

GRAPPLING IRONS

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A SERMON

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*“Quicken me after Your lovingkindness; so shall I keep the testimony of Your mouth.”
Psalm 119:88.*

WHEN David wrote this part of the psalm he was evidently beset by many enemies who sought to destroy him, and it is exceedingly important to note what part of himself he guarded with the most care. Which part of his nature did he regard as the most vital? Where did he hold the shield that he might be screened from the darts of the foe? We observe that his prayer is very little about his body, or his temporal interests. Like other men, he desired to be preserved in life and kept in prosperity, but his main prayer is not about these matters. Evidently his chief thought is concerning his soul, his character, his adherence to God's word, his steadfastness in the faith. Observe the current of his supplication—“Quicken me after Your lovingkindness; so shall I keep the testimony of your mouth.” He is not so anxious to keep his health, or to keep his house, or to keep his crown, or even to keep his life, as he is that he may keep the testimony of God's mouth. O brethren, everything is right when the heart is right, and everything is wrong when the soul is wrong. We are prospering even when we lose our wealth if we grow in grace, but we are in the direst adversity, even if we are growing rich, if we become spiritually poor. Starve your soul, and you will be wretched amid the dainties of a king's table, but let your soul be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and a dinner of herbs will be better to you than a stalled ox. The first thing, the main thing, the chief thing, is that the heart be kept true towards God and His word. Concerning this David prays.

I would call to your notice this morning, first, *his intense desire*, which is that he may keep the testimony of God's mouth. Secondly, *his consequent prayer* arising out of that desire, “Quicken me after Your lovingkindness; so shall I keep the testimony of your mouth.” When we have spoken upon those two points we shall then endeavor to use the whole text by way of showing *his holy example*—a lesson to all believing people in all ages to strive after quickened spiritual life that they may keep the testimony of God's mouth.

I. First, in these words of David, we have HIS INTENSE DESIRE that he might keep the testimony of God's mouth.

This desire *was founded in a high esteem of God's word*. He viewed the divine revelation as coming directly from Jehovah's own mouth. To some men this holy book is no more inspired than the plays of Shakespeare or the poems of Milton. We have in the Old Testament, they say, the sacred writings of the Jews, which deserve to be treated with great respect, and this is all. David thought not so, and thank God, we join with David in his opinion. David speaks of God's word, though he had but a small portion of it compared with what we have, as “the testimony of God's mouth.” To me there is no explanation of those words except that which involves verbal and infallible inspiration. The testimony of God's mouth must be given in words. God's heart has thoughts, but God's mouth has words, and words from the omniscient and true God must be infallible. This view invests Holy Scripture with awe and a glory which create in us the deepest reverence, and constrains us to the most earnest attention. When we look upon every word of this precious book as coming fresh from God's mouth, we liken it to those other words by which He called the universe out of nothing, and created light where there had only been darkness. To the ear that is rightly tuned by God's Spirit there is a voice and music as of infinite wisdom and love about every syllable of Scripture. The breath of life is in the testimony from the mouth of the living God. In truth the Lord may have spoken the word actually by the mouth of Moses, but spiritually His own mouth has uttered it. The inspired sentence may come down to us from the pen of David, Isaiah, or any

other of the prophets, may have been the visible medium of its transmission, but the word itself has come distinctly and directly, with absolute truth and unmingled purity, from the mouth of the Most High. The coin of inspiration comes from the mint of infallibility. The truth is the teaching of the God of truth. As such we render to it our ears, our hearts, and our obedient lives. What God has said we dare not question. The man of God wraps his face in his mantle and bows before the divine majesty, humbly saying, "Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears."

Those who have this reverence for God's word will long to cling to it, they will be afraid of misinterpreting it, and they will not venture to add any of their own words to it, lest they be called into judgment for such presumption. The ear of the devout man seems to hear the thunder of that sentence, "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." God grant that we may accept the Bible not as the writings of man, but as the word of the living God. A few evenings ago we were led to think of those who tremble at God's word, may we be numbered among them, for to such will God look, and with such will He dwell. Let us unite with the Psalmist in saying, "Your testimonies are wonderful: therefore does my soul keep them."

