

THE MAN WITH THE MEASURING LINE

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*“I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand.
 Then said I, Whither goest thou?”*

*And he said to me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof.
 And, behold, the angel that talked with me went forth, and another angel went out to meet him,
 and said unto him, Run, speak to this young man, saying,
 Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein:
 For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.”*
Zechariah 2:1-5

IT is evident that this vision and prophecy graciously reveal the future history of Jerusalem. You may spiritualize, if you will, and say that Jerusalem signifies the church, but I pray you not to forget the literal meaning of such words as these in the twelfth verse—“The LORD shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again.” Jerusalem is spoken of, and Jerusalem is meant.

A man with a measuring line is about to measure the length and breadth of the city. He appears to be interrupted in his work by another angel, who foretells that so greatly shall Jerusalem extend, that she will be as a town without walls, for the number of men and cattle that shall be therein.

This prophecy has not as yet been fulfilled, it may have had some partial fulfillment in those times of peace before the coming of the Savior, but even then Jerusalem was surrounded by a triple wall. And though it is true that there was a large suburban population, yet the city was not even then “as towns without walls,” nor was the glory of God in the midst of her in any eminent degree. I believe this passage refers to a happy and glorious future yet to come, when the city of Jerusalem shall have no walls, except the protection of the Lord, but shall be extended far and wide.

The Jewish people and their royal city shall remain the center of the manifestations of divine glory, just as the city of London still remains the center of the metropolis. But the nations of the earth shall be joined unto the Lord, so that while Jerusalem remains the city of the Great King, the faithful among the people of all nations shall be, as it were, a suburban population to the chosen city, and the kingdom of Messiah shall extend far and wide. Jerusalem will be rebuilt in more than her former splendor, the Jews will be restored to their own land, and Messiah will reign as a prince of the house of David.

We cannot understand many portions of Scripture except upon this belief. If it be so, it appears according to this prophecy that God shall be the protection of this great city, and the glory in the midst of her. All her sons shall be gathered from their distant wandering places, and where they have associated themselves with Antichrist, they shall hear the voice which says, “Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon.”

Christ Himself shall fulfill His promise, “Lo, I come,” the nations shall be judged. God shall shake His hand over all lands and give them as a spoil to His people. Zion shall sing and rejoice, her Lord and King shall dwell in the midst of her. Many nations shall join themselves unto JEHOVAH, and *He*, from shore to shore shall reign, while all flesh is silent before Him, because He is raised up out of His holy habitation.

I am not given to prophesying, and I fear that the fixing of dates and periods has been exceedingly injurious to the whole system of pre-millennial teaching. But I think I clearly see in Scripture that the

Lord Jesus Christ will come—so far I go, and take my stand—that He will come *personally* to reign upon this earth.

At His coming it appears clear to me that He will gather together the Jewish people, that Jerusalem shall become the metropolis of the new empire which shall then extend from pole to pole, from the river even to the ends of the earth. If this be a correct interpretation of prophecy, you may read the whole of this chapter through and understand it. You have the key to every sentence, without such a belief I see not how to interpret the prophet's meaning.

Dear friends, we may sometimes refresh our minds with a prospect of the kingdom which is soon to cover all lands, and make the sun and moon ashamed by its superior glory. We are not to indulge in prophesyings as some do, making them their spiritual food, our meat and drink. But still we may take them as choice morsels, and special delicacies set upon the table. They are condiments which may often give a sweeter taste, or if you will, a greater pungency and savor to other doctrines.

Prophetic views light up the crown of Jesus with a superior splendor. They make His manhood appear illustrious as we see Him still in connection with the earth, to have a kingdom *here* as well as there, to sit upon a throne here as well as in yonder skies, to subdue His adversaries even upon this Aceldama, as in the realm of spirits, to make even this poor earth upon which the trail of the serpent is so manifest, a place where the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together.

If our view of prophecy be the correct one, it seems to be in perfect harmony with all the doctrines of the Gospel. God certainly did elect His people the Jews. He made a covenant with His servant Abraham, and albeit you will remind us that this was only a temporal covenant, I would remind you that it was the type of the spiritual one, and it would be an unhappy reflection for us if the typical covenant should prove to be only temporary as well as temporal. If that came to an end, and if God cast away, in any sense, the people whom He did foreknow, it might augur to us the ill foreboding that perhaps He might cast away His spiritual seed also, and that those who were chosen as the spiritual seed of Abraham, might yet be cut off from the olive into which they had been grafted. If the natural branches are cast away forever, why not the grafted branches too?

