

SALVATION BY GRACE

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A SERMON
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“By grace ye are saved.”
Ephesians 2:5

THE cardinal error against which the Gospel of Christ has to contend is the effect of the tendency of the human heart to rely upon salvation by works. The great antagonist to the truth as it is in Jesus is that pride of man which leads him to believe that he can be, at least in part, his own savior. This error is the prolific mother of multitudes of heresies. It is through this falsehood that the pure stream of the truth has been tainted, so that, instead of flowing on in one clear limpid river, it has been sadly polluted.

There have been many who have sought to hinder the flowing of the water of life, or to divert the stream from its proper current. Many have tried to mingle the fancies and fallacies of men with the truth as it is in Jesus, in order thereby to make it more palatable to poor, fallen, human nature.

It is my belief that all great reforms in the church of Christ must have for their basis the declaration of the doctrine revealed in my text—“By grace ye are saved.” The tendency of the church, like that of the world, is to fly away from this truth which is really the sum and substance of the Gospel. A departure from this doctrine is, in my opinion, the essence of those many errors which, springing up from time to time, have troubled and divided the church and marred the beauty of the spouse of Christ.

In all times, whenever this doctrine has been obscured, the church has become either heretical or Laodicean. She has either held some dangerous and damnable heresy, or she has held only a portion of the truth and held it with so feeble a grasp that it has lost its ancient power in her hands—so that her enemies have prevailed against her.

The mightiest men in all ages of the church's history—those who have been the means of bringing the greatest good into her midst and the most usefulness into the wide world—have been those who, rising up like Samson when called to do valiant deeds on behalf of Israel, have made this the distinguishing characteristic of their ministry—the doctrine of salvation by grace in contradistinction of salvation by works.

In Augustine's day, there had been a grievous falling away from the simplicity of the Gospel. And when he arose and preached to the world this glorious truth, there was an influence for good which, I believe, staved off the great Romish heresy, at least for a time. Had the church and the world but listened to his voice and accepted his teaching, Popery would have been an impossibility.

Then later, when Romanism had waxed exceedingly strong, the Lord raised up Martin Luther, who taught this as the great central truth of Christianity, that sinners are justified by faith and not by works. After Luther came another distinguished teacher of the doctrine of grace—John Calvin, a man far better instructed in the truth of the Gospel than even Martin Luther was—and he pushed this grand doctrine to its legitimate consequences.

Luther had, as it were, undammed the stream of truth by breaking down the barrier which had kept back the living waters in the great reservoir—but the stream was turbid and carried down with it much that ought to have been left behind. Then Calvin came and cast salt into the waters and purified them, so that they flowed on in a clear, sweet, limpid stream to gladden and refresh the church of God and to quench the thirst of poor parched sinners.

Calvin preached, as his great staple doctrine, the great truth in my text, “By grace ye are saved.” It is common, in these days, to call those ministers who dwell mainly upon this doctrine, “Calvinists.” But we do not accept that title without qualification. We are not ashamed of it and we would rather be called “Calvinists” than have any other name except that which is our true one.

We hold and assert again and again, that the truth which Calvin preached, the truth which Augustine thundered out with all his might—was the very truth which the apostle Paul had long before written in his inspired epistles and which is most clearly revealed in the discourses of our blessed Lord Himself. We desire to preach the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

We are not the followers of any mere man—we do not derive our inspiration from Calvin’s Institutes and Commentaries, but from the Word of God itself. Yet we hold the doctrines commonly called “Calvinism” to be none other than the essential basement doctrines of our holy faith. These were the truths that Whitefield preached and that produced the great revival in his days. And these must be the doctrines to which the church of God must again return, if the church of Rome is to be razed to its deep foundations, or souls to be converted in great multitudes, or the kingdom of Christ to come.

My text relates to the doctrine of salvation by grace, and coming to it, I ask you to notice, first, that the apostle *addresses certain people who were saved*. Next, I want you to notice the *meanings of the term “grace” as applied in the Scriptures*. And I shall finish with *some consolatory and practical inferences*.

I. In the first place, THE APOSTLE ADDRESSES CERTAIN PEOPLE, TO WHOM HE SAYS, “YE ARE SAVED.”

He does not say, “Ye shall be saved,” or “Ye hope to be saved.” He speaks to them as persons already “saved.” Now, there are no people on the face of the earth who can be correctly described as “saved” unless it can also be said of them that they are saved by grace.

