

CHRIST'S SYMPATHY WITH HIS PEOPLE

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“For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted.”
Hebrews 2:18

THAT which is the most simple lesson the Gospel has to teach, is often the most difficult lesson for the Christian to learn. That simple lesson is that we must not look to ourselves for anything good, but that we must look to the Lord alone for all our righteousness.

The lesson is short, as well as simple, it is easy to repeat, but as often as our faith is severely tried, we find how apt we are to forget that which is the very Alpha of the Gospel, its rudiments—that man, in himself, is wholly lost, and that all his hope of help and salvation must rest on Christ—that, apart from God, there is nothing upon which faith can fasten itself—and that without the atoning sacrifice and justifying righteousness of Christ, the quickening and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, and the everlasting love of the Father, there is neither joy, nor peace, nor comfort, nor hope to be found anywhere.

This seems to be a very easy lesson, yet even aged believers, when their hair is getting grey and they are about to enter the land of perfect peace and rest, still find the temptation to unbelief too much for them, and they begin to look for something good in the creature, and to seek for happiness in themselves, instead of seeking all good in God.

I want to try to teach you this lesson again, and to also learn it myself, for I need to learn it as much as you do—the lesson of looking away from our temptations, and from our own weakness and inability to repel those temptations, to Him who, having Himself suffered in being tempted, “is able to succor them that are tempted.” Let us fix our eye upon our great High Priest, and leave Satan and all his insinuations, his blasphemies and his temptations, out of the question. Or rather, let us bring them to Christ, and see them all finished in Him. I am going to address three separate characters that are represented here—first, *the confirmed believer*, secondly, *the young beginner*, and thirdly, *the backslider*, and then, summoning the attention of *the whole company here assembled*, I shall try to commend the comfort and instruction of the text to you all.

I. First, let me speak TO ADVANCED CHRISTIANS.

You all have your trials, and those trials are of an advanced character. The troubles, with which the plants of God's right-hand planting are assailed, when they are saplings, are quite inconsiderable compared with those which come upon them when they are like cedars firmly rooted. As surely as our strength increases, so will our sufferings, our trials, our labors, or our temptations. God's power is never given to a man to be stored up unused. The heavenly food, that is sent to strengthen us, like the manna given to the Israelites in the wilderness, is intended for immediate use.

If the Lord sends you much, you shall have nothing beyond what you can use for Him, though, blessed be His holy name, if you have but little, you shall have no lack. When the Lord puts upon our feet the shoes of iron and brass, which He has promised us in His ancient covenant, He intends that we should wear them, and walk in them—not that we should put them into our museum, and gaze upon them as curiosities.

If He gives us a strong hand, it is because we have a strong foe to fight with. If He gives us a great meal—like that which He gave to Elijah—it is in order that, in the strength of that meal, we may go for forty days, or even longer.

Perhaps, my brother or sister, you are just now in great trouble. You have grown in grace, and your troubles have also grown. You feel that you want someone to whom you can tell your trouble—your trouble very likely arises from the absence of your Lord.

Let me remind you that, in this respect, you are very like the Israelites in the wilderness, when Moses had been absent from them for forty days. They said, “What shall we do? Our leader is gone, he, who was king in Jeshurun, has departed from us, and we are left like sheep without a shepherd.” So they went—I dare not say that they went for counsel, but they went—to the high priest, and you remember what they said, and what he did.

Alas! He gave them no good counsel, for he was as unwise as they were, and as untried, he had always had Moses by his side ever since the day that the Lord had said, “Is not Aaron the Levite your brother?...He shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God.” Aaron had never been left without his great leader, so, in his absence, he miserably failed, and led the people in the making and worshipping of the golden calf.

How different it will be with you, who mourn the loss of the light of your Lord's countenance, if you go to our Great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ! He knows the meaning of your present trial, for He had once to cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” You tell Him that your “soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death,” and He tells you that it was so with Him also, on that night in which He was betrayed, when, “being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” No untried priest is He, He can sympathize, and He can succor.

