

RESTRAINING PRAYER

NO. 2943

A SERMON

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 6, 1905

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

IN THE YEAR 1863

“Thou...restrainest prayer before God.”

Job 15:4

THIS is one of the charges brought by Eliphaz the Temanite against Job, “Yea, thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God.” I shall not use this sentence as an accusation against those who never pray, though there may be some in this house of prayer whose heads are unaccustomed to bow down, and whose knees are unaccustomed to kneel before the Lord their Maker. You have been fed by God’s bounty, you owe all the breath in your nostrils to Him, yet you have never done homage to His name.

The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master’s crib, but you know not, neither do you consider the Most High. The cattle on a thousand hills low forth their gratitude, and every sheep praises God in its bleatings, but these beings, worse than natural brute beasts, still continue to receive from the lavish hand of divine benevolence, but they return no thanks whatsoever to their Benefactor.

Let such remember that that ground, which has long been rained upon, and ploughed, and sown, which yet brings forth no fruit, is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned. Prayerless souls are Christless souls, Christless souls are graceless souls, and graceless souls shall soon be damned souls. See your peril, you that neglect altogether the blessed privilege of prayer. You are in the bonds of iniquity, you are in the gall of bitterness. God deliver you, for His name’s sake!

Nor do I intend to use this text in an address to those who are in the habit of formal prayer, though there are many such. Taught from their childhood to utter certain sacred words, they have carried through youth, and even up to manhood, the same practice. I will not discuss that question just now, whether the practice of teaching children a form of prayer is proper or not. I would not do it.

Children should be instructed in the meaning of prayer, and their little minds should be taught to pray. But it should be rather the matter of prayer than the words of prayer that should be suggested, and I think they should be taught to use their own words, and to speak to God in such phrases and terms as their own childlike capacities, assisted by a mother’s love, may be able to suggest.

Full many there are who, from early education, grow up habituated to some form of words, which either stands in lieu of the heart’s devotion, or cripples its free exercise. No doubt there may be true prayer linked with a form, and the soul of many a saint has gone up to heaven in some holy prayer, or in the words of some beautiful liturgy, but for all that, we are absolutely certain that tens of thousands use the mere language without heart or soul, under the impression that they are praying. I consider the form of prayer to be no more worthy of being called prayer than a coach may be called a horse. The horse will be better without the coach, travel much more rapidly, and find himself much more at ease. He may drag the coach, it is true, and still travel well.

Without the heart of prayer, the form is no prayer. It will not stir or move, it is simply a vehicle that may have wheels that might move, but it has no inner force or power within itself to propel it. Flatter not yourselves that your devotion has been acceptable to God, you that have been merely saluting the ears of the Most High with forms. They have been only mockeries, when your heart has been absent.

What though a parliament of bishops should have composed the words you use, what though they should be absolutely faultless, ay, what if they should even be inspired, or though you have used them a thousand times, yet you have never prayed if you consider that the repetition of the form is prayer.

No! There is more than the chatter of the tongue in genuine supplication, more than the repetition of words in truly drawing near to God. Take care lest, with the form of godliness, you neglect the power, and go down to the pit, having a lie in your right hand, but not the truth in your heart.

What I do intend, however, is to address this text to the true people of God, who understand the sacred art of prayer, and are prevalent therein, but who, to their own sorrow and shame, must confess that they have restrained prayer. If there is no other person in this congregation to whom the preacher will speak personally, he feels shamefully conscious that he will have to speak very plainly to himself.

We know that our prayers are heard. We are certain—it is not a question with us—that there is an efficacy in the divine office of intercession, and yet (oh, how we should blush when we make the confession!) we must acknowledge that we do restrain prayer. Now, inasmuch as we speak to those who grieve and repent that they should so have done, we shall use but little sharpness, but we shall try to use much plainness of speech. Let us see how and in what respect we have restrained prayer.

