

# PEACE AT HOME AND PROSPERITY ABROAD

## NO. 314

A SERMON  
 DELIVERED ON WEDNESDAY EVENING, MAY 9, 1860  
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 ON BEHALF OF THE LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY

*“He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat.  
 He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth: his word runneth very swiftly.”  
 Psalm 147:14-15*

PARDON me, my brethren, if I attempt no exposition whatever of the text, but simply endeavor to address you upon what I think is an inference from it, or at least a reflection to which it might readily give rise. The psalmist is here describing the prosperity of Jerusalem, and he connects that prosperity with the progress and diffusion of the Word of God. He is teaching us I think this great truth, that there is an intimate connection between the establishment and the building of our Zion at home, and the going forth and the spread of God’s Word abroad, both in the provinces of our own land, and throughout the regions of the world.

Our own churches must be in a prosperous state. As the second verse has it—“the Lord doth build up Jerusalem,” we may then rest assured that “He will gather together the outcasts of Israel.” If there be in the churches of our own highly-favored land a healthiness of spirit and an abundance of the grace of God, we need not fear but that all our operations will be carried on with success. God shall greatly crown our endeavors, and give us to see our heart’s desire.

If this be not precisely the critical meaning of the text, then let me just say I shall use it in this sense as a motto. The subject of this evening’s discourse will be the connection between a healthy church at home, and the increase of the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

First, let me very briefly advert *to the main points which constitute a healthy state in the church of Christ*. Under what conditions should we be warranted in applying to it the glowing description of this psalm—“He hath blessed thy children within thee; he maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of wheat.” When we have described this healthiness, we shall proceed to show *the connection between this and the sending forth of God’s commandment upon earth*—the running swiftly of His Word, and then we shall conclude by *pushing this principle home to the necessary inference*.

**I.** First then, WHAT ARE THE POINTS WHICH CONSTITUTE THE HEALTHINESS OF THE CHURCH AT HOME?

To begin with the most important—*the true piety of all her members*. A church can never be in a sound and satisfactory state for labor, she never can be in such a condition that God can smile upon her complacently, if she be mixed up with the world, if her sons and daughters be not sufficiently distinguished from the world to be manifestly God’s people.

If we take into our churches those who are not converted, we swell our numbers, but we diminish our real strength. We might need to purchase a larger church book, we might perhaps be able to parade our numbers before the world, and we might even flatter ourselves with our apparent prosperity till we intoxicated our own brain, but we should be going backward when we think we are going forward.

We have not conquered the world, we have only yielded to it. We have not brought the world up to us, we have only brought ourselves down to it. We have not Christianized an ungodly generation, but we have adulterated Christianity. We have brought the chaste spouse of Christ to commit fornication among the people. We cannot possibly be too strict in the examination of those who are proposed for church fellowship.

I will grant you, there are methods by which bigotry may exclude a large proportion of those whom God has called, putting such an extent of knowledge as the test of Christian experience, that many of the lambs of the flock stand bleating without the fold and are never enabled to come and partake of its pasturage. This evil, doubtless, is to be avoided.

But on the other hand, it is quite possible that the fullest charity with which the mildness of our Savior's mind and the love of the Spirit can imbue us, may be blended with the most stern firmness in executing a sacred trust and with the most prudent discretion in maintaining the purity of discipleship, when we are engaged in the acceptance or rejection of candidates for the fellowship of the visible church.

If we could tomorrow bring into the church a sufficient number of ungodly but moral men to double our numbers, to double our subscriptions, to double our places of worship, to enable us to double the number of our missionaries, we should by succumbing to the temptation procure a curse instead of a blessing. In our purity, and in our purity alone we stand. Let us once lose our distinctive principles, let us once come back and attempt to nationalize the church, and bring ourselves from the distinction we have sought to maintain between the church and the world, and God's blessing will be withdrawn from us, we shall cease to be strong within and mighty without.

