

PAUL—HIS CLOAK AND HIS BOOKS

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A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when you come, bring with you,
and the books, but especially the parchments.”*
2 Timothy 4:13.

FOOLISH persons have made remarks upon the trifles of Scripture. They have marveled why so little a matter as a cloak should be mentioned in an inspired book, but they ought to know that this is one of the many indications that the book is by the same author as the book of nature. Are there not things which our short-sightedness would call trifles in the volume of creation around us?

What is the peculiar value of the daisy upon the lawn or the buttercup in the meadow? Compared with the rolling sea or the eternal hills, how inconsiderable they seem! Why has the humming bird a plumage so wondrously bejeweled, and why is so much marvelous skill expended upon the wing of a butterfly? Why such curious machinery in the foot of a fly, or such a matchless optical arrangement in the eye of a spider? Because to most men these are trifles, are they to be left out of nature’s plans? No, because greatness of divine skill is as apparent in the minute as in the magnificent.

And even so in Holy Writ—the little things which are embalmed in the amber of inspiration are far from inappropriate or unwise. Besides, in providence are there not trifles? It is not every day that a nation is torn by revolution, or a throne shaken by rebellion—far oftener a bird’s nest is destroyed by a child or an anthill overturned by a spade. It is not at every hour that a torrent inundates a province, but how frequently do the dewdrops moisten the green leaves? We do not often read of hurricanes, tornadoes, and earthquakes, but the annals of providence could reveal the history of many a grain of dust borne along in the summer’s gale, many a withered leaf torn from the poplar, and many a rush waving by the river’s brim.

Hence learn to see in the little things of the Bible, the God of providence and nature. Observe two pictures, and you will, if thoroughly skilled in art, detect certain minute details, which indicate the same authorship if they are by the same hand. The very littlenesses often, to men of artistic eye, will betray the painter more certainly than the more prominent strokes, which might far more easily be counterfeited.

Experts detect a handwriting by a slight quivering in the upstrokes, the turn of the final mark, a dot, a cross, or less matters still. Can we not see the legible handwriting of the God of nature and providence in the very fact that the sublimities of revelation are interspersed with homely, everyday remarks? But they are not trifles, after all. I venture to say that my text has much in it of spiritual instruction. I trust that *this cloak* may warm your hearts this morning, that *these books* may give you instruction, and that *the apostle* himself may be to you an example of heroism, fitted to stir your minds to imitation.

I. First, let us LOOK AT THIS MEMORABLE CLOAK which Paul left with Carpus at Troas.

Troas was a principal seaport town of Asia Minor. Very likely the apostle Paul was seized at Troas on the second occasion of his being taken before the Roman emperor. The soldiers usually appropriated to themselves any extra garments in the possession of an arrested person, such things being considered as the right of those who made the arrest. The apostle may have been forewarned of his seizure, and therefore prudently committed his few books and his outer garment, which made up all his household stuff, to the care of a certain honest man named Carpus.

Although Troas was a full six hundred miles’ journey from Rome, yet the apostle Paul is too poor to purchase a garment, and so directs Timothy, as he is coming that way, to bring his cloak. He needs it

badly, for the sharp winter is coming on, and the dungeon is very, very chilly. This is a brief detail of the circumstances. What kind of cloak it was, certain learned commentators have spent whole pages in trying to discover. But as we know nothing at all about it ourselves, we will leave the question to them, believing that they know as much as we do, but no more.

1. But what does the cloak teach us? There are five or six lessons in it. The first is this—*let us perceive here with admiration, the complete self-sacrifice of the apostle Paul for the Lord's sake.* Remember, my dear friends, what the apostle once was. He was great, famous, and wealthy. He had been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. He was so zealous among his brethren that he could not but have commanded their most sincere respect. He was attended by a guard of soldiers when he went from Jerusalem to Damascus. I do not know whether the horse on which he rode was his own, but he must have been a man of importance to have been allotted so important a post in religious matters.

He was a man of good standing in society, and doubtless everybody looking at young Saul of Tarsus would have said, "He will make a great man. He has every chance in life. He has a liberal education, a zealous temperament, abundant gifts, and the general esteem of the Jewish rulers. He will rise to eminence." But when the Lord met him that day on the road to Damascus, how everything changed with him! Then he could truly say, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him."

