

CO-WORKERS WITH GOD

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A SERMON
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 DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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*“Except the LORD builds the house, they labour in vain that build it:
 except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.
 It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows:
 for so he giveth his beloved sleep.”*
Psalm 127:1-2

DID you notice, when we were reading this psalm, that it is entitled, “A Song of Degrees for Solomon”? The title may be either, “for Solomon” or “by Solomon.” If it is by Solomon, I can only say that it is worthy to be placed side by side with the book of Proverbs or Ecclesiastes. It is a psalm which is very brief, and which has the soul of wisdom in it, it is, in fact, a Solomonic Psalm, it is quite after his style of writing.

The whole of it might be made into a proverb, and its separate sentences might be cut up into proverbial expressions. It was inspired by the Spirit of God, and He may have used for the writing of it no less accomplished an individual than King Solomon, whose wisdom was greater than that of the men of his age.

If it be a psalm “for Solomon”—which it strikes me it is—then it is none the less admirable in our esteem, for if Solomon needed to be taught it, certainly we do. If, when David knew that Solomon was to build the house of the Lord, he thought it necessary before he began the temple to remind him that “except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it,” we may depend upon it that, as we are less wise than Solomon, we need to have just such a lesson taught us.

Let us accept it as from David, and let each one of us hear the words of the dying king as he speaks to us as well as to his son and successor. I intend, as God shall help me, to fetch out three or four lessons from our text which it may be well for us to learn.

I. The first is, WHAT WE MAY NOT EXPECT, namely, that God will build the house without our laboring, that God will guard the city without the watchman’s waking, or that He will give us bread without our toiling for it. This principle may be applied to a great many matters.

And first, to *what we call our ordinary life*, though I never like to draw any distinction between one portion of our life and another. It is a part of the Christian religion to sanctify everything, so that we worship God in the shop as well as in the meeting house, and are as reverent about our domestic affairs as about our devotional concerns. But still, as it is our habit to speak of the ordinary affairs of life, it is needful to say that, in all things to which we put our hand, we are expected to use all available means, and we are not allowed to be idle, and to sit still, and do nothing, because we say that we are trusting in providence.

One of the things which Christianity cannot bear is laziness. The apostle Paul writing to the Thessalonians, was inspired to pass a very sharp sentence upon it, “This we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat”—a sentence which would exterminate a great number of persons who at the present time seem to flourish.

If in business I am not diligent, I cannot expect to prosper. If I wish to be a man of learning, I cannot get it simply by praying for it, I must study, even to the weariness of the flesh. If a man be sick, he may

trust in God as much as he wills, that should be his first thing, but let him also use such remedies as God has given if he can find them out, or learn of them from others.

My grandfather said to me many years ago, concerning the preparation of a sermon, and I have always remembered his words, "I study my sermon as much as if the work of preaching depended entirely upon myself, and I go into the pulpit relying upon the Spirit of God, knowing that it does not depend upon myself, but upon Him." For us to do all that we can do is the appointed way in which the blessing comes. We should all think it ridiculous if men left off sowing because they had so much faith in God that they were sure He would not suffer men to starve, and would be certain to send a harvest.

Suppose the farmer said, "Ploughing is for ordinary people, but I live by faith, I never plough. Harrowing, fertilizing, sowing—these are all the pitiful shifts of unbelief. I shall do nothing with the land, I shall just wait, I cannot doubt that God can make wheat to grow quite as well as weeds, and if He pleases, He can give me a harvest without my using any of these ordinary means which are only a coverlet for unbelief." Within a year, he would be convinced of his folly, and I wish it were as easy to convince all Christians of their folly in thinking that faith means that they are no more to work. "Faith without works is dead." "Faith worketh by love."

There is no stronger and more forceful principle for fetching out the energy of a man than his conviction that God is with him. If God works in me to will and to do of His good pleasure, then the natural result is that I must work out what He has worked in. Where God has united means and ends, I would say of them, "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." To trust in the means without God is presumption, but to profess to trust in God without the means is only another form of presumption, and it will come to the same thing in the end. I am to believe in God, and in God alone, but if I perceive that He works in a certain way, I am to drop into God's way, and to believe that He will work while I am pleading with Him to do so, and seeking to carry out His plan of doing it.

