

COULD HE NOT? AH! BUT HE WOULD NOT

NO. 3420

A SERMON
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“And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?”
John 11:37

HERE was very good reasoning. Jesus Christ had opened the eyes of the blind, could He not, therefore, have healed Lazarus of the disease which proved fatal? Of course, He could. He who can avert one evil can avert another. It could have been no more difficult for Christ to have turned aside the fever, or whatever it may have been, which afflicted Lazarus, than to have opened the eyes of a man who was born blind. The first was impossible, but that achieved, no difficulties remained.

“Impossible” is a word which does not fall into language when you have to deal with Christ, and therefore, when He has once proved, by a miracle, that He is truly the Christ, then it is clear that, ever afterwards, nothing is difficult or impossible to Him.

The same truth, in another shape, holds good, namely, that when Christ has conferred one blessing, He can also confer another. He is not as we are, who, with one gift, have exhausted our stock, and who can only bestow good wishes afterwards, because we have no more means. But Jesus Christ is just as full of power as if He had never exerted that power, and after a thousand miracles, He is just as willing and as able to bestow further favors. One evil averted is a good argument that another can be, one good received is a good argument that another may be received from the self-same divine hand.

Stop a minute, therefore, and encourage your hearts with such reasoning as this. “The Lord, that delivered thee out of six troubles, can He not also deliver thee out of the seventh? The Lord, who hath been with thee these forty years in the wilderness, shall He leave thee in this forty-fifth or fiftieth year? He that hath brought thee thus far, and bestowed upon thee early tokens of His faithfulness, is it a hard thing for thee to believe that He will continue to do the same? Thou hast been preserved out of dangers, why not out of the next? Thou hast been provided in necessities, why not be provided for again? Thou hast been raised up when most cast down, why not raised up again? Thou hast found a way out of the very depths, when the pains of hell got hold upon thee, and the snares of the devil did surround thee, why can there not be a way found for the rescue again?”

The Lord, that hath done, can do, and is doing. That He has done so in the past, is a guarantee that He will do so in the present, and in the future. He has already made an investment—if I may so speak—of His love, and of His grace, and of His faithfulness upon thee, and He will not lose what He has already spent, but He will carry on the good work to perfection, till He shall bring thee to Himself in everlasting glory.

Comfort thyself, then, Christian, with this blessed remembrance of thy past experience, and be thou assured that this man, who opened thine eyes when thou wast blind, can keep thy life from spiritual death, yea, and wert thou dead, yet shouldest thou live by His strength, for He is able to do exceeding abundantly above what thou dost ask, or even think.

The like encouragement may be suggested to any here who are anxious about their souls. The salvation of anyone ought to be an encouragement to any other. If God had saved one sinner, why not another? If the precious blood of Jesus hath made one drunkard clean, why not another? And if, amongst the white robed hosts, there be some who had defiled their garments with the foulest stains, why should

not I yet be there by the self-same blood washing and the self-same mercy of my gracious God? He that opened the eyes of one blind man can open the eyes of all blind men, if so it pleaseth Him, and He that gives to one perfect pardon and acceptance, can give to another the like, wheresoever He chooses to bestow them.

Let no man despair. There are examples of great sinners saved on purpose to encourage others to trust in Christ. I care not how aggravated your iniquities may have been, I am quite sure they have been already paralleled in some other cases—in some other cases, too, where salvation has ultimately come.

Thou art not beyond the divine range. Thou hast not sinned thyself yet into hell. Mercy yet can reach thee, the blood can yet cleanse thee, the divine bosom can yet receive thee, and even the heaven of God can yet find room for thee, though thou be the chief of sinners. This is good argument, we say—this which was used by Jesus. What has been done can be done. If Christ doth one form of good, He can do another. If He openeth the eyes of the blind man, He can cause that the sick shall not die.

But now, after that encouragement, there comes up a great difficulty. It is certain that, if Christ had willed it, Lazarus need not have died, then Mary need not have sat still in the house weeping, then Martha need not have said, with sorrow and with broken heart, “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” There was no need that Lazarus should suffer all that pain, and all that languishing, and pass through the gates of the grave—no absolute need for it. Christ could, if He had chosen, have prevented that man from dying, and what is more, if Christ willed it, He could prevent all your troubles, and all mine.

