

EBENEZER!**NO. 500**

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 15, 1863,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Then Samuel took a stone and set it between Mizpeh and Shen and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto has the LORD helped us.”
1 Samuel 7:12.*

IT is certainly a very delightful thing to mark the hand of God in the lives of ancient saints. How profitable an occupation to observe God’s goodness in delivering David out of the jaw of the lion and the paw of the bear. His mercy in passing by the transgression, iniquity, and sin of Manasseh, His faithfulness in keeping the covenant made with Abraham, or His interposition on the behalf of the dying Hezekiah.

But beloved, would it not be even more interesting and profitable for us to remark the hand of God in our own lives? Ought we not to look upon our own history as being at least as full of God, as full of His goodness and of His truth, as much a proof of His faithfulness and veracity as in the lives of any of the saints who have gone before? I think we do our Lord an injustice when we suppose that He wrought all His mighty acts in days of yore, and showed Himself strong for those in the early time, but does not perform wonders or lay bare His arm for the saints that are now upon the earth.

Let us review, I say, our own diaries. Surely in these modern pages we may discover some happy incidents, refreshing to ourselves and glorifying to our God. Have you had no *deliverances*? Have you passed through no rivers, supported by the divine presence? Have you walked through no fires unharmed? Have you not been saved in six troubles, yea, in seven has not JEHOVAH helped you?

Have you had no *manifestations*? The God who spoke to Abraham at Mamre, has He never spoken to you? The angel who wrestled with Jacob at Peniel, has He never wrestled with you? He that stood in the fiery furnace with the three holy children, has He never trod the coals at your side? O beloved, He has manifested Himself to us as He does not to the world. Forget not these manifestations—fail not to rejoice in them.

Have you had no *choice favors*? The God who gave Solomon the desire of his heart, has He never listened to you and answered your requests? That God of lavish bounty, of whom David sang, “Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s,” has He never satiated you with fatness? Have you never been made to lie down in green pastures? Have you never been led by the still waters? Surely, beloved, the goodness of God of old has been repeated unto us. The manifestations of His grace to those gone to glory has been renewed to us and delivering mercies as experienced by them are not unknown even to us, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

I beg you, therefore, dear friends, for a little time this morning, to fix your thoughts upon your God in connection with yourselves. And while we think of Samuel piling the stones and saying, “Hitherto has the LORD helped us,” let us lay the emphasis upon the last word and say, “Hitherto has the Lord helped US,” and if you can put it in the singular and say, “Hitherto has the Lord helped ME,” so much the better.

Again, it is a very delightful exercise to remember the various ways in which the grateful saints recorded their thankfulness. Who can look without pleasure upon the altar which Noah reared after his preservation from the universal deluge? Have not our eyes often sparkled as we have thought of

Abraham building the altar and calling it, “JEHOVAH-Jireh, in the mount of the LORD it shall be seen”?

Have we not read, with intense satisfaction, of Jacob setting up the stone which had been his pillow, pouring oil upon it, and calling upon the name of the Lord, naming the place Bethel, though the name thereof was Luz at the first? Who has failed to rejoice in the martial music of Miriam’s timbrel and the glorious notes of Moses’ song at the Red Sea? And have we not paused and looked at the twelve stones set up in the midst of Jordan by good old Joshua when Jordan was driven back, that the hosts of Israel might go through dry-shod?

Surely, brethren, we have rejoiced in this stone which Samuel set up and called Ebenezer? And in looking upon all the various ways in which the saints of God have recorded His lovingkindness of old, we have felt a satisfaction in beholding the perpetuity of God’s glory, since one generation shows forth to another all His mighty acts.

Oh, would it not be quite as pleasant and more profitable *for us* to record the mighty acts of the Lord as we have seen them? Should not we set up an altar unto His name, or weave His mercies into a song? Should we not take the pure gold of thankfulness, the jewels of praise and make them into another crown for the head of Jesus? Ought not our souls to give forth music as sweet and exhilarating as ever came from David’s harp? Ought not the feet of our gratitude to trip as lightly as Miriam’s when she led the daughters of Israel?

Have we not some means of praising God? Are there no methods by which we may set forth the gratitude we feel within? I trust we can make an offering unto our Lord. We can entertain our Beloved with the spiced wine of our pomegranate and the choice drops of our honeycomb. I hope that this day our souls may suggest unto themselves some way in which we may record the Lord’s mighty deeds and hand down to coming generations our testimony of His faithfulness and of His truth.

