

## A GENEROUS PROPOSAL NO. 916

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

*“Come thou with us, and we will do thee good.”  
Numbers 10:29*

THESE ancient words, so simple, yet so sweet, fascinate us with a potent hallowed charm. They ring out their melody like a familiar air. The language of a heart instinct with kindness, inspired with faith, and inspirited with the enthusiasm of a hope so much divine, that the lapse of ages impairs not their force, or diminishes aught from their natural spontaneous freshness.

This story of Hobab one can hardly read without remembering the apostolic declaration that the law was a “shadow of good things to come.” A truly instructive shadow it was. In this instance the shadow is so like the image, the type so like the antitype, that we can almost see the Christian church, and the convert as he is invited to unite with it, and we may behold in metaphor the blessings of which he may expect to be a partaker in so doing.

“Come thou with us, and we will do thee good,” seems to be quite as suitable an address from the lips of a Christian pastor as from those of the prophet of Horeb, who was king in Jeshurun. We do not feel in the least degree hesitant as if we were wrenching the words from their natural association, or even exercising the slightest ingenuity in accommodating them to our own circumstances, so suitable do they seem for our use.

The people of Israel in the wilderness were a type of the church of Christ. The invitation here given was such as may be given to those who are proper subjects for communion with the Christian church.

We shall proceed accordingly, this evening, to talk to you upon four things—first, *the nature of a true church as it is depicted by Israel in the wilderness*. Secondly, *the bounden obligation of such a church to invite suitable persons to join it*. Thirdly, *the argument that the church may use, and the inducements it will always have to offer in setting forth the benefits to be conferred on those who heartily respond*. And fourthly, *the scrupulous fidelity it behooves us, as members of the church, to observe in keeping our pledge ever afterwards to seek the welfare of such as unite with our fellowship*.

**I.** First then, WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TRUE CHURCH AS IT IS PICTURED BY ISRAEL IN THE WILDERNESS?

We might prolong the answer to this question with many minute features, but it will be unnecessary at present to do more than give you a simple broad outline. The people in the wilderness were a *redeemed people*. They had been redeemed by blood and redeemed by power. The sprinkling of the blood of the paschal lamb over their lintels and their doorposts had secured their safety when the firstborn of Egypt was slain.

Thus they were redeemed by blood, while wonderful miracles were wrought throughout the whole land, and at the last when threatened and pursued by their oppressors, the whole of the pride and pomp of Egypt was destroyed in the Red Sea. They were indeed redeemed by power.

So, all the true members of God’s church understand what the blood of sprinkling means. They have enjoyed a passover through it. God has passed over them—passed over them in mercy. Justice has executed its warrant upon the person of the Lamb, and they have escaped—they have been redeemed by blood. And the Holy Spirit has entered into their hearts, and made them hate their former sins, has delivered them from the dominant power of their inward corruptions, has set them free and brought them out of the bondage of sin.

Thus they have also been redeemed by power, and no one has any right to think himself a member of Christ's church unless by faith he has seen himself redeemed by blood, and in his experience has also been redeemed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

But according to our text and the context, the Israelites were *a people who were passing through a land wherein they found no rest, neither did they desire any, for they were journeying to another country, the promised land, the Canaan*

Now, here is another description of the true church of God. They are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world. This is not their rest. Here they have no continuing city. Objects which may suit men who have no outlook beyond death would not be suitable to them. That which rejoices the heart of the mere worldling gives them but very slender solace. Their hope and their consolation lie beyond the river. They look for a city that has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God.

Judge then, my dear hearer, whether you are a member of God's church, of the church of Jesus Christ, for if you are, you are a stranger and a foreigner this night here below, however pleasant the tent of your pilgrimage may be, for your Father's house on high is your destination. You are an exile from your home, albeit to your faith's foreseeing eye its golden gates may never so clearly appear.

You have not yet come to your rest, but there remaineth to you a rest, a rest to which you shall come in due time, though you have not yet reached it. May I entreat you to put these questions to your own hearts as they arise, and judge yourselves.

