Tell someone today how much you love Jesus Christ.

LIFE BY FAITH
NO. 814

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 7, 1868,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“The just shall live by faith.”
Galatians 3:11.

THE apostle quotes from the Old Testament, from the second chapter of Habakkuk, at the fourth verse, and thus confirms one inspired statement by another. Even the just are not justified by their own righteousness, but live by faith; it follows then most conclusively, that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God. If the best of men find no justification coming to them through their personal virtues, but stand accepted only by faith, how much more such imperfect beings, such frequent sinners as ourselves?

Men who are saved by faith become just. The operation of faith upon the human heart is to produce love, and through love, obedience, and obedience to the divine law is but another name for morality, or, what is the more divine form of it, holiness. And wherever this holiness exists, we may make sure that the holiness is not the cause of spiritual life and safety, but faith is still the wellspring of all. You saw, a few weeks ago, the hawthorn covered with a delicious luxuriance of snow-white flowers, loading the air with fragrance; now, no one among the admiring gazers supposed that those sweet May blossoms caused the hawthorn to live. After a while you noticed the horse chestnut adorned with its enchanting pyramids of flowers, but none among you foolishly supposed that the horse chestnut was sustained and created by its bloom; you rightly conceived these forms of beauty to be the products of life, and not the cause of it. You have here, in nature’s emblems, the true doctrine of the Inner life. Holiness is the flower of the new nature. It is inexpressibly lovely and infinitely desirable; no, it must be produced in its season, or we may justly doubt the genuineness of a man’s profession; but the fair graces of holiness do not save, or give spiritual life, or maintain it—these are rills from the fount, and not the fountain itself. The most athletic man in the world does not live by being athletic, but is athletic because he lives, and has been trained to a perfection of animal vigor. The most enterprising merchant holds his personal property not on account of his character or merit, but because of his civil rights as a citizen. A man may cultivate his land up to the highest point of production, but his right to his land does not depend upon the mode of culture, but rather upon his title deeds. So the Christian should aim after the highest degree of spiritual culture and of heavenly perfection, and yet his salvation, as to its justness and security, depends not on his attainments, but rests upon his faith in a crucified Redeemer, as it is written in the text, “The just shall live by faith.” faith is the fruitful root, the inward channel of sap, the great life-grace in every branch of the vine. In considering the text, this morning, we shall use it, perhaps somewhat apart from the context in which it stands, and yet not apart from the mind of the Spirit, nor apart from the intention of the apostle, if not here yet in other places.

I. In the first place, IN THE PUREST SPIRITUAL SENSE IT IS TRUE THAT THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.

It is through faith that a man becomes just, for otherwise, before the law of God he is convicted of being unjust—being justified by faith he is enrolled among the just ones. It is through faith that he is at first quickened and breathes the air of heaven, for naturally he was dead in trespasses and sins. Faith is the first sure sign of the spiritual life within the human breast. He repents of sin and looks to Jesus, because he believes the testimony of God’s Son; and he believes that testimony because he has received a new life. He depends upon the atoning blood of Jesus because his heart has received the power to do so by the Holy Spirit’s gift of spiritual life. Ever afterwards you shall judge of the vigor of the man’s Inner life by the state of his faith—if his faith grows exceedingly, then his life also, is increasing in power. If his faith diminishes, then depend upon it, the vital spark burns low; let faith ebb out, and the life-floods are ebbing too; let faith roll in with a mighty sweep, in a floodtide of full assurance, then the secret life-floods within the man are rising, and filling the man with sacred energy. Were it possible for faith to die,
the spirit-life must die too; and it is very much because faith is imperishable that the new life is incorruptible. You shall find men only live before God as they believe in God and rest in the merit of His dear Son; and in proportion as they do this you shall find they live in closer fellowship with heaven. Great saints must be great believers—Little-Faith never can be a matured saint.

