

AN APPEAL TO CHILDREN OF GODLY PARENTS NO. 2406

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, MARCH 31, 1895
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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*“My son, keep thy father’s commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother:
bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck.
When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee;
and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee.
For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light;
and reproofs of instruction are the way of life.”*
Proverbs 6:20-23

YOU have here, before you, the advice of King Solomon, rightly reckoned to be one of the wisest of men, and verily he must be wise indeed who could excel in wisdom the son of David, the King of Israel. It is worth while to listen to what Solomon has to say—it must be good for the most intelligent young person to listen—and to listen carefully, to what so experienced a man as Solomon has to say to young men.

But I must remind you that a greater than Solomon is here, for the Spirit of God inspired the Proverbs. They are not merely jewels from earthly mines, but they are also precious treasures from the heavenly hills, so that the advice we have here is not only the counsel of a wise man, but the advice of that Incarnate Wisdom who speaks to us out of the Word of God.

Would you become the sons of wisdom? Come and sit at the feet of Solomon. Would you become spiritually wise? Come and hear what the Spirit of God has to say by the mouth of the wise man.

In considering this subject, I am going, first of all, to show you that *true godliness*, of which the wise man here speaks, *comes to many of us recommended by parental example*, “My son, keep thy father’s commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother: bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck.”

But in addition to that, *true religion comes to us commended by practical uses*, by its beneficial effect upon our lives, “When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life.”

I. Now, in the first place, I want to show you that TRUE RELIGION COMES TO MANY OF US RECOMMENDED BY PARENTAL EXAMPLE.

Unhappily, it is not so with all of you. There are some who had an evil example in their childhood and who never learnt anything that was good from their parents. I adore the sovereignty of divine grace that there are among us tonight many who are the first in their families that ever made a profession of faith in Christ.

They were born and brought up in the midst of everything that was opposed to godliness, yet here they are—they can themselves hardly tell you how—brought out from the world as Abraham was brought from Ur of the Chaldees. The Lord in His grace has taken one of a city and two of a family, and brought them to Zion.

You, dear friends, have special cause for thankfulness, but it should be a note to be entered in your diary that your children shall not be subjected to the same disadvantages as you yourselves suffered. Since the Lord has looked in love upon you, let your households be holiness to the Lord, and so bring up your children that they shall have every advantage that religious training can give, and every opportunity to serve the living God.

But there are many among us, I believe the larger proportion of those gathered here, who have had the immense privilege of godly training. Now, to my mind, it seems that *a father's experience is the best evidence* that a young man can have of the truth of anything. My father would not say that which was false anywhere to anyone, but I am sure that he would not say it to his son. And if, after serving God for fifty years, he has found religion to be a failure, even if he had not the courage to communicate it to the whole world, I feel persuaded that he would have whispered in my ear, "My son, I have misled you. I was mistaken and I have found it out."

But when I saw the old man, the other day, he had no such information to convey to me. Our conversation was concerning the faithfulness of God and he delights to tell of the faithfulness of God to him and to his father, my dear grandfather, who has now gone up above. How often have they told me that, in a long lifetime of testing and proving the promises, they have found them all true and they could say, in the language of the hymn—

*"'Tis religion that can give
Sweetest pleasures while we live;
'Tis religion must supply
Solid comfort when we die."*

As for myself, if I had found out that I was mistaken, I should not have been so foolish as to rejoice that my sons should follow the same way of life, and should addict themselves with all their might to preaching the same truths that I delight to proclaim. Dear son, if you have a godly father, believe that the religion upon which he has fixed his faith is true. He tells you that it is so—he is, at any rate, a sincere and honest witness to you, I beseech you, therefore, forsake not your father's God.

Then I think that one of the most tender bonds that can ever bind man or woman is the affection of a mother. Many would, perhaps, break away from the law of the father—but the love of the mother—who among us can break away from that? So, next, *a mother's affection is the best of arguments*. You remember how she prayed for you. Among your earliest recollections is that of her taking you between her knees and teaching you to say,

*"Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Look upon a little child."*

Perhaps you have tried to disbelieve, but your mother's firm faith prevents it. I have heard of one who said that he could easily have been an infidel if it had not been for his mother's life and his mother's death. Yes, these are hard arguments to get over and I trust that you will not get over them.