This prayer of David's, springing from his great reverence for the revealed will of God, *includes within it many points of virtue*. I cannot explain what he means by keeping the testimony of God's mouth by any one line of things; it is a far-reaching prayer, as full as it is brief. He means, no doubt, that he desired to be *steadfast in the doctrine* which the mouth of the Lord had spoken. He wished to be taught of the Lord so as to know the truth, and then to be so confirmed and established in it that no wind of doctrine should carry him away from his moorings. He desired to be steadfast, unmovable, rooted and grounded in the truth of God. Such an attainment is much to be desired at this time. The things which we have learned and have received we must hold fast until our Lord shall come. He has set us in our place to keep guard over His truth, let no sentry sleep at his post. He has put us in trust with the gospel, God grant we may not be dishonest trustees, trifling with our charge. May those especially who are teachers of others be good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Though we bring forth things new and old, let us take care that we bring forth nothing but what we find in the treasury of the Word. Woe unto the prophet who declares "a vision of his own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord." Too many are doing so at this hour, glorying in their boasted culture, and trusting to their own intellects. Of such we may say with Jeremiah, "They are prophets of the deceit of their own heart." The Lord shall one day silence such, and put their followers to confusion. But blessed is that man who speaks the mind of God, and causes the people to hear the word of the Lord. Man's word is for the forum, but God's word must be spoken in His temple. The things which we have heard, and seen, and received of the Spirit of God, these things we would hold and teach, and nothing beside. I am sure that the prayer of our text means—"Help me, Lord, to know, believe, and hold fast the testimony of Your mouth, may I be a true believer, having my feet upon the solid rock of Your teaching, and not upon the quicksand of man's invention. May I never be ashamed of Your truth. If men call it outworn and powerless, may I nevertheless know it to be Your own eternal word which lives and abides forever. Let me feel it to be quickening, reviving, strengthening, and as full of power and energy as ever it was. May I believe concerning it that it has the dew of its youth about it, that its locks are bushy and black as a raven, that it still goes forth as the sun from the chambers of the morning, and that like a mighty man it marches onward conquering and to conquer." Brethren, this word shall never return to God void, but it shall accomplish that which He pleases. This meaning of the prayer is worthy of solemn note in these evil days.

But there is another meaning which will seem to some more practical, though indeed it is not so, for there is as much real practice about right thinking as about right acting, and for the understanding to be obedient to God is as vital a thing as for the actions of the life to be conformed to His will. We ought to be anxious to be *obedient to God in all His precepts*, and if we are striving to be so, our prayer should daily be that we may be preserved in the keeping of the testimony of God's mouth. Our Father who is in heaven has told His children what His will is, should not this constrain them to fulfill it? He has been pleased to teach us what it is that pleases Him, should we not hate that which God hates, and love that which He delights in? Let us pray that we may be set in the straight and narrow way which leads unto eternal life, and may be kept there even to the end. There is no law of God's mouth which a faithful and

loving believer would wish to be ignorant of. There is no command of His mouth which we would willfully disobey or neglect. Our prayer is, “Make me to run in the way of Your commandments.” That law of God, which was once so terrible to us, has lost its frowns through the atoning sacrifice, and now we delight in the law of God after the inward man, and we long to be perfectly conformed to it. Our grief is that we are not perfect; sin is our pain and plague. We shall never be perfectly happy till we are perfectly holy. Sin is a constant fret and burden to us, whenever we see even a trace of it in our nature or our acts, we cry, “Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?” We cannot endure that the shade of evil should flit across the imagination, no; even if in our dreams a sin cast its shadow over our spirit we wake disturbed. We would not have a wish which leans towards iniquity. We would have every thought brought into captivity to the Lord, bound by the bonds of righteousness and led prisoner along the triumphant way of sanctification, for holiness is life, light, and liberty to us. “I will walk at liberty, for I seek Your precepts.” Freedom from the power of evil is the highest liberty which we expect on earth. I am sure, my friends, the prayer is rising in your hearts at this moment—

*“Teach me to run in Your commands,
'Tis a delightful road.
Nor let my head, nor heart, nor hands,
Offend against my God.”*

