

A LESSON FROM THE GREAT PANIC

NO. 690

A SERMON
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*“The removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made,
that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.”*
Hebrews 12:27

IT is a most popular error that the world stands still, and is fixed and immovable. This has been scouted as an astronomical theory, but as a matter of practical principle it still reigns in men's minds. Galileo said, “No, the world is not a fixed body, it moves.” Peter had long before declared that all these things should be dissolved. At last men believed the astronomer, but they still doubt the apostle, or at least forget his doctrine.

Though it is clear as noonday in Scripture and in experience that stability is not to be found beneath the moon, yet men are forever building upon earth's quicksand as if it were substantial rock, and heaping up its dust as though it would not all be blown away. “This is the substance,” cries the miser, as he clutches his bags of gold, “Heaven and hell are myths to me.” “This is the main chance,” whispers the merchant as he pushes vigorously his commercial speculations, “as for spiritual things they are for mere dreamers and sentimentalists. Cash is the true treasure.”

Ah, sirs, you base your statements upon a foundation of falsehood. This world *is* as certainly a mere revolving ball as to human life as it is astronomically, and hopes founded thereon will as surely come to nought as will card houses in a storm. Here we have no abiding city, and it is in vain to attempt to build one. This world is not the rock beneath our feet which it seems to be. It is no better than those green, but treacherously soft and bottomless bogs which swallow up unwary travelers.

We talk of *terra firma* as if there could be such a thing as solid earth. Never was an adjective more thoroughly misused, for the world passes away and the fashion thereof. Every now and then, in order to enforce this distasteful truth upon us, the God of providence gives the world, in some way or other, a warning shake. The Lord has only to lay one finger upon the world, and the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea, while the waters of the ocean roar and are troubled until the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.

The most solid fabrics of human skill and industry are dissolved at the voice of the Most High. Though they appear to possess the firmness of earth and claim the sublimity of heaven, yet one divine word shakes earth and heaven in a moment.

Looking back through history, you will observe many periods of very tremendous shakings, the records of which are indelibly engraved upon human memory. An empire has been piled up by conquest and cemented by policy and power. Monarchs of gigantic mind have been sustained by armies of indomitable valor, and great dynasties have been established whose reign promised to be as enduring as the sun, but God has shaken, and the diadem has fallen, and the kingdom becomes desolate.

Babylon sat as a Queen and said, “I shall see no sorrow,” but she became desolate, and her palaces crumbled into a heap of ruins. The power of Persia wore the aspect of permanence, and proudly claimed universal dominion, but the iron rod of Alexander broke it in pieces as a potter's vessel. Nor could the Macedonian Empire long continue, but soon gave place to the mightier power of Rome, which, with all its valiant legions, lasted but its time, and then, like a bowing wall, fell headlong to the ground. Even as a moment's foam dissolves into the wave that bears it and is lost forever, so dynasties, republics, empires, all pass away. As a dream, when one awakes, their image is gone forever.

Between the intervals of these great revolutions there have been changes less extensive, but still of the same warning character. Every now and then in our commerce God gives a serious shake to our affairs. Men usually have a degree of confidence in their fellow men, and on the strength of this legitimate confidence business flourishes. But on a sudden, as though seized with madness, they say in their haste with David, "All men are liars," and forthwith clamor for their gold.

The boat is quite able to ferry them all across the stream if they will have patience, but they are carried away with the notion that it will soon be swamped, and therefore they push and fight to get on board all at once, and so bring to pass the very evil which they feared.

Had they but a little patience and a little forbearance, were they much less greedy, and much more considerate of others, things might still go well enough. But selfishness takes fire at the least suspicion, blazes into mistrust, and setting its neighbor's house on fire to save its own candle, soon finds its own dwelling in flames too. Greed is so afraid lest one brick of its house should be stolen that it pulls out the cornerstone to keep it safe under the bed, and the whole building tumbles about its ears.