Oh! that God might grant to each of us, who are the pastors of the church, that unceasing vigilance and constant watchfulness whereby we shall be able to detect the wolves in sheep's clothing, and whereby we shall be able to say calmly, sternly, yet lovingly, to those who come before us seeking communion, without satisfactory evidence that they belong to the living family of God, "You must go your way until the Spirit of God hath touched your heart, for until you have received the living faith in Jesus, we cannot receive you into the number of His faithful ones."

Next to the sincere piety of all our church members, I think we must look very carefully and very steadfastly to the *soundness of that Gospel which we proclaim and preach*. Soundness I say—and here possibly I may be touching upon a delicate subject, but what signifieth if that subject be of the utmost and highest importance! There should be, I aver, in the declaration of the ministers of Christ, not uniformity, for that is not consistent with life, but unity which is not only consistent with life, but which is one of the highest marks of a healthy existence.

I do not think the time will ever come when we shall all of us see eye to eye, and shall all use the same terms and phrases in setting forth doctrinal truths. I do not imagine there ever will be a period, unless it should be in that long looked for millennium, when every brother shall be able to subscribe to every other brother's creed, when we shall be identical in our apprehensions, experiences, and expositions of the Gospel in the fullest sense of the word.

But I do maintain there should be, and there must be if our churches are to be healthy and sound, a constant adherence to the fundamental doctrines of divine truth. I should be prepared to go a very long way for charity's sake, and admit that very much of the discussion which has existed even between Arminians and Calvinists has not been a discussion about vital truth, but about the terms in which that vital truth shall be stated.

When I have read the conflict between that mighty man who made these walls echo with his voice, Mr. Whitefield, and that other mighty man equally useful in his day, Mr. Wesley, I have felt that they contended for the same truths, and that the vitality of godliness was not mainly at issue in the controversy.

But my brethren, if it should ever come to be a matter which casts doubts upon the divinity of Christ, or the personality of the Holy Ghost, if it should come to a matter of using Gospel terms in a sense the most contrary to that which has ever been attached to them in any age of the truth, if it should ever come to the marring and spoiling of our ideas of divine justice, and of that great atonement which is the basis of the whole Gospel as they have been delivered to us, then it is time my brethren once for all that the scabbard be thrown aside, that the sword be drawn.

Against any who assails those precious vital truths which constitute the heart of our holy religion, we must contend even to the death. It is not possible that an affirmative and negative can be two views of the same truth. We are continually told when one man contradicts another that he does but see with other eyes.

Nay, my brethren, the one man is blind, he does not see at all, the other sees, having the eyes of his understanding enlightened. There may be two views of truth, but two views of truth cannot be directly antagonistic. One must be the true view and the other the false view. No stretch of my imagination can ever allow me to anticipate the time can come when “yes” and “no,” can lie comfortably down in the same bed.

I cannot conceive by any means there ever can be a matrimonial alliance between positive and negative. Do you think such things might exist? Verily there were giants at one time, when the sons of God saw the daughters of men, and we may live to see gigantic heresies, when God’s own children may look upon the fair daughters of philosophy, and monster delusions shall stalk across the earth. A want of union about the truth too clearly proves that the body of the church is not in a healthy state.

No man’s system can be said to be in a normal condition if that man prefers ashes to bread, and prefers ditch water to that which flows from the bubbling fountain. A man must be unhealthy or he would not use such garbage. We must look to the preservation of the health of the church. Alas! if her doctrines be tainted, her faith will not be maintained, and the church being unsound, who can tell what next may occur.

But not to tarry longer here, it seems to me the next important point with regard to the true healthiness of the church at home, will be more and more of *the spirit of union*. This society happily represents in a large degree this saved bond of brotherhood. It may have become somewhat denominational, it was never intended to be, nor is it the fault of the maintainers, it is not because they have made it exclusive, but because other denominations have somewhat seceded, and established societies of their own.

The London Missionary Society comprehended all Christian men, whether in the establishment or not. I believe we are all eligible to become members, and all may, as far as we can, assist in sending forward the Gospel by its means. But alas! there lingers among our churches—and I hope it is but a lingering of that which must presently expire—there lingers still a spirit of disunion because we do not agree in ceremonies.