David further desired that he might be preserved in perfect and unwavering *confidence in the promises of God*. The testimony of God’s mouth is largely made up of exceedingly great and precious promises. Oh, what rich and eternal things has He promised to them that fear Him! No good thing will He withhold from them, all things work together for their good. He will give them of the dew of heaven, and of the deep that lies under, the chief things of the ancient mountains and the precious things of the lasting hills has He covenanted to give them. The sad fact is that sometimes His own people begin to question those promises, and if the vision tarries they are in unbelieving haste, and limit the Holy One of Israel. Yet the covenant is ordered in all things and sure, “God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: has He said and shall He not do it? Or has He spoken and shall He not make it good?” Not one of His words shall fail, nor shall one blessing which He has promised be withheld. “All the promises of God in Him are yes, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” His covenant shall stand fast, though heaven and earth pass away, He will not alter the thing that has gone out of His mouth. Therefore our prayer is that we may keep the testimony of His mouth, and like our fathers, may be persuaded of the promises, and embrace them. What an instructive word is that! “Embraced them”—pressing them to their hearts, and holding them dear to their souls. Oh, never, never let us dare to suspect the faithfulness of our God, rather let us emulate the faith of Abraham, who staggered not at the promise through unbelief, believing that if God had promised him a seed of Isaac, and yet commanded him offer Isaac as a sacrifice, God was able even from the dead to raise Isaac up, and so to keep His word. All things may be contrary to what they seem to be, and all human witnesses may be intentionally or unintentionally false, but the Eternal God must be true. “Let God be true and every man”—yes, and every thing—“a liar.” It would be better to suppose the very heavens did lie, and that the earth beneath us had become untrue, and that all our senses were instruments of deception, rather than we should for a moment allow that the God of truth could falter or waver. The largest faith of which the most enlarged mind is capable is the righteous due of God, who cannot err or change. Be this your prayer, that you may be confident of the truth of every promise of the covenant of grace, and stand to it, come life or come death. Be this your firm resolve, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.”

This prayer then, you see, has a very wide significance, and I want you to observe that upon the very surface of the words there is an indication that this desire in his soul was *backed up by the experience of the past*. He desires to keep the testimony of God’s mouth, and that implies that he has already received that testimony, and is in possession of it. If a man has not obtained a thing, he cannot keep it. Beloved, I would take you back this morning for a moment upon memories of the past. Do you remember the place, the spot of ground where you first heard of God with your inner ear? Do you remember your poverty, your disease, your death? And how the heavenly word gave you wealth, healing, and life in Christ? Since then, how precious, how soul-sustaining, how full of deliverance, how pregnant with victory, have the words of God been to you in days of affliction and conviction! At this day you must feel that you could not leave this precious word, for you would be leaving the fountain of living waters. It has been

your life, your joy, your all, why would you leave it? With David you can bear witness, “Unless Your law had been my delights, I should then have perished in my affliction.” Where will you go if you forsake the Lord’s testimony? What way is open to you if you turn from the way of His statutes? But, my brothers, the mercies of the past, I might even say the miseries of the past, all bind us to our God and to His statutes. All that has happened up to now has only magnified His word above all His name. We have lived on that word when otherwise our soul would have died of famine. We have had light in the midst of more than Egyptian darkness through its testimonies. What wonders we have worked through the promises of God. “O my soul, you have trodden down strength.” By the power of this word we have run through a troop, by our God we have leaped over a wall. Passing through the fire we have not been burned, wading through the rivers we have not been drowned, for the word of the Lord has brought us deliverance. Believe for the future, for the past demands it! God grant that we may, by a childlike confidence, forever keep the testimony of His mouth.

Furthermore, this desire is *necessitated by the struggles of the present*. Poor David had become like a bottle in the smoke. His eyes were failing, his heart had fainted, his days were growing few, his pathway was intercepted with pits, he was persecuted wrongfully, he was almost consumed, but he adds, “I forsook not Your precepts.” That was the saving clause of it all. We may be in the smoke, but we shall not be smothered. We may be persecuted, but we shall never be forsaken. We may be cast down, but we shall not be destroyed while we keep the testimonies of God’s mouth. We are still in the sea, therefore let us cling to our life buoy, we are still in the wilderness; let us daily gather the heavenly manna. Cast not away your confidence, which even now has great recompense of reward. Stand to it, that, be the present what it may, your choice is made, your understanding is assured, your convictions are indelible. Change as you will, all you that know not God, but we that know Him by long experience are inseparably united to Him. To quit the truth of God for modern notions would be to leave the streams from Lebanon for the sand of the desert, the sweet waters of Siloam for the brine of the Dead Sea. Tossed no longer with tempest, our soul has found her anchorage and rests in the Lord. “O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise!” We are not forever learning, but we have come to the knowledge of the truth by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. We are neither to be bribed nor bullied so as to lose our faith, for it is of the operation of God. The elect shall not be deceived, for they know the voice of their Lord, and He has taught them to distinguish the language of truth from the jargon of error.