Few of us ever dreamed of seeing such a panic as that of the last two days, and now, pausing in the midst of it, it may be as well to look around. What about these commercial shakings? How can we account for them? Are they not results of the law of change and instability, which is stamped upon every created thing? Instead of wondering at panics, we may well wonder that they do not come oftener. In considering the body of the commonwealth, we may say of it as Dr. Watts does of our natural body—

*"Strange that a harp of thousand strings
Should keep in tune so long."*

No wonder that the machine of commerce sometimes gets out of order, the wonder is that with so much dirt of trickery, deceit, and covetousness, it goes on at all. Considering the depravity of the heart of man, it is perfectly marvelous that human governments are so stable, and that mortal affairs run so smoothly. We can only attribute it to the presiding providence of God, that there are not many more crashes and disasters.

But still what of these shakings? If they must come, what must we say of them? Why, this much, that ultimately they are among the greatest blessings which God sends us, for with all their attendant calamities they shake only the things which may be shaken, while the things which cannot be shaken remain, and remain in a healthier state because the unsound and rotten things have been discovered and removed.

We shall regard our text as declaring a great general principle, that God shakes in order that the things which can be shaken may fall, and that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. We will try to carry out that principle to practical purpose this morning.

I. First, the original drift of the statement refers to THE OLD JEWISH DISPENSATION.

The ceremonial law was a very wonderful system of types and figures. To the spiritually-minded Israelite it was an illustrated book full of precious teaching. Prophets and kings delighted to study it. Such men as David and the like perused its sacred pages both day and night with ever fresh delight. But after all the Jewish dispensation, with all its outward splendor and inward meaning, was still a thing that could be shaken. And therefore when its time of shaking came, all the created part of it passed away and only its eternal truths remained.

Today we find the Jew, but we find not the Mosaic economy. Israel has neither priest, nor sacrifice, nor altar, nor temple. Jerusalem is trod under foot by the Gentiles, and Zion's hill no longer echoes to the voice of psalms. Judah's sons are banished far away, and her daughters dwell in exile. The outward economy was shaken at the coming of our Lord, and as an external thing has ceased to be.

How was it that it could be shaken? One reason was that *it had so much to do with materialism*. It needed an altar of earth or stone, and such altars the hand of the spoiler can overturn. It required a bullock that has horns and hoofs, and such sacrifices the plague may slay. It demanded a priest of the

house of Aaron, and a race of men may be cut off from the families of the nations. It needed a tabernacle or a temple, and buildings made with hands are readily demolished, hence it could be shaken.

The veil of the temple has been rent, the great stones of the temple are thrown down, a priest with Urim and Thummim no more appears, and a consecrated altar no longer smokes. Where is the ark with its mystic cherubim? Where the table of shewbread, and the golden candlestick, and the tables of stone? These were but things which are made, and they have been shaken and removed. But the things which cannot be shaken still remain. Our spiritual altar still endures, our great High Priest still lives, our house not made with hands is still eternal in the heavens.

Our spiritual faith depends not upon materialism. We have no altar of brass or stone, our Lord Jesus sanctifies our offerings. We have no incense of frankincense and onycha, the merits of our Savior are sweeter far. We need no temple nor holy of holies within the veil, for we worship God in spirit, and—

*“Where’er we seek Him He is found,
And every place is hallowed ground.*

We have given up all that which binds unseen realities to the shadows which are seen, and now we are no more as to our faith in bondage to the beggarly elements of matter, time, and space.

The Jewish religion could be shaken because it could be combated by material forces. Antiochus could profane its altars, Titus could burn its temple and cast down the walls of the sacred city. But no invader can pollute the heavenly altar of our spiritual faith by brute force, or destroy the celestial bulwarks of our hope by fire and sword. Material forces are not available in our warfare, for we wrestle not with flesh and blood. The tyrant may burn our martyrs and cast our confessors into prison, but the pure truth of Jesus is neither consumed by fire nor bound with chains. It has within itself essential immortality and liberty.

The doctrine that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners is no more to be wounded by the sword of persecution than is the ocean to be scarred by the keels of navies. When winds may be manacled, when waves are fettered, and when clouds may be shut up in dungeons, then, nay not even then, may the Word of God be bound. The free spirit of the cross of Christ cannot be vanquished by armies, nor can legions tread it down.

