

THE SPECIAL CALL AND THE UNFAILING RESULT

NO. 616

A SERMON DELIVERED SUNDAY EVENING
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“God is faithful, by whom you were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus, Christ our Lord.”
1 Corinthians 1:9.

AS I look round upon this large Church, numbering far above two thousand members, my soul is often cast down within me. Yes, I am brought into the lowest depths of anxiety! Who is sufficient for these things? To order and distribute its sacred offices aright, to govern with discretion, to exercise discipline with prudence, to hide a strong hand and to show at all times a loving heart—such thoughts roll in, wave after wave, till they threaten to overwhelm the mind! And then at last to render unto the Master an account according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed. To be saluted of my God at His coming as a faithful and wise servant who has given to His household meat in due season. To be approved as a faithful steward of the mysteries of God, not having “shunned to declare the whole counsel of God,” as well to those that did forbear as to those that did hear. If such aims do sometimes wind up one’s nerves to extraordinary energy, they verily make the heart palpitate at other times with the fear that haunts and the solemnity that awes our soul.

Well, well could I be content to renounce so tremendous a charge if it were possible! This, however, is always the most painful qualm that troubles me. Will all these people hold on their way? They have professed to be converted. Many of them have come out from the world, and for several years their lives have been distinguished by all virtues. These hands have baptized them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. And so far there appears reasonable evidence that the Spirit of God has set His seal to their being His genuine work by maintaining them in the Truth of God and holiness.

But will they persevere? Will they hold on? When the world is so full of temptations in the midst of this age of sham. When godliness, when true godliness is as much hated as ever it was and when spiritual religion is as great a mystery as it was to the sages of Areopagus in the days of Paul—will these men and women, especially the younger ones of them—will they all be found faithful—or will they disgrace the cause? Will they stain the escutcheon of Christ? Will they turn their backs in the day of battle and prove recreant cowards, traitors to our Lord and Master?

Such a text as this, then, is refreshing, indeed! It comes so softly into one’s ear and breathes such gentle music because it gives the comfort which just meets the difficulty. Yes, yes, they will hold on their way! There may be some who will go out from us because they were not of us—for if they were of us, doubtless they would have continued with us—but still the foundation of God stands sure, having this seal, “The Lord knows them that are His.” Yes, they shall stand, for God is faithful, who has called them unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord!

Well, now, dear Brothers and Sisters, have you not the same sort of trouble rising in your own minds? You look within. You think you see what Divine Grace has done for you. You feel as you never did feel before conversion. The things you once hated you now love and what you once loved you now hate. You feel that there has been a radical change in you—one that nature could not effect and your spirit is very glad in the prospect of what this will all lead to—“the rest which remains for the people of God,” and the crown of everlasting life that fades not away.

But here comes in this awkward “but”—you see so much corruption within! You feel so much weakness which aids and abets this corruption! You foresee so many trials awaiting you that the pale shadow of despondency falls on your heart and fitful doubts and questions vex your brain. You have no sooner overcome one adversary than you are attacked by another and sometimes the evil spirit howls in your ear, “God has forsaken you! Now it is all over with you!” And you are ready to lie down and die in despair, saying, “I shall one day fall by the hand of the enemy, I shall never see His face with joy.”

To you, also, my text comes like a whisper from Heaven—"God is faithful" who has called you "unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ." My drift this evening will be, while reminding you of your calling and of your fellowship, to comfort your hearts with regard to your perseverance. He is able to confirm and keep you even to the end and He will do it! He will present you blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ for this very reason—that He has called you to fellowship with Him. What shall we say, then? First, I want to refresh your memories with your calling. Secondly, I want to make you exercise your fellowship. And, thirdly, I want you to perceive your security.

I. Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, LET ME REFRESH YOUR MEMORIES WITH YOUR CALLING. Was there not a day, the mementoes of which you fondly cherish, when you were called from death unto life? Fly back, now, to the day and hour if you can and, if not, light upon the season thereabouts when the great transaction took place, in which you were made Christ's forever, by the voluntary surrender of yourself to Him. In looking back, does it not strike you that your calling must have been of Divine origin?