But here is our joy, the God who swore unto His servant Abraham that to him and to his seed would He give the land forever, has not gone back from His word. They shall possess the land. Their feet shall joyously tread its fruitful acres yet again. They shall sit every man under his own vine and under his own fig tree, and none shall make them afraid. And so the spiritual seed to whom the spiritual heritage is given as by a covenant of salt, they also shall possess their heritage forever, and of their rightful portion no robber shall despoil them.

Now, I think it cannot be said that I have avoided the immediate meaning of the passage before us, and that I have selected the vision as a text merely to accommodate it to my own purpose. You have now before you the intention and mind of the Spirit of God, so far as I am able to perceive it. And having spoken thus far upon it, I now feel at liberty to interpret the vision in what is commonly called a more spiritual sense, begging you, however, not to think that I make the spiritual sense override the sense I have already given, for the mind of the Spirit in the passage is ever to be respected far beyond any human accommodation. And though the accommodation may seem to be less historical and more suitable for Sabbath food to the people of God, yet remember, God's sense stands first, and our sense is only to be regarded and respected as it stands in harmony with other portions of Holy Writ.

My heart is so taken up with the present state of my church and congregation that I feel moved to use my text in its application to us, and I think it may well bear such an application. May God teach it and bless it to us.

First, dear friends, *I want you to lift up your eyes with Zechariah and see the man with the measuring line. Secondly, to open your ears with Zechariah and hear the voice of the prophesying angel. And then thirdly, I want you to go your ways and publish abroad the commands of this angel.*

I. First then, LET US SEE THE MAN WITH THE MEASURING LINE IN HIS HAND.

All Zechariah's visions are remarkably simple. They are not like Isaiah's when he saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up. Nor like Ezekiel's when he beheld living creatures with four faces, and wheels full of eyes. Zechariah had not imagination enough to be capable of beholding with due appreciation visions so complicated and mysterious. He was not the proper instrument of God for the revelation of these more mysterious matters. But the Lord had a place for him and a vision for him too.

How sweet to be a servant of God in *any* position! He sees simply a man, an ordinary architect, going forth with a measuring line to measure the city of Jerusalem—a very simple sight—and without any stretch of the imagination you can all picture the man with his line.

If this man in the text is to be viewed *as an angel*, commissioned by God to take measurements of that city, he would be sure to do it accurately, and his measurements would be instructive could he reveal them to us. Since they are hidden from our eyes, let it be enough for us to perceive that the city *has* measurements, has a settled length and breadth, that the measurements can be taken, and that we have divine authority for asserting that they have been taken.

This leads us to contemplate the doctrine of predestinating love, with its line of grace, and its plans of wisdom. God's city of Jerusalem is not to be built at hap-hazard. The line marks out and measures how long the wall shall be, and where the corner shall be placed, and how far the other wall shall be carried, and where it shall come to an end. The towers are counted, the bulwarks are considered. Every single item and particular of the sacred architecture of the church of God is written down in the decree of the Most High.

Every *man* has his plan, and shall not the Most High God? He is esteemed to be a simpleton who begins to erect a building with no sort of idea how it will look at the close, who is waiting till the topstone is brought out before he conceives in his mind any sort of idea of what the building will be like.

You would never employ such a person without foresight as an architect. And if a man were foolish enough to do this with his own building, all who heard thereof would make it the theme of laughter. It cannot be supposed, therefore, to be so with God. Your belief in His wisdom supposes that He has a plan, nay, necessitates that there should be a design in the divine mind.

Moreover, you cannot separate the thought of omniscience from God. If God be omniscient, He knows the end from the beginning. He sees in its appointed place, not merely the corner stone which He has laid in fair colors, in the blood of His dear Son, but He beholds in their ordained position each of the chosen stones taken out of the quarry of nature, and polished by His grace. He sees the whole from corner to cornice, from base to roof, from foundation to pinnacle. He has in His mind a clear knowledge of every stone which shall be laid in its prepared space, and how vast the edifice shall be, and when the topstone shall be brought forth with shoutings of "Grace! Grace! unto it."

