

THE BEST CLOAK NO. 832

A SERMON
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“And was clad with zeal as a cloke.”
Isaiah 59:17*

THE solitary champion who is here spoken of, who looked and “saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor,” and therefore His own arm brought salvation unto Him, and His righteousness it sustained Him. This conquering hero we cannot fail to recognize as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Prince of the house of David, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Whatever may have been the first and primary meaning of the text, we are persuaded that the ultimate reference of it is to that destroyer of death, the Captain of our salvation, by whose struggles the whole host of the elect have obtained the victory. Of Him we may say beyond and above all others, that He “was clad with zeal as a cloke.”

When a man has all other excellences, when the grace of God has wrought in him all other virtues, then zeal is still needed to elevate and perfect his entire manhood. Behold the altar, built of unhewn stones, and after God’s own law. Behold the wood laid on it, see the victim slain, and the blood flowing, but you cannot make a sacrifice without fire—unless the fire from heaven shall perfect the sacrificial preparations, all will be useless.

Behold in the altar the figure of the man. He has faith, courage, love, consecration, but if he lacks the fire of fervent zeal, his life will be a failure. He will remain an offering unconsumed, and consequently worthless and unaccepted.

By this indeed, may you know the genuine from the false when other things might raise a question. The false is like the altar of Baal whereon there is much wood, and a well fed bullock, and around it are active genuflections and vigorous ritualisms, but there is no true fire from heaven. While the true is like the altar of Elias, upon which in answer to fervent prayers, the hallowed flames descend.

One of the first requisites of an earnest, successful, soul-winning man, must be zeal. As well a chariot without its steeds, a sun without its beams, a heaven without its joy, as a man of God without zeal.

Taking the text, and coming to it at once with eager expectation, because the Lord is there, we shall first observe—*how zeal is to be regarded—it is to be to the Christian as a cloak. Secondly, we shall joyfully show how our Lord Jesus Christ exhibited it. And then thirdly, look for a few minutes at the secret springs which fed the zeal of our blessed Lord, and which in our case must also feed us.*

I. First then, according to the text, ZEAL IS TO BE REGARDED AS A CLOAK THAT COVERS ALL.

The Christian man is to wear zeal as we wear an outward garment which covers all the rest of our garments—a flowing robe which encompasses the entire person.

Zeal is all enveloping. Zeal should envelope all the powers of the Christian. He is to invest himself with faith and love, with patience and perseverance, with hope and joy, but zeal must be over all these.

We are not to be zealous with one part of ourselves, nor zealous in one particular duty, nor zealous at one special season, but to be altogether zealous, for all Christ’s work, for all Christ’s truth. And at all times zealous not only in one good thing, but in all good things, wrapping ourselves up completely in zeal, by the power of God’s Spirit, just as the traveler in the snowstorm wraps himself up in his great coat, or binds his cloak about him. Zeal is to envelope all.

We are to wear holy zeal as a cloak, *in order to preserve the different parts of our soul from danger. Zeal is preserving.*

The cloak covers the arm, the breast, the heart, and all the more delicate parts of the body. In order that when the rain comes down we may not so soon be chilled to the skin and suffer injury from cold, we are protected with a cloak, and find it to be a warm and welcome shelter. So our love needs to put on zeal as a protection against the coldness of the outside world. Our faith needs to buckle on a garment of zeal as a defense that when the storm of troubles comes as a blast against the soul, confidence may not be frostbitten.

Zeal is to wrap up the whole man, so that when he is subject to a furious hail of persecution, or a biting wind of poverty, or a torrent of down-pouring griefs, the pilgrim to the skies may hold on his way, and bid all weathers brave defiance.

Beloved, I am afraid that many of God's children are sickening for lack of wearing this cloak. They never rise to the point of being zealous. They are very proper, and with that doubtful virtue they remain content. Oh, that dreadful propriety, which is the death of all true godliness wherever its frosty scepter sways its wintry dominion over a man!

Thousands of our church members are locked in the deadly arms of an Arctic propriety. They are proper, very proper. They are always afraid of being fanatical, even more than of being worldly or backsliding. When religious work is being done in earnest, they say it is exciting and irregular, and they therefore avoid it.

