

A PROMISE FOR US AND FOR OUR CHILDREN NO. 564

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 10, 1864
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen:
thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee:
Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen.
For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground:
I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring:
and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses.
One shall say, I am the LORD’s; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob;
and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel.”
Isaiah 44:1-5*

WE ought not to overlook the first and immediate meaning of these words. There can be no doubt that we have here a promise made to God’s ancient people, the Jews. Whatever their sins may have been, God has not forever cast them away. They have become like the dry and thirsty desert, but the day will yet dawn when God’s sovereign love shall again visit them, and His Spirit shall distil upon them until Israel shall be glorious among the nations, and her children shall be multiplied and saved.

O that the long-expected day would hasten! Break, hallowed morning, for earth’s watchers are growing weary! The twelve tribes right longingly wait for the appearance of Messiah the Prince, and we also who believe in Jesus, joyfully expect His advent, and the gathering together of Israel. How great will be the day of the Lord’s gracious visitation! “For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?” “If the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fullness?”

The vision tarries, but it will surely come. The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it. Be it ours to rejoice in that ancient promise, “There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.”

Leaving this interesting view of the text, we will meditate thereon, for practical purposes of comfort to ourselves.

Observe that the text begins with the word “Yet.” What an ominous word as to the past! What a cheering word as to the future. “Yet.” “Yet.” What black words are those which come before it? Surely all is not well. Look at the preceding verses and see. God’s people were represented as being in a sadly backsliding state. They had lost their love to the service of God. They neglected His altar. They brought Him no thank offerings, nay, they had fallen into a state of sin until they wearied God with their iniquity. Consequently they fell into a condition of sorrow. God gave them up to the curse and the reproach.

It may be that such is our case this morning, though we are God’s people. Perhaps our soul lies cleaving unto the dust. We have forgotten to run with diligence in the way of God’s commandments. We have fallen into a lukewarm state, we are following afar off.

It may be that we have even fallen into sin, and sitting in this house of prayer we confess with Pharaoh’s butler, “I do remember my faults this day.” It is very possible that we have been made too smart for our sins. God may have hidden His face from us, our faith may be flagging, our graces may be withering. It will be so, it must be so, when we forsake our God. If we leave the flowing fountain to trust in broken cisterns, we shall soon know the bitterness of thirst.

“Yet.” “Yet,” says the text—“yet,” though you have fallen into this state, do not despair. Though you have transgressed very foully, do not think God has cast you away. “*Yet* now hear, O Jacob, my servant, and Israel, whom I have chosen.” *Yet*—the word is a star of the morning, prophetic of brighter rays—*yet* I love you; *yet* you are My chosen; *yet* My loving heart is true to you; *yet* will I return unto you in favor; *yet* shall you rejoice in Me and be filled with My goodness.

Come then, brothers and sisters, if we have wandered never so far, let this word sound like the shepherd’s call to bring us back. You need not always be sad. There is no necessity that you should be always weak in righteousness and abundant in sin—*yet* the promise is yours, *yet* God loves you, *yet* He invites you to come to Him. Return now and seek His face once more.

You have lived in the feverish lowlands, yet climb the mountains. You have grovelled in the dust, yet ascend as on eagles’ wings. You have been covered with sackcloth, yet put on your beautiful array. Your neglect of the promises has not made them the less sure. The key of your faith may be rusted, but it will still open the door of mercy. You may have been unbelieving, but God abideth faithful. Up, and enjoy your sure inheritance. Let us feel comforted by the very first word of the text, and let it encourage us to lay hold, despite our own unworthiness, upon the great promise of the Lord.

The Lord, in order to comfort His people and bring them out of their present state, first, *reminds them of what He has done for them*. Secondly, *He repeats His promise of what He will do*. And thirdly, *He adds to this a most gracious and full promise of what He will do for their offspring*.

I. First then, and O may the Lord refresh our memories by revealing to us the way by which He has led us—first of all HE COMFORTS HIS PEOPLE BY THE REMEMBRANCE OF WHAT HE HAS DONE FOR THEM.

Come, my brethren, reach down for your biographies, turn over your diaries, Go back with me a little while to that spot where you first knew the Savior, then march on along the way by which the Lord has led you, till you reach the day and hour which found you in the house of God, listening to His promise.