Observe that this truth of God proves itself in all the characteristics of spiritual life. The nobility of the inner life—who has not noticed it? A man whose life is hid with Christ in God is one of the aristocrats of this world; he who knows nothing of the Inner life is but little above a mere animal, and is by no means comparable to the sons of God—to whom is given the royal priesthood, the saintly inheritance. In proportion as the spiritual life is developed, the man grows in dignity, becoming more like the Prince of Glory, yet the very root and source of the dignity of the holy life lies in faith. Take an instance. The life of Abraham is remarkable for its placid nobility. The man appears at no time to be disturbed. Surrounded by robber bands, he dwells in his tent as quietly as in a walled city. Abraham walked with God, and does not seem to have quickened or slackened his pace; he maintained a serene, obedient walk, never hastening through fear, nor loitering through sloth; he kept sweet company with his God—and what a noble life was his! The father of the faithful was second to no character in history; he was a kingly man, yes, a conqueror of kings, and greater than they. How calm is his usual life! Lot, following his carnal prudence, is robbed in Sodom, and at last loses all—Abraham following his faith, abides as a pilgrim, and is safe. Lot is carried away captive out of a city, but Abraham remains securely in a tent, because he cast himself on God. When does Abraham fail? When does that mighty eagle suddenly drop as with wounded wing? It is when the arrow of unbelief has pierced him—he begins to tremble for Sarah, his wife; she is fair, perhaps the Philistine king will take her from him. Then, in an unbelieving moment, he says, “She is my sister.” Ah, Abraham, where is your nobility now? The man who so calmly and confidently walked with God while he believed, degrades himself to utter the thing that is not, and so falls to the common level of falsehood! Even so will you, so shall each of us, strong or weak, noble or fallen, according to our faith. Walking confidently with God, and leaning upon the everlasting arm, you shall be as a celestial prince surrounded by ministering spirits; your life shall be happy and holy, and glorious before the Lord; but the moment you distrust your God, you will be tempted to follow degrading methods of evil policy, and you will pierce yourself through with many sorrows.

As the dignity, so the energy of the spiritual life depends upon faith. Spiritual life, when sound, is exceedingly energetic; it can do all things. Take the apostles, as an instance, and see how over sea and land, under persecutions and sufferings, they nevertheless pressed forward in the Holy War, and declared Christ throughout all nations. Wherever the spiritual life fairly pervades man, it is a force which cannot be bound, fettered, or kept under; it is a holy fury, a sacred fire in the bones. Rules, and customs, and proprieties, it snaps as fire snaps bonds of tinder; but its energy depends upon God the Holy Spirit—entirely upon the existence and power of faith. Let a man be troubled with doubts as to the religion which he has espoused, or concerning his own interest in the privileges which that religion bestows, and you will soon find that all the energy of his spiritual life is gone—he will have little more than a name to live, practically he will be powerless. Take Abraham again. Abraham finds that certain kings from the East have pounced upon the cities of the plain. He cares very little for Sodom or Gomorrah, but among the prisoners his nephew, Lot, has been carried away. Now, he has a great affection for his kinsman, and resolves to do his duty and rescue him. Without stopping to inquire whether his little band was sufficient, he relies entirely upon the Lord his God, and with his servants and neighbors hastens after the spoilers, nothing doubting, but expecting aid from the Most High God. That day did Jehovah, who raised up the righteous man from the East, give his enemies to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow, and the patriarch returned from the slaughter of the kings laden with the spoil. He could not but fight while he believed. It was impossible for him to sit still and yet believe in God; but if he had not believed, then had he said, “The matter must go by default; it is a sorrowful misfortune, but my nephew, Lot, must bear it; perhaps God’s providence will interpose for him.” faith believes in providence, but she is full of activity, and her activity, excited by reliance upon providence leads like wheel within a wheel to the fulfillment of the providential decree. My brothers and sisters, it is necessary for us to believe much in God, or we shall do but little for Him. Believe that God is with you, and you will have an insatiable ambition to extend the Savior’s kingdom; believe in the power of the truth of God, and in the power of the Holy Spirit who goes with the truth, and you will not be content with the paltry schemes of modern Christendom, you will glow and burn with a seraph’s ardor, longing and desiring even to do more than
you can do, and practically carrying out with your utmost ability what your heart desires for the glory of the Lord.