We must needs have many communions, because we cannot see eye to eye in discipline, while nevertheless we are really and vitally one. We must have I suppose different walks, and cannot commune and converse with one another as members of the same family, and as parts of the same divine body.

Whenever the foot is at enmity with the hand there must be something like madness in the body, there cannot be a sound mind within that frame which is divided against itself. And if there be among us any remnants of the spirit of division, if there be aught in us that would make us excommunicate and cut off brethren because we cannot see with them in all the points of the spiritual compass, though we agree in the main, if it be so, then there must be somewhere or other an unhealthy disease, there must be grey hairs here and there, which have stolen upon us though we knew it not.

Oh my heart longs to see a more thorough union among the ministers of Christ Jesus. I think there is more of it than we sometimes believe. I am sure the more we come to know one another, the better we love each other. Distrust may arise from want of personal acquaintance, we need more frequently to come into company, and if the churches were more active, so as to throw us into contact, I think we should discover more of a real unity than perhaps we think has begun to exist.

And oh! that this unity may grow and continue, and may not be merely an evangelical alliance in form, but a spiritual confederation in fact, that its enunciation may come from every lip and every heart, and that there may be a real love toward every other member of that alliance, in carrying out its principles to the fullest and the greatest extent.

These three points—purity of life, soundness of doctrine, and unity of the ministers of the church of Christ—will help to constitute a healthy church at home. All these things, however, will never avail unless there be added another, namely, *constant activity*. We all have our times when we feel dull, and listless, and heavy, when we would rather be in bed all day than get up, rather sit in the chair than go to business or enter the pulpit, or when we are in the pulpit, we find our brain does not work, and we cannot put forth the energy that we would. The tongue may be as a ready writer, but we cannot speak as we would desire.

We feel at times that we are not well, that there is something wrong in our system. And the church every now and then gets into the same state. At intervals some earnest speech stirs the members up to spasmodic action, then they return again to their apathy and Laodicean lukewarmness.

Sometimes they feel as if they would carry all by storm, but anon they sit down again in calm security. We have hundreds of our churches, from which I continually receive an answer like this to the inquiry, “How do you prosper?”—“Well, we are not increasing much, we have added no souls to the church, but we are very comfortable.” That very comfortableness has stolen upon a large proportion of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a marvel that they should be comfortable while souls are dying and sinners perishing, when hell is filling and the kingdom of Christ is not extending.

But yet quite comfortable they are, and they come to look upon the revivals and increase to the church as wonders and prodigies, rather like comets that come now and then, than like sums which are to abide with us, and they grow into the habit of questioning the revival spirit and thinking that when the church is alive, she has become excited, that she has been dram drinking and is intoxicated, instead of believing that it is just her actual evidence of health. When she is in health, she is at work with all her hands, praying with all her tongues, weeping with all her eyes, and agonizing with God in prayer with all the might of her many intercessors.

Oh, my brethren, we are all wrong when we think that the church is healthy when it is comfortable and still. It is the health of the stagnant pool, the health of the graveyard, the health of a fainting fit—a fit that is on the very verge of death. God be pleased to let loose some blood from us, that we may discover what the church really is when she shall put forth all her energy. If we saw a queen sitting upon a heap of rubbish, her hair disheveled, and dirt upon her garments, if she never stirs hand or foot, but sits down sleeping on in her misery, could you think she is a queen in all her dignity?

Rise up you Virgin Daughter of Zion, and let us behold you in your beauty, shake yourself from the dust, and put on your beautiful garments, and ascend to your throne—then shall men see what you are. When you are idle, and careless, and prayerless, you are sick and ready to die, but when you are anxious, and striving, and travailing, then are you in the state in which your Lord would have you, you bless Him and He has blessed you.