In the spirit of these two observations then, looking at God’s hand in our own life and acknowledging that hand with some record of thankfulness, I, your minister, brought by divine grace to preach this morning the five hundredth of my printed sermons, consecutively published week by week, set up my stone of Ebenezer to God. I thank Him, thank Him humbly, but yet most joyfully for all the help and assistance given in studying and preaching the Word to these mighty congregations by my voice, and afterwards to so many nations through the press.

I set up my pillar in the form of this sermon. My motto this day shall be the same as Samuel’s, “Hitherto, the LORD has helped me.” And as the stone of my praise is much too heavy for me to set it upright alone, I ask you, my comrades in the day of battle, my fellow laborers in the vineyard of Christ, to join with me in expressing gratitude, while together we set up the memorial stone and say, “Hitherto the LORD has helped *us*.”

This morning there are three things I want to talk about—three, yet only one. This stone of help was suggestive as to *the place of its erection*, as to *the occasion of its setting up*, and as to *the inscription which it bore*.

I. First, then, much valuable instruction, much excitement to devout thankfulness may be found in THE SPOT WHERE THE STONE OF EBENEZER WAS SET UP.

Twenty years before on that field Israel was routed. Twenty years before, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the Lord, were slain upon that ground and the ark of the Lord was taken and the Philistines triumphed. It was well that they should remember the defeat they had sustained and that amidst the joyous victory they should recollect that the battle would had been turned into a defeat unless the Lord had been upon their side.

Brethren, let us remember our defeats. Have we forgotten when we went out in our own strength, determined to subdue our corruptions, and found ourselves weak as water? Have you forgotten when you reposed in the ark of the Lord, when you rested in ceremonies and ordinances, and not in the rock of your salvation? Have you forgotten, I say, how you were perplexed before your sins and found no place

of refuge from your adversaries? Have we forgotten our pitiful failures in preaching and prayer when we waited not upon God for strength?

O, those times of groaning, when none have believed our report because the Lord's arm was not revealed. I call to remembrance all my failures as I stand on this hill of joy. I doubt not that on the field of Ebenezer there were the graves of thousands who had been slain in battle. Let the graves of our past proud notions, the graves of our self-confidence, the graves of our creature-strength and boasting, stir us up to praise the Lord who has hitherto helped us.

Perhaps on that spot there stood a trophy raised by the insulting Philistines. Oh, let the remembrance of the boasting of the adversary, when he said, "Aha! Aha!"—let that come into our ears to sweeten the shout of triumph while we glorify the God of Israel. Have you done anything for God? You would have done nothing without Him. Look to your former defeats. Do you return victorious? You would have returned with your garments trailing in the mire and your shield dishonored, if God had not been on your side. Oh, you that have proven your weakness, perhaps by some terrible fall or in some sad disappointment, let the recollection of the spot where you were vanquished constrain you to praise the Lord, who has helped you even to this day to triumph over your adversaries.

The field between Mizpeh and Shen would also refresh their memories concerning *their sins*, for it was sin that conquered them. Had not their hearts been captured by sin, their land had never been captured by Philistia. Had they not turned their backs upon their God, they would not have turned their backs in the day of conflict.

Brethren, let us remember our sins. They will serve as a black foil on which the mercy of God shall glisten the more brightly. Egypt's fertility is the more wonderful because of its nearness to the Libyan sands, which would cover it altogether if it were not for the Nile. That God should be so good is marvelous, but that He should be so good to you and to me, who are so rebellious, is a miracle of miracles.

I know not a word which can express the surprise and wonder our souls ought to feel at God's goodness to us. Our hearts playing the harlot, our lives far from perfect, our faith almost blown out, our unbelief often prevailing, our pride lifting up its accursed head, our patience a poor sickly plant, almost nipped by one night's frost, our courage little better than cowardice, our love lukewarmness, our ardor but as ice. Oh! my dear brethren, if we will but think anyone of us what a mass of sin we are, if we will but reflect that we are after all, as one of the fathers writes, "walking dunghills," we should indeed be surprised that the sun of divine grace should continue so perpetually to shine upon us and that the abundance of heaven's mercy should be revealed in us. Oh, Lord, when we recollect what we might have been, we must say, "Glory be unto the gracious and merciful God who hitherto has helped us."