1. Taking the text as our guide, let us notice first the grace we have experienced *in its practical effect*. The practical effect of divine grace in our case has been to make us God’s *servants*—“Yet now hear, O Jacob, *my servant*.” We may be unfaithful servants, we certainly are unprofitable ones, but blessed be His name, if not awfully deceived, we are His true servants.

We were once the servants of sin and the slaves of our own passions, but He who made us free has now taken us into His family and taught us obedience to His will. We can say with David, “I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds.” We do not serve our Master perfectly, but we would if we could.

There are some of His commandments which we forget, but there are none which we would despise. We do, through infirmity, turn aside unto crooked ways, but we find no comfort in them. Our meat and our drink is to do the will of Him who sent us, and our prayer is—

*“Make me to walk in Thy commands,
It is a delightful road;
Nor let my head, nor heart, nor hands,
Offend against my God.”*

Beloved, if God has made us His servants, let us be comforted. It is so great a change, and so wonderful an effect of irresistible grace upon a man to transform him from an heir of wrath into a servant of the living God, that we have herein ground for comfort.

2. Observe again, this grace is *peculiar, discriminating, and distinguishing*. He calls us, “*My chosen*.” We have not chosen Him first, but He has chosen us. If we be God’s servants, we were not always so—to sovereign grace the change must be ascribed. We might have been left, like other men, to continue in sin, and to be rebels against the King of heaven. But the eye of sovereignty singled us out

from among others not more unworthy than we were, and it was the voice of love which said, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love.”

Long before those stars were kindled into flames—long before the sun begun his mighty course—long ere the mountains lifted their hoary heads, or the deep clapped its hands in the tumultuous joy of tempest—long ere time began, or space was created, God had written upon His heart the names of His elect people. He had selected them, never to change His choice. He had united them unto the person of His Son Jesus Christ by a divine decree never to be revoked. He had predestinated them to be conformed unto the image of His Son, and had made them the heirs of all the fullness of His love, His grace, and His glory.

Have you and I been chosen? Can we see the connection between the link of calling and the link of predestination? Have we made our calling sure? If so, we may infer most certainly that we must have been predestinated.

What comfort is here! Would the Lord have loved us so long, and will He cast us away? I know you are dead and barren, and your soul feels heavy, and your sins stare you in the face, but did not your God know all this beforehand? He made the choice, knowing all—why then, should He change His purpose? He knew how stiff-necked you would be. He understood that your heart was evil, and that the imaginations of it would be only evil, and that continually, and yet He loved you!

Ah, my Savior is no fickle lover. He does not feel enchanted for awhile with some gleams of beauty from His church’s eye, and then afterwards cast her off because of her unfaithfulness. Nay, my brethren, He married her in old eternity, and though according to the words of the prophet, she has played the harlot and done evil exceedingly, yet it is written of JEHOVAH, “He hateth putting away.” There is no divorce in the court of heaven. Christ has espoused His people to Him in faithfulness, and they shall know the Lord.

Be this your comfort then, the activity of grace has made you God’s servant. The distinguishing character of grace has made you His chosen.

3. Reflect again, in the light of the text, upon *the ennobling influence of grace*. The people are first called Jacob, but only in the next line they are styled Israel. You and I were but of the common order. If we had boasted of anything we should have been called Jacobs, supplanters, boasting beyond our line. But as Jacob at the brook Jabbok wrestled with the angel and prevailed, and gained the august title of prince—prevailing prince—“For as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed,” even so has grace ennobled us!

It may be that we wear today the common well-worn garb of labor, our names never glitter in the rolls of earth’s mightiest, but we are allied unto the King of kings if the life of God be in our soul. We are of the royal family, we are princes of the blood imperial. We shall take our seats among those lordly spirits who forever dwell before the majesty of the Most High. Priests and kings unto our God has Christ made us by virtue of His own position.

Oh! to think that we who were worse than dogs, should sit amongst the children; that we, who once stood at the swine trough and fain would have filled our belly with the husks, now feed upon the fatted calf, while they dance and make merry. What love is this, that whereas we said, “I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof,” He has been pleased to make our bodies the temples of the Holy Ghost, and God dwells in us and we in Him!

My brethren, what an honor to be one with Christ—to be united to the person of Him who counts it not robbery to be equal with God—to be made at last to sit upon His throne, even as He sits upon His Father’s throne! Why, when I look upon the dignity which belongs to the meanest Christian, the imperial pomp of all emperors and kings sinks into insignificance, and like a shadow melts away. Think of this, my brethren, and despite your low state of grace this morning, take comfort. He would not have made you such mighty ones as you are in Him, if He had not intended to bless you still.