Israel in the wilderness, according to the text again, was a people *walking by faith as to the future*, for if you remember, the words are, "They were going to the place of which the Lord said, I will give it to you." They had never seen it. No one had come from it to tell them of it. True, in after days some spies had returned, but they brought up an ill report of the land, so that the people required even more faith than they did before.

If anyone had said to them, "But if there be a land that floweth with milk and honey, how will you gain it? The inhabitants thereof are strong and mighty. How are you sure that you will ever obtain this goodly land?" The only reply would have been, "The Lord has spoken to us concerning it." Every true Israelite had been instructed as to the covenant God had made with Abraham when He said, "To thee and to thy seed will I give this land to possess it," and every true Israelite was expecting that his people should find a lodgment and a portion in that land evermore because of the covenant which God had made with his fathers.

They were walking then, in that respect by faith, looking after a country which they had not seen, traversing a desert in search of a land which as yet they had not known, with only God's word for their title deed and nothing more.

And such are God's people now. As for joys to come, they have not tasted them, but they are looking for them because God has promised them. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit," and the Spirit reveals them only to our faith.

If you ask me, "How do you know that there is a heaven?" I must answer you, I believe it on God's testimony. I have no other warrant for it. No man has returned from that fair land to testify that he has heard the everlasting song, or seen the blessed citizens as they stand in their bright array before the everlasting throne. Nor want I that any such should return. God's word is enough, let that stand instead of the testimony of ten thousand angels, or of myriads of the white-robed host of spirits who might have returned to tell the tale. We walk by faith as Israel did of old.

Are you walking by such a faith? Do you believe in the unseen future, and does the hope of an unseen reward make you despise the present rewards of sin? Are you willing to bear the reproach of Christ because you count it greater treasure than all the riches of Egypt? Are you willing now to take up with Christ's cross because you believe in Christ's crown? Though you have not seen it yet do you believe in it, and rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory? Here is another mark of a member of the true church of Christ.

These people, also, *as to their present circumstances were walking by faith*. It was not merely faith which sang to them of Canaan, but it was faith that told them of the manna which fell day by day, and the water which flowed from the rock, which stream followed them in their journeyings.

Why, they could not live in any other way in the wilderness but by faith in God, for from that arid strand there sprang nought for their nourishment. Here and there a palm tree, now and then a cooling well, but for the most part, had it not been for the goodness of God, their way had been over a desert, cheerless, waste, and terrible. But He gladdened it for them, and made the place of His feet, and of their feet too, right glorious, for His mercy and His lovingkindness endure forever.

Now, in this world the Christian man has to live by faith upon God as to present things. As to temporal necessities he must cast all his care on Him who cares for us, but especially as to all spiritual supplies the Christian has no stock of grace. He has no inner spring within himself in his old nature. He has to look for everything that can sustain his new life from God, even the Father, who has promised not to forsake him.

Now surely, my dear hearer, you know whether you are living by present faith or not. If all your comfort is derived from that which you can handle, and hear, and see, and if your joys of life are only the outward things of the present, then are you no member of the church of God. Whether you may have been baptized, or confirmed—whatever profession you may have made, or whatever sign you may have received—you do not belong to Christ's people, nor can you belong to them.

But if you live by faith, I care not of what church you are a member, if you are exhibiting day by day a living faith upon a living but unseen God, if your trust is in His providence, if you daily resort to Christ for help and succor, if you have that faith which is the mark of God's elect, you may depend upon it that you are one of His.

One other mark let us give among many more which might be mentioned. These people found wherever they went, *that they were surrounded by foes*. In the wilderness the Amalekites were against them. When they crossed into the promised land all the inhabitants of Canaan were up in arms against them. So I think you will find it if you are a child of God.

All places are full of snares. Events, prosperous or adverse, expose you to temptations. All things that happen to you, though God makes them work for good, in themselves would work for evil. While here on this earth the world is no friend to grace to help you on to God. The bias of the current is not towards heaven, alas! it is the other way. "Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves." "The whole world lieth in the wicked one, and ye are of God, little children."

