

A REVIVAL SERMON NO. 296

A SERMON
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AT EXETER HALL, STRAND

*“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper,
and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed;
and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.”*
Amos 9:13

GOD’S promises are not exhausted when they are fulfilled, for when once performed, they stand just as good as they did before, and we may await a second accomplishment of them. Man’s promises even at the best are like a cistern which holds but a temporary supply, but God’s promises are as a fountain, never emptied, always overflowing, so that you may draw from them the whole of that which they apparently contain and they shall still be as full as ever. Hence it is that you will frequently find a promise containing both a literal and spiritual meaning.

In the literal meaning it has already been fulfilled to the letter, in the spiritual meaning it shall also be accomplished, and not a jot or tittle of it shall fail. This is true of the particular promise which is before us. Originally, as you are aware, the land of Canaan was very fertile, it was a land that flowed with milk and honey. Even where no tillage had been exercised upon it the land was so fruitful, that the bees that sucked the sweetness from the wild flowers produced such masses of honey, that the very woods were sometimes flooded with it. It was “A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of olive oil, and honey.”

When, however, the children of Israel thrust in the plowshare and began to use the divers arts of agriculture, the land became exceedingly fat and fertile, yielding so much corn, that they could export through the Phoenicians both corn, and wine, and oil, even to the pillars of Hercules, so that Palestine became, like Egypt, the granary of the nations.

It is somewhat surprising to find that now the land is barren, that its valleys are parched, and that the miserable inhabitants gather miserable harvests from the arid soil. Yet the promise stands true, that one day in the very letter Palestine shall be as rich and fruitful as ever it was. There are those who understand the matter, who assert that if once the rigor of the Turkish rule could be removed, if men were safe from robbers, if the man who sowed could reap, and keep the corn which his own industry had sown and gathered, the land might yet again laugh in the midst of the nations, and become the joyous mother of children.

There is no reason *in the soil* for its barrenness. It is simply the neglect that has been brought on, from the fact that when a man has been industrious, his savings are taken from him by the hand of rapine, and the very harvest for which he toiled is often reaped by another, and his own blood spilt upon the soil.

But my dear friends, while this promise will doubtless be carried out, and every word of it shall be verified, so that the hilltops of that country shall again bear the vine, and the land shall flow with wine, yet, I take it this is more fully a spiritual than a temporal promise, and I think that the beginning of its fulfillment is now to be discerned, and we shall see the Lord’s good hands upon us, so that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.

First, I shall this morning endeavor to explain my text as *a promise of revival*, secondly, I shall take it as *a lesson of doctrine*, then as *a stimulus for Christian exertion*, and I shall conclude with *a word or two of warning* to those whose hearts are not given to Christ.

I. First, I take the text as being A GREAT PROMISE OF SPIRITUAL REVIVAL. And here, in looking attentively at the text, we shall observe several very pleasant things.

1. In the first place, we notice a promise of *surprising ingathering*. According to the metaphor here used, the harvest is to be so great that before the reapers can have fully gathered it in, the plowman shall begin to plow for the next crop—while the abundance of fruit shall be so surprising that before the treader of grapes can have trodden out all the juice of the vine, the time shall come for sowing seed. One season, by reason of the abundant fertility, shall run into another.

Now you all know, beloved, what this means in the church. It prophesies that in the church of Christ we shall see the most abundant ingathering of souls. Pharaoh's dream has been enacted again in the last century. About a hundred years ago, if I may look back in my dream, I might have seen seven ears of corn upon one stalk, rank and strong, anon, the time of plenty went away, and I have seen, and you have seen in your own lifetime, the seven ears of corn thin and withered in the east wind. The seven ears of withered corn have eaten up and devoured the seven ears of fat corn, and there has been a sore famine in the land.

Lo, I see in Whitefield's time, seven bullocks coming up from the river, fat and well-favored, and since then we have lived to see seven lean kine come up from the same river, and lo! the seven lean kine have eaten up the seven fat kine, yet have they been none the better for all that they have eaten? We read of such marvelous revivals a hundred years ago, that the music of their news has not ceased to ring in our ears, but we have seen, alas, a season of lethargy, of soul-poverty among the saints, and of neglect among the ministers of God. The product of the seven years has been utterly consumed, and the church has been none the better.