Deny the decree of election, and what see you? You see the work of grace without God's superintendence in it. What would *creation* be if God had not been absolutely present there? Can we conceive of a single creature formed without the creating purpose of God? Is there a fish in the sea, or a fowl in the air which was left to chance for its creation? Nay, in every bone, joint and muscle, sinew, gland, and blood vessel, you mark the presence of God working everything according to the design of infinite wisdom.

Shall God be present in creation, ruling over all, and not in *grace*? Shall grace be left in a state of chaos while creation is ordered by the Most High? Look you at providence! Who knows not that not a sparrow falls to the ground without your Father? Even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Every dark and bending line meets in the center of Your love. It is our joy to believe that the measuring line is used in our trials and our troubles. If He ordained the number ten, who, can make it eleven? If He fill the cup but half-full, even satanic agency cannot fill it to the brim. God weighs the mountains of our griefs in scales, and the hills of our tribulation in balances.

And shall there be a God in providence and not in *grace*? What! shall He ride in the chariot of the clouds, and put a bit into the mouth of the tempest, and rein in the wild steeds of the storm, and yet shall

He leave the greater work of His grace, His third dominion, the grandest and the best, to the will of man, to the fickle choice of the creature?

Shall He make the glorious salvation of Jesus an unsettled thing, to be kicked about as a football by the free agency of man? Shall divinity stand as lackey to the creature's changeful choice? Never! He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy. He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion, and at last it shall be seen that in every chosen vessel of mercy, JEHOVAH did as He willed with His own, and in every separate instance of salvation, and in every part and portion of the work of grace, the Lord reigned as King forever and did as He willed, and glorified His own name. I see a man with a measuring line, and I rejoice to see him, and thank God that it is written, "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The LORD knoweth them that are his."

It is just possible that the man in the text was *nothing but a man*. At any rate, we may often see apparitions of men with measuring lines, and while I have an intense reverence to *the angel* with the measuring line, I must confess an entire dislike to *the man* with the measuring line.

How often, brethren, have we seen men with the measuring line endeavoring to estimate the length and breadth of God's true church. Some of them take a *very long line*, and they begin to calculate how many Protestants, Roman Catholics, and members of the Greek Church there may be throughout the world, and then they write down all these millions as being Christians.

Now, we beg to differ from the estimate. We wish we *could* agree with it, glad enough should we be to hope that these were all true members of the church of God. But when we remember the errors with which one section of the church is polluted almost beyond hope, when we remark the absence of all spirituality in others, when we see how the mass of nominal Christians are living without God and without Christ, when we reflect upon the many criminals, harlots and open sinners who would, according to this rule, be called Christians, we beg to remind the man with the measuring line, "They are not all Israel which are of Israel." And although they may all lie upon the threshing floor, "What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD." The field is the world, but among the wheat many tares are growing. Multitudes are gathered here, not in the valley of decision, but in the plains of outward profession, and a separating day must come.

If we were to measure in this way, we should certainly be deluded. We should find Christians whom we could not trust, Christians who did not know their creed, Christians who did not rejoice in the name of Christ, Christians without faith, without hope, and strangers to the commonwealth of Israel. Christians merely in name cannot be Christians, for "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

Again, I very frequently see another man with a measuring line. He is *of a very sad countenance*, and looks out upon the universe through blue spectacles. He will never fall into the error of the first man, but delights in the opposite extreme.

"Oh!" he says, as he wrings his hands in a kind of delicious misery, "the people of God are a handful, a remnant, a child might write them." He likes right well that hymn—

*"Dear Shepherd, of Thy chosen few,
Thy former mercies here renew."*

He wishes his minister to preach from, "Fear not, *little* flock," or this one, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and *few* there are that find it." Sometimes Despondency takes the shape of a man's fearing that he himself shall not enter. Now there is something humble about that, and therefore it is bearable, but in frequent instances, Despondency is married to Pride, and then it is not despondency about themselves, but about all the rest of the human family.

They are doubtless the men, and "wisdom will die with them." They hear of backsliders, and they conclude that all professors will backslide. They have read a story of some famous minister who stained

his character, and they believe that all ministers are mere pretenders. They hear of Mr. Liberal, who was noted for his generosity, and for his zeal in the cause of Christ, and yet he turned out to be generous with other men's money, and to be thought little better than a thief.

