

UNMITIGATED PROSPERITY

NO. 2963

A SERMON

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 1905

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

IN THE YEAR 1863

“The pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.”

Isaiah 53:10

YOU know that the whole verse says, “Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.” The last words form our text—“The pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.”

It may be that the devil thought that the death of Christ was the defeat of Christ. If so, how greatly was he mistaken, for when Christ yielded up the ghost, He won an everlasting victory. Nor is He dead. Jesus, who died, has left the dead, no more to die. He died, but could not long be held a prisoner in the grave. Loosing His cerements, He came forth in life and immortality, and now is the promise fulfilled, “He shall see his seed.”

From the heights of heaven He looks upon the multitude of His seed on earth. In eternal glory He takes His solace in the society of His seed above. As many as the stars of heaven, as countless as the dust of the summer, are the seed of our Lord Jesus Christ. He indeed *lives* to see His seed—while others die, and their children follow them, and they know not of their progeny—Jesus lives to see, one after another, all the souls that He has redeemed, born first to earth and then born a second time to heaven.

“He shall prolong his days.” More than eighteen hundred years have passed since He rose from the dead to His new life, yet He lives still. And His days, we know, shall be continued while this earth shall stand, yea, and at the end, when He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, still He shall prolong His days. “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.” *You* shall endure, though the mountains perish and though the skies are rolled up like a vesture that is worn out.

“He shall see his seed; he shall prolong his days.” Nor shall His life be a long one without usefulness. He shall have a work to do. Brethren, He still has that work to do and oh, how well He does it! It is the joy of heaven to know that Christ still stands hard and fast to His covenant engagements. It is a comfort to us on earth that our Lord, for Zion’s sake, will not stay His hand nor hold His peace until He has perfected the divine will and brought all the redeemed home to Himself.

This evening I propose to speak of our Savior’s great work and of the way in which it prospers in his hand. Coming close to our text, we shall first examine *this interesting description of Christ’s work—it is “the pleasure of the LORD.”* We shall then notice *how, and in what respects, that work prospers in Christ’s hand*, and having done so, we shall solicit a little consideration as to *our connection with that pleasure of God and that great “hand” and prosperity of which we here read.*

I. From our text it is very clear that THE WORK WHICH JESUS CHRIST HAS UNDERTAKEN IS THE FATHER’S GOOD PLEASURE.

It is the work of bringing His elect out of darkness into light, from nature to grace, and from grace to glory. Why is this called “the Father’s good pleasure”?

We answer, for many reasons. First of all, *because God’s good pleasure is the source of all saving work.* For many centuries and ages, the source of the Nile has been a theme of wonder. Many travelers have spent their lives and lost them in endeavoring to track that mysterious stream to its first fount—at last the deed has been accomplished to the honor of our country.

But the stream of divine grace, where does *it* spring? In what mountain does *it* take its rise? Arminian theology, like all the ancient travelers, has failed to make the discovery. But the Gospel, as it is revealed in Scripture, plainly tells us that everything in salvation is according to the good pleasure of the divine will.

If you ask some good brother who is rather muddled in his theology, “What is the cause why a man is saved?” He will say, perhaps, “Well, he is saved because he believes.” You will then ask, “But why does he believe?” He will say, “Because he hears the Gospel.” You will say, “Ah, but others hear it, too, and yet do not believe. How is it that his hearing produces faith in him?” He will say, “It is because he gives the more earnest heed.” You will say, “Yes, but why does he give the more earnest heed?”

And there will come another question, and another, and another, and another, and you will keep on beating around the bush until, if you succeed in getting your brother into a corner, he will say to you, “Well, I do not know, but I think it must be the grace of God.” Happy is the man who begins there—who says, without going all the way round about to try and fight against a most precious and blessed truth—“Yes, the good pleasure of God is that primeval source from whence flows that first rill of electing love, which goes widening on, forever manifesting itself more and more clearly,—

*“Till, like a sea of glory,
It spreads from pole to pole.”*

Grace is called, then, God’s pleasure, because there it takes its source.

