

A CHEERY WORD IN TROUBLOUS TIMES

NO. 1335

A SERMON
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 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.”
Acts 27:25.

THE presence of a brave man in the hour of danger is a very great comfort to his companions. It is a grand thing to observe Paul so bold, so calm, in the midst of all the hurly-burly of the storm and talking so cheerfully, and so encouragingly, to the crew and to the soldiery and to the prisoners. You must have seen in many events in history that it is the one man, after all, that wins the battle. All the rest play their parts well when the one heroic spirit lifts the standard.

Every now and then we hear some simpleton or other talking against a “one-man ministry,” when it has been a one-man ministry from the commencement of the world to the present day. And whenever you try to have any other form of ministry, except that of each individual saint discharging his own ministry, and doing it thoroughly and heartily and independently and bravely in the sight of God, you very soon run upon quicksand. Recollect, Christian man, that wherever you are placed, you are to be *the* one man and you are to have courage, and independence of spirit, and strength of mind received from God, that with it you may comfort those around you who are of the weaker sort. So act that your confidence in God shall strengthen the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees, and your calm quiet look shall say to them that are of a faint heart, “Be strong. Fear not.”

If you are to do this, and I trust you will do it, in the sick chamber, in the midst of the troubles of life, in the church, and everywhere else, *you must be strong yourself*. Take it as a good rule that nothing can come out of you that is not in you. You cannot render real encouragement to others unless you have courage within yourself. Now, the reason why Paul was able to embolden his companions was that he had encouraged himself in his God. He was calm or else he could not have calmed those around him. Imagine him excited and all in a tremble, and yet saying, “Sirs, be of good cheer.” Why they would have thought that he mocked them and they would have replied, “Be of good cheer yourself, sir, before you encourage us.”

So my dear brothers and sisters, you must trust God and be calm and strong, or else you will not be of much service in the world and in the church as you ought to be. Get full and then you will run over, but you can never fill others till you become full yourselves. Be yourselves “strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might,” and then you will be as a standard lifted up to which the timid will rally.

At this time, we are going to speak very little about Paul, but a great deal to ourselves. May God speak to us! May the Holy Spirit cheer our hearts and lead us into the way of peace and power. *If Paul was strong it was because he believed God*. Let us speak about that faith. Paul, being strong, spoke words of good cheer to others. Let us, in the second place, *see whether we cannot speak words of encouragement to our comrades in distress*. We will finish up with such words as God may give us.

I. First, then, PAUL WAS STRONG BECAUSE HE BELIEVED.

Faith makes men strong—not in the head, but in the heart. Doubting people are generally headstrong—the Thomas-sort of people who obstinately declare that they will not believe unless they can have proofs of their own choosing. If you read certain newspapers, journals, quarterly reviews, and so on, you will see that the doubting people who are always extolling skepticism and making out that there is more faith in their doubt than in half the creeds, and so on, are particularly strong in the upper region, namely, in the head—only it is that sort of head-strength which implies real weakness, for obstinacy seldom goes with wisdom.

They are always sneering at believers as a feeble folk, which is a clear sign that they are not very strong themselves. For evermore this has been a rule without exception, that when a man despises his opponent, he is himself the party who ought to be despised. When certain writers rave about “evangelical platitudes,” as they commonly do, they only see in others a fault with which they are largely chargeable themselves. Anybody who glances at the skeptical literature of the present day will bear me out that the platitudes have gone over to the doubting side of the house. No people can write such fluent nonsense and talk such absurdity as the school of modern doubt and “culture.”

They think themselves the wisest of the wise, but professing to be wise, they have become fools and I know what I say. It is true that the evangelical party has become flat and stale, but the other party has beaten us at that. They are more dull, more stale, and more unprofitable by far. When a man leaves faith, he leaves strength. When he takes up with “liberal” views in religion and does not believe anything in particular, he has lost the bone and sinew of his soul. It is true all round, in all things that he who firmly believes has an element of power which the doubter knows nothing of. Even if a man is somewhat mistaken in what he believes, there is a power in his faith, though it may be in part power for mischief. There is, however, in a believer a world of power for good if the right thing is believed. Paul was a believer in God, and so became strong in heart and was on board the foundering vessel the center of hope, the mainstay of courage.