And Despondency shakes her head, and says, "I told you so, all men are liars." "Lord! are there few who shall be saved?" is the constant question of Despondency. And every day she lives, she keeps making the measuring line a little and a little shorter, till perhaps the day will come when Despondency shall prophesy the destruction of the Christian faith, the return of the Papacy, and the outpouring of the vials and say, "The faithful fail from among men, Zion is under a cloud." "A day of clouds and of thick darkness," is the only description of the present age which this spirit allows to be correct.

Perhaps Despondency herself may die in the dark, believing that she is not included in the line of the covenant of grace. Well, now, I must confess, I am thankful that God has not set our desponding brother to measure His Zion. I am grateful that He is pleased to keep that in His own hands, or it might be woe forever to many of the brightest of the Lord's people.

Certain men occasionally come across my path that carry a measuring line which was originally made either by one called *Mr. False Experience*, or *Mr. Proud Experience*. These brethren will not believe any to be Christians who have not experienced precisely the same emotions, doubts, fears, trembling, horrors, terrors, ecstasies, delights or raptures, which they themselves have felt.

They get hold of every Christian professor, and they do with him as Procrustes did with men in his day. They take him unto their bedchamber, and there is their bed of experience, the exact length that it should be. If the brother to be judged be not long enough to reach from head to foot, then they have a rack ready for him, and they will pull his limbs a little. Or if he should happen to be rather longer than themselves, then their pride is more aggrieved still, and it is likely enough that a sharp two-edged sword of censure will take off his head so as to accommodate him to the length of the couch.

Perhaps you know certain professors of this kind, and if you live in their midst, the only path of wisdom will be to hold your peace. They are supposed to have received information by special revelation from on high that their particular rut and that rut alone, leads to the land where sorrow is unknown. See them put on their spectacles and sit as a sort of jury to investigate a candidate for church membership. This poor young man only professes to have been converted some three months. If they entertain his case at all it is with the decided determination ultimately to reject him.

Thus they begin with him, "Have you ever experienced such and such law-work in your soul? Were you ever led to curse God, and to feel the awful corruptions of your nature, tempting you to blaspheme the Holy Ghost?" The poor young man can only say he knows himself to be a sinner, lost by nature and saved by grace through faith in Christ. They shake their heads and tell him it is a mere natural, notional faith. As he has not known the law-work which they have known, he is of no good whatever. They affect to hope for him, but they mean all the while that they do not believe in him an atom.

Another class of emotional religionists steers by another star. They question the inquirer from another catechism, "Have you been carried up to the third heaven, like Paul? Can you say, 'Whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell; God knoweth'?"

Such brethren sometimes will put such questions as this, "Do you feel any pleasure whatever when you are with your friends? Can you take a walk in the fields and find enjoyment in the singing of birds and in the foliage of the trees?" And if you answer, "Yes, thank God, I can." Ah! they are sickened at you. You are not spiritually-minded. If you can look at works of art and admire them, if you can view the works of God in creation and feel any pleasure, they are astonished at you, and think you carnal.

As for themselves, they have attained to such a superfine degree of spirituality, that they have purified all the *common* sense out of themselves as well as the "*sense*." Dr. Watts says—

*"May purge ourselves from sense and sin,
As Christ the Lord is pure."*

He meant by “sense” *feeling*, mere carnal feeling, but I am afraid that some have really purged themselves from sense in the ordinary acceptance of the term, and might very well claim that their spirituality was not at all akin to worldly wisdom, for it is remarkably akin to absurdity and cant.

Now, I thank God that the measuring line is not in the hands of the experientialists, and bless my Master that it is written, “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God,” and “We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren.”

I have also seen the measuring line in the hands of others—*Doctrinalists*. Yes, and their line has five marks which were originally made by John Calvin. And if your opinions do not square exactly to the standard, you are cut off from all part and lot in the blessings of vital godliness.

Zion is certainly built according to the arrangement of the five points, and therefore if any brother does not comprehend and receive them all, he is not a *weak* believer, but according to the measuring line of our rigid friends, he is not a believer at all.