He begins to preach—away goes his character. Now nothing is too bad for Paul among his Jewish associates. "Away with such a fellow from the earth; it is not fit that he should live," was the exact expression of Jewish feeling towards him. He continues his labors and away has gone his wealth—he has either scattered it among the poor, or it has been sequestered by his former friends. He journeys from place to place at no small sacrifice of comfort. The wife to whom he was probably once united—for no unmarried man could vote in the Sanhedrim as Paul did against Stephen—had fallen sick and died, and the apostle now preferred a life of singleness, that he might give himself entirely to his work.

If only in this world he had hope, he would have been of all men the most miserable. He has at last grown grey, and now the very men who owed their conversion to him have forsaken him. When he first came into Rome they stood with him, but now they have all gone like winter's leaves, and the poor old man, "such a one as Paul the aged," sits with nothing in all the world to call property, but an old cloak and a few books, and those are six hundred miles away.

Ah! how he emptied himself, and to what extremity of destitution was he willing to bring himself for Christ's name sake. Do not complain that he mentions his clothes—a greater than he did so, and did so in an hour more solemn than that in which Paul wrote the epistle. Remember who it was who said, "They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots." The Savior must die in absolute nakedness and the apostle is made something like Him as he sits shivering in the cold.

Brethren, was Paul right in all this? Were his sacrifices reasonable? Was the object which he contemplated worthy of all this suffering and self-denial? Was he carried away by an excessive heat of fanaticism to spend upon an inferior object what was not required of him? No believer here thinks so. You all believe that if you could give up substance, and talent, and esteem, yea, and your own life also for Christ, it would be well spent.

I say you think so, but how many of us have ever carried it out? Had I not better say, how few of us? There are some who seldom have an opportunity for sacrificing for Christ at all. What they give is spared from their overabundance—they never feel it. It is a high luxury when a man has such a love for Jesus that he is able to give until he pinches himself. If Paul were reasonable, what are you and I? If Paul only gives as a Christian should do, how ashamed should we be of ourselves? If he will bring himself to poverty for Christ, what shall we say of those base-born professors who will not lose a trifle in their trade for honesty's sake? What shall we say of those who say, "I know how to get money, and I know how to keep it, too," and look with scorn upon those who are more generous than they?

If you are content to condemn Paul, and charge him with folly, do so, but if not, if this be but a reasonable service, and such as the infinite grace of God which Paul experienced required of him, then let us do something of the like sort. If you have experienced as much love, love the Lord as much, and spend and be spent for the Lord Jesus.

2. Secondly, dear friends, we learn *how utterly forsaken the apostle was by his friends*. If he had not a cloak of his own, could not some of them lend him one? Ten years before, the apostle was brought in chains along the Appian way to Rome. And fifty miles before he reached Rome, a little band of members of the church came to meet him. And when he came within twenty miles of the city, at the “Three Taverns,” there came a still larger group of the disciples to escort him, so that the chained prisoner Paul, went into Rome attended by all the believers in that city.

He was then a younger man, but now, for some reason or other, ten years afterwards, nobody comes to visit him. He is confined in prison, and they do not even know where he is, so that Onesiphorus, when he comes to Rome, has to seek him out very diligently. He is as obscure as if he had never had a name, and though he is still as great and glorious an apostle as ever, men have so forgotten him, and the church has so despised him, that he is friendless.

The Philippian church, ten years before, had made a collection for him when he was in prison. And though he had learned in whatsoever state he was, to be content, yet he thanked them for their contribution as an offering of a sweet smelling savor unto God. Now he is old, and no church remembers him. He is brought to trial, and there are Eubulus, and Pudens, and Linus—will not some of them stand by his side when he is brought before the emperor? “At my first answer no man stood with me.”

Poor soul, he served his God and worked himself down to poverty for the church’s sake, yet the church has forsaken him! Oh! how great must have been the anguish of the loving heart of Paul at such ingratitude. Why did not the few who were in Rome, if they had been never so poor, make a contribution for him? Could not those who were of Caesar’s household have found a cloak for the apostle? No, he is so utterly left, that although he is ready to die of fever in the dungeon, not a soul will lend or give him a cloak.

