

THE PROFIT OF GODLINESS IN THIS LIFE

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A SERMON
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*“Bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.
This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance.”
1 Timothy 4:8-9*

YOUR attention will be the more readily given to this passage, because Paul declares it to be a “faithful”—a most true and certain saying, and “worthy of all acceptance,” that is to say, worthy to be received and practiced by us all.

Paul has four of these faithful sayings. The first occurs in 1 Timothy 1:15, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” The second is our text. The third is in 2 Timothy 2:12, “It is a faithful saying, if we suffer, we shall also reign with him.” And the fourth is in Titus 3:8, “This is a faithful saying, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works.”

We may trace a connection between these faithful sayings. The first one lays the foundation of our eternal salvation in the free grace of God, as shown to us in the mission of the great Redeemer. The next affirms the double blessedness which we obtain through this salvation—the blessings of the upper and nether springs—of time and of Eternity. The third shows one of the duties to which the chosen people are called, we are ordained to suffer for Christ with the promise that “if we suffer, we shall also reign with him.” The last sets forth the active form of Christian service, bidding us diligently to maintain good works.

Thus we have the root of salvation in free grace. Next, we have the privileges of that salvation in the life which now is, and in that which is to come. And we have also the two great branches of suffering with Christ, and serving with Christ, loaded with the fruits of the Spirit.

Let us treasure up these faithful sayings. Let them be the guides of our life, our comfort, and our instruction. The apostle of the Gentiles proved them to be faithful, they are faithful still, not one word shall fall to the ground. They are worthy of all acceptance, let us accept them now, and prove their faithfulness. Let these four faithful sayings be written on the four corners of your house.

Today we consider the second of the four, and we will read the text again, “Bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”

In the days when Paul wrote this epistle, the Greeks and others paid great attention to physical culture, the development of the muscles, the proportion of the limbs, the production of everything in the body which might conduce to the soundness of manhood. The philosophy of Greece all looked that way, and hence at the various gymnasia, bodily exercises of an athletic and even violent kind were undergone by men with the view of developing the body, and so assisting the soul.

It may be that Timothy, being yet a young man, fancied that there was something in this philosophy, and something indeed there is, in the original the apostle Paul admits that it is so, for the passage might be read thus, “Bodily exercise verily profiteth a little,” or thus, “Bodily exercise profiteth for a short time.”

Physical training is of some service, attention to it is not sinful nor to be condemned. It is of some use and has its proper place, but still it has no very eminent position in the Christian system. It occupies

a place far in the background in the teaching of Christ and His apostles. It is but a minor part of a complete education. It profiteth a little, a little for a little time.

But godliness, the worship of God, the fear of God, hath a long and wealthy entail of blessing, having the promise both of the life that now is and of that which is to come. Its profiting is not little but great, its benefit is not confined to the body, but is shared by the body and the soul, it is not limited by this mortal life, but overleaps the grave and brings its largest revenue of profit in the world where graves are all unknown.

This morning I am about to try and speak upon the profit of godliness to a man in this life. We will consider its having the promise of the life to come, in the evening, if God spares us.

With regard to this life, let it be remarked that *the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ neither undervalues nor overvalues this present life*. It does not sneer at this life as though it were nothing, on the contrary, it ennobles it, and shows the relation which it has to the higher and eternal life. It does not overvalue it by making this life, and the secular pursuits of it, the main objective of any man. It puts it into an honorable but yet a secondary place, and saith to the sons of men, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

It is not, however, very easy to keep to the middle point of exact truth as to a due estimate of this present life, he who does so is taught of God. There are many who undervalue this life, let me mention some of them to you.

Those undervalue it who sacrifice it to indulge their *passions*, or to gratify their *appetites*. Too many for the sake of momentary gratifications, have shortened their lives, and rendered their latter end bitterly painful to themselves. They conceived that the pleasures of the flesh were better than life. They were mistaken in their estimate. They made but a poor exchange when they chose lust and death, rather than purity and life.

The drunkard has been known to take his cups, though he knew that in so doing he was virtually poisoning himself. The man of hot passions has been seen to plunge into uncleanness, though the consequences of his folly have been plainly set before him. Men who for a morsel of meat, or a flash of merriment, are selling this world as well as the world to come, are fools indeed. He that would have pleasure must not pursue it too furiously.