So, in the ordinary affairs of life, my dear brethren, do not go and put your feet on the fender, and sit still and say, "The Lord will provide," because if you act so foolishly, very likely He will provide you with a place in the workhouse. If you go up and down the town with no profession, with your hands in your empty pockets, and say that you are trusting in God, God will give you the wages that you earn, namely, poverty; He will clothe you with rags if you clothe yourself with idleness. If you will not serve Him, you shall find the reward that comes to the man who wastes his Master's talents by wrapping them in a napkin.

The same thing is true in *the great matter of our salvation*. Dear friends, it is quite true that God saves His people. "Salvation is of the LORD" from first to last, but no man is saved apart from his own believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. That faith is God's gift, but it is man's act. The Holy Spirit does not believe for us, what should He believe? No man is saved apart from repentance. Now, repentance is a work of the Spirit of God, but the Spirit of God does not repent, what has He to repent of? It is the man himself who must repent and believe. "If ye believe not, ye shall die in your sins." "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Do not therefore, any of you sit still, and dream about the predestination of God. Divine predestination is most blessedly true, it is the joy of my spirit, but do not turn it into a pillow for your idle head, and fancy that blessing will come to you when you are not looking for it. "Faith cometh by hearing," therefore hear most attentively and reverently the Word of God, and drink it in. And salvation comes by faith, therefore what you hear of God's Word, believe and accept simply, and with a childlike faith, and so you shall be saved.

Do not, I pray you, any of you, fall into the idea that it matters not where you are, or what you do, or how inattentive you are, or how careless you are about the things of God, it does matter. All these things are sins, and sins for which you shall be called to account. Oh, that the Spirit of God may lead you to adopt quite another line of conduct! Search the Scriptures, says our Lord, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me."

May you often be found upon your knees, for the Lord hears them that cry unto Him! May you be found confessing your sins, for “whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy”! May you be found believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, for there is no soul lost that casts itself at the foot of Christ’s cross! Do not then, misread the text as though, either in common things or in the loftiest matter, we were to do nothing, and leave everything to God.

This also is true, dear friends, as to the matter of *our spiritual growth*. We are not to assume that, because we are Christians, we shall go on growing in grace if we use no sort of means whatever. I know persons, who stint themselves in their meals, and they are often faint, do you wonder? What shall I say of persons who, on the Sabbath day, practice once-a-day Christianity, and who never go out to a week night service? They have not time, they say, yet I hear of their being at various secular entertainments. They stint themselves in their spiritual food, and then they say—

*“Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought,
Do I love the Lord or no,
Am I His, or am I not?”*

That is a point *I* long to know too, for the case is very doubtful. If a man will not feed himself upon the bread of heaven, can he expect that he shall grow strong? We see some who neglect private prayer, of course, not giving it up altogether, but they have little of it, and they are seldom found where the assemblies of God’s people are gathered for prayer, and they say they do not know how it is that they do not enjoy religion. I should think not, dear friend; you do not have enough of it, for it is with religion as the poet says it is concerning learning—

*“A little learning is a dangerous thing;
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring.”*

It is often so with religion, a man gets just enough of it to make him miserable. He cannot be satisfied now with the world, and he is not satisfied with God, so he is miserable all round. Oh, that you had, not only religion enough to make you a miserable sinner, but enough to make you a rejoicing saint!

But if we neglect to search the Word, and neglect private prayer, and neglect the assemblies of God’s house, if we restrain communion with the Most High, can we wonder if we do not grow? God will build our spiritual house undoubtedly, but we also must labor in it, there must be an earnestness, a prayerfulness, a watchfulness, an intensity of desire, a using of all appointed means by which we may be built up in our most holy faith.

I am certain that this is also true in a fourth matter, namely, *in our Christian work*, in our trying to bring souls to Christ. We cannot expect to see men converted if we are not earnest in telling them that truth which will save the soul. It is the work of the Spirit to convert sinners, to regenerate must ever be the sole work of God, yet the Lord uses us as His instruments.

