

GRACE REVIVING ISRAEL

NO. 342

A SERMON
DELIVERED AT TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD CHAPEL
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*“I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.
His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon.
They that dwell under his shadow shall return;
they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.”*
Hosea 14:5-7

IN reading this passage, does it ever fail to charm you? How full of beauty, and how full of poetry it is! Every word is a figure. Fair flowers that adorn, and corn that enriches the fields, the olive tree and the vine, the scent of the wine of Lebanon, and all rich things are here gathered and clustered together, to set forth the beauty of Israel under the reviving influences of God’s favor. And as this one portion of Sacred Writ is full of poetry, the like holds good of all the Word of God.

There is no book so poetic in its character as the Book of Inspiration. We had rather, for poetry’s sake, lose all the books that have ever been written by all the poets that ever lived, than lose the sacred Scriptures, yea, if a collection could be made of all the gems of all the noted books, could they all be bound into one volume, there could not be found so many beauties as lie here, some of them are hidden, and others of them manifest, in this most blessed volume of Revelation.

Altogether apart from the sublimity of the matters treated, and the glory of the doctrines, the style itself is enough to make the Book precious to every reader. It is a wondrous book, it is the Book of God, yea, as Herbert says, “The god of books.” It is a book full of stars, every page blazes with light, from almost every sentence there beams forth some beautiful metaphor, some glorious figure.

In expounding the words of the text, we shall observe, first, *the promise of grace made to Israel, notwithstanding Israel’s sin*, “I will be as the dew unto Israel.” Secondly, *the influences of divine grace sweetly set forth in divers metaphors*, and thirdly, *the effect of divine grace upon those around*, “They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.”

I. Here is A PROMISE OF GRACE MADE TO THE CHRISTIAN, “I will be as the dew unto Israel.”

I need not remind you that the Christian (under the similitude of Israel, as I shall presently show you), is here compared to a plant, a plant which cannot be watered by any water that is to be found on earth, a plant which needs heavenly watering, even the dew from above. Hypocrites may be watered by natural religion.

Formalists may get their supply from the wells and springs of earth, but the Christian is a plant which can only be supported by dew from heaven. He feels that though the river of Egypt might be turned to his roots, he could not grow, though all the water in its floods, and though the ocean itself might be brought to irrigate him, yet he could get no genial moisture, no true growing power, from all that could be had on earth. He needs to have his dew from heaven.

“Well,” says God to Israel, “thou art of thyself dewless, and sapless, and motionless, and you have no moisture. Thou canst not obtain any of your own, nor can mortals give it thee, but do you stand still where I have planted thee, and I will water thee every moment. I, the Lord will keep thee, I will be as the dew unto thee.” That Eastern figure, *dew*—for it is essentially Eastern, and not so well to be understood in this country—has in it several beauties.

You will notice first of all, that grace, like the dew, *often comes down imperceptibly* into man's heart. When did the dew tell us that it was about to fall? Who ever heard the footsteps of the dew coming down upon the meadow grass? Who ever knew when it was descending? We see it when it has fallen, but who saw it come?

And so with Christianity, it is very often imperceptible in its operations. True it is sometimes like the rattling hail, pelting on the windows, the sinner knows when it comes by stormy convictions, and by troubled feelings within, but quite as often the work of grace in man's heart is like the "still small voice," which few hear, and of which even the man himself is partially unconscious, not as to its operation perhaps, but as to its nature, feeling that there is something in his heart, though not positively sure that it really comes from God.

Christian! despise not spiritual things because you hear not a sound therewith. Much that God does, He does in silence. There is a plant which bursts with the sound of a trumpet, but full many a flower called beautiful, opens in silence, and no man hears the sound thereof. There be some Christians who seem bound to make a noise in the world, they were made for that purpose, but there be far more who have to blush unseen, whose glory it is not to "waste their sweetness," though to perfume "the desert air," and to make it sing and blossom like the garden of the Lord.

Beloved, you may perhaps fancy that you have not grace because it has not come upon you in terrible excitements and in awful convictions. I beseech you, do not distrust the power of grace because it has stolen imperceptibly into your hearts. Mark the promise, "I will be as the dew unto Israel,"

Again, if the dew is sometimes imperceptible, *it is always sufficient*. If God waters the earth with dew, foolish would be the man who should go afterwards to water after his Maker. And God's grace, when it comes upon a man's heart, is all-sufficient. What He gives unto Israel, His own chosen people, is always enough for them. They sometimes think they want something more, they never really do, and what else they want, or think they want, it is better for them to still want. God is sufficient.