Take another case, that of Hannah, the “woman of a sorrowful spirit.” She was in a peculiarly trying position. Her husband's other wife had children, but she had none, though she was greatly beloved of her husband, her adversary vexed her sorely to make her fret. Day by day, this was thrown in her teeth, that because of some sin, God had not granted her the desire of her heart. A trial in one's own house is one of the saddest places where it can come, the saddest, perhaps, with the exception of a thorn in the flesh which comes still closer home.

So poor Hannah, having that trial at home, thought she would go up to the sanctuary in Shiloh. There, she “prayed unto the LORD, and wept sorely, and she vowed a vow.” But “she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard.” So Eli, the high priest, thought that she was drunk, and instead of comforting and consoling her, he spoke harshly to her, depressed and broken as her spirit was.

You, my brethren, and you, my sisters too, may have some trouble which you dare not tell to another, though it is sorely vexing you, and threatens even to break your heart. But when you go to the great High Priest, He will understand all about you, He will not need you to explain your sorrow to Him, for He knows exactly what it is, and He will apply the healing balm to your sorrowful spirit, and send you on your way full of peace and comfort.

I offer, then, to you who are advanced believers, this very comforting reflection—in *Christ's sufferings, you are quite certain to find something akin to your own*, and in Christ's heart, you are quite sure to find a deep well of divine sympathy, so you need not hesitate to go to Him, or doubt that His loving heart will overflow with sympathy towards you, whatever your trial may be.

But more than that, while I would console you by reminding you that Christ has suffered even as you have, I would also comfort you with the reflection that *this very day, He still suffers with you*. Suppose now, that a man could be so high in stature that his head could be in heaven while his feet were on earth, yet whenever his feet suffered, his head would suffer too. In the Canticles, the spouse says of her Heavenly Bridegroom, “His head is as the most fine gold...his legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold.” As John saw Him, “in the isle that is called Patmos,” “His eyes were as a flame of

fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace." This suggests to me a parable, the feet of Christ, which form His church on earth, still glow "as if they burned in a furnace." The glorious Head of the church, up in heaven, "is as the most fine gold," but there is not the least glow of heat, in the feet on earth, which is not felt by the Head in heaven. There is not a pang that rends your heart which Jesus does not feel. There is not a sorrow that cuts deeply into your soul, which does not also cut into His, so you can still sing—

*“He feels at His heart all our sighs and our groans
For we are most near Him, His flesh and His bones;
In all our distresses our Head feels the pain,
They all are most necessary, not one is in vain.”*

Does it not comfort you to know that Christ can sympathize with you, and that He must sympathize with you—*can*, because He has suffered; *must*, because He suffers still?

I may also add, for your comfort, that *all this*—Christ's suffering as you do, and His suffering with you—*must tend to shield you in your trials*. A country minister, preaching upon the text, "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there?" made the remark that Christ is a good Physician. "Ah!" said he, "Christ is not like those doctors, who come and say they are sorry for you, whereas, in their hearts, they are glad you are ill, for if you and others were not ill, there would be no work for them. Or else," said the preacher, "they look down upon you, and pity you, but not half as much as if they themselves had your complaint, and felt all the pains that you are feeling."

"But suppose," he added, "that the doctor had all your pains himself—suppose you had the headache, and that he looked down on you, and had your headache—suppose, when you had palpitation of the heart, he had palpitation of the heart too—why, he would be very quick to cure you, certainly, he would not let you lie there a moment longer than was necessary, because he himself would be suffering with you."

Now, there is just one objection that may be made to the countryman's argument—that is, that the physician might be willing to raise the patient up at once, because he was himself suffering with him, yet he might say, "Here are two of us in the same plight, but my skill fails me here. If I could deliver you, you can well imagine that I would gladly do so, for in so doing, I should deliver myself as well, but alas! it is beyond my power, I cannot lighten your burden, or my own, we can only sit down together, and mingle our tears, but we cannot assist one another."