Further, it is quite certain that all the joy of the spiritual life depends upon faith. You all know that the moment your faith ceases to hang simply upon Jesus, or even if it allows a little check, your joy evaporates. Joy is a welcome angel, but it will not tarry where faith does not entertain it; spiritual joy is a bird of paradise which will build its nest only among the branches of faith; faith must pipe, or joy will not dance. Unbelieving Jacob finds his days few and evil, but believing Abraham dies an old man, and full of years; if you would anoint your head and wash your face—and put away the ashes and the sackcloth, you must trust more firmly in the faithfulness of the Lord your God! Doubts and fears never could strike so much as a spark with which to light the smallest candle to cheer a Christian, but simple trust in Jesus makes the sun to rise in his strength with healing beneath his wings—even upon those that sit in the valley of the shadow of death. In proportion as you lean on Christ—in that proportion shall life’s burden grow light, heaven’s joys grow real, and your whole being more elevated.

I might thus continue to mention each point in the secret life, but I rather choose to proceed in order to observe only that all our growth in the spiritual life depends upon our faith. True life must grow in its season. You can tell the difference between two stakes which are driven into the ground—the one may happen to have life in it, and if so, before long it sprouts, while the dead one is unchanged. And so with the Christian; if he is living he will grow. He must make advances. It is not possible for the Christian to sit still and remain in the same state month after month; but if he is to increase in spiritual riches, he must of necessity exert a constant and increasing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter cannot walk the waters except he believes; doubting does not help him, but it sinks him. I fear that some of my brothers and sisters try to grow in spiritual life by adopting methods which are not of faith. Some think that they will set themselves rules of self-denial or extra devotion—these plans are lawful, but they are not in themselves effective, for vows may be observed mechanically, and rules obeyed formally, and yet the heart may be drifting away yet further from the Lord. Yes, these vows and rules may be a means of deluding us into the vain belief that all is well, whereas we are nearing spiritual shipwreck! I have found in my own spiritual life that the more rules I lay down for myself, the more sins I commit. The habit of regular morning and evening prayer is one which is indispensable to a believer’s life, but the prescribing of the length of prayer, and the compelled remembrance of so many persons and subjects, may gender prayer rather than assist it. To say I will humble myself at such a time, and rejoice at such another season is nearly as much an affectation as when the preacher wrote in the margin of his sermon, “cry here,” “smile here.” Why, if the man preached his sermon rightly, he would be sure to cry in the right place, and to smile at a suitable moment; and when the spiritual life is sound, it produces prayer at the right time, and humiliation of soul and sacred joy spring forth spontaneously, apart from rules and vows. The kind of religion which makes itself to order by the almanac, and turns out its emotions like bricks from a machine, weeping on Good Friday, and rejoicing two days afterwards, measuring its motions by the moon, is too artificial to be worthy of your imitation. The liberty of the spiritual life is a grand thing, and where that liberty is maintained constantly, and the energy is kept up, you will need much faith, for the fading of faith will be the withering of devotion, liberty will degenerate into license, and the energy of your life will dwindle into confidence in yourself. Let who will, bind himself with rules and regulations in order to (as he may think) advance himself in divine grace—be it ours, like Abraham, to believe God, and it shall be counted us for righteousness, and like Paul, to run the race which is set before us, looking unto Jesus! Faith enriches the soil of the heart; faith fills our treasuries with the choicest gold, and loads our tables with the daintiest food for our souls. By faith we shall do valiantly, stopping lions’ mouths, and quenching violent flames; but faith in Jesus, the Savior, faith in the heavenly Father, faith in the Holy Spirit, this we must have, or we perish like foam upon the waters.

As the other side of all this, let me notice that some Christians appear to try to live by experience. If they feel happy today, they say they are saved, but if they feel unhappy tomorrow, they conclude that they are lost; if they feel at one moment a deep and profound calm overspreading their spirits, then are they greatly elevated, but if the winds blow and the waves beat high, then they suppose that they are none of the Lord’s people. Ah, miserable state of suspense! To live by feeling is a dying life; you know not where you are, nor what you are if your feelings are to be the barometer of your spiritual condition. Beloved, a simple faith in Christ will enable you to remain calm even when your feelings are the reverse of happy—to remain confident when your emotions are far from ecstatic. If indeed we are saved by Jesus Christ, then the foundation of our salvation does not lie within us, but in that crucified man who now
reigns in glory. When He changes, ah, then what changes must occur to us, but since He is the same yesterday, today, and forever, why need we be so soon removed from our steadfastness? Believe in Jesus, dear heart, when you cannot find a spark of divine grace within yourself; cast yourself as a sinner into the Savior’s arms when you cannot think a good thought, nor uplift a good desire. When your soul feels like a barren wilderness that yields not so much as one green blade of hope, or joy, or love—still look up to the great Farmer who can turn the desert into a garden; have confident faith in Jesus at all times, for if you believe in Him, you are saved, and cannot be condemned. However good or bad your state, this shall not affect the question—you believe, therefore you shall be saved! Give up living from hand to mouth in that poor miserable way of frames and feelings, and wait only upon the Lord from whom comes your salvation.