What patience does this teach to those similarly situated. Has it fallen to your lot, my brother, to be forsaken of friends? Were there other times when your name was the symbol of popularity, when many lived in your favor like insects in your sunbeam? And has it come to this now, that you are forgotten as a dead man out of mind? In your greatest trials do you find your fewest friends? Have those who once loved and respected you fallen asleep in Jesus? And have others turned out to be hypocritical and untrue? What are you to do now?

You are to remember this case of the apostle. It is put here for your comfort. He had to pass through as deep waters as any that you are called to ford, and yet remember, he says, “Notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me.” So now, when man deserts you, God will be your friend. This God is our God *forever and ever*—not in sunshiny weather only, but forever and ever. This God is our God in dark nights as well as in bright days. Go to Him, spread your complaint before Him. Murmur not. If Paul had to suffer desertion, you must not expect better usage.

Let not your faith fail you as though some new thing had happened to you. This is common to the saints. David had his Ahithophel, Christ his Judas, Paul his Demas, and can you expect to fare better than they? As you look at that old cloak, as it speaks of human ingratitude, be of good courage and wait on the Lord, for He shall strengthen your heart. “Wait, I say, on the LORD.”

3. There is a third lesson. Our text *shows the apostle’s independence of mind*. Why didn’t the apostle borrow a cloak? Why did he not beg one? No, no, no. That is not to the apostle’s taste at all. He has a cloak, and though it is six hundred miles away, he will wait until it comes. Though there may be some who may lend, he knows that they who go a borrowing go a sorrowing, and that they who beg are seldom welcome.

I do not think a Christian should blush to borrow or to beg if he is absolutely brought to it, but I never like that class of people who do either systematically. I wish many of the poor would not damage

the charity of others by being so ready to beg on every pretense of necessity. A Christian would do well to remember that it is never to his honor, though it is not always to his dishonor, to beg. “I cannot dig, to beg I am ashamed,” said the *unfaithful* steward, and if he had been a *faithful* one, he would have been more ashamed still.

I say again, when it comes to the pinch, and a man must ask of his fellow, let him do it boldly. But let him never be too ready to do it, but like the apostle, as long as he can do without it, let him say, “I have labored with my own hand, and eaten no man’s bread for nought.” Paul taught that the minister of God had a right to be supported by the people. “If you partake of their spirituals,” says he, “it is right that you give of your temporals.” He insists upon it that they are not to muzzle the mouth of the ox that treads out the corn. yet though he holds this as a great general principle, he never takes anything himself. He follows his trade of tent making. He stitches away at the canvas, and earns his own living so that he is chargeable unto no man. Noble example!

How anxious all Christians ought to have been to see that he did not come to want in his old age! Yet Paul does come to poverty—but his independent spirit is not broken at the last, for he will wait till his own cloak is brought six hundred miles, rather than ask any man to give or lend. Let the Christian be quite as independent, for though independence is not a Christian grace, yet it is a common grace which, when wreathed with Christianity, is very beautiful and befits the character of a son of God.

4. The fourth remark is—*see here, how very little the apostles thought about how they were dressed.* Paul wants enough to keep him warm. He asks no more. There is no doubt whatever that the other parts of his garments were getting very dilapidated—that he was indeed in a state of rags, and so he needed the cloak to wrap about him. We read in olden times of many of the most eminent servants of God being dressed in the poorest manner.

When good Bishop Hooper was led out to be burnt, he had been long in prison and his clothes were so gone from him that he borrowed an old scholar’s gown, full of rags and holes, that he might put it on, and went limping with pains of sciatica and rheumatism to the stake. We read of Jerome of Prague, that he lay in a damp, cold dungeon, and was refused anything to cover him in his nakedness and cold.

Some ministers are very careful lest they should not always be dressed in a canonical or gentlemanly manner. I like that remark of Whitefield’s, when someone of a bad character wondered how he could preach without a cassock. “Ah,” he said, “I can preach without a cassock, but I cannot preach without a character.” What matters the outward garment, so long as the character be right?

This is a lesson to our private members too. We sometimes hear them say, “I could not come out on the Sabbath—I had not fit clothes to come in.” Any clothes are fit to come to the house of God with, if they are paid for, no matter how coarse they may be. If they are the best God has given you, do not murmur.