The great honor that God often puts upon instrumentality is very wonderful. Paul speaks of himself as the very mother of those to whom he was the means of conversion, “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ is formed in you.” Then, in writing to Philemon, he says, of Onesimus, “whom I have begotten in my bonds”—making himself to be, as it were, both father and mother—strong expressions, and yet they are warranted, or else Paul would not have used them.

God does so use those who seek to win souls so that, as it were, He puts the very paternity of those souls upon them. It is great condescension that He should do so, but let it teach us this lesson, that if God works by means, as He does, He will not have us neglect those means, or ourselves will be found unfit for the Master’s use.

A brother complains that there are no conversions under his ministry, will he ask himself whether he has aimed at conversion? A Sunday school teacher says that she has seen no girls in her class brought to

Christ, has her teaching been such as to tend that way? Has Christ been set forth in His sweet attraction? Has prayer been offered that the girls might come to Christ? Have they been pleaded with? Have they been taught their lost condition? Have they been shown the excellence of Christ as a Savior?

You see, if we do live in a region of means suited to ends, it is the path of wisdom to find out the means best suited to the desired end, and to use it in dependence upon God. Our text tells us that, without God, our labor will be in vain, but it does not tell us that we may expect to have our desire in our spiritual service unless we ourselves do work for the Lord.

I believe, my brothers, that if we preach Christ crucified with crucified hearts, if we set forth Christ with earnest longing that men may see Him, they will see Him. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." I believe, teachers in the Sunday school, that if Christ is taught in the classes earnestly and prayerfully, the children will receive Him.

Ask those who have tried it, there are many such here, and I am sure that if I were to appeal to their experience, they would tell you that though they may have been at times slack in their service, God has never been slack concerning His promise. His word has not returned unto Him void, it has accomplished what He pleased, and prospered in the thing where He sent it.

Let there be no listless indifference, no falling back upon the sovereignty of God as an excuse for half-heartedness, Solomon was too wise a man to write a psalm that would be meant to encourage idleness. The Holy Spirit would never have led him to write sentences that would bring us into such a state of heart as that.

II. But now, secondly, our text suggests to us **WHAT WE MAY EXPECT**, that is, we may expect failure if we attempt the work without God. We may expect it, and we shall not be disappointed.

Going back again, to *our ordinary life*, note what the psalmist says, "Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows." The pivot word in the text is the word "vain." It rings out three times as a death knell to the hope of every man who tries to do without God. Vain is your building a house, vain is your watching a city, vain is your rising up early, and sitting up late. "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity"—utter vanity, without God.

Success in life, without God, is always vain, a man may be a millionaire without God, but what is that? He may be reported in the newspapers to have died worth a million, when in fact, he was not worth a brass button. He was put into a coffin, lowered into the grave, but he was himself worth nothing at all. He could take nothing with him. Even the silver plate on the coffin did not belong to him. If anyone had dug open the grave, and taken the plate away, he could not have said, "Leave that alone, it is mine." "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out." So life is a failure if it is only used in amassing gold.

"Oh!" says one, "but a man may be famous without God." Yes, in a sense, he may, but have you ever analyzed fame? Of what good is it to a dead man? Of what good is it to a *damned* man? A man in hell, and his name in every newspaper! A man in the bottomless pit, and they say that he is one of the great men of the age, who has left his mark upon the world, but if it is a mark without God, what kind of mark is it? A mark that had better be obliterated as soon as possible.

No creature can be a success unless it pleases its Creator. No man can be a success unless he has treasure laid up for immortality, a mansion in the glory land, a place to abide in the islands of the blessed, in the land of the hereafter. Without God, he is a complete failure in life.

It may be that some of you are trying to attain success without God, but you will not succeed, and in the process you will fritter away your life. What would you think of a man who cut himself up into strips with which to make himself a coat? "That would be a most absurd thing," you say. Well, but what think you of a man who destroys himself that he may get himself bread, or that he may find a house and clothes for himself? "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his soul?" That is, supposing he could gain the whole world by bartering his soul for it, what profit would he make?