Now, I take it however, we are about to see the seven fat years again. God is about to send times of surprising fertility to His church. When a sermon has been preached in these modern times, if one sinner has been converted by it, we have rejoiced with a suspicious joy, for we have thought it something amazing. But brethren, where we have seen one converted, we may yet see hundreds, where the Word of God has been powerful to scores, it shall be blessed to thousands, and where hundreds in past years have seen it, nations shall be converted to Christ.

There is no reason why we should not see all the good that God has given us multiplied a hundred-fold, for there is sufficient vigor in the seed of the Lord to produce a far more plentiful crop than any we have yet gathered.

God the Holy Ghost is not stinted in His power. When the sower went forth to sow his seed, some of it fell on good soil, and it brought forth fruit, some twentyfold, some thirtyfold, but it is written, "*Some a hundredfold.*"

Now, we have been sowing this seed, and thanks be to God, I have seen it bring forth twenty and thirtyfold, but I do expect to see it bring forth a hundredfold. I do trust that our harvest shall be so heavy, that while we are taking in the harvest, it shall be time to sow again, that prayer meetings shall be succeeded by the inquiry of souls as to what they shall do to be saved, and ere the inquirers' meeting shall be done, it shall be time again to preach, again to pray, and then ere that is over, there shall be again another influx of souls, the baptismal pool shall be again stirred, and hundreds of converted men shall flock to Christ.

Oh! we never can be contented with going on as the churches have been during the last twenty years. I would not be censorious, but solemnly in my own heart I do not believe that the ministers of our churches have been free from the blood of men. I would not say a hard word if I did not feel compelled to do it, but I am constrained to remind our brethren that let God send what revival He may, it will not exonerate them from the awful guilt that rests upon them of having been idle and dilatory during the last twenty years.

Let all be saved who live *now*, but what about those that have been damned while we have been sleeping? Let God gather in multitudes of sinners, but who shall answer for the blood of those men who have been swept into eternity while we have been going on in our canonical fashion, content to go along

the path of propriety, and walk around the path of dull routine, but never weeping for sinners, never agonizing for souls. All the ministers of Christ are not awake yet, but the most of them are.

There has come a glad time of arousing, the trumpet has been set to their ear, and the people have heard the sound also, and times of refreshing are come from the presence of the Lord, our God, but they have not come before they were needed, for much did we require them, otherwise surely the church of Christ would have died away into dead formality, and if her name had been remembered, it would have been as a shame and hissing upon the face of the earth!

2. The promise then, seems to me to convey the idea of surprising ingatherings, and I think there is also the idea of *amazing rapidity*. Notice how quickly the crops succeed each other. Between the harvest and the plowing there is a season even in our country, in the East it is a longer period. But here you find that no sooner has the reaper ceased his work, or scarce has he ceased it, ere the plowman follows at his heels. This is a rapidity that is contrary to the course of nature, still it is quite consistent with grace.

Our old Baptist churches in the country treat young converts with what they call summering and wintering. Any young believer who wants to join the church in summer, must wait till the winter, and he is put off from time to time, till it is sometimes five or six years before they admit him, they want to try him and see whether he is fit to unite with such pious souls as they are.

Indeed among us all there is a tendency to imagine that conversion must be a slow work—that as the snail creeps slowly on its way, so must grace move very leisurely in the heart of man. We have come to believe that there is more true divinity in stagnant pools than in lighting flashes. We cannot believe for a moment in a quick method of travelling to the kingdom of heaven. Every man who goes there must go on crutches and limp all the way, but as for the swift beasts, as for the chariots whose axles are hot with speed, we do not quite understand and comprehend that.

Now mark, here is a promise given of a revival, and when that revival shall be fulfilled this will be one of the signs of it—the marvelous growth in grace of those who are converted. The young convert shall that very day come forward to make a profession of his faith, perhaps before a week has passed over his head you will hear him publicly defending the cause of Christ, and ere many months have gone you shall see him standing up to tell to others what God has done for his soul.

There is no need that the pulse of the church should forever be so slow. The Lord can quicken her heart so that her pulse shall throb as rapidly as the pulse of time itself, her floods shall be as the rushing of the Kishon when it swept the hosts of Sisera in its fury. As the fire from heaven shall the Spirit rush from the skies, and as the sacrifice which instantly blazed to heaven, so shall the church burn with holy and glorious ardor. She shall no longer drive heavily with her wheels torn away, but as the chariot of Jehu, the son of Nimshi, she shall devour the distance in her haste. That seems to me to be one of the promises of the text—the rapidity of the work of grace, so that the plowman shall overtake the reaper.