Inasmuch as the trial of raiment is a very sharp one to some of the poorest of God’s people, I think this text was put into the Bible for their comfort. Your Master wore no soft and dainty raiment. His garment was the simple peasant’s smock-frock—woven from the top throughout without seam, and yet He never blushed to wear it in the presence of kings and priests. I shall always believe that the Christian ought to cultivate a noble indifference to these outward things. But when it comes to the pinch of absolute want of clothing, then he may comfort himself in this thought, “Now I am companion with the Master. Now do I walk in the same temptation as the apostles. Now I suffer even as they also suffered.” Every saint is an image of Christ, but a poor saint is His express image, for Christ was poor. So, if you are brought to such a pinch with regard to poverty, that you scarcely know how to provide things decent by way of raiment, do not be dispirited, but say, “My Master suffered the same and so did the apostle Paul.” And so take heart and be of good cheer.

5. Paul’s cloak at Troas shows me *how mighty the apostle was to resist temptation.* “I do not see that,” you say. The apostle had the gift of miracles. Our Savior, though able to work miracles, never wrought anything like a miracle on His own account, nor did His apostles. Miraculous gifts were

entrusted to them with Gospel ends and purposes, for the good of others, and for the promotion of the truth. But never for themselves.

Our Savior was tempted by the devil, you will remember, when He was hungry, to turn stones into bread. That was a strong temptation to apply miraculous powers which were intended for other ends, to His own comfort. But He rebuked Satan, and said, “Man shall not live by bread alone.” Paul also had power to have created a cloak if he had liked. Why could he not? His very shadow healed the sick. If he had willed it, he could have prevented the cold and damp from having any effect upon himself. He who had once raised to life dead Eutychus, when he had fallen from a loft and brought back the vital heat, could certainly have kept the heat in his own body if he had chosen.

And I am bold to say, the devil often came to him and said, “If you are an apostle of God, if you can work miracles, command this atmosphere to rise in temperature, or these rags to be joined together and form you a comfortable raiment.” You do not know—you cannot tell, for you were never put to it—what were the stern struggles the apostle must have had in resisting the foul temptation to use his miraculous gifts for himself.

O brethren, I am afraid you and I are much more ready to give way to self than was the apostle. We preach the Gospel, and if God helps us, oh! directly the devil will have us to take some of the praise. “You preached a good sermon this morning,” said one to John Bunyan, as he came down the stairs. “You are too late,” said honest John, “the devil told me that when I was preaching.” Yes, God works the miracles, but we take the honor of it to ourselves. There is the temptation for any man who has gifts to use them to his own purposes, and if he does, he is an unfaithful steward to his Master.

I do beseech you, whether in the Sunday school or the church, never let the miracle-working power, which God has given you be used for yourselves. You can do for Christ’s sake mighty things, through faith and prayer, but never let prayer and faith be prostituted to so base a purpose as to minister unto the flesh. I know carnal minds will not comprehend this, but spiritual minds, who know the temptations of the devil, will know how stern must be a life-long battle to keep ourselves back from doing that which might apparently make us happy, but which would at the same time make us unholy.

6. The sixth lesson from this cloak is *we are taught in this passage how precisely similar one child of God is to another*. I know we look upon Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob as being very great and blessed beings—we think that they lived in a higher region than we do. We cannot think that if they had lived in these times, they would have been Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We suppose that these are very bad days, and that any great height of divine grace or self-denial is not very easily attainable.

Brethren, my own conviction is that if Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had lived now, instead of being less, they would have been greater saints—for they only lived in the dawn, and we live in the noon. We hear the apostles often called, “*Saint*” Peter and “*Saint*” Paul. And thus they are set up on high as on an elevated niche. If we had seen Peter and Paul, we should have thought them very ordinary sort of people—wonderfully like ourselves. And if we had gone into their daily life and trials, we should have said, “Well, you are wonderfully superior to what I am in grace, but somehow or other, you are men of like passions with me. I have a quick temper, so have you, Peter. I have a thorn in the flesh, so have you, Paul. I have a sick-house, Peter’s wife’s mother lies sick of a fever. I complain of the rheumatism, and the apostle Paul, when aged, feels the cold and needs his cloak.”

Ah, we must not consider the Bible as a book intended for transcendental super-elevated souls—it is an everyday book, and these good people were everyday people, only they had more grace, but we can get more grace as well as they could. The fountain at which they drew is quite as full and as free to us as to them. We have only to believe after their fashion and trust to Jesus after their way—and although our trials are not the same as theirs, we shall overcome through the blood of the Lamb.