Again, that spot would remind them *of their sorrows*. What a mournful chapter in Israel's history is that which follows their defeat by the Philistines. Good old Eli, you remember, fell backward and broke his neck, and his daughter-in-law in the pangs of her travail cried, concerning her child, "Call him Ichabod, for the glory has departed, because the ark of the LORD is taken." Their harvests were snatched away by robbers, their vintage was gleaned for them by alien hands. Israel had twenty years of deep and bitter sorrow. They might have said with David, "We went through fire and through water; men did ride over our heads."

Well, friends, let the remembrance of *our sorrows* also inspire *us* with a profounder thankfulness while we erect the stone of Ebenezer. We have had our sorrows as a church. Shall I remind you of our black and dark day? Never erased from our memory can be the time of our affliction and trial. Death came into our windows and dismay into our hearts. Did not all men speak ill of us? Who would give us a good word? The Lord Himself afflicted us and broke us as in the day of His anger—so it seemed to us, then. Ah, God, You know how great have been the results which flowed from that terrible calamity, but from our souls the memory never can be taken, not even in heaven itself. In the recollection of that night of confusion and those long weeks of slander and abuse, let us roll a great stone before the Lord and let us write thereon, "Hitherto the LORD has helped us."

Little, I suppose, did the devil get by that master-stroke, small was the triumph which he earned by that piece of malice. Greater multitudes than ever flocked to listen to the Word and some here who otherwise might never have attended the preaching of the Gospel, remain as living monuments of God's power to save. Of all evil things out of which good has arisen, we can always point to the Surrey Hall catastrophe as one of the greatest goods which ever befell this neighborhood, notwithstanding the sorrows which it brought.

This one fact is but a sample of others, for it is the Lord's rule to bring good out of evil, and so to prove His wisdom and magnify His grace. O you that have come from beds of languishing, you that have been bowed down with doubt and fear, and you that have been poverty-stricken, or slandered, or apparently deserted by your God, if this day the glory of God's grace rests upon you, pile the stones, and anoint the pillar, and write thereon, "Ebenezer, hitherto the LORD has helped us."

While dwelling upon the peculiarity of the locality, we must remark, that, as it had been the spot of their defeat, their sin, their sorrow, so now before the victory, it was the place of *their repentance*. You see, beloved, they came together to repent, to confess their sins, to put away their false gods, to cast Ashtaroth from their houses, and from their hearts. It was there that they saw God's hand and were led to say, "Hitherto has the LORD helped us."

When you and I are most diligent in hunting sin, then God will be most valiant in routing our foes. You look to the work within and overcome sin, and God will look to the work without and overcome your troubles and your trials for you. Ah, dear friends, as we pile that stone thinking how God has helped us, let us shed tears of sorrow to think how ungrateful we have been. On earth penitence and praise must always sing together. Just as in some of our tunes there are two or three parts, we shall always need repentance to take the bass notes while we are here, while faith in praise can mount up to the very highest notes of the divine music of gratitude.

Yes, with our joy for pardoned guilt we mourn that we pierced the Lord, and with our joy for strengthened graces and ripening experience, we must mourn over ingratitude and unbelief. Hitherto the LORD has helped you and yet you did once say, "My God has forgotten me." Hitherto the LORD has helped you and yet you did murmur and complain against Him. Hitherto the LORD has helped you and yet you did once deny Him like Peter. Hitherto the LORD has helped you and yet your eye has gone astray after vanity, and your hands have touched sin, and your heart has played the wanton. Let us repent, my brethren, for it is through our tears that we shall best perceive the beauty of these grateful words, "Hitherto has the LORD helped us."

You must remember too, that Ebenezer was the place of *lamentation after the Lord*. They came together to pray God to return to them. We shall surely see God when we long after Him. How delightful it is to see a church earnest after revivals, crying, pleading for God to come into her midst. When you know, brethren, that without God, your ordinances are nothing, when you cannot rest satisfied with the dead, dry letter, but really want to have the power and the presence of God, then it will not be long before you have it. So while you and I express gratitude for the past, let us breathe another prayer to God for renewed grace. If you personally have lost the light of His face, pray this morning—

***"Return, O holy Dove! Return,
Sweet messenger of rest!
I hate the sins that made Thee mourn,
And drove Thee from my breast."***

And if it be the entire church and in any measure our love that has grown cold, and the converting and sanctifying Spirit has departed, let us pray also the same prayer—

***"Savior, visit Thy plantation,
Grant us, Lord, a gracious rain!
All will come to desolation,***

*Unless Thou return again.
Lord, revive us,
All our help must come from Thee!"*

The place of revival should be the place of gracious thankfulness.