4. Furthermore, the text conducts us onward to notice *the creating and sustaining energy* of that grace. “Thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb.” How did you become

believers in Christ? By any internal energy of your own? Speak, believer, was it your free will that brought you to the Savior's feet, or was it God's free grace? Men may hold free will doctrine as a matter of theory, but you never find a believer hold it as a matter of experience. We can all say—

*“Oh! to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrain'd to be.”*

It was all of Your grace I was brought to obey, while others were suffered to go the downward road. About this you can have no difficulty, for your own experience tells you that you were dead in trespasses and sins, and it must have been something beyond any power of yours that quickened you into spiritual life. Men might as well claim the honors of creation or resurrection as boast of commencing their own spiritual life. The Lord alone shall have the glory of that opening hour of love.

Since that happy day what has sustained you? Has your fire of piety been fed by internal, self-produced fuel? Have you kept yourselves from the power of Satan? My brethren, have you kept yourselves in communion with God? You know that you have not. You are debtors for your soul's daily bread to your Father who is in heaven. Every good thing which you have, you have received from Him. The great Father of lights, with whom is no variableness or shadow of turning, has given you every good and perfect gift which you have received. You have profited in nothing by the flesh, but in all things by the Spirit of the living God.

Taking you from your first conviction and tracking you to the present moment, it has been God's creating and forming. In the womb of conviction He fashioned you, and He has nurtured you until now. Let this be your comfort, if God could quicken you when you were absolutely dead, and if He has kept you until this moment, can He not revive you again? Can He not make that spark again become a flame? Have you fallen too low for Him? Is His arm shortened that He cannot save? Is His ear heavy that He cannot hear? No, He that hath delivered thee aforetime will deliver thee yet again; therefore be thou of good comfort.

5. We will leave this part of the subject when we notice once again that this grace has the characteristic of *intense affection in it*. This is not very plain in our translation, but I think we can make it clear. God gives to His people the title of Jeshurun, which means *the righteous people*, according to some translators, but most interpreters are agreed that it is an affectionate title which God gives to His people. Perhaps it may be considered to be a diminutive of Israel. I do not know that we could pronounce it so as to make it plainly appear here, but very likely it is so—a diminutive of Israel.

Just as fathers and mothers, when they have great affection for their children, will frequently give them an endearing name—shorten their usual name—or call them by a familiar title only used in the family, so in calling Israel Jeshurun, the Lord sets forth His near and dear love. God's grace to us is not merely the mercy of the Good Samaritan towards a poor stranger whom he finds wounded by the way, but it is the love of a mother to her sick child; the fondness of a husband towards a weeping wife; the tenderness of the head towards the wounded members.

O beloved, did you ever try to grasp the thought that God loves you? Whenever I try it, it brings the tears into my eyes and I can go no farther. That the eternal God should pity me I can understand, that He should regard my misery and deliver me I can comprehend, that He should look upon me with eyes of benevolence seems reasonable enough, but that He should love me, love me too with a love infinitely stronger than any love I have to my own children, or to my own spouse. That He should so love me that His own darling Son, the only begotten, was not better loved than I have been, this is a wonder of wonders.

I must not say that Jesus was not as well loved as poor sinful men, but I will say when the question came to this whether those poor sinful but beloved ones should die or Christ should die, He spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all. Oh! what mysterious love, that Christ should suffer that we may go free, that the Father's darling should hang upon the accursed tree and bleed away His

life that we might be received into the eternal bosom of JEHOVAH, and might be forever accepted as the favored ones of His electing love! He loves you. Oh! there is nothing can melt the heart like this—God loves you! And while it melts it strengthens. While God loves me, whom shall I fear? If JEHOVAH has chosen me, if He has set His heart upon me, of whom shall I be afraid? Verily with this I may walk through the valley of the shadow of death and fear no evil. With this in the midst of war I may have confidence. Upon this in famine I shall be fed; and in affliction I shall not be afraid.

Oh! the joy which dwells in the thought that God loves His people. Jesus loved *me*, and gave Himself for me; can you say this, my hearer? If you can, you can say more than Demosthenes or Cicero were ever able to say with all their eloquence.