You remember well her quiet patience in the house when there was much that might have ruffled her. You remember her gentleness with you when you were going a little wild. You hardly know, perhaps, how you cut her to the heart, how her nights were sleepless because her boy did not love his mother's God.

I do charge you, by the love you bear her, if you have received any impressions that are good, cherish them, and cast them not aside. Or if you have received no such impressions, yet at least let the sincerity of your mother, for whom it was impossible to have been untrue—let the deep affection of your mother, who could not, and would not, betray you into a lie—persuade you that there is truth in this religion which now, perhaps, some of your companions are trying to teach you to deride. "My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother."

I think that to any young man, or any young woman either, who has had a godly father and mother, the best way of life that they can mark out for themselves is to *follow the road in which their father's and mother's principles would conduct them*. Of course, we make great advances on the old folks, do we not?

The young men are wonderfully bright and intelligent, and the old people are a good deal behind them. Yes, yes—that is the way we talk before our beards have grown. Possibly, when we have more sense, we shall not be quite so conceited of it. At any rate, I, who am not very old, but who dare not any longer call myself young, venture to say that, for myself, I desire nothing so much as to continue the

traditions of my household. I wish to find no course but that which shall run parallel with that of those who have gone before me.

And I think, dear friends, that you who have seen the holy and happy lives of Christian ancestors will be wise to pause a good deal before you begin to make a deviation, either to the right or to the left, from the course of those godly ones. I do not believe that he begins life in a way which God is likely to bless, and which he himself will, in the long run, judge to be wise, who begins with the notion that he shall upset everything—that all that belonged to his godly family shall be cast to the winds.

I do not seek to have heirlooms of gold or silver, but though I die a thousand deaths, I can never give up my father's God, my grandsire's God, and *his* father's God, and *his* father's God. I must hold this to be the chief possession that I have, and I pray young men and women to think the same. Do not stain the glorious traditions of noble lives that have been handed down to you. Do not disgrace your father's shield, bespatter not the escutcheons of your honored predecessors by any sins and transgressions on your part. God help you to feel that the best way of leading a noble life will be to do as they did who trained you in God's fear!

Solomon tells us to do two things with the teachings which we have learned of our parents. First he says, "Bind them continually upon thine heart," *for they are worthy of loving adherence*. Show that you love these things by binding them upon thine heart. The heart is the vital point—let godliness lie there—love the things of God.

If we could take young men and women and make them professedly religious without their truly loving godliness, that would be simply to make them hypocrites, which is not what we desire. We do not want you to say that you believe what you do not believe, or that you rejoice in what you do not rejoice in.

But our prayer—and oh, that it might be your prayer, too!—is that you may be helped to bind these things about your heart. They are worth living for, they are worth dying for, they are worth more than all the world besides—the immortal principles of the divine life which comes from the death of Christ. "Bind them continually upon thine heart."

And then Solomon, because he would not have us keep these things secret as if we were ashamed of them, adds, "and tie them about thy neck," *for they are worthy of boldest display*. Did you ever see my Lord Mayor wearing his chain of office? He is not at all ashamed to wear it. And the sheriffs with their badges—I have a lively recollection of the enormous size to which those ornaments attain—and they take care to wear them, too.

Now then, you who have any love to God, tie your religion about your neck. Do not be ashamed of it, put it on as an ornament, wear it as the mayor does his chain. When thou goest into company, never be ashamed to say that you are a Christian, and if there is any company where you cannot go as a Christian, well, do not go there at all.

Say to yourself "I will not be where I could not introduce my Master. I will not go where He could not go with me." You will find that resolve to be a great help to you in the choice of where you will go and where you will not go—therefore bind it upon your heart, tie it about your neck. God help you to do this and so to follow those godly ones who have gone before you!

I hope that I am not weak in wishing that some here may be touched by affection to their parents. I have had very sorrowful sights, sometimes, in the course of my ministry. A dear father, an honest, upright, godly man, is perhaps present, but he will not mind my saying what lines of grief I saw upon his face when he came to say to me, "Oh, sir, my boy is in prison!"

I am sure that if his boy could have seen his father's face as I saw it, it would have been worse than prison to him. I have known young men who have come to this Tabernacle with their parents—nice boys, too, they were—and they have gone into employment in the city, where they have been tempted to steal, and they have yielded to the tempter and have lost their character. Sometimes, the deficiency has been met and they have been rescued from a criminal's career, but alas, sometimes they have fallen into the hands of a wicked woman and then woe betide them!