On that day too, Mizpeh was the place of *renewed covenant* and its name signifies the *watchtower*. These people, I say, came together to renew their covenant with God and wait for Him as upon a watchtower. Whenever God's people look back upon the past, they should renew their covenant with God. Put your hands into the hands of Christ anew, you saints of the Most High, and give yourself to Him again. Climb your watchtower and watch for the coming of your Lord. See whether there is sin within you, temptation outside you—duty neglected or lethargy creeping over you. Come to Mizpeh, the watchtower. Come to Mizpeh, the place of the renewal of the covenant and then set up your stone and say, "Hitherto, the LORD has helped us."

It seems to me that the spot where Samuel said, "Ebenezer," was exceedingly similar in many respects to the position occupied by us this day. I do not think the children of Israel could with heartier joy say, "Ebenezer." than we can. We have had many sins, a share of sorrows, and some defeats by reason of our own folly. I hope we have humbled ourselves before God, and lament after Him, and desire to behold Him, and to dwell very near Him, and that our soul does bless His name while we renew the covenant again this day. And while we come to the watchtower and wait to hear what God the Lord will speak unto us. Come, then, all in this great house which the Lord's favor has built for us, let us sing together, "Hitherto the LORD has helped us."

II. We now change the subject to look at the OCCASION OF THE ERECTION OF THIS MEMORIAL.

The tribes had assembled unarmed to worship. The Philistines, hearing of their gathering, suspected a revolt. A rising was not at that time contemplated, though no doubt there was lurking in the hearts of the people a hope that they would somehow or other be delivered. The Philistines being as a nation, far inferior in numbers, to the children of Israel, had the natural suspiciousness of weak oppressors. If we must have tyrants, let them be strong ones, for they are never as jealous or cruel as those little despots who are always afraid of rebellion.

Hearing that the people had come together, the Philistines determined to attack them—to attack an unarmed company, mark you, who had come together for worship. The people were alarmed, naturally they might be. Samuel, however, the prophet of God, was equal to the occasion. He bade them bring a lamb. I do not know that the lamb was offered according to the Levitical rites, yet prophets in all ages had a right to dispense with ordinary laws. This was to show that the legal dispensation was not permanent, that there was something higher than the Aaronic priesthood—so that Samuel and Elijah, men in whom God expressly dwelt—were mightier than the ordinary officiating priests of the sanctuary. He takes the lamb, puts it on the altar, offers it and as it smokes to heaven, he offers prayer. The voice of man is answered by the voice of God—a great thunder dismays the Philistines and they are put to rout.

We, I think, have been in similar circumstances. Hear the parallel. The victory obtained was *by the lamb*. As soon as the lamb was slaughtered and the smoke went up to heaven, the blessing began to descend upon the Israelites and the curse upon the foes. "They smote them"—note the words—they "smote them until they came under Bethcar," which, being interpreted, signifies "the house of the Lamb." At the offering of the lamb, the Israelites began to fight the Philistines and slew them even to the house of the lamb.

Brethren, if we have done anything for Christ, if we have achieved any victories, if in this house any souls have been converted, any hearts sanctified, any drooping spirits comforted, bear witness that it has been all through the Lamb. When we have pictured Christ slaughtered, have described the agonies which He endured upon the cross, when we have tried to preach fully though feebly the great doctrine of

His substitutionary sacrifice, have set Him forth as the propitiation for sins, then it is that the victories have begun.

And when we have preached Christ ascending up on high, leading captivity captive, and when we have glorified in the fact that He always lives to make intercession for us, and that He shall come to judge the quick and dead, if any good has been accomplished it has been through the Lamb—the Lamb slain—or else the Lamb exalted.

Mark, dear friends, as we pile our Ebenezer this morning, we do it honoring Him. “Unto the Lamb once slain be glory forever and ever.” You have overcome your foes, you have slaughtered your sins, you have mastered your troubles. How has it been? From the altar of that bleeding Lamb, onward to the throne of Him who is to reign forever and ever, the whole road has been stained with the crimson blood of your enemies—you have overcome through the blood of the Lamb.