The text says, "God called you"—does not your experience prove the same? We thought, perhaps, as the season transpired, that we had had no other call than that which came in the word that was addressed to us through our godly parents, through our Bibles, through the good books that we read. Yet we perceive, in looking back, as the crisis passes before us in review, that none of these things ever could have produced the effect which has been taking place in us. Did we not read the same books years before? They never touched a chord in our hearts! We listened to the same minstrel, it may be, scores of times—but he never could strike a spark into our dark natures! We had our convictions before this, but they were the mere inquietudes of natural conscience which died away like the morning's frost, when the sun rises and scatters it all.

Therefore we conclude that this time it must have been something special and we think every man that has experienced it will say at once, "Yes, I see the finger of God in this! I am absolutely certain it was not moral persuasion. It was not the oratory of the preacher. It was not the earnestness, even, of my pleading teacher or friend—but the hand of God as clear in my conversion as in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." And, being so, Beloved, do you not notice at once how irresistible that call was? Oh, we had been called scores of times before but we always turned a deaf ear! I can say earnestly that I had been dragged to the Cross of Christ before and yet I would not go. It was with me as the old proverb has it, "One man may lead a horse to water, but twenty cannot make him drink."

How many times was I lead to the water? Brought to the foot of the Cross? Pointed to Christ, pleaded with to look to Him? Urged to put my trust in Him, but I would not? I preferred the things of this world and I would gladly have followed the devices of my own heart—my own willingness and doing and judging—rather than yield to the will, and wisdom and kindness of God!

But when this particular call came, did you struggle against it? Perhaps you did, but you had more than your match! Oh, the Divine influence, when you threw down your sword and said, "Great God, I yield. I know not how it is, but I feel sweet yearnings within. My soul relents. I can be Your enemy no more. Your love has destroyed me and made me powerless to resist. You have whispered something in my ear—I know not how You did it, but 'tis there and I surrender at discretion. Do what You will with me, only allow me to know Yourself, that I may be saved."

How gracious that calling must have been since it came to you from God! It came to you irresistibly and came to you with such personal demonstration! What Grace was here! What was there in you to suggest a motive why God should call you? Oh, Beloved, we can hardly ask you that question without tears rising in our own eyes—

*"What was there in us that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?
'Twas even so, Father!" we ever must sing,
'Because it seemed good in Your sight.'"*

Some of you were drunkards, were profane, were injurious. Many of you cared neither for God nor man. How often have you mocked at God's Word! How frequently have you despised God's ministers! How constantly has the holy name of the Most High been used in a flippant, if not in a profane manner by you! And yet for all that, He fixed His eyes upon you and would not withdraw. And when you spurned the Divine Grace that would have saved you, still He followed you, determined to save, till at last, in the appointed time, He got the grasp of you and would not let you go until He had made you His friend, turned your heart to love Him and made your spirit obedient to His Grace!

I think, throughout eternity, if we had this problem to solve—“why did He call *me*”—we should still go on making wrong guesses! We could never arrive at the right conclusion unless we should say, once and for all, “I do not know.” He did as He willed. He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy. He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion. And here, let me say, if these things are so, oh should not this calling of ours tonight evoke our most intense gratitude, our most earnest love? Oh, if He had not called you, where had you been tonight? You shall sit tonight at the Lord’s Table—where would you have been but for Divine Grace?

To repeat the old saying of John Bradford when he saw a cartful of men going off to Tyburn to be hanged, “There goes John Bradford but for the Grace of God.” When you see the swearer in the street, or the drunkard rolling home at night—there are you, there am I—but for the Grace of God. Who am I—what should I have been if the Lord, in mercy, had not stopped me in my mad career! I know there are some of us who can remember the old story of Rowland Hill, when a good Scotchman called to see him and without saying a word, sat still for some five minutes, looking into the good old gentleman’s face.