I. Do you not think, dear friends, that we often restrain prayer IN THE FEWNESS OF THE OCCASIONS THAT WE SET APART FOR SUPPLICATION?

From hoary tradition and modern precedents, we have come to believe that the morning should be opened with the offering of prayer, and that the day should be shut in with the nightly sacrifice. We do ill if we neglect those two sessions of prayer. Do you not think that often, in the morning, we rise so near to the time of labor, when duty calls us to our daily avocation, that we hurry through the usual exercises with unseemly haste, instead of diligently seeking the Lord, and earnestly calling upon His name?

And even at night, when we are very weary and jaded, it is just possible that our prayer is uttered somewhere between sleeping and waking. Is not this restraining prayer? And throughout the three hundred and sixty-five days of the year, if we continue thus to pray, and this is all, how small an amount of true supplication will have gone up to heaven!

I trust there are none here present, who profess to be followers of Christ, who do not also practice prayer in their families. We may have no positive commandment for it, but we believe that it is as much in accord with the genius and spirit of the Gospel, and that it is so commended by the example of the saints, that the neglect thereof is a strange inconsistency.

Now, how often this family worship is conducted in a slovenly manner! An inconvenient hour is fixed, and a knock at the door, a ring at the bell, the call of a customer, may hurry the believer from his knees to go and attend to his worldly concerns. Of course, many excuses might be offered, but the fact would still remain that in this way we often restrain prayer.

And then, when you come up to the house of God—I hope you do not come up to this Tabernacle without prayer—yet I fear we do not all pray as we should, even when in the place dedicated to God's worship. There should always be a devout prayer lifted up to heaven as soon as you enter the place where you would meet with God.

What a preparation is often made to appear in the assembly! Some of you get here half an hour before the service commences. If there were no talking, if each one of you looked into the Bible, or if the time was spent in silent supplication, what a cloud of holy incense would go smoking up to heaven!

I think it would be comely for you and profitable for us if, as soon as the minister enters the pulpit, you engaged yourself to plead with God for him. For me, I may especially say it is desirable. I claim it at your hands above every other man. With this overwhelming congregation, and with the terrible responsibility of so numerous a church, and with the word spoken here published within a few hours, and disseminated over the country, scattered throughout all Europe, nay, to the very ends of the earth, I may well ask you to lift up your hearts in supplication that the words spoken may be those of truth and soberness, directed of the Holy Spirit, and made mighty through God, like arrows shot from His own bow, to find a target in the hearts that He means to bless.

And in going home, with what earnestness should we ask the Master to let what we have heard live in our hearts! We lose very much of the effects of our Sabbaths through not pleading with God on the Saturday night for a blessing upon the day of rest, and through not also pleading at the end of the

Sunday, beseeching Him to make that which we have heard abide in our memories, and appear in our actions.

We have restrained prayer, I fear, in the fewness of the occasions. Indeed, brethren, every day of the week, and every part of the day, should be an occasion for prayer. Cries such as these, "Oh, would that!" "Lord, save me!" "Help me!" "More light, Lord!" "Teach me!" "Guide me!" and a thousand such, should be constantly going up from our hearts to the throne of God.

You may enjoy a refreshing solitude, if you please, in the midst of crowded Cheapside, or contrariwise, you may have your head in the whirl of a busy crowd when you have retired to your closet. It is not so much where we are as in what state our heart is. Let the regular seasons for devotion be constantly attended to. These things ought you to have done, but let your heart be habitually in a state of prayer. You must not leave this undone. Oh, that we prayed more, that we set apart more time for it!

Good Bishop Farrar had an idea in his head which he carried out. Being a man of some substance, and having some twenty-four persons in his household, he divided the day, and there was always some person engaged either in holy song or else in devout supplication through the whole of the twenty-four hours. Never was there a moment when the censor ceased to smoke, or the altar was without its sacrifice. Happy shall it be for us when, day without night, we shall circle the throne of God rejoicing. But till then, let us emulate the ceaseless praise of seraphs before the throne, continually drawing near unto God, and making supplication and thanksgiving.