The Lamb shall overcome you. He that rides on the white horse goes before us, His name is the Lamb. And all the saints shall follow Him on the white horses, going forth conquering and to conquer. “Ebenezer, hitherto the LORD has helped us.” But the help has always been through the Lamb, the bleeding, the living, the reigning Lamb.

As in this occurrence the sacrifice was exalted, so also was the *power of prayer acknowledged*. The Philistines were not routed except by prayer. Samuel prayed unto the Lord. They said, “Cease not to cry unto the LORD for us.” Brethren, let us bear our witness this morning that if anything of good has been accomplished here, it has been the result of prayer. Often have I solaced my heart by the recollection of the prayers offered in our former house of meeting at New Park Street. What supplications have I heard there, what groans of wrestling spirits. Times we have known when the minister has not had the heart to say a word, because your prayers to God melted him—stopped his utterance and he has been glad to pronounce a benediction and send you away, because the Spirit of God has been so present that it was hardly the time to speak to man, but only to speak to God.

I do not think we always have the same spirit of prayer here and yet in this I must and will rejoice—I know not where the spirit of prayer is to be found more in exercise than in this place. I know you hold up my hands, you who are like Aaron and Hur upon the mountains. I know that you intercede with God for the conversion of this neighborhood and the evangelization of this great city. Young and old, you strive together that the kingdom of God may come and the Lord’s will may be done.

But oh, we must not forget as we look upon this vast church—two thousand and more members walking in the fear of God—we must not forget that this increase came as the result of prayer and that it is in prayer still that our strength must lie.

I charge you before the Most High, never depend upon my ministry. What am I? What is there in me? I speak, and when God speaks through me, I speak with a power unknown to men in whom the Spirit dwells not. But if He leave me, I am not only as weak as other men, but less than they, for I have no wisdom of years, I have no human learning, I have taken no degree in the university, and wear no titles of learned honor. If God speaks by me, He must have all the glory. If He saves souls by such a frail being, He must have all the glory. Give unto the Lord glory and strength—lay every particle of the honor at His feet. But do continue to pray, do plead with God for me that His power may still be seen, His arm still put mightily to His work. Prayer honored must be recollected when we set up the Ebenezer and say, “Hitherto the LORD has helped us.”

Again, as there was prayer and sacrifice, you must remember that in answer to the sweet savor of the lamb and the sweet perfume of Samuel’s intercession, *JEHOVAH came forth* to rout His foes. I read not that Israel shouted a war cry. No, their shouts would not have been heard amid those great thunders. I find that they dashed to battle, but it was not their bow, their spear, their sword that gained the victory.

Hearken, my brethren, the voice of God is heard. Crash! Crash! Where are you now, you sons of Anak. The heavens shake, the earth rocks, the everlasting hills do bow, the birds of the air fly to the coverts of the forest to hide themselves, the timid goats upon the mountains seek the clefts of the rocks. Peal on peal the thunders roll till mountain answers mountain in loud uproar of affright. From crag to

crag leaps the live lightning and the Philistines are all but blinded by it and stand aghast, and then take to their heels and fly. Quit yourselves like men, O Philistines, that you be not servants to the Hebrews. Quit yourselves like men, but unless you are gods, you must tremble now. Where are your bucklers and the points thereof? Where are your spears and the sheen thereof? Now let your swords flash from their scabbards! Now send out your giants and their armor-bearers! Now let your Goliaths defy the Lord God of hosts!

Aha! Aha! You become like women, you quake! You faint! See, see! They turn their backs and fly before the men of Israel, whom they counted but as slaves. They flee. The warrior flies and the stout heart quails, and the mighty man flies like a timid dove to his hiding place. “Glory be unto the Lord God of Israel, His own right hand and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory.”

Beloved, if anything of good has been accomplished, or if you and I have routed sin, how has it been? Not by *our* strength, not by *our* power, but by the glorious voice of God. When the Gospel is truly preached, it is God thundering. It may sound as feebly as a child’s voice when we tell of Jesus crucified, but it is God thundering and I tell you, sirs, the thunders of God never so smote the heart of the Philistines as the Gospel of Christ does the heart of convinced sinners. When we preach and God blesses it, it is God’s lightnings, it is God’s flashes of divine fire, the glitter of His spear, for never were Philistines so smitten with the blaze of lightning in their faces, as sinners are when God’s law and Gospel flash into their dark eyes.