I see two things in this part of my text and first, *the apostle mentions a present salvation*. He speaks not to people who were to be saved when they died, or who hoped to be saved in some future state, but he addresses those who actually were saved—who had salvation, not in prospect, but in present enjoyment—who had passed out of a state of condemnation into that of salvation and who looked upon their salvation as being as surely, as certainly, as really theirs, as their houses, their lands, or their lives.

A present salvation cannot consistently be preached by any beside those who hold the doctrine that salvation is by grace. Is there a Roman Catholic, in the whole world, who, in harmony with his own creed, can say that he is saved? No, there is not one. In fact, lying as that creed is, it does not profess to put anyone into a position in which he can say, “I am saved.”

Nay, the Romish church not only postpones salvation to the day of death, but positively beyond it. There was Daniel O’Connell, of whom the Pope said that he was his greatest subject in Europe—yet it is not many years ago that we were informed that he was in purgatory. It was a hard thing that such a faithful disciple of the Pope should be sent there, yet he was no worse off than the bishops, archbishops, and cardinals, for according to the Romish teaching, they all go to “purgatory.”

Of course, the Pope lets them out after a certain time, but that is all he professes to offer—salvation after a future indefinite period—he never pretends to say to anyone, “You are saved now.” That would be a lie too gross even for the Pope and priests of Rome to utter. There is no such thing as a present salvation in the whole of the Romish church.

Nor is this possible under any system except that of salvation by grace. Bring up the good Dissenters, and the good churchmen, the men and women who are regular in their attendance on outward ordinances. Whatever the ceremonies of their church may be, they observe them with the most indefatigable industry.

They have been “baptized” and confirmed. They have “taken the sacrament” or sat at the communion table—according to the phraseology of their different churches—and they believe that, by their constant attention to the outward observances of worship, they will assuredly be saved. But speak

to any one of these people, and ask if he can say, “I know that my sins are forgiven”—he will be astonished at your inquiry, and will reply, “I would not have the presumption to say such a thing.”

Appeal to the very best of them, the most devoted, the most earnest, the most indefatigable of those who are seeking salvation by their own works, and ask if they have obtained eternal life. You cannot find one who has done so—they are all hoping that, through the mercy of God, they may somehow and sometime be saved—but none of them will declare that they are saved now.

From those who join us in church fellowship, I frequently hear such remarks as this, “I attended my church every day in the week. I repeated the prayers regularly, but I never found any rest to my soul until I trusted wholly in Christ.”

From others who attended certain Dissenting places of worship, I have had such expressions as this, “I went up to the house of God and I heard my minister exhort me to be patient in sickness, to love my God and my neighbor, and I tried to do my best to obey his exhortations, but I never could say that I was a saved man, or use the confident language of the spouse, ‘My beloved is mine, and I am his,’ until I learned that salvation is all of grace and trusted in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

No, my dear friends, under the theory of salvation by works, whatever form it may take—whether it appears in the garb of Popery or hides itself under the veil of Protestantism—it is always substantially the same. A man’s own works cannot pretend to offer to him the blessing of a present salvation. Take the Arminian theory, which is the least objectionable of all forms of salvation by works—cut it asunder and you will find that there is a strong taint of Popery even there.

“But” asks someone, “do not Arminians rejoice to say that they are already saved?” Yes, but their assertion is contradicted by the assurance which they will give you directly afterwards, that they may finally perish. Although they are saved now, their safety is something like that of a wrecked mariner who, after being tossed to and fro in a stormy sea, is washed up on a rock, from which he may presently be hurled back into the raging billows.

Their safety is not like that of the man who has been carried into the lighthouse, or brought to land in the lifeboat, for they believe that after all they have experienced, they may be lost. It is not salvation that the Arminian possesses—he is only in a salvable state. His condition is that of a man who, if he continues to repent and believe, shall be saved, but he is not saved now—he has not been built upon that sure, certain, solid foundation upon which the true believer is resting. He cannot sing, with Toplady,—

*“The terrors of law, and of God
With me can have nothing to do;
My Savior’s obedience and blood
Hide all my transgressions from view.*

*“My name from the palms of His hands
Eternity will not erase;
Impress’d on His heart it remains
In marks of indelible grace.*

*“Yes, I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given;
More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in heaven.”*

Such a salvation as that—a present one, enjoyed now in all its fullness, in all its riches, in all its boundless lengths, and breadths, and depths and heights—is not possible under any other system but that of salvation by grace, and by grace alone. We, of all men living, who preach the doctrine of salvation by grace, can proclaim a present salvation in all its fullness.