And the dew too, when it is required, is *constant*. God may, if He pleases, withhold the dew, that He may make a nation fear before Him, but He usually sends the dew in its appointed time, and each morning beholds the pearly drops shed forth from the hand of God, and so, Christian, God will be your dew. As you want grace, so shall you find it.

*"All needful grace will God bestow,
And crown that grace with glory too;
He gives us all things, and withholds
No real good from upright souls."*

But it is superfluous for me to tell you what is the meaning of this figure. You all know it ten times better than I do, or at least you ought, for I am sure this text has been preached from times enough, and you are always hearing the metaphor used. Like many of God's metaphors, it is so simple, so glorious, it arrests our attention at first sight—"I will be as the dew unto Israel." Instead of explaining therefore, allow me to question you concerning it.

Are you, my dear friends, of the number here mentioned who belong to Israel? You ask me what is meant by Israel. I reply that historically Israel means God's elect, His chosen ones, "Israel have I loved, but Esau have I hated." But as you cannot tell that you are God's elect, except by signs and marks, I must tell you another meaning of Israel. *Israel* means *a man of prayer*. The name of "Israel" was given to Jacob, because he "wrestled with the angel and prevailed." Are you a man of prayer? Come now, answer the question, each one of you for yourselves. Are you men of prayer, and women of prayer?

Alas! some of you may use a form of prayer, but it has no life in it. You ask, do I object to forms of prayer? I answer, no. I believe that sometimes forms of prayer, molded according to the mind of the Spirit, are offered up with the vital breath of the same Spirit of God. Far be it from me to say that because you use a form of prayer, therefore you do not pray at all, this however I remind you, your form

of prayer is merely a vehicle that moves not except as it is drawn. Of itself it is like a steam engine, motionless till the furnace is heated, or rather, it is like the carriage which is drawn by the steam engine, being linked thereto with chains.

A form of prayer is a heavy material thing, which prayer has to drag after it. It is no help to prayer, but rather a burden to it. There may be prayer with the huge cumbrous thing called the form attached, but the form is distinct in every sense from the power. The prayer is the spirit, the life, the desire, the wish, the agonizing panting with God to obtain the blessing.

I ask you not whether you use a form of prayer, or whether you utter extempore prayers, for you may speak extemporaneously in prayer, and talk as much nonsense, ay, and a great deal more than you would if you used a prescribed form, you may avoid formality, and become frivolous. It is not uttering spontaneous words that is prayer any more than repeating a litany. But I ask you, do you pray? If you are prayerless, then you have no right to call yourselves God's elect. God's people are a praying people. They are an Israel, a wrestling race, and only unto them the promise is made—"I will be unto them as the dew unto Israel."

Yet one more hint, Israel *may represent those who have chosen a better portion*, who have given up the mess of pottage, who have sold that to "the men whose portion is in this life," and are looking to the recompense in another world. Are you, my hearer, one of those who are content with a mess of pottage? Is it enough for you if your dish is filled with dainty meat, your wine cup full, your income steady, and your back clothed with goodly raiment, and do you then care nothing for the things to come? Is your whole soul set on the things of earth? Then I warn you. Though you may talk about being elect, you are none of God's elect unless you have set yours affections on things above and not on things on the earth.

If you are trying to make the best of things in this world, rejecting or even slighting that one object which ought to be your only one, to make the best of the next world, and do not leave this in God's hand for Him to take care of, you are none of His. Unless you have renounced the pottage, and taken Christ to be your all and heaven your portion, you have no well-founded hope, and you have no right to take this promise to yourself—"I will be as the dew unto Israel." But you who abhor the world, you who spend your time in prayer, you may take this to yourself, and in your most barren and dry moments, you may urge this at the mercy throne—"I will be as the dew unto Israel."

II. THE INFLUENCES OF DIVINE GRACE IN THE SOUL ARE HERE SET FORTH IN METAPHOR—"I will be as the dew unto Israel."

What is the effect? Although grace is imperceptible in its coming, it is discernible enough in its fruits.