II. But to proceed to a second remark, dear friends, I think it will be very clear, upon a little reflection, that we constantly restrain prayer **BY NOT HAVING OUR HEARTS IN A PROPER STATE WHEN WE COME TO ITS EXERCISE.**

We rush into prayer too often. We would think it necessary, if we were to address the Queen that our petition should be prepared, but often we dash before the throne of God as though it were but some common house of call, without even having a thought in our minds of what we are going for. Now, just let me suggest some few things which I think should always be subjects of meditation before our season of prayer, and I think, if you confess that you have not thought of these things, you will also be obliged to acknowledge that you have restrained prayer.

We should, *before prayer, meditate upon Him to whom it is to be addressed.* Let our thoughts be directed to the living and true God. Let me remember that He is omnipotent, then I shall ask large things. Let me remember that He is very tender and full of compassion, then I shall ask little things and be minute in my supplication. Let me remember the greatness of His covenant, then I shall come very boldly.

Let me remember also that His faithfulness is like the great mountains, that His promises are sure to all the seed, then I shall ask very confidently, for I shall be persuaded that He will do as He has said. Let me fill my soul with the reflection of the greatness of His majesty, then I shall be struck with awe, with the equal greatness of His love, then I shall be filled with delight. We would pray better than we do if we meditated more, before prayer, upon the God whom we address in our supplications.

Then, let me *meditate also upon the way through which my prayer is offered.* Let my soul behold the blood sprinkled on the mercy seat. Before I venture to draw near to God, let me go to Gethsemane, and see the Savior as He prays. Let me stand in holy vision at the foot of Calvary, and see His body rent, that the veil which parted my soul from all access to God might be rent too, that I might come close to my Father, even to His feet.

O dear friends, I am sure, if we thought about the way of access in prayer, we should be more mighty in it, and our neglect of so doing has led us to restrain prayer.

And yet again *ought I not, before prayer, to be duly conscious of my many sins?* Oh! when I hear men pray cold, careless prayers, surely they forget that they are sinners, or else, abjuring gaudy words and flowing periods, they would smite upon their breast with the cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner." They would come to the point at once, with force and fervency. "I, black, unclean, defiled, condemned

by the law, make my appeal unto You, O God!” What prostration of spirit, what zeal, what fervor, what earnestness, and then, consequently, what prevalence would there be if we were duly sensible of our sin!

If we can add to this *a little meditation upon what our needs are*, how much better we would pray! We often fail in prayer because we come without an errand, not having thought of what our necessities are, but if we have reckoned up that we need pardon, justification, sanctification, preservation—that, besides the blessings of this life, we need that our decaying graces should be revived, that such-and-such a temptation should be removed, and that through such-and-such a trial we should be carried, and prove more than conquerors, then, coming with an errand we should speed before the Most High.

But we bring to the altar bowls that have no bottom, and if the treasure should be put in them, it would fall through. We do not know what we want, and therefore we ask not for what we really need. We affect to lay our necessities before the Lord, without having duly considered how great our necessities are. See yourself as an abject bankrupt, weak, sick, dying, and this will make you plead. See your necessities to be deep as the ocean, broad as the expanse of heaven, and this will make you cry.

There will be no restraining of prayer, beloved, when we have got a due sense of our soul’s poverty, but because we think we are rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing, therefore it is that we restrain prayer before God.

How well it would be for us if, *before prayer, we would meditate upon the past with regard to all the mercies we have had during the day*, what courage that would give us to ask for more! The deliverances we have experienced through our life, how boldly should we plead to be delivered yet again! He that has been with me in six troubles will not forsake me in the seventh. Do but remember how you did pass through the fires, and was not burnt, and that you should be confident that the flame will not kindle upon you now. Christian, remember how, when you passed through the rivers aforetime, God was with you. And surely you may plead with Him to deliver you from the flood that now threatens to inundate you.