But to God be the glory—to God—to God—to God alone! Not a word for man, not a syllable for the son of man. “Unto him who loved us and washed us from our sins in his blood, unto him be glory.” This is the song of perfect saints above. Shall it not be the song of imperfect ones below? “Not unto us, not unto us,” the seraphs cry as they veil their faces with their wings and cast their crowns at JEHOVAH’s feet. “Not unto us, not unto us,” must we say while we exult in His power and magnify the God of our salvation.

III. This was the occasion then. I need not tarry longer, but turn at once to THE INSCRIPTION UPON THE MEMORIAL, “Ebenezer, hitherto the LORD has helped us.” The inscription may be read in three ways.

You must read first of all its central word, the word on which all the sense depends, where the fullness of it gathers. “Hitherto the LORD has helped us.” Note, beloved, that they did not stand still and refuse to use their weapons, but while God was thundering, they were fighting and while the lightnings were flashing in the enemy’s eyes, they were making them feel the potency of their steel.

So, that while we glorify God, we are not to deny or to discard human agency. *We* must fight because God fights for us. We must strike, but the power to strike and the result of striking must all come from Him. You see they did not say, “Hitherto our sword has helped us, hitherto Samuel has encouraged us.” No, no, “Hitherto the LORD has helped us.”

Now you must admit that everything truly great must be of the Lord. You cannot suppose a thing so great as the conversion of sinners, the revival of a church can ever be man’s work. You see the Thames when the tide is ebbing—what a long reach of foul, putrid mud—but the tide returns. Poor unbeliever, you who thought the river would run out till it was all dry and the ships be left aground—see, the flood comes back again, joyfully filling up the stream once more. But you are quite certain that so large a river as the Thames is not to be flooded except by ocean’s tides.

So you cannot see great results and ascribe them to man. Where there is little work done, men often take the credit themselves, but where there is great work done, they dare not. If Simon Peter had been angling over the side of his ship and had caught a fine fish, he might have said, “Well done, fisherman!” But when the boat was full of fish so that it began to sink, he could not think of himself then. No, down he goes with, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” The greatness of our work compels us to confess that it must be of God, it must be of the Lord alone.

And dear friends, it must be so if we consider the little with which we began. Jacob said as he came over Jordan, “With my staff I crossed this Jordan, but now have I become two bands.” Surely his

becoming two bands must be of God, for he had nothing but his staff. And do you not remember some few of you here present one morning when we crossed this Jordan with a staff? Were we a hundred when first I addressed you? What hosts of empty pews, what a miserable handful of hearers. With the staff we crossed that Jordan. But God has multiplied the people and multiplied the joy, till we have become not only two bands but many bands.

And many this day are gathering to hear the Gospel preached by the sons of this church, begotten of us and sent forth by us to minister the Word of life in many towns and villages throughout these three kingdoms. Glory be unto God, this cannot be man's work. What effort made by the unaided strength of man will equal this which has been accomplished by God? Let the name of the Lord, therefore, be inscribed upon the pillar of the memorial.

I am always very jealous about this matter. If we do not, as a church and a congregation, if we do not as individuals, always give God the glory, it is utterly impossible that God should work by us. Many wonders I have seen, but I never saw yet a man who arrogated the honor of God's work to himself, whom God did not leave sooner or later. Nebuchadnezzar said, "Behold, this great Babylon that I have built." Behold that poor lunatic whose hair has grown like eagle's feathers and his nails like bird's claws—that is Nebuchadnezzar. And that must be you and that must be me, each in our own way, unless we are content always to give all the glory to God.

Surely, brethren, we shall be a stench in the nostrils of the Most High, an offense, even like carrion, before the Lord of Hosts, if we arrogate to ourselves any honor. What does God send His saints for? That they may be demigods? Did God make men strong that they may exalt themselves into His throne? What, does the King of kings crown you with mercies that you may pretend to lord it over Him? What, does He dignify you that you may usurp the prerogatives of His throne? No. You must come with all the favors and honors that God has put upon you, and creep to the foot of His throne and say, "What am I and what is my father's house that You have remembered me." "Hitherto the LORD has helped us."