If He chose, none of His people need ever have so much as a headache, or a pin’s prick of the finger, they need not one of them ever be poor, or have any losses or any crosses. They need none of them ever be tempted, for He could chain up the devil. They need none of them die, for He could take them up to heaven, like Elijah, or translate them, like Enoch.

It stands proof positive, if He could open the eyes of the blind, He could, if He would, prevent any of His people from sickness and from death, and from all other ills else, He could prevent and save them. It were possible for Christ, if so He willed it, to avert all our sufferings, and all our losses from us. *Then why does He not do it?* “Behold how he loved him!” said the Jews, and yet the next thing they said was, “Well, but if he opened the eyes of the blind, could he not, if he had willed it, have prevented this man dying? Yet he did not do it; but Lazarus died.”

Now, I am quite sure, brethren, if you had a dear one at home that was sick, and I came in to see you, and I could with a word raise your sick friend, I dare not go out of your room without doing it. You would feel very grieved with me if I did. You would think it very unkind, and moreover, I could not find it in my heart not to do it, I am sure. Speak a word? Why, I would speak any number of words, if I could raise your sick ones from being sick and keep them from dying. You would, think me very unkind if I did not, and so these Jews could not comprehend it.

They said of Christ that He burst into tears at the thought of Lazarus being dead, they said, as they saw Him in that genuine burst of sacred passion, “Behold, how he loved him!” and they could not comprehend it, that, with a power which could open the eyes of the blind, and which must be sufficient to prevent the death of Lazarus, yet He did not prevent it, but the loving Christ suffered His friend Lazarus to sleep till he was laid four days in the grave, and his body began to stink with corruption.

Brethren, we are now about to look the question in the face, and what shall we say about it? The first thing we shall say about it is this, that—

I. IT IS NOT ALWAYS RIGHT FOR US TO MAKE INQUIRIES AS TO THE LOVE AND THE WISDOM OF OUR LORD.

It may seem a very strange thing to us that He does not prevent the afflictions which are so grievous, and that He does not give us some of those mercies which we think would make us so comfortable, but we have no right to ask questions. A servant must not be always asking his master, “Why dost thou do this? or why dost thou do that?” and the scholar is not expected to understand all the doings of the professor at whose feet he sits.

A master builder would soon discharge the carpenter on the work who should always be saying, "Why should that piece of timber be of that shape, or why must those stones be placed in such a position?" The architect is supposed to know the plan, not the Irish laborer the plan. It is enough for the architect to know, without every small body on the work understanding everything that is to be done. We are not, therefore, to be always asking questions.

There is another spirit that ought to rule us, rather than the spirit of captious criticism. A man goes and takes stones, and he puts some of them into the earth, deep down, some of them he places higher up, one upon another, some he daubs with mortar, some he places where they cannot be seen, and some he polishes, and puts them into the corners. Are the stones to say to the builder, "Why dost thou place me here? or why dost thou place me there?"

The potter takes his lumps of clay, and puts them on his knees, and one vessel is made to dishonor, and another is made a graceful form to honor, but shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, "Why hast thou made me thus?" It is not for the thing that is created to begin to question its Creator, for then the Creator might well reply, "Who art thou and where wert thou when I made the heaven and the earth? when I balanced the clouds, and laid the foundations of the earth? Declare now, if thou canst answer me!"

That wonderful sermon from the mouth of God Himself at the close of the book of Job rolls like crashes of thunder over our heads, and makes us cower down, conscious of our insignificance, and when we dare to lift up our heads once more, we find upon our lips words like those which came from the mouth of Job, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of ear, but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." For you and for me to think to understand God is as though some tiny insect, whose whole life was comprehended in an hour, should expect to understand the marches of the heavens, and to comprehend the revolutions of the spheres.