3. But a third blessing is very manifest here, and one indeed which is already given to us. Notice the *activity of labor* which is mentioned in the text. God does not promise that there shall be fruitful crops without labor, but here we find mention made of plowmen, reapers, treaders of grapes, and sowers of seed, and all these persons are girt with singular energy.

The plowman does not wait, because, saith he, the season has not yet come for me to plow, but seeing that God is blessing the land, he has his plow ready, and no sooner is one harvest shouted home than he is ready to plow again. And so with the sower, he has to prepare his basket and to collect his seed, but when he hears the shouts of the vintage, he is ready to go out to work.

Now, my brethren, one sign of a true revival, and indeed an essential part of it is the increased activity of God's laborers. Why, time was when our ministers thought that preaching twice on Sunday was the hardest work to which a man could be exposed. Poor souls, they could not think of preaching on a weekday, or if there was once a lecture, they had bronchitis, were obliged to go to Jerusalem, and lay by, for they would soon be dead if they were to work too hard.

I never believed in the hard work of preaching yet. We find ourselves able to preach ten or twelve times a week, and find that we are the stronger for it—that in fact, it is the healthiest and most blessed

exercise in the world. But the cry used to be, that our ministers were hardly done by, they were to be pampered and laid by, done up in velvet, and only to be brought out to do a little work occasionally, and then to be pitied when that work was done. I do not hear anything of that talk nowadays.

I meet with my brethren in the ministry who are able to preach day after day, day after day, and are not half so fatigued as they were, and I saw a brother minister this week who has been having meetings in his church every day, and the people have been so earnest that they will keep him very often from six o'clock in the evening to two in the morning.

“Oh!” said one of the members, “our minister will kill himself.” “Not he,” said I, “that is the kind of work that will kill no man. It is preaching to a sleepy congregation that kills good ministers, but not preaching to earnest people.”

So when I saw him, his eyes were sparkling, and I said to him, “Brother, you do not look like a man who is being killed.” “Killed, my brother,” said he, “why I am living twice as much as I did before, I was never so happy, never so hearty, never so well.” Said he, “I sometimes lack my rest and want my sleep, when my people keep me up so late, but it will never hurt me, indeed,” he said, “I should like to die of such a disease as that—the disease of being so greatly blessed.” There was a specimen before me of the plowman who overtook the reaper—of one who sowed seed, who was treading on the heels of the men who were gathering in the vintage.

And the like activity we have lived to see in the church of Christ. Did you ever know so much doing in the Christian world before? There are grey-headed men around me who have known the church of Christ sixty years, and I think they can bear me witness that they never knew such life, such vigor and activity, as there is at present. Everybody seems to have a mission, and everybody is doing it.

There may be a great many sluggards, but they do not come across my path now. I used to be always kicking at them, and always being kicked for doing so. But now there is nothing to kick at—every one is at work—Church of England, Independents, Methodists and Baptists—there is not a single squadron that is behindhand, they have all their guns ready, and are standing shoulder to shoulder, ready to make a tremendous charge against the common enemy. This leads me to hope, since I see the activity of God's plowmen and vinedressers, that there is a great revival coming—that God will bless us, and that right early.

4. We have not yet however, exhausted our text. The latter part of it says, “The mountains shall drop sweet wine.” It is not a likely place for wine upon the mountains. There may be freshets and cataracts leaping down their sides, but who ever saw fountains of red wine streaming from rocks, or gushing out from the hills. Yet here we are told that, “The mountains shall drop sweet wine,” by which we are to understand that conversions shall take place in unusual quarters.

Brethren, this day is this promise literally fulfilled to us. I have this week seen what I never saw before. It has been my lot these last six years to preach to crowded congregations, and to see many, many souls brought to Christ, it has been no unusual thing for us to see the greatest and noblest of the land listening to the Word of God, but this week I have seen, I repeat, what my eyes have never before beheld, used as I am to extraordinary things.

I have seen the people of Dublin, without exception, from the highest to the lowest, crowd in to hear the Gospel. I have known that my congregation has been constituted in a considerable measure of Roman Catholics, and I have seen them listening to the Word with as much attention as though they had been Protestants.

I have seen men who never heard the Gospel before, military men, whose tastes and habits were not likely to be those of the Puritan minister, who have nevertheless sat to listen, nay, they have come again—have made it a point to find the place where they could hear the best—have submitted to be crowded, that they might press in to hear the Word, and I have never before seen such intense eagerness of the people to listen to the Gospel.