Occasionally, it has seemed to be sheer wantonness and wickedness that has made them act unrighteously. I wish I could fetch those young men—I do not suppose that they are here tonight—and let them see not merely the misery they will bring upon themselves, but show them their mother at home

when news came that John had lost his position, because he had been acting dishonestly, or give them a glimpse of their father's face when the evil tidings reached him.

The poor man stood aghast. He said, "There was never a stain upon the character of any of my family before." If the earth had opened under the godly man's feet, or if the good mother could have gone down straight into the grave, they would have preferred it to the lifelong tribulation which has come upon them.

Therefore I charge you, young man, or young woman, do not kill the parents who gave you life, do not disgrace those who brought you up. But I pray you, instead thereof, seek the God of your father, and the God of thy mother, and give yourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ, and live wholly to Him.

II. Now I must turn to my second point, which is that TRUE RELIGION COMES TO US COMMENDED BY PRACTICAL USES.

This is a less sentimental argument than the one I have been pleading, but to many, vital godliness appeals because of its immense utility in the actual everyday life of men.

Solomon tells us, first, *that true godliness serves us for instruction*, "For the commandment is a lamp." If you would know all that you ought to know, read this Book. If you would know in your heart that which shall be for your present and eternal good, love this Book, believe the truth it teaches, and obey it, "for the commandment is a lamp."

Next, *true religion serves us for direction*, "and the law is light." If we want to know what we should do, we cannot do better than yield ourselves up to the guidance of the Divine Spirit and take this Word as our map, for—

*"Tis like the sun, a heavenly light,
That guides us all the day;
And through the dangers of the night,
A lamp to lead our way."*

Solomon also tells us that *true religion guides us under all circumstances*. He says, in the twenty-second verse, that when we are active, there is nothing like true godliness to help us, "When thou goest, it shall lead thee." He tells us that when we are resting, there is nothing better than this for our preservation, "When thou sleepest, it shall keep thee." And when we are just waking, there is nothing better than this with which to delight the mind, "When thou awakest, it shall talk with thee."

I do not intend to expand those three thoughts except just to say this. When you are busiest, your religion shall be your best help. When your hands are full of toil and your head is full of thought, nothing can do you more service than to have a God to go to, a Savior to trust in, a heaven to look forward to.

And when you go to your bed to sleep, or to be sick, you can have nothing better to smooth your pillow, and to give you rest than to know that you are forgiven through the precious blood of Christ, and saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. Often, before I fall asleep, I say to myself those words of Watts—

*"Sprinkled afresh with pardoning blood,
I lay me down to rest,
As in the embraces of my God,
Or on my Savior's breast;"*

and there is no more delicious sleep in the world than that sleep which, even in dreams, keeps near to Christ.

Some of us know what it is, even in those wanderings of our mind in sleep, not to quit the holy ground of communion with our Lord. It is not always so, but it is sometimes so, and even then, when the mind has lost power to control its thoughts, even the thoughts seem to dance, like Miriam, to the praise of God. Oh, happy men, whose religion is their protection even in their sleep!

And then Solomon says, "when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee." This Bible is a wonderful talking book—there is a great mass of blessed talk in this precious volume. It has told me a great many

of my faults. It would tell you yours if you would let it. It has told me much to comfort me and it has much to tell you if you will but incline your ears to it.

It is a book that is wonderfully communicative. It knows all about you, all the ins and outs of where you are, and where you ought to be, it can tell you everything. The best communion that a man can have is when he commences with God in prayer and the reading of the Word, “When thou awakest, it shall talk with thee.”

I have hurried over that point because I want to say something else to you. Dear friends, those of you who are unconverted, our great anxiety is that you should know the Lord at once. And our reason is this—that *it will prepare you for the world to come*. Whatever that world may be, full of vast mysteries, yet no man is so prepared to launch upon the unknown sea as the one who is reconciled to God—who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, who trusts Him and rejoices in the pardon of his sin through the great atoning sacrifice—and experiences in his own heart the marvelous change which has made him a new creature in Christ Jesus.

The great reason, I say again, why we wish to have our dear friends converted is that they may be ready for the world to come. You will soon die, all of you. I think it was last Sunday evening that there sat, in that pew just over there, a friend who was generally here in the morning and evening, but on Wednesday he died quite suddenly. He appeared to be in good health, but he died at the railway station, away from home.