They have heard of unwise excitement attending some religious meetings, and they at once conceive a great dread of everything like excitement, however holy and useful. And therefore, in order to avoid as much as possible that which is at all unusual, they make to their tents, and shun the very angels of God, lest they should become too enthusiastic by conversing with them. So far am I from commending them for this, because I am persuaded there is no cloak in which a man can be so well wrapped up against the trials of the world and the temptations of business as a cloak of zeal that covers him all over.

The devil cannot so readily assail a zealous man. There is a point, of course, at which he can overthrow him by turning that zeal into unhallowed passion, fierce bigotry, or unbridled rant. But still, in the ordinary temptations of life, the man who is thoroughly and heartily possessed by the spirit of true and thoroughly Christian zeal throws off the blows of the enemy as the shields of the ancient warrior hurled off the fiery darts of the foe.

Zeal is comforting, even as the cloak when wrapped about the traveler in the snowstorm, so must zeal be with us.

Oftentimes the Christian minister, especially, will pass through a pelting, raging, whirling tempest and hurricane of difficulties, and in such times unless he is very zealous he may be inclined to succumb and to yield to the present distress. But He who says, "I am called of God to a work, and I will do it or I will die. I must win souls. God has called me to it, and I can lie in prison, or I can have my name cast out as evil, or I can suffer poverty, but I cannot give up ministering to poor souls and snatching them as brands from the burning."

Such a man dreams not of pausing in his career because old Boreas howls. The man who is possessed by an irresistible passion for carrying out his lifework will gird this gracious ardor well around him, and let the snowflakes come as they may, they will only fall, as it were, into a furnace, and will melt before they can injure.

You who have zeal for God in your Sabbath school, will find it protect you from the numbing influence that will come over you in the class. After teaching for some months, and perhaps years, the routine of the school is apt to become a heavy toil, and you are apt to say, "I work hard all week, and I really want my Sundays for rest," and you *will* take them for rest unless zeal shall forbid.

But wrapping yourselves in holy fervor you will look at your little ones and feel that you cannot let them perish for lack of knowledge. And out of love to them, and out of love to your Master, you will return to the class with extra devotion, and troubling nothing for the consequences, you will press on

like a true hero, because your soul is warmed and comforted with zeal as a cloak, and therefore your heart beats warm within however cold the world may be without.

We may regard zeal as a cloak *by reason of its adorning a man's character*. Many a person looks all the more comely because of the garment in which he has arrayed himself. There is no more becoming garment to the Christian when he possesses all the virtues than an all-enveloping zeal. Do not tell me that the beauty of holiness consists in a mere stately, dull, sober round of duties. It is not so. The beauty of holiness consists in that out-breaking of love towards God which is enamored of holiness, and would rather suffer a thousand ills than do anything evil.

Brethren, you will not be as Christians thought beautiful in the eyes of angels and perfect intelligences, (and these are the best judges of beauty), because you coldly pursue the regular rounds of duty. But you will be beautiful to them if you glow, and flame, and blaze with intense affection towards God.

God, who is the greatest and highest example of all beauty, when He reveals Himself, does so in a flaming fire, Sinai is altogether on a smoke. He touches the hills, and they melt like wax though they were granite before. God as a Spirit is a consuming fire, and the more we get to be like God the more shall we become like consuming fires.

The half-animated lethargic state in which we sing—

*“Our souls can neither fly nor go
To reach celestial joys,”*

is earthly, gross, sensual. But oh! when we once receive the promised eagle wings, and begin to mount, then are we spiritual. And when our soul, like a sharp sword, cuts through the scabbard, and the body seems as if it could not bear the indomitable energy that rules within, it is then that we are elevated to be like God.

When God within us manifests the weight of deity, and bows the weakness of our humanity into the dust, while the newborn nature is, in sublime ecstasy, made to stand forth, alone and away from the body, in the blaze of the divine presence, then it is that we are favored of the Lord. I pray God that we may be evermore ardent as seraphs, made of God to be like those celestial ministers of His who are as flames of fire.

The true God's-man burns his way. His life is like the passage of a meteor across the sky. None can stay his onrush. He has omnipotence within him. He is launched like a thunderbolt from the eternal hand, and he must go forward till his career is run. He is not like yon half-awakened sons of the sluggard, who having no strength from God, and possessing none of their own, crawl as the snail crawls, and melt as it melts, until there is nothing left of them.