The child by your side, taking up a shellful of water, has no idea of what the sea is, and you, when you look at God's ways, see no more of God's ways than that little shellful, as it were, compared with the sea. Stand still and see that He is God. Let Him be exalted in the earth, yea, let Him be exalted in the heavens. He giveth no account of His matters. He doeth as He wills in the armies of heaven and amongst the inhabitants of this lower earth.

Ah! Lord, it is better for us to lie passive in thy hands than to be attempting to sit upon thy throne, holding the balance and judging thy work! What if He does not make me rich, but lets me pine in poverty, what if He does not heal me, but suffer me to linger out a life of sorrow? what if He does not bless my undertaking, but He permits heavy trials to overcome me? I will not ask Him why. "I was dumb with silence; I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it," that is the spirit in which we may look at this question.

One thing more I want you to remember, and that is this—

II. THAT WHATEVER GOD MAY DO OR MAY NOT DO WITH US, IT IS ALWAYS THE CHRISTIAN'S WISDOM TO STAND TO THIS, THAT CHRIST IS ALWAYS LOVE.

The Jews said, "Behold how he loved him!" They could see that by His tears, though He let him die. Now, there were good reasons, though the Jews might not see the reasons, and brethren, there are good reasons why God withholds that right hand of His which is so full of bounty, and why at other times He does stretch it out, and good reasons why He lifts that left hand of His which is so heavy to smite, and brings it down upon you, the chosen child of His heart.

But do not think that Christ can be otherwise than kind. If you have trusted in Him, never believe that He can hate or forget you. Never think that He can suspend His affection towards you. No, never once will He deal with you according to any other rule than that of love, never once. The dispensation may be very dark, but judge not by appearances. Your conscience may be very guilty, but He is greater than your guilt. Your heart may condemn you, yet can He absolve you, and His love is not measured by even your consciousness of His presence He has forgiven you, and He will not visit you in wrath for sin.

No, though Satan tell you that repeated strokes must argue an angry God, he is the father of lies from the beginning, and believe not that which he suggests. It cannot be possible that God is unkind. The camels are destroyed, the oxen are stolen, the children have perished, the body is covered with sore boils and blains, but “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him,” saith the triumphant patriarch. “Shall we receive good from the hand of the LORD, and shall we not receive evil? The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the LORD.”

Be then, as Job was, and as David was when, being about to describe the perturbation of his mind on account of the affliction of the righteous, and the prosperity of the wicked, he began the psalm by saying, “Truly God is good to Israel,” as if he started with that, and nothing could ever drive him from it. Though the wicked prospered, and the righteous were chastened every morning, yet God was good to His own covenant people in the supremest and most emphatic sense.

But now let us come to this question again, for still it looks difficult. If faith makes no inquiries and resignation shall be content, still—

III. THERE IS DIFFICULTY.

Let us see now. If Christ had prevented Lazarus’s death, *what would have happened?* He might have done, if He had liked, but in the first place, *Christ would not have been glorified by raising Lazarus from the dead.* If Lazarus does not die, he cannot be raised, and that manifestation of miraculous power could not be evinced. You will let Lazarus die, then—you all agree to that—that Christ may have an opportunity of raising him again.

See, then, if you do not have a trouble—and Christ can prevent it if He wills—but if you are not brought into trouble, you cannot have the deliverance, Christ cannot put out His hand of love to save you, if there is nothing to save you from. Oh! then, be quite content to bear trouble, in order that your blessed Lord Jesus may make Himself illustrious as He comes to you in the very nick of time and delivers you out of the depth of your distress.

In the next place, if Lazarus had not died, *Lazarus himself would not have been so honored.* Everybody said afterwards, “That is Lazarus whom Christ raised from the dead.” He was a marked man, and I am sure, if you were Lazarus, you would say, “All! well, it is worthwhile to die to be raised again to have the honor of such a favor.”

Now, beloved, if you are not tried and troubled, you cannot become one of the experienced saints, it cannot be said of you by your brethren, “That man has passed through six troubles and through seven, and yet the Lord’s faithfulness has been proved in them all.” You will miss great pleasure if you miss great affliction. Depend upon it, you will be more a loser by missing trouble than you have hitherto imagined.