Think of the past ages too, of what He did of old, where He brought His people out of Egypt, and of all the mighty deeds which He has done, are they not written in the book of the wars of the Lord? Plead all these, and say unto Him in your supplications, “O You that are a God that hears prayer, hear me now, and send me an answer of peace!” I think, without needing to point that arrow, you can see which way I would shoot. Because we do not come to the throne of grace in a proper state of supplication, therefore it is that too often we restrain prayer before God.

III. Now, thirdly, it is not to be denied, by a man who is conscious of his own error, that IN THE DUTY OF PRAYER ITSELF, WE ARE TOO OFTEN STRAITENED IN OUR OWN HEART AND SO RESTRAIN PRAYER.

Prayer has been differently divided by different authors. We might roughly say that prayer consists, first, of *invocation*: “Our Father, which art in heaven.” We begin by stating the title and our own apprehension of the glory and majesty of the Person whom we address. Do you not think, dear friends, that we fail here and restrain prayer here? Oh! how we ought to sound forth His praises!

I think, on the Sabbath, it is always the minister’s special duty to bring out the titles of THE ALMIGHTY ONE, such as “King of kings, and Lord of lords!” He is not to be addressed in common terms. How should we endeavor, as we search the Scripture through, to find those mighty phrases which the ancient saints were accustomed to apply to JEHOVAH!

And how should we make His temple ring with His glory and make our closet full of that holy adoration with which prayer must always be linked! I think the rebuking angel might often say, “You think that the Lord is such a one as yourself, and you talk not to Him as to the God of the whole earth, but as though He were a man, you do address Him in slighting and unseemly terms.” Let all our invocations come more deeply from our soul’s reverence to the Most High, and let us address Him, not in high-sounding words of fleshly homage, but still in words which set forth our awe and our reverence while they express His majesty and the glory of His holiness.

From invocation we usually go to *confession* and how often do we fail here! In your closet, are you in the habit of confessing your real sins to God? Do you not find, brethren, a tendency to acknowledge

that sin which is common to all men, but not that which is certainly peculiar to you? We are all Sauls in our way, we want the best of the cattle and the sheep, those favorite sins, those Agag sins. It is not so easy to hew them in pieces before the Lord.

The right-eye sin, happy is that Christian who has learned to pluck it out by confession. The right-hand sin, he is blessed and well-taught who aims the axe at that sin and cuts it from him. But no, we say that we have sinned—we are willing to use the terms of any general confession that any church may publish, but to say, “Lord, You know that I love the world and the things of the world. I am covetous.” Or to say, “Lord, You know I was envious of So-and-so, because he shone brighter than I did at such and-such a public meeting. Lord, I was jealous of such-and-such a member of the church, because I evidently saw that he was preferred before me.”

And for the husband to confess before God that he has been overbearing, that he has spoken rashly to a child. For a wife to acknowledge that she has been willful, that she has had a fault—this would be *letting out* prayer. But the hiding of these things is *restraining* prayer, and we shall surely come under that charge of having restrained prayer unless we make our private confessions of sin very explicit, coming to the point.

I have thought, in teaching children in the Sabbath-school, we should not so much talk about sin in general as the sins in which children most commonly indulge, such as little thefts, naughty tempers, disobedience to parents. These are the things that children should confess. Men in the dawn of their manhood should confess those ripening evil imaginations, those lustful things that rise in the heart. While the man in business should ever make this a point, to see most to the sins which attack businessmen.

I have no doubt that I might be very easily led, in my confession, to look to all the offenses I may have committed against the laws of business, because I should not need to deal very harshly with myself there, for I do not have the temptations of these men, and I should not wonder if some of you merchants will find it very easy to examine yourselves according to a code that is proper to me, but not to you.