That seat where he used to sit ought to have a warning voice to all of us, crying aloud, “Prepare to meet thy God.” It might have been me—it might have been any of these friends around me on the platform—it might have been any of you in the congregation. Who can tell who will go this week? Probably some one or other of us (our number is so large) will be taken away before another Sabbath bell shall be heard.

I think that is a very good reason for seeking the Lord, that you may be prepared for eternity. One day this week I saw an aged friend who cannot live much longer. She is eighty-six and her faculties are failing her, but she said to me, “I have no fear, I have no fear of death. I am on the Rock, I am on the Rock Christ Jesus. I know whom I have believed and I know where I am going.”

It was delightful to hear the aged saint speak like that. And we are always hearing such talk from our dear friends when they are going home—they never seem to have any doubts. I have known some who, while they were well, had many doubts, but when they came to die, they seemed to have none at all, but were joyously confident in Christ.

But there is another reason why we want our friends converted and that is *that they may be prepared for this life*. I do not know what kind of life you have set before yourself. Perhaps I may be addressing some young men who are going to the University and they hope to have lives consecrated to learning, and crowned with honor.

Possibly, some here have no prospect but that of working hard to earn their bread with the sweat of their brow. Some have begun to lay bricks, or to drive the plane, or to wield the pen. There are all sorts of ways of mortal life, but there is no better provision and preparation for any kind of life on earth than to know the Lord and to have a new heart and a right spirit.

He that rules millions of men will do it better with the grace of God in his heart. And he that had to be a slave would be the happier in his lot for having the grace of God in his heart. You that are old and you that are young, you that are masters and you that are servants—true religion cannot disqualify you for playing your part here in the great drama of life—but the best preparation for that part, if it is a part that ought to be played, is to know the Lord and feel the power of divine grace upon your soul.

Let me just show you how this is the case. The man who lives before God, who calls God his Father, and feels the Spirit of God working within him a hatred of sin and a love of righteousness, he is the man who will be *conscientious in the discharge of his duties*. And you know, that is the kind of man, and the kind of woman, too, that we want nowadays.

We have so many people who want looking after—if you give them anything to do, they will do it quickly enough if you stand and look on—but the moment you turn your back, they will do it as slovenly, or as slowly and as badly as can be. They are eye-servants only. If you were to advertise for an eye-servant, I do not suppose anybody would come to you, yet they might come in shoals, for there are

plenty of them about. Well now, a truly Christian man, a man who is really converted, sees that he serves God in doing his duty to his fellow men. “Thou God seest me,” is the power that ever influences him, and he desires to be conscientious in the discharge of his duties whatever those duties may be.

I once told you the story of the servant girl who said that she hoped she was converted. Her minister asked her this question, “What evidence can you give of your conversion?” She gave this among a great many other proofs, but it was not a bad one. She said, “Now, sir, I always sweep *under* the mats.” It was a small matter, but if you carry out in daily life that principle of sweeping under the mats, that is the kind of thing we want.

Many people have a little corner where they stow away all the fluff and the dust—and the room looks as if it was nicely swept, but it is not. There is a way of doing everything so that nothing is really done, but that is not the case where there is grace in the heart. Grace in the heart makes a man feel that he would wish to live wholly to God—and serve God in serving man. If you get that grace, you will have a grand preparation for life as well as for death.

The next thing is that a man who has a new heart has imparted to him *a purity which preserves him in the midst of temptation*. Oh, this dreadful city of London! I wonder that God endures the filth of it. I frequently converse with good young men who come up from the country to their first situation in London, and the first week they live in London is a revelation to them which makes their hair almost stand on end. They see what they never dreamed of.

Well now, you young fellows who have just come to London—perhaps this is your first Sunday—give yourselves to the Lord at once, I pray you. Yield yourselves to Jesus Christ tonight for another week in London may be your damnation. Only a week in London may have led you into acts of impurity that shall ruin you forever. Before you have gone into those things, devote yourselves to God and to His Christ, that with pure hearts and with right spirits you may be preserved from “the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and the destruction that wasteth at noonday,” in this terribly wicked city.

There is no hope for you young men and young women in this great world of wickedness unless your hearts are right towards God. If you go in thoroughly to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goes, He will keep and preserve you even to the end. But if you do not give yourselves to the Lord, whatever good resolutions you may have formed, you are doomed—I am sure you are—to be carried away with the torrents of iniquity that run down our streets today. Purity of heart, then, which comes from faith in Christ, is a splendid preparation for life.