You know, brethren, that there is no soul living who holds more firmly to the doctrines of grace than I do, and if any man asks me whether I am ashamed to be called a Calvinist, I answer, I wish to be called nothing but a Christian. But if you ask me, do I hold the doctrinal views which were held by John Calvin, I reply, I do in the main hold them, and rejoice to avow it.

But my dear friends, far be it from me even to imagine that Zion contains none within her walls but Calvinistic Christians, or that there are none saved who do not hold our views. Most atrocious things have been spoken about the character and spiritual condition of John Wesley, the modern prince of Arminians. I can only say concerning him, that while I detest many of the doctrines which he preached, yet for the man himself I have a reverence second to no Wesleyan. And if there were wanted two apostles to be added to the number of the twelve, I do not believe that there could be found two men more fit to be so added than George Whitefield and John Wesley.

The character of John Wesley stands beyond all imputation for self-sacrifice, zeal, holiness, and communion with God. He lived far above the ordinary level of common Christians, and was one of whom the world was not worthy. I believe there are multitudes of men who cannot see these truths, or at least, cannot see them in the way in which we put them, who nevertheless have received Christ into their hearts, and are as dear to the heart of the God of grace as the soundest Calvinist out of heaven. I thank God we do not believe in the measuring line of any form of bigotry.

I remember meeting with one who knew, yes, he knew how many children of God there were in the parish where he lived, there were exactly *five*. I was curious to know their names, and much to my amusement he began by saying, “There is *myself*.” I stopped him at this point, with the query whether he was quite sure about the *first* one.

Since then, his character has gone I know not where, but certainly he will get on better without it than with it. Yet he was the first on his own list, and a few others of his own black sort made up the five. There were in the other places of worship to which he did not go, men, whose characters for integrity and uprightness, ay, and for spirituality and prayerfulness, would have been degraded by being put into comparison with him, and yet he, *he* was set as judge in Israel, and was to know exactly how many people of God were in the village.

Oh! I bless God that we have learned to have very little respect for the vision of *the man* with the measuring line. When we see an angel with it, if such be the intention of the vision, we are glad enough. “The Lord knoweth them that are his,” but when we see *a man* with it, we tell him that he must give us a warrant from God, and show us how he is to know the elect by any other method than that laid down in Scripture, “By their fruits ye shall know them.”

Notice that this vision soon departed. The prophet does not seem to have dwelt long upon it. Almost as soon as it appeared, it disappeared. Perhaps it is not a good thing for the people of God at any time to be much engaged in numbering the people. It is a question what was the particular sin of David in numbering the people. I will not enter into it just now, but I do fear that it is hard for us to number the people at any time without committing a sin. Either the greatness of their number may lift us up and

inflate us with pride, or the littleness of their number may make us despond and doubt the strength of God.

The vision of *the man* with the measuring line is only to be looked upon for a moment, and then it may depart. We therefore ask you to close your eyes to that, and open your ears to the voice of that covenant angel, who, interrupting the man, began to tell Zechariah good things concerning times to come.

II. From my text it appears, dear friends, THAT WE ARE TO LOOK FOR A GREAT EXTENSION OF THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

I hope we are to look for it *now*. Jerusalem shall be inhabited “as towns without walls.” There are those in this place who remember when, if you crossed Blackfriars Bridge, you scarcely met with a house, as soon as ever you had crossed the bridge from London, you were in the country at once. They still survive among us to see how this great city has not only swollen to this district, but has gone right on for miles and threatens to absorb mile after mile of the country.

Such an extension we are to expect in Christ’s church. It began with twelve apostles. It was soon swollen to some four hundred brethren. It was increased by three thousand more on the day of Pentecost, there were added afterwards to the church daily of such as should be saved.

The Gospel was preached throughout all regions. The children of God were found in Athens and Corinth, in Derbe and Lystra, from all parts of the earth the elect were gathered out. The kingdom extended, the Gospel was preached in Spain as well as Italy. It passed on to Gaul, it came to Great Britain. In these after days it still continues to spread.

A new world has been discovered, the religion of Jesus has been carried there. The emigrants, who are peopling great islands of the southern sea, bear with them the religion of Jesus Christ. Everywhere the kingdom grows. There is, as it were, a little core and center of believers from among the Jewish people, but all around these there spreads a vast multitude of whom I might almost say that no man can number them.