If our devotion hovered around an earthly shrine, and could only be presented by a certain order of men robed in a peculiar garb, and chanting a peculiar ritual, then the truth of Christ might be put down for a while, if not extinguished. But we depend on none of these things, we can as well worship God in barns as in basilicas, in catacombs as in cathedrals. Ploughmen and paupers are as much priests to God as presbyters or prelates, and solemn silence may yield as true praise as the voices of the sons of music with all their pipes and organs.

Our religion is so spiritual that death itself in ridding us of these material bodies shall rather assist than injure our devotions, so that we laugh to scorn both spear, and sword, and buckler, for our holy faith is beyond the reach of carnal weapons.

Moreover, the Mosaic economy passed away because it could be affected by time. The ark was made of long-enduring gopher wood, but it has yielded to time. The veil was one of the most costly and durable fabrics, but it yielded to the strain, and was rent from top to bottom. The temple itself, if it had not been destroyed by the enemy, would have grown gray with age, for time strikes with impartial hand buildings both holy and profane.

“Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.” But see the doctrine of the cross of Christ! No time affects it. The message of salvation by grace is as fresh today as when Peter preached it at Pentecost. The great command, “Believe and live,” has as much life-giving power about it as when it was first applied by the Holy Ghost. No time affects the promise of the Father, the merit of the blood of Jesus, or the energy of the Divine Spirit, hence our faith remains.

Beloved friends, many more shakings may come. Romanism, which is a spurious reproduction of the materialism of Judaism, needs a shake to destroy it. Puseyism, an equally gross and carnal combination of the outward and visible with the inward and unseen, will also pass away when its hour comes, but the faith once delivered to the saints will outlive every change.

The symbol is transient, the spiritual truth is eternal. Over every form of material worship there shall be pronounced the sentence, "Earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes," but the pure spiritual faith of Jesus Christ can never die. The blessed doctrine that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, and all those glorious doctrines which cluster around the cross of Christ shall survive "the wreck of matter and the crash of worlds."

They shall not only remain, but remain in greater clearness and in fuller power, because the things that could be shaken are taken away, for created things only dim the luster of the cross, and are made by human sin a veil to hide the Redeemer's glory. The more completely they are removed the more plainly shall we see the cross of Christ in open vision. "They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail."

II. We now turn the light of our text upon another subject. ALL THAT IS TRUE IN OUR PROFESSED CREEDS AND STANDARDS WILL STAND WHEN MERE OPINIONS ARE SHAKEN.

Some of us though young are old enough to recollect a great many theological panics, panics very nearly as foolish as that in Lombard Street, for there are other old ladies besides those who rush to the bank to draw out their deposits. It is not so very long ago that we had a certain "Rivulet" controversy, then came the noisier battle of the "Essays and Reviews." By and by a live bishop fired off an arithmetical cannon at Moses, and now all sorts of writers are hammering away at the "Life of Christ," and what may be next we cannot tell.

When these attacks occur there is generally a very great alarm among timid believers. They say, "What will happen now? People do not respect authority. They used to receive sound teaching because they were taught it. Now they want to know the reason of everything. Alas, Master, what shall we do?"

It is true that men are beginning to raise very serious questions, and some which will not be answered today nor tomorrow. They want us to prove now that the Bible is the Word of God, instead of accepting it as such. The skepticism which questions everything is very rife and cannot be stifled, for it persists in putting its questions again and again, and saying, "No, I will never be quiet until I get an answer." Is there any real cause for fear in all this? Will the truth as it is in Jesus suffer damage from these attacks?

My brethren, I believe that it has not suffered and will not sustain an injury, but on the contrary, will be made the more triumphant thereby. I cannot exculpate or even make an apology for those who make these attacks upon the Word of God, to their own Master they stand or fall. Above all I cannot say a word in the defense of certain professed ministers of Christ, who only exercise their calling to undermine that which they profess to have been called to defend. But beloved, whoever may be the instruments, whether they are professed men of God or overt servants of the devil, I do not believe that controversial shakings can lead to the destruction of a single truth, but to the bringing out of that which is true, and separating it from falsehood.