Darkness prevails. It cannot minister to your safety or to your happiness. Neither can the sinful world minister light to the understanding, peace to the conscience, joy to the heart, or holiness to the life of the believer. You will have to fight continually. Till the last step you take will be a conflict, and you will never be able to sheathe your sword until you are in the bosom of Christ. Thus must you maintain the godly warfare—

*“Till with yonder blood-bought crowd,  
You shall sing on Canaan's shore  
Songs of triumph, sweet and loud;  
War with Amalek no more.”*

Here then, are some of the marks of the church of Christ. I hope that a part of that church worships in this house. A part of that church will be found to worship in every house of prayer where the disciples of our common Lord assemble, and the mystery of God and of the Father and of Christ is acknowledged.

**II.** Let us pass on to the second word, which is this, that **IT IS THE DUTY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH TO INVITE SUITABLE PERSONS TO JOIN WITH IT.**

As you read—“*Come thou with us, and we will do thee good*”—say if these are not the terms in which any church should invite *a suitable pastor* to unite with it? I have always felt that they have a

better application to a pastor than they have to the people, for it is said of Hobab, “Thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou shalt be unto us instead of eyes.” It was inviting a really efficient helper, who would be of great service to the Israelites, to come and cast in his lot with them.

So should a church expect to find in its pastor one who may guide them, because he knows how they are to encamp in the wilderness, one who may be to them, in some respects, instead of eyes. Their invitation should come in this way, not only “Come thou with us, that we may get good out of thee”—that is one design—but it should also be, “Come thou with us, that we may do thee good, that we may hold up thy hands, that we may sustain thee by our prayers, that we may back thee up by our efforts, that being led onward by thee from one work of Christian activity to another, we may never fail thee, never betray thee, but may stand with thee even to the last.”

I believe you will seldom get much good unless you are willing also to confer good. Those who are the nearest to the heart of the preacher, in all Christian service, will in all probability be most spiritually enriched under his ministry.

I speak not of myself, nor for myself, but I specially address myself now to those of you, my hearers, who are members of other churches. Do, I exhort you, love your ministers, stand up for their character in all companies, rally at their side in all their efforts, never let them have to regret your absence at the weeknight service, or at any other time, if you can help it. Let them see that you appreciate the men whom you have chosen to be over you in the Lord, and that you have said in inviting them to come among you, “Come thou with us, and we will do thee good.”

But not to linger on that view, however pertinent and seasonable, let us take the words as significant of the manner in which churches should invite *suitable persons to come among them as private members*.

Are there not those who go in and out merely as visitors worshipping with you, who have never joined hands with you in covenant? They meet with you as mere hearers, under the same ministry, but they have not identified themselves with the brotherhood to sit down and feast with you at the table of the Lord. To such as these the proposal may be made, and the welcome proffered. The conditions, of course, need to be thoroughly understood on our part as well as on theirs.

We dare not invite anyone to join the visible church who has not first joined the invisible church. We do not believe that a man has any right to be baptized in water unless he has first been baptized in the Holy Ghost, nor that anyone has a right to eat of the Lord’s supper, the outward signs of bread and wine, until he has eaten of the flesh and drank of the blood of the Son of Man in a spiritual sense. He must have the essence of the symbol before we dare give the symbol.

So a man must be vitally united to the living church of Christ before he has any right to be professionally united therewith. Hence, it would be a sin on the part of any child of God to say to anyone whom he knew to be an unconverted person, “Come and unite yourself with the church.” Nay, that cannot be.

First, dear hearer, you must be one with Christ, reconciled to God, a believer in the precious blood, and then afterwards may you come to the church of God. But until then you have neither part nor lot in this matter, for you are still in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity.

Moses did not thus invite any strangers or neighbors indiscriminately, saying, “Come ye with us,” but he invited Hobab as one whom he well knew, and of whose fitness he could feel no doubt. Was not Raguel his father, the priest of Midian, a servant of the Most High God? and was not Hobab also a worshipper of JEHOVAH, the God of Israel? “Come thou with us,” saith he, “you are our kith and kin. Birds of a feather flock together, come thou with us and we will do thee good. You are one of our brethren, come and welcome, nothing shall stand in the way. Come *thou* with us, and we will do thee good.”