It is the pleasure of the Lord, in the next place, *because it is there it finds its direction given to it*. I see the spring welling up, but in which way shall it flow? To what *man* shall salvation come? There was even an opportunity for election in the choice of the *nation* to which it should come. What is there in this little island that we should be favored with the Gospel? Why might not New Zealand, at the other end of the world, have had it years gone by, and this nation been without it?

Why should it come to the descendants of barbarians, while the inhabitants of Greece, who were cultured and enlightened when our sires were naked savages, have *not* received the light of the Gospel as we have? Why should it not have glanced on China or found a congenial home amidst the islands of Japan? Why did it come here? It is the Father’s good pleasure that gave the stream of grace the direction toward this land.

And in this land, why did grace come to me? Why to you? Why to your brother yonder? Was it that we were better than others? In no wise. Did we seek it more than they? Nay, verily, for we resisted its influence and would have none of its blessings when it came to our door. Why, then, came it to us? We know of no answer but this—the good pleasure of the Lord.

I know no other reason why Abraham, an idolater, should be called out of the land of Ur. Or why, to take a later case, Saul of Tarsus should be taken out of the college of the Pharisees, while yet a persecutor, to be made an apostle of Christ. If I am asked to solve the question why these men are made heirs of heaven and distinguished possessors of Gospel truth, I must reply, “It is the Father’s good pleasure.” I know no other answer. Hence, I think it is because God gives the direction and sends the Gospel where He wills, that it is called the good pleasure of the Lord.

Further, *the good pleasure of the Lord is the Gospel’s vital force*. Upon what does the Gospel depend for its existence and its spread? Upon the zeal of its bishops? *Some* of them deny the Gospel. Upon the fervor of its ministers? *Some* of them are sound asleep. Upon the consistency and energy of its professors? *Some* of them are hypocrites, many of them lukewarm.

Upon what, I say, does the cause of Christ depend? Upon the influence of kings and princes? The kings of this world know it not. Upon some alliance with the State—it scorns it. “*My kingdom is not of this world.*” Brethren, the vital force which gives the kingdom to the chosen flock is the Father’s good pleasure.

And it is because God wills it that daily His church stands, and grows, and gathers strength. The world stands upon God's good pleasure—He may truly say, "I bear up the pillars thereof." *He* hangs the golden lamps of heaven with their silver chains. He binds the Pleiades or looses the bands of Orion. All things depend upon His will, much more does His church—His grandest, His most choice and peculiar work—depend day by day upon His good pleasure, His predestination, His purpose, and His will, for all its vital powers.

Nor is this all. *The consummation of the Gospel is the Father's good pleasure.* Not simply its origin, its direction, and its sustenance, but its consummation. Never—for we must now speak of God after the manner of men—never shall the eternal God rejoice more than when He sees all the company complete, the whole of His redeemed standing around His throne.

At the very prospect of it, He will break forth into singing. He will rest in His love. He will rejoice over them with singing and He will never rest until He shall behold this consummation. From North and South, from East and West, He will continue to send His heralds—nor will He pause in sending forth His ambassadors and in giving them His strength, until He shall say, "Here they all are whom I gave to the Messiah—He has lost none—the jewels of My crown *all* glitter here. The rubies of My breastplate are *all* here. All those choice things have been gathered by the hand of Jesus."

And dear friends, I ought to add that *the great object of all saving grace is the Father's good pleasure.* What is God's object in everything that He does? It must be an object equal to Himself and there is no supposable object equal to God, but God. God's glory—that is the end and aim of all that He does.

He saves His people. Why? For His great name's sake. It were unworthy of God to find a motive for His actions in anything lower than Himself. But there can be nothing but what is lower than God except God Himself. Therefore, in His own heart He finds His motive and in His own glory we perceive the object for which He acts.

And you shall find, beloved, in the whole of the great drama of the Fall and redemption, which shall have been transacted when the curtain shall fall, that the result shall be, "Hallelujah hallelujah, hallelujah!" from all worlds where creatures dwell, "unto that God who has manifested Himself to perfection in the wondrous work of grace perfected in the person of His Son Jesus Christ."