Let the workman pray to God as a workman and confess the sins common to his craft. Let the trader examine himself according to his standing, and let each man make his confession like the confessions of old, when everyone confessed apart—the mother apart and the daughter apart, the father apart and the son apart. Let each one thus make a clean breast of the matter, and I am sure there will not be so much need to say that we have restrained prayer before God.

As to the next part of prayer, which is *petition*, lamentably indeed do we all fail. We have not, because we ask not or because we ask amiss. We are ready enough to ask for deliverance from trial, but how often we forget to ask that it may be sanctified to us! We are quite ready to say, “Give us this day our daily bread,” how often, however, do we fail to ask that He would give us the Bread which comes down from heaven, and enable us blessedly to feed upon His flesh and His blood!

Brethren, we come before God with little desires, and the desires we get have so little fervency in them, and when we get the fervency, we so often fail to get the faith which grasps the promise, and believes that God will give, that, in all these points, when we come to the matter of spreading our wants before God, we restrain prayer.

Oh, for the Luthers that can shake the gates of heaven by supplication! Oh, for men that can lay hold upon the golden knocker of heaven’s gate, and make it ring and ring again as if they meant it to be heard! Cold prayers court a denial. God hears by fire and the God that answers by fire, let Him be God. But there must be prayer in Elijah’s heart first—fire in Elijah’s heart first—before the fire will come down in answer to the prayer. Our fervency goes up to heaven, and then God’s grace, which gave us the fervency, comes down and gives it the answer.

But you know, too, that all true prayer has in it *thanksgiving*. “Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever.” What prayer is complete without the doxology? And here, too, we restrain prayer. We do not praise, and bless, and magnify the Lord as we should. If our hearts were more

full of gratitude, our expressions would be far more noble and comprehensive when we speak forth His praise.

I wish I could put this so plainly that every Christian might mourn on account of his sin and mend his ways. But indeed, it is only mine to speak. It is my Master's to open your eyes, to let you see, and to set you upon the solemnly important duty of self-examination. In this respect, I am sure even the prayers that you and I have offered today may well cry out against us, and say, "You have restrained prayer."

IV. Yet again, I fear we must all join in acknowledging A SERIOUS FAULT WITH REGARD TO THE AFTER-PART OF OUR PRAYERS. When prayer is done, do you not think we very much restrain it?

For, *after prayer, we often go into the world immediately.* That may be absolutely necessary, but we go there and leave behind us what we ought to carry with us. When we have got into a good frame in prayer, we should consider that this is like the meat which the angel gave to Elijah that he might go on his forty day's journey in its strength.

Have we felt heavenly-minded? Yet, the moment we cross the threshold, and get into the family or business, where is the heavenly mind? Oh, to get real prayer, inwrought prayer—not the surface prayer, as though it were a sort of sacred masquerading after all—to have it inside, in the warp and woof of our being, till prayer becomes a part of ourselves. Then, brethren, we have not restrained it.

We get hot in our closets—when I say "we," oh, how few can say as much as that!—but still, we get hot in our closets and go out into the world, into the draughts of its temptations, without wrapping ourselves about with promises, and we catch well-nigh our death of cold. Oh, to carry that heat and fervor with us!

You know that as you carry a bar of hot iron along, how soon it begins to return to its common ordinary appearance and the heat is gone. How hot, then, we ought to make ourselves in prayer, that we may burn the longer, and how, all day long, we ought to keep thrusting the iron into the fire again, so that, when it ceases to glow, it may go into the hot embers once more, and the flame may glow upon it, and we may once again be brought into a vehement heat. But we are not careful enough to keep up the grace, and seek to nurture and to cherish the young child, which God seems to give in the morning into our hands that we may nurse it for Him.

