

GOOD WORKS IN GOOD COMPANY

NO. 605

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BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Come, my Beloved, let us go forth to the field. Let us lodge in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyards. Let us see if the vine has budded, whether the grape blossoms are open and the pomegranates are in bloom. There will I give You my love. The mandrakes give off a fragrance, and at our gates are pleasant fruits, all manner new and old, which I have laid up for You, O my Beloved.”
Song of Solomon 7:11-13.

THE daughters of Jerusalem had been praising the Church as the fairest among women. They spoke of her with admiring appreciation, extolling her from head to foot. She wisely perceived that it was not easy to bear praise, and therefore she turned aside from the virgins to her Lord, making her boast not of her own loveliness, but of her being affianced to her beloved—“I am my Beloved’s and His desire is toward me.”

Solomon has said, in his Book of Proverbs, “As the fining pot for silver and the furnace for gold so is a man to his praise,” meaning to teach us that praise is a serious ordeal. Very many men can bear censure and abuse, for their spirit rises so superior to it all that they are even profited thereby. But to be flattered, or even duly honored, is not so easy a thing to endure. The sun’s warm beams made the traveler unbind his coat when the wind made him wrap it the more closely about him—the warmth of praise may make us relax our integrity—unless we are very watchful.

How many have been foolish enough, when standing upon a pinnacle, to look down and admire their own elevation and then their brain has reeled and they have fallen to their own shameful ruin? If we must at any time listen to the praises of our virtues. If we have served God so that the Church recognizes and rewards our usefulness, it is well for us to listen just as long as we are obliged to do, but no longer. And then let us turn aside at once to something more practical and more healthful to our own spirits.

The spouse seems abruptly to break off from listening to the song of the virgins and turns to her own husband-Lord, communion with whom is ever blessed and ever profitable. She says to Him, “Come, my Beloved, let us go forth into the field.” To lodge in communion with Christ is a certain cure for every ill. Whether it is the bitterness of woe, or the over-indulgence of earthly delight, close fellowship with the Lord Jesus will take the gall from the one and the satiety from the other. Live near to Jesus, Christian, and it is matter of secondary importance whether you live on the mountain of honor or in the valley of humiliation.

Live near to Jesus and the glowing coals of the furnace cannot consume you, nor the chill blasts of wintry affliction destroy you. Living near to Jesus you are covered with the wings of God and underneath you are the everlasting arms. If you read the three verses before us with attention, you will see that the Church all through anxiously desires fellowship with her Lord. It is, “Come with me,” “let us.” She will do nothing except as she is near to her beloved and in the enjoyment of His company.

I think she desires three things in her words. First, she desires to practice *self-examination*—she would go and see whether the vine flourishes and whether the tender grape blossoms appear. But it is self-examination with Him. She desires next to go into active *service*—it is to this end that she would lodge in the villages and go among the tender plants, that she may labor there, but it is with Him—“Let us go!” “Come with me!” In the third place, she has a store of fruits laid up for Him. Some things done and some things doing—things old and new—but they are all for Him and she will not mention them except for Him, much less bring them out for them to be enjoyed by a rival. “They are laid up for You, O my Beloved.”

Let us try to make a personal matter of the text, this morning, and may God hear the desire of our hearts that we may have true fellowship with His own dear Son.

I. First, then, IS THE MATTER OF SELF-EXAMINATION. This is a most desirable and important business, but every Believer should desire to have communion with Christ while he is attending to it. Self-examination is of the utmost importance. No trader who would wish to succeed would neglect to keep his books. No farmer who wishes to prosper would be careless as to the state of his fields. No flock-master who would see his herds abundantly increase would leave his servants to care for them and fail to tend them with a watchful eye. If you would have your business prosper, see to it carefully yourself.

In soul-business it is of no use taking anything for granted where there are so many temptations to self-deception in our own hearts—where so many around us are deceived and are willing to help us to be deceived, too. And where Satan sedulously and craftily seeks to cry to us, “Peace, peace,” where there is no peace—it is of the first and last importance that we should search ourselves whether we are in the faith and whether, being in the faith, our graces are growing, our faith increasing, and our love deepening.