When I read these words, and began to think of them for the first time, they ravished my heart with joy. To think that the salvation of sinners was God's pleasure—how sublime! I can imagine a physician taking pleasure in the healing of certain diseases and yet there must be something irksome about his constant toil. If the disease be something hideous, there must be an alloy mingled with the pleasure of his philanthropy.

But in God's case, it is all pleasure. We read even that "it pleased the LORD to bruise him." God takes divine pleasure in everything which ministers to the salvation of His elect. Christian, do you not see the drift of this? If it be God's pleasure to save you, *who* shall destroy you? If it affords the Eternal delight to see *you* saved, *who* can stand in His way. *Who* shall match himself with Omnipotence?

Will not God have His own way? Will He be thwarted in His pleasures? What? The infinite God robbed of His desires, balked in His intentions, frustrated in His aims, foiled in His designs? It cannot—it must not be. If it be the Father's good pleasure to give *you* the kingdom, "Fear not, little flock, be of good comfort," the kingdom you must and shall have.

Thus much, then, upon the first point—the work which Jesus Christ undertakes is the Lord's pleasure.

II. Now, secondly, THAT WORK GOES ON PROSPEROUSLY IN THE HAND OF CHRIST, since God has made His soul an offering for sin. Let me again give some subdivisions.

That work has prospered in Christ's hands thus far, that *all the great difficulties towards its accomplishment have been already surmounted.* That work prospers indeed which is complete as to its main point. In order that God's pleasure might be accomplished, it was necessary that the gulf should be

filled between God and man. It is filled and there is fellowship this day between the almighty Father and His redeemed children.

It was needful that there should be a sacrifice made to divine justice—the sacrifice is made—justice has received its full demand, and mercy can now range without limit. It was needful that the sinner should become clean—the bath is provided for his washing. It was necessary that he should be clothed with righteousness—the garment is woven from the top throughout without seam.

In that gigantic enterprise which Jesus undertook—the forming of a great highway through the vast bogs and morasses of human guilt and inability—the constructing of that highway over the deep gulf of sin and across the very flames of hell up to the throne of God—all that, with His cross in his hand, Jesus Christ has achieved. And now, from the lowest depths to the loftiest heights, the way to heaven has no break. It has been finished from the one end to the other—the great road that leads from the City of Destruction to the City of Refuge is finished by Jesus Christ.

Child of God, see how this work prospers—you are ransomed, you are washed, you are clothed, you are adopted, you are accepted, you have been brought safely hitherto—and all this has been accomplished through Jesus Christ, who has made the way so clear that you need not miss it, but may rest assured that if you are trusting in Him, He has made your heaven secure. In this respect the work prospers.

Further, the work prospers in Jesus Christ's hand *in the calling out of each of the chosen by effectual and sovereign grace*. I was thinking, this afternoon, what a book of wonders will be opened at the day of judgment if the conversions of believers shall all be published! In what strange ways have men been brought to Christ!

A sailor, whose mother had been dead some fourteen years, happened to have, one day, an idle hour in London, so he stepped into St. Paul's Cathedral. Well, there was not much there, I should think, except at the special services, that was likely ever to convert a soul. That way of singing out the prayers must always, one would think, rather excite a disgust at such religion than not. I wonder whether they suppose that when the penitent publican said, "God be merciful to me a sinner," he intoned it? It seems such a strange, strange thing.

But it so happened, that day, a lesson was read in which these words occurred, "Pray without ceasing." Well, Jack went away and forgot St. Paul's, forgot the text, forgot the lessons, and the prayers. Seven years afterwards, it was one bright moonlight night, and he was walking up and down the deck on his watch, and all of a sudden something seemed to remind him of the words, "Pray without ceasing."

And as he walked up and down, he thought, "Where did I hear those words—'Pray without ceasing'?" St. Paul's Cathedral came before his mind. "'Pray without ceasing?' said the tar, "why, I have never begun to pray. There, I have lived forty years and I have never prayed in all my life." It was the thin edge of the wedge.

The consciousness that he did not pray led to his remembrance that there were many other things that he had left undone. He thought to himself, "I wish I had a Bible. I fear there is not one on board the ship." So he walked on his beat up and down the deck still, until he thought, "I wonder whether there is one in my chest? I should not wonder but what my old mother put one in there."