Now, I have heard persons speak on this wise, “I believe that my child has been converted, but you must not think that I have pressed him, for I never spoke to my child about religion.” I am heartily ashamed of a father who can say that, and I hope that he will be equally ashamed of himself. I quite

agree, however, that no parent and no friend should press another to make a public profession of faith until he is as well assured as he possibly can be that the fruits of the Spirit are put forth in that child, or that friend. But once assured of that, there can be no credit in holding your tongue about a Christian duty.

It is the duty of every child of God to be associated with the Christian church, and surely it is part of our duty to instruct others to do what the Lord would approve of! Do not, therefore, hesitate to say to such as serve and fear the Lord, "How is it that you remain outside the pale of the visible church? Come thou with us, and we will do thee good." So Moses did to Hobab.

As it is a very kind and tender word, "Come thou with us," let it be spoken *persuasively*. Use such reasoning as you can to prove that it is at once their duty and their privilege. Observe, Moses does not command, but he persuades. Nor does he merely make a suggestion or give a formal invitation, but he uses an argument, he puts it attractively, "And we will do thee good." So, look the matter up. Study it, get your arguments ready, seek out inducements from your own experience. Draw a reason, and then and thus try to persuade your Christian friends.

*Do it heartily.* Observe how Moses puts it as from a very warm heart. "Come thou with us, give me thy hand, my brother. Come thou with us, and we *will* do thee good." There are no "ifs" and "ands," and "buts," or "Well, you may perhaps be welcome," but "Come thou with us." Give a hearty, loving, warm invitation to those whom you believe to be your brethren and sisters in Christ.

*Do it repeatedly* if once will not suffice. Observe in this case, Hobab said he thought he would depart to his own land and his kindred, but Moses returned to the charge and says, "Leave us not, I pray thee." How earnestly he puts it! He will have no put off. If at first it was a request, now it is a beseeching almost to entreaty—"Leave us not, I pray thee." And how he repeats the old argument, but puts it in a better light—"If thou go with us, yea, it shall be, that what goodness the LORD shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee."

I would therefore earnestly say to Christian brethren and sisters here, look for some among our congregation, such as you believe to be godly people, and put to them this matter. I am sure they are losing much benefit, and quite certain that they are standing in an irregular position. If it is right for any one Christian not to be a member of a church it is right for all Christians not to be members of churches—consequently it would be right for there to be no visible church, and ordinances might be dispensed with, for all these things must either consist through the maintenance of sacred order or else collapse with the breach of godly discipline.

What is not the duty of one is not the duty of any, and what is the duty of one is the duty of all, for we all stand alike before God. If I may be innocent in abstaining from union with the people of God, so may all of you, or if you may, so may I. There is no more obligation upon me to preach the Gospel than there is upon any one of you to make a profession of his faith.

If you are a Christian, the same rule of love that prompts me to speak for my Lord should prompt you in your way to speak for your Lord. And if I should not be excusable if I remained silent, and refused to bear my testimony, neither will you be excusable, being a Christian, if you refuse to unite yourself with the people of God.

Remember our Master's word, "Whosoever therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men" (which has the force there of not confessing), "him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."

Before I leave this point let me call your attention *to a certain sense in which Christian men may address this invitation to all who they meet with*, "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good." Not, "come and join our church," not "come and be members," not "come and put on a profession of faith."

You cannot say that to any but to those in whom you see the fruits of the Spirit. But you may say, and you ought to say, to all persons of all classes on all sides, "Come away from the seed of evil doers, cast in your lot with the people of God. Leave the world, come on pilgrimage to the better country, forsake the pursuit of vanities, lay hold on eternal life.

“Waste not all your thoughts upon the bootless cares of time. Think about the momentous matters of eternity. Why will you be companions of those who are upon the wrong side and whose cause is the cause of evil? Why will you remain an enemy to God? Why will you be in an unreconciled state?”

“We, by God’s grace, have cast in our lot with Christ and with His cause. We desire to live to His glory. Our ambition is to serve Him. If we could, we would live without sin, for we hate it and loathe it. If we could, we would be as the angels are, without a single fault.

“Come and cast in your lot with us—that is, believe. That is, trust a Savior slain. That is, put your soul into the custody of Christ the Intercessor. That is, press forward through a life of holiness on earth to a home of happiness in heaven. ‘Come thou with us, and we will do thee good.’”