It may be, as we have said before, that we have fallen into a low sad state this morning and are trying to get ourselves out of it by chastening ourselves with many dark and doleful fears. Now that is not the way to rise from the dust. It is not the law but the Gospel which saves at first. And it is not a legal bondage but a Gospel liberty which can restore the fainting believer. It is not slavish fear that brings back the backslider to God, but the sweet wooings of love allure him to Jesus' bosom.

As I sat the other night in my study, musing on my message for the coming Sabbath, some little unbelief crossed my mind. Would the Lord sustain me in my ministry among such multitudes? Would He give fresh matter on the morrow? And there stood on my shelves nine volumes of my sermons, the records of nine years of gracious help. What witnesses did those volumes seem to be of the faithfulness of the Lord.

Now *you* can look back, some of you, to ten, twenty, thirty, or forty years, which are like so many volumes of grace received. Dare you distrust your God? David went forth to fight Goliath with past experience as his comfort, "Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them." Cannot you use the same argument? You have already slain your adversaries—what can stand against you? Be of good comfort and dash forward to the fray. Take as your war-note, "His mercy endureth for ever," and you need never quail, whatever difficulties assail you. So much for the first point. Now let us turn with great brevity to the second.

II. We are encouraged, in the second place, this morning, by THE PROMISE OF WHAT GOD WILL DO.

He says, "Fear not; I will help thee," and then He adds, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground." You feel this morning, thirsty, that is, uncomfortable in heart. You have lost much of the joy of religion, and your prayer is, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation." You are conscious also that you are barren, like the dry ground. You are not bringing forth that fruit unto God which He has a right to expect of you. You are not as useful in the church nor in the world, as your heart desires to be.

Well then, here is His promise of what He will do, "*I will help thee.*" You cannot pray this morning, you cannot wrestle as you desire—"I will help thee." You feel unable to overcome sin—"I will help thee." You are engaged in service too heavy for you—"I will help thee." Whether it is to suffer, to sacrifice, to labor, or to endure, take this comfort—"I will help thee." I love this promise. It is a very short one, but it is all the longer in meaning because it is short in expression. You may avail yourself of it in all cases.

The promise turns every way, and blesses in every form. It is like a weapon which may be used for fifty purposes—it will be to you, if you will, a sword, and you may beat it into a ploughshare. Anon it will prove a shield, a spear, a chariot, and I know not what besides. You cannot find any possible position into which the child of God can be brought in which this promise will fail to bless him. Sit down no longer in lethargy, lift up the hands which hang down and confirm the feeble knees, for if God says, "I will help thee," how can you be afraid?

Then comes a promise, fuller in words and as rich in grace, "I will pour water on him that is thirsty." You shall have the grace you want. Water refreshes the thirsty; you shall be refreshed, your desires shall be gratified. Water quickens sleeping vegetable life; your life shall be quickened by fresh grace. Water

swells the buds, and makes the fruits ripe; you shall have fructifying grace, you shall be made fruitful in the ways of God.

Whatever good quality there is in divine grace, you shall enjoy it to the full. All the riches of divine grace you shall receive in plenty. You shall be as it were drenched with it, and as sometimes the meadows become flooded by the bursting rivers and the field turned into pools, so shall you be. The thirsty land shall be springs of water.

O my brethren, when the Holy Spirit visits a man, what a difference it makes in him! I know a preacher, once as dull and dead a man as ever misused a pulpit. Under his slumbering ministrations there were few conversions, and the congregation grew thinner and thinner. Good men sighed in secret, and the enemy said, "Aha! so would we have it."

The revival came. The Holy Ghost worked gloriously, the preacher felt the divine fire and suddenly woke up to energy and zeal. The man appeared to be transformed. His tongue seemed touched with fire. Elaborate and written discourses were laid aside, and he began to talk out of his own glowing heart to the hearts of others. He preached as he had never done before, the place filled, the dry bones were stirred, and quickening began. They who knew him once so elegant, correct, passionless, dignified, cold, lifeless, and unprofitable, asked in amazement, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

The Spirit of God is a great wonder-worker. You will notice certain church members; they have never been good for much. We have had their names on the roll, and that is all. Suddenly the Spirit of God has come upon them, and they have been honored among us for their zeal and usefulness. We have seen them here and there and everywhere diligent in the service of God and foremost in all sorts of Christian labor, though before you could hardly get them to stir an inch. I would that the quickening Spirit would come down upon me, and upon you, upon every one of us in abundance, to create us men valiant men for truth and mighty for the Lord.