One more point and I will conclude this description of the church’s healthiness. The church is never healthy except when she *abounds in prayer*. I have known prayer meetings that have been like the bells to the parish steeple—a very poor parish where there were never enough bells to ring a chime. The minister has had to pray twice and read a long chapter in order to spin out the time, or to meet the want yet more efficiently, he has called upon a brother who had the gift of supplicating for twenty-five minutes and then concluded by asking pardon for his short comings.

And then the few friends, the bold-hearted, self-denying martyrs, who went to hear the Word of God, were obliged to endure the torture of hearing such a prayer as that. Those brethren must come and go, and never feel that God has been in their midst, and never been near to the throne of God, never had the wrestling with the angel, never brought a blessing down, for the man has been praying against time, “an occupying of the few minutes,” as they call it, and there was no real intercession or drawing near to God.

Now, what church can be considered to be as Christ would have her, when her members meet to pray and they constitute but a handful? I care not if the place is crowded at your other services, the church is not prosperous if the prayer meetings be thin. It signifies nothing if that church has sent up a

hundred, or five hundred, or a thousand pounds to the Missionary Society—write “*Ichabod*” on her walls, unless the brethren meet together for prayer.

The most erudite minister may instruct the people, the most earnest preacher may plead God’s cause with men, but if he has not with him a band of men who plead man’s cause with God, his pleadings will be in vain. Shut up that house in which men have ceased to pray, or if you open it, let your opening be a meeting for hearty and earnest prayer.

I have to mourn and confess in my own case, that I have had to feel in myself—and I think I can speak for many others—a want of prayerfulness with regard to missionary effort especially. These things do not meet us as the destitution of London does, for the City Missionaries, and for the sinners of our own congregations, I trust we do not need arguments to make us pray. These arguments are before us every day.

We do pray for our own families, and our own congregations, but the heathens are across the sea, many miles away. We may now and then see a Lascar in the street, or the dark face of a Hindu, and then our soul breathes a silent brief prayer, but alas! for the most part, many Christians might say whole months pass with them without carrying the cause of the heathen who are in darkness, before the throne of God, and how can we expect, while this unhealthiness exists among us, that God will bless our missionary operations.

Zion must travail before she can bring forth children. She may use all her weapons, but if she keeps back the great battering-ram of prayer, she will never break the walls of the spiritual Jericho. She may use every other instrument, but unless she takes John Bunyan’s weapon of “all-prayer,” she will never put to rout the great enemy of souls. Yes, my brethren, we want faithfulness, we want healthiness, we want a prayerful spirit given to us, then we may conclude that all is well with us.

It shall be left to each individual heart and each member of the church, to answer for himself the question, whether his own church is in a state of spiritual health, taking these things as a test, namely, purity, soundness, unity, and prayerfulness.

**II.** I have now to show THE CONNECTION BETWEEN A HEALTHY CHURCH AT HOME AND THE SPREAD OF CHRIST’S KINGDOM ABROAD.

To the mind of the simple this thing will be clear enough. Suppose all the churches to degenerate into a lack of life, and into nearness to spiritual death. Suppose the pulpit in our land gives an uncertain sound. As a result God’s people begin to forsake the assembling of themselves together, no crowds gather to hear the Word, places begin to get empty, prayer meetings become more and more deserted, the efforts of the church may be still carried on, but they are merely a matter of routine, there is no life, no heart in it.

I am supposing a case you see, a case which I trust we may never see. Things get worse and worse, the doctrines of the Gospel become expunged and unknown, they that fear the Lord no more speak one to another. Still for a little time the money continues to be brought into the society, and foreign missions are sustained.

Can you not imagine reading in the next report, “We have had no converts this year, our income is still maintained, but notwithstanding that, our brethren feel that they are laboring under the greatest possible disadvantages, in fact, some of them wish to return home and renounce the work.” Another year—the missionary spirit has grown cold in the churches, its funds decrease. Another year, and yet another, it becomes a moot point among us as to whether missions are absolutely necessary or not.