I am sure I may add that this desire of David is *well warranted by every prospect of the future*. We do not know what troubles we shall yet experience, but we do know that He who has helped us bears us through, and makes us more than conquerors too. The testimony of God’s mouth is our shield in the day of battle. We cannot put on Saul’s armor, for we have not proved it, but we have proved the full armor which God provides for us in His word and therefore we wear it daily. That future, which extends in endless vista far beyond our mortal life, demands faithfulness of us. If we are traitors to the truth of God today, what will become of the next generation, and the next, and the next? At this hour we suffer for the negligence of our ancestors, error has been established by a long continuance of perversity—shall we persevere in maintaining falsehood? Today will you rebuild the Jericho which the Reformers threw down? Will we pull down the Jerusalem which they have built up? If so, our sons shall curse the memory of their fathers. This poor world may experience great delay to her grand hope if Christian men in the present are unfaithful to the truth. Ages hang upon the conduct of the church of today. Speak out the truth while you live, so that when you leave this life it may be said, “He being dead yet speaks.” Let us today anchor the church to sound doctrine, lest she drift further and further in years to come. Speak God’s word faithfully, for that word shall live and conquer when you are gone. He that sows the seed of heresy and evil doctrine entails upon succeeding generations an evil and a plague, and his very name shall rot, but he that sows the good seed shall be the father of 10,000 successive harvests. Today we may seal the coming centuries unto the Lord, setting the impression of the truth upon them. Be you steadfast for the truth in your own day, for you know not what perilous times will come, before the advent of the Lord Jesus. Your words and acts today will affect eternity itself. A word spoken today, barbed with ill intent, and envenomed with the poison of falsehood, may make souls to smart throughout a dread eternity. Tremble therefore lest in any way you cease to keep the testimony of the mouth of God. Thus much upon David’s desire, may a like desire burn in our hearts!

II. Secondly, let us consider HIS CONSEQUENT PRAYER. He did not pray immediately that he might keep the testimony of God's mouth, but he offered the next prayer to it, the one which leads up to it right surely. As a man that goes up to his chamber does not leap up all at once, but climbs the stairs, so does David rise to the keeping of the Lord's word by the prayer—"Quicken me after Your lovingkindness."

This prayer is *wisdom*. He that says, "I shall keep the testimony of God's mouth, for I am fully resolved to do it," had better salt that resolution with prayer, or it will rot like all things which come of the flesh. "Oh," he says, "I am strong-minded and firmly established, and shall never be moved from the hope of my high calling." O man, you know not yourself, nor the power of temptation, if you are depending upon yourself. You will be as readily blown away as the thistledown upon the plain when the north wind is raging. O heart, you are but human, and humanity is unstable as water. O man, you are frail as a shadow, trust not in yourself for a moment. "Trust in the Lord with all yours heart; and lean not unto your own understanding." Put up a prayer to God that He would confirm you, for in that way and in that way only shall you be true to His statutes. He shall keep God's testimony that is kept by God's power, and he alone, therefore this prayer is wisdom. Moreover, as there is but one Lord and Giver of life, what more could David do than pray? He could not give himself life, and he was wise to apply to Him who alone quickens the dead.