As Watts writes in his couplet—

*“They trust their native strength,
And melt away, and droop, and die.”*

Such as confide in God and in His might, clothing themselves with the holy ardor which God has given them, shall be beautiful in His sight, and beautiful to all eternity in the judgment of those who know how to estimate true beauty of character.

Perhaps these four points may bring out the excellence of being clothed with zeal as a cloak. Zeal is to envelope all our powers. It is to preserve us in danger. It is to comfort us in affliction. It is to adorn us at all times.

But I should like to say one or two other things on this subject. *We must take care to put on zeal as a cloak and not as a hood*. Some put it over their heads, and do not wear it over their bodies. Now, nobody wears his cloak over his head, and yet I have known some persons whose zeal has entirely blindfolded

their judgment. They have taken zeal as men put a bandage over their eyes when they would be blinded, and then have gone headlong in evil or foolish work.

Now the zeal that God would have us cultivate is wise and prudent, it does not heedlessly leap into the ditch, though it would swim a river, yea, and the Atlantic to boot, if it felt that God had bidden it do so. Zeal is like fire, which is said to be, “a good servant but a bad master.” The fire in the grate, who shall say too much in its favor? But fire in the thatch of the house, who shall say too much against it?

The fire, the flaming fire of zeal, burning and blazing in the soul, this is a Christian gift and virtue. But when zeal takes away judgment, and the man is led hither and thither by the first loud talker, carried about by every wind of doctrine, and is first in love with this, and then with that, then the man does not wear zeal as a cloak, he makes a hood of it, and makes himself brother to a fool.

Zeal, again, is a cloak, *and therefore is not intended to supersede the other graces*. We do not put on our great coats and leave off all our other clothes. We do not see the traveler climbing the Alps with nothing upon his body but his cloak—that would be most absurd. And so zeal cannot take the place of knowledge, or faith, or love, or holiness. It is a cloak which is a great thing, it is true, but it is nothing more than a cloak and the rest of the garments must be carefully attended to.

When I have sometimes heard a zealous brother preaching, who evidently did not know anything of this subject, or of human nature, I have been pleased to see the cloak, but I wished that I could have seen some other garments for decency’s sake.

Ill is the case of those ill clad zealots who bawl with all their might, “Believe, believe, believe,” and thump the pulpit cushion, and make great demonstration when they cannot tell what is to be believed, nor expound the doctrine of the atonement—nor give an intelligent description of the plan of salvation. All such zeal is as rational as it would be for us all to go abroad bare of every rag except a cloak. Modesty ought to keep such unclothed men out of sight. Go home, brethren—go home, you who have only your cloaks, and get other garments, and then we shall be glad enough to see you. Zeal is a cloak, but it is very far from being everything.

Again, zeal is a cloak, *and therefore we are not to regard it as an extraordinary robe to be worn only occasionally on high days and holidays*. A man wears his great coat or his cloak when he wants it. He wears it not on Sundays only, but in going to and fro in his labor. He reckons his cloak not to be a thing in which to walk in state with my lord through the streets, but as a portion of his ordinary working-day dress, and so ought our zeal to be.

Zeal for God should be exhibited in workshops, should be worn in the market-house, in the senate, or wherever we may labor. Zeal should be worn in the homestead, and in the factory, by masters, by servants, by children, by parents. If it be genuine zeal, it will be like the cloak which always hangs ready on the nail in the hall. Nay, since the storm is always on, and we are always pilgrims, it will be like the cloak which we cannot bear to lay aside. We shall try always to wear it for Christ’s sake.

Brethren, while I say that zeal is not everything, recollect that the cloak *covers everything, and do not let your zeal be such a scanty thing that it will only hang like a girdle round your loins*, but let it be a great wrapper in which to enfold all your manhood apparent everywhere, not secret and inward alone, but revealed and active.

Our Lord is said to *put on zeal* as a cloak. He manifested and displayed His holy fervor. We have heard some boast that they were zealous, but you could not see it, for their zeal was deep in their hearts. Now our Lord had not zeal in His heart merely, *but He had zeal outwardly as well*. It is all very well to have grace in the heart—that is the first and primary point. But where there is grace in the heart it soon shows itself in the life.

It is useless for a man to say he has an abundance of wealth if he always dresses like a beggar, and his household is conducted on the most stingy system. So a man must not claim to have zeal in his heart if he never shows that zeal in his conversation nor in earnest service of Jesus. Remember, our Lord *put on zeal*. While the Christian religion is an internal thing, there is no religion in the world which shows itself so much externally.