But it is not so with the good Physician, for He has both the will and the power to heal us. One motion of that eternal arm, and every cloud, that is wrapped about the sky, shall be folded up, like a worn out vesture, and cast away. Jesus speaks, and the boisterous billows cease their raging, and the wild winds are hushed to sleep. "Let there be light," He says, and over the thick darkness of our affliction and adversity, comes the bright gleam of joy and prosperity. He did but lift up His voice, and "kings of armies did flee apace."

O Jesus, our Lord, when You come forth for the deliverance of Your people, who can stand before You? As the wax melts before the fire, and as the fat of rams is consumed upon Your altar, so do our trials and troubles melt and vanish away when You come forth for the deliverance of Your people!

Remember, believers that you not only have the love of Christ's heart, but you also have the strength of Christ's arm at your disposal. He rules over all things, in heaven, and earth, and hell, so rest in Him, for He still bears the scars of His wounds to show that He has suffered even as you do. Still does He prove Himself to be man, seeing that He suffers with you, yet is He also "very God of very God," into whose hand all power in heaven and earth is committed. He can, He must, He will, deliver His people, and bring them out of all their trials into His eternal kingdom and glory.

II. Secondly, I am going to speak TO ANXIOUS INQUIRERS AND YOUNG BEGINNERS.

I hear a plaintive voice over yonder, saying to me, "I know, sir, that the precious blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin, and I know that the moment I believe in Him, I have nothing to fear concerning the past, for that sin is blotted out, once for all, but my fear is that if I commence a Christian life, it will not last long. I am afraid I shall be like Pliable, and turn back at the Slough of Despond, or if my neighbors jeer at me, I fear that I shall be ashamed to go forward in spite of their opposition. Even if I get over that, I feel that I cannot trust my own evil heart, which is so apt to deceive me. If old temptations should be overcome, new ones will be sure to arise, and I cannot help fearing as to what will become of me. I have seen some, who made a fair show in the flesh, turn back, and go straight to perdition, and I tremble lest it should be so with me also."

"How can I hope to withstand the imperious lusts which were too strong for me when first they allured my simple heart? How much more shall they be too mighty for me now that sin has gathered the force of habit and practice, like an iron net, has enfolded me in its cruel grip! When I was a youth, I could not stand against this great enemy of my soul, how then, shall I be a match for him now that I have grown old and feeble? The old Adam will be too strong for the young Melancthon."

Well, dear friends, I have seen some persons who have been truly converted to God, who have been greatly troubled with this fear. Indeed in some instances, I have even known of poor men kneeling down, and praying that God would let them die, there and then, sooner than that they should live to prove that their feelings were only a delusion, and that their supposed repentance was merely a passing excitement.

Some of us can fully sympathize with those who pray such a prayer as that, for we have often felt that the most terrible death would be preferable to the disgrace of bringing dishonor upon the name of Jesus by turning back to the City of Destruction after we had once started for the Celestial City. But my dear friend, if the Lord has begun a good work in your soul, and led you to trust in Jesus as your Savior, my text will just meet that fear of yours, for the apostle here says that Christ "is able to succor them that are tempted."

You will be tempted—I will not delude you with the notion that you will not—and you cannot, by yourself, stand up against that temptation, but Christ, "in that he himself has suffered being tempted, is able to succor them that are tempted." This truth we set before you as a shield against all these dark, mysterious thoughts—Christ can, and He will, if you trust in Him, protect you from the sin and the temptation which you rightly dread.

"But how is this to be done?" asks someone. Well, first of all, *Christ can do it by the force of His own example*. He can show you—as He has done in His Word, but He can also show you by His Spirit opening up that Word, how He was once subject to just the same temptation that now assails you.

Are you poor, and are you tempted to use wrong means to get rich? Christ can tell you how, in the wilderness, "when he had fasted forty days, and forty nights, he was afterwards an hungered," and Satan came to Him, and said, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread."