But notice that *Paul's faith was faith in God*. “I believe God,” said he. Nobody else in the ship could see any hope in God. With the exception of one or two like-minded with Paul, they thought that God had forsaken them, if indeed they thought of God at all. But there had that night stood by Paul's side an angel fresh from heaven, bright with the divine presence, and strengthened by his message, Paul said, “I believe God.” That was something more than saying, “I believe *in* God.” This many do and derive but slender comfort from the belief. But “I believe *God*, believe *Him*, believe His truthfulness, believe the word that He has spoken, believe His mercy, and His power. I believe God.” This made Paul calm, peaceful, strong. Would to God that all professing Christians did really believe God.

Believing God, *he believed the message that God had sent him*, drank in every word and was revived by it. God had said, “Fear not Paul, I have given you all them that sail with you.” He believed it. He felt certain that God, having promised it, was able to perform it, and amidst the howling of the winds, Paul clung to that promise. He was sure that no hair of any man's head would be harmed. The Lord had said the preserving word and it was enough for His servant. Has He said it and shall He not do it? Has He spoken it and shall it not come to pass? He believed God that it should be even as it was told him.

And he did that—mark, dear friends—*when there was nothing else to believe in*. “I believe God,” said he. He might have said to the centurion, if he had pleased, “I do not believe in the sailors. They are evidently bewildered and do not know what to do. We are driven before the wind, and their sails and tackle are useless. I do not believe in the men themselves, for they are plotting to get into the boat and leave the ship and all in it to go to the bottom. We must have them on board, but still I have no trust in them, their help is of small account compared with the divine aid.”

He did not say, “I believe in you, the centurion, that you can maintain military discipline and so we shall have a better opportunity of escaping.” No, the ship was breaking up. They had put ropes all round her, undergirding her, but he could clearly perceive that all this would not avail. The fierce Euroclydon was sweeping the vessel hither and thither, and driving her towards the shore, but he calmly said, “I believe God.”

Ah, that is a grand thing—to believe God when the winds are out—to believe God when the waves howl like so many wild beasts and follow one upon another like a pack of wolves all seeking to devour you. “I believe God.” This is the genuine breed of faith—this which can brave a tempest. The common run of men's faith is fair-weather faith—faith which loves to see its beautiful image mirrored in the glassy waves, but is far away when the storm clouds are marshalling the battle. The faith of God's elect is the faith that can see in the dark, the faith that is calm in the tumult, the faith that can sing in the midst of sorrow, the faith that is brightest when everything around her is black as midnight. “I believe God,”

said he, when he had nothing else to believe in. “My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him.” Say you, O my soul, “Though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, yet will we not fear, for God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”

*“God lives still!
Trust, my soul, and fear no ill.*

*Heaven’s huge vault may cleave asunder,
Earth’s round globe in ruins burst.*

*Devil’s fullest rage may thunder,
Death and hell may spend their worst.*

*Then will God keep safe and surely
Those who trust in Him securely.*

*Wherefore then, my soul, despair?
Mid the shipwreck, God is there.”*

Since the apostle Paul believed God thus truly and really, *he was not ashamed to say so*. He said openly to all those around him, “There shall not a hair of your heads perish, for I believe God.” Now, it is not so easy to thrust out your faith and expose it to rough weathers and to the hearing of rough men. Many a man has believed the promise but has not quite liked to say so, for there has been the whisper in his soul, “Suppose it should not come true, then how the enemy will rejoice! How those that listened to me will be saddened when they find that I was mistaken.” Thus does the devil cause faith to be dumb and God is robbed of His honor.

Under the name of prudence, there lurks an unbelieving selfishness. Brother, lend me your ear that I may whisper in it—“You do not believe at all.” That is not the legitimate sort of believing. Genuine faith in God speaks out and says, “God is true and I will stake everything on His Word.” It does not swallow its own words and keep its thoughts to itself, but when the time comes and others are in difficulty and doubt, it cheers them by crying out, “I believe God.” It is not ashamed to say, “The Lord Jesus, whose I am and whom I serve, stood by me this night and spoke with me, and I avow it.”