This prayer was *suggested*, I do not doubt, *by David's inward state*. He says, "Quicken me." Does he mean that he was dead? Yes, comparatively. He means that he felt the power of death working in him. Before he is quite numbed he cries, "Quicken me." He was not altogether dead, for dead men never pray for quickening, but he had a sense of deadness creeping over him, gradually chilling the genial current of his soul. He was dull, he was heavy, and he felt lethargic and indisposed to activity. "Quicken me, Lord," he says, "Quicken me." The Lord has given us some life, beloved, but that life at intervals seems to go to sleep through weariness, let us pray, "Quicken me, Lord." The Lord has given us His well-beloved Son, not only that we might have life, but that we might have it more abundantly. Is your life vigorous, dear brother? Yet this prayer is still suitable to you, still cry, "Quicken me." Nobody knows how much vitality a man can manifest. He who seems all alive might still have more life. He can rise from life to strength, from strength to activity, from activity to intensity, from intensity to violence. When a man is thoroughly alive what a man he is! Are we not, the most of us, a droning, sleepy, half-quickened set? We mope and grope like men who are looking for their graves, but when the Lord comes to us He quickens us from head to foot, and then the blood leaps in our veins, our spiritual breath is full and deep, and we are fired with enthusiasm. We are dry now and powerless, like the bush in the desert, but the Spirit descends upon us as fire, and then we blaze with divine fervor. We can do all things through Christ that strengthens us. If we desire to cleave to the truth let us pray that up to the highest point we may be filled with the life of God, since life and truth go together. Oh that we may become quick in every respect, quickened by Him who is the resurrection and the life. This is every way a suitable prayer, a very fitting one for lukewarm Laodiceans. It will not be out of place in the mouth of any of us. However full of life we may be, let us all together plead for this master blessing of quickening—

*"Revive Your work, O Lord,
Disturb this sleep of death,
Quicken the smoldering embers now,
By Your almighty breath."*

It is a prayer which *met David's condition*. Carefully read the octave of verses with, "Caph," [verses 81-88] at the head of them, and see how well it fits in at the end of each. "My soul faints"—"Quicken me." "My eyes fail"—"Quicken me." "I am become like a bottle in the smoke"—"Quicken me." "How many are the days of Your servant?"—I seem near to death—"Quicken me." "The proud have dug pits for me"—"Quicken me," that I may spy out their pitfalls and avoid them. "They persecute me wrongfully"—"Quicken me," Lord; for they cannot hurt me, though they pour death upon me, if You pour life into me. "They had almost consumed me"—"Quicken me," and then I may burn with fire, but I shall not be consumed. You see, the blessing of quickening meets all these conditions. I believe that the best preservative under trial is increased spiritual life. Did I hear you complain, "I am very poor"? Brethren, if your soul is quickened and you become rich in faith; poverty will be a light burden. "But I am very depressed in spirit." Truly, this is sad, but if you are more fully quickened, you will shake it off as living

men put from them the garments of the tomb. But you cry, "I have such hard work to do!" If you have stronger life, the task will be easier. "But I have been disappointed and defeated." You will have few defeats, or you will bear them joyfully when your spiritual life is vigorous and full. "Quicken me." I suggest that this prayer be presented all over the place by every child of God. Breathe it before God in the silence of your hearts. "Quicken me. Quicken me." I, Your minister, how much I need the quickening influences of Your Spirit! My brethren associated with me in the church, how much they require it! Lord, quicken us all! You that have come up from the country, some of you grow dull enough in your rustic quietude. Join with us in pleading, "Quicken me." You who are Sunday school teachers want life for yourselves if you are to communicate it to others. In any and every case increased spiritual life will be a blessing to you. Whatever your difficulty, whatever your doubt, whatever your sorrow, whatever your temptation, here is a prayer that meets every case, "Quicken me after Your lovingkindness."

It is especially a prayer *which answered to David's aim in presenting it*. He prayed this prayer that he might be enabled to keep God's testimony. Now who are the people that give up sound doctrine? Why, the people who do not know the quickening power of it in their own souls, and do not live in the delightful enjoyment of it. Who are the people that give up holy practice? Why the people that are not dwelling in the power of the Holy Spirit, and are not full of the life of God. Who are those that are tossed up and down like the locust and are shiftily, and have no fixed position? Why they are the men that have not received the fullness of life from on high. You can do a great many things with a dead man, but you cannot make him stand up. You may try most earnestly, but a corpse cannot stand. Until you put life into the body it will fall to the ground, and so if the life of God is not in you, you cannot hold the truth, or maintain purity, or walk in integrity. Life is absolutely essential to steadfastness in the truth. Whenever I hear of churches and ministers departing from the faith, I know that piety is at low ebb among them. It is proposed that we should argue with them, it is of no avail to argue with dead people. It is proposed that we should bring out another book of Christian evidences; it is small benefit to provide glasses for those who have no eyes. What is needed is more spiritual life, for as the truth quickens men they love the quickening word, but dead men care little about that which is to them a dead letter. "Your word has quickened me," says David, and the man that is quickened clings to the truth which quickens him. Whenever you feel a little shaky, and your feet begin to totter, and your head to swim, just cry, "Lord, quicken me. Here is a sign that I am dying, for I am doubting, pour more of Your power into me." When spiritual life is healthy, it will feed upon the word, and so take it into its innermost self that nothing can remove it. Why do men grow weary of heavenly food? David tells us—"Fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. Their soul abhors all manner of meat, and they draw near unto the gates of death." Just so, the best meat in God's word is not enjoyed by men who are sinful and foolish, for they are suffering under a soul-sickness which kills holy appetites. The prayer of our text answers David's aim, "Quicken me after Your lovingkindness; so shall I keep the testimony of Your mouth."