There is a remarkable piece of advice given by Paul which sounds very strangely if you read it literally. He writes, "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy." Now, surely, bowels are things to be worn within and not without, and yet he would have the Christian to be such a tender-hearted man, as to wear his very soul on his sleeve, so that he can be easily touched, moved, and affected by the woes of his fellow men. So must it be with zeal. It must be in the heart, but it must also shine, and flash, and sparkle throughout the whole of man's outward life.

II. Leaving that point, it is now for a few minutes our very pleasant duty TO OBSERVE HOW OUR LORD EXHIBITED THIS ZEAL.

Beloved, we can but speak a few words where volumes would scarce suffice. *In His earliest childhood, you have tokens of His inward zeal.* He is found in the temple among the doctors, at an age when other children are shouting in the playground, or laughing among their toys. He is hearing the rabbis, and asking them questions, and when His anxious parents ask Him why He has left them, He replies, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Yes, even at that early age, His soul was longing to commence His work. Eager for the baptism that He was to be baptized with, He was "straitened," even then "until it was accomplished."

In after life, you see His burning zeal in leaving all the comforts of life. What but His zeal brought Him to such a condition that He said, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests: but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head"?

He might, if He had chosen, have enjoyed the comforts of the domestic circle. There were those who loved Him. There were hundreds throughout Judea, who would have been but too glad to house Him, for Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus, were but types of others whom Jesus loved, and who loved Jesus. And yet, for love of souls, for love of God, He banishes Himself from all domestic joys. Oh! blessed mirror of quenchless ardor, when shall we learn self-denial from Thine example, and imitate Thy passion to glorify God?

His very dress showed His zeal because it was not ostentatious, but in every way suitable for incessant labor, and humble service. He wore nothing that could attract attention. The common smock-frock of the ordinary peasant was His outer dress. Nothing in His apparel distinguished Him from others. He had given up all the dainties, ay, and all the comforts of life, for the one great object of accomplishing our redemption.

He showed His earnestness *in persevering in His work under all manner of rebuffs.* He was constantly misrepresented. He came unto His own, and His own received him not. Though He was worthy to be beloved of all hearts, yet, "He was despised and rejected of men." Still He never turned aside from His work.

Once, when the flesh would fain have shrunk from the cup of gall, how mightily did He put aside the temptation with, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt"! His path was always onward, and it mattered not who stood in the way, whether Pharisee or Herodian, He tarried for none. Whether the princes of this world or the powers of the infernal lake opposed Him, still onward He advanced to complete His victory.

And as a clearer proof of His zeal still, *all the blandishments of the world could not attract Him.* The excited crowd would have taken Him by force, and have made Him a king, but such was His zeal for the one work He had in hand, that He counted royal honors to be less than nothing and vanity. There was no temptation to Him in all the pomp of a kingdom. He had received the offer of all earth's thrones from the arch-enemy, and had refused them all. What then was one petty principedom to Him!

If all Jerusalem had clapped their hands and said, "God save the King!" He would not have listened to the cry, nor have cared for it. He cared to wear the thorn-crown, and to give His hands to the nails, and His heart to the spear. But He had no heart and no hand for anything save the love of God and the well-being of men.

Many and many a man has been very zealous for God till he has met with fierce persecutions, or bitter enemies, and then he has turned his back. And many more have been zealous in the highest degree

until wealth came in their way, or the possibilities of honor, and then they have stooped, and have licked the world's foot, and have been mere puddles of fashion. Their ardor for truth has evaporated, and their zeal has fled. Jesus was turned aside neither by frowns nor by smiles, but onward still He went, "clad with zeal as with a cloke."

Look, my brethren, at His incessant labors. In the three years of Christ's life, you behold epitomized three thousand years of ordinary existence. I do not know how it seems to you, but the life of Christ appears to me to be the longest life I ever read. It is such a condensed, massive, close-grained life! It is very short—in truth, it consists of only three years of labor, as the former part of His life was spent in obscurity—and there we leave it as God has left it—but the three active years of His earthly sojourn, how are they crowded with incident!

Why, He is here, and there, and everywhere! All the day He is working, and all the night He is praying. You read of the cold mountains and the midnight air as witnessing the fervor of His prayer. And then, at morning light, He is healing the sick or preaching the Gospel, never pausing, but constantly pressing on like a racer to the goal.