In our portion of Christ’s church it has been upon a small scale the same. Beginning with but a handful of men, God has been pleased to add hundred after hundred till He has extended our number to a great host. But I do trust that what it is now is only the nucleus around which there is to be built a yet mightier church.

I would to God that now He might open the windows of heaven and pour us out a blessing, and so multiply us that the present thousands of this church might be altogether lost in the numbers yet added. Truly, I would not ask it for this church alone, but that other churches all around may derive health from our prosperity, that God may raise up out of our loins churches which shall be our sons and daughters, which shall again beget spiritual children, so that the kingdom of Christ may come, and His name be exalted in the land.

We are to look for an extension. I want to encourage our elders and deacons, and all our brothers and sisters, to be looking for it. We have prayed for God’s blessing, if ever a people prayed, we have. There has been an earnestness, I am sure, about the most of the brethren here, which cannot be without its reward. We have pleaded the name of Jesus even unto tears, and God does not answer prayer if He does not send us a blessing. We have used His Son’s name, we have pleaded His own promise, we have asked in faith, nothing doubting, and the blessing *must* come. Let us look for it, and as sure as ever effect follows cause, so surely must we receive an extension of this church.

It appears from the vision that *the supply for all the number shall be as great as is required*. “Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein.” The cattle are the provisions for the population. What is to be done with so large a church? How are the converts to be seen after? How are the members to be fed with spiritual food?

“As thy days, so shall thy strength be.” Whatever provision the church shall want, God will give it. JEHOVAH-JIREH is His name. This city of London has not overgrown its supplies. While we may be astonished at the population, we may be equally astonished at the provision. It shall be so in the

kingdom of grace. God will raise up in the midst of any growing church the proper men to look after the converts and see to their spiritual health. We have no need to be under any alarm in this respect, "All necessary grace will God bestow."

Other friends are afraid that if there is so large an extension of the church, there will be many added to it who are not believers, and that consequently the church may be increased, but not really strengthened. That too, is supplied in the text, "I, saith the LORD, will be *a wall of fire round about,*" both to keep out her enemies and to protect her from the incoming of false friends. It is the church's duty to see to it that she admits not unworthy persons knowingly, but her best guard is the presence of God. It is written, "Of the rest durst no man join himself unto them."

You remember the death of Ananias and Sapphira. It came in opportunely, just at the time when the church was rapidly increased. That solemn judgment set a wall of fire round about the church, so that ungodly persons dared not hypocritically come to be united with them. And so will God do to His church now.

The traveler, when he wishes to keep out the wild beasts, makes a ring of fire, and then the lion is shut out, and God makes a ring of fire round His church, and the enemy is kept at a distance. China is said to be protected by a wall of stone. Old England is shielded by her wooden walls. But the church of God has a better wall still, for she has the divine wall of fire. Her enemies cannot break through this to destroy the meanest of her citizens, and her false friends shall say to themselves, "Who among us can dwell with the eternal burnings?" and so shall start back from a church which is visibly sheltered and protected by the presence of the Most High.

Observe, dear friends, while the church is thus supplied and thus protected, *she does not lack for glory*. Her glory, however, does not lie in her numbers, or in the provision made for them, but in the presence of God. "I will be the glory in the midst of her." Let us never cease to pray for this. Let the church distinctly recognize that the Holy Spirit is in the midst of the church now. When we sing—

"Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,"

we mean rightly enough, but the words must not be understood to mean that the Spirit of God is not here, for He *is* in the midst of His church continually, and He dwells among His people as the Shekinah in the temple, and your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost. God dwelleth in you. Our prayer must be, "Thou that dwellest between the cherubim, shine forth! Stir up Thy strength and come and save us."

The glory of a church does not lie in the architecture of the place where she meets, nor in the eloquence of her minister, nor in the greatness of her number, nor the abundance of her wealth, nor the profundity of her learning, it lies in her God. "Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered." "O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, when thou didst march through the wilderness: the earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel." Here then lies the church's best hope, let her make this the grand object of her prayer, that the Lord may be the glory in the midst.

To close up this point, let us observe that doubtless at such seasons, *divine love shall be very sweetly enjoyed among all the members*. For the eighth verse says—though I do not intend to push our investigations further than the text—"He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye." We never know so much of our nearness and dearness to God as when we, in common with the rest of God's people, are visited with the joy of His presence.