The very first effect of grace in the heart is that *it makes us grow upward*. We shall "grow as the lily." This refers to the daffodil lily, which on a sudden, in a night, will spring up. There may have been no lilies at all in a field, but after a shower of rain the lilies may be seen springing up everywhere, and the ground will appear perfectly covered with their yellow hue. Mark, that is what grace does in a man's soul. Wherever grace comes, its first operation is to make us grow up.

It is a remarkable fact, that young Christians grow upward faster than any other Christians. They grow upward in their flaming love, mighty zeal, ardent hopes, and longing expectations. Sometimes indeed our old friends step in and say, "Ah! young man, you are growing a great deal too fast, you are springing too rapidly upward, you will have a bitter frost to nip you a little presently." Very well, that is true enough, but that frost will come quite soon enough, without any of your frosty breath going before it.

Let the young grow when they can, do not give them a piercing nip with your freezy fingers. Let them thrive while they can. You may tell us we shall hurt our constitutions, and by and by we shall not be so zealous, nevertheless let us alone till our constitutions are hurt, suffer us to be zealous while we can. You know very well, with all your prudence, you would give a king's ransom if you could tomorrow have your juvenile ardor over again, and yet you quarrel with us because we grow upward.

Why it is the effect of grace to grow upwards. The very first thing that grace does for us is to make us grow upward in *love*. Oh! what sweet love that is that we have in the early morning of life! There is not a prayer meeting, but we are there. There is not a lecture, but oh how sweet it is to us. There is scarcely a good deed to be done, but we must be engaged in it. We are so earnest, we are growing so fast. “They shall grow as the lily,” that is the promise. So when you see the promise fulfilled, my dear aged friends, do not be peevish or rebuke the young people because they grow up and flourish in the courts of the Lord’s house.

There is a second effect. After they have been growing upward, *they have to grow downward*. While “he shall grow as the lily,” he shall “cast forth his roots as Lebanon” likewise. God will not have His people all flower and foliage, He wants them also to take deep root and throw out strong fibers. After a few years, when we have been growing up in ardent piety, it usually happens that some doubt crosses the mind, or some affliction comes, which, if it does not chill our ardor, yet sometimes checks our energy, and we do not grow so fast as we should.

Well, what is the effect? Are we really hurt or injured thereby? I trow not. Growing down is quite as good as growing up. I will not say it is better. The most blessed growth in grace is to be growing up and growing down—to be rooted in humility, and yet growing up in zeal, but usually the two do not come together.

Sometimes we grow up, and at other times we grow down. We are such poor mortals, we cannot attend to two things at once. So sure as ever we take to shooting up, the devil comes and tries to prevent us from growing down, and if we are growing down, he generally keeps us from growing up. Well, if we cannot do two things at once, what a mercy it is that we can do one at a time, by God’s grace!

After having grown up, the Christian grows down, “he casts forth his roots as Lebanon.” That is, he gets less in his own esteem. He was nothing once, but he now begins to be less than nothing. He thought humbly of himself before, but now he thinks worse of himself than he ever did. If you ask him now what is his character, although he said he was “a poor sinner and nothing at all” before, now he will tell you that he thinks he is the poorest of sinners, for he has not grown one atom the richer all the time he has served his Lord. He is still poor in spirit, and perhaps poorer than he ever was. Blessed is it to grow downward!

And let me remind you, my dear friends that growing downward is a very excellent thing to promote *stability*. Perhaps that is the exact meaning of the passage. When we are first brought to God, we are like the lily, wafted about by the wind, afterwards we grow downwards, and become firm. I am fully convinced that the prevailing lack of this age is not so much in respect to growing upwards as growing downwards.

Whenever I look abroad on the aggregate assemblies of religious people, I am obliged to hold a large number of my hearers in supreme contempt. Are you not one day crowding to hear me preach what I think the truth, and another day cramming a place where a man is preaching the very opposite to what I hold to be true? The fact is, some of you have no idea of what fundamental truth in theology is.