We have come at last to the more advanced point which some divines have already reached, and begin to question whether Mahomet and Confucius had not a revelation from God as well as Jesus Christ. And now we begin to say, “Is it needful that we should extend the Gospel abroad at all? We have lost faith in it, we see it does nothing at home, shall we send that across the sea which is a drug on the market here, and distribute as a healing for the wounds of the daughters of Zidon and of Tyre that which has not healed the daughters of Jerusalem?”

I can conceive that first one station then another would be given up, those that would be maintained would only be kept up by reason of an old custom which was recollected to have existed in the absurd days of evangelists. I can imagine the church degenerating further, and further, and further, till at last her unhealthiness clearly showed that it would be impossible that it ever could be maintained abroad.

You have only to look abroad upon nature, and you will soon find analogies to this. There is a well of water springing up, and the people of the district flock to it, it is said to have healthy properties, men come and drink thereat and are refreshed. Suddenly the secret spring begins to fail, by some means or other the water is removed to another place, and the spring is no more there. You can conceive that this place would cease to be a thoroughfare, there would no longer be passengers. Where multitudes of men and women were wont to drink with joy and gladness, there is not a single person to be seen.

Or suppose again, there is the sun in its sphere shedding light on all the planets, and with its attractive power making them move with regularity in their orbits. Suddenly the sun's fire dies out, its attractive power decreases also and becomes extinguished. Can you not imagine that the result must be fatal to all the planets that revolve around it? How shall they be sustained in their light and heat, or how shall they be kept in their spheres when once the power that kept them there is gone? No, prophecy is fulfilled, the sun is turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, and the stars fall like withered fig-leaves from the tree.

And what is the church to our missionary stations but like the sun? Is it not her light that shines? Do they not receive from her their instructions in the Word of God—the light of the world? And are not those stations the rays from the great central luminary? Let her lose her power and her light, and what must become of the rest of the world? Must not total darkness cover all the nations? Oh! yes, my brethren, if we do not know that, we soon should know it if God should ever put us to the test.

If once England's glory were extinguished, if once the Christianity of America were put out, where were all the vital godliness then? How should those agencies which depend upon us be sustained if our home piety were once brought to nought? No, we must have the bars of our gates strengthened, there must be peace in our borders, and we must be filled with the finest wheat, or else God's Word will not run very quickly, nor will His commandment be sent forth upon the earth.

Let me endeavor very briefly to show what this connection is. There is a direct connection between the pureness of the church at home and the progress of Christianity abroad—a direct connection, we shall have to speak of the more indirect connection by and by. The inconsistencies of English Christians have proved one of the greatest barriers to the progress of Christ's kingdom in other lands.

An excellent minister of the church in France told me—and told it with a sorrowful earnestness too—that Protestantism received a severe check in Paris from the inconsistent conduct of Christian men there, those who claim Protestantism at least, if they were not members of our churches. “Now sir,” said he, “when a man visits Paris, who is a Protestant—an English Protestant—I will not say an actual member of your church certainly—when he comes to Paris, he neglects all attendance to the Sabbath day,” and Romanists, if spoken to about their constant breach of the holy day, will reply to the Reformed Christians of France, “Look to the Protestants of Great Britain when they are here, do they attend to their religion abroad any better than we do?”

I have been assured by several pastors living in Paris, that it is a frightful and lamentable fact, that men when they go on the Continent seem to go there to get rid of their religion, when they land on those shores they assume the garb of a traveler, and think they may be permitted to attend Roman Catholic places of worship on the Lord's-day, and they are not seen worshipping God with their brethren where the worship in the English language is still maintained.

I can assure you that I was affectionately requested to avail myself of an early opportunity to make a prominent complaint against the Christianity of England for its inconsistency abroad. In the name of the pastors of France I speak, and in the name of the pastors of l'Oratoire I think I speak also—I think I speak for five of them at least—I do beseech Christian men who are going abroad, not to permit

themselves to forget their Christianity, but to remember that the eyes of men are still upon them, and if not the eyes of men certainly the eyes of God.

Let me give you another fact which proves that when the church is unsound at home she will not go on well abroad. In the late Report of the Baptist Missionary Society, I observed a great trouble through which certain stations have lately passed, a trouble which they have survived, but which materially checked their usefulness.