During the Reformation period the pulpits resounded with the doctrine of justification by faith and little else, and divers heresies arose, and attention was directed to other truths equally necessary to edification, so that a more complete Gospel testimony was promoted. Just now the tug of war seems to gather around the doctrine of future punishment, which I believe to be as certain as the existence of God and the inspiration of Holy Scripture. Now that struggle against it will only bring out that truth more and more clearly, and will make the ministers of Christ thunder it out with greater certainty. And so, by God's grace, sinners will be alarmed and driven to the cross of Christ for comfort.

Never be afraid, my brethren, truth will bear threshing and lose nothing but the husk which surrounded it. Fear not for the truth because of the ability and education of its foes. The wisest man living is a fool when he fights against the truth as it is in Jesus, and you will be a match for him when he is on the side of wrong.

Do not give infidelity credit for a vast amount of sense and learning, it is only folly masking itself under the garb of philosophy, metaphysics, and outlandish jargon. If I cannot defend what I believe, I am afraid I shall begin to doubt it myself. And therefore, for my own sake, I will make myself master of the point, if possible, and if in the study of it I do not meet with an answer which may satisfy my opponent, if I meet with one which satisfies my own conscience, I shall be all the better and stronger a Christian for it and so good will come out of evil. Shake away, sir! Sift away! Not one grain of wheat will fall to the ground!

I stood this week by the side of a church which once was a considerable distance inland, but now it stands just by the ocean side. Almost every year a great mass of the clay cliff falls into the sea, and in a year or two this parish church must fall. It stands now in quietude and peace, but on a certain day it will all be swallowed up into the sea, as certainly as the elements still work according to their ordinary laws.

I could not help thinking that the edifice was a type of certain ecclesiastical bodies which stand upon the clay cliff of Statecraft, or superstition. The tide of public enlightenment, and above all the ocean tide of God's Spirit, is advancing and wearing away their foundation till at last the whole fabric must go.

What then? Will you hold up your hands and cry, "The church of God is gone?" Forbear the foolish utterance, God's church is safe enough. Look yonder, there stands the church of God upon a stormy promontory where the sea always dashes and perpetually rages on all sides. And yet she fears no undermining because she is built on no clay cliff, but on a rock against which the waves of hell shall not prevail.

There let your earth-born, State-propped churches go! Swallow them up, O sea of time, swallow them all up and leave no wreck behind! But the church of the Living God shall stand all the more glorious because of the ruin which has overtaken her rivals and discovered their human origin.

I need not, however, enlarge, because you can all see it is so if you look back in history. And you may rest assured that what was true a hundred years ago will be true now, and that the more there is of strife against the Gospel, the more the Gospel will prevail. Therefore let us not fear, but rejoice confidently in our God.

III. The principle may be applied in a third direction, THE REAL IN OUTWARD PROFESSION STANDS, NOTWITHSTANDING TIMES OF SHAKING.

There are seasons when the professing church undergoes fearful trials. She suffered in olden times the ordeal of *persecution*. Edicts and writs were issued forbidding all worship in the name of Jesus. Cruel penalties were the reward of those who were faithful to the doctrine of the cross. The rough wind howled dreadfully, and the result was that the church, which had been overgrown with hypocrisy, was speedily freed from pretenders. And only those remained whose faith could bear the fire.

The church was thus refined by persecution, and might have thanked her persecutors for having put her through the blessed process. Nowadays we are not so much subject to this test, but the world hates us still. It now *fawns* upon the Christian. It invites him to share her joys, and bids him be no longer rigid and strict. It offers him rich rewards and soft speeches if he will but compromise a little, and not be too sternly pure and upright.

What of this? Is it not the same purifying process? Let those who love the world go to it by all means, and let those who value the world's pleasures have them. If it were possible for me to put a hedge all round this church so that none of you should be tempted to enter the theater or enter into giddy company, if I could put a wall all round so that none of you should ever be tempted into the gin-palace or the playhouse, I should not dare to do it, for what would you then be? You would only cease from these things because you could not get at them. The taste for such vanities, if it is in your hearts, would be uncured.