So also is *truthfulness of speech*. Oh, what a wretched thing it is when people tell lies! Now, the heart that is purified by the grace of God hates the thought of a lie. The man speaks the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth—and he is the man who shall pass through life unscathed—and shall be honored, and in the long run successful. He may have to suffer for a time through his truthfulness, but in the end, nothing shall clear a way for him so well as being true in thought and word and deed.

If you love the Lord with all your heart, you will also learn *honesty in dealing*—and that is a grand help in life. I know that the trickster does sometimes seem to succeed for a time, but what is his success? It is a success which is only another name for ruin. Oh, dear sirs, if all men could be made honest, how much more of happiness there would be in the world! And the way to be upright among men is to be sincere towards God—and to have the Spirit of God dwelling within you.

Again, true religion is of this value, that *it comforts a man under great troubles*. You do not expect many troubles, my young friend, but you will have them. You expect that you will be married and then your troubles will be over—some say that *then* they begin. I do not endorse that statement, but I am sure that they are not over, for there is another set of trials that then begin.

But you are going to get out of your apprenticeship and then it will be all right—will it? Journeymen do not always find it so. But you do not mean always to be a journeyman—you are going to be a little master. Ask the masters whether everything is pleasant with them in these times. If you want to escape trouble altogether, you had better go up in a balloon—and then I am sure that you would be in trouble for fear of going up too high or coming down too fast.

But troubles will come and what is there that can preserve a man in the midst of trouble like feeling that things are safe in his Father’s hands? If you can say, “I am His child and all things are working together for my good. I have committed myself entirely into the hands of Him who cannot err and will

never do me an unkindness,” why, sir, you have on a breastplate which the darts of care cannot pierce, you are shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace, and you may tread on the briars of the wilderness with unwounded foot.

True religion will also build up in you *firmness of character*, and that is another quality that I want to see in our young people nowadays. We have some splendid men in this place, and some splendid women, too. I should not be afraid, if the devil, himself were to preach here, that he would pervert them from the faith. And if all the new heresies that can rise were to be proclaimed in their presence, they know too well what the truth is ever to be led astray.

But on the other hand, we have a number of people who are led by their ears. If I pull their ears one way, they come after me. If they happen to go somewhere else and somebody pulls their ears the other way, they go after him. There are lots of people who never do their own thinking, but put it out, as they put out their washing—they do not think of doing it at home.

Well now, these people are just like the chaff on the threshing floor, and when the wind begins to blow, away they go. Do not be like that. Dear young sons and daughters of the church members here, know the Lord. May He reveal Himself to you at once, and when you do know Him, and get a grip of the Gospel, bind it to your heart and tie it about your neck, and say, “Yes, I am going to follow in the footsteps of those I love, and especially in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus Christ—

*“Through floods and flames, if Jesus lead,
I’ll follow where He goes.”*

God help you to do it! But first believe in the Lord Jesus Christ—trust yourselves wholly to Him—and He will give you grace to stand fast even to the end.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

PSALM 119:1-16

The first eight verses of this Psalm, in the Hebrew, begin with the letter A, and the second eight begin with the letter B. The whole Psalm is the good man’s alphabet. The Holy Spirit condescended to use these expedients to help the memory of the readers of Holy Scripture. We should be thankful for this.

I have sometimes heard preachers blamed for dividing their discourses in such a way as to help the memory of their hearers. The preacher may well bear that blame without any regret, since the Spirit of God here condescends to alliteration, and to alphabetical arrangement, in order to help the memories of readers. Thus the Psalm begins—

Verse 1. *Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD.*

If there are any people in the world who are blessed, surely it must be those who are in God’s way, and who take care to keep their garments unspotted from the world. Oh, if one can feel, at the end of every day, “I am undefiled in God’s way, and I have walked in His law,” how sweet it is in such a case to fall asleep, not self-righteous and boastful, but yet thankful to have been kept from the iniquity that abounds in the world!

Truly, “Blessed are the undefiled in the way.” Perhaps some of you cannot claim this particular blessing. Then, remember that there is another Psalm (the thirty-second) which begins, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered,” and that blessing is of the same force and of the same sweetness as this one.

2-3. *Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart. They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways.*

And if we walk in God's ways, He will never require us to do anything which is inequitable or unrighteous. No, that life which is made up of walking in God's ways, will be full of equity, and free from iniquity.