Many professors are even worse; they try to live by experiments. I am afraid a great many among Dissenters are of that kind; they must have a revivification meeting once a week at least; if they do not get a grand display quite so often, they begin to fall dreadfully back, and crave an exciting meeting as drunksards long for spirits. It is a poor spiritual life which hangs on eloquent sermons and such like stimulants; these may be good things and comforting things—be thankful for them, but I pray you, do not let your spiritual life depend upon them. It is very much as though a man should, according to Scriptural language, feed on the wind, and sniff up the east wind, for your faith is not to stand in the wisdom of man, nor in the excellence of human speech, nor in the earnestness of your fellow Christians, but in your simple faith in Him who is, and was, and is to come; who is the Savior of sinners! A genuine faith in Christ will enable you to live happily even if you are denied the means of divine grace; a genuine faith in Christ will make you rejoice on board ship, keep Sabbath on a sick bed, and make your dwelling a temple, even if yours is but a log hut in the far West, or a shanty in the bush of Australia. Only have faith, and you need not look to these excitements any more than the mountains look to the summer’s sun for their stability.

Shall I need further to say; by way of caution that I fear many professors live anyway? I know not how otherwise to describe it; they have not enough caution to look at their inward experience; they have not enough vigor to care about excitement, but they live a kind of listless, dreamy, comatose life. I mean some of you! You believe that you were saved years ago, you united yourselves to a Christian church and were baptized, and you conclude that all is right. You have written your conversion in your spiritual trade-books as a good asset—you consider it as a very clear thing. I am afraid it is rather doubtful; still you think it sure. Since that time you have kept up the habit of prayer, you have been honest, you have subscribed to church funds, have done your duty outwardly as a Christian, but there has been very little vitality in your godliness—it has been surface work, skin-deep consistency. You have not been grievously exercised about sin! You have not been bowed under the weight of inward corruption; neither have you been, on the other hand, exhilarated by a sense of divine love, and a delightful recognition of your interest in it; you have gone on dreamily, as I have heard of soldiers marching when they were asleep. O for a thunderbolt to wake you, for this is dangerous living! Of all modes of living, if you are a Christian, this is one of the most perilous! And if you are not a Christian, it is one of the most seductive, for while the outward sinner may be got at by the preaching of the gospel, you are almost beyond the reach of gospel ministry, because you will not admit that warnings are meant for you. You wrap yourselves up and say, “It is well with me,” while you are really naked, and poor, and miserable in the sight of God. Oh, if you could but get back to live by faith!

II. Secondly, “the just shall live by faith”—this means that FAITH IS OPERATIVE IN OUR DAILY LIFE.

It is operative in many ways, but three observations will suffice. Faith is the great sustaining energy with the just man under all his trials, difficulties, sufferings, or labors. It is a notion with some that true religion is meant to be kept shut up in churches and chapels as a proper thing for Sundays, which ought to be attended to, since a man is not respectable if he does not take a pew somewhere, even if he does not need sit in it, or sitting in it, pays no more attention to the word preached than to a ballad singer in the street! There is a decent show of religion which people as a rule must keep up, or they cannot be received into polite society, but the idea of bringing religion down to the breakfast table, introducing it to the drawing-room, taking it into the kitchen, keeping it on hand in the shop, in the workshop, or the corn exchange, carrying it out to sea in your vessel—this is thought by some to be sheer fanaticism! And yet if there is anything taught by the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is just this, that religion is a matter of common, everyday life, and no man understands the Christian religion at all unless he has fully
accepted it as not a thing for Sundays, and for certain places and certain times, but for all places, and all
times, and all conditions, and all forms of life. An active, operative faith is by the Holy Spirit implanted
in the Christian, and it is sent to him on purpose to sustain him under trial. I shall put this to some of you
as a test by which you may try whether you have obtained the faith of God’s elect. You have lost a large
sum of money—well, are you distracted and bewildered? Do you almost lose your senses? Do you
murmur against God? Then I ask you what are you better than the man who has no religion at all? Are
you not an unbeliever? If you believed that all things work together for your good, would you be so re-
bellious? Yet that is God’s own declaration; now is the time when your faith in God should enable you
to say, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” What do you
By this shall you test whether you have faith or not. Or it may be you have lost a darling child, and that
more than others unless you can thus speak with submission and resignation, yes, even with cheerful-
murmur against God? Then I ask you what are
sum of money—well, are you distracted and bewildered? Do you almost lose your senses? Do you