Temperance is the rule here, moderation and the use, not excess and the abuse, will secure to us the pleasure even of this mortal life. Value not, I pray you, the transient joys which the animal appetites can bring to you, at least value them not so much as to shorten life for their sakes.

Some evidently undervalue their lives because they make them wretched through *envy*. Others are richer than they are, and they think it a miserable thing to be alive at all while others possess more of this world's goods than they. They walk, they say, and toil, while yonder person, who has no more deserts than they, is riding in his chariot. So, forsooth, they count the chariot the main thing, and not the life, and they will not enjoy their life because they cannot have a certain coveted addition which another possesses.

Haman is not grateful for all the mercies of life while unbending Mordecai sits in the king's gate. He counts his honey to be bitterness because he cannot lord it at his will. God gets no thankfulness at all from the man for the innumerable mercies which he has, these are nothing, he pines for some particular supposed mercy which he has not. He considers that the fact of his being alive, and being favored of God in many respects, is nothing at all to be considered, because he has not all that his avarice might wish for. O poison not life by the envy of others, for if you do so you miserably undervalue it!

The slaves of *avarice* undervalue their lives, for they do not care to make life happy, but pinch themselves in order to accumulate wealth. The miser who starves himself in order that he may fill his bags may well be reasoned with in this way, "Is not the life more than the meat, and the body than raiment? Skin for skin, yea, all that other men have will they give for their lives; but you give your life for this pelf, this glittering dust. You are willing to forego all the enjoyments that this life might afford

you, that you may have a heap to leave to your uncertain heirs, who will probably squander it, and certainly forget the hands that scraped the hoard together.”

Why should I throw away myself for the sake of dying rich? Is it true success in life to have enjoyed nothing, to have poisoned all my existence, merely that the world might be informed in a corner of the *Illustrated News* that I died worth so many thousands of pounds? This is to undervalue life indeed.

So also do they undervalue it who in *foolhardiness* are ready to throw it away on the slightest pretext. He that for his country's sake, or for the love of his fellow creature, risks life and loses it, truly deserves to be called a hero. But he who to provoke laughter and to win the applause of fools, will venture limb and life without need, is but a fool himself, and deserves no praise whatever.

He undervalues life who will display an art which endangers it, or who will run the risk of it for anything whatever short of the laudable motive of preserving liberty to his country, or life to his fellow men. Holy Scripture never teaches us to undervalue our own lives. He that said, “Thou shalt not kill,” meant that we were not to kill ourselves any more than others. We ought to seek by all we can do in the surroundings of our habitations, by our cleanliness, by carefully observing sanitary laws, by never encouraging dangerous exhibitions, and by every other means to show our care of the life that now is, for it is a precious thing.

Yet, my brethren, there can be such a thing as overvaluing this life, and multitudes have fallen into that error. Those overvalue it that prefer it to eternal life. Why, it is but as a drop compared with the ocean, if you measure time with eternity. Seventy or eighty years of dwelling here below, what are they when compared with infinite ages of existence in the presence of the Most High?

I reckon that this present life is not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. When men in fearful moments have denied the faith for the sake of saving their lives, they have overvalued this life. When to preserve themselves from the sword, or the fire, or the tortures of the rack, they have denied the name of Jesus, they have made a mistake, and exchanged gold for dross. Alas, how many of us, in like condition, might have fallen into the same error?

They overvalue this life who consider it to be a better thing than divine love, for the love of God is better than life—His lovingkindness is better than life itself. Some would give anything for their lives, but they would give nothing for God's love. If their lives were in danger, they would hasten to the physician, but though they enjoy not the love of God they yet sit at ease, and seek not the priceless boon.

They who feel aright think it a cheap thing to die, but an awful thing to live apart from God. They recognize that life would be but death unless God were with us, and that death itself is but the vestibule of life while God is our joy and our strength!