We meet with incidents like this, "He had not time, no, not so much as to eat bread." And at another time, "They took him even as he was into the ship," implying that He could not walk down to the vessel because He was too faint, so they bore Him away even as He was. On board the ship He was so weary, so utterly overcome, that when a storm came on, He slept. Slept while the sea and the sky were mingled, and the ship was likely to go to pieces—slept from sheer weariness and want of rest.

Remember that all this was not merely work of the body, but that which I dare say some of you think very easy, but which, if you were to try it, you would find to be the most laborious work in the world—brain work. And in our Lord's case, it was brain-work of the most intense kind, for Jesus never preached a careless sermon, never produced a single address before the people that was uninformative or shallow, and never delivered a speech in an inefficient manner, coldly and heartlessly. He was a man like ourselves, albeit He was God—and I am speaking of His Humanity now—and that human soul of His achieved centuries of work in those three plenteous years.

There is, perhaps, no such thing as time to the brain. When we sleep, a dream in which we think we have passed hours, may have only occupied a tick of a clock, or the winking of an eye. When Mohammed in his absurd story, tells you of his traversing the seven heavens, and yet returning to earth again so quickly that the pitcher of water, which had been almost overturned by the angel's wing when he started, had not had time for the water to spill, he does in a quaint story but tell you what may happen to the mind.

Men who have been rescued from drowning have stated that though they were but a second or two going down in the water, they have yet in that time lived over again the whole of their lives, and their whole history, as in a panorama, has been unfolded before them.

There is no time to the mind, and when this body shall drop from off us, eternity will be no novelty to the mind, but the soul will find itself perfectly at home. Our Lord Jesus Christ realized this fact, for in mental labor He condensed whole centuries of holy thought and desire into those three short years of His service for us. Nothing but zeal could have sustained that toil. Nothing but zeal could have upheld that perpetually laboring Soul.

Look at the Lord Jesus Christ again, *in His preaching*, and you see His zeal. What words of love He uses! How gently He addresses the poor trembling ones, as He bids them come unto Him, and they shall have rest. He does not utter those blessed invitations in a sleepy manner, but His heart goes out with every syllable, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

And when He turns to sterner oratory, and addresses those enemies of the truth, the Scribes and Pharisees, how He thunders and lightens at them! Were ever such indignant words uttered as those of the Master, "Woe unto ye, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites"! Why, *there* stood the men. He was not speaking of them as I might speak of people who are in Abyssinia or Japan. But there they were, before

His eye, gnashing their teeth at Him, looking indignant, and longing to tear Him down and drag Him off to death.

But “woe unto you!” came again from His lips, and yet again, “woe unto you! For a pretense ye make long prayers; ye strain at a gnat, and ye swallow a camel.” No man could speak more plainly than He did in the face of these hypocrites, for zeal was girt about Him as a cloak, and no fear of man could restrain Him.

Probably you see His zeal most *of all in His prayers*, for a man’s intensity of heart may eminently be judged of by his secret devotion before God. What prayers were those that were heard by the stars, and admired by the astonished angels at midnight as they lingered on the mountainside!

What cries and groans. What strong cryings and tears were those that shook the gates of heaven as Jesus prayed and pleaded for the sons of men! Mighty Intercessor! It seemed as if this world were not a strong enough base for Thee to rest the lever of Thy prayer upon, when Thou wert lifting up a greater weight than this world, even the weight of our infirmities, which then was heavy upon Thy soul!

Ah! if you seek a pattern of zeal, you must stand in the garden when the sweat is streaming from Him, not the sweat of man that works for bread—the staff of life, but the sweat of a man toiling for life itself. See there, my brethren, He sweats as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

Still His zeal was more manifest even than this, for having prayed and wrought so hard, He proved his zeal again *by giving up Himself*. Having persevered alone when deserted by His friends, He persevered still when given over to His enemies. What zeal was that which makes Him stand so silent before the bar of Pilate? He will not speak though strong is the temptation to defend Himself. He will not speak, for He must fulfill the prophecy, “He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not His mouth.”

It was a wonderful triumph of Christ thus to hold His tongue. A master speaker feels an intense longing to speak when great occasions demand his voice, but Jesus was greater than a master speaker, for He was a great master of silence, and by His divine energy He restrained Himself, and uttered not a word.