Certain brethren holding rather extreme *church views* thought it necessary, instead of carrying on operations among the pure heathen, to set to work to convert those who were Christians already to their own creed, and the effect in the villages where they tried their scheme was that by giving more charity than a poorer society could afford to give, they managed to decoy a large proportion of the congregations to a different form of Protestant service.

The result was just this—they were informed by these pastors—good men doubtless—that the sect to which they once belonged was an ignoble body in its own country, and did not possess any influence. And for the first time the Hindus answered that there were Christian men who could depreciate one another—that there were professors of this one religion who had a greater dislike to one another than any two sects of Heathenism ever had. The effect upon the minds of the villagers was not merely disastrous to that one mission, but to Christianity herself. They began to suspect that the house that was divided against itself could not have its foundations upon truth.

My brethren, when we shall once come to unity of doctrine, and to purity and consistency of life, the direct agency of our church members and of our missionaries upon the heathen world, will be far more healthy and effective than it is. I do not doubt, if I had a wider and more extensive knowledge of the proceedings of the church in other lands, I could multiply instances of this kind, in which our faults at home have been very great drawbacks upon our success abroad.

And yet the agency, I think, may be considered in the main to be indirect, but nevertheless, as potent as if it were direct. If our churches be not true, if they be not kept by God, if they be not pure, and holy, and prayerful, they will begin to lose the missionary spirit, and when the missionary spirit evaporates of what use will be the missionary body? Bury it, yes, in Bloomfield Street will we dig its grave, or in Moorgate Street shall we make a vault! Put on its shroud and let it have a tearful burial, for if the spirit of missions be lost in the churches, it would be no use trying to maintain the semblance of the body of the Society.

We all know what the missionary spirit is, and yet we could not any of us exactly describe it. It is a sort of thing that sets a man longing to see others saved, and makes him pant especially for those who have no means of grace in their own lands, that they may have those means carried to them, that they may be saved. This leads them to self-denying, and to earnest prayer for those who are diligent servants. Extinguish the healthiness of the church, and you have lost that spirit.

We can never expect the ruddy flush of health upon the cheek, unless there is health within. The missionary spirit is just that bloom, which will soon be taken away if consumption should seize upon the frame. The missionary spirit can only be maintained by the maintenance of life and vitality in the church.

But further, if you take away the missionary spirit, of course all prayerfulness, and with that all powerfulness to rend the clouds of heaven are withdrawn. Let the winds of the Holy Spirit, brethren, once depart from our churches at home, our Missionary Society shall be as a ship at sea with her sails all spread, and her spars well rigged, but without a breath of air to move her towards her port. There she shall lie till she perishes upon the rocks, or founders in a calm. She can be of no service, she can bring no glory to her God, carry no cargo of living spirits up to the port of heaven, unless there be prayer at home to wake up all the winds, and let them loose upon her to speed her on her destined course.

With that want of prayer too, you must remember you suspend all hopes of finding fresh missionaries. I have often wondered whether our churches are choosing the best means to find out young men who would be useful in the mission field. There is growing nowadays a lack of ministers for our

own pulpits. Why it is so I cannot tell, except that it strikes me that young men are not sufficiently encouraged when they have preaching abilities, to endeavor to do their best to exercise them.

I do know a brother who ever makes it a rule, if a young man displays any sort of ability and applies to him for a recommendation for college or otherwise—positively to throttle him if he can. “You,” he says, “Who are you? I am sure you will never make a minister, you can only talk, sir—you are no good.” And many a young man who might have been usefully employed in that one church has been driven away from it to seek some more congenial spirit, because he has been put back in his attempts to do some service.

Of course if we never make an attempt to grow ministers, or to bring them out from the world, train them up and guide them to the place where their talents may be proved, we shall not have a right to expect God’s blessing in this matter. Only cease to cultivate wheat, and you shall have but very little of it. God does raise men and send them out, but at the same time He works by means, and He makes the church use means to bring out members.