Let us never set the present life before divine love, and never let it be compared even for a moment with the pursuit of God's glory. Every Christian man is to feel that he is to take care of his life in comparison with any earthly glory, but if it comes to a choice between God's glory and his life, he is to have no timorous hesitation in the matter, but at once sacrifice his life freely at his Lord's altar.

This has ever been the spirit of true Christians. They have never been anxious to die, nor have they been fearful concerning the loss of life. They have not thrown away their lives, they have known their value too well, but they have not withheld their lives for Christ's sake, for they have esteemed Him to be better than life itself. So you see the Scripture teaches us that there is a proper middle course in estimating this present life, and if we follow its instructions, we shall neither undervalue nor overvalue it.

It appears from the text, that godliness influences this present life, puts it in its true position, and becomes profitable to it.

I. First, let me observe that GODLINESS CHANGES THE TENURE OF THE LIFE THAT NOW IS.

It hath “*the promise* of the life that now is.” I want you to mark the word—“it hath *the promise* of the life that now is.” An ungodly man lives, but how? He lives in a very different respect from a godly man. Sit down in the cell of Newgate with a man condemned to die. That man lives, but he is reckoned

dead in law. He has been condemned. If he is now enjoying a reprieve, yet he holds his life at another's pleasure, and soon he must surrender it to the demands of justice.

I, sitting by the side of him, breathing the same air, and enjoying what in many respects is only the selfsame life, yet live in a totally different sense. I have not forfeited my life to the law, I enjoy it, as far as the law is concerned, as my own proper right. The law protects *my* life, though it destroys *his* life. The ungodly man is condemned already, condemned to die, for the wages of sin is death, and his whole life here is nothing but a reprieve granted by the longsuffering of God.

But a Christian is pardoned and absolved. He owes not his life now to penal justice, when death comes to him it will not be at all in the sense of an infliction of a punishment. It will not be death, it will be the transfer of his spirit to a better state, the slumbering of his body for a little while in its proper couch to be awakened in a nobler likeness by the trumpet of the archangel.

Now, is not life itself changed when held on so different a tenure? To live because I am now protected by the law, is not that better than to be living at the sufferance of the law? To live the life of an absolved man, of a free man, the life of God's own child even in this present life, is not that a different thing from living the life of one to whom each hour measures out a nearer approach to the capital sentence, and to the execution of well-deserved punishment? The first is a life of pleasure, the second, disguise it as you may, is death in life, a life overshadowed with the darkness of eternal wrath.

"Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is." That word changes the tenure of our present life in this respect, that it removes in a sense the uncertainty of it. God has given to none of you unconverted ones any promise of the life that now is. You are like squatters on a common, who pitch their tents, and by the sufferance of the lord of the manor may remain there for a while, but at a moment's notice you must up tents and away.

But the Christian hath the *promise* of the life that now is. That is to say, he has the freehold of it, it is life given to him of God, and he really enjoys it, and has an absolute certainty about it. In fact, the life that now is has become to the Christian a foretaste of the life to come.

Do you say that it is uncertain to the Christian whether he shall die or live? I grant you in one sense his remaining here is uncertain, yet is this certain to him, that he shall never die until it is best for him to die. He shall never depart this life till he is ripe for the life to come, shall never, in fact, be removed from his present tabernacle till he himself, if he knew all, would be perfectly willing to be removed. Willing! ay, far more, overjoyed that his tabernacle should be dissolved that he might enter into his "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

The tenure is very different between the uncertainty of the ungodly that has no rights and no legal titles, and the blessed certainty of the child of God who lives by promise.

Let me add that this word seems to me to sweeten the whole of human life to the man that has it. Godliness has the *promise* of life that now is, that is to say, everything that comes to a godly man comes to him by promise, whereas if the ungodly man has any blessing apparent, it does not come by promise, it comes overshadowed by a terrible guilt which curses his very blessings, and makes the responsibilities of his wealth and of his health and position, redound to his own destruction, working as a savor of death unto death through his willful disobedience.

Everything that comes to the Christian comes by promise. He sees his daily bread and he saith, "It has my Father's mark on it. He said my bread should be given me. Here comes the water from the crystal stream, it is flavored with the love of God. He said my water shall be sure." He puts on his raiment, and it may not be so comely as the dress of others, but he saith, "This is the livery my Father promised me."