It was over twenty-one years since the chest had been packed up—and at the bottom of it lay a Bible, with a mother's prayer written in it. He took it out, and as he read it, God spake the words of joy and peace to his soul, and Jack became a believer in Christ. You would little have suspected that there was any connection between his idly strolling into St. Paul's Cathedral and his gloriously entering into the great Cathedral and Temple of the living God, where they praise Him day and night.

Here is another case that shows how the Lord can make His work prosper in his hands. At Horselydown, a young man, in connection with a Religious Tract Society, went on board a vessel to distribute tracts. And he saw nobody on board but one old gentleman, who received his tracts very gladly, and said he liked to see tracts and religious truth everywhere and anywhere.

The tract distributor said he did not like to see the Bible used as it often was at the butter shops—he did not like to see pages of the Scriptures used to do up butter and cheese, and such like things. “Well,” said the old man, “I am of a different opinion from you upon that point. It is twelve years ago,” said he, “and I was a wonderful smoker. One day I went into a shop—I was a godless, careless fellow—and bought an ounce of tobacco. It was done up in a leaf of the New Testament, and while I smoked my pipe, I looked at the leaf, and that was the means of making me a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. And so,” he said, “I do not care what they do with it, so long as they put it where people may read it.”

This was a strange instance of one who would never have been caught by any ordinary means, but just indulging in his own habit, God meets with him and the Word comes as truly from heaven as though an angel had come into his chamber, and delivered the message. Truly, the Lord’s work does prosper in Christ’s hand—by some means or other, He brings home His banished ones.

You may remember, perhaps, the case of good Mr. Wilberforce, one of the best, most excellent, and noble of all modern Christians. When he was three-and-twenty years of age, Mr. Wilberforce was very far from being religious. He was said to be the crown and glory of Doncaster races. His affable manners and the geniality and humor of his bearing made him many friends among men of the world.

He went to Nice on a journey, and while travelling there, he had for a companion, Dean Milner. They were talking about a certain clergyman in Yorkshire. Mr. Wilberforce said he thought that clergyman carried his religion a great deal too far. For his part, he considered religion a very good thing if it was kept within bounds, but he censured those who made too much of it.

The dean said, “Mr. Wilberforce, if you read your Bible a little more, you would not think so. For I am persuaded there is no such thing as carrying religion too far.” Mr. Wilberforce said, “Come, now, you and I are together—I will read the New Testament through if you will.” “I will,” said Milner, and being both of them excellent Greek scholars, during their journey they read the New Testament through in Greek.

Happy, happy, happy thought for Wilberforce! He who was to speak with voice of thunder,—

*“Thus saith Britannia,
Empress of the sea,
Thy chains are broken,
Africa, be free!”—*

must first hear the Scripture speak to him, and say, “Wilberforce, be free. Christ has borne your sins and carried all your sorrows. You are saved.”

There are, then, odd ways, strange ways, all sorts of ways, yet appropriate ways, fitting ways by which Jesus Christ brings His people to Himself. And as I look about, or read the narratives of their conversion, I can only say, “Truly, the pleasure of the LORD doth prosper in his hand.”

Furthermore, you may see the pleasure of the Lord prosper in the hands of the Savior *in the keeping and preserving of every one that has been called*. If to call the saints is a miracle, to keep them is a long string of miracles. To what temptations and trials have not the saints been exposed? In the olden times, they suffered from fire, the rack, hot pincers, gloomy dungeons, the dropping of water—a most cruel form of punishment—drowning, death in all its shapes, and yet they stood fast. They were more than conquerors through Him that loved them.

In this age, the children of God have had to suffer laughter, scoffing, slander, obloquy, all sorts of shame—then the devil has thrown them over to the other side and tried them with prosperity, honor, esteem, worldly dignity—but still they have not yielded. They have been tried in the furnace of temporal distress, of bereavement, of mental despondency. They have been forsaken by friends and often been subjected to labor too severe for natural strength—but what can we say of the safeguard of all the people of God? Not *one* of them is lost.