At last Rowland Hill asked him what engaged his attention. Said he, “I was looking at the lines of your face.” Well, what do you make of them? “Why,” said he, “that if the Grace of God hadn’t been in you, you would have been the biggest rascal living!” And some of us feel just that—that if it had not been for the Grace of God we should have been out-and-out ringleaders in every kind of infamy and sin. I know for myself I can never do things by halves. If I had served Baal I would have built him an altar and made victims smoke upon it day and night. And if we serve God zealously and earnestly we have the more reason to be humble and to lay low in the dust. For that very zeal of spirit would have been turned to the very worst account unless Divine Grace had been pleased to transform us.

Why, there are some people in the world that seem too insipid to do any good or hurt and *they* have reason to be thankful if they are converted. But still not that reason that others have, who, if they did mischief, would do it with both hands and if they do anything for God, must do it with all their might. This was a kind and gracious call, when we consider what we might have been. Stand up now, Believer, and look at this and remember the Grace of this call when you consider what you are.

Why, Man, tonight, what are you? A pardoned sinner—not a sin against you in God’s book. What are you?—A justified person. The righteousness of Christ girds you—even the eyes of God cannot see a spot in you! You are in Christ all fair. There is no spot in you—justified freely by His Grace—roll that thought under your tongue as a sweet morsel. What are you tonight? You are a son of God, an adopted heir of Heaven, joint heir with Christ! You are accepted in the Beloved and very precious to Jehovah, Himself. What are you? You are an heir of immortality. Heaven is your certain inheritance. Oh, I wish you could believe this! You that are Christians and know this to be true, I wish you could realize it—that within ten minutes you may be in Heaven with Christ, and that within a few years you will be there! Eternal life is yours—not maybe, not perhaps—but *is* yours tonight and you have but to heave one gentle sigh and the dust is left behind and the spirit waves the palm and wears the crown and sings the eternal hymn before the Throne of God!

God has called us! Let us look back upon the time of our calling and if some such thoughts as these should rise in our minds, they will not be unprofitable. They will fill your souls with grateful joy in retracing the steps by which you have been led. They will put courage into your souls in realizing the Grace by which you now stand. They will clear the mist from your eyes in looking forward with cheerful hope to the future. I think they will prompt you to take your harp down from the willows and touch the strings with melodious song—

*“Every fallen soul, by sinning,
Merits everlasting pain.
But Your love, without beginning,
Has restored Your sons again.
Countless millions
Shall in life, through Jesus, reign.
Pause, my Soul! Adore and wonder!
Ask, ‘O why such love to me?’
Grace has put me in the number
Of the Savior’s family—Hallelujah,
Thanks, eternal thanks, to You!”*

II. To what end, or for what purpose did God call you? He called you, as we had it this morning, that you might receive Christ and walk in Him, or, as the text has it, that you might have fellowship with Christ. Now the word “fellowship,” [koinonia,] is not properly to be interpreted here as a society, but as the *result* of society—that is to say, fellowship lies in mutual and identical interests. A man and his wife have fellowship with each other in that which is common to both and enjoyed in communion accordingly. All their possessions are joint possessions. They are one together in love. And if the wife has anything, it is the husband’s and the husband, in his love, thinks all that he has to be his wife’s.

Now, when we were called to Christ, we were called to have fellowship with Him of this peculiar kind—that we became relatively and absolutely identical with Christ. We were made one with Him so that everything Christ had became ours. This was the act of faith to let us take hold of what Christ had. And this is the result of faith—to give us Christ and to give us to Christ—so that we are in kinship together and made one person, Christ the Head and we the members. Now we have a unity to Christ, a fellowship to Christ, first in His loves. What Christ loves we love. He loves the saints—so do we.

He loves sinners—so do we. He loves the world and pants to see it transformed into the garden of the Lord—so do we. Whatever Christ loves, our heart loves, for our heart and Christ’s heart are welded together—put into the same furnace and then made into one—so that what He loves we love and what He hates and detests and abhors, we also deprecate and loathe. Then we are one with Christ in His desires. Does Christ desire anything?—So do we. He desires to see multitudes saved—so do we. He desires the Glory of God—we also labor for the same. He desires that the saints may be with Him where He is—we desire to be with Him there, too. He desires to drive out sin—behold we fight under His banner.