He sleeps, and it is beneath the canopy of divine protection. He wakes and he walks abroad, angels according to the promise bearing him up in their hands. Afflictions come to him by promise, the broad arrow of the great King is set on each one of them, for was it not said of old, "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye shall have peace"? He can see everywhere the trace of divine faithfulness in the keeping of the covenant promise.

He lives not the life of Ishmael, who by and by may be banished to the wilderness with the bondwoman his mother, but he lives the life of Isaac, the child of the promise, who is ere long to inherit all things, and who even now is the darling child of his father, and rejoices in his father's love. There is a vast difference between having the life that now is, and having *the promise* of the life that now is—having God's promise about it to make it all gracious, to make it all certain, and to make it all blessed as a token of love from God.

II. It is time that we pass on to THE BENEFIT WHICH GODLINESS BESTOWS IN THIS LIFE.

Perhaps the fullness of the text is the fact that the flower of life, the crown of life, the highest blessedness and bliss of life, is secured to us by godliness. I have no doubt you have often heard interpretations of this text, very excellent, and it is not for me to judge or censure them, which lead to the belief that the way to make the best of both worlds is to be a Christian. I also subscribe to that, but I must demur to the way in which it is generally put.

There is an excellent sermon by that notable divine, Saurin, in which he urges this text as a proof that the best hope of success in the world is enjoyed by the Christian. I disagree to that being the teaching of this text. There may be some truth in it, but I do not think it is much to be insisted on.

It has been said that he who fears God has the best guarantee of health. It is true, there is nothing in godliness to destroy the health of the body. The true Christian is preserved from many of those passions, and excitements, and indulgences, which tend to produce disease and to bring on early death. That much is true, but I do not believe that godliness inevitably ensures good health.

I rather believe that some godly men absolutely require for the highest perfection of their godliness, that they should be visited with sickness. It seems to me to be a very strange theory, to teach that godliness guarantees health, for it would lead to the supposition that all people who are unhealthy must necessarily be or have been deficient in godliness. And this is all the more untenable when we observe that some of the best people we have ever met have been those who have for years been bedridden by affliction, which they certainly never brought upon themselves by any kind of sin.

I would say to every young man, there is nothing in the pursuit of godliness that can injure your health, but I would not say to him, "If you are godly, you have the promise of being a healthy man," for I do not believe it, since unhealthiness may come from a thousand other sources besides impropriety of conduct.

I will go further, and affirm that godliness, when carried to its highest and most honorable degree of excellence, might sometimes render it necessary for a man to place himself where he would of necessity become unhealthy. I know that it was the highest godliness which made our missionaries fix their abodes among the fever marshes of Fernando Po and Old Calabar to preach the Gospel.

When I heard from one of our missionaries, as I did personally, that he had at last become so acclimatized that he did not have the fever oftener than about two days out of three, I could not think that godliness in his case necessarily involved health. But I gathered that it might so happen that an eminently godly man might feel it needful to go where he might say, "Farewell, health, you are not after all the promise of the life that now is. I can bear to suffer, I can bear to creep about this world sick and ready to die if I may but have what is better than health, the luxury of winning souls for Christ, the honor and joy of instructing the ignorant in the faith of the crucified Redeemer."

It were wicked to think that a man has less of godliness who sacrifices his health for Christ's sake. He certainly would not be the man to miss the promise, and yet if health were such a promise, he would evidently have missed it.

Again, we have heard it argued that the godly man has the best prospect of wealth in this world. Now, I will also grant that as godliness delivers us from a multitude of expenses into which riot and dissipation would lead us, and as godliness creates habits of sobriety and economy, as godliness begets honesty, and honesty is even in a worldly sense the best policy, there are some reasons why Christian traders should grow rich, and godly men have much in their favor.

But I also cannot help recognizing that while trade is as it is, there are many things which a Christian cannot do, and dares not do, which some have done, and are to this day rich for having done them—dirty acts, mean, low, and groveling, which have brought wealth to the creatures who have practiced them. And yet more, I have known the best of Christians, and men too, whose outward conduct has been fully conformable to their profession, who have lived and died poor. Now, if wealth be the promise of the life that now is, I venture to say that godliness does not infallibly or even generally secure it.