Then, when they scourged Him, when they spat upon Him, when they mocked Him—why, a wish of His would have destroyed them all. But He bears their contumely in the patience of His zeal for us. And when they hound Him through the streets of Jerusalem along the Via Dolorosa, when they take Him out to the mount of doom, and pierce His hands and His feet, and then stand around, and with many jests and jeers mock His griefs, when, as I have said before, His wish could have annihilated all of them, and have put an end to all His bitterness, was it not a matchless zeal which upheld Him in majestic endurance?

His zeal was with Him when covered with His dying crimson. It was wrapped about His naked body as a cloak, so that the shame He despised and the cross He endured, looking forward to the recompense of reward.

Ah! brethren, I am not able to speak to you concerning my Master’s zeal. It is too great a subject. There it is. Read it as the evangelists tell you the story. Seek to enter into fellowship with it, and ask God to help you to imitate it, and then shall you best understand how He “was clad with zeal as a cloke.”

Observe what His zeal was made of. It was zeal for God. He went into God’s temple, and saw the merchandise that was carried on there, and He did not deliberate, but seizing a scourge of small cords, flogged the buyers and sellers, and drove them all out—as it was written, “The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up.” He had not patience to tolerate making a gain of godliness. He had patience with sinners, when they bowed before Him. But with those who trafficked in God’s own temple He grew indignant, and chased them forth.

He had a zeal for God, *which was also a zeal for truth*. How indignantly He denounced the adversaries of the true and the good, and how constantly, and with what force, did He declare the Gospel amongst the ignorant and perishing thousands!

He had, above all things, *a zeal for souls*. He loved His church, and gave Himself for it. He saved others, Himself He could not save. No burden was too heavy, no suffering too severe for Him, if He might deliver men from going down into the pit. Such was His zeal. O that all His followers were as their Lord!

III. Lastly, WHAT WAS IT THAT THE ZEAL OF CHRIST FED UPON? WHAT WERE THE SECRET SPRINGS OF THE SEA WHICH FED THE OCEAN OF HIS ZEAL?

We answer that *Christ's zeal was based upon a defined principle*. He had of old said, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." Our Lord's was not a hurried, hasty zeal, excited in Him by the earnest addresses of eloquent pleaders. It sprang from fixed and intelligent principles. For He had set His heart upon a great purpose, He had weighed it, counted the cost, looked at it on all sides, and now He was not to be turned from it.

Beloved hearers, I would that all Christians possessed that intelligent zeal which does not arise from mere excitement of our surroundings, but springs from our knowing what we are at, understanding the truth, and holding to it, because we are assured of it. Zeal without truth for its fuel is a mere will-o'-the-wisp.

Jesus knew the soul and its value, the loss of a soul and its horror, the heaven of a soul and its glory, and therefore was He zealous. And if such fixed principles reign in you, they will be in you a well of water springing up unto everlasting life. And your zeal will not cease, but continue to flow on forever and ever.

The zeal of our Lord Jesus Christ *was occasioned by intense love*. He loved His Father. He could not, therefore, but do His will. He loved His people. He could not, therefore, do otherwise than seek their good. Oh, how He loved the souls of men! It was a passion with Him.

Brethren, we need to get the same love. We do not love God as we should, or we should be more zealous, neither do we love our fellow men as ourselves, or we should be more heart-whole in our Christian work.

O that the Christian church were baptized in zeal! There is much in that promise, "He shall *baptize* you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." Not *drops* of the Holy Ghost, nor sparks of fire—we need to be plunged into it. We need that the fire should cover us as it does the gold when it consumes the dross, so that we may be like the three holy children in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, living amid flames, ourselves aglow, burning our way in our Lord's business! May it be so by the Holy Ghost to the glory of God!

Then the zeal of our Lord Jesus Christ *had an eye to the recompense*, "For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame." Christian, think of the recompense of the faithful servant—not of debt, but of grace. What joy, when you enter heaven, to be met by those who were converted to God through your means. To hear them hail you as their spiritual father or their spiritual mother!

It is a great bliss, doubtless, to enter heaven alone, but it must be a greater joy still to hear the wings of others behind you as you enter, and turning round—as soon as you can do so after you have looked upon the blazing throne and the divine One at the right hand of the Father—turning round, what bliss to see hundreds who were called to glory and immortality through your ministry!