In our text, we also see that *the apostle speaks of a perfect salvation*. We teach that, the moment a man believes in Christ, he is not merely put into a salvable state, not half saved—he is not placed in a position where, if he remains, he will be saved, but concerning which there is a fear that he may fall from it—but that he is already completely saved.

I verily believe that the saints in heaven, albeit they have received the crown of salvation, are not, as to its essential reality, more truly saved than the meanest and weakest believer in Christ who is struggling through floods of temptation here upon earth.

For what is it to be saved? It is to have sin forgiven and to be “accepted in the beloved.” The moment a sinner believes in Jesus, his sins are as much pardoned as they ever will be. They are as fully and as finally blotted out of God’s Book of remembrance as they would be if he should live a thousand years of piety. He is as completely clear, so far as the forgiveness of his sins is concerned, as he will be when he stands at the right hand of the Judge at the last great day.

To be saved, however, includes more than forgiveness of sins—it includes the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. And in this sense also, the meanest believer in Him is as much saved as the celestial spirits in the Paradise above. Is the robe of Christ’s righteousness spread over the apostles? So is it, at this hour, around the poorest person on earth who is trusting in Jesus.

Are those who sing God’s praises before His throne in glory clothed in the fair white linen which is the righteousness of the saints? Even so are all believers here below. Each saint is, as John Kent says,—

*“With his spotless vesture on,
Holy as the Holy One.”*

Covered with Christ’s righteousness, God sees no spot in His people.

“But” asks someone, “are not the saints in heaven more secure than believers on earth?” Believers on earth are not secure from temptation, but they are secure from destruction—not from tribulation, but from condemnation. They are not exempt from care, and woe, and suffering, but they are forever delivered from the wrath of God and the damnation of hell.

Not an angel in heaven is more certain of the eternal love of God than is the feeblest believer upon earth. If your soul is committed to the hands of Christ, you can never perish. I speak no more strongly than His own utterances warrant, for He has said, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish.”

To the woman at the well of Sychar, our Savior said, “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” We are complete in Him—perfected in all the essentials of salvation.

Now, mark you, under no system of doctrine whatever is perfect salvation in this world contemplated except under that scheme which teaches that we are saved by grace. Under the plan of salvation proposed by the work-mongers, there is no completeness in any of its aspects. Under the old Mosaic dispensation, in which God most clearly revealed Himself as the Judge of His people, all “those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually” could not “make the comers thereunto perfect.”

There was, “in those sacrifices, a remembrance again made of sins every year.” However attentive they might be to all the observances of the ceremonial law, their salvation was not perfect. But Christ, “by one offering has perfected for ever them that are sanctified” and therefore He has “sat down on the right hand of God.”

Now if under that noblest form of the covenant of works, complete salvation was not to be secured, how is it likely to be attained in any of those corrupt systems in which, while men profess to set aside the old covenant of works, they yet expect to find salvation? No man but he who believes the doctrines of grace talks about being completely saved.

Ask the Arminian—the fairest and best specimen, sometimes the best of men, though miserably mistaken as to his beliefs—what can he say? He tells you that if he perseveres in well-doing, in faith,

and in repentance, he will be saved. Ask him whether he is completely saved, or whether there is something more yet to be done, and he will tell you that there is many a step yet to be taken before he will reach full salvation. He may talk about a finished righteousness, but he does not know how it is attained.

We hold that believers are complete in Christ even now and that, die whenever they may, they will enter into His presence as being already perfect in Him. Oh, how sweet it is to enjoy a present salvation, which is, at the same time, a perfect salvation! How grateful should we be that it is presented to us in the covenant of grace and that it is revealed to us in those blessed portions of Holy Scripture which tell us of the wonderful grace of God which He has manifested towards His people!

“Ye are saved.” Oh, how sweet are these words! Pause, beloved, a moment or two, and rejoice over them. “Ye are saved”—saved now, at this present instant—if you are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. Now we are to notice THE MEANINGS OF THE TERM “GRACE” AS EMPLOYED IN THE SCRIPTURES—“By grace ye are saved.”

First, it means that if we are saved, it must be *a matter of free favor*. There is nothing in us that could ever merit God’s esteem or give Him such delight as to lead Him to bestow upon us the blessings of eternal salvation. If we ask why any individuals are rescued from the ruins of the Fall and enabled to believe in Jesus, the only answer is, “Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.”