In the next place, *Mary and Martha would not have had such a sweet lesson from Christ.* Their poor eyes were red, I doubt not with their four days’ weeping, and the previous day’s watching and nursing, but then, oh! what joy they had when they saw their dear brother restored again! Such a meeting did make amends for all the grief of parting, and though they had heard the Lord Jesus talk about the resurrection and the life, they heard that dear powerful voice cry, “Lazarus, come forth.”

Why, it was for their education, their spiritual profit and benefit, that the Lord suffered Lazarus to die. He might have prevented it, but they were such gainers by the affliction that it proved His love that He did not deny them the benefit of the trial.

Mark, again, if Lazarus had not died, *then those few would not have been converted because they saw Lazarus rise from the dead,* and it is said “Therefore, many of the Jews believed on him.” Well they might. It was a wonderful sermon to see a dead man come forth bound in his grave clothes, but how could he have thus come forth if he had not died? It was for the benefit of those spectators that the trial was suffered to come.

Oh! you do not know, some of you, how many precious souls may have their destiny—speaking after the manner of men—wrapped up in your affliction. There is a needs be, for the good of others, that

through your testimony others may believe, that you should be brought into the very depths, and made to be sad, that afterwards God may interpose for your rescue.

Yet again, the result of *the resurrection of Lazarus was that our Lord rode in triumph through the streets of Jerusalem*. There seems to me to be a connection between these two things. If you read the next chapter, you find our Lord taken in triumph through the streets, with palm branches and great shoutings, and probably that which moved the multitude to do it, the immediate cause, was this marvellous miracle which Christ had wrought.

Oh! beloved, Christ often gets great triumph among the sons of men from the deepest trials of His people, out of which He doth rescue them, and shall not you and I be well content that He should stand back and hide His face, and even seem to be an enemy to us, if, out of all this, His glory shall spring? If He shall get hosannas and shouting, and the waving of palm branches, and if men on earth and angels in heaven shall do Him extraordinary homage because of the work He works in us, oh! shall we not be content that our choicest joys shall wither, and our best comforts for a while shall die?

In the case of Lazarus, you can all see that, though he need not have died—in one respect Christ could have kept him alive—yet *it was a great proof of love on Christ's part that Lazarus did die*. Now, I believe that everything else that has happened in the world, if we had light enough to see it by, would turn out to be the same.

I know it is a difficult question sometimes to make out why God permits certain evils. When people say, as the Negro did, “Well, now, God is greater than de devil, why don't He kill de devil?” I am sure I cannot answer the question, but I am very well persuaded that if, on the whole, it would be the best thing to do to kill the devil, He would do it, and it is, after all, in a most mysterious way, the best thing for His people, and the most glorious thing for Himself, that the devil should be permitted.

The fall—what a mysterious thing that is! It might have been prevented. I cannot hold any limit to the omnipotence of God, if He had willed it, there need not have been a fall. Then why did He permit it? I reply to that in the same spirit. I do not know, and I do not want to know, but I think I can see such a display of divine mercy, and love, and grace, and every other attribute, in the redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ that the fall, terrible thing as it is, seems to be a grand platform on which the glory of God could be displayed.

When the Lord brought His people out of Egypt, they might have gone right straight to Canaan. Why did He not take them there at once? Why did He make them go round by the Red Sea, and come to that difficult place? Why—why did He not, indeed? They would not have had half the fears, nor half the terrors. No, but then, recollect, there would not have been so many Egyptians drowned, and there would not have been such grand shouting, nor such sweet clashing of Miriam's cymbals, nor such beating of timbrels, nor such dancing of nimble feet, and they would not have said, “Sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously, the horse and his rider, he hath cast into the sea!”

All the difficulty only led to a greater triumph. God was glorified, His enemies were put to confusion, and His people's memories were stored with thoughts of the mighty works of God, which might stimulate their faith as long as the world should stand. It is best as it is. God orders all things right, after all, and though He might prevent this, and does not, and He might give us that, and does not, we believe it is all for the best, and bow our heads, and wait till the light shineth, that we may understand more of the reason why.