Well does the spouse suggest that she should see whether the vine flourishes, whether the tender grape blossoms have appeared and the pomegranates budded forth—our spiritual vineyard needs perpetual watchfulness. While you are attending to this important business, see to it at the same time that you keep up your communion with Christ, for you will never know so well the importance of self-examination as when you see Him! Mark Him there—fastened to the accursed tree—wearing the crown of thorns all set with ruby drops of His own blood! Look at His griefs—if repenting tears do not blind you! Behold His awful agonies! Gaze into that visage more marred than that of any man and stay awhile and listen to the heart-rending shriek, “Eloi! Eloi! Lama sabachthani?” And did Christ suffer all this that souls might be saved?

Then surely, my Soul, it should be your chief business to see that you have an interest in Him. What? Shall I miss that which is purchased with such a price? When such a crimson stream from Christ’s own heart flows to cleanse away sin, shall I think it a matter of no account whether I am cleansed or not? When that head which once was revered by angels, is now crowned with the thorns of mockery and cruelty, shall I not use all the thoughts of my head and brain to find out whether I am one with Christ, and a partaker of His passion? That cannot be a little heritage which Christ has purchased with such agonies—let me fear lest I should lose it!

That cannot be a slight evil which cost my Savior such griefs—let me search myself to see whether I am delivered from it. I am sure, Beloved, you cannot have a better candle to look into the secret recesses of your soul than a candle lit at the fire of Jesus’ love. Know His love for you and all His griefs on your behalf and you will charge your own heart after this fashion—“See to it that you make sure work as to your interest in Jesus—that you are really one with Him. Be sure that your faith in Him is genuine and that you shall be found in Him in peace at the day of His appearing.”

Self-examination, however, is very *laborious* work—the text hints at it. It does not say, “Let us go,” but “Let us get up.” Self-examination is ever up-hill work. It is by no means a pleasant task. It is one from which flesh recoils, for the flesh cries, “Let well enough alone! You are easy and comfortable! You have a hope which affords you much solace—do not dig too deep—the house stands well enough just as it is! Be not too anxious about the foundation—rest assured that it is all right—you would not have all these joys and present comforts if you had built upon sand.”

We need to school ourselves to perform a duty so irksome. But, Beloved, if we attempt to examine this, feeling that Christ is with us and that we are having communion with Him, we shall forget all the labor of the deed. There I see Him in the garden, sweating great drops of blood in prayer! Can I view Him prostrate on that cold winter’s night (when the ground was hard with frost), so burning with His soul’s travail that huge clots of blood-red gore are falling upon the frozen earth? And shall I think any toil too great to make sure of my interest in Him?

Does He, when the cup is put to Him, say, “Not as I will, but as You will,” and drink it up with resignation? And shall the far less bitter cup of self-examination, which is so much for my good, be refused by me? No, Savior of the world, I have not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin. But if it must be, if all my powers and members must be made to bleed, if my poor heart must be crushed as in a mortar, then let it be so that I may but be found one with You, washed in Your blood and covered with Your righteousness! Keep close to the Savior and the difficulties of self-examination will vanish and the labor will become light.

Self-examination should always be very *earnest* work. The text says, “Let us get up early.” It has been well observed that all men in Scripture who have done earnest work rose up early to do it. The dew of the morning, before the smoke and dust of the world’s business have tainted the atmosphere, is a choice and special season for all holy work. In this passage getting up early signifies that the Church felt she must give her best hour to this necessary work. And as the work might be long, she gets up early that she may have a long day before her—that before the sun goes down she may have examined every vine and looked to every pomegranate and examined all the mandrakes of the garden.

So must we set to work earnestly about self-examination. This is not child’s play. If you would find out the trickery of your deceitful heart you must be very careful and watchful. If you would know on what foundation your hope is built, it is a laborer’s work to dig out the rubbish and to find out where the foundation is laid. He who has to prove the title-deeds of his estate does not always find it an easy business—there are many manuscripts through which he must wade and numerous title-deeds to be read, verified and collated before the case will be clear.

And so it must be with you. The great matter, “Do I believe in Jesus,” needs no hours of deliberation, for if I do not, I will now begin again. But to know the growing state of one’s graces is not so easy. After all, you may be deceived. Therefore come to it with a soul all glowing with zeal, saying, in earnest prayer, “Search me, O God and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts: and see if there are any wicked ways in me and lead me in the way everlasting.” Now I think there is nothing which can make you do this earnest work so well as to say to your Master and your Lord, “Lord, come with me.” “While we examine ourselves, abide with us to help us in the work.”