I have heard too, cheering news of work going on in the most unlikely quarters—men who could not speak without larding their conversation richly with oaths—have nevertheless come to hear the Word,

they have listened and have been convinced, and if the impression does not die away, there has been something done for them which they will not forget even in eternity.

But the most pleasing thing I have seen is this, and I must tell it to you. Hervey once said, “Each floating ship, a floating hell.” Of all classes of men, the sailor has been supposed to be the man least likely to be reached by the Gospel. In crossing over from Holyhead to Dublin and back—two excessively rough passages—I spent the most pleasant hours that I ever spent.

The first vessel that I entered, I found my hands very heartily shaken by the sailors. I thought, “What can these sailors know of me?” and they were calling me, “*brother*.” Of course, I felt that I was their brother too, but I did not know how they came to talk to me in that way. It was not generally the way for sailors to call ministers, brother.

There was the most officious attention given, and when I made the inquiry, “What makes you so kind?” “Why,” said one, “because I love your Master, the Lord Jesus Christ.” I inquired and found that out of the whole crew, there were but three unconverted men, that though the most of them had been before without God, and without Christ, yet by a sudden visitation of the Spirit of God they had all been converted.

I talked to many of these men, and more spiritual, heavenly minded men I never yet saw. They have a prayer meeting every morning before the boat starts, and another prayer meeting after she comes to port, and on Sundays, when they lay-to off Kingstown or Holyhead, a minister comes on board and preaches the Gospel, the cabins are crowded, service is held on deck when it can be, and said an eyewitness to me, “The minister preaches very earnestly, but I should like you to hear the men pray, I never heard such praying before,” said he, “they pray with such power, as only a sailor can pray.”

My heart was lifted up with joy, to think of a ship being made a floating church—a very Bethel for God. When I came back by another ship I did not expect to see the like, but it was precisely the same. The same work had been going on. I walked among them and talked to them. They all knew me. One man took out of his pocket an old leather covered book in Welch—“Do you know the likeness of this man in front?” said he, “Yes,” I said, “I think I do, do you read these sermons?” “Yes, sir,” replied he, “we have had your sermons on board this ship, and I read them aloud as often as I can. If we have a fine passage coming over, I get a few around me and read them a sermon.”

Another man told me a story of a gentleman who stood laughing when a hymn was being sung, and one of the men proposed that they should pray for him. They did and that man was suddenly smitten down, and began on the quay to cry for mercy, and plead with God for pardon. “Ah! sir,” said the sailors, “we have the best proof that there is a God here, for we have seen this crew marvelously brought to a knowledge of the truth, and here we are, joyful and happy men, serving the Lord.”

Now, what shall we say of this, but that the mountains drop sweet wine? The men who were loudest with their oaths, are now loudest with their songs, those who were the most darling children of Satan, have become the most earnest advocates of the truth, for mark you, once get sailors converted, and there is no end to the good they can do.

Of all men who can preach well, sailors are the best. The sailor has seen the wonders of God in the deep, the hardy British Tar has got a heart that is not made of such cold stuff as many of the hearts of landsmen, and when that heart is once touched, it gives great big beats, it sends great pulses of energy right through his whole frame, and with his zeal and energy what may he not do, God helping him and blessing him?

5. This seems to be in the text—that a time of revival shall be followed by very extraordinary conversion. But albeit that in the time of revival, grace is put in extraordinary places and singular individuals are converted, yet these are not a bit behind the usual converts, for if you notice the text does not say, “The mountains shall drop wine” merely, but they “shall drop *sweet* wine.” It does not say that the hills shall send forth little streams, but *all the hills shall melt*.

When sinners, profligate, and debauched persons are converted to God, we say, “Well, it is a wonderful thing, but I do not suppose they will be very first-class Christians.” The most wonderful thing

is, that these are the best Christians alive, the wine which God brings from the hills is sweet wine, that when the hills do melt they *all* melt. The most extraordinary ministers of any time have been most extraordinary sinners before conversion.

We might never have had a John Bunyan, if it had not have been for the profanity of Elstow Green, we might never have heard of a John Newton, if it had not have been for his wickedness on shipboard. I mean he would not have known the depths of Satan, nor the trying experience, nor even the power of divine grace, if he had not been suffered wildly stray, and then wondrously to be brought back.