Christ has kept them—they have all been in the hollow of His hand. As the eagle covers her nest and flutters over her young, and will not suffer the spoiler to take away so much as one eaglet from the nest, even so has Christ always kept and preserved His people. And He holds them fast even to this day. In all this, we see the pleasure of the Lord prospering in his hand.

And dear friends, no doubt we see this very conspicuously *in the constant growth of the Redeemer's kingdom*. I sometimes feel sad to think how very slowly the work of conversion is going on, but on the whole, this one thing we can say—if we do not make the progress we should like to make, at any rate we *are* on the progressing side.

Idolatry advances not a step—it manifestly crumbles. Mohammedanism makes but few converts. If our religion does not increase as fast as we desire, it *does* increase, and it seems to be, just now, in that state in which we are laying mines and trains of heavenly gunpowder so that, when the time comes and the match shall be struck, the work shall be done suddenly and the battlements of evil shall fall with a crash to the ground.

But though I say we are not doing what we would, yet here and there we see fertile spots. The Master *is* causing His kingdom to come. The seed does not rot under the clods. heaven grants us revivals, seasons of refreshing in the presence of the Lord. We believe that the good pleasure of the Lord is prospering in his hands.

And mark you, brethren, we shall see this, by and by, *when everyone among us shall begin to feel his own individual responsibility*. We shall then see God's good pleasure prospering indeed. Suppose we were the House of Commons, and some speaker should rise and tell us that there was a world of filth in the City of London, that the streets were very dirty, that people threw their rubbish out of the front door every morning, and that the road was covered with all sorts of garbage?

One wise member of Parliament would propose that there should be a troop of orderlies and another would say that there was a capital machine invented that ought to be tried. But what would you think if some common-place member of Parliament should rise and say, "Don't you think the quickest way to sweep all London is to make every householder sweep in front of his own door?" "Why," you would say, "that is the thing. It would take months to do it in any other way, but this would allow it to be done at once."

Now, when we have once got the church of God to feel that every man is to sweep in front of his own door, that every convert is to try to make more converts, every Christian man and woman to bring others to Jesus—then I believe we shall see such a wonderful growth in the church as we never anticipated, and then the pleasure of the Lord will prosper in Christ's hand.

Now there is too much leaving of the work to a few of us. I do not think that is right. I love to see our friends give something to the cause of God every week. I believe that principle of every one giving something and every one laying by in store every week will provide the church with all the money that she needs.

And then every Christian doing something and every one doing it constantly out of zealous love to the Lord Jesus Christ—beyond a doubt we shall see a flood-tide of grace and a beginning of the tides of glory which are yet to cover the world. Only let us get the church right and get the saints stirred up, and we shall see the pleasure of the Lord prospering in Christ's hand.

Now mark these words, for they shall surely come true—the work is so sure to prosper in Christ's hand that *it will not fail in any one point*. All along the line of battle there shall be victory, in every point of His work there shall be success. The great Architect shall not bring out beauty here, and leave deformity there, but the plan shall be carried out without a single diminution of the splendor of the first design.

You shall see each stone, yes, the very stone that was chosen, dug out of the quarry, and put in its place. You shall see every sheep of Christ's fold brought safely to the pastures on the hilltops of heaven. You shall see Christ defeated nowhere, but Conqueror everywhere. He shall stand, at the last, in the midst of all the troops that have fought by His side—they shall all wear the laurels of victory. They shall

all be conquerors and more than conquerors, through Him that loved them. The cause of God is quite safe in the hand of Jesus—it *does* prosper, it *shall* prosper, it *must* prosper forever.

III. I conclude by asking, WHAT IS OUR RELATION TO ALL THIS?

Alas! *there are some who oppose the pleasure of God in the hands of Christ.* What we have to say to them is, “Mind what you are at.” He that falls upon this stone shall be broken, but upon whomsoever this stone shall fall, it shall grind him to powder. You who oppose Christ might as well lay yourselves down before the huge wheels of the car of Juggernaut in order to stop it., Christ’s chariot will go on, and crush you to powder, as surely as you are a living man, if you stand in its way.