I cannot be careless when I hear Christ say, “My meat and My drink is to do the will of Him that sent Me.” I cannot be careless in my own Christian career when I see Him straining every nerve that He may run the race and win the crown for me! When I see Him sitting yonder, above all principalities and powers, pleading for my soul with never-ceasing intercession, I cannot be dull and sluggish! Wake up, you drowsy powers! Be stirred up, you sleeping passions, to examine yourselves anxiously and carefully, since Christ, for Zion’s sake does not hold His peace and for Jerusalem’s sake does not rest!

And yet again, self-examination, it seems to me (I may be wrong), is not the simple work that some people think, but is beset with *difficulties*. I do believe that the most of self-examinations go on a wrong principle. You take Moses with you when you examine yourself and consequently you fall into despair. He who looks at his own character and position from a *legal* point of view will not only despair when he comes to the end of his reckoning, but he will be a wise man if he despairs not at the beginning! If we are to be judged on the footing of the Law, there shall no flesh living be justified. The very brightest members of Christ’s family—those who wear the most of the Savior’s image and honor Him best among men—may well shrink from the place where even Moses did “exceedingly fear and quake.”

O Brothers and Sisters, remember to take Jesus with you and not Moses, lest you dishonor the Grace of God and harbor suspicion against the faithfulness of God when you ought rather to have suspected *yourself*! If I take Jesus with me, see on what different principles the examination is carried on! I do not ask, “Am I perfect?” That question Moses would suggest—“Am I perfect in myself?” But I ask, “Am I perfect in Christ Jesus?” That is a very different matter. I do not put it thus, “Am I without sin, naturally?” but thus—“Have I been washed in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness?”

It is not, “Am I in myself well-pleasing to God?” but it is, “Am I accepted in the Beloved?” The Christian man sometimes looks at his evidences and grows ashamed of them and alarmed concerning his own salvation. “Why,” says he, “my faith has unbelief in it! It is not able to save me!” Suppose he had looked at the Object of his faith instead of his faith? Then he would have said, “There is no failure in Him and therefore I am safe!” He looks at his hope—“Why,” he says, “my very hope is marred and dimmed by an anxious carefulness about present things! How can I be accepted?” Yes, but if he had looked at the *ground* of his hope he would have seen that the promises of God stand sure and that whatever our hope may be, that promise never fails!

Then he looks at his love—“Oh,” he says, “surely I am condemned, for my love is so cold!” But if he had looked at *Christ’s* love, he would have said “No, I shall never be condemned—for many waters cannot quench His love—neither can the floods drown it and, loving me as He does, He will never condemn me, nor cast me away.” I do not want you to look at Christ so as to think *less* of your sin, but to think *more* of it! You can never see sin to be so black as when you see the suffering which Christ endured on its behalf—and I do desire, dear Friends, that you never look at sin apart from the

Savior. If you gaze at the disease and forget the remedy, you will be driven to despair. If you look at the gathering gangrene and forget the all-gracious Surgeon who is able to remove it, you may well lie down and die!

If you see your own emptiness and poverty and forget His fullness, you will never glorify His name. If you are lost in a sense of your own corruptions and forget the eternal glory which belongs to you in Christ, so that you are even now raised up together and made to sit together in heavenly places in Him—I say, if you forget this Grace-given brightness and only remember your native blackness—your spirit will turn aside from the path of faith and you will hang your harp upon the willows and fail to glorify your God.

Examine yourselves, but let it be in the light of Calvary—not by the blazing fires of Sinai’s lightning, but by the milder radiance of the Savior’s griefs. Am I resting upon You, Son of God? Are Your wounds my hiding place? Have Your nails nailed me to Your Cross? Has Your spear pierced my heart and broken it with grief for sin? And am I now crucified with You to the world, buried with You to the power of sin, risen with You to newness of life and, like Yourself, waiting for the day of manifestation when sin, death and Hell shall be trod under foot and You shall be All in All? Come, let us look to the vines and pomegranates, but let us make sure that our Crucified Lord accompanies us! Otherwise we shall do the work amiss.