So then, the exhortation of our text which, strictly speaking, seems most applicable to the minister, becomes next suitable to the child of God who has not hitherto cast in his lot with the company of our Lord’s disciples. And after that, in a certain sense, it may be appropriately addressed to all who come under the sound of the Gospel. “Come thou with us, and we will do thee good.”

**III.** But now, our third observation is, that THE MAIN ARGUMENT—THE MOST POWERFUL INCENTIVE WE CAN EVER USE IS—THAT ASSOCIATION WITH THE CHURCH OF CHRIST WILL DO THOSE WHO ENTER INTO IT GOOD.

I am sure it will, for I speak from experience, and if I were to call upon many scores, and even hundreds, in this house, they would all bear the same testimony, that union with the people of God has done them good.

The church of God may say this, first, *because she can offer to those who join with her good company*. In the church of God are those who are called “the excellent of the earth,” in whom David said was all his delight.

In the church of God are the humble, and meek, and lowly, and though in that church there will come a traitorous Judas, yet there are not wanting the warm-spirited and loving John, the bold and daring Peter, the practical James, the well-instructed Paul, in labors more abundant, and many of the precious sons of Zion, and daughters of Jerusalem in like manner, of whom I might affirm, as the apostle did of Priscilla and Aquila, that they are my helpers in Christ Jesus, unto whom I not only give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

Truly we can sing with heart-felt sincerity, Dr. Watt’s paraphrase of David’s psalm—

*“Here my best friends, my kindred dwell,  
Here God my Savior reigns.”*

Good company is always a good thing, and the children of God may say to their brethren who have not yet joined with them, “Come thou with us, and we will do thee good,” for we will introduce you to the goodly fellowship of the saints, to a section of the general assembly and church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven, and whose work of faith, patience of hope, and labors of love, are spread abroad throughout the world, even where their memory is forgot, that we need not to speak anything.

“Come with us,” the church of God may say, “and you shall have *good instruction*,” for it is in the true church of God that the doctrines of grace are preached, that the covenant of grace is unfolded, that the person of Christ is extolled, and that the work of the Spirit is magnified, that all the precious things, indeed, which make up the spiritual meat of God’s servants are brought forth and put upon the table every Sabbath day.

There the good stewards bring forth things both new and old. In the midst of the church the Good Shepherd makes us to lie down in the green pastures, and leads us beside the still waters. Come thou with us, and the teaching of the church shall do thee good, thou shalt hear those glorious doctrines which shall build thee up in thy most holy faith.

“Come thou with us, and we will do thee good,” *in the best sense, for thou shall feel in our midst the good presence of God.* Where two or three are gathered together in Christ’s name, there is He in the midst of them. And in the greater assemblies of His people, when the solemn hymn swells up to heaven, and the fervent prayer rises like a cloud of sweet perfume, and the ministry of the Gospel is diffused like a sweet smelling savor of Christ unto God—there God is.

There the Father is, receiving returning prodigals, accepting His dear children who feel the spirit of adoption. There the Son is, manifesting Himself unto them as He does not unto the world. There the Spirit is, working in them to will and to do of His own good pleasure, and helping their infirmities as a Comforter and an Advocate.

Have you not often felt the presence of God, my dear brethren and sisters, in your assemblies as the people of God? Can you not, therefore say, with the recollections in your glowing hearts of the consolations you have received in association with each other, “Come thou with us, and we will do thee good”?

“Come with us again, for *you shall participate in all the good offices of the church.*” That is to say, my brother Christian, if you will cast in your lot with us, if there be prayer you shall have your share in it. We will pray for you in your trouble, and trial, and anguish. If a brother’s voice can intercede for you when your tongue is dumb with grief, you shall certainly have such help as that can minister to you. Come thou with us, for in the true church of God there is sympathy.

Genuine believers are taught to “weep with those that weep,” and to “rejoice with those who rejoice.” They feel that they are members one of another, and partakers of the same life with Jesus Christ.