I would to God all Christians were prepared to throw down the gauntlet and to come out straight. For if God be not true, let us not pretend to trust Him, and if the Gospel is a lie, let us be honest enough to confess it. But if it be true, wherefore should we doubt it and speak with bated breath? If God’s promise be true, why should we distrust it? What excuse is there for this hesitancy? “Oh,” says one, “but that might be running great risks.” Risks with God, sir? Risks about God’s keeping His word? It cannot be. “Let God be true and every man a liar.” Let heaven and earth return to chaos and old night, but the Most High cannot break His word or run back from His promise. Therefore, O you Pauls, if you receive a message from the Most High, publish it abroad and let your faith be known.

I should like that little word to drop into the ears of some of you who think you love Christ, but have never told of your love—you that are hiding in the background there. Come out and show yourselves!

As for you who have long avowed your Savior, do it more and more and,

*“Speak His word, though kings should hear
Nor yield to sinful shame.”*

II. Now, if we have any measure of the faith of Paul, let us try whether we CANNOT CHEER OTHERS AS PAUL DID.

Let the language of the text be on our tongues, “Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.”

First, you will meet with *seeking souls*. They have not found Christ, yet, but they are hungering and thirsting after Him. They are saying, “Oh that I knew where I might find Him!” You that believe God are bound to speak comfortably to them, and say, “Sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.”

There is one that is sorrowing for sin. Go and tell him that sorrow for sin is sweet sorrow, and that no man should ever regret that he mourns his faults, but should be glad that God has enabled him to feel a holy grief, a penitential pain. Gotthold tells us that he was called one day to see a man who, when he entered his chamber, burst into many tears, and it was a long time before the good divine could discover what made him so unhappy. At last the man broke out, saying, “Oh, my sin, how I hate it! My sin, how I sorrow over it!” Whereupon Gotthold, who had been sad at the sight of his sadness, smiled and said, “Friend, your sadness is my gladness. I never behold a happier sight than when I see a man sorrowing for his sin.”

“Oh,” said the other, “say you so?” “Yes, indeed,” he said, “there are many mourners who mourn for others, but blessed are they that mourn for themselves. There are many who are sorry because they cannot have their own will, but,” said he, “there are few enough that sorrow because they have had their own will and have disregarded the will of the Lord. I rejoice,” said he, “for such as you are those for whom Jesus died. Come and trust Him, for when there is sorrow for sin, there will soon be joy for pardon.” Now, whisper in the ears of those who are penitent. Tell the mourner that God has promised to turn his night into day and his sackcloth into beauty.

Perhaps you will meet with another whose condition is that he is *pleading daily for mercy*. “Oh,” says he, “I have been praying, and praying, and praying. I cannot let a day pass without asking for forgiveness, but somehow my prayers seem to come back to me. I get no favorable replies.” Brother, to a man in this plight you should speak up and say, “Be of good cheer, friend, for I believe God, that it shall be even as He told me and He told me this, ‘Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened.’” Tell the praying soul that praying breath was never spent in vain and that in due time, “He that asks, receives.” To withhold your testimony will be cruelty to the seeking one and a robbery of God, to whose honor you are bound to speak.

Possibly you will meet with another who is saying, “I am beginning now to *venture myself upon Christ*. I am desiring to believe, but oh! mine is such a feeble confidence. I think I trust Him, but I am afraid I do not. I know there is no other Savior and I give myself to Him, but still I am jealous of my heart, lest mine is not true faith.” Tell that soul that Jesus has plainly said, “Him that comes to me I will in nowise cast out,” and then say, “Be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as He has told me.” Tell the trembling heart that Jesus never did yet reject one believer, however trembling might be his trust. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned. Let the comfort you feel in coming to Christ yourself thus be handed on to other seekers, even as the disciples passed the loaves and fishes among the hungry multitudes.

Perhaps you will find one who says, “*I desire the renewal of my nature*. I am so sinful. I can believe in Christ for pardon, but my heart is terribly deceitful, and I feel such strong passions and evil habits binding me that I am sore afraid.” Go and say to that soul, “His name is called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.” Tell that anxious one that the Lord can take away a heart of stone and give a heart of flesh. Say that Christ has come to bring liberty to the captives and to set men free from the bonds of sin. And tell them that you believe God, that it will be even as He has told you, and He has told you, and you know it is true, that He will purge you from sin and sanctify you wholly. Any soul and every soul that comes trustingly to Jesus and rests in Him shall find sanctification in Him so that sin shall be hated, avoided, and conquered.