But men do not gain the world by losing their own soul, and they lose both this world and the next too, and for what do they lose all this? Why, they “rise up early.” Oh, what would they not give for another half hour in the morning? They rise up early, and they “sit up late,” till they fall asleep at their work. Oh, dear! What mill horses! What worse than slaves! And they “eat the bread of sorrows,” there is very little bread, and instead of being buttered, it seems to be smeared over with gall.

There are some that I know who would not eat bread if they could help it, they grudge the money that it costs to keep body and soul together, so they are losing this life, and they are not getting anything for the life to come. They are throwing all away for some vain hope of becoming rich, that they may be talked of among men. Oh, happy and blessed is the man who has risen above that groveling, and who knows that, without his God, he cannot prosper! He first of all goes to Him to learn what true prosperity is, and then looks to Him to bestow it.

Now, dear friends, here is a very important and blessed truth which concerns *our salvation*. What we may expect regarding our salvation is this, if we attempt to obtain salvation apart from God, it will be a failure. Oh, how many there are who are seeking salvation through the works of the law! They build, and they watch, and they rise up early, and they sit up late, and they eat the bread of sorrows, and let me tell you, if you are trying to be saved by your good works, you have need to get up early, and to sit up late, and work your fingers to the bone, and worry yourselves into your graves, and then it will be all in vain.

Let me read to you again the beginning of that 126th psalm, though we had it just now. The man of works rises up early, sits up late, and eats the bread of sorrows, all in vain, but this is what faith says: “When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them.” You are trying to see what you can do, but we have found out what the Lord can do. You are fretting and fuming because of what you cannot do, but we are laughing and singing because of what the Lord has done by the redemption accomplished on the cross of Calvary.

I wish you would flee from Moses, and get away to Christ, and begin to trust and rejoice in Him, for if you do not, this is what you may expect—if you spend the next half century in tears and mortification of the body, if you deny yourself, and give all your goods to feed the poor, and even give your body to be burned, yet vanity of vanities shall it all be, without God, all that you can do in the matter of your salvation shall be vain.

It is just the same with regard to the Christian’s *growth in grace*. The believer must never think that he will naturally and necessarily grow in grace because he uses the means of grace. I just now insisted upon the reading of the Scriptures, but that may be a very dry formality unless we look to God to bless it to us. I spoke of gathering to hear the Word, but that will be a very unprofitable piece of ceremonialism unless our eye is toward the Lord rather than toward the preacher. I spoke of private prayer, but that may degenerate into a mere form unless we have communion with God in it, indeed it is just nothing unless God is there.

You cannot go an inch in the pilgrimage to heaven without God. It is not possible for you to overcome a solitary sin, or to produce a single virtue, apart from the Holy Spirit. “They labour in vain that build” without God. You may rise up early, and sit up late, and be one of the most outspoken professors of religion, but nothing will come of it unless God is in it all.

And so is it with regard to *the work and service of God*. O brothers and sisters, we may preach, but none of our preaching will raise the spiritually dead except the Lord is there! We may adopt every kind of expedient, and go what length we like in seeking a revival, but it will be all a farce and a nullity unless our dependence is upon the Lord alone. Give us a working church, but let it first be a trusting church. Let the man be earnest, but first let him be humble. Let him believe in the Gospel being blessed, but let him first believe that it is God alone who can bless the Gospel. If not, we shall certainly meet with failure.

If we dream for a moment that we can change a heart of stone into flesh, that stony heart will by its obduracy teach us a severe lesson. If we even think that one little child can be converted by our tears and prayers, apart from God, we shall be utterly disappointed. Without God, we are nothing.

III. Now thirdly, and briefly, let us notice from the text, WHAT WE SHOULD NOT DO.

And the first point is that, *in our ordinary affairs, we should not fret, and worry, and grieve.* You know how some people act, they forget that God rules all things, and that they are taught to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread,” so they are all in a fume, up in the morning far too early, waking everybody up who wanted a little extra rest, then toiling hard all day, not really doing much, but fussing over it all, rather than really accomplishing anything.