It appears, from the words of the spouse, that the work of self-examination should be carried on in *detail*, if it is to be of real service. It is written, “Let us see if the vine has budded, whether the grape blossoms are opened and the pomegranates are in bloom.” We must not take a general view of the garden, but particularize and give special attention to each point. If a candle is guarded on all sides, if there is but one place left open, the wind will find it out and blow out the light. So in self-examination, if we find ourselves right in many points, it is not enough—we must seek to be right in *all* points.

The main thing is your faith. Is that faith simple? Does it depend upon Jesus only? Is it real? Is it an active, living faith? Does it work by love? Does it purify the soul? When you have examined faith, you may possibly make a mistake. Therefore go on to see what your *love* is. Do you love the Savior? Can you truly say, “The very thought of You fills my breast with rapture”? Can you hear the music of His name without feeling your blood leap in your veins? Oh, if you can, I think, dear Friend, you have reason for grave questioning. Try your active graces—go from one to the other and search them all. The worm may be at the root just in that part of the soil where you have not upturned the sod.

One leak may sink a ship, therefore search well the vessel before you launch her upon the stormy deep. It is little by little that backsliders fall—even Judas does not betray his Master with a kiss at first. Men are schooled in the downward road. Let us be particularly anxious, therefore, that we do not fall little by little. And let us watch that we do not suffer small sins to get force and head, till, like little sparks, they have kindled a great fire!

If you wish to be exact in prying into every part and corner you cannot do better than take Jesus with you. Tempted in all points like we are, He will know all the points in which we are tempted. And, while we are earnestly examining, His gracious finger will point out the spots where our weakness may lie and we shall thus fulfill the prayer we have often prayed—“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts: and see if there are any wicked ways in me and lead me in the way everlasting.”

When boys are at school and have to learn to write, every schoolmaster knows that at the first line they keep their eye upon the copy at the top. The next line they look at their own writing and their penmanship is not quite so good. And the next line they probably look at the last they have written and so they write worse and worse as they reach the bottom of the page because they have been imitating themselves and copying their own writing! It is well for the Christian if he does not fall into this mistake. He must keep his eyes upon his great Exemplar, not upon himself! He will be far more likely to see his own faults by looking to Christ than by looking at any of his own attainments.

What a delightfully white thing this snow is! When it has newly fallen, take the whitest linen you may have ever seen and put it down—you will find it looks positively yellow by the side of it. Take the fairest sheet of paper that ever came from the mill and compare it. It does not look white at all. There is no whiteness, that I know of, which can at all emulate the heavenly whiteness of snow. So, if I put my character side by side with another man’s, I may say of it, “It will bear comparison,” but if I put it by the side of Christ’s perfections—since His whole life is like the pure and spotless snow—I discover at once my own failures and spots.

Oh, to have our great Pattern ever before our eyes! Jesus should not be a Friend who calls upon us now and then, but one with whom we walk forevermore. You have a difficult road to travel—see, O traveler to Heaven, that you go not without your Guide. You have to pass through the fiery furnace—enter it not, unless like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, there is a fourth with you like unto the Son of Man! You have to storm the Jericho of your own deceptions—attempt not the scaling until, like Joshua, you have seen the Captain of the Lord’s host with his sword drawn in his hand.

You have to meet the Esau of your many temptations—meet him not until at Jabbok’s brook you have laid hold of the angel and wrestled with him and prevailed. In every case, in every condition, you need Jesus! But most of all, when you come to deal with your own heart’s eternal interests, O, keep close to Him! Lean your head upon His bosom! Ask to be refreshed with the spiced wine of His pomegranates and then there shall be no fear but that you shall be found of Him at the last, without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing. Seeing you have lived with Him and lived in Him here, you shall live with Him forever.

II. THE CHURCH WAS ABOUT TO ENGAGE IN EARNEST LABOR and desires her Lord’s company. It is the business of God’s people to be trimmers of God’s vines. Like our first parents, we are put into the garden of the Lord for usefulness. Observe that the Church, when she is in her right mind, in all her many labors desires to retain and cheerfully to enjoy communion with Christ. Some persons imagine that one cannot serve Christ actively and yet have fellowship with Him. I think they are very much mistaken.