Are you a man in a high position, and are you tempted to do some daring and reckless deed? Christ can remind you how, when He was on a pinnacle of the temple, Satan said to Him, "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down." Or do you seem, just now, to have great power within your reach if you will but stain your hand to grasp it? Christ can tell you how Satan showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and said to Him, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me."

Then He will remind you how He passed through all these ordeals without sin, for the prince of this world could find nothing in Him to respond to his temptations. He was tried and tested again and again, but no trace of alloy could be discovered even by the devil himself. Though He was often shot at by His great adversary, He was never wounded by the fiery shafts, so, inspired by His glorious example, you may say—

***"Through floods and flames, if Jesus lead
I'll follow where He goes."***

You not only have Christ's example to keep you from sin, but you also have *His presence*. Do you know what this means? Let me give you an example of it.

There was a certain merchant, who had been, again and again, tempted to an act of sin. It was the usual custom in his trade, everybody else did it, but he knew that it was wrong, and his soul revolted against it. As he sat in his counting house, he saw pictured before his mind's eye, his wife homeless, and his children crying for bread, and the demon whispered to him, "Do it, do it." Then another picture flitted before his eyes—he and his wife and children were rich, their home was filled with good things, and again the adversary said, "Do it, do it."

He saw the advantages that were to be gained by doing it, but he went home and pondered the whole matter. His soul was heavy, and a stern struggle was proceeding within him. Then he went to his chamber, and shut himself in alone, and falling upon his knees, told out all his difficulty and temptations to his Father in heaven.

Then, suddenly, not before his eyes, but to Faith's inner eye, there appeared a vision of the crucified Christ, who showed him His pierced hands, and feet, and side, and then said to him, "He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. Thou hast not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." The merchant, fixing his tearful eyes upon his Savior, remembered Paul's words, "Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds," he came down from his bedroom, his soul was glad, for his mind was made up, and he said to himself, "I will not do it, I can be poor, but I cannot sin."

Others marked the man, and wondered at the change in his appearance. He walked erect, no longer like one bowed down beneath a heavy burden. Many men marveled at him, and asked what had happened to him, but none could tell. The secret was that the crucified Christ had appeared to him, and had given him the support of His divine presence. That was sufficient to succor him in the time of temptation, for Christ, having Himself suffered being tempted, was able to succor His faithful follower when he also was tempted.

I know that I am addressing someone, who says—I will use, as far as possible, his own words—"Look here, sir, I have always been in the habit of being a jolly fellow, meeting with a number of boon companions to drink, and chat, and sing, and so on. I do not know that we did very much amiss, but still, I could not do it again if I became a Christian. Suppose now, that I should be invited to join the same company tomorrow—I am not sure what I might do, I might refuse their invitation—but if I were asked again and again, and they jeered at me for refusing, I might give in. Suppose that I did not yield, there is another difficulty. I have been a man of such and such a character, and have formed such and such habits, now how in the world am I to overcome those habits? How am I to become a Christian, and to continue so to the end?"

These are very proper questions, and I answer—You are utterly helpless, apart from Him who is able to succor them that are tempted, but if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, He will give you a new nature. That new nature, it is true, will not at once cast out the old nature, your old nature will still be there, but the new nature will struggle against it, and ultimately, through the effectual working of the Holy Spirit, the new nature will prevail over the old nature, and you will be "a new creature in Christ Jesus," old things will have passed away, and all things will have become new. You will say, as a young convert did, when he came to join the church, "I don't know which it is, but either everything else is changed, or else I am." It was in himself, of course, that the great change had been wrought, but that changed the aspect of everything else.