He presented this prayer on the right ground. Observe how He pleads the mercy and love of God. "Quicken me after Your lovingkindness." That is a lovely way of putting it—"I do not now appeal to Your righteousness, but to Your love, Your special love, Your *lovingkinnedness* to those that are of *kin* to You. Lord, I would entreat You to bless me because of Your lovingkindness to those whom You did foreknow and did predestinate to be Your own. Oh, by that special love of Yours I pray You quicken me, that I may take fast hold upon Your word, and never let it go!"

He means too, I think, by saying, "after Your lovingkindness," that he desires to be quickened by a sense of God's love. Is there anything that puts life into a man like that? A mother finds her babe half frozen, and she warms it back to life by pressing it to her bosom, she imparts the warmth of her own heart to it until it lives again and smiles. It is just so with our God—there is no reviving us except by pressing us close to His bosom. Did I hear you say, "I will repent in terror; I will go to Moses to get revival"? I advise you not to do so, for he will use the rod most severely, and flog you back to feeling, and that is by no means a desirable method. Divine love is a sweeter and surer quickener. The true elixir of life is love. Oh, for a draught of it!—

*"Your mercy is more than a match for my heart,
Which wonders to feel its own deadness depart,
Awakened by Your goodness I rise from the ground,*

And sing to the praise of the mercy I've found."

"Quicken me after Your lovingkindness."

I would close this section of my discourse by saying *it is a prayer which has a promise attached to it*. It was not so in David's day, but in these latter times we have a promise which fits it as the wax the seal. When I have a lock I am always glad to find a key which fits it. Here is the lock—"Lord, I feel as if I were dead;" and here is the key—"He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." That answers the supplication as a glove fits the hand—"Though he were dead, yet shall he live." If it were possible for a believer to get between the jaws of death and stand there, the mouth of the sepulcher could not close itself upon him. Look at Jonah, he is in the whale's belly, and the whale is in the great deeps, far down from the light of day. Surely it was the very belly of Hades to him, but it could not be his grave. The great fish had an indigestible morsel within him at that time; he could not possibly consume the prophet because Jonah believed the truth of God with a living faith. He soon escaped after he had uttered his creed, and this was his creed, "Salvation is of the Lord." With that confession of faith in your heart no power can destroy you, no belly of hell can swallow you up, you must live, for so it is written, "Though he were dead, yet shall he live." Plead that promise, and cry unto God, when you feel sloth creeping over you—"Quicken me, that I may keep the testimony of Your mouth."

III. We part with David, and this is the last word; in this verse we have HIS HOLY EXAMPLE, which I commend to you.

First, *offer the prayer of life when you feel that you are dead*. It is a strange paradox, but I put it with all my might to you. If this morning you are forced to cry, "My heart seems like adamant, my feeling is all gone, if anything is felt, it is only pain to find I cannot feel, I seem to be altogether out of sorts, if the life of God is in me at all it is like a spark hidden away among the ashes, and I cannot discover it." Well, then, bestir yourselves to pray. "Awake you that sleep, and arise from the dead and Christ shall give you light." Let your groan go up from the grave's mouth. If you can get no further than a sigh, let your moaning be addressed to God, let the heaving of your anguished heart move towards your heavenly Father. Let prayer arise like smoke from the altar towards heaven, "Quicken me, quicken me." Such a prayer will prove an antidote to the poison of death. Though your bones lie scattered at the grave's mouth, as when one chops wood upon the earth, yet if the sighing of your soul is towards quickening you shall be brought up again. "Your dead men shall live." From between the very ribs of death there shall come a higher, better, and more divine life. Breathe, then, your desire in prayer after this fashion—"Lord, Your poor, dead servant cries to You for life!" Do not say, "It is such an odd prayer, it is so singular, therefore it cannot be correct." I gather that it is genuine because it is so singular that no one would borrow it from his neighbor. In spiritual life that which is according to usual routine is often false, and that which is so strange that only a personal experience could have suggested it, is most probably correct. Therefore I say again to you who seem as if you were dead, let this prayer go up, "Lord, quicken me," and He will enlighten you by His Holy Spirit.