These great sinners are not a whit behind those who have been trained under pious influences, and so have been brought into the church. Always in revival you will find this to be the case, that the converts are not inferior to the best of the converts of ordinary seasons—that the Romanist, and the men who have never heard the Gospel, when they are converted, are as true in their faith, as hearty in their love, as accurate in their knowledge, and as zealous in their efforts, as the best of persons who have ever been brought to Christ. “The mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.”

II. I must now go on to the other point very briefly—WHAT IS THE DOCTRINAL LESSON WHICH IS TAUGHT IN OUR TEXT, AND WHAT IS TAUGHT TO US BY A REVIVAL?

I think it is just this—that God is absolute Monarch of the hearts of men. God does not say here *if men are willing*, but He gives an absolute promise of a blessing. As much as to say, “I have the key of men’s hearts, I can induce the plowman to overtake the reaper, I am Master of the soil—however hard and rocky it may be, I can break it, and I can make it fruitful.”

When God promises to bless His church and to save sinners, He does not add, “If the sinners are willing to be saved.” No, great God! You lead free will in sweet captivity, and your free grace is all triumphant. Man *has* a free will, and God does not violate it, but the free will is sweetly bound with fetters of the divine love till it becomes more free than it ever was before.

The Lord, when He means to save sinners, does not stop to ask them whether they mean to be saved, but like a rushing mighty wind, the divine influence sweeps away every obstacle, the unwilling heart bends before the potent gale of grace, and sinners who would not yield are made to yield by God.

I know this, if the Lord willed it, there is no man so desperately wicked here this morning that he would not be made now to seek for mercy, however infidel he might be, however rooted in his prejudices against the Gospel, JEHOVAH has but to will it, and it is done. Into your dark heart, O you who have never seen the light, would the light stream, if He did but say, “Let there be light,” there would be light. You may bend your fist and lift up your mouth against JEHOVAH, but He is your Master yet—your Master to destroy you, if you go on in your wickedness, but your Master to save you now, to change your heart and turn your will, as He turns the rivers of water.

If it were not for this doctrine, I wonder where the ministry would be. Old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon. The power of our preaching is nought—it can do nothing in the conversion of men by itself, men are hardened, obdurate, indifferent, but the power of grace is greater than the power of eloquence or the power of earnestness, and once let that power be put forth, and what can stand against it? Divine omnipotence is the doctrine of a revival. We may not see it in ordinary days, by reason of the coldness of our hearts, but we *must* see it when these extraordinary works of grace are wrought.

Have you never heard the Eastern fables of the dervish, who wished to teach to a young prince the fact of the existence of a God? The fable has it, that the young prince could not see any proof of the existence of a first cause, so the dervish brought a little plant and set it before him, and in his sight that little plant grew up, blossomed, brought forth fruit, and became a towering tree in an hour. The young man lifted up his hands in wonder and he said, “God must have done this.” “Oh, but,” said the teacher, you say, “God has done this, because it is done in an hour, has He not done it when it is accomplished in twenty years?” It was the same work in both cases, it was only the rapidity that astonished his pupil.

So, brethren, when we see the church gradually built up and converted, we lose the sense perhaps of a present God, but when the Lord causes the tree suddenly to grow from a sapling to a strong tall monarch of the forest, then we say, “This is God.” We are all blind and stupid in a measure, and we

want to see sometimes some of these quick upgoings, these extraordinary motions of divine influence, before we will fully understand God's power.

Learn then, O church of God today, this great lesson of the nothingness of man, and the Eternal All of God. Learn, disciples of Jesus, to rest on Him, look for your success to *His* power, and while you make your efforts, trust not in your efforts, but in the Lord JEHOVAH. If you have progressed slowly, give Him thanks for progress, but if now He pleases to give you a marvelous increase, multiply your songs, and sing unto Him that works all things according to the counsel of His will.

III. I now desire, with great earnestness, as the Holy Ghost shall help me, to make the text A STIMULUS FOR FURTHER EXERTION.

The duty of the church is not to be measured by her success. It is as much the minister's duty to preach the Gospel in adverse times as in propitious seasons. We are not to think, if God withholds the dew, we are to withhold the plow. We are not to imagine that if unfruitful seasons come, we are therefore to cease from sowing our seed. Our business is with act, not with result.