I do not know how I shall manage it, but I wish that I could in two or three words say something that would make every Christian here look out after poor seeking souls with tenfold eagerness. I do not know

what to say, except this. There is a brother the less in this house tonight. There was one here two Sabbaths ago who never needed me to tell him to sympathize with anxious souls. He was always up here in the great congregation looking out, and then down in the prayer meeting below on the same errand. Many persons have been invited from this upper service to go down below and have there been spoken with by him concerning the Lord Jesus. It was our dear brother, Verdon, who was a mighty soul-hunter before the Lord and he lived to seek after souls. He is gone and my heart mourns him. Alas, my brother, when shall I ever again see such a one as you were? Now I want each one of you to try to fill up his place. Keep your eye on any who seem to feel the power of the Word, and then step up with an encouraging word, somewhat like that of the apostle, "Sirs, I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me."

Now, there is another set of people who are saved, but they are *Little-faiths*, and I want you strong-faith people to encourage them by telling them that you believe God that it shall be even as it was told you. Some of these Little-faiths are conscious of very great inward sin. They thought when they believed in Christ that they would never feel any more conflicts—their notion was that they should be saved from the assaults of sin the moment they were born unto God. But now they discover that the old viper within is not dead. He has had a blow on the head, but he is not dead. They see lusts and corruptions moving within their hearts and they cannot understand it. Go and tell them that you feel the same, but that, thanks be to God, He gives you the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. The poor young soul that is just struggling out of darkness into light, and beginning to contend with inward corruption, will be greatly comforted if you thus state your experience and declare your faith in the ultimate issue.

In the case of some others of these Feeble-faiths, the trouble is that they are *vexed with outward temptation*. Many a young man says, "It is hard to be a Christian where I work." Many a young woman has to say, "Father and mother are against me." Others have to complain that all their associations in business tempt them to that which is evil and that they have few to help them. Go and tell them of the Lord all-sufficient. Remind them that, "He keeps the feet of his saints." Tell them to pray day by day, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Tell them that there is strength enough in Christ to preserve His own. Bid them hide under the shadow of His wings. You have done so and found a happy shelter, and therefore you may confidently say to them, "Sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me."

You will find others whose lamentation is, "*I am so weak*. If I am a Christian, yet I am good for nothing. I have little liberty in prayer or power to edify anybody. I think I am the most useless of all the family." Tell them, "He gives power to the weak, and to him that has no strength He increases might." Tell them the Lord does not cast away the little ones, but He "carries the lambs in his bosom and does gently lead those that are with young." Tell them of the faithfulness and tenderness of the Good Shepherd and say, "Sirs, be of good cheer. Weak as you are, the Lord's strength will sustain you and as He has promised to preserve His own, and has evermore preserved me, do not doubt, for it shall be to you even as the Lord has told me."

Perhaps they will say, "Ah, but *I am beset by Satan*. Blasphemous thoughts are injected into my soul. I am driven to my wits' end." Then tell them that the Lord enables His people to cry, "Rejoice not over me, O my enemy, for though I fall yet shall I rise again." Tell them that when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him. As they feel their danger, point them to their great protector, the Lord Jesus, who has come to destroy the works of the devil, and say, "You will conquer him, you will conquer him yet. The Lord will bruise Satan under our feet shortly. Sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as He has told me."

There is much work for happy believers among the Feeble-minds and the Miss Much-afraids and the Mr. Despondencies and the like. I earnestly hope that they will set about it.

Now, if you have performed these tasks, I commend to your attention a third class of persons, namely, *those who are greatly tried*. God has a very tried people abroad in the world. I learned a lesson the other day which, I think, I never can forget. I was asked after preaching a sermon to go and see a

lady who suffered from rheumatism. Now, I know by bitter experience what rheumatism is, but when I saw one whose fingers and hands had all lost their form through pain, so that she was incapable of any motion beyond the mere lifting up of her hand and the letting it fall again—when I saw the pain marked on her countenance and knew that for twenty-two years she had suffered in agony, then I said, “You have preached me a sermon upon patience and I hope I shall profit by it. How dare I be impatient if you have to suffer so?”