4. *Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently.*

We are to be as industrious in holiness as grasping men are in business. "Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently," watchfully, carefully, industriously, with all our might.

5. *O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!*

The psalmist is driven to prayer. His admiration of the godly man makes him aspire to be like him, and then he feels that he cannot attain to that height without divine help, so he cries, "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!"

6. *Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.*

That is a wide expression, "respect unto all thy commandments." There are many men who are willing to keep a part of God's commandments, but they must pick and choose for themselves which these shall be. Such are arrant traitors. There lurks in their heart a distinct rebellion against the Lord, for they do really presume to be the judge of God, by taking exception to this or that command in His law. In their great condescension, they are willing to be obedient in certain points, but not in all. Such men have need to be ashamed, but the psalmist could say, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments."

7. *I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.*

"I will not praise myself, if I am enabled to be holy, that holiness is Your work, and I will praise You for it."

8. *I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly.*

Whenever you make a resolve, accompany it with a prayer. Let this be your declaration, "I will keep thy statutes," but pray, "O forsake me not utterly," for, otherwise, your resolution will come to nought.

Now begins the second octave of the Psalm—

9. *Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?*

The psalmist has spoken about the holy way, now he would speak about young men running in it. One of the most intense desires of every godly man is that there may be a succession of godly men. Oh, that our young men might be good men, so that, when the old men pass away, the generation following them may be as good as their fathers, nay more, that they may be far better!

"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" Within him are strong passions, around him are fierce temptations—wherewithal shall he cleanse his way? There are plenty who would defile him—the youth is compassed about with the temptations of gaiety and the allurements of folly, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" Here is the answer—

9. *By taking heed thereto according to thy word.*

There is no keeping a clean way if you walk with your eyes shut—you must pick your path in such a foul road as this, "By taking heed thereto according to thy word." Yes, the greatest heed we can take will not keep us out of the mire unless God's Word is a continual lamp unto our feet and a constant light unto our path. Oh, that every young man here might cleanse his way by taking heed thereto according to God's Word!

10. *With my whole heart have I sought thee:*

Can you each one say that, "With my whole heart have I sought thee"?

10. *O let me not wander from thy commandments.*

"For, though I have sought thee with my whole heart, yet my heart may in the future go astray. Do not permit it, Lord; do not permit it." It is a very sorrowful thought to me, that there are many, who once sat in these seats, and resolved to maintain a holy life, who, nevertheless, are, at this moment, in the seat

of the scornful, some perhaps in prison, and many of them where they ought not to be. They determined to be right, but destitute of divine grace, they have gone astray.

Therefore, let each of us pray, “O let me not wander from thy commandments.” You know what John Bradford used to say when he saw a man taken out to be hanged, “There goes John Bradford, but for the grace of God.” And when you see others wander, you may say the same about yourself, and then breathe the prayer, “O let me not wander from thy commandments.”

11. *Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*

An old preacher, in a sermon on this text, divided it thus, “The best thing—‘thy word.’ In the best place—‘have I hid in my heart.’ For the best of purposes—‘that I might not sin against thee.’” He thus gave in a few words the very gist of the text.

12. *Blessed art thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes.*

There is a mixture, you see, of prayer and praise. That is the best devotion, which contains a happy combination of these two things, prayer and praise.

13. *With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth.*

I must take leave to claim a special property in this text, and there are some among us here, following that same holy craft of preaching the divine Word, who can, each one, lay his hand upon his heart, and say to God, “With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth.” This is a happy occupation. If you cannot spend all your lives in it, because of other duties, yet at least in your own family, and as often as you have opportunities, use your lips in God’s service.

14. *I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches.*

Not only as much as in riches, but as in all riches. David had gathered together a vast sum of money for the building of the house of the Lord, but whatever joy he had in those accumulations (and I daresay he had great gladness when he thought of the purpose to which all would be put) yet, nevertheless, he says, “I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches.”

15. *I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.*

Blessed meditation! The lack of meditation is one of the faults of the days in which we live, we are so very busy that we have not time to study God’s Word, but the psalmist said, “I will meditate in thy precepts.” That is the secret strength, “and have respect unto thy ways,” that is the public result.

If we meditated more, we should live better. God help us so to do!

16. *I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.*

So may each one of us resolve. Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—23 (Version II), 119 (Song II), 119 (Song III), 727

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