If you were hypocrites you would not be so likely to be found out if never tried. And those of you who are genuine would never grow into strong men, but remain Christian babies—nursed and dressed by others, but not at all able to run alone. The blandishments of the world are only another form of that fan which is in Christ's hand, with which He purges the great visible heap lying upon the threshing-floor of His church.

When some of you fall into temptation, though we cannot but weep over *you*, yet we do not know but what your outwardly falling into temptation may only have discovered the rottenness and wickedness of your heart, and so we may be well rid of you. And you yourself, in the long run, may have your eyes opened to much secret evil which otherwise you would never have detected.

At certain times *discord* has marred our churches. Blessed be God we have not felt it here, but when it does come, I am not certain that that is altogether a matter of regret. There are parties and strife, and all this is sin, but when the church is shaken those that can be shaken will be shaken, and they will slide off, some this way, and some that. But those who cannot be shaken will stand fast in their integrity, and defend the faith once committed to the saints.

There may also happen *great fallings into sin*. Some who have been prominent in the church may make shipwreck, and when this occurs, woe indeed is it to the whole community and sorrow to every member. But still I am not certain but what there may be a gain even in the loss, for then those are discovered whose faith may have stood in the wisdom of man, who have been depending on human countenance, and not following holiness for its own sake, and others who have merely been led by associations and not by principle, are led to great searching of heart.

I would sorrow in all cases of failure, but not as though I had no consolation, for, my brethren, those only are shaken that may be shaken, but those who are rooted and grounded in Christ and are truly what they profess to be, will stand fast unto the end.

That old oak in the forest is one of the noblest works of God. Look at it just now bursting into full leaf, bearing well its verdant honors, and making a picture worthy of the artist's rarest skill. What are these dry pieces of wood which strew the ground beneath it? What are these large branches which rot under its shade? It is needless to ask, for we all know that they fell from the tree during winter's storms.

Is it a cause of regret for the sake of the tree that those rotten branches were broken off? It may be a lamentation as far as concerns the broken boughs, but the tree itself would never have been so healthy, and never looked so complete if the rotten branches had been suffered to abide.

When the hurricane came howling through the woods, the old tree shivered in the gale, and mourned as it heard the cracking of its boughs, yet now it is thankful because the sound healthy branches with sap and life in them are all there, and the withered ones no longer encumber the trunk.

Summing this matter up in a word or two, I do not think times of storm to a church are in the long run to be regretted, a calm is much more dangerous. The plague bearing miasma settles and festers in the vale till the atmosphere becomes deadly, even to the casual passenger. But the storm fiend, as men call him, leaps from the mountains into the sunny glades of the valley, and with terrific vigor hurls down the habitations of men and tears up the trees by the roots. But meanwhile all is superabundantly compensated by the effectual purging which the atmosphere receives.

Men breathe more freely and heaven smiles more serenely now that the heaviness of the death-damp is gone, and the poisonous vapor clings no longer to the river's bank and the valley's side.

IV. We will further apply the principle to OUR OWN PERSONAL EXPERIENCE.

Beloved friends, this principle, which is true without, is equally sure within. There will come to every sincere Christian a time of inward shaking, testing, and convulsion. We have included much in our experience which is not *real*. We think we know a great deal, which is nothing better than boastful ignorance. How many times we have imbibed the conceit that we were becoming very humble, when we were never more proud than when we thought so!

We have felt as if we were conquering all our besetting sins, at that very moment Satan was laughing at us because we mistook a sleeping sin for a dead sin. We are puffed up with the fancy that we are rich

and increased in goods, whereas all that we have put in at the front door has been stolen at the back door and more. We have put our spiritual money into a bag that is full of holes. We have been heaping up that which is not bread, and spending our labor for that which profits not. The soul's conflict comes, and we are troubled because we do not care to be disturbed in our false peace, but ah, how much we need disturbing!

I know some of you do not relish soul-searching sermons. When I give you one which acts like the refiner's fire, you can scarcely endure it. You want to have the soft pillows of the promises laid under your head, and savory meat placed by your side. But searching sermons you wish to be few and far between. But these times of self-examination are fully as necessary as times of nourishing and comfort. And when they visit your inner man they are loaded with blessings, and are to be received with gratitude and thanksgiving.