How differently things look in the sunshine from the way in which they appear without it. Ride along this land of ours when the rain is pouring down, or the mists have gathered, and what a dull, dreary wilderness it seems. And these London streets, what a settlement for convicts they appear in the midst of our thick fogs! but let the sun shine forth as it did this morning, let the mists be scattered, and then even the leafless trees have a golden light upon them, and all nature rejoiceth, and the meanest and poorest landscape becomes, after its sort, sublime.

So when our hearts are dull and heavy, and the church of God is in the same state, how poor everything appears! but when the Lord shines forth, and the Sun of Righteousness arises with healing in His wings, then the doctrines of grace, how precious! then the ministry of the Gospel, how effectual! then the means of grace, how dear! the people of God, how estimable! the things of God, how delightful!

O that we may have this! We have a right to expect it! We do not deserve it, but God has promised it. Let us give Him no rest till we have it! Stay your measurings, O Despondency! Stay your measurings, O Bigotry! Stay your censures, ye who cut off the people of God, and hearken while the angel prophesies that the kingdom of Christ shall grow and increase, till, like a city without walls, Jerusalem shall have for her glory the presence of the Lord, and for her boundary nothing but the will of the Most High.

III. I close with a few words on *the third point*, and but a few. Where is this increase to come from, this great increase? It is to come from two sources indicated in the sixth and seventh verses. **MULTITUDES ARE TO COME OUT OF THE WORLD.**

“Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the LORD: for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the LORD.”

God’s chosen people are scattered here and there. There are many of them in this assembly of whom we know nothing, but God knows them. The preaching of the Gospel is a message to you to come forth, that message is this, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” It comes to every soul among you, with this commanding, but most consoling word, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.”

My hearers, you know what believing means, it is simply trusting upon what Christ has done for sinners. “Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation,” if you now trust Him, your many sins shall be forgiven you. You are a child of God and an heir of heaven. Like prodigals you may have spent all your substance. Spiritual hunger may have seized upon you. You would fain fill your belly with the vain pleasures of the world, but you cannot. The Holy Spirit whispers in your heart, “Arise, and go unto your Father.”

Obey that heavenly whisper, and though you be as yet a great way off, yet your Father sees you. He runs to meet you as you are. He falls upon your neck and kisses you, just as you are, undeserving and sinful. He cries to His servants, “Bring forth the best robe and put it on him.” Will you trust that Father’s love? Will you confide in it as it is set forth in the bleeding sacrifice of the Lord Jesus?

It is from you, O unconverted men and women, that we expect the greatest increase through the Spirit’s power. We are looking for it, and praying for it. I hope that the people of God this morning will be looking after you, and when this sermon is done I hope they will speak with you, or if they cannot do so, at least pray for you.

“Ho, ho, come ye forth”—twice the shout is given, as if you were slumberers and needed to be awakened. “Ho, every one that thirsteth; come ye to the waters,” here there are two “Ho’s,” as if you should be called with vehemence, with earnestness, with pleading—“Come ye forth.” The year is almost over, I pray God that a new year may not be begun by you in sin, but may God begin with you at the fall of the year, and bring you now to know His power to save.

There is another class from which the church is to get this increase, indicated in the next verse, “*Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon.*” There is a large number of this second class in this congregation. There are a number of you who do believe in Christ, but you dwell with the daughter of Babylon. If a census were taken of Christians according to the church roll, and I do not know that it could be taken better by mortal man, then you must be put down as being of the world.

When the Lord’s supper is spread, and the Savior says, “Do this in remembrance of me,” you go away, or stay in the galleries, you practically say to the Lord Jesus, “Lord, I will not do this in remembrance of You. I feel myself justified in disobeying Your command. I believe I have a valid reason for not doing what Your loving lips request me to do.”

I do not know if I put it in that shape that you will quite agree with your own assertion, because how can a man really have a justifiable reason for not doing what the Lord Jesus Christ expressly tells him to do? That word “separation” needs to ring in the ears of Christians, “Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the LORD, and touch not the unclean thing.” Though this is to be done practically by your actions, yet first and foremost it should be done by a distinct avowal of your Lord Jesus Christ, and that avowal should be by baptism, and union with the church.

May God bless these remarks both to saints and sinners, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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.