Furthermore, faith in ordinary life has an effect upon the dispensations of divine providence. It is a
riddle which we cannot explain how everything is eternally fixed by divine Purpose, and yet the prayer
of faith moves the arm of God. Though the enigma cannot be explained, the fact is not to be denied. My
brothers and sisters, I may be thought fanatical, but it is my firm belief that in ordinary matters, such as
the obtaining of your living, the education of your children, the ruling of your household, you are to de-
pend upon God as much as in the grand matter of the salvation of your soul! The hairs of your head are
all numbered; go to God then about your trifles! Not a sparrow falls to the ground without your Father;
cast upon the Lord your minor trials! Never think that anything is too little for your heavenly Father’s
love to think upon; He who rides upon the whirlwind, walks in the garden at evening in the cool breath
of the zephyr; He who shakes the avalanche from its Alp, also makes the dry leaf to twinkle as it fall s
from the aspen; He whose eternal power directs the spheres in their everlasting marches, guides each
grain of dust which is blown from the summer’s threshing floor! Confide in Him for the

Are we to we expect miracles then?” asks one. No, but we expect the same results as are compassed
by miracles. I have sometimes thought that for God to interpose by a miracle to accomplish a purpose is
a somewhat clumsy method, if I may be allowed such a word. But for Him to accomplish the very same
thing without interfering with the wheels of His providence seems to me the more thoroughly God-like
method. If I were hungry today, and God had promised to feed me, it would be as much a fulfillment of
His promise if my friend here brought my food unexpectedly, as if the ravens brought it; and the bring-
ing of it by ordinary means would all the better prove that God was there—not interrupting the machin-
ery of providence, but making it to educe the end which He designed. God will not turn stones into
bread for you, but perhaps He will give you stones to break, and you will thus earn your bread! God
may not rain manna out of heaven, and yet every shower of rain falling upon your garden brings you
bread. It will be the better for you to earn your food, than to have it brought by ravens, or better that
Christian charity should make you its care than that an inexhaustible barrel and cruise should be placed
in your cupboard. Anyhow, your bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure. My witness is,
and I speak it for the honor of God, that God is a good provider. I have been cast upon the providence of
God ever since I left my father’s house, and in all cases He has been my Shepherd, and I have known no
lack. My first income as a Christian minister was small enough in all conscience, never exceeding 40
pounds, yet I was as rich then, as I am now, for I had enough. And I had no more cares, no, not half as
many, then, as I have now! And when I breathed my prayer to God then, as I do now, for all things tem-
poral and spiritual, I found Him ready to answer me at every pinch—and pinches I have had full many!
Many a monetary trial since then have I had in connection with the College work which depends for
funds upon the Lord’s moving His people to generosity. My faith has been often tried, but God has al-
ways been faithful and sent supplies in hours of need; if any should tell me that prayer to God was a
mere piece of excitement, and that the idea of God’s answering human cries is absurd, I would laugh the
statement to scorn, for my experience is not that of one or two singular instances, but that of hundreds
of cases in which the Lord’s interposition for the necessities of His work has been as manifest as if He had
rent the clouds, and thrust forth His own naked arm and bounteous hand to supply the needs of His serv-
ant! This, my testimony, is but the echo of the witness of the Lord’s people everywhere! When they look
back, they will tell you that God is good to Israel, and that when they have walked by faith they have
never found that God has failed them. The Red Sea of trouble has been divided; the waters have stood
upright as a heap, and the depths have been congealed in the heart of the sea. As for their doubts and
difficulties, like the Egyptians the depths have covered them, there has not been one of them left.
And standing on the further shore to look back upon the past, the redeemed of the Lord have shouted
aloud, “Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously,” for faith has conquered all their difficul-
ties, and brought supplies for all their needs.