Dear friends, let me mention a few methods of soul-shaking. *Affliction* is one of them. The man thought that he had resigned everything to God—death came and took away his child, where was his resignation then? Perhaps it stood that trial, but lo, the Lord removes another—how now, good sir? A second time—do you still bear it? Alas, the third shaft smites another beloved one. Can you still, in all things own His hand? Do you still stand to the surrender? You say, “Ay.” May it prove so when the trials come!

You said the other day, dear friend, “I do not think I am worldly-minded. I hope my affection is set upon things above, and not on things on the earth.” How have you found it during the last two or three feverish days? You sang the other day, as we sang this morning—

***“Let mountains from their seats be hurl'd
Down to the deep, and buried there;
Convulsions shake the solid world;
Our faith shall never yield to fear.”***

How stood your faith on Friday when the banks suspended payment? Did you play the man or play the fool? When the great waters were let loose, was your ark seaworthy, or did it prove a poor leaky hulk? We have, I fear, much more resignation in name than in fact, and more faith in fancy than in reality.

You think sometimes that now you really do love God with all your heart, and soul, and strength, and that nothing can come in to make you think harshly of Him. But will not a sharp blow from the rod alter your tune? Do you kiss the rod, or do you begin to kick like a willful child? Can you say with Job, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away: blessed be the name of the LORD”?

Tribulations, losses, crosses, sicknesses, and bereavements are very stern trials, and the things within us which may be shaken will be shaken by them. But if we can bear them well and trustingly, and yet praise and bless God for all, we have evidence of possessing gracious qualities which cannot be shaken, and therefore will remain.

What a shake *temptation* gives us! We spoke of that last Sabbath morning. [See sermon #689, *Temptations On The Pinnacle*]. How commonly is it the lot of God's people! Temptations will assail us of a sort that we never dreamed of. We are tempted to deny God, to doubt the deity of Christ, to mistrust the truth of Scripture, tempted to presumption, to every form of sin, and there are times when temptations follow each other so quickly that we do not know which way to look nor where to turn.

We use the great shield of faith as best we can, but it seems as if it could not avail us to ward off the innumerable darts. Ah, what shall we do *then*? Why, brethren, we shall then know whether our grace is the grace of God or the grace of man. We shall now see whether we have the faith of God's elect or not. The faith of God's elect can write “*Invicta*” upon its escutcheon. It is unconquered and unconquerable,

but the faith which springs from mere human reason will speedily give way like a pasteboard helmet, or a wooden sword.

O sharp temptations! terrible as you are to me, yet I thank God for you, because the trial of my faith, which is much more precious than that of gold which perisheth, though it be tried by fire, shall redound to the glory of God and to my own comfort.

There is a time of shaking coming which none of us shall be able to avoid. If we could live without affliction and without temptation, which I think will be impossible, yet we cannot enter into the promised land without passing through the river of *death*, unless the Lord shall come. What a testing-time will the death hour be!

Beloved friends, certain professors cannot endure to have a suspicion raised concerning the sincerity, vitality, and power of their godliness. They say, "Why should the minister set me questioning myself as to whether I am saved or not? Is it not best for me to believe that I am saved, and so go on cheerfully till I die?" Beloved, may this tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth ere I shall knowingly assist any of you in being comfortable in presumption.

True faith can bear examination, and even courts it. The preaching which says to its hearer, "You are not to examine yourself, take it for granted that it is all well with you," is a preaching that comes from the bottomless pit and does the devil's work. But it is not a ministry which God has sent.

If my faith will not bear human examination it will never bear God's examination. And if when I am in health I dare not sit down by the hour together to look over my soul's estate, what shall I do in the swellings of Jordan? If even now I am half afraid, what shall I be then? and if I dare not now look certain texts of Scripture in the face, but am obliged to forget that they are in the Bible in order to be at peace in my own heart, oh! what shall I do when those texts will force themselves upon me, and will not take my indifference for an answer, but will demand of my conscience that it should feel their power?