Now, if you go and see sick folk, and I suppose you do, and if no sickness comes to your own house—say to them, “Sirs, be of good cheer: for it shall be even as God has told me.” And what has He told you? Why, that He will support His people in the most severe afflictions. “In six troubles I will be with you and in seven there shall no evil touch you!” Tell them that the Lord will bless His people’s troubles, for “all things work together for good to them that love God.” Tell them that God will bring His people out of the trouble some way or other, for He has said, “Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all.” And if you will tell them these precious things, believing them yourself—for that is the main point—having experienced the truth of them yourself, your testimony will comfort them.

You will meet with some that have been bereaved, who have lost the light of their house and have seen the desire of their eyes taken away with a stroke. Cheer them and tell them of the sweet things that God has said concerning the bereaved. He is “the Judge of the widow and the Father of the fatherless,” and do make a point of declaring your belief that He is so. You will meet with godly folks who are under testing trials. Many young people have to go through severe tests. I mean trials like this—“Will you take this employment, young man? The wages are sufficient, are they not?” “Yes, sir, I should be well content, I do not think I shall get a better situation as far as money goes.” “You understand that you will not have the Sabbath day to yourself and that we want no religion here. Now, young man, what do you say to that?”

Do not think twice about it, my friend, but say, “No, ‘what shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?’” Speak right straight out and do not be afraid to throw up the tempting offer. Many Christians can tell you “to be of good cheer,” for if you do this, God will bless you. You shall have even in this life your recompense, as well as in the life to come, if you can be decided and steadfast to stand for God and keep His way. I could mention many Christians who would tell you that when they were tested the Lord helped them to stand fast and that they have to bless Him for it every day of their lives. Whereas certain others have temporized and given way a little and they have got out of God’s ways and have had to run from pillar to post all their lives long, and though they are still Christians, yet they never enter into the joy of their Lord.

O sirs, be of good cheer when you have to suffer for Christ’s sake, for He is able to give you much more than you will ever lose by Him and above all He will give you peace of conscience, which is worth all the mines of California. Should you come under persecution, any of you, I hope you will be met by your fellow Christians who will tell you not to be afraid, for the Lord can make you increasingly to rejoice the more you are despised and slandered. Believe you that and you shall find it true.

And O you tried people of God, you that have lost the light of His countenance, those of us who rejoice in God would come to you and bear witness that He has only forsaken you for a small moment, but He will return to you in the fullness of His mercy. We believe God that, whether the season be dark or light and whether the road be rough or smooth, His heart is still the same, and He will not turn aside from the salvation of one of His chosen people.

Thus, dear friends, you have good scope for your faith to exercise itself in comforting others. Lay yourselves out in this delightful service.

I have yet another set of good folks to speak to. We have some Christian people about who tremble greatly for the ark of the Lord. I occasionally meet with good brethren, very good brethren, who are tempted to commit the sin of Uzzah—to put forth their hand to steady the ark because the oxen shake it—as if God could not protect His own cause. Some say that the good men are all dying. I have even

heard that they are all dead, but I am not quite sure of it. And they ask, as the fathers fall asleep and one after another of the pillars of the house of God are taken away, what will become of the church? What will become of the church? “My Father! My Father! The chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!” What will become of the truth, the cause, and the church? You know the good Methodist woman’s outcry at the funeral sermon when the minister said, “Now that this eminent servant of the Lord is departed, we know of no one to fill his place. The standard-bearers are removed and we have none left at all to be compared with them. It seems as if the glory were departing and the faithful failing from among men.” The worthy mother in Israel called out from the aisle, “Glory be to God, that’s a lie!”

Well, I have often felt inclined to say the same when I have heard a wailing over the absence of good and great men, and melancholy prophecies of the awful times to come. “Glory be to God! He will never let His church die out for lack of leaders. He has a grand reserve somewhere.” If all the men who preach the Gospel today were struck down in the pulpit with apoplectic fits tomorrow, the Holy Spirit would still qualify men to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We are, none of us, necessary to Him, nor is any mere man necessary to God. Do not get into that state of mind which makes you attach undue value to men or means. The salvation of souls is God’s work, and if it is God’s work it will go on. Be quite sure of that. There is no fear of any work falling to the ground which has JEHOVAH for its builder.