Happy shall he be who has turned many to righteousness! He has his Master's word for it that he shall shine as the stars forever and ever. Beloved, seek after this. As men hunt after gold, as greedy misers search it out, and busy merchants compass sea and land to gain it, so seek after the souls of men. Count all things else but dross, that you may win Christ, and having won Christ for yourselves, bring others to Him.

I count that to be life wherein I serve Christ, but that is death wherein I am unprofitable; I count that day to be a day of true living in which I can tell out something of Jesus, build a single stone in His living temple, or carve a piece of cedar that may help to make the rafters of His house. But that day is nothing else than a mere pretense of life, it is a day of death, as though my body were sheeted and wrapped up in

the ceremonies of the tomb, in which I have done nought, and thought nought, and prayed nought to my Master's honor, and the extension of His kingdom.

O brethren, may God grant us grace more and more to have an eye to the coming reward, and to the, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" so that zeal may be wrapped about us as a cloak.

Last of all, our Lord Jesus Christ was so zealous *because He had a greater spiritual discernment than you and I have*. We are not zealous because we cannot see. We can see these houses, these streets, and this money. We can hear those people's tongues, and we can look at these creature comforts. We hear the question, "What shall we eat? What shall we drink? Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" But our ears are as though they were stopped up with wax and our eyes as though they were blinded to better things.

We do not hear true voices, neither do we see real things, nor abiding, everlasting and eternal things. Alas! how blind and deaf we are! But when Jesus was here He saw angels, and He beheld the spirits of men. He beheld not their bodies only, but their inner selves and He looked upon men, not as flesh and blood, but as immortals.

Best of all, He saw God. He could say, "I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand I shall not be moved." As Jesus Christ dwelt in this world, He did not look on it as you and I often do, as though it were all earth, fire, water, wood, stone, trees, men, beasts, but He viewed it as a theater for spiritual action.

Devils came to tempt Him. Angels came to minister to Him. The souls of bad men fought with Him, though He fought not with His hands or His staff. The spirits of good men sought Him, hung upon Him, depended upon Him. As for Himself, His conversation was always heavenly. He was on the earth, and doing good on earth, but still His soul, His great, grand Spirit was always talking with His God.

When He speaks aloud in prayer, He says to His Father, "I know that thou hearest me always, but because of them that stood by I did it." He had no need to use vocal sounds with God. His spirit was so near to God that He was always communing with God, breathing Himself into God. What a source of zeal this must have been! He was brought nearer to God than we are, being indeed Himself God, and speaking now of His manhood, as a man He abode very near to the Father.

Yet we too have a wondrous nearness, for the Holy Ghost dwells in us. In these bodies, as in a temple, God dwells if we are believers, so that there is a marvelously intimate union between God and us. And if we can by His grace rise to a higher spiritual life, a life cognizant of spiritual things, familiar with spiritual personages, and dealing with spiritual realities, we shall attain unto somewhat of that mighty, omnipotent zeal which glowed in the bosom of the Redeemer, and in which He was clad as in a cloak.

There are many here who have no faith in Christ, and therefore I cannot exhort them with respect to this zeal. Beloved friends, you have heard what I have been saying about zeal. Now, do you know one great reason why I want to have this zeal myself, and why I desire God's people to obtain, is because of you. We believe that when we are zealous it often happens that we are made the means of the conversion of others, and we should like to see you saved.

Do you know the way of salvation? It is just this, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." To believe is to trust. Here is God's Word, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." To believe is simply to rely upon Jesus, and when you have done that you are saved. God will never cast a soul away that leans all its weight on Christ.

After you are saved remember it is written, "He that believeth *and is baptized*." Your baptism must follow your faith, it is to be to you a sign, and a means of fellowship with Christ. You are to regard yourselves as dead to the world, as dead in Christ, and to come, therefore, and be buried with Him in baptism.

May the Spirit of God bury you with Christ. May the Spirit of God give you a familiar acquaintance with what it is to be dead, and for your life to be hid with Christ in God. But to trust is the first great

thing. “He that believeth on him hath everlasting life.” Baptism follows as an act of obedience, and you must not neglect it, but trust Christ, and you are saved.

God grant you grace to trust Him, for Jesus’ sake.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 59

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.