The next thing I learn is this, that *living truth can only be held firmly by living men*. Some who are very sound are nothing else but sound, but we want no such allies. Some of those who hold a correct creed are very narrow, and will not tolerate a departure by a hair's-breadth from their fixed opinion, but narrowness is not strength. To know the truth and feel its power, and manifest its influence in your life, is the proof that you have grappled it to your soul as with hooks of steel. A dead creed in a dead man's hand is like dead wheat in the grip of an Egyptian mummy, what can come of it? But observe carefully a living man, with living seed to sow, for you shall yet see a harvest. A living man who grasps a living truth is mighty as Moses with Aaron's rod in his hand which had life in it, for it budded and blossomed, and brought forth almonds. Such a rod as this can divide the Red Sea, and fetch waters out of flinty rocks. Oh, for living truth in the grip of a living man! My dear friend, if you are going to be a champion of reformation, first be reformed yourself, if you would become a defender of the faith, first be an exemplifier of it. Let Jesus reign in your soul, and then He will make you a priest and king unto Himself by His own divine power.

The next lesson is, *regard God's lovingkindness as a source of life*. Unhappily too many have viewed it as an excuse for death. "Oh, yes," they say, "I am one of God's chosen. I need not trouble myself about holiness or activity. I shall be saved by sovereign grace." Do you sit down and quietly cross your legs, and fold your arms, do nothing, and then look to be rewarded for it? In all probability you will

be lost at last, for you are already lost. The man who dares to pervert truth is already a lost man, but he that knows the lovingkindness of the Lord says, “Quicken me, Lord. Such love as this I must translate into life, grant that to me to live may be love.” Those words “love” and “live” are very near akin in their conformation, they are joined together in spiritual things, let no man put them asunder. Do not get behind the door and suck your honeycomb, and say, “I love enjoyment, but I hate employment. I never try to defend the truth or to spread it, but it is very sweet to me.” Ah, my dear sir, that kind of honey will poison you, the thought of it makes me sick. The right thing is to feel that the more God loves you the more you love Him, the more He does for you the more you will do for Him—

*“Loved of my God, for Him again
With love intense I burn;
Chosen of Him ere time began,
I choose Him in return.”*

“Quicken me after Your lovingkindness.”

And lastly, *let divine aid, whenever we seek it or obtain it, lead us to the practical use of it in obedience.* “Quicken me,” and “so shall I keep.” I put those words together in that fashion, for they are together. That is to say, if the Lord gives quickening I will give steadfastness. The believer is active, not passive. He is acted on, but he also acts. In the first work of regeneration we are passive, that must be a pure act of God’s grace, but as the child as soon as it is born becomes active, and begins to cry, so does a new-born soul prove its activity by its prayer. As the child ever after has an activity all its own in proportion to the measure of its vitality, so will it be with the child of God, he becomes more and more energetic in proportion as God pours into him more and more of the divine life. Come, you that lie in the dust, shake yourselves from it. You that are at ease in Zion, bestir yourselves in the service of your Lord and Master before a heavy woe overwhelms you. This is an evil day, a day in which multitudes are perishing in poverty and sin by reason of their ignorance of Christ, will you not instruct them? This is a day of blasphemy and rebuke, in which the truth of God is cast down and trodden like mud in the streets, will you not stand up for it? If you come not today to the help of the Lord and His truth, then you shall be cursed like the inhabitants of Meroz of old. But oh, I charge you, men of God, who live by faith on the Son of God, feed upon Him and be strong, and then quit yourselves like men, and keep His testimonies in the teeth of an infidel world and a philosophizing church. Hold to the fundamentals of the faith, though with others the foundations are shaken. Abide like rocks in the midst of foaming billows, and defy all opposition. Stand fast in the house of your God below, and this shall be your reward above—“Him that overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out.” May the best of blessings rest upon you. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 119:81-104.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—100 (PART 2); 119 (PART 3); 459.**

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