If there be anything to be found in ordinances you shall have a share of that good thing. If the Lord reveals Himself in the breaking of bread, you shall not be shut out from the table. Come thou with us, and when we behold Him, thou shalt see Him too. Come thou with us, and if our fellowship be with Christ, you shall have a share in it. And if our conversation of the things of God be sweet and pleasant, you too shall have your say, and your good word, and we will rejoice to hear you.

We invite you to a pure brotherly fellowship, not to one of name only, but in deed and in heart. “Come thou with us, and we will do thee good.”

But the good that Hobab was to get *was not only on the road.* He must have got a deal of good on the road, for he saw in the sacrifice what he had never seen before. While he walked amongst those tents of Judah, he must have felt that God was remarkably present there as he had never felt it amongst the tents of Midian.

He saw there every morning the pillar of cloud, and every night the pillar of fire. He heard the sound of the silver trumpets, he saw the uplifting of the sacred banners, and the marching of the chosen host of God, and he must have felt, “This is a place more marvelous than any I have ever trodden before. In that falling manna, in that miraculous stream, I see everywhere the marks of omnipotence, love, and wisdom, as I never have seen them in all my solitary musings or my long wanderings aforetime.”

And so in the church of God there are the footprints of Deity, there are marks of the sublime presence of the Christ of God who abides in the furnace with His afflicted people, signs of God’s presence such as all the world besides cannot exhibit. You shall get good on the road.

But still, the main good that Hobab got was this—*he went into the promised land with God’s people.* We read of his people, the Kenites dwelling in the land in aftertime. He seems to have become a partaker of the same covenant with Israel, to have become part and parcel with them.

So, the main blessing that you get from being united with the invisible church of Christ through being part and parcel of the body of Christ, *is reserved for the hereafter.*

*“When God makes up His last account  
Of natives in the holy mount;  
'Twill be an honor to appear*

*As one new born and nourished there.”*

Woe unto those who shall have no part with Israel in the day when the lots shall be divided, and the portions shall be given! Woe unto such as shall be found among the Amalekites or Canaanites, strangers to the chosen seed!

But happy shall all they be who have God to be their God, for their portion shall be bliss forever. Come thou, therefore, with us, for whatsoever good the Lord shall do unto us thou shalt be a partaker in it.

**IV.** And now, lastly. All this being seriously pondered and clearly understood, the last point is a matter of very serious importance. Lest we should be found mere pretenders, LET ALL OF US WHO BELONG TO CHRIST’S CHURCH TAKE CARE TO MAKE THIS ARGUMENT TRUE.

I speak to many brethren and sisters here who have long been joined to the visible church of God, and I put this interrogatory to them—*How have you carried out this silent compact which has been made with the friends of Christ?* You have promised to do them good, have you fulfilled your pledges? I am afraid few of us have done good to our fellow Christians up to the measure that we might have done, or that we ought to have done. Some professors, I fear, have forgotten the compact altogether. They joined the church, but the idea of doing good to the rest of the community has scarcely entered into their mind.

“Come thou with us, and we will do thee good.” You say this, then, *to the poor members of the church*. Has God prospered you? Do them good. Say not to them, “Be ye warmed, and be ye filled,” but as far as ever your ability can reach minister to them, that Christ may not have to say to you, “I was an hungered and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink.” Let your charity be wide as the world, for God maketh it to rain on the just and the unjust, but remember, He has a peculiar people, and He would have us to be a peculiar people unto Himself.

Let us do good unto all men, but specially to those who are of the household of faith. If you know a brother in Christ whose need is pressing, own him as a brother, open your hand wide unto him. Do him good in this respect.

You that are old members of the church, well established and instructed, you have virtually promised to do good *to the young* members. Will you not try to do so? Some of them, perhaps, are not all you would like them to be, mind, you are not to condemn, but to reform them. Can you not gently prune the luxuriance of their branches that are a little too wild? Would it not be possible for you, in a loving and an affectionate manner, to assist them in the points wherein they are weak, to lead them in the matters wherein which they err?

Do them good, do not clamor against them with reproach, censure, sneer, and jibe. Nor wish to bind them down to conformity with your rule, judging them by the somberness of your own disposition. What though they are lively and cheerful, try to make them merry and wise. Let them be happy and rejoice, seek that their happiness may be in Christ, and their rejoicing in the Lord. Do them good.