I confess it is very easy to get into Martha’s position and to be cumbered with much serving. You may have to preach here and there so many times a week—to attend committees, to visit sick people and to do so many other things that you may really, unless you are careful—fritter away your own inward life in outward exercises. You may have to complain with the spouse, “They made me keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard have I not kept.” I do not think, however, that there is any reason why this should be the case except through our own folly. Certain is it that a person may do nothing at all and yet grow quite as lifeless in spiritual things as those who are most busy.

Mary was not praised for sitting still. No, but for sitting still at Jesus’ feet! And so Christians are not to be praised if they neglect duties merely because they live in retirement and keep much at home—it is not sitting, I say, but sitting at Jesus’ feet. Had Martha been sitting still, or had Mary been sitting anywhere else, I doubt not that the Master would have given a word of rebuke! He would never have said that mere sitting still was choosing the good part. Indeed, I know some of you who are none the better for doing nothing, but a great deal the worse! Those who do nothing grow sour and are always willing to find fault with the way in which others serve Christ.

Do not think, therefore, that mere activity is, in itself, an evil—I believe it is a blessing. Taking a survey of Christ’s Church you will find that those who have most fellowship with Christ are not the persons who are recluses or hermits—who have much time to spend with themselves—but they are the useful indefatigable laborers who are toiling for Jesus and who in their toil have Him side by side with them. They are workers *together* with God. Let me, then, try to press this lesson upon you—that when we as a Church and each of us as individuals have anything to do for Christ—we must do it in communion with Him.

We come up to His House and why do we come? It is said that among Church people the prayers are the main thing and among Dissenters the sermon. I believe that in both cases this would be a fault. Praying should not eclipse *preaching!* To preach or to listen to preaching is as true an act of worship as to pray. We never worship God better than when we hear His Word, reverently receive it and are moved thereby to love and gratitude. To hear preaching is, in a sense, praying, since the true effect of all preaching that is worth listening to draws us into a spirit of devotion and makes us ready for prayer and every other form of worship.

But why do we come here? I am afraid there are some who come merely because it is the time to come—because the hour of worship has come round. And others come only because a certain preacher happens to stand upon the platform. Ah, this is not how God’s own beloved ones come up to His House! They desire to *meet* with Him. Their prayer, as they tread the hallowed courts of God’s House will be, “My heart and my flesh cries out for the living God.” There is no hymn sung so well as when we really do praise Jesus in it. No prayer is so true as that prayer which really comes to the Mercy Seat and spreads itself before the All-Seeing God. There is no preaching like that which is full of Christ, which gives forth a savor of His good ointments.

Worship is not to be commended because of the glorious swell of a Gregorian chant, or because of the equally majestic volume of sound which this great assembly may send forth from that sweet instrument, the human voice. A service is not to be commended because of the eloquence of the preacher or because of the display of learning which he is able to make in expounding his discourse. No, to the Christian it is, “Was the Master there?” The question on Sunday morning is, “What do you think, will He come up to the feast?” Coming to the Lord’s Table, the child of God’s business is not so much with the bread and the wine, as with His blood and with His flesh. May I feed on Him? May I see Him? And if I get to Him, then it is well with me.

If I have then to serve God in the public engagements of His House, let me say, “Come, my Beloved, let us get up to the vineyards.” You have other service to do, dear Friends. This afternoon many of you will be occupied with your Sunday school classes. There will be a knot of lads or girls around you. You will, perhaps, be conducting classes of hundreds of young men and young women. This evening, again, many will be occupied in preaching, or you will be engaged at home with your own children. Oh, how blessed it is to go to the classes, or into the pulpit, having the Master with you! It sometimes happens to the preacher that he is like the butcher at the block—he has a cleaver in his hand and cuts off large pieces of meat as food for those present—but he himself gets none.

But it is otherwise with him when he has his Master with him! Then, whether the rest of the assembly are fed or not, certainly he himself is satisfied as with marrow and with fatness. After what a blessed sort the teacher can teach when the love of God is shed abroad in his heart! You will bear with the rudeness of those boys—you will put up with the inattention of those girls! You will not be angry at the folly of that youth—you will not forget to be in earnest with that poor wanderer—when Jesus Christ stands by your side!