Certainly, we were not saved because of our talents, for the most talented often remain unconverted. We were not saved because of our wealth, for most of us have none. We were not saved because of the excellence of our disposition or the holiness of our character, for even since our conversion, we cannot think of our best services without shame and confusion of face.

If I look upon the people of God either in the mass or as individuals, instead of imagining that there was anything in them to cause God to love them, I am compelled to say that there seems to have been far more to move Him to destroy them than to save them. Will not all believers here confess that they are saved, not because of anything good in them, but because of grace most full, and free, and unconstrained?

Further, we are saved by grace as *a matter of divine operation*. From the first holy desire in the soul, to the last shout of victory in the dying hour, salvation is by the operation of the Almighty. Whatever is not wrought in you, by God’s grace, will be an injury, not a blessing, to you. If any of you have a faith, or a repentance, or any condition of heart or life, which is of your own making, get rid of it, for there is nothing good in it.

That so-called faith, which is not the gift of God, is really presumption—and that repentance, which is not godly sorrow wrought by God in the soul, needs to be repented of. I am sure that all there is of good in any saint must have been put there by the Holy Spirit, for it would not have sprung up of itself. Human hearts will naturally grow weeds, but not those rare exotics, those flowers of heaven, the Christian graces. These must be divinely implanted and nurtured, and grow up entirely by the exercise of that same omnipotence which raised Christ from the dead.

I will go even further and say that, if divine grace should carry us every inch of the road to heaven but one, we would be lost because of that last inch. If, in the edifice of our soul’s salvation, there is even one stone left for us to put in its place, unassisted by God’s grace, that building will never be completed. From first to last, all must be of grace. I agree with the highest doctrinalist upon this point, that there is not, and there cannot be, a good thing in the heart of any man if it was not wrought there by the sovereign grace of God.

“Well, but” says one, “is it not the duty of men to repent and to believe?” Certainly it is, but I am not speaking of their duty. Their lack of power does not excuse them from obedience to God’s command. If a man owed another a thousand pounds, it would be his duty to pay his debt, whether he had the ability or not. And inasmuch as it is man’s duty to repent and to believe, herein is the glory of God’s grace made manifest, in that He accomplishes, by his grace, what man could never have done.

I can truly say that so far as I have gone in the divine life, there has been nothing good in me but that which has come from God. Let others give their own testimony—if they have any good thing which they have produced, let them glory in it. But I have nought whereof to glory and must say to the Lord, “You have wrought all my works in me so far as they have been any good, but as for myself, I would cover my face and cry, ‘Unclean, unclean, unclean.’ Lord, have mercy upon Your servant!”

III. Now, to close, I want to draw some CONSOLATORY AND PRACTICAL INFERENCES.

First, *how humble that man ought to be who is saved by grace!* The Arminian says that he can stand or fall according to his own will. Ought he not to be proud? What a fine fellow he is! Sing a Psalm in your own honor, sir, and when you get to heaven, take all the glory to yourself. You say that you have done part yourself—you admit that the Lord did a great deal for you, but that your own free will settled the matter. Very well, then, give the glory to yourself—sing your own praises forever and ever.

But the true believer says, “I was as clay in the hands of the potter when the Lord began with me. I was senseless, dead, corrupt, till the Lord took me in hand, and quickened and changed me, and made me what I am—and I should go back to what I was before if He did not keep me by His grace. But I know that what His grace has commenced, He will certainly complete, and to Him be all the glory!”

Next, if we are saved by grace, *we, of all people, should have compassion on those who are out of the way.* If we are on the road to heaven, we were brought onto it by grace and therefore we ought to be very considerate of those who are not on it. That good man, John Newton, used to say, “A Calvinist who gets angry with the ungodly is inconsistent with his profession. He knows that no man can receive this doctrine except by the grace of God—so, if God has not given to these men the grace to receive this doctrine, rather pray for them than get angry with them—and ask that they may receive the truth in which your soul delights.”

Then, once again, here is *a word of comfort.* If we are saved—are saved, mark—what shall make us sad and unhappy at heart? “Oh!” says one, “I am so poor.” Yes, but you are saved. You are a believer in Christ, so you are saved. “But” says another, “I am so afflicted.” Yes, but you are saved. “But” says another, “I am often so neglected and despised.” Yes, but you are saved. Oh, what joy would that thought have caused, a little while ago, when the burden of all your sins was upon you!

You used to say, “Oh, if I could but be sure that I was saved, I would not mind if I had nothing but a crust of bread and a cup of water! If I could but know that my sins were forgiven, I would not mind being shut up anywhere in the world. If I might know that I was Christ’s, the world might say what it liked about me.”