I like to see religion brought out in everyday life. Do not tell me about the godliness of the Tabernacle, tell me about the godliness of your shop, your counter, and your kitchen. Let me see how grace enables you to be patient in the cold, or joyful in hunger, or industrious in labor. Though grace is

no common thing, yet it shines best in common things. To preach a sermon, or to sing a hymn, is but a paltry thing compared with the power to suffer cold, and hunger, and nakedness for Christ's sake.

Courage then, courage then, fellow pilgrim, the road was not smoothed for Paul any more than it is for us. There was no royal road to heaven in those days any more than there is even now. They had to go through sloughs, and bogs, and mire, as we do still.

*“They wrestled hard as we do now
With sins, and doubts, and fears,”*

but they have gained the victory at last and even so shall we. So much then, for the cloak which was left at Troas with Carpus.

II. We will LOOK AT HIS BOOKS.

We do not know what the books were and we can only form some guess as to what the parchments were. Paul had a few books which were left, perhaps wrapped up in the cloak, and Timothy was to be careful to bring them. *Even an apostle must read.*

Some of our very ultra-Calvinistic brethren think that a minister who reads books and studies his sermon must be a very deplorable specimen of a preacher. A man who comes up into the pulpit, professes to take his text on the spot, and talks any quantity of nonsense is the idol of many. If he will speak without premeditation, or pretend to do so, and never produce what they call a dish of dead men's brains—oh! that is the preacher.

How rebuked are they by the apostle! He is inspired and yet he wants books! He has been preaching for at least thirty years and yet he wants books! He had seen the Lord and yet he wants books! He had had a wider experience than most men and yet he wants books! He had been caught up into the third heaven and had heard things which it was unlawful for a man to utter, yet he wants books! He had written the major part of the New Testament and yet he wants books! The apostle says to Timothy, and so he says to every preacher, “Give yourself unto reading.”

The man who never reads will never be read. He who never quotes will never be quoted. He who will not use the thoughts of other men's brains proves that he has no brains of his own. Brethren, what is true of ministers is true of all our people. *You* need to read. Renounce as much as you will all light literature, but study as much as possible sound theological works, especially the Puritan writers and expositions of the Bible. We are quite persuaded that the very best way for you to be spending your leisure time is to be either reading or praying. You may get much instruction from books which afterwards you may use as a true weapon in your Lord and Master's service. Paul cries, “Bring the books”—join in the cry.

Our second remark is that *the apostle is not ashamed to confess that he does read.* He is writing to his young son, Timothy. Now some old preachers never like to say a thing which will let the young ones into their secrets. They suppose they must put on a very dignified air and make a mystery of their sermonizing. But all this is alien from the spirit of truthfulness. Paul wants books and is not ashamed to tell Timothy that he does. And Timothy may go and tell Tychicus and Titus if he likes—Paul does not care.

Paul herein is a picture of industry. He is in prison. He cannot preach—what will he do? As he cannot preach, he will read. As we read of the fishermen of old and their boats, the fishermen were gone out of them. What were they doing? Mending their nets. So if providence has laid you upon a sick bed and you cannot teach your class—if you cannot be working for God in public, mend your nets by reading. If one occupation is taken from you, take another, and let the books of the apostle read you a lesson of industry.

He says, “*Especially the parchments.*” I think the books were Latin and Greek works, but the parchments were Oriental. And possibly they were the parchments of Holy Scripture. Or as likely, they

were his own parchments, on which were written the originals of his letters which stand in our Bible as the epistles to the Ephesians, the Philippians, the Colossians, and so on.

Now, it must be, "*Especially the parchments*" with all our reading. Let it be *especially the Bible*. Do you attach no weight to this advice? This advice is more needed in England now than almost at any other time, for the number of persons who read the Bible, I believe, is becoming smaller every day. Persons read the views of their denominations as set forth in the periodicals. They read the views of their leader as set forth in his sermons or his works. But the Book, the good old Book, the divine fountainhead from which all revelation wells up—this is too often left. You may go to human puddles, until you forsake the clear crystal stream which flows from the throne of God. Read the books, by all means, but especially the parchments. Search human literature, if you will, but especially stand fast by that Book which is infallible, the revelation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

III. We now want to have AN INTERVIEW WITH THE APOSTLE PAUL HIMSELF, for we may learn much from him.

It is almost too dark to see him—we will find him out in that frightful den. The horrid dungeon—the filth lies upon the floor till it looks like a road which is seldom scraped—the draught blows through the only little slit which they call a window. The poor old man, without his cloak, wraps his ragged garment about him. Sometimes you see him kneeling down to pray, and then he dips his pen into the ink and writes to his dear son Timothy. No companion, except Luke, who occasionally comes in for a short time. Now, how shall we find the old man? What sort of temper will he be in?