Let me beseech you while you rest simply and alone upon Christ, be sure that you rest sincerely and with your whole heart upon Him. Do not make mistakes about your soul's eternal matters, for mistakes here will be fatal. Be built upon the rock, and be surely built on it. Do not be afraid of being shaken now, because you must be shaken before long.

That silent chamber must be tenanted by you, and on that bed you must be stretched. You will hear the warning voice of death in the silent tread of those who expect your departure, and in the faint whisper of the physician as he warns your friends that there is no hope. You will be compelled to gaze into worlds unknown, You will hear the booming of the deep sea of eternity, and oh, if a fear should molest you, then how dark will be your descent into the valley!

But oh, beloved, if you can be confident then, with what joy will you face your last hour, and with what triumph enter into eternity! How can you expect to be confident *then* if you are self-indulgent *now*, and will not dare to try your estate? Come, have a friendly suit as it were in the heavenly chancery between your soul and your hopes today, lest there should be a fatal suit against you, a suit brought on by divine justice which shall end in your total bankruptcy throughout eternity. God grant that we may not be afraid of being shaken, for if we cannot bear shaking now what shall we do at the last?

What has been the result of all the shaking through which we have passed hitherto? I think it has been this—we have had a great deal removed from us which was of no use to us. We could boast once rather more loudly than we dare to do now. I must confess that the longer I live the more of a fool I feel myself to be. I am in myself weaker, more distrustful, more conscious of sin, more hopeless of self-assistance than ever. The more strength I get from God the weaker I discover myself to be in and of myself.

There were a few things that I thought I knew once, but except those things which God has taught me I now find that I know nothing. I suppose that the further we proceed in the way to heaven the more we shall be dissatisfied with ourselves, because our daily trials and troubles have the effect of bursting many of those bubbles in which we once put our confidence. All the wooden centers must be taken away from our masonry, for God builds His arches so that they will stand without supporting frameworks. The

dog shores must all be knocked away from our ship, for it is not meant to lie high and dry on the shore, it is to be launched upon a sea of everlasting glory. The dross is consuming, blessed be God for that, for the precious metal gains by the loss. Our outward man decays, but the inward man is renewed day by day. Go on, Great Shaker of heaven and earth, and shake from me my mere pretensions, my presumptions, and empty professions, for the genuine work of grace will be helped thereby!

V. I must now bring before you ALL THAT YOU HAVE IN POSSESSION.

The things which can be shaken will be removed, but things that cannot be shaken will remain. We have many things in our possession at the present moment which can be shaken, and it ill becomes a Christian man to set much store by them. The poorest man amongst us has many providential blessings for which to be grateful this morning, but the richest among us has nothing earthly upon which he can depend. Wife and children make glad our hearth, we have a little place which may be very homely, but it is our home and we love it.

Some of you are prospering and thriving traders, others are merchants who have almost accumulated a competency. Be grateful for all this, but do not forget that these are things which may be shaken. The cheek of the wife may grow pale, the lustrous eyes of the little ones may soon become dim, the house may be left a heap of ashes, the property may take to itself wings and fly away, there is nothing stable beneath these rolling skies, change is written upon all things.

Yet, my brethren, some of us have certain “things which cannot be shaken,” and I invite you this morning to read over the catalog of them, that if the things which can be shaken should all be taken away, you may derive real comfort from the things that cannot be shaken, which will remain.

In the first place, whatever your losses may have been, you enjoy *present salvation*. You are this morning standing at the foot of His cross, trusting alone in the merit of Jesus’ precious blood, and no rise or fall of the markets can interfere with your salvation in Him, no breaking of banks, no run upon your credit, can touch that. A sinner saved!

I recollect the time when I thought that if I had to live on bread and water all my life, and to be chained in a dungeon all my days, I would cheerfully submit to that if I might but get rid of my sins; when sin haunted and burdened my spirit, I am sure I would have counted the martyr’s death to be preferable to a life under the lash of a guilty conscience. Now, your sins are all gone, there is not one left in God’s book. Through Jesu’s blood you are clean, and that is a comfort which cannot be removed.