In this church of ours at the Tabernacle, we gradually lose our leaders and I have heard it said, and I must confess that I have almost thought, “If So-and-So were gone, nobody would ever fill her place or his place.” Such earnest and holy individuals seem to be essential and we feel that their removal would be fatal. Yet it is not so, dear friends. It is not so. Others arise and God’s work still goes on. Christians ought to be as confident as the heroic Spartans. The old men advanced in procession and they said, “*We have been brave,*” and they showed their scars, and then the strong men in the prime of their days followed and said, “*We are brave,*” and they bared their arms for war. Then if anyone wondered what would happen when the old men were gone and when the strong men were slain in battle, there came the boys and the striplings behind, and they said, “*We will be brave,* for we are Spartans!”

I see my grey-headed brethren going off the stage and I bless God that, though they do not say it, I can say it of them, “They have been brave.” Blessed be God, we have also a good staff of active workers of whom I may say, though they must not say it, “They *are* brave.” And yonder are the young soldiers coming on—the young men and the young women. I see in their very faces that they are smiling at the thought of being numbered with the hosts of Christ and I am persuaded they mean to be brave, and to stand up for the good old cause and for the blood-stained banner of Christ, even as their fathers have done. Instead of the fathers shall be the children—God make them far better soldiers than we have been. Brethren, do not let us be discouraged, for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me, “The LORD has been mindful of us, he will bless us.”

Many minds are in a state of great distress about the spread of error. I do not know what is going to happen to England according to the weeping prophets. The signs of the times are very bad and the would-be prophets say that a dreadful storm is coming on. My barometer does not indicate anything of the kind, but theirs stand at “much rain” or “stormy.” Not long ago I walked with a very excellent man, whose name I will not mention, because I think he must have been ill that morning. He told me that he believed that he should live to see the streets of London run with blood on account of the unbridled democracy, the atheism, and the radicalism of the times. In fact, he thought that everything was out of joint, and we were going—I do not know where. It is not long ago and I remember that I pulled him by the sleeve and said, “But, my dear friend, God is not dead.” Now, that is my comfort.

God is not dead and He will beat the devil yet. As surely as Jesus Christ won the victory on the cross, He will win the victory over the world’s sin. It is true it is a hard time for Christianity and infidels are fighting us with new arguments, but when I think of them I feel inclined to say what the Duke of Wellington said at Waterloo to the generals, “Hard pounding, gentlemen! Hard pounding! But we will see which will pound the longest.” And so we say—it may be “hard pounding” for the Christian church, but we shall see who can pound the longest.

Hitherto—these eighteen hundred years or more—the Gospel gun has gone on pounding and has neither been spiked nor worn out. As for our opponents, they have changed their guns a good many times. Our Gospel cannon has blown their guns and gun carriages and gunners all to pieces and they have had to set up new batteries every year or two. They change their modes, their arguments, their tactics, but we glory in the same cross as Paul did, and preach the same Gospel as Augustine and Calvin and Whitefield and the like. All along the testimony of Jesus Christ has still been the same. The precious blood has been exalted and men have been bidden to believe in Jesus. Pound away, gentlemen! We shall pound the longest and we shall win the day. If we believe God in that fashion, let us turn round to our discomfited brethren and say to them, “Sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.”

The last class that I shall notice will be our brethren and sisters who are laboring for Christ. Sometimes workers for the Lord get cast down. “I have taught a class for years,” says one, “and have seen no fruit.” “I have been preaching at the corner of the street for months, but have never heard of a conversion,” says another. “I have been visiting the lodging-houses, but I have never met with a convert.” Well, dear brother, do you think that you have preached Jesus Christ and nothing has come of it? If you do, you must be a very unbelieving brother. I do not believe it for a moment. I believe God, that it shall be even as He has told me, and He has said, “My word shall not return unto me void, but it shall prosper in the thing where I sent it.”