O for some of the ancient valor of apostolic times, that, like good knights of the cross we would dash forward against the foe, and with irresistible courage deal heavy blows against the adversary of souls and his vast host! We may do this, we have only to plead the promise. God will be inquired of, but the promise stands true, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." Do not lose the blessing through remissness, but ask and ye shall receive. Brethren, pray for me, for I need more grace, and in return I will plead the Lord's words on your behalf.

III. As a very great comfort to His mourning people, the Lord now promises A BLESSING UPON THEIR CHILDREN.

You will observe, dear friends, that they must get the blessing for themselves first, for the third verse has it, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground"—that is first, and then afterwards—"I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed." We must not expect to see our children blessed unless we ourselves grow in grace.

It is often the inconsistency of parents which is the obstacle, the outward obstacle to the conversion of their children. No doubt there have been multitudes of children of professing parents who have been damned instrumentally by the ungodliness and inconsistency of their parents at home. The parents, let us hope, were Christians, but there has been so much of apparent inconsistency about them, that the ruin of their children has been the consequence.

It is a notorious fact that some of the worst of men have been the children of godly parents. I could give living instances but I forbear. When good Mr. Williams was murdered at Eromanga—the fact should be well-known—the natives had first been exasperated by the most abominable conduct on the part of the son of a missionary, who, having gone there, had practiced all sorts of evil upon the natives, and then good Mr. Williams was sacrificed to their fury.

You will find that among the most fearfully depraved there are a few of the very deepest dye who received an early Christian education, and dashed down all its restraints that they might run greedily into iniquity. I think the children of godly parents are like Jeremiah's figs, the good are very good, but the bad are very bad—very naughty figs, such as cannot be eaten.

Some of the children of God have been the parents of great offenders. Eli begets Hophni and Phinehas, David has an Absalom, Noah is father to Ham, Isaac begets profane Esau, the wise Solomon is followed by Rehoboam the fool, and pious Hezekiah is sire to persecuting Manasseh. Oh! how sad it is that it should be so, but so it is. We must therefore look to ourselves, and our own careful walking before God, for we shall not get the promise for our offspring, till we obtain its fulfillment in our own case.

But now, supposing that this is done, if we have had faith to receive much grace from God, here comes a blessed promise for our children—“*I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed,*” in which observe *first* of all, *the need*. Our children want the Spirit of God. They are not like children educated in the street, the tavern, or the low theater. They have not heard from our lips words of lust or profanity. They have been hushed to sleep by the name of Jesus as their lullaby. They breathe the air of religion, but for all that they need the Spirit of God.

We love to see the children of godly parents brought into church membership, but we would avoid above all things anything like hereditary profession or inherited religion. It must be personal in each individual or it is not worth a groat.

I believe that the idea of birthright membership has tended materially to weaken the strength of that most respectable and once powerful denomination, the Society of Friends. Believing that their children have an inward light which they ought to follow, I do fear they often teach their children to follow inward darkness rather than light. And forgetting the necessity of the Holy Spirit, which is infinitely superior to ordinary light of conscience, their children have grown up to attend meeting and to wear a particular garb without receiving the Spirit, certainly without that grand enthusiasm which honored their sires in bygone days.

We must not adulterate our membership by the reception of the children of godly parents, unless we have clear proof that they themselves are converted to God. Your children need the Holy Spirit quite as much as the offspring of the Khoikhoi or the Kaffir. They are born in sin and shapen in iniquity. In sin do the best of mothers conceive their children, and however well you may train them, you cannot take the stone out of the heart nor turn it into flesh. To give a new heart and a right spirit is the work of the Holy Spirit, and of the Holy Spirit alone.

In the *second* place, the *source* of the mercy which God will give. “*I will pour out my Spirit.*” It was the work of the Spirit which transformed their fathers—it is that which must transform them. The Word may come to them and not be blessed. We may be silly enough to take them to baby-baptism and they would not be blessed. We may persuade them to come to the Lord’s table, but they would not be blessed. But when the Spirit of God comes upon them, then it is all done. Now comes the broken heart, now comes the humble spirit, now is breathed the earnest prayer, now love to Christ flames forth and trust is built upon Him.