Let me give you a little parable to illustrate this point. A lion and a tiger used frequently to roam the forests together, in search of prey that might satisfy their bloodthirsty appetites. But one day, an angel came, touched the lion, and changed him into a lamb. The next day, the tiger came, and wanted the lion to go with him to his feast of blood. Do you think it was difficult for him to refuse the invitation? Oh, no! "I have no inclination to go," said he. The tiger laughed scornfully, and said, "Aha! you have become pious, have you? Now you will go to the sheepfolds, and sneak behind the shepherds' heels—"

you that were once so brave!" And the tiger despised him, and said, "You are miserable to be thus tied up like a dog, and not to dare to come and do as we have always done." "Nay," said the lion, "it is not that I dare not go with you, but I have no wish to go. I am not miserable because I cannot go with you on such an errand—I should be miserable if I did go. The fact is I cannot now do what I once did, for I am not what I once was. My new nature has brought me new loves, new hatreds, new preferences, new pursuits, so I cannot go with you on your bloodthirsty expedition."

If God has wrought a similar change in you, and transformed the lion into a lamb, and the raven into a dove, it will not be difficult for you to be kept from sin, for you will hate sin with a perfect hatred, and have no fellowship with it, and besides that, as your nature will be renewed, day by day, by the Holy Spirit, with a constant infusion of everything that is good, and gracious, and Godlike, do you not see that sin shall no longer be like a strong spear to pierce you, but as a fragile reed which shall snap against the armor of proof which your soul shall wear?

Let me remind you, who are thinking of going upon pilgrimage, but are afraid of the lions and the dragons in the way, that He, under whose banner you hope to enlist, never allowed one soldier, who was in His service, to perish. If you become a sheep under the care of the good Shepherd, remember that—

*“His honor is engaged to save
The meanest of His sheep.”*

If you are a mariner, bound for the Fair Havens of eternal felicity, recollect that the Lord High Admiral of the seas of providence and grace has safely convoyed into port every vessel that has yet been committed to His charge, not one has ever been wrecked or lost in any way. Trust yourself to His protection and guidance, and He will bring you also safely in.

What if your temper be naturally furious? What if your evil propensities have been indulged until they have become as giants holding you in cruel captivity? What if your passions boil, and burn, and blaze, like Vesuvius in eruption? What if your temptations should come upon you as the Philistines came upon Samson? He, to whom you commit the keeping of your soul, shall make you master over all, and you shall yet be, with the great multitude that no man can number, more than conqueror through Him who hath loved you.

Oh, that the Holy Spirit would constrain many of you, straightway, to leave your old master, and to enter the service of the Savior! You will never find a better master than the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Ah!” said a sailor, seventy years of age, who had heard a sermon that had deeply affected him, and I trust, had been the means of renewing his nature, “I am going to haul down my old flag today. I have sailed under the colors of the Black Prince all these years, but they are coming down today, and I am going to run up the blood-red cross in their place, and I hope to sail under that flag until I die.”

So may it be with many of you! Say, “O Satan, we have served you far too long! Miserable is your service, despicable are your ways, degrading is our position, and awful must be our end if we remain in your power.” Then turn to the Lord, and appeal to Him. Say, “O God, help us! We cry to You. Bring us, we pray You, from under the tyrant’s sway. Help us to yield ourselves up to You this very hour. Take our hearts, black as they are, and wash them in the precious blood of Jesus Christ, Your well-beloved Son. Change the hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. Make us to be Your servants while we live, and to enter into Your rest and Your glory when we die.”

I have thus, I hope, spoken somewhat to the comfort of young beginners and anxious inquirers.

III. Now, in the third place, I am going to speak briefly TO BACKSLIDERS.

Where are you, backslider? I cannot pick you out, but there is an eye that sees you, and that weeps over you. Ten years ago, you used to sit down at the communion table, twenty years ago, you were a reputable member of the church, but you fell, and oh, what a fall was yours! Since that time, you have not wholly forsaken the house of God, though you have wandered hither and thither, but you have never dared to call yourself a Christian again. You lost the light of God’s countenance long ago, and you find

the service of Satan very hard, yet you think you must go downward to despair. You feel that you are in the iron cage of which Bunyan wrote, and you fear that you will never get out of it. Poor backslider, I cannot mention your name without a tear, and if I, a fellow creature, thus weep over you, much more does that compassionate Savior, who suffered being tempted, and who is able to succor them that are tempted.