The old church of the Waldenses used the best means I think that ever will be devised. Every pastor of the church had one young man with him, and tried to train him up, keeping him in habitual conversation with him, and teaching him what he knew of pastoral discipline and of the preaching of the Word. So that when the one minister died, they had not to look for a successor, there he was, ready to hand among the young men who had come out of that church.

Our nation used to boast that it could grow everything it needed, we do not care for the boast in these free-trade times, but we do say that our churches ought to grow all that they need for themselves. They ought not always to go a hundred miles to get pastors when they could obtain them among themselves. They do not go abroad for deacons! Why not have pastors from among themselves who were raised from childhood in the church?

Ah! should we once become unsound in our churches, and prayer become cold, where are the men to come from that shall succeed those heroes of Christ whose blood was shed by heathen hands? Where shall we find the successors to Knibb and Williams? Where shall we find the successors to Moffat and Livingstone, unless the healthy tone of Christian self-denial and holy firmness of divine fervor be kept up and maintained? Do you imagine you can enlist them from abroad? Do you think they will spring up at your call? Oh, no. It is one thing to obtain money to keep a man, to obtain a free passage for him, and a station where he may be maintained, but another thing to find your man.

And you may lose your men because you are not looking for them, you may pass over the men whom God would honor most, because they come not up to your standard of scholastic attainments or oratorical gift. They might come up to that by and by. You striving together with prayer, with sympathy and interest in their welfare, God would enrich them, and then you might find a phalanx of heroes who should be like the old guard who never could surrender, but in every battle upon which they should enter would drive their foemen before them, even to the ends of the earth.

**III.** The last point is one upon which I would briefly but very earnestly preach to myself and to all here assembled. If it be true, and I am sure it is, that the healthiness of the church at home is vitally connected with the success of the Word of God as preached abroad, then, dear brothers and sisters, let us remember that it must also have a connection with **OUR OWN PERSONAL STANDING IN THE SIGHT OF GOD.**

Truth is like the crystal, which retains its shape even though it be broken almost to an invisible atom. And so the truth that our success depends upon the whole church is equally sure, when we bring it down to this, that, our success in a measure depends upon the vitality, healthiness, and Godliness of each individual.

If you were as a Christian, my brother, a separate and distinct organism—a body entirely separate from every one else—you might be never so sick and no one else would suffer, but you are not so. Remember that you are a member of *His* body, of *His* flesh, and of *His* bones, and we hold it to be a precious fact, that if one member suffer, all the members suffer, if one member rejoice, all the members



share the joy. Must it not equally be true, that if one member be unhealthy, the unhealthiness of that member does to a degree taint the whole?

The church had all things common in the apostles' days in temporals, to this day she has all things common in spirituals. We all draw from the same treasury, on the other hand we ought to contribute to the same. If you contribute less, there is less in the treasury, if your efforts be more feeble than they should be, the efforts of the whole church are the feebler. Depend upon it, if there are no electric unions between man and man, there are such spiritual unions that the thoughts, acts, and words of any one man do in a degree, however inappreciable to our senses, affect the deeds and actions of every living man, and perhaps of every man that ever shall live to the end of this earthly dispensation.

There is no end to a word, it is an infinite thing. It is like the stone that is dropped into the lake—the circles are ever-widening. So your influence for good or evil knows no bound. It may be but little upon one individual, but then that individual prolongs it upon another, and he upon another still, till the pulse of time, nay, of eternity, may be made to throb through something that you have said or done.

You may work an evil work which shall tremble in the flames of hell forever and ever, or you may do a good work, which, under God may glisten in the light of glory throughout eternity. There is no limit to the influence of any man, and certainly there is no possibility of your staying that influence altogether, and of making yourself so distinct that you are independent of another.

Look then you cold, you careless ones, look you on this—you are not clear, you have helped to spoil the church. Next time you go abroad to find fault, remember that you share in the cause of that fault. Next time you mourn the church's prayerlessness, remember that it is your own prayerlessness that helps to make up the bulk of the church's lack. Next time you would complain of any minister's dullness, or of any church's want of energy, oh! reflect, it is your own dullness, your own want of energy, that helps to swell the rolling tide.