If you choose to go down to the low-water mark on the shore and attempt to push back the sea, the sea will come rolling over you—and its great billows, as they swallow you up—shall seem to howl your funeral dirge. Had you not better change your side? Is it wise to oppose the Irresistible? Is it prudent to become an enemy of the Omnipotent?

We sometimes hear a person say, “I cannot be on Christ’s side, for how do I know that such and such a thing is true?” That excellent servant of God, Mr. John Williams, the martyr of Romania, tells us that on one occasion, when a person of skeptical turn had been questioning about Scripture and so forth, he called together a number of the natives of the South Sea Islands. They stood around him, little knowing what was to be done.

Mr. Williams put to them the question, “How do you know that the religion of Jesus comes from God?” They had never been asked that question—they had accepted it as divine without investigating evidences—but they were not long at a non-plus, for one of them very properly answered, “How can that religion be anything but divine which has broken up an idolatry in which our fathers lived from time immemorial—which turned us from being cannibals to be Christians and which has brought us from the depths of vice of every kind to sit clothed, in our right mind, at the foot of the cross?”

And another of them said, “I know that this religion comes from God, because I have hinges in my body. If I want to move my foot, there is a hinge to move it. If I want to move my hand, there is a hinge to move that—there is a hinge for everything. Now, the God who shows so much wisdom in the making of my body, shows just as much wisdom in the making of the Bible to suit my case. I conclude, therefore, it comes from the same place as my body did—that is, from my God.” This was not bad reasoning for a South Sea Islander.

The best way, I believe, to get men to believe that the Bible is true is to get them to read the Bible. Someone asked me what book he should read in order to put an end to his skepticism. My answer was, “Read the Bible.” But he said, “No, I need to know whether the Bible is true.” I said, “Then, read the Bible. The Bible is its own interpreter and its own evidence. And while you are reading it, may God breathe His divine Spirit upon it and may the good pleasure of the Lord prosper in Christ’s hand! Though you began by being an opposer, may you end by being a friend!”

There was a club of gentlemen who used to meet together to discuss literary and scientific subjects, and after a long discussion, they had agreed to burn the Bible—and one of them was about to do it. They had selected about the boldest of them to do it, but as he was going to take it to the fire, his hand trembled and laying it down, he turned round and said, “I think we had better not burn this Book till we find a better one.”

And I think we may say of those who, in these days, are trying to kick against Scripture, they had better leave it alone until they find a better one, or else they will be something like Voltaire, who, when two of his disciples came to see him to talk about atheism, said, “Hush, hold your tongue till my servant has gone out of the room. I do not want to have my throat cut.”

This was a sure sign that he dared not talk about his own disbelief in the presence of those he thought not well-instructed, lest they should by it become hardened to sin and made capable of any and every crime. Oh, you that oppose Jesus Christ, I wish you would just try Him! Take His Book and read it—search it through and through and if, after that, you still reject it, it is because you *will* do so, and on your head be your blood.

But there are some of us, thank God, who are on the side of God's good pleasure—on the side that prospers in Christ's hand. What, then, shall I say to such? Why, dear friends, let every one of us be doing something to make God's pleasure prosper. Mothers, I have told you one story which should excite you to earnestness to do your children good, let me tell you another.

In the old war between England and America, there was a son who received a Bible from his mother. It was brought to him by a comrade who said to him, "Your mother told me to say that, out of love to her, she hoped you would learn one verse every day." So he opened the Book and with a laugh, he said, "Well, then, here goes."

Strangely enough, the verse that he opened on was the only verse he ever learned at the Sunday school, for he had been a bad lad, and could not be made to learn. And he read it and it fetched tears into his eye. It was this—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And the mother's prayers were heard to a mother's joy. Go on, mothers, praying for your children, that the pleasure of the Lord may prosper in Christ's hand.

And you Sunday school teachers, be more earnest than ever in teaching your classes, mind you keep to this point—the conversion of your children as children. Do not be content to sow seed that *may* spring up when they are fifty, but pray to God that it may spring up while they are as yet perhaps under fifteen. Pray, O you Sunday school teachers, that God's pleasure may prosper in Christ's hand with you!