Now, beloved, the point I want to come to is this, depend upon it, that as I have proved in the case of Lazarus, it was the best thing that the worst thing should happen, so it is in your case. You are in trouble tonight. Now, Christ could have prevented it, could have carried you to heaven on a feather bed if He had chosen, could have made you ride to heaven all the way in a chariot that never jolted, on a macadamized road right straight up to paradise, without a single rut or any stones on it, but He does not choose to do so.

Now—

IV. LET US SEE IF WE CANNOT FIND A REASON.

If we, cannot, it will not matter, if you believe it is right. Still we will try. The roughness of the road that you are traveling now, *may it not be necessary to wean you from this world?* Oh! but the goods of this world are like bird-lime to birds, they stick to our feet and keep us from mounting towards heaven. “Ah!” said one, as he looked abroad on his gardens, and house, and park, “these are the things that make it hard to die.” Ay, and these are the things that make it hard to live near to God. When a man’s heart begins to be contented with the things of this world, when he finds his satisfaction here, he is not inclined to look up to his God.

Now, perhaps, you are one of that kind that could not bear too much prosperity. Every gardener will tell you that there are some of his flowers that he cannot put in the glare of the sun, they would never do there. So with you, you grow better in the shade. Your nearness to heaven and your soul’s health require this affliction.

Besides, may it not be that this affliction is sent on purpose to try *your faith because it is weak?* “What,” say you, “try my faith because it is weak? I thought you would have said *not* try it because it is weak.” Ah! but faith grows by trial. When faith is weak, a too heavy trial would crush it, but a suitable trial is over-ruled by God for the strengthening of it. You must, you must grow. The Lord would not have His children be stunted and dwarfed, and this trial is sent that you may be made to grow.

Further, you may not only be made to grow in faith this way, but *also in close communion with your God.* I have read lately one old Puritan, whose opinion is that we never grow, except in affliction. I could not endorse that, but I am afraid there is a great deal of truth in it, for almost all the sunshiny days we have we waste, and when God is very gracious to us in temporals, we generally find that these lean kine of our ingratitude will eat up the fat king of God’s mercies. We do grow best, depend upon it, when the wind blows us away from our natural havens to the great port of peace, which is found in communion with God in Christ Jesus.

When our soul has nowhere else to fly to for shelter, she flies to Christ. When she sees all her crutches and all her props broken away, and all her foundations made to reel, then she casts her arms about her own dear Lord, and there she hangs in rapture and simple childlike love and confidence, brought nearer to God than ever she was by the strength of her trials, and that is always a divine result, a divinely valuable result. It is a great mercy, if nothing else should come of it—a great mercy to have troubles, if they should have this result.

Brethren and sisters, if Christ would, He could prevent our having affliction, but He will not prevent them, *because He wants to make something of us.* For instance, He wants to make some of us to be comforters to others, but how can you comfort others in trouble when you have never experienced the like?

Oh! what poor hands some of us make in trying to comfort some of God’s saints who have been in much deeper water than we have ever sailed on. Why, we find they look upon us as mere boys, and wonder how we should have the impertinence to bring consolation to them. But when we can say “I have just experienced just the very trial you are now passing through, and the Lord sanctified it, and supported me under it,” then the mourner opens wide His ears, and the soul receives our comfort as though it were honey droppings from the comb.

My dear brethren, you *will never be qualified to understand and explain some of the promises without trials.* Some of God’s promises cannot be read, except by the firelight of affliction. There is a kind of invisible ink that people sometimes use, which does not show till you hold it to the fire and some of the promises seem to be written in that kind of ink. You do not understand them until you get a trial, and in the trial you find out that God has fitted every word of the consolation to the providence in which He has placed you.

But indeed, my brethren, when I consider the infinite variety of blessings which come to us, drawn by the team of black horses that our Father always keeps for this purpose, when I consider how God is glorified by the endurance of the saints, and by the graces which they receive in consequence of tribulation, when I consider how their joy will be swollen at the last, when they come to their rest, by the

remembrance of their pilgrimage here below, I can but think that it is a fine mark of special mercy that God does not suffer His people to go into the fat fields of unbroken prosperity, but into the fields of trial and of trouble, that they may be enriched, and that their souls may be established.