Now you do know it, for you are on the Rock and you are saved—so why are you sad? You may be despised now, but remember, the time is coming when you shall be glorified with Christ. You may be forgotten by your friends now, but your Savior’s eye is on you and your name is on His heart. You are sad, yes, but you are secure.

If you believe in Jesus, you may be cast down but you cannot be destroyed. You may be forsaken for a while, but you can never be cast away. Come then,—

*“Children of the heavenly King,
As ye journey, sweetly sing;
Sing your Savior’s worthy praise,
Glorious in His works and ways.”*

Lastly, one *word to those who cannot say that they are saved.* My dear friends, there is very much in this text that should cheer and comfort you. The men who are saved are saved by grace—that is, by God’s free favor. There was nothing in them to recommend them to God. You have been confessing, “O Lord, I do not feel as I ought to feel” He does not want your feelings as a recommendation. If saved, you are to be saved as a matter of free favor and not as a matter of merit in any sense whatever.

“But” says one, “I cannot repent, I cannot believe.” My dear friend, you are not going to be saved by anything that you can do in your own strength. You want repentance. Do not try to work it for yourself—the Lord will work repentance in you. You want faith. Do not go about to seek faith in yourself—you will never find it there—seek it from Christ. He is the Author as well as the Finisher of faith.

“By grace ye are saved.” Go and carry this text into every den and sty of pollution in London. Tell it to the murderer, the thief, the blasphemer, the harlot. Tell it to the man who cannot repent, and cannot pray, and cannot believe. Tell him that salvation is by grace, and is wrought in us by God the Holy Ghost, and as the hymn says,—

*“Heaven with the echo shall resound,
And all the earth shall hear.”*

Go, then, my brethren, and spread the doctrine of salvation by grace, for this old watchword of the church is the source of her victory. And when once this shall be her battle-cry, her triumph is sure. The headstone of God’s spiritual temple shall be brought forth with shouts, crying, “Grace, grace unto it.”

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

1 CORINTHIANS 12 AND 13:1-3

1 Corinthians 12:1-2. *Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that you were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.*

Although the members of the church at Corinth were highly favored with spiritual gifts, they do not seem to have known how to use them. Paul points out to them, in this chapter, how ignorant they were concerning the very gifts which they possessed. They did not know how to put them to proper use in the service of God.

The apostle therefore reminds these gift-exalted Corinthians that, only a little while before they were heathens, carried away by lies and superstition, and worshipping dumb idols. They had nothing, therefore, to boast of and it is probable that if we also look back to the hole of the pit whence we were dug, we shall find no more occasion for boasting than they had.

3. *Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed:*

I suppose that in their assemblies, where everybody talked who liked, there were some people who even spoke blasphemy. They professed to be under the guidance of the Spirit of God, and yet they stood up and called Jesus accursed. Where there is no rule nor order, there is pretty sure to be something very mischievous before long. Paul gives them to understand that this kind of talk could not go unrebuked.

3. *And that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.*

If a man really knows Jesus as his Lord, and he declares that truth, then you may fully accept it as being in harmony with the teaching of the Spirit of God.

4-7. *Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.*

It is given in order that he may himself profit, and also that he may be the means of profiting those who hear him.

8. *For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom;*

He is prudent—an experienced man—fit to lead the young, and the feeble, and those who are less instructed than he himself is.

8. *To another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;*

He has a wide range of practical acquaintance with God's Word, and though he may not be so judicious as the brother who was just mentioned, yet he is a man of knowledge.

9. *To another faith by the same Spirit;*

Paul probably means here some special kind of faith, perhaps the faith that enabled its possessor to work miracles.

9-10. *To another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits;*

So that he is able to detect the impostors who come even into the nominal church of Christ. They did come then and they will continue to come even to the end.

10-11. *To another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongue: but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.*

Whatever our gifts as a church, or as individuals, may be, they all come from the selfsame Spirit. This should tend to promote unity amongst us. Let us all trace whatever gift we have to the hand that gave it and to the Spirit that wrought it. Let us feel that we are so many pipes connected with one fountain, and therefore, as all the good that we convey comes from the one source, let us give all the honor and glory of it to the Spirit of God from whom it comes.

12. *For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.*

That is to say, Christ visible—the church of Christ. We are members of His mystical body. He is the Head, but all who are quickened by the Spirit of God are one with Him.