The popular cry is for liberality of sentiment, and if a man happens to say a hard word against anything he thinks essentially wrong, he is accounted a bigot directly. Many of you shrink from the imputation of bigotry, as if it were more awful than heresy in regard to the faith. You would as soon be called a common informer as be called a bigot. I beseech you, do not be appalled at a taunt. Do not be a bigot, but do not be ashamed of being called one.

A man ought to have stable principles, and not be always shifting about from one set of opinions to another. He ought not to be hearing a Calvinistic minister in the morning and saying, that is good, and then going in the evening to hear an Arminian minister and saying, that is good.

We are often told by some ministers in their drawing rooms that God will not ask in the day of judgment what a man believed, for if his life has been correct, it will not much matter what doctrines he held. I am at a loss for the authority on which they base such laxness. I wonder who told them that was the truth. I have read my Bible through, and I have never found a text that could absolve my judgment

from its allegiance to my Maker. I hold that to believe wrongly is equally as great a sin in the sight of heaven as to act wrongly.

Error is a crime before God, and though there is liberty of conscience, so far as man and man are concerned, there is no liberty of conscience with God. You are not free to believe the truth, or to believe error just as you like. You are bound to believe what God says is truth, and on your soul's peril be it, that you believe two things that are contrary, or confound the positive and the negative, where *faith* is the evidence of justification, and *unbelief* the seal of a sinner's doom. I think God will say to you at last, "Man, I gave you brains, I endowed you with reason, how could you suppose yourself less responsible for the use of your brains than for the use of your tongue?"

One man says, "Yes," another says "No," and because it is the fashion to call out, "Liberality, liberality, liberality," you do assent to both, and joining the crowd you are sincere in neither. You ought rather to say, "I believe that what I hold is true, and if I did not, I would not avow it, and believing it to be true, I cannot hold that the opposite is true, nor can I be continually going to hear one doctrine at one time and another at another, my conscience demands that I distinguish between things that differ."

My dear friends, do try to grow down, strive to get a good hold of the rocky doctrines of free grace, do not give them up, keep fast hold of them. When you believe a thing upon genuine conviction, do not shrink from the avowal, because an ill name is applied to it, say rather,

*"Should all the forms that men devise
Assault my faith with treacherous art,
I'd call them vanity and lies,
And bind the Gospel to my heart."*

Well, what next? After a Christian has become confirmed in his doctrine, and has received the truth in the love of it, what next? Why the next thing is, *he makes a profession*. "His branches shall spread." He has been a lily straight up, with no branches at all, but now his roots have struck deep into the ground like the cedars of Lebanon, and the next thing he does is to send forth branches. He says, "I am a Christian, I cannot keep it a secret, I must let somebody know I am a child of God." He goes to a prayer meeting, and he is asked to pray. There is one branch spread. He goes to join a church, there is another branch. He sits down to the Lord's supper, there is another branch.

And so the little lily, which was at first but a tiny plant, now grows into a tree, and his branches spread. That is a blessed effect of grace, believe me, when it leads you to come forth from your obscurity, and let the world know what you are.

I have no patience with some of you who talk about being secret Christians. I should think a man a deserter if he were to say, "Well, I am a soldier, but I do not like anybody to know it." I should think that he did not belong to one of our good regiments surely, or he would not be ashamed of his colors.

But there are many nowadays that you scarce know whether they are Christians. Shall I tell you why? The awful fact is that they are *not* Christians. "No man lighteth a candle and putteth it under a bushel." You know what the consequence would be if he did—it would burn a hole through as sure as it was a candle, and no man can have grace in his heart, and keep it a secret. I am sure it must come out, it is one of the things that cannot be concealed.

You shall not tell me you can walk into worldly company, and never let it be known that you are a Christian, that you can live for months in a house, and keep it dark that a Christian is living there. If that is the case, I tell you the angels do not know it, for it is not a fact.

He that is a child of God will be discovered, his conduct will be different from the rest of men. "Thy speech betrayeth thee," said the maid to Peter. And our speech will betray us, if we are disciples. I beseech you, let me stir you up, my young friends, to make a more open profession of your faith. The Savior has done much for you, do not be ashamed of Him, I implore you, but begin to make a profession of Christ Jesus, your Lord.