My dear friends in the catechumen classes, go on laboring with greater earnestness than before. Young men who go forth from us to preach the Gospel, we look to you and we trust that God will be pleased to give you tongues of fire and hearts of flame. You that stand at the corners of the streets, you that labor anywhere, be more and more determined—let others loiter as they will—that you will labor with both your hands for Christ.

I am often afraid lest, with such a church as this, we should not do what the church at large and the world expect of us. We number two thousand three hundred or more in church fellowship [in the year 1863], but if you are all idle, or if the most of you are idle, it would be better for me to have had a hundred or so of earnest workers.

There is nothing one dislikes so much as to be reputed to have what we have not. Why, I read, I should think, in a dozen newspapers, some time back, the information that I received from America £1,000 a year. I should like to see it. I said, as I read it, "If it had been a thousand pence, I might have been better content than to read it there and know it is not true."

But just that kind of feeling comes over me when people say, "What a church there is there! What a deal they must do for Christ!" Ah, but if you do not, then what a poor man your minister is to have the reputation of being so rich in the efforts of his people, and then not to have them doing anything! Oh, don't do that!

I know you may say I am not worthy of you, but I pray you, dear friends, let us try to be worthy of one another. Let us fight side by side for Christ and for His cause. Let us tell upon this neighborhood and let us make men know that there is a church in London that does pray, that does wrestle with God, that does work, that does give to His cause, and that will spend and be spent until the members are willing even to lay down their lives upon the altar of God for the promotion of His kingdom.

May we all believe in Jesus and so be His friends! "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," says He. May we all be led to believe in Jesus, and believing, may we be enlisted on His side—and being enlisted, may we fight even to the end and so be partakers of His great reward! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

LUKE 17:1-10

Verse 1. *Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offenses will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come!*

Since the Fall, we are so constituted that there are sure to be differences and disputes. It is a great mercy when men dwell together in unity. “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is.” It is a work of divine grace. But nature has its lustings and lustings leads to strivings. And so, as long as the world is as it now is, “It is impossible but that offenses will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come.”

Let us not, therefore, be either offense givers or offense takers. When anyone offends us, let us say, “It is impossible but that offenses will come,” and let us make light of it. And let us be very careful that we do not cause others to offend. As for him through whom the offense comes,

2. *It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend*

Or cause to offend—

2-4. *One of these little ones. Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.*

Perhaps someone remarks, “It looks as if he would do nothing else but keep on sinning and repenting.” Well, suppose he does so, that is precisely what you are doing, except that you do not so often repent when you sin. So, possibly, the offender is rather better than you are, after all, and if God is gentle in His dealings with you, you may well be gentle in your dealings with your neighbor.

5. *And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.*

They seemed so struck with the severity of this command that they asked for more faith that they might be able to obey it. And dear friends, that is always the best thing to do. Do not refuse obedience to the Lord’s precept, but say, “Lord, increase my faith that I may be able to obey it. It can be done, or else You would not have given me the command. I cannot do it as I am without an increase of strength, therefore, as faith is the medium by which strength is received, Lord, increase my faith.”

6. *And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.*

Meaning that anything and everything should be possible to our faith. But we need much more of it than the most of us have. Remember how holy Bernard says, “If you have a hard task, ask God to give you a hard resolution.” The diamond is difficult to cut, but it can be cut if you can find something harder. So, if there be a very difficult task set before us, if we get faith that is more than equal to it, it will be accomplished. “With God all things are possible,” which means not only that God can do all things, but that we also can do all things when God is with us.

7-8. *But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink?*

This world is the place of service—we are not to be expecting to have the festival here. The great supper comes at the end of the day. This is the time for us to serve, even as Jesus did when He was here—and we are to serve right on till the close of the day, even as Jesus did.

9. *Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not.*

When the serving-man has done his day’s work, his master does not say, “I am very grateful to you, John, for what you have done for me.” He will have his wages—they will be his master’s thanks.

10. *So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants : we have done that which was our duty to do.*

“When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you.” Ah! but we have not come anywhere near that yet. Even if we had, we should still be “unprofitable servants.” In our mind we should expect no thanks from our Master, but we should sorrow that we had not served Him better.

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.