Do not let me be misunderstood, however; faith is never to be regarded as a premium for idleness. If
I sit down and fold my arms, and say, “The Lord will provide,” He will most likely provide me a sum-
mons to the County Court, and a place in the parish workhouse! God has never given any promise to idle
people that He will provide for them, and therefore they have no right to believe that He will! To trust in
God to make up for our laziness is not faith, but wicked presumption! Neither does the power of faith
afford ground for fanaticism; I have no right to say, “I should like to have so-and-so, and I will ask for
it, and shall have it.” God has never promised to give to us everything which our whimsies may select. If
we really want any good thing, we may plead the promise, “No good thing will I uphold from them who
offend God’s blessing upon it, your work will not hinder your faith, but be an exhibition and display of it.
Thus with a simple faith in God, not fanatical, not idle, but going on in the path of prudence, desiring
to glorify God—you shall find that all difficulties will vanish, and your doubts and fears shall fly away.
Do understand that even faith itself will be no guarantee against trials and against poverty, for it is good
for God’s people to be tried, and there are some of them who would not glorify God if they were not

Tell someone today how much you love Jesus Christ.
Sermon #814  
Life by Faith

III. Lastly, THIS IS ALSO TRUE IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH AS A WHOLE.

The Christian church lives by faith. She lives by faith in opposition to speculation. Every now and then a fit of speculative philosophy seizes the church, and then her vitality withers. In the days of the school-men, just before Luther’s time, good men were fighting and squabbling from morning to night; gathered like so many carrion crows around the dead body of Aristotle; fighting about nobody knows what! It is said that they held sage discussions upon how many angels could poise themselves upon the point of a needle! While such foolish and unlearned questions as these were being raised, the poor people in the Christian church were starved, and the church lost all its energy; sinners were not converted, fundamental truths of God were despised; but then came Luther, and the notable revival. In more modern days, in the period after Doddridge and Watts, among Dissenters the habit of philosophizing upon the Trinity was common. Brothers tried to be very exact and precise, as exact and precise as the Athanasian Creed, while others combated their dogmatism, and the result was that a large proportion of the Dissenting churches fell asleep—degenerated doctrinally, and Socinianism threatened to eat out the very life of evangelical Dissent. Speculation is not the life of the Christian church, but faith, a reception of the Bible truth in its sublimity and authority, an obedient belief in revelation, not because we understand all its teachings, but because not understanding, we nevertheless receive the Lord’s word upon the ipse dixit of the Most High. Whenever the church is simple-minded enough to require no outworks to her faith, to care very little about evidences, internal or external, but just to fight the battle on the ground of divine authority saying, “This is of God, and at your peril reject it”—she has been “fair as the sun, clear as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners.” Let her begin to split hairs, try to move away objections, and spend all her time upon her outworks, and then her glory departs.