Old Master Dyer speaks of locking up his heart by prayer in the morning and giving Christ the key. I am afraid we do the opposite—we lock up our hearts in the morning, and give the devil the key, and think that he will be honest enough not to rob us. Ah! It is in bad hands when it is trusted with him, and he keeps filching all day long the precious things that were in the safe, until at night it is quite empty and needs to be filled over again. Would God that we put the key in Christ's hands, by looking up to Him all the day!

I think, too, that *after prayer, we often fail in unbelief.* We do not expect God to hear us. If God were to hear some of you, you would be more surprised than with the greatest novelty that could occur. We ask blessings, but do not think of having them. When you and I were children, and had a little piece of garden, we sowed some seed one day, and the next morning, before breakfast, we went to see if they were up. And the next day, seeing that no appearance of the green blade could be discovered, we began to move the dirt to look for our seeds.

Ah! We were children then. I wish we were children now, with regard to our prayers. We should go out, the next morning, to see if they had begun to sprout, and disturb the ground a bit to look after our prayers, for fear they should have miscarried. Do you believe God hears prayer?

I saw, the other day, in a newspaper, a little sketch concerning myself, in which the author, who is evidently very friendly, gives a much better description of me than I deserve. But he offers me one rather pointed rebuke. I was preaching at the time in a tent and only part of the people were covered. It began to rain just before prayer, and one petition was, "O Lord, be pleased to grant us favorable weather for this service and command the clouds that they rain not upon this assembly!"

Now he thought this very preposterous. To say the least, it was rash, if not blasphemous. He admits that it did not rain a drop after it. Still, of course, he did not infer that God heard and answered the prayer. If I had asked for a rain of grace, it would have been quite credible that God would send that, but when I ask Him not to send a temporal rain, that is fanaticism. To think that God meddles with the clouds at the wish of a man, or that He may answer us in temporal things, is pronounced absurd. I bless God, however, that I fully believe the absurdity, preposterous as it may appear.

I know that God hears prayer in temporal things. I know it by as clear a demonstration as ever any proposition in Euclid was solved. I know it by abundant facts and incidents which my own life has revealed. God does hear prayer. The majority of people do not think that He does. At least, if He does, they suppose that it is in some high, clerical, mysterious, unknown sense. As to ordinary things ever happening as the result of prayer, they account it a delusion.

“The Bank of Faith!” How many have said it is a bank of nonsense, and yet there are many who have been able to say, “We could write as good a book as Huntington’s ‘Bank of Faith,’ that would be no more believed than Huntington’s Bank was, though it might be even more true.”

We restrain prayer, I am sure, by not believing our God. We ask a favor, which, if granted, we should attribute to accident rather than ascribe it to grace, and we do not receive it. Then the next time we come, of course we cannot pray, because unbelief has cut the sinews of prayer and left us powerless before the throne.

You are a professor of religion. After you have been to a party of ungodly people, can you pray? You are a merchant and profess to be a follower of Christ. When you engage in a hazardous speculation, and you know you ought not, can you pray? Or when you have had a heavy loss in business, and repine against God, and will not say, “The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD,” can you pray? Pity the man who can sin and pray, too.

In a certain sense, Brooks was right when he said, “Praying will make you leave off sinning or else sin will make you leave off praying.” Of course, that is not meant in the absolute sense of the term, but as to certain sins, especially gross sins—and some of the sins to which God’s people are liable are gross sins—I am certain they cannot come before their Father’s face with the confidence they had before, after having been rolling in the mire or wandering in By-Path Meadow.

Look at your own child. He meets you in the morning with a smiling face, so pleased. He asks what he likes of you and you give it to him. Now he has been doing wrong, he knows he has, and you have frowned upon him, you have chastened him. How does he come now? He may come because he is a child, and with tears in his eyes, because he is a penitent, but he cannot ask with the power he once had.