A vision of the Crucified, my Brethren, is that which we want! When we are toiling in His harvest field and sit down to wipe the sweat from our brow, we grow very weary. The harvest is plenteous, but the laborers are few—we feel that the edge of our sickle is growing very, very blunt and we wish we could lie down under the spreading tree from the heat of the sun and toil no longer. But just then we see the Crucified One coming forward with His mighty sickle and we mark the drops of blood streaming from His brow and see the nail prints in the hands with which He grasps the sickle.

We see how He toils and how He labors! With what an awful love He sacrifices Himself—He has stripped off His very garments—and in all the nakedness of self-denial He gives Himself up that He may save others while Himself He cannot save. Then we pluck up our hearts again and take our sickle in the hands which once did hang down, saying, “Jesus, I will never be weary, for You were not weary. And when I shall be faint awhile, I will see You, whose meat and drink it was to do Your Father’s will and I will make it my meat and my drink to serve You.” Surely you cannot do God’s work so well as when you have Jesus Christ with you!

But it is possible, dear Friends, that some of you may be engaged in the service of winning for God some *one* soul. I know those who have one soul laid upon their heart. Perhaps it is the most solemn work under Heaven to have to pray for one soul. I have so many to look after that I cannot but feel I may rightly excuse myself from any very sedulous attention to one. But there are some of you who have only one person to look after—one child, one friend, one soul. You tried to talk to that one person the other day—you burst into tears when you heard the answer you received. You have been praying for months, but instead of seeing any answer to your prayer the person prayed for is growing worse! You are sure that he is never more vile than when you are most earnest.

Friend, I should not wonder if Satan should whisper to you, “Give it up!” But let me, I pray you, urge you never to do so. And if you want something that will make you never to give up praying for that soul, see yonder, the eternal Son of God! He came into this world to save such a sinner as *you* yourself are! And you can never think you are doing anything too hard when trying to save your fellow man from destruction. O for a vision of the Savior’s face covered with the spittle! See Him marred and bruised by the rough Roman soldiers! Behold Him as His back smarts beneath the thongs of the cruel whips! See Him as Pilate brings Him forth and cries, “Ecce homo.”

Mark Him as He treads the Via Dolorosa! See Him while they lift Him up on high and dislocate His bones! Why, what is *all* that *you* can endure compared with this? When your soul swells with fearful grief you do not feel such grief as this! You do but sip at the cup which the Savior drained to the dregs! You do but feel a scratch from those nails which went right through His hands! You do not have but for a moment a flesh wound from that spear which pierced His heart!

Courage, solitary laborer—let Christ's griefs solace you. Come with me, my Beloved! Come with me, my Lord! And my toil shall be easy.

There are some Christians engaged in works of heroism, works of peculiar daring for Christ. I should not like to be misunderstood, but I really think that amid the gross darkness of the Popish Church there have been some who have caught the true idea of Christian life far better than the most of us. Let me tell you what I mean. There have been some who have denied themselves all the comforts of life and have lived in suffering and poverty out of love to Jesus and from a sincere desire to benefit their fellow men.

There have been produced in that Church men whose passionate love no labor or persecution could extinguish. They have fed the poor and nourished the sick. And women who have gone into the hospitals among diseases the most contagious and have risked life and lost life for the sake of nursing the sick. There are those living at this present moment upon the tops of such mountain passes as St. Bernard and the Simplon, spending the prime of their life in seclusion in inhospitable frost—where somebody must live—but where nobody ever would live if it were not for the sake of religion. They are there simply that they may serve the poor weary traveler when he comes wading through the snow, or is likely to be lost in a snow storm.

No man shall take precedence of me in my abhorrence of the thrice accursed doctrines of the harlot of Rome! But from our enemies it is right to learn—and I do learn and would teach this—that self-denial and consecration are among the highest of the Christian virtues. I would to God that our people had the spirit of self-consecration in proportion to the light which they enjoy. I would to God we had true Sisters of Mercy who devoted themselves to going from house to house among the sick. We have some—but we need more—more who would be hospital nurses and who would count it but a small sacrifice even if they gave up themselves for the good of others.

Missionaries we need who will face the malaria and deadly fever—our societies cry out for such—but very few are coming forward. We need men of substance who would take their substance and go out with it to a foreign land to evangelize. We need men who having prospered in business who would now count it an honor to spend the rest of their days in some new and special work of charity or piety. Oh, when I see the Savior in all His agonies doing so much for us I cannot but think that we as a Christian people do next to nothing for Him!