They seem as if they cannot go to bed at night, there is always something more to be done. There is another drawer that wants putting to rights or something else that must be attended to even at midnight! Then look at the man in business, he does not do half as much as the quiet man who goes calmly about his work, but you would think, from the fuss he makes, that he is going to compete with all the traders in London, and that his shop, if he is to live by it, must cut out all the shops that ever existed. If there is a bad debt, oh, he will be ruined!

I know of some people who seem to make all the affairs of life into a kind of slavery by the way in which they are agitated about them, it is sad to see a soul immortal worrying itself thus about the things of time, well did the poet say that it resembled—

*“Ocean into tempest tossed
To waft a feather or to drown a fly.”*

Yet this is the way with very many, they forget that God “giveth his beloved sleep.” They would be far better in bed sometimes when they are sitting up and worrying. If they could just sleep on it, and leave the matter with God, it would go on a deal better without them than it does with them. Yet they fancy that if they are not there, to hack, and drive, and scold, from morning to night, everything must go amiss. My dear worrying man or woman, pray the Lord to give you a little patience, and a great deal of faith, and the grace to be quiet, and leave all in His hands.

In the matter of *the soul’s salvation*, a man should be anxious, yet his salvation will never come by his working, and running from this one to that and the other. I have known men who have desired to be saved, and who have not been satisfied with the preacher they have been accustomed to hear, so they have gone to another. They have not been satisfied with him, so they have gone to still another. They have not been content, perhaps, in one denomination, so they have drifted off to another, and at last it is highly probable that they have cast anchor with the worst lot of all.

Perhaps they have got as far as the Papacy, and they think now they have something real, here is an historic church, they can cast anchor there, yet very soon they are off somewhere else. Possibly, they go to the Plymouth Brethren, or to the Irvingites, nobody knows where they may go, but they keep flying about hither and thither. This is not the way that salvation comes. I can stop just where I am, and find that, by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, I am saved.

“Lord Jesus, I believe, I trust You, and I am saved.” That is the way salvation comes, and not by all that running about and gadding to and fro. This is our Lord’s declaration, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” That is how, in the great commission, He bade us put it, and I shall not put it otherwise than He commanded us. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”

But instead of doing that, some must be here, and there, and everywhere. Oh, that they would listen to the text! “It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows,” for to those who are in Christ, to those who simply believe on Him, “He giveth his beloved sleep.”

Now, with regard to *growing in grace*, I believe that it is much the same. I do not know that I ever looked down my own throat, but there are some Christians who seem to live that way, they will not

believe that they are spiritually breathing unless they can see down their own throats, they do not believe that their heart is beating unless they can hear it palpitating. I mean this. There is often such an amount of introspection about Christians that they miss the very essence of true Christian life. They look into themselves instead of looking to Christ alone.

You remember that, when the face of Moses shone because he had looked at God, we read that, “Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone.” You go and look in the looking glass, and you are in hopes that you will see your face shine that way, but it will not. You say, “Would you not have a man look in the looking glass?” Of course I would, that he may see the spots on his face, but he cannot remove them by his looking, he must go to the water to wash the spots away. The way to become like Christ is to think about Christ.

Some people think so much about their own sanctification that they miss sanctification altogether. They are looking at their own image, and admiring it, until they are gradually being more and more conformed to their own image, but he who looks away from himself entirely to Christ, shall go from glory to glory, and be transformed into the image of his Master. It is foolish to be always fretting and worrying, and saying, “I am not humble enough, I am not believing enough, I am not this or that,” go to Christ, and rest yourself on Him, and believe that what He has begun to do for you and in you He will certainly perform and perfect.

Here comes in again *our working for the Lord*. Beloved friends, let us work for the Lord, without being “cumbered” with much service, as Martha was. The Lord Jesus Christ is admirable in His life for the quiet way in which He does everything. He always seems ready, whatever the occasion is, He is never put about or flurried. He works all day long, and He gets weary, but He says nothing about it.