Hark! If you will but incline your ear, you may hear a note that will cheer your heart, and yet break it too! 'Tis God who speaks, and He is having a controversy with Himself over you. Justice says, "Destroy him," but Mercy says, "Spare him." The very Gospel, which you have despised, witnesses against you, but at the same time, pleads for you. The Lord still says to backsliders, as He did to His ancient people when they wandered from Him, "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD, for I am married unto you." "Married unto you!" This marriage bond cannot be broken, you have played the harlot, and gone after many lovers, but your first Husband hates putting away, and even now invites you to return to Him. So—

***"To your Father's bosom pressed,
Once again a child confessed;
From His house no more to roam,
Come, O poor backslider, come!"***

I may even be addressing some, who once drank from the cup of communion, but who have turned aside to drink the cup of devils. I may be speaking to some, to whom, for years, the Sabbath has been a day for business instead of a day for worship. Yet you could never get the sound of the Sabbath bell out of your ears, and even now, you cannot forget the profession you once made, or the joys you once knew, and you cannot be easy in your sins. There is a spark of heavenly fire that still lingers within you, and it will not die out, even though you seek to quench it that it may not hinder you from going after your lusts.

That is God's grip still upon you, oh that I might be His ambassador of peace, to fling wide the doors of His mercy to you! Poor prodigal, you are clad in rags, the sty is your only sleeping place, and the swine your only companions, you would fain fill your belly with the husks that they eat, but you must not, for you are a God-made man, and swine's food can never satisfy you. As you stand here, perhaps there is a tear trickling down your cheek because of the many years that you have spent in sin, and you are saying, "I would arise, and go to my Father, but I fear that He has forgotten me."

Oh, say not that! But do as the prodigal did, arise, and come to your Father, for He will give you such a reception as the prodigal received. You shall have the kiss of forgiveness upon your brow, the best robe of your Savior's perfect righteousness shall be cast all around you, the ring of everlasting love shall be placed upon your finger, the shoes of peace shall be fitted to your feet, you shall eat the fat things of the promises of God, there shall be music in your ears, music in your house, music on earth, and music in heaven itself, because he that was dead is alive again, he that was lost is found.

This should be your consolation, "In that he himself has suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." Did I hear you say, "But I cannot see how Christ was ever in the same position that I am in, for He was never a backslider"? That is quite true, but what are your trials? First, you are tried by the burden of sin that is resting upon you, and Christ had the sins of all His people resting upon Him, so He knows what that burden means.

Next, you are tried by the loss of the light of God's countenance, so was He, for He cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Then, you say that you have lost all your friends, so had He, for in His time of trial, "they all forsook him, and fled." You say also, that you are despised, that you are the subject of the song of the drunkard and the mirth of the mocker, so was He, for He could truly say, "Reproach hath broken mine heart." So Christ can sympathize—not with your sin, for He never had any of His own—but with your sorrow, which is the consequence of sin, for He had to bear all that before you did.

IV. Now I have to close by speaking TO THE WHOLE ASSEMBLY.

I think I might liken you, on a large scale, to that little band of pilgrims—Christiana, and Mercy, and Matthew, and James, and the rest of them who started from the City of Destruction—who, when they came to the Interpreter's House, were put under the escort of Mr. Greatheart. I am not Mr. Greatheart—I am but one of the children—but our great Savior is Mr. Greatheart, and He is going with us all the way to the Celestial City.