I said this text might be read three ways. We have read it once by laying stress upon the center word. Now it ought to be read *looking backward*. The word, "Hitherto," seems like a hand pointing in that direction. Look back, look back. Twenty years—thirty—forty—fifty—sixty—seventy—eighty, "Hitherto!" Say *that* each of you. Through poverty—through wealth—through sickness—through health—at home—abroad—on the land—on the sea—in honor—in dishonor—in perplexity—in joy—in trial—in triumph—in prayer—in temptation, "Hitherto." Put the whole together.

I like sometimes to look down a long avenue of trees. It is very delightful to gaze from end to end of the long vista, a sort of leafy temple with its branching pillars and its arches of leaves. Cannot you look down the long aisles of your years, look at the green boughs of mercy overhead, and the strong pillars of lovingkindness and faithfulness which bear your joys? Are there no birds in yonder branches singing? Surely, there must be many and the bright sunshine and the blue sky yonder, and if you turn round in the far distance, you may see heaven's brightness and a throne of gold. "Hitherto! Hitherto!"

Then the text may be read a third way—*looking forward*. For when a man gets up to a certain mark and writes, "Hitherto," he looks back upon much that is past, but "Hitherto" is not the end—there is yet a distance to be traversed. More trials, more joys, more temptations, more triumphs, more prayers, more answers, more toils, more strength, more fights, more victories, more slanders, more comforts, more lions and bears to be fought, more tearings of the lion for God's Davids, more deep waters, more high mountains, more troops of devils, more hosts of angels yet. And then come sickness, old age, disease, death.

Is it over now? No, no, no! We will raise one stone more when we get into the river, we will shout Ebenezer there, "Hitherto the LORD has helped us," for there is more to come. An awakening in His likeness, climbing of starry spheres, harps, songs, palms, white raiment, the face of Jesus, the society of saints, the glory of God, the fullness of eternity, the infinity of bliss. Yes, as sure as God has helped us so far as today, He will help us to the close. "I will never leave you, I will never forsake you; I have been with you and I will be with you to the end."

Courage, brethren. And as we pile the stones, saying, “Hitherto the LORD has helped us,” let us just gird up the loins of our minds and be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be revealed in us—for as it has been—so it shall be world without end.

I want some oil to pour on this pillar—I want some oil. Jacob poured oil upon it and called upon the name of the Lord. Where shall I get my oil? Grateful hearts, have you any oil? Prayerful spirits, have you any? Companions of Jesus, have you any? You who commune with Him day and night, have you any? Pour it out, then. Break your alabaster boxes, oh you Marys. Pour out your prayers this morning with mine. Offer your thanksgivings with my grateful expressions of thanks.

Come, each of you, pour this oil upon the top of this Ebenezer today. I want some oil, I wonder whether I shall get it from yonder heart. “Oh,” says one, “my heart is as a flinty rock.” I read in Scripture that the Lord brought oil out of the flinty rock. Oh! if there should be a soul led to believe in Christ this morning, if some heart would give itself up to Christ today. Why not so? Why not? The Holy Ghost can melt flint and move mountains.

Young man, how long are we to preach to you, how long to invite you, how long to entreat you, to implore you? Shall this be the day that you will yield? Do you say, “I am nothing”? Then Christ is everything. Take Him, trust Him. I know not a better way of celebrating this day of Ebenezer and thanksgiving, than by some hearts this day accepting the marriage ring of Christ’s love and being betrothed unto the Son of God forever and ever. God grant it may be so. It shall be so if you pray for it, O true hearts.

And unto God be glory forever. Amen.

*“Great God, we sing that mighty hand,
By which supported still we stand;
The opening year Thy mercy shows,
Let mercy crown it till it close.*

*By day, by night, at home, abroad,
Still we are guarded by our God,
By His incessant bounty fed,
By His unerring counsel led.*

*With grateful hearts the past we own,
The future, all to us unknown,
We to Thy guardian care commit,
And peaceful leave before Thy feet.*

*In scenes exalted or depress’d,
Be Thou our joy, and Thou our rest.
Your goodness all our hopes shall raise,
Adored through all our changing days.*

*When death shall interrupt these songs,
And seal in silence mortal tongues,
Our helper God, in whom we trust,
In better worlds our souls shall boast.”*

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. 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.