Perhaps you preach unbelievably. Now, an unbelieving word is not God’s Word. If you preach confidently and teach trustfully, believing in the power of the Spirit of God, and so exhibiting Jesus Christ to your children and to your hearers, there are sure to be results. The raindrops return not to heaven and the snowflakes climb not back to the treasure house, but water the earth and make it bring forth and bud, and even so shall God’s Word be. It must prosper in the thing where He has sent it. Beloved brother, do not give up. Dear sister, do not be discouraged. Go on! Go on! If you do not see results today, you must wait and work on, for the harvest will come. “He that goes forth and weeps, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.”

Be not so cowardly as to say, “I will leave the work.” You are not to win a battle in a moment or reap a harvest as soon as you sow the seed. Keep on! “Be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” We say this to you because we are confident ourselves and would have you confident also. Sirs, be of good cheer. God has been true to us and given us success, and we believe that it shall be to you even as He has told us.

III. Now, I have done the sermon, but I had intended, if time had held out, to give ONE OR TWO WORDS OF PERSONAL TESTIMONY TO THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD by declaring that the Lord has always acted to me as He has promised me. I will give one or two.

When I was converted to God, as I read the Scriptures I found that believers ought to be baptized. Now, nobody around me saw things in that light, but it did not matter to me what they thought, for I looked at it carefully for myself. Parents, friends, all differed, but believers’ baptism seemed to me to be scriptural, and, though I was a lad, God gave me grace to be honest to my conscience and to follow the Lord in that respect as fully as I could.

Have I had any cause to regret it? It seemed then that I might soon have grave cause for doing so, but I have had none. It has, on the other hand, often been a great comfort to my soul to feel that I did not trifle with my convictions. And I should like to urge you, young people, whether on that matter or any other, if you have received light from God, never to trifle with it. Follow the Lord fully and I can say, as the result of actual experience, “Sirs, be of good cheer. No harm will come to you if you are faithful to God and to your consciences.”

Again, when I came to London as a young minister, I knew very well that the doctrines which I preached were by no means popular, but I, for that very reason, brought them out with all the more emphasis. What a storm was raised! I was reading the other day a tirade of abuse which was poured upon me about twenty years ago. I must have been a horribly bad fellow, according to that description,

but I was pleased to observe that it was not *I* that was bad, but the doctrines which I preached. I teach the same truths now, and after having preached them these four-and-twenty years or so, what can I say of the results? Why, that no man loses anything by bringing the truth right straight out. If he believes a doctrine, let him speak it boldly. Mr. Slapdash, as Rowland Hill called the bold preacher, will after all, succeed. Let no minister say, “That is too Calvinistic and Calvinism is at a discount. That is too nonconforming and if you dare to speak against the Church of England somebody will be very vexed. Now trim your sails. Preach smoothly. Whenever you have anything to say, polish it and put it in such a neat way that nobody can object. As the great goddess Diana nowadays is unsectarian, try and be unsectarian, and all that is sweet and soothing and velvety and treacly, and you will succeed.”

Now, how has it turned out with me? I wish to bear this witness, not about myself, mark, but about the truth which I have preached. Nothing has succeeded better than preaching out boldly what I have believed and standing to it in defiance of all opposition, and never caring a snap of the fingers whether it offended or whether it pleased. Young man, if you are beginning life now, I charge you begin so that you can keep on, with a straightforward, honest reliance in God, for be sure of this—the truth will reward those who love it and all who lose for its sake are great gainers. Be steadfast in following your convictions. I cannot help saying it, because some of you, perhaps, are beginning to temporize a little. I would say to you, “Stand up straight and tell out the truth and then be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as He has told me.”

May God grant that this little personal testimony may tend to put backbone into certain Christians, for we have a molluscos company of professors about who do not believe anything, but shape their creed according to the mind of the last person they meet. Go, dear brethren, and pray God to cleanse your hearts of that evil if you have ever indulged in it. Believe God. Take every letter of His Book and hang to it as for dear life, and in little, as well as in great things, keep to the statutes and precepts and ordinances and doctrines of the Lord as they are committed to you. As surely as you do this, the Lord of Hosts will bless you.

First rest in Jesus by a simple faith in Him and then treasure up His every Word and keep His every command. So shall the blessing of God be with you henceforth and forever. May His Holy Spirit work this in you! Amen.

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