***“Once in Christ, in Christ forever;
Nothing from His love can sever.”***

In the next place, you are *a child of God* today. God is your Father. No change of circumstances can ever rob you of that. If you were a peer of the realm you might be degraded. If you have walked among the rich you might be thrust out from their society. Father and mother might forsake you, but you can never lose this joyous fact, that you are an heir of God, joint-heir with Jesus Christ.

Coming out of losses and poverty, stripped bare, you can say, “He is my Father still. Naked I came out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither; but to my *Father* shall I return, and in my Father’s house are many mansions; therefore I will not be troubled.”

You have this day another permanent blessing, namely, *the love of Jesus Christ*. He who is God and man loves you with all the strength of His affectionate nature. Now, nothing can rob you of that. You can look to the cross, and know that He who died on it died for you, and He who reigns in heaven reigns for you and pleads for you. No catastrophes can deprive you of that.

Austria and Prussia may go to war, if they please, and Italy or France may join in the turmoil. Blood may flow like water, established rule may be shaken by revolution, and a fierce mob may ride roughshod over the world, but these things shake not the fact that Jesus loves you, “My beloved is mine, and I am his.” Cattle plagues may come, and mildews may blast the rising corn, but though the fig tree

may not blossom, and the flocks may cease from the field, and the herds from the stall, yet will I rejoice in the LORD, for Jesus loves me still, Jesus still faithful, Jesus still true.

Beloved, you have another thing, namely this truth, that *whatever may happen to you, you have God's faithful promise which holds true that all things shall work for your good.* Do you believe this? You want it just now, and therefore let me recall it to your recollection. It is true that you cannot see the good in the trouble itself, but it works for good. Sometimes deadly poisons may be antidotes against other poisons, and the worst afflictions may be antidotes against far worse ones.

The ship rocks!—What a wave was that! What a sea the vessel shipped! She rocks again, the sails fly to ribbons. How the yards are snapping! The masts will go by the board. The frail bark will be wrecked, the danger is imminent, she must be wrecked. The rocks are ahead, and she must be dashed upon them!

Not so, you passenger in the ship of Providence, not so. Do you see who it is that is at the helm, and do you not know that He who steers the ship also wings the winds and gives force to the waves? God is not the God of the vessel only, but of the stormy sea also. Therefore go you where you may be quiet, betake yourself to the hind part of the ship near to the steersman, and go to sleep in peace. It is the best thing you can do, for the ship is safe.

*“Though winds and waves assault her keel,
He doth preserve it, He doth steer,
Even when the bark seems most to reel,
Storms are the triumph of His art,
He will not close His eyes, nor yet His heart.”*

Once more, if everything should melt away, yet you have *“a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”* Sometimes foreign princes when they have been afraid of a revolution have invested all their money in the English funds, and then they have said, *“Now come what may, my prosperity is safe.”* Ah, well, it is a blessed thing to invest all your wealth in the heavenly funds, and then let the earth go to ruin, our treasure is safe. Let the world, like an old water-logged hulk, go down if she will, it is a wonder that she keeps afloat so long—let her go, I am in the lifeboat which can never sink, and I shall soon be on shore where tempests cannot blow.

Oh, to rest in assured hope, the hope that makes not ashamed, the hope that shall never be confounded, the hope that when days and years are passed we shall see the face of Jesus and dwell with Him forever! Courage, brethren, our best portion and richest heritage remains, and cannot be moved. Rejoice in this, and be of good cheer this day.

Ah! there are some of you who have nothing but what may be moved, and you are therefore sure to lose your all. Go away and mourn and lament. Better still, go to the cross, stand under the foot of it, and you cannot be shaken there. Look up to the flowing of the Savior's blood, and trust Him, for nothing can ever shake you then.

As for those of us who possess the things which cannot be shaken, let us stand fast and be of good courage. Whatever may happen during this week, let us play the man. Let us show that we are not such little children as to be cast down by what may happen in this poor fleeting state of time. Our country is Immanuel's land, our hope is above the sky, and therefore calm as the summer's ocean, we will see the wreck of everything and yet rejoice in the God of our salvation.

The Lord fill us with His peace for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEGORE SERMON—PSALM 46

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.