He desires that his Father’s name may be loved and adored by all His creatures—we pray daily, “Let Your kingdom come and Your will be done on earth, even as it is in Heaven.” We are called, then, to a fellowship with Christ in having the same loves and the same desires. So, too, in our measure we have the same sufferings. We are not nailed to the Cross, nor do we die a bloody death. Yet many of our compeers that have gone before have done so and if it ever came to that, there are still millions of us, with true hearts, as ever became sacrifices to God in England. And when Christ is reproached, we are reproached and we have learned to bear His reproach, too.

It is a very sweet thing to be blamed for Christ’s sake—to be despised for following the Master, to have the wits of the world against us—’tis well, ’tis well. It was so with Him. The servant would not be above his master, nor the disciple above his Lord. Some few drops of His cup we drink and they are but few. And yet it has been given to some more than to others to “fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ for His body’s sake, which is the Church.” And, Beloved, we also have fellowship with Christ in His joys as well as in His trials. Is He happy? We are happy to think Christ is happy.

I do not know whether you have ever drank that joy, Believer, but I have found it a very sweet joy to be joyful because Christ is joyful. You may have known some friend, perhaps, who had another dear friend and he saw that friend prospering in the world. He did not get on himself as he could wish. He was sickly, he was often low in spirit—but somehow, as often as ever he saw his friend, marked his prosperity, saw his happy wife and smiling children, he said, “It always makes me happy to think how you prosper.” There was true friendship. Now between Christ and His people there is such love that if Christ is crowned, never mind where I am—if God also has highly exalted Him, what does it matter, what does it matter even though He crush me in the very dust?

I think a man must undergo some overwhelming trouble before he can lay hold on this as a comfort. But if he can once get it, from my own experience I bear witness, there is no sweeter, more thrilling delight to be known this side of Heaven than that of having Christ’s joy fulfilled in us that our joy may be full. Oh, see Him rise! See Him crowned! Hear the songs of angels! Mark the terror of devils! Know that His name is high over all in Heaven and earth and sky and you will feel, “Well, well, all these things that I have to suffer are nothing. It does not matter—it is all well, Christ is exalted—and I am perfectly content.” This is to have fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Nor does the fellowship end here! Nor is it possible tonight to go through the whole of it, for our fellowship with Christ leads us to be partakers of all His riches. Whatever Christ has belongs to us. If He has riches in pardoning, supporting, instructing, illuminating, sanctifying, preserving or perfecting Christians, they are all ours. Is His blood precious? It is mine. Is His righteousness complete? It is mine. Are His merits sweet? They are mine. Has He power in inter-

cession? It is mine. Has He wisdom, righteousness—has He anything? It is mine. The father has called us to have fellowship with Christ and to be partakers in all He has. So is it with all His Glory. There is not a crown He wears but we have part of it—no, there is not a gem that sparkles in a crown He wears but it sparkles for us as well as for Him!

For us the golden streets! For us the chariot in which He rides along them! For us the crowding angels! For us the joyous acclamations! For us those chords of music! For us the shout of, “Hallelujah, Hallelujah! For You were slain and have redeemed the saints unto God by Your blood.” For us the Second Advent with all its splendors. For us the universal reign of Christ, the gathered scepters and the congregated crowns. For us the Day of Judgment with the reeling columns of the sky, and the rocks dissolved before the heat of the blast of His anger. For us the angels as they gather up the righteous and even for us the triumph of the Lord, when with shout of archangel He shall destroy His adversaries with the breath of His nostrils forever!

There is nothing to come in Scripture, or in all the prophecies that are yet to be fulfilled when Christ shall come—there is nothing anywhere to be revealed concerning Christ, but what is ours, since our fellowship is with Him. And all this, Brothers and Sisters, leads to practical spiritual fellowship with Christ! I hope that you who are in Christ will strive tonight to realize that you are in Him. Come now, I am not trying to preach. I want to talk this over with you. If you believe you are in Christ you are one with Him tonight. Say, then, to your soul, “You are one with Christ even now. In yourself you are everything that is vile, but in Him you are nothing of the sort. My Soul, tonight you are strong and rich and blessedly perfect. In Him you are in Heaven. In Him there is nothing to taunt you, nothing to accuse you, much less any thing to condemn you.”