Do pray, dear friends, for your children, that God will pour His Spirit upon them, and as to the rest, you may depend that all the fruits will come in due time. I do not know that the parent needs to say much to his child about baptism or the Lord’s supper, except, sometimes, a gentle word as to the duty of the believer, and a clear explanation of the meaning of the ordinances. But I do hold that the duty of the parent is to look first and foremost for the work of the Spirit, and insist upon it that he must be born again or else no profession can be made.

Tell the child that he is dead in trespasses and sins, let there be no doubt about his natural condition, and let this always be your prayer, “Almighty grace, renew his heart; turn him from darkness to light and make him Thine!”

I think that in some Sunday school addresses there is not always the Gospel so clearly and decidedly proclaimed as it should be. It is not very easy, I know, to preach Christ to little children, but there is nothing else worth preaching. To stand up and say, “Be good boys and girls, and you will get to heaven,” is preaching the old covenant of works, and it is no more right to preach salvation by works to little children than to those who are of mature age. *We* are all dead, and as the Spirit of God can alone

renew *us*, so He alone can renew *them*, and there is no natural goodness, no amiability, no generosity of character which can supersede the work of the Holy Spirit. We must remember this and hold to it, that we pray to God to work by His Spirit in their hearts.

Then you have in the promise in the third place, *the plenty* of grace which God gives. He says, “I will *pour* my Spirit upon thy seed”—not a little of it, but they shall have abundance. It has charmed me, especially of late, when I have conversed with very many children—many of them children of godly parents, and others we have brought into our school, and instructed by good and loving teachers—I have been charmed, I say, in examining them for membership at the profoundness of their knowledge, and the abundance of their grace.

I have questioned them in a way I would not question some grey-headed men and women. I have gone into points of intricate doctrine with many of them in a way which I would not use with many of middle age, because I know I would take them out of their depth. But these children have been able to tell me from Scripture—and generally their answers have been quotations of a text—the great plan of salvation and the doctrines connected with it, as explicitly as the best Doctor of Divinity in any of our universities.

And I have been often pleased to notice that the very babes are those out of the mouths of whom God has ordained strength, and He gives the perfect wisdom of the upright full often to those who are but as babes and sucklings.

It is so good to notice this. You are not to expect children merely to exhibit faint traces of grace, but in the strength of this promise you may look for great things. In the deathbeds of children—and very often children who are early saved are early caught up to heaven—many very wonderful expressions have fallen from their lips.

Mr. Janeway, in his “Token for Children,” has preserved many examples, showing that some dying children have been wondrously mature in piety, and the expressions they have used have perfectly astounded the most experienced of the saints. You ought not in the case of children to look merely for life, you will find vigorous life. You may not expect a little surface-knowledge only, but you may expect to find in them a depth of knowledge in the things of God, for so God’s promise has it, “I will *pour* my Spirit upon thy seed.”

I must not leave the text without noticing *the blessedness* of all this. “And my blessing upon thine offspring.” Oh! what a blessing it is to have our offspring saved! God give us each to see it. What a blessing to have our children enlisted in Christ’s army!

Beloved, we wish them well, we wish them the best of God’s gifts, but if we were asked whether we would have them famous or wealthy, we would pause to ask whether it were good for them. But if it were put to us, “Shall they be saved?” we feel we would cheerfully give our life, if that must be the price, to know that our children walked in the truth. “I have no greater joy than this,” said one in Holy Scripture, and there can be no greater joy than this to the Christian parent. How happy the family becomes! And when they grow up and go out from us, married *in the Lord*—for how can they be gracious else?—we should expect to see a gracious house built up.

There is a very sad verse, I think you will find it in the second chapter of Judges, which runs thus, “And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.” Oh! that is sad to see how soon religion dies out in a nation.

But without household piety—without constant instruction both in the Sabbath school and at home, the next generation in our case will be as ignorant of God as if Christ had not been known by their fathers. Unless we are careful over the young, there may be none to bear the Lord’s banner when we sleep among the clods.

In matters of doctrine, you will find orthodox congregations frequently change to heterodoxy in the course of thirty or forty years, and that is because too often there has been no catechizing of the children in the essential doctrines of the Gospel. For my part, I am more and more persuaded that the study of a

good Scriptural catechism is of infinite value to our children, and I shall see that it is reprinted as cheaply as possible for your use. Even if the youngsters do not understand all the questions and answers in the “Westminster Assembly’s Catechism,” yet, abiding in their memories, it will be of infinite service when the time of understanding comes, to have known those very excellent, wise, and judicious definitions of the things of God.