There are no stakes of Smithfield now, thank God. There are no dungeons of the Lollard's Tower. No crowns of martyrdom for suffering brows—but there are still special spheres of labor where we could make the name of Christ illustrious. Let me hold up for your imitation some in modern times, who by works of faith and labors of love, have made us feel that the old spirit of Christianity is not dead. Our beloved friend, Mr. George Muller, of Bristol, for instance. There burns a holy devotedness, an intensity of faith, a fervor of perseverance which I would to God we all possessed! May we have more of this and so by keeping close to Jesus we shall produce better fruits, richer clusters and more luscious grapes than are commonly produced upon those vines which are in a less happy part of the vineyard.

III. And now let me close by remarking that according to the text, THE CHURCH DESIRES TO GIVE TO CHRIST ALL THAT SHE PRODUCES. She has "all manner of pleasant fruits," both, "new and old," and they are laid up for her Beloved. We have some new fruits. This morning I hope we feel new life, new joy, new gratitude—we wish to make new resolves and carry them out by new labors. Our heart goes up in new prayers and our soul is pledging herself to new efforts.

But we have some old things, too. There is our first love—a choice fruit that is! And Christ delights in it. There is our first faith—that simple faith by which, having nothing, we became possessors of all things! There is our joy when first we knew the Lord—let us revive it. How happy we were then, when the candle of the Lord shone round about us! Old things? Why we have the old remembrance of the promises. How faithful has God been! In that sickness of ours, how softly did He make our bed! In those deep waters, how placidly did He buoy us up! In that flaming furnace, how graciously did He deliver us so that not even the smell of fire passed upon us. Old fruits, indeed! We have many of them, for His mercies have been more than the hairs of our head.

Old sins we must regret, but then we have had repentances, which He has given us, by which we have wept our way to the Cross and learned the merit of His blood. We have fruits, this morning, both new and old. But here is the point—they are all to be for Christ. Do you not, after doing good service, detect yourself whispering, "I have done that well"? You intended that nobody should know it. You tried to do it as a secret act of devotion. You were half inclined to tell

somebody when it was done, and though it came out, you say it was by accident. But you had a finger in that accident and you did not altogether regret that you had some of the honor of it.

Do you not find when you are really serving your Master that if somebody does not pat you on the back, you grow cold? I know some Sunday school teachers, who, if they are looked after and encouraged, can do well, but who, if they have no encouragement, could not keep on in their work. Oh, it is so easy for us to preach when there are many souls being fed under us and the Master honors us in the eyes of men! Would it be quite as easy to serve Him without honor? I have known Brethren who have met with a little bad feeling among their people. Perhaps they have not always been able to keep their temper—and they have run away from their charge—left the sheep in the wilderness because in their inmost heart they were serving *themselves*, at least to a degree.

Truly, Beloved, those are the best and most acceptable services in which Christ is the solitary aim of the soul—and His Glory without any mixture whatever is the end of all our efforts. Let your many fruits be laid up only for your Beloved—bring them forth when He is with you—bless His name for them. Put jewels into His crown, but never say, “Unto me be honor and unto my name be praise,” but, “Sing unto Jesus, and to Jesus only be Glory while Heaven endures.” O that strangers to Jesus would believe our testimony concerning Him!

We are asked, sometimes for proofs of our religion. There is one proof which we defy anyone to contradict and this is the intense joy which the love of Christ gives to us. We are not fools, and I may add we are not dishonest—our witness is that there is a joy in love to Christ and in the enjoyment of His Presence! A joy which could not possibly have come to us from any but a Divine source!

We do not speak because we have not tried other joys—some of us have had our fill of them. We can say of some that their sweet is soon lost in bitterness. Of others that they stale upon our taste. But communion with Christ has no after-taste in it. It never grows stale. It is a sun without spots! It is a moon which never wanes! It is an ocean which never ebbs—it is a river which flows on forever—it is all Heaven and all bliss! Oh, if you did but know it you would never doubt again—your soul would rest implicitly upon Christ, whom God has set forth to be the Propitiation for sin! And, remember, if you rest upon Him and trust Him, you are saved and shall be with Him, where He is, to behold His Glory forevermore! May God bless these words for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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