Look at a king’s favorite. As long as he feels that he is in the king’s favor, he will take up your suit and plead for you. Ask him tomorrow whether he will do you a good turn, and he says, “No, I am out of favor. I don’t feel as if I could speak now.” A Christian is not out of covenant favor, but he may be experientially under a cloud. He loses the light of God’s countenance and then he feels he cannot plead, his prayers become weak and feeble.

Take heed unto yourselves and consider your ways. The path of declension is very abrupt in some parts. We may go on gradually declining in prayer till faith grows weak, and love cold, and patience is exhausted. We may go on for years, and maintain a consistent profession, but all of a sudden, the road which had long been descending at a gradual incline may come to a precipice, and we may fall, and that when we little think of it. We may have ruined our reputation, blasted our comfort, destroyed our usefulness, and we may have to go to our graves with a sword in our bones because of sin.

Stop while you may, believer. Stop, and guard against the temptation. I charge you, by the trials you must meet with, by the temptations that surround you, by the corruptions that are within, by the assaults that come from hell, and by the trials that come from heaven, “Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.”

To the members of this church I speak especially. What has God wrought for us! When we were a few people, what intense agony of prayer we had! We have had prayer meetings in Park Street that have

moved our souls. Every man seemed like a crusader besieging Jerusalem, each man determined to storm the Celestial City by the might of intercession. And the blessings came upon us, so that we had not room to receive it.

The hallowed cloud rests o'er us still, the holy drops still fall. Will you now cease from intercession? At the borders of the promised land, will you turn back to the wilderness, when God is with us, and the standard of a King is in the midst of our armies? Will you now fail in the day of trial? Who knows but you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this? Who knows but that He will preserve in the land a small company of poor people who fear God intensely, hold the faith earnestly, and love God vehemently, that infidelity may be driven from the high places of the earth, that Naphtali again may be a people made triumphant in the high places of the field? God of heaven, grant this!

Oh, let us restrain prayer no longer! You that have never prayed, may you be taught to pray! "God be merciful to me a sinner," uttered from your heart, with your eye upon the cross, will bring you a gracious answer, and you shall go on your way rejoicing, for,

*“When God inclines the heart to pray,
He hath an ear to hear;
To Him there’s music in a groan,
And beauty in a tear.”*

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

1 JOHN 2

1 John Chapter 2. Verses 1-4. *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*

Holy living is the sure fruit and proof of anyone being in Christ. Where it is not manifest, the profession of being in Christ is a lie.

5. *But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.*

Note the gradation: we know Him, we are in Him, we know that we are in Him.

6. *He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk even as he walked.*

Abiding in Christ helps us to live as Christ lived, not, as one well observes, that we can walk on the water as Christ walked upon it, but that we can walk in our daily life even as He did, because we abide in Him.

7. *Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.*

The old commandment is the word which we have heard from the beginning, yet it is always fresh and new.

8-10. *Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.*

Love is the great and sure way of abiding in the light, abiding in Christ.

11-14. *But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes. I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name’s sake. I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him*

that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

Having overcome him, at the first by your faith in Christ, you still go on to conquer him by abiding in Christ.

15-17. *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*

Everything else is transient, fleeting, and soon passes away, but he that does the will of God has entered into the eternal regions and he has himself become one of those who abide forever. Do not be carried away, therefore, from your old firm foundation, and from your eternal union to Christ.

18-20. *Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.*

You are taught of God, so you know all that is needful for the attainment of true godliness and the accomplishment of the divine purposes.

21-25. *I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: [but] he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also. Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.*

Not transient life, but eternal life, is the great promise of the covenant of grace and abiding in Christ we possess it.

26-27. *These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you,*

What a wonderful declaration this is—not only that we have this holy anointing, but that we have it always.

27-28. *And ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it has taught you, ye shall abide in him. And now, little children, abide in him;*

See how the apostle rings out this note again and again. Our Savior repeated the word “abide” or “remain” many times in the short parable of the Vine, and now John strikes this same silver bell over and over again, “And now, little children, abide in him;”

28-29. *That, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.*

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.