If we would maintain orthodoxy in our midst, and see good old Calvinistic doctrines handed down from father to son, I think we must use the method of catechizing, and endeavor with all our might to impregnate their minds with the things of God. It will be a blessing to them—the greatest of all blessings—a blessing in life and death, in time and eternity, the best of blessings God Himself can give. I will not prolong this, but there are still two points I must mention.

Carefully notice the vigor with which these children shall grow. “They shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses.” Close by the water’s edge the grass grows very green, and the willow is a well-known tree for speedily shooting forth its branches. Our farmers lop their willows often, but they very soon sprout again. As the old proverb has it, “A willow will buy a horse where an oak will not buy a saddle, because the willow being often lopped and then springing again, yields much to the grower.”

The willow grows fast, and so do young Christians. If you want the eminent men in God’s church, look for them amongst those converted in youth. There are, of course, exceptions, but after all, our Samuels and Timothys must come from those who knew the Scriptures from their youth. O Lord! send us many such whose growth and advance shall as much astonish us as the growth of the willows by the water courses.

Why, since I have been among you these ten years and more, lads who used to come into the school, and were the objects of our hope, where are they now? Why they are preaching the Gospel this very morning. And as I look at the happy parents here, and remember the time when the now useful minister sat as a lad in the pew, and remember that at this very moment they are preaching in the name of Jesus, they do seem to have grown quite as fast as the willows. They grow so fast and so well, and serve the Lord so admirably, that the promise has indeed been fulfilled to the very letter.

Then comes, last of all, *the manifestation of this in public*. It appears from the text, that not only are our children to have the Spirit of God in their inward parts, but they are to make a profession of it. One shall say, “I am the Lord’s”—he shall come out boldly and avow himself on the Lord’s side—and another shall so ally himself to God’s church that he “shall call himself by the name of Jacob.” And then another who can hardly speak quite so positively, but who means it quite as sincerely—“shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD,” and a fourth “shall surname himself by the name of Israel.”

Oh! it is a joy indeed when those who know the Lord come forward and declare themselves to be on His side. May we by God’s grace be helped to train our children to an open avowal of that which is within them. A hint sometimes will do our sons and daughters good when we believe that they fear God.

Indicate to them that religion is not meant to be kept under a bushel, that the grace of God is not to be covered and concealed, and ere long, seeing their duty, God will help them to walk in the way of it, and it shall be your privilege and mine to rejoice at seeing them added to the church.

The promise upon which I have preached this morning needs to be pleaded before God, for God does not fulfill such promises as these without our bringing them before Him in earnest fervent prayer. A banker gives me a check and it is a very good one, but I can never get the cash for it without going to the counter and presenting it for payment. And if God gives me a promise conditional upon my pleading it, I must never expect Him to fulfill it unless I inquire concerning it.

I look upon some here who can remember the way by which God has led them, who look upon their children, and their children’s children, walking in the truth, You, my brethren, can confirm the faith of the younger parents among us, and make us feel that as God has dealt well with you He will deal well with us.

Some of us in looking back can speak of a godly father and a godly grandfather. We can look for generations back, till as far as we can trace a line, grace has run in our family. O that the line may continue for years to come, till as long as generations are born there shall be one of our kith and kin to carry the standard and sound the trumpet and fight for the Lord of Israel. I invite you therefore to much earnest prayer, especially during the coming week, which is selected by the Evangelical Alliance as a prayer week for this special object, and I trust with regard to this promise none will be backward in pleading it.

As for you who are unconverted, you cannot pray for your children if you do not pray for yourselves. You never can expect a blessing, for you are under the divine curse. Nevertheless, I pray God to make you thirsty, and if He makes you hunger and thirst after righteousness, then you can put your hand upon this promise, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." And afterwards the remainder of the blessing shall be yours. God bless the Word for Jesus' sake. Amen.

*"Wake, parents of Israel! O hasten to plead
For the Spirit of grace to descend;
The word has gone forth, and the faithful have need
Of your prayers the great cause to defend.*

*"From the youth of our country shall armies arise,
The Gospel of peace to proclaim;
O'er the land and the seas, the glad message that flies,
Shall re-echo Immanuel's name.*

*"Wake, parents in Israel! O, wrestle and pray
That grace to our youth may be given;
For the hands that in faith are uplifted today
Shall prevail with our Father in heaven."*

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.