Come then, let every murmuring thought be gone; let every dark suspicion be discarded. Let us kiss the hand that smites us, and look up to our Father's face, even when He chastens us, and in this way, we shall soon find the trial turn to joy, the bitter cup will become sweet, and resignation will sweeten all.

If these words shall have ministered any consolation to God's suffering ones, my heart shall be glad. I sometimes want such thoughts myself, and there are times when, if I could have them spoken to me by somebody else, they would be to me like the paths of God which drop with fatness.

Now, there may be some of you—I know you are tried and troubled—to whom this will be just the very word. If so, do not let Satan take it away from you. Do lay hold of it by faith, and feed upon it with joy and comfort. Yes. "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God; speak ye comfortably unto Jerusalem." So I would that you may be happy and a rejoicing people in the midst of all your troubles.

But alas! this does not belong to all of you. It is only comfort to those who belong to Christ, but some of you do not belong to Him, and have never trusted Him. The Lord bring you this very night to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Those about to be baptized say to you tonight, "We avow ourselves to be believers in Jesus, we are buried in water to show that we desire to be dead to all the world, and buried in the death of Christ, we rise out of it to show that we desire to live in newness of life by the quickening power of the resurrection of Christ."

You will have no right to this ordinance until you have trusted the Savior. When you have trusted Him, when you have relied fully upon Him, when He becomes all in all to you, then may you take the sign, because the thing signified is yours.

May the Lord bless you, for Jesus' sake.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

PSALM 119:25-40

By the help of God's Holy Spirit, this psalm may serve for the purposes of self-examination, for we may ask ourselves as we read, "Do I feel in that way? Are my prayers like those of this good man? Is my experience like his?" We may often ask ourselves, "Am I as watchful, and as careful, and as fond of God's Word as he was?" Such questions will do us good.

Psalm Chapter 119. Verse 25. *My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word.*

He does not like to feel the cleaving of his soul to the dust. There are some that feel it, but they seem content to continue in that condition, but no sooner does David feel it than he cries "Quicken thou me." A sense of sin is of small value, unless it leads us to desire to escape out of it. "Quicken Thou me. I lie as dead as if it were dust to dust. My soul seems cleaving to it, as if it had come to its own, and meant to rest there, but Lord, give me life. Thy Word promises me life. Thou hast ways laid down in Thy Word for giving life. Quicken Thou me, according to Thy Word"

26. *I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me: teach me thy statutes.*

I have told Thee all about myself. Now tell me about Thyself. "Teach me thy statutes."

27. *Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works.*

It is a bad thing to talk of what we do not understand, and he who shall preach what he has never experienced is very likely to do so. Yet beloved, there is no understanding Gods precepts except He shall teach them to us. We are void of understanding. He must enlighten. He must instruct. "Make me to understand the way of thy precepts."

Some are very anxious to understand the doctrines, and some to understand the prophecies. All well and good, but "Make me to understand the way of thy precepts," give me practical godliness, help me to

live to thy praise, “so shall I talk of thy wondrous works.” I will not talk till Thou hast taught me. But when Thou hast taught me, then my subject shall be Thy wondrous works. The wondrous work of making me to understand Thee shall be something to speak about, and all the wondrous works of nature, and providence, and grace shall be the subject of my continual conversation.

28. *My soul melteth for heaviness:*

For the best of men sometimes suffer the sharpest sorrows. Hearts of stone are not likely to be so sensitive as hearts of flesh. “My soul melteth for heaviness.”

28. *Strengthen thou me according unto thy word.*

He wants strength, but he does not want to obtain it in any way, but the way of God’s appointment. “According unto thy word.” Somewhat like our hymn, which says—

*“He that suffered in my stead,
Shall my physician be
I will not be comforted
Till Jesus comforts me.”*

“Strengthen thou me,” but let it be “according to thy word.”