13-14. *For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many.*

By the way in which some people act, you might almost imagine that the body was one member and that the one member was a tongue—but it is not so. God never intended that in the assembly, all should speak. Let those speak to whom He has given the power to speak. He does not lay all burdens upon one back—let each man bear the personal burden which God has placed upon his back.

15. *If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?*

Where are you, dear child of God, who are in the position of the foot? Have you been comparing yourself with some eminent Christian who did much in his Master's service? And have you sorrowfully asked, "Why cannot I do what he did? I am only a poor foot, always touching the ground, often limping, and frequently needing to be washed."

Well, suppose you could be made into a hand, it might be a gain to you in some respects, but it might be a loss to the rest of the body. It would certainly be a loss to any of you if your feet were to be turned into hands, for you have need of feet. And the church, which is here called by the name of Christ, needs its feet as much as it needs its hands.

The mercy is that, even if you have, in your anxiety—perhaps I ought to say in your unbelief—been saying, "Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body," it does not matter what you have said, for that does not alter the fact. "Is it therefore not of the body?" Of course, it is of the body still, whatever it may say.

16. *And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?*

Oh, by no means! The ear has its proper purpose to fulfill. It is designed for a special service in the body which no other member can render. We must never compare ourselves among ourselves and wish to be somebody else. You are bad enough as you are, dear friend, but you would probably be much worse if you were somebody else.

You may think that you are a very poor ear, but you would decidedly make a much worse eye. Even if your ear is dull of hearing, it can, at any rate, hear better than it can see. It can do its own work better

than it could do the work of any other member of the body—and so can you as a member of Christ’s mystical body.

17-18. *If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now has God set the members, every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.*

That is the best rule for each part of our body—“as it hath pleased him.” Could any of you suggest a better place for your eyes than where they are? We have read the old heathen fable of a giant who had one eye in the middle of his forehead—and whenever I have seen his portrait sketched by fancy, I have felt at once that it was no improvement upon the human face.

No, the eye is best where it is—and so is the ear and so is the mouth. They are all best just where they are. So are you, my brother or my sister, best where you are, if you are in the place where God evidently meant you to be.

19. *And if they were all one member, where were the body?*

There would be no body at all.

20-21. *But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee:*

You know how very quick the hand always is to go up to the eye when it is in danger. You do not have to wait to tell it what to do, but in an instant, the hand is up, for there is a fellow-feeling between the members of the same body. “The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee.” And the hand never feels that it may leave the eye to take care of itself—it is ready at once to protect it.

21-23. *Nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: and those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.*

They are covered and concealed, and so we take more trouble with them than we do with other parts of our body.

24. *For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked.*

Here is a lesson for us with regard to church fellowship—always to take most notice of those who are the least noticeable and to be most gentle with those who require the most tenderness. You know that there are some of our fellow members who are not all we should like them to be. We believe that they are children of God, but they are, somehow or other, “cut on the cross.” They are crotchety and weak in many ways.

Now, we should try, as far as we can, to adapt ourselves to them. If you have ever had the gout very badly, you know that if a person walks across the room too heavily, you feel it. Do you, therefore, say to your father, when he is thus laid aside, “You cannot expect me to take notice of such a thing as that? Nor would you be so cruel as to say to anybody else, “If he has a gouty foot, I cannot help it, and I shall tread on it every now and then.” No, you are not so brutal as that.

So, if there is a member of the body that is more tender than the rest, and especially if that tenderness is the result of disease, let us try to minister to it as far as ever we possibly can. Let us give “more abundant honour to that part which lacked.”

25. *That there should be no schism in the body;*

That is, no division, no rent in the body.

25-26. *But that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.*

I am afraid that this second half of the verse refers to a duty which is more neglected than is the other. It is an easier thing to suffer with those that suffer than it is to rejoice with those that rejoice. And I will tell you why it is so—because, in giving compassion to those that suffer, you have some sense of dignity.

Condescension is often a sort of pride, but when a brother is better off than you are—when he has more talent than you have—when he is more successful than you are—for you to go and rejoice with him and be as glad as if it were all your own gladness—ay, to enter into his joy, and say, “God be thanked, my brother, for your prosperity! I would increase it if I could, for I feel that I am a partner with you.”—ah! this needs great grace. So, may God give us more grace continually and deliver us from everything like envy, which is of Satan, and yet is all too common even among professing Christians.

27-31. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3. *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*

God grant us grace, then, that we may abound in this most excellent grace of a true Christian life, which is infinitely more essential than the highest gifts or the most remarkable talents that God Himself can bestow upon us!

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