We are but like those boys and girls, and we are afraid of what we may meet on the road. There are lions in the way, but Mr. Greatheart can kill them, or restrain them from hurting us. There is Apollyon in the valley, but our Greatheart is more than a match for the arch-fiend. We shall have to go through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, yet each one of us shall be able to say, "I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." We shall have to go through the Enchanted Ground, but as Christ will be with us, we shall not fall asleep there to our grievous hurt. We shall have to go through Vanity Fair, and to bear the jeer and the jibe of the mocking mob, but we can bear all that, for we shall have our great Captain with us.

But—and here comes the dark thought to some—we shall at last come to the dark river without a bridge. Mr. Greatheart—whom Bunyan meant to be the minister, had to go through the stream with the rest, but when we come to the river, our Mr. Greatheart, Christ Himself—will go through the river with each one of us. He will put His almighty arm around us, and when we get where our feet cannot feel the bottom, He will say to each one of us, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." To die with Jesus is better even than living with Him except that higher style of living with Him beyond the river of death, for—

*"Jesus can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are,
While on His breast I lean my head,
And breathe my life out sweetly there."*

In this sense, our text shines like a cluster of stars. Jesus died, Jesus rose again; in that He died, He can sympathize; in that He rose again, He can succor. Lay hold of this text whenever you think of death with any gloomy cast in your mind, and let us go on our way, each one singing—

*"Since Jesus is mine, I'll not fear undressing,
But gladly put off this garment of clay;
To die in the Lord is a covenant blessing,
Since Jesus to glory through death led the way."*

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

2 CORINTHIANS 6:1-18

Verse 1. *We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.*

God's servants are called to take many different positions. They are ambassadors under one aspect, they are workers under another. As ambassadors, they are ambassadors for Christ, as workers, they are workers together with God. Oh, how much it costs to win a soul! I mean, not only how much it cost the Savior, so that He broke His very heart over it, and poured out His life's blood—but also how much it must cost the messenger of peace! He must know how to beseech and implore, and when even this fails, he must still go on toiling, laboring, as a worker together with God.

2. *(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation).*

I trust that, if I am addressing any who say that it is too late for them to be saved, and that their sin is too great to be forgiven, this text will drive away that unholy and unwarranted fear, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

Then the apostle goes on to speak of himself, and the rest of the apostles and other preachers of the Word—

3-4. *Giving no offense in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed: but in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God,—*

As those early servants of the Lord really did.

4-10. *In much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known, as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.*

All these things Paul and his brethren were to be and to do in order to win souls for Christ; just as the hunters in the cold North seek after furs, and try all sorts of plans to catch the wild creatures on which they grow. They will trap them, or snare them, or shoot them, but somehow or other, they will get them. They will be on the alert all day, and all night too. They will learn the habits of every creature they have to deal with, but they will get the furs somehow. And so must the true minister of Christ be willing to be anything, to do anything, to suffer anything, to bear reproach and shame, to be nothing, or to be all things to all men, if by any means he may save some.

11-12. *O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels.*

If they were not saved, it was not because Paul did not open his mouth to speak to them, and to warn and invite them, nor because he did not open his heart, and feel, in his very bowels, the movements of a sacred compassion for them.

Now, having thus spent himself in his endeavor to bring them to Christ, he writes to those whom he did bring—

13. *Now for a recompense in the same,—*

There must be some wages for this blessed work. The apostle wisely puts it on that footing, as if, surely, they were indebted to him, but the payment that he seeks is, of course, no personal gain to him, he only puts it in that form, but it is a gain to them.

13. *(I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged.*

"There has been so much earnest labor to secure your conversion, so be you also in earnest to bring in others. Get large thoughts of God, be fully consecrated to Him, spend and be spent for Him. Follow a good example." Paul could well urge them to that consecration when he had given himself so completely to the work of winning souls, "Be ye also enlarged."

14. *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers:*

Not in any way—neither in marriage, which is the chief of all forms for yoking, nor yet in business or other partnerships.

14. *For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?*

You must be in the same world with them, but keep yourself distinct from them. Go not into their society by your own choice, nor seek your pleasure with them.

15-18. *And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the*

unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

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.