue to drink thereof might not have been really good even for them. Peter knew not what he said. The like might be said of many another excited utterance of enthusiastic saints.

5. *While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.*

"While he yet spake." Such wild talk might well be interrupted. What a blessed interruption! We may often thank the Lord for stopping our babbling. "A bright cloud overshadowed them." It was bright, and cast a shadow. They felt that they were entering it, and feared as they did so. It was a singular experience, yet we have had it repeated in our own cases. Do we not know what it is to get shadow out of brightness, and "a voice out of the cloud"? This is after the frequent manner of the Lord in dealing with His favored ones.

The voice was clear and distinct. First came the divine attestation of the Sonship of our Lord, "This is my beloved Son," and the Father's declaration of delight in Him, "in whom I am well pleased." What happiness for us that JEHOVAH is well pleased in Christ, and with all who are in Him! Then followed the consequent divine requirement, "Hear ye him." It is better to hear the Son of God than to see saints, or to build tabernacles. This will please the Father more than all else that love can suggest.

The good pleasure of the Father in the Lord Jesus is a conspicuous part of His glory. The voice conveyed to the ear a greater glory than the luster of light could communicate through the eye. The audible part of the transfiguration was as wonderful as the visible.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—421, 292, 425

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.