Having joined the church, and made a profession, what is the next effect of grace for the believer then? Why it is to make him *beautiful* as “the olive tree.” The most beautiful thing in the world is a Christian. Shall I tell you what kind of beauty he has? His beauty is the beauty of an olive tree, and that consists first *in its fruitfulness*. The most beautiful olive tree a man can grow is the one that bears the most, and the most beautiful Christian in the church is the one that abounds most in good works. Besides, the olive is an evergreen, and so is the Christian. He has an olive-green beauty. He has a beauty which does not fade away, as it does from other trees, but lives forever.

Ah! my friends, we sometimes put one of our members before others because of his wealth, and at times we show a little partiality to another because of his eloquence, and to another because of his talents, but I take it that God ranks us all according to our fruitfulness. The most beautiful tree in a garden is the one that bears the most fruit, and there is a promise given to a Christian that after his branches have spread, his beauty shall be as the olive tree, that is, he shall grow and be laden with fruit.

The olive tree, I have told you before, is evergreen, and so is the beauty of the Christian. Alas for the beautiful Christians we have in some of our places of worship on Sunday! Glorious Christians! Oh! if they could be packed up and sent to heaven just as they are, or provided their appearances were true indications of their state, what a blessed thing it would be! But alas, alas! on the Monday they have not the same sort of dress they had on Sunday, and therefore they have not the same kind of actions.

Oh! dear friends, there is so much mere Sunday religion in these days! Now, I like a Monday religion, and a Tuesday religion, and a Wednesday religion, and a Thursday religion, and a Friday religion, and a Saturday religion. I do not think the religion of the pulpit, or the religion of the pen, is to be relied upon. I think it is the religion of a draper’s shop, the religion of a corn exchange, religion in a house, religion in the street, and the religion of a fireside, that proves us to be God’s children.

But how would some of you come off if you were weighed in these balances? Fine fellows, with your feathers on, on Sunday, but poor creatures when you are in your undress, in your religious *dishabille* on Monday! You are not well arrayed then, but ah! if you were Christians, you would be always well arrayed, yea, you would be always beautiful as the olive tree.

Again, “His smell shall be as Lebanon.” Now, I take it the smell means the report which will go out concerning a man. As you walk up Lebanon, it is said that the flowers of the aromatic herbs there cast up a most delicious perfume. You need not touch a flower—you can smell it at a distance. And so with the true Christian. Without seeking for it, he will obtain a blessed name among his brethren, and some name also among the world. “His beauty shall be as the olive tree.”

Once more, “His smell *shall be* as Lebanon.” Did you ever know a flower at all concerned about its odor, or about what people would think of it? Did you ever hear a rose have a lawsuit with a thorn, because the thorn said the rose did not smell sweetly? No, certainly not. The rose went silently on, casting up its perfume, and left Mr. Thorn alone.

Now, at times, with all ministers and with all Christians, there will be all manner of reports and hard sayings, but I have found a great gain by letting the fellows alone. When they are tired, they will have done, I dare say, and I am sure they will not much hurt us. If there be anything amiss in us, we are much obliged to them, and we will try and mend it, but if they have lied about us it is a satisfaction to us, as far as we are concerned, to know that they are liars, and we pray God that they may not have a portion in “the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.”

Beloved, you never need to be very much concerned what men shall say of your character, only take care that in the midst of reproach you are without guile or guilt. Live, live, live—that is the way to beat all slanderers and all calumniators. Keep straight on with what you think is right, and in due time your light shall burst forth as the morning, and your brightness as the sun in its strength. “His beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon.” Wherever the Christian goes he will cast a perfume about him, and when he is gone he will leave some savor behind which will be remembered.

III. Thus far we have spoken concerning the benefits of grace to the Christian himself, more briefly I will now address you CONCERNING THE BENEFITS OF GRACE TO OTHERS.

The text says, “They that dwell under his shadow shall return.” I am sure, my dear friends, if you have Christian principle in your heart, you will not like a selfish religion. Though you will hold it to be a duty continually to examine yourself, and to see that you also are sound in the faith, you will not confine your religion to yourself. You may perhaps take the maxim that Christianity should begin at home, but you will never think of improving on it by thinking that it ought to end there.

I like an expansive religion. I should not like to attend a chapel where all the preaching was meant for me—where all I heard comforted me. I should not like to go where there was not a scrap for me, but all for my brethren, nor where there was not something for the poor sinner. I could not afford to attend a place where I should always hear that which was exclusively for the saint, or exclusively for the sinner. If a man left half his congregation without a word, I should doubt whether he would give me the right one.