If every man mended one, all would be mended, if every man had but one soul stirred, and that soul his own, the whole church would be stirred up. If it were possible for every member of the church to be sound, how could any part of the body be sick? If every individual were what he should be, how could there be any complaints?

We have grown into the habit of praying for the church as if she were a colossal culprit, which we would tie up, and then take the ten-thronged whip of the law and pull off thongfull after thongfull of the quivering flesh, while all the while the real culprit is escaping, namely—ourselves—our own individual selves.

I do feel more and more the necessity of looking at the souls of men in the light of my own responsibility to them. I do not want to look at the maps sometimes published by the Society, with red and green marks, showing where there is light. I like to look at, and have a map where I have been a light. I would rather look at London, not in the light of what any particular society or its agency can do for it, but in the light of what *I* can do for it, and so each of you ought to look on his fellow man.

No society ever thought of taking your responsibility on itself, if it did so, or if you ever thought so, you have both been mistaken. Responsibilities to God for the souls of men is cast on each one of us, and no contribution, however liberal, can ever shield us from the obligation. We must stand, each man for himself, and hear the "Well done good and faithful servant," or else "Thou wicked and slothful servant."

My dear Christian friends—members of our churches—are you doing all you can for the souls of men? You cannot save them, but God the Holy Spirit can make you the instruments of their salvation. When you hear the bell tolling tomorrow for some one who lived in your street, can you go into the cemetery, and can you stand there and look at the grave and say, "I did all that was in the power of any mortal man for that man's salvation"?

*No. You cannot.* I am afraid that none of us, or but very few, could say, when we hear of the death of friends, "If that man perish, I did not leave a single stone unturned." No, we might say we have done *something*, but we could not say that we have done all that we might have done.

And to conclude—that I may discharge this solemn responsibility myself in some measure—are there not many in this congregation who are still unconverted? We talk about heathens—there are heathens here. You have heard the name of Jesus these many years, but you are no more Christian tonight than the Khoikhoi in his kraal, perhaps further off from the kingdom of heaven than he, because you have become more hardened in heart by rejecting the Gospel of Christ—a sin he has never committed, seeing he has never known it.

Ah! my hearers, in this place there have been hundreds of souls brought to Jesus. There is not a pew in this ancient Tabernacle which could not tell stories of grace. If it could but speak, it would say, “Such and such a broken-hearted penitent sat there.” These walls, if they could cry aloud, could tell how many sighs and groans they have heard and how many precious tears they have seen trickling from the eyes of converted men and women.

And is there not one here tonight who shall yet be saved? Remember, you are lost and ruined, ruined utterly, helplessly, and hopelessly. So far as you yourself are concerned, there is no hope of your salvation. But there is help laid on One who is mighty to save, even Jesus Christ. Look out of yourself to Him, and you are saved. Cast away all self-confidence and repose on Jesus and your spirit lives. The soul-quickenings words are, “Believe and live.”

Oh! may the Lord enable you now to trust Jesus and you shall be saved, be your sins never so many. The hour which sees you look to Christ, sees sin’s black garment all unbound and cast away. The hour which sees your eye salute the bleeding Savior, sees the eyes of God looking down on you with manifest complacency and joy. “He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved,” be his sins never so many, “He that believeth not shall be damned,” be his sins never so few.

I would earnestly exhort those who feel their need of Jesus, those who are “weary and heavy-laden, lost and ruined by the fall,” now to take the Savior, even *now*, for He is yours. You have a personal right to Him, as surely as your hearts are willing to receive Him, you have nothing of your own, Christ is yours, take Him, His grace is free as the air. Take of this water of life which saves. Drink of it, no one can deny you, drink even to the full, and there shall be joy in heaven, and joy on earth *over* sinners saved. May the Lord add His blessing for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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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](http://www.spurgeongems.org).