In the next place, faith is the life of the church in opposition to reliving despondency. In our own churches it used to be the habit for our friends to be very well content if they built a chapel in the lowest part of a town, down two courts, three alleys, and a turning. And as to attendants, the members appeared to be particularly anxious to avoid anything like the excitement of a crowd; they were a most retiring people as a rule, but as to coming out into the forefront to set their city on a hill, and make their light shine by evangelizing the masses, that was a forgotten business! At the present hour, from other quarters you constantly hear expressions defiled with the most dastardly timidity, denoting the most shameful cowardice; for instance, lately we have heard that, “The church is in danger.” “The church is in danger.” Christians with their Bibles, and all the truths in the Bibles, Christians with their ministers, and all their earnestness, Christians with the Holy Spirit, with God’s promises, with the foundations against which the gates of hell shall not prevail—and yet in danger! Really, such remarks and such fears are quite unworthy of the manhood of those who believe in the divinity of the Christian faith! No church can make progress till she believes enough in her God to be sure that in Him she is strong; while she imagines that she is weak, she is weak! Fear paralyzes her; dread kills her energies, but when she believes in the divine Strength with which she is encountered as with a golden belt, then she marches on with certainty of triumph. May we as a church always believe that as long as we are resting upon the strength of God, nothing can hurt us. I defy the House of Lords, the House of Commons, the Pope, the Turk, and all the nations in the entire world, and all the devils in hell to put this church in danger! I do not know anything that they could take away from us, for I know of nothing which they have given us! If they had endowed and established us, they could take away what they gave, but as they have not given us a thread for a shoelace, they can do whatever they please, and we shall not even call a church meeting to consider it. Yet here are other churches, with Lord Bishops, and deans, and stipends, and I know not what beside, which are horribly shaken because an arm of flesh is failing them. The pay of their preachers will by-and-by, by a gradual process, be withdrawn, and they tremble for the ark of the Lord! Shame on your little minds, to be thus afraid; surely you have lost confidence in the truth of God, and in God, or you would not fear because of the talents of gold which will be justly withheld from you! Remember that the truth of God allied with earthly power has often been defeated by error—but the truth of God alone has always defeated error, even when that error had had physical might upon its side. Let truth have her fair
chance, and stand alone; she is most strong when least hampered with human strength, and most sure to be victorious when she has no might but that which dwells in herself or comes from her God!

In the next place, the Christian church lives by faith, that is, faith in opposition to a squeamishness which I see springing up nowadays as to the selection of instruments. Let me be understood. I hear it is said, “Why allow these men to preach in the street? Is it not a pity that illiterate persons should preach at all? Some of them are very ungrammatical, and really, what they say at the very best is very so-so; is it not better that none should go out but the best trained men?” Then, for missions, it is said only the very best picked men should be sent forth; as to young men, full of zeal, not having had experience, and not having learned all the classics, and being well up in mathematics—it is of no use thinking to send them! Many a church indeed thinks that all her officers ought to be rich, all her ministers learned, all her agents Masters of Arts, at least—if not Doctors of Divinity. This was not so in olden times; thus it was not when the church of God grew mightily, for of old the church of God had FAITH—in what? Why, faith in weakness! Faith in the things that were not! Did not she believe, “Not many noble, not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty are called; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised”?

It is very memorable that in the catacombs of Rome, among those remarkable inscriptions which are now preserved with so much care as the memorials of the departed saints, that it is rare to find an inscription which is all of it spelt correctly; proving that the persons who wrote them, who were no doubt the very pick of the Christian flock, could neither write nor spell correctly, and yet these were the men and women who turned the world upside down! When Wesley began his career, our churches were nearly dead with the disease called, “proprieties,” but Mr. Wesley employed men, some of whom were quite unlettered, to go about to preach; and by those men this nation was revived! To this day our Primitive Methodist friends are doing a great and noble work for which God be thanked, because they use almost every man they have, and they use the men till they become fit to be used, trained and tutored by practice. In this church I thank God I have always encouraged every brother and sister to do all they can, and I do still urge all so to do! I trust there is not a young man here who can say that I ever held him back in desiring to serve his Master; if I have, I am sure I am very sorry for it. Oh, all of you do all that you can, for this church, at any rate, has faith in you all, that though you make a thousand blunders, yet it is better to have the gospel preached blunderingly than not at all! And while three millions and more in London are perishing for lack of knowledge, it is better that you spoil the Queen’s English, and make ever such mistakes than that you should not preach Jesus Christ! God will not be angry with you for all your ignorance, if you are not ignorant of the one thing necessary.

So, beloved, it comes to this—that we must not, as a Christian church, calculate our resources, nor take out our note books and count up how much we have to rely upon; the treasury of the church is the generosity of God; the power of the church is the omnipotence of Jehovah; the persuasions of the church are the irresistible influences of the Holy Spirit; the destiny of the church is an ultimate conquest over all the sons of men! Advance then, every one of you to the fray, for you advance also to conquest! Rely upon Him who has said, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world,” and you shall find that as the just, you shall live by faith! If you sit down and waste your time, or turn your backs and retire from the battle, you shall be written among the cowards whose memorial is in the dust; but if you stand fast, and are immovable, “always abounding in the work of the Lord,” your record shall be on high, and your portion shall be at the right hand of the Father, where Christ sits, and where you shall also sit forever and ever! God bless these words for His name’s sake. Amen.

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