Come, put on your silver sandals, daughter of Zion! Wrap yourself now in your scarlet and fine linen which your Lord has bought for you! Come with Him up to the mountain and sit with Him awhile, “Far from this world of grief and sin,” and let Him speak to you while He tells you, “You are Mine and I am yours.” Then will you be able to say, “Truly, our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

III. Now we conclude by noticing the third point in two or three words. All this leads us to perceive our security. Saints must be saved—it cannot be otherwise—for two reasons. First, because God has called them. Now the gifts and calling of God are, according to Scripture, “without repentance,” that is to say, if He has once called a man, He never sends him back again. What? Give me quickening Grace and let me die after it? Give me to taste the joys of the Spirit and yet take them away from my lips forever?

Why this were unheard of cruelty! For God to destroy the guilty in Hell is just, but, I venture to say, that for God to give spiritual enjoyments, the intense, the unutterable intense delights of spiritual enjoyment and not intend that the person should always enjoy these—to take them away forever—would be to put a sting into Hell which I cannot conceive of, because He is faithful in all His ways and righteous in all His judgments. No, let the sinner bear his guilt, but do not add the unnecessary torment of letting him, first of all, know the hope of eternal life and then find himself disappointed.

Does God play fast and loose? Does He give and then take back again? Does He make us nobles and then degrade us into beggars? Does He put crowns on our heads and then slay us? Does He make us His children and then cast us out of the family? God forbid! These are unheard of things for a God to do. God is faithful who has called you. Having called you, He has justified you! Having justified you He will glorify you! Then again, there is another reason why you are saved. He has called you into fellowship with Christ and that fellowship, if God is faithful, must be complete. You have shared His sufferings, you have had to bear a part of His reproach—His faithfulness secures the rest. He is “the strength,” yes, the eternity of Israel! “He is not a man that He should repent.”

Pronounce His name with reverence—it has in it more virtue than ten thousand material pledges. He is *God*—therefore He will maintain the fellowship all the way through. Am I to bear the Cross and not to wear the crown? Am I to come as a guilty sinner and have fellowship in His blood and yet not have fellowship in the Heaven into which, by that blood, He entered as my representative? Am I to come and trust Christ and have fellowship in the merit of that dying Savior and yet have no fellowship in His living power? Am I today, by faith, to be in fellowship with Him and never by sight to have the same? Oh this were strange! Oh this were two modes of acting, sowing many seeds! This were having mixed weights in the bag!

God acts on one principle, not on two—and where He calls us to be His sons and to be partners with Christ—He will carry out the deed of partnership and we shall see His face! And we shall wear His crown and we shall sit upon His Throne—and all that shall come by-and-by. Therefore, courage, Brothers and Sisters, and let us rejoice tonight, while we come to the Table, that we are secure, for God has called us—we must be saved, for we have fellowship with Christ.

Now I have been preaching only to the people of God and there is a large number of my hearers that are not of this happy family. I wish I were preaching to them also! But the time has fled. Let me say this word of encouragement to them—the Divine Grace that called us can call you! You cannot save yourself, but He can save you and here is a promise which He gives you—“Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” To call upon that name is to invoke it in prayer—venture upon it in fact and trust it by faith.

If you believe in Christ you shall be saved. I know not who you may be. To every creature under Heaven the same Gospel is preached, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you”—I know not to whom that refers just now—“you”—though you are the vilest sinner living—“you shall be saved.” Trust Christ now and your sins are gone! Rest on Him and you are snatched from the kingdom of evil and put into the republic of life—you become members of Christ’s body—you are, by His Grace, saved!—

*“Oh, believe the message true,
God to you His Son has given.”*

Cast yourself upon Him! Trust His Grace and Heaven is yours forever! The Lord add His blessing, now, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307