The church has to do her duty, even though that duty should bring her no present reward. "If they hear thee not, Son of man, if they perish, they *shall* perish, but their blood will I not require at thine hands." If we sow the seed and the birds of the air devour it, we have done what we were commanded to do, and the duty is accepted even though the birds devour the seed. We may expect to see a blessed result, but even if it did not come we must not cease from duty.

But while this is true so far, it must nevertheless be a divine and holy stimulant to a Gospel laborer, to know that God is making him successful. And in the present day we have a better prospect of success than we ever had, and we should consequently work the harder.

When a tradesman begins business with a little shop at the corner, he waits a while to see whether he will have any customers. By and by his little shop is crowded, he has a name, he finds he is making money. What does he do? He enlarges his premises, the back yard is taken in and covered over, there are extra men employed, still the business increases, but he will not invest all his capital in it till he sees to what extent it will pay. It still increases, and the next house is taken, and perhaps the next, he says, "This is a paying concern, and therefore I will increase it."

My dear friends, I am using commercial maxims, but they are common sense rules, and I like to talk so. There are, in these days, happy opportunities. There is a noble business to be done for Christ. Where you used to invest a little capital, a little effort, and a little donation, invest more. There never was such heavy interest to be made as now. It shall be paid back in the results cent per cent, nay, beyond all that you expected you shall see God's work prospering.

If a farmer knew that a bad year was coming, he would perhaps only sow an acre or two, but if some prophet could tell him, "Farmer, there will be such a harvest next year as there never was," he would say, "I will plow up my grass lands, I will stub up those hedges, every inch of ground I will sow." So do you.

There is a wondrous harvest coming. Plow up your headlands, root up your hedges, break up your fallow ground, and sow, even amongst the thorns. You know not which shall prosper, this or that, but you may hope that they shall be alike good. Enlarged effort should always follow an increased hope of success.

And let me give you another encouragement. Recollect that even when this revival comes, an instrumentality will still be wanted. The plowman is wanted, even after the harvest, and the treader of grapes is wanted, however plentiful the vintage, the greater the success the more need of instrumentality.

They began at first to think in the North of Ireland that they could do without ministers, but now that the Gospel is spread, never was there such a demand for the preachers of the Gospel as now. Proud men said in their hearts, "God has done this without the intervention of man." I say, they said it proudly, for there is such a thing as proud humility, but God made them stoop. He made them see that after all He would bless the Word through His servants—that He would make the ministers of God "mighty to the pulling down of strongholds."

Brothers and sisters, you need not think that if better times should come, the world will do without you. You will be wanted. “A man shall be precious as the gold of Ophir.” They shall take hold of your skirts and they shall say, “Tell us what we must do to be saved.” They shall come to your house, they shall ask for your prayers, they shall demand your instructions, and you shall find the meanest of the flock become precious as a wedge of gold. The plowman shall never be so much esteemed as when he follows after the reaper, and the sower of seed never so much valued as when he comes at the heels of those who tread the grapes. The glory which God puts upon instrumentality should encourage you to use it.

And now I beseech and entreat you, my dear brothers and sisters, inhabitants of this great city of London, let not this auspicious gale pass away without singular effort. I sometimes fear lest the wind should blow on us, and we should have our sails all furled, and therefore the good ship should not speed. Up with the canvas now. Oh! put on every stitch of it. Let every effort be used, while God is helping us. Let us be earnest co-workers with Him.

I think I see the clouds floating hither, they have come from the far west, from the shores of America, they have crossed the sea, and the wind has wafted them till the green isle received the showers in its northern extremity. Lo! the clouds are just now passing over Wales, and are refreshing the shores that border on the principality. The rain is falling on Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire, divine grace is distilling, and the clouds are drawing nearer and nearer to us.

Mark, my brethren, they tarry not for men, neither for the sons of men. They are floating o’er our heads today. Shall they float away, and shall we still be left as dry as ever? ’Tis yours today to bring down the rain, though ’tis God’s to send the clouds. God has sent this day over this great city a divine cloud of His grace.

Now, you Elijahs, pray it down! To your knees, believers, to your knees. *You* can bring it down, and only you, “For this thing will I be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them.” “Prove me now herewith,” saith the Lord of hosts, “and see if I will not open the windows of heaven, and give you such a blessing that you shall not have room to contain it.”