It is a sweet way of working for Christ “to do the next thing,” the next that needs to be done today—not always forecasting all that we are going to do tomorrow and the next day, but calmly and quietly believing that there are so many days in which a man shall be able to walk and to work, and while we have them we will both walk and work in the strength of God. It is a very sweet thing when a man is brought into such a condition that he can work for Christ in Christ’s own quiet way, calmly leaving all his cares at his Savior’s feet.

IV. I will finish up with the description of SOMETHING WHICH I WOULD LIKE TO SEE.

When Solomon was building the temple for the Lord, it was done very quietly. The men had got the plan, not one of them had to consider about it, the plan was all before them, and when the stones came from the quarries, they did not need any hammering or any altering. They only wanted quietly fixing, each stone into the place that was prepared for it. Those who went to work for Solomon on the mountains had one month in Lebanon, and then they had two months at home, so that they were not killed by overwork.

I can well believe, that while the temple was building, it was about the noblest form of human labor that ever fell to men’s lot. I should think they began the morning with psalms—not too early, before the sun was up, but just when they could begin it properly, and they worked well on till evening—not too late, for this was work for God, and God is no tyrant, He does not want His servants to be slaves—and ere the sun went down, there was an evening hymn, and they said, when they went home, “Oh, we have had another blessed day’s work, it has been so pleasant!

Another big stone has been hoisted up, we could not have believed that it would move, but we got it into its place all right. We had not to hammer it, or even to tap it with a mallet, it just fitted precisely, and we felt so glad, for it is the Lord’s house that is being built. We kept singing all day. All the time the great cranes were lifting the big stones, we kept praising and blessing the Lord as we saw the temple being built. We never had such work before, and never enjoyed work like it, it seems like one long blessed holiday.”

Those who were privileged to work from day to day with all their might yet found every day to be like a Sabbath, for now their ordinary work was work for God. They were not like common workmen who were toiling for the world, even that by which they earned their daily bread was all for the Lord. So

every day went merrily on till they came to the very last day, and they saw the topstone raised, and then they looked with the utmost delight upon it, and they were the gladdest of all the company.

When Solomon prayed that wonderful prayer to the great Lord of the house, they felt that they had not labored in vain, for God had blessed them, and now He had filled the house with His presence so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the brightness of the glory.

Now, I want all of us to feel, that as workers for God, pastor and people, Sunday school teachers, and you who teach the Bible classes, you who distribute tracts, you who preach at the street corners, all of you, my beloved fellow helpers, we are doing grand work.

You know that it is God's house that we are building, under God, and with His help, we are building up His church with stones that He points out to us, helps us to quarry, and enables us to bring into their places, and the work goes on so easily too, if we will but do it according to the great Architect's plan, and if we do not get too fussy and busy, and if we do not think that we should knock a corner off here, and alter the shape of a stone there, but will just do it as God would have it done, in His fear, in simple dependence upon Him, confident that it is all right, and the great Master Builder will complete His work.

I think that we ought to be the happiest workers who ever lived, it should be a joy to us to do anything for the Lord Jesus. And oh! When it gets finished, and the topstone is laid, and the Lord descends and fills the house, and none of us will be any longer wanted, for the priests will not be able to stand and minister by reason of the glory of the Christ who has filled His church, oh, then, what joy we shall have that ever we were engaged in the work!

I mean that for you, my dear sister, do not go on fretting and saying, "I shall have to give up my class, things do not seem to go well." I know how you talk, do not speak like that any longer. And you, dear brother, must not go home to your church in the country and say, "I cannot stir the people, the work does not flourish as I wish it would." Of course it does not, my work does not prosper as I wish it might. You and I can never go at the pace we would like to go, but can we not be willing to be driven by our Lord, and to go at His pace?

It is quite right to work as if the salvation of all the souls in the world depended upon you, yet as it does not, you had better throw that burden back upon your Lord and Master. Feel the weight of men's souls till it crushes you down to Christ's feet, but do not let it crush you any lower than that, you are not the Savior, you are not to have the glory of their salvation. Neither, if you have served your Lord faithfully, shall you have the shame of their ruin if they are lost.