We find him *full of confidence in the religion which has cost him so much*. For in the first chapter, at the twelfth verse, we hear him say, "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless, I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." No doubt, often the tempter said to him, "Paul, why you have lost everything for your religion? It has brought you to beggary. See, you have preached it and what is the reward of it? The very men you have converted have forsaken you. Give it up, give it up, it cannot be worth all this. Why, they will not even bring you a cloak to wrap round you. You are left here to shiver, and very soon your head will be struck from your body. Take your hand from the standard and retire." "No," says the apostle, "I know whom I have believed."

Why, I have heard of professors who say, "Ever since I have been a Christian I have lost in my business, and therefore I will give it up." But our beloved apostle clings to it with a life grip. And oh, there is no heart in our piety if our afflictions make us doubt the truth of our religion, for these trials inasmuch as they work patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, render us such that we are not ashamed, but we do the more firmly hold on to Christ.

Imagine you hear the apostle say, "I know whom I believe." It is very easy for *us* to say it. We are very comfortable, sitting in our pews. We shall go home to our plentiful meal. We shall be clothed comfortably. We have friends about us who will smile at us, and it is not hard to say, "I know whom I have believed." But if you were vexed on the one hand by Hermogenes and Philetus, and on the other hand by Alexander the coppersmith, and Demas, you would not find it quite so easy to say, "The Lord is faithful." Behold this noble champion who is just as much unmoved at the worst as he was at the best times. "I know how to be full," said he once, and now he can say, "I know how to suffer hunger: I know how to abound, and how to suffer loss."

But he is not only confident. You will notice that this grand old man is *having communion with Jesus Christ in his sufferings*. Turn to the second chapter, at the tenth verse. Did ever sweeter language than this come from anyone? "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: if we believe not, yet he abides faithful: he cannot deny himself."

Ah, there are two in the dungeon—not only the man who is suffering trouble as an evildoer, even unto bonds, but there sits with him one like unto the Son of Man, sharing all his griefs, and bearing all

his despondencies, and so lifting up his head. Well may the apostle rejoice that he has fellowship with Christ in his sufferings, being made conformable unto His death.

Nor is this all. Not only is he confident for the past, and in sweet communion for the present, but *he is resigned for the future*. Look at the fourth chapter and the sixth verse. “I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.” It is a beautiful emblem taken from the sacrificial bullock. There it is, tied to the horns of the altar, and ready to be offered. So the apostle stands as a sacrifice ready to be offered upon the altar.

I am afraid that we cannot all say we are ready to be offered. Paul was ready to be a *burnt offering*. If God willed it, he would be burnt to ashes at the stake. Or he would be a *drink offering*, as he did become, when a stream of blood flowed under the sharp sword. He was ready to be a *peace offering*, if God willed it, to die in his bed. In any case, he was a *freewill offering* unto God, for he offered himself voluntarily, as he says, “I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.” Glorious old man!

Many a professed Christian has been clothed in scarlet, and fared sumptuously every day, and yet could never say he was ready to be offered, but rather he looked upon the time of his departure with grief and sorrow. As you think, then, of poor, shivering, ragged Paul, think of the jewel which he carried in his breast. And O you sons of poverty, recollect that the magnificence of a holy life, and the grandeur and nobility of a consecrated heart can deliver you altogether from any shame which may cling to your rags and poverty, for as the sun at setting, paints the clouds with all the colors of heaven, so your very rags, poverty, and shame may make your life the more illustrious, as the splendor of your piety lights them with heavenly radiance.