Will you lose the opportunity, Christians? Will you let men be lost for want of effort? Will you suffer this all-blessed time to roll away unimproved? If so, the church of one thousand eight hundred and sixty is a craven church, and is unworthy of its time, and he among you, men and brethren, that has not an earnest heart today, if he be a Christian, is a disgrace to his Christianity. When there are such times as these, if we do not every man of us trust in the plow, we shall indeed deserve the worst barrenness of soul that can possibly fall upon us.

I believe that the church has often been plagued and vexed by her God, because when God has favored her she has not made a proper use of the favor. “Then,” saith He, “I will make thee like Gilboa; on thy mount there shall be no dew; I will bid the clouds that they rain no more rain upon thee, and thou shalt be barren and desolate, till once again I pour out the Spirit from on high.” Let us spend this week in special prayer. Let us meet together as often as we can, and plead at the throne, and each one of you in private be mighty with your God, and in public be diligent in your efforts to bring your fellow men to Christ.

IV. I have done, when I have uttered a WORD OF WARNING to those of you who know not Christ.

I am aware that I have many here on Sabbath mornings who never were in the habit of attending a place of worship at all. There is many a gentleman here today, who would be ashamed in any society, to confess himself a professor of religion. He has never perhaps, for a long time heard the Gospel preached, and now there is a strange sort of fascination that has drawn him here.

He came the first time out of curiosity—perhaps to make a joke at the minister’s expense, he has found himself enthralled, he does not know how it is, but he has been all this week uneasy, he has been wanting to come again and when he goes away today, he will be watching for next Sabbath.

He has not given up his sins, but somehow they are not so pleasurable as they used to be. He cannot swear as he did, if an oath comes out edgeways, it does not roll out in the round form it used to do, he knows better now. Now, it is to such persons that I speak.

My dear friends, allow me to express my hearty joy that you are here, and let me also express the hope that you are here for a purpose you do not as yet understand. God has a special favor to you, I do trust, and therefore He has brought you here. I have frequently remarked that in any revival of religion, it is not often the children of pious parents that are brought in, but those who never knew anything of Christ before.

The ordinary means are usually blessed to those who constantly attend them, but the express effort, and the extraordinary influence of the Spirit reach those who were outside the pale of nominal Christians, and made no profession of religion. I am in hopes it may meet you.

But if you should despise the Word which you have heard, if the impression that has been made—and you know it has been made—should die away, one of the most awful regrets you will ever have when you come to your right sense and reason in another world will be the feeling that you had an opportunity, but that you neglected it. I cannot conceive a more doleful wail than that of the man who cries at last in hell, “The harvest is past—*there was a harvest*, the summer is ended—*there was a summer*—and I am not saved.”

To go to perdition in ordinary times is hell, but to go from under the sound of an earnest ministry, where you are bidden to come to Christ, where you are entreated with honest tears to come to Jesus—to go there after you have been warned is to go not to hell merely, but to *the very hell of hells*. The core and marrow of damnation is reserved for men who hear the truth and feel it too, but yet reject it and are lost.

Oh! my dear hearer, this is a solemn time with you. I pray that God the Holy Spirit may remind you that it may be now or never with you. You may never have another warning, or if you have it, you may grow so hardened that you may laugh at it and despise it. My brother, I beseech you, by God, by Christ Jesus, by your own immortal welfare, stop and think now whether it be worth while to throw away the hallowed opportunity which is now presented to you. Will you go and dance away your impressions, or laugh them out of your soul? Ah! man, you may laugh yourself into hell, but you can not laugh yourself out of it.

There is a turning point in each man’s life when his character becomes fixed and settled. That turning point may be today. It may be that there shall be some solemn seat in this hall, which if a man knew its history he would never sit in it—a seat in which a man shall sit and hear the Word, and shall say, “I will not yield, I will resist the impression, I will despise it, I will have my sins, even if I am lost for them.” Mark your seat, friend, before you go, make a blood-red stain across it, that next time we come here we may say, “Here a soul destroyed itself.”

But I pray the rather that God the Holy Spirit may sweetly whisper in your heart—“Man, yield, for Jesus invites you to come to Him.” Oh, may my Master smile into your face this morning and say, “I love your soul, trust Me with it. Give up your sins, turn to Me.” O Lord Jesus, do it! and men shall not resist You. Oh! show them Your love, and they will yield. Do it, O Thou Crucified One, for Your mercy’s sake! Send forth Your Holy Spirit now, and bring the strangers home, and in this hall grant Thou, O Lord, that many hearts may be fully resigned to Thy love, and to Thy grace!

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.