But there are some people so selfish that, provided they go to heaven, it is enough—they are in the covenant. They are the dear people of God—generally dear at any price, a peculiar people—awfully peculiar they are certainly, they are so different from other people—there is no doubt about that. They say it is equal whether God ordains man’s life or man’s death. They would sit still to hear men damned, and I do believe they would sing a song over hell itself and hail its jubilee.

They seem to have no feeling for anyone but themselves. They have dried the heart out of them by some cunning sleight of hand, they have taken away the marrow from the bones of godliness, and wrapped themselves entirely up in self. But true Christianity will be expansive and care for others.

Come then, you men of generous hearts, you of glowing charity, here is a promise for you—you have some who dwell under your shadow. Are you a minister? your people sit under your shadow on the Sabbath. Are you a father? your children come and dwell under your shadow. Are you a master? your workmen dwell under your shadow, you have often prayed for their salvation, you have often yearned for the conversion of their souls.

Mother! you have often pleaded for the deliverance of a daughter from her sin. “They that dwell under his shadow shall return.” If you want to do good to your neighbors, and to bring them to Christ, set your own heart much upon the Savior. The more of Christ a man has, the more useful will he be in his day.

If you were to look out all the ministers who have been useful, you will not find they were distinguished by great talent so much as by great grace. God can bless a poor unsophisticated countryman to the salvation of hundreds if he has grace, and a man ever so learned may preach in vain, with great periods and stupendous sentences, if he has none. Do you, then, seek to prove that promise—“I will be as the dew unto Israel,” and so doing, you will get this other promise fulfilled—“They that dwell under your shadow shall return; shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.”

I have no time to dwell upon these points—“They shall revive as the corn,” or “They shall return,” but I must just make a remark upon that sweet thought—“They shall grow as the vine.” We will transplant the Eastern metaphor into Western soil.

Vines, with us, grow up by the side of walls, they could not grow up themselves if there were not some prop against which they could lean for support. Now, I have often thought this is an explanation of that text—“Train up a child in the way he should go.” Do you try all you can by God’s grace to train up your child like you would a vine, and here is the promise. “It shall grow as the vine.”

Oh! I have thought, what a pretty sight it is to see an aged Christian, who in his youth, was a Sabbath school teacher, still a member of the church, and there are nine or ten young men in the church perhaps, and they walk up and down the chapel, and go and talk to him and comfort him. Do you not see how that is? Why, when the young man was a strong oak, he let those pieces of ivy grow around him, and those young Christians entwined and grew around him like the vine, and now he has become an old man the wind would come and blow the oak down, but the ivy that is twisted around it shields him from the blast and keeps him upright.

So with aged Christians, when they have served their God well in their day and generation they shall have comforts from others who have grown around them like the vine, and shall be sheltered by them in their old age. May those of us who are young always seek to cheer the aged! Let us never despise them, let us try as much as we can to grow around them, that we may tower upwards by their means and that they may be comforted by our adherence. “They shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine.”

Lastly, “The scent thereof shall be as Lebanon.” The Christian man shall not allow others to grow up by him, but by a godly conversation he shall spread the sweetness of perfume wherever he goes. I know some dear saints of the Lord who, if they come to my house for five minutes, leave a refreshing savor behind them for five weeks. They come and talk to me of the things of the kingdom, and I have not forgotten their sweet influence on my spirit for a long time after they have gone.

It is said of the wine of Lebanon, that if you pour some into a glass the flavor of it will remain for a long time after the wine is gone. And you know of old wine casks, that it is long before the taste of the wine departs out of them. So with the old Christian, he has got a savory conversation, he talks of the things of the kingdom, and leaves a perfume behind him which lasts for weeks afterwards, and you say, “Oh how I wish that man of God would come to my house again, what a sweet savor there was about him!”

This is not the case with every one. Many of you, when you go and see your friends, sit and tittle tattle all the afternoon, and on the Lord’s day you break the Sabbath as much as if you had sought diversion in the park, although you cry out so much against those who go there. How many there are who utterly waste their time by unprofitable chat in their own houses!