We have not quite concluded with the apostle, for we find him not only resigned, but *triumphant*. “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.” See the Grecian warrior just returned from battle? He has many wounds and there is a gash across his brow. His chest is streaming here and there with cuts and flesh wounds. One arm is dislocated. He limps, like Jacob, on his thigh. He is covered with the smoke and dust of battle. He is smeared with many a blood-splash. He is faint, and weary, and ready to die, but what does he say? As he lifts up his right arm, with his buckler tightly clasped upon it, he cries, “I have fought a good fight, I have kept my shield.” That was the object of ambition with every Grecian warrior. If he kept his shield he came home glorious.

Now, *faith* is the Christian’s shield. And here I see the apostle, though he wears all the marks of the conflict, yet he triumphs in these marks of the Lord Jesus, saying, “I have fought a good fight, my very scars and wounds prove it. I have kept the faith.” He looks to that golden shield of the faith fastened to his arm and rejoices in it. The tyrant Nero never had such triumph as the apostle Paul, nor all the warriors of Rome, when the multitudes climbed the chimney-tops and looked down upon the procession. None of them had such true glory as this solitary man, who has trodden the winepress alone, and of the people there were none with him—who has stood against the lion, a solitary champion, with no eye to pity, and no arm to save, still triumphant to the end. Brave spirit! Never mind the old cloak at Troas, so long as your faith is safe.

Once more. He not only triumphs in the present, but he *is in expectation of a crown*. When the Grecian wrestler had fought a good fight, a crown was presented to him. And so Paul, who writes about the old cloak, also writes, “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.”

When I was picturing Paul, and talking of the poverty of many believers—“Ah,” said the sinner, “who would be a Christian? Who would suffer so much for Christ? Who would lose everything as Paul did?” Worldly minds here are thinking—“What a fool, to be led away by such an excitement!” Ah! but see how the tables have turned! “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown!” What if he had been robed in scarlet, had rolled in wealth, and been great, and what if there had been no crown for him in heaven, no joy hereafter, but a fearful looking of judgment?

See, he springs from his dungeon to his throne. Nero may cut off his head, but that head shall wear a starry crown. Courage, then, you who are downtrodden, afflicted, and despairing. Be of good cheer, for the end will make up for the way, and all the roughness of the pilgrimage will be well recompensed by the glory which shall await all those who are resting upon Christ Jesus.

We close, having done with this old cloak, when we say, is it not beautiful as you read this epistle, and indeed, all the apostle's letters, to see how *everything which the apostle thought of was connected with Christ*. How he had concentrated every passion, every power, every thought, every act, every word, and set the whole upon Christ. I believe that there are many who love Christ after a sort, just as the sun shines today. But you know if you concentrate the rays of that sun with a magnifying glass, and fix all the rays upon any object, then what heat there is, what burning, what flame, what fire! So many men scatter their love and admiration on almost any and every creature, and Christ gets a little, as we all get some rays of the sun.

But that is *the man*, who, like the apostle Paul, brings all his thoughts and words to a focus. Then he burns his way through life. His heart is on fire, like coals of juniper are his words. He is a man of force and energy, he may have no cloak, yet for all that, he is a great man, and the Czar in his imperial mantle is but a driveling dwarf by the side of this giant in the army of God.

O, I wish we could set our thoughts on Christ this morning. Are we trusting in Him this morning? Is He all our salvation and all our desire? If He be, then let us live to Him. Those who are wholly Christ's are not many. O that we were espoused as chaste virgins unto Christ, that we might have no other lover, and know no other object of delight. Blind are these eyes to all but Christ. And deaf these ears to any music but the voice of Christ. And lame these feet to any way but that of obedience to Him. Palsied these hands to anything but work for Him. And dead this heart to every joy if Jesus cannot move.

Even as a straw floats upon the river, and is carried to the ocean, so would I be bereft of all power and will to do anything but that which my Lord would have me do, and be carried along by the stream of His grace right onward, ready to be offered up, or ready to live, ready to suffer, or ready to reign just as He wills, only that He may be served in my living and dying.

It will little matter what cloak you wear, or if you have not any at all, if you have but such a concentration of all your bodily and mental powers, and spiritual energies upon Christ Jesus, and upon Him alone. May those of you who have never trusted Jesus be ready to rely upon Him now. He did not forsake Paul, even in extremity, and He will not forsake you.

***“Trust Him, He will ne'er deceive you,
Though you hardly of Him deem.
He will never, never leave you,
Nor will let you quite leave Him.”***

Therefore trust Him now and forever, for Jesu's sake. Amen.

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.