Rise not up early, and sit not up late, I mean, so as to work yourself away, but give yourself up by faith to do all you can do, all that God shall help you to do, and then trust in Him to bless you, and He will bless you. God make this discourse a word of comfort to His own people, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

PSALMS 126 AND 127

Psalm 126. Verse 1. *When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.*

We could hardly believe it, we began to talk incoherently, as men do in their sleep. We were so carried away with joyful rapture that we did not know where we were: "we were like them that dream."

2. *Then was our mouth filled with laughter,—*

We became Issacs, for he was the child of laughter. We laughed as Abraham did, for very joy of faith. Sometimes, laughter may become the holiest possible expression. It may be one of the meanest utterances of our nature, but it may also be one of the loftiest. These people not only laughed, but their mouth was filled with laughter, they could not laugh loudly enough, there was no expression of articulate speech that sufficed them at all, "Then was our mouth filled with laughter,"—

2. *And our tongue with singing:*

When they did find their tongue, they could not speak, they must sing. They could not have anything as slow as a mere declaration, they must have a psalm, “Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing.”

2. *Then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them.*

The heathen could not help seeing that it was the Lord who had delivered Israel. No other people except the Jews ever came back from captivity. The Babylonian tyrant never restored any others to their land, but he did restore these people, and the very heathen said, “It is their God, JEHOVAH, that hath done it.” And what did God’s own people say?

3. *The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.*

See the difference between the outsider and the insider. The outsider says, “The LORD hath done great things for *them*.” Ah! but they who belong to God say, “The LORD hath done great things for *us*.” Oh, the privilege of being able to say, “*for us*”! Dear hearers, can you join with all the saints and say, “The LORD has done great things *for us*”?

This is what happened to God’s people before, but now they have fallen into another trouble, so hear how they pray.

4. *Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the south.*

“You did it once, do it again. You made us to live, make us to live again. We sang then, O LORD, enable us to sing again, ‘Turn again our captivity.’ As the dry riverbeds are suddenly made to be filled with water at the melting of the snow, so come, and fill our hearts, ‘as the streams in the south.’”

5. *They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.*

Take that for certain, lay it down as a Scripture proverb. When God sends us a wet time, and we have to sow in the moist, foggy atmosphere, never mind, there are brighter days yet to come. We shall reap amid the sunbeams, and carry home our sheaves with joy.

6. *He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.*

“He shall doubtless come again with rejoicing.” Now, you disconsolate workers, you who have only a handful of seed, you shall come back with an armful of sheaves. You shall come back rejoicing though you go forth now sorrowing, for the Lord has said it, wherefore, be of good courage.

Psalm 127. Verses 1-3. *Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep. Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.*

The psalmist had been speaking about house building, and there is the building up of the house in the sense of a family being built up by children. Some people think children an encumbrance, but they are “a heritage of the LORD,” and they are to be looked upon with gladness. One said, “I have twelve sons,” and his friend answered, “That is exactly Jacob’s number.” “Yes,” said the first speaker, “and I have Jacob’s God to enable me to sustain them.” There is a comfort in that thought, may God grant that none may be troubled by those whom God sends to us for a heritage!

4. *As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth.*

In the case of an arrow, you know, it all depends which way you shoot it. Mind therefore, that you direct your children aright, give them a good start, a true aim from the very first, God helping you, and then they shall fly from you like the arrows of a mighty archer.

5. *Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them:*

That is, when they are like arrows—not when they are gnarled and knotty, like crooked sticks. When they are unwilling to be tutored and trained, then they become a trial and a trouble, but happy is the man who has a quiver full of arrows, the more the merrier of such children as the psalmist here speaks of.

5. *They shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.*

When there was any suit at law, these sons of his would be there to plead for him, if there was any fighting to be done, they also would be to the front. It was a dangerous thing to attack a man who had a house full of strong, loyal, loving sons. They would be his defense; they would speak, and speak with very considerable emphasis too, with his enemies in the gate.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—708, 4, 3

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.