Let me solemnly warn you concerning this—“They that feared the LORD spoke often one to another”—not about one another. When you meet together, there is too little talk about Christ Jesus, the glory of His kingdom, and the greatness of His power. Ministers come in for their share of fulsome praise or offensive scandal, but brethren, these things ought not to be so.

Beloved, if you are true Christians—that is the point—you will leave a scent behind you in your conversation, and when you are dead, there will still be a sweet savor left. Ah! there was good old wine in this pulpit once, there was good old wine in this house of God once, and I can see the stains of it here now.

Yea, there is the perfume of holy Whitefield in this place tonight, I am sure there is. I can fancy his shade looking down this evening upon this hallowed spot. I am sure he rejoices to see the multitude keeping holyday here, and there is to me, somehow, a kind of solemn awe throughout this place. I wonder how I dared to come here, to stand where he once stood, “whose shoes latchet I am unworthy to unloose.”

Oh! dear friends, it is something to leave a scent behind you as long as he has done. You may all do it in a measure. In one of Whitefield’s sermons (I like to read them continually, for I can find none like them), he speaks of some young man who said, “I will not live in my old father’s house, for there is not a chair or a table there but smells of his piety.”

That is what you should endeavor to do, to make your house so smell of piety, that a wicked man cannot stop in it, to make it so holy, that without obtrusively telling your sentiments, it should make ungodly men uncomfortable in it, you should so live, that your name in your private circles, if not elsewhere, may be mentioned with honor, and it may be said of you, “Ah! he was one who reflected his Master’s image, and who sought to adorn the doctrine of God his Savior in all things.”

I may have spoken to you in what you may think an odd style tonight, but I have spoken earnestly right on, I never pretend to preach to you eloquently, but I have only thrown out thoughts I wish you to remember, and God grant that you may find them to your profit.

But I am well aware that I am preaching to a great many who know nothing about the things of which I have been speaking. What shall I say to them?

Oh! my dear hearers, I should like to strike beneath the floor of this pulpit, and get Whitefield to rise up and preach to you for five minutes. How he would plead with you! how he would stretch forth his

hands, the tears rolling down his cheeks, and how he would cry out in his usual impassioned manner “Come, sinners, come, God help you to come to Jesus Christ!” and then he would go on to tell you how the heart of Christ is big enough to take big sinners in, and how the blackest and the filthiest—the devil’s castaways even, are welcome to Christ.

And I think I see him pressing the poor convinced sinners into the fold. I think I see him doing as the angels did with Lot, taking them by the shoulders, and saying, “Run, run for your life, look not behind you, stay not in all the plain!” I cannot do it as he could, but nevertheless, if these lips had the language which the heart would speak, I would plead with you for Jesus’ sake, that you would be reconciled to God.

I have, I trust, some here who are crying for a Savior, they feel they want Him, God has brought them to this state, they feel their need of Him. Sinner! if you want Christ, Christ wants you, if you have a desire after Christ, Christ has a desire after you. What say you, poor soul, will you take Christ just as He is?

Come! bundle out all your righteousness, come! pack up all your goodness and cast it out of doors. Take Jesus, Jesus only, to be your salvation, and I tell you, though you were black as night, and filthy as a demon, while you are yet in the land of the living, if you do now take Christ as your Savior, that Christ will be enough for you, enough to clothe you, enough to purge you, enough to perfect you, and enough to land you safely in heaven.

But if you are self-righteous, I have no Gospel for you except this—

***“Not the righteous, not the righteous,
Sinners, Jesus, came to save.”***

Sinners, of all sorts and sizes! sinners black, sinners blacker, sinners blackest! sinners filthy, sinners filthier, sinners filthiest! sinners bad, sinners worse, sinners worst! all you who can take to yourselves the name of sinners! all of you who can subscribe to that title! I, in God’s name, preach to you that “He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him,” and if by faith and prayer you are enabled to come to Him this night, there is not a sinner who feels his need of a Savior who may not this night have that Savior.

God has given Him first, and He will not deny Him second. He who is freely proclaimed in revelation, is freely commended to you in ministration.

***“True relief and true repentance,
Every grace that brings you nigh;
Without money,
Come to Jesus Christ, and buy.”***

O God! save souls! O God! save souls! Amen! Amen!

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.