There are some of your fellow Christians *who are faint-hearted*—not pleasant people to talk to. They will never cheer you much. They always look on the black side. They have always some trouble. They are terribly dull company—do not shun them, do them good. Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of feeble heart, “Be strong; fear not.” Do not forsake them, but you that are spiritual bear their burdens, and help to make them rejoice.

Some among your number will be *backsliders*—alas! that it should be so. Let not your coldness ever accelerate the pace at which they step aside. Rather let your sedulous care watch over them, that their first wandering may be soon checked. Little, alas! can be done to remedy backsliding when it goes far, but much may be done by nipping it in the bud.

In the church of God prevention is infinitely better than cure. Watch over them, then. “If any man be overtaken in a fault, ye that are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, remembering thyself lest thou also be tempted.”



Some in the church may be *ignorant*. There always were such. No standard of height is set up in the Word of God for all the recruits to be up to that level. No by-law prescribes that none be received unless they are of a certain stature. If therefore some you meet with are very ignorant, then do them good. Do not set about a report of any absurd remark that they may make or any misapprehension they may have upon a point of divinity.

You were not always so wise as you are now, probably you are not so wise now as you think you are, but anyhow, I shall argue from the wisdom you possess your duty to impart it. You have said, “Come thou with us, and we will do thee good.” It is not doing any man good to smile at him, to find fault with him for not knowing, but it is doing him good to hide his shortcomings and help his progress.

Once again—there may be some in your midst *who are in a good deal of trouble*. Have they no friends to sympathize and console them? Alas! friends in this world are often too much like swallows, that are gone as soon as the first frost appears. Let it not be so with you, but if you never owned him your friend before, be his friend now. Come to his help if you possibly can. Let him have your countenance.

Do not pass him because his black coat has a rusty hue. Do not get out of his way because you are afraid that he is short of cash. As far as ever you can, let him see, now he is in his trouble, that you did not value him for what he had, but for himself, for his character, for his attachment to Christ.

If anybody has spoken ill of him, do not be ready to jot down as true the slander that every fool or villain may please to hold forth against a Christian man, search for yourselves, and if you are obliged to believe it, yet say little about it. Carry it before God, as though it were your own sin, and sorrow over it. Talk to your brother, if it be your lot to know him well, and get him to leave the evil into which he has fallen, and lead him back again, but do not forsake him.

Or if he be the victim of slander and scandal, be you among the first to defend him. I do hope that there will always be amongst us a spirit of true Christian brotherhood, so that those who love Christ and have thrown in their lot with us, may find that we really desire to do them good.

I have thus spoken more particularly because I know that the number of Christians among us who are not making a profession is unusually large just now. I had far rather it should be so than that it should be the reverse—than that many should be making a profession without knowing or feeling the private virtue and public faith it demands. Better that you were outside the visible church all your lives, and be in Christ, than make a profession, and yet have no part nor lot with Him.

All these outward things are nothing compared with the inward. “Ye must be born again.” There must be a living faith in Christ, a real change of heart, an indwelling of the Spirit of God to attest the verity of your godliness. Where these are, the rest ought not to be neglected. “These things ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other undone,” but still even if they are left undone, it shall not amount to a total shipwreck.

But if there be no faith, you may build the vessel as you will, and you may think that you have loaded her with precious treasures, but sink she must, because that alone which would have kept her afloat has been neglected.

God grant us to be one with Christ, and to be one with His people, in time and in eternity. There now—there now—there is Christ’s church, and if I saw that she were in the stocks and all were hooting her, if she stood in the pillory and all were pelting her, yet it would be my desire to throw in my lot with her. Whatever she endured I would endure, because the day cometh when those who were not on the side of Christ and His church would give their eyes if they had been. Ay, would wish themselves that they had never been born, to think that they did not take up with the reproached people, and did not side with the reproached Savior.

O be with Christ in His sorrows, that you may be with Him in His joy. Be with Him in His reproach, that you may be with Him in His glory! Amen.

#### PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

**EXODUS 18 AND NUMBERS 10:23-36**

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Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at [www.spurgeongems.org](http://www.spurgeongems.org).