29. *Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me thy law graciously.*

Let me not lie. Let me not be tempted to lie. Let me not be pestered with the falsehoods of others. Remove the way of lying far from me, and oh! by Thy grace, give me to know the law. That is a remarkable combination of words. “Grant me thy law graciously.” Has law anything to do with grace? Yes, such a law as he speaks of—the law in the heart—the law in the hand of Christ—the law written in the life of the believer—not the law of merit and of salvation by works, but “grant me thy law graciously.”

30. *I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me.*

As a seaman spreads out the chart before him, that he may follow the right channel, and not miss his track—as a traveler spreads out his map that he may keep to the right way. “I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me.”

31. *I have stuck unto thy testimonies:*

As if I were glued to them—sealed to them. They said I was very old fashioned. They said I did not keep pace with the times. They said I was not a man of thought. I did not care about that. “I have stuck unto thy testimonies.”

31. *O LORD, put me not to shame.*

And He never will. If we stick to Him, we may be quite sure that we shall come forth out of every difficulty and every opposition triumphantly. “Put me not to shame.” And although he thus spoke, yet you perceive the activity of his soul.

32. *I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.*

Give my heart freedom. Knock off my fetters. Take away my heaviness Remove from me my ignorance. Give my soul room, and she will run, but it will be in the ways of thy commandments.

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

Here is the art of finally persevering. Here is the way of continuing to the end, and the same shall be saved. We must begin with a teachable spirit. He that is not willing to learn has not begun right. We ought to disciple all nations, but he that will not learn is not yet disciplined. “Teach me.”

But the teaching we must have must come from God. “Teach me, O Lord. I am not content to have the Word second-hand. Be Thou my schoolmaster. Teach me, O Lord. I shall never learn unless Thou teach me. Thou who didst make me—Thou who didst give me a new heart—Thou must write that law upon my heart, or it will never be written there. Teach me, O Lord. Teach me the way of Thy statutes. Teach me practical godliness. So teach it to me that I shall learn it, and put it into practice, and if I be taught of Thee, then I shall keep it unto the end, not else.”

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

A want of understanding is a very great lack. There is little wonder that men turn aside from an outward religion which has never taken possession of their thoughts and minds. If they only subscribe to the creed which they have never studied—if they only carry out a life—the mere shell of a life—the inward principles of which they do not know, they will soon turn aside. “Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law.”

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

“Not only teach me the way, but make me to go in it. Take hold of me, as a mother does of her little child, and teach me how to walk, and help me in the walking.” Make me to go. It is a feeble word—a most expressive prayer. “Make me to go, for therein do I delight.” When a man delights in God’s way, he will be sure to be made to go in it.

36. *Incline my heart unto thy testimonies,—*

Bend it that way—incline it.

36. *And not to covetousness.*

For, naturally, my heart would go after the world, and cleave to its riches and its treasures, and begin to covet, but Lord, bend it the other way. If you do not love God’s testimonies, the tendency will be to become a lover of the world. “Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.”

37. *Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity;*

Or “make mine eyes to pass from beholding vanity.” I am a runner in the race. Do not let me stop to look at anything, but may my eyes pass by vanity. Let me not be like her in the fable who paused to gather the golden apples in the race, and so lost it and was deceived. If the world’s golden apples are thrown in my way, make my eyes to pass from beholding vanity.

37. *And quicken thou me in thy way.*

More life towards thee will deaden me to the world. The more I follow after God, the less shall I care to follow after the world.

38. *Stablish thy word unto thy servant,—*

Make it fast, firm, sure.

38. *Who is devoted to thy fear.*

I am established in Thee. Stablish Thy Word to me. Thou has bound me fast to Thy altar. Oh! give me the fast blessings and sure mercies of David.

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

I fear lest I bring a reproach upon Thee, and then upon myself. Oh! suffer me not to do so. I am not afraid of the reproach of the world. I count the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. But oh! let them never have to charge me with sin and let me not fall into such pecuniary difficulties or other troubles, that men will be able to make a charge against me out of them. Help me to provide things honest in the sight of all men. “Take away my reproach, which I fear: for thy judgments are good.”

40. *Behold, I have longed after thy precepts: quicken me in thy righteousness.*

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.