The God-fearing man may have as fair an opportunity as any other in the race of life, but all things considered this is all we can say, for it may be that the godly man may be a poor man, and from a dozen circumstances not connected with his religion or his morals, may live and may die poor in this world, but rich in faith.

It has also been said that godliness has the promise of the life that now is, in the sense that a Christian man is the most likely to have a good name, fame, and reputation among his fellow men. That also is true in a measure. In well-regulated society, the believer in Christ through the holiness of his character, will be had in esteem, and even amongst the worst of men the excellence of his conduct will command a measure of respect.

But for all that, I do not believe that repute among men is the promise of the life that now is, for what is it after all? Good repute among men, if it be deserved, I shall not decry, but if by any chance slander should come and take away the good man's name—and it has often done so—shall I say pity the calumniated saint as one who has lost the promise of the life that now is? I dare not think it. Far rather would I bid him rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for so persecuted they the prophets that were before him.

And who is the most likely person to be slandered? Is it not the man who is most consistent with his profession and most zealous in the spread of the faith? The apostle Paul certainly never accounted riches to be the promise of the life that now is, for he had nothing. He had learned to be poor and to labor with his hands. He certainly never reckoned health to be the promise of the life that now is, for he was in such circumstances of peril by land and sea, and among false brethren, that his life was in jeopardy for the Gospel.

And as to a good name, he never regarded that as the promise of the life that now is, for he was willingly accounted as the offscouring of all things, some thought him mad, others thought him base, his repute with the multitude was gone.

I will repeat what I have said, lest I be misunderstood. Under ordinary circumstances it is true that godliness wears a propitious face both towards health, and wealth, and name, and he who has respect to these things, shall not find himself, as a rule, injured in the pursuit of them by his godliness. But still I disdain altogether the idea that these three things together are, or even make up a part of the promise of the life that now is.

I believe some persons have the life that now is in its fullness, and the promise of it in its richest fulfillment, who have neither wealth, health, nor fame, for being blessed with the suffering Master's smile and presence, they are happier far than those who roll in wealth, who luxuriate in fame, and have all the rich blessings which health includes.

Let me now show you what I think is the promise of the life that now is. I believe it to be an inward happiness, which is altogether independent of outward circumstances, which is something richer than wealth, fairer than health, and more substantial than fame. This secret of the Lord, this deep delight, this calm repose, godliness always brings in proportion as it reigns in the heart.

Let us try and show that this is so. A godly man, my brethren, is one who is at one with his Maker. *It must always be right with the creature when it is at one with the Creator.* The Creator is omnipotent, all-just, all-holy. When the creature is out of gear with the Creator it will always be dashing itself against the prick, and wounding itself. As the Creator will not change, if the creature runs not parallel to the divine will, the creature must suffer, must be unhappy, and must be unrestful.

But when godliness puts our will into conformity with the divine will, the more fully it does so, the more certainly it secures to us happiness even in the life that now is. I am not happy necessarily because I am in good health, but I am happy if I am content to be out of health when God wills it. I am not happy because I am wealthy, but I am happy if it pleases me to be poor because it pleases God I should be. I am not happy because I happen to be famous, but I am happy if, being all unknown, I count it my highest fame to be accepted in the Beloved.

A heart reconciled to the divine will has full possession of the promise of the life that now is, for such peace with God is perfect happiness where it perfectly exists—conformity to God's will is heaven below. I pray that godliness may work in all of you conformity to the divine will, and then I am sure, whatever your outward lot may be, you will win the promise of the life that now is.

The Christian starting in life as such, is best accoutred for this life. He is like a vessel fittingly stored for all the storms and contrary currents that may await it. The Christian is like a soldier, who must fain go to battle, but he is protected by the best armor that can be procured. He wears the helmet, and the breastplate, he wears the entire divine panoply which heavenly wisdom has prepared to protect him from every dart of his adversaries. He has the promise of the life that now is already, just as the man with a good sword and good armor has the best promise of success in battle.

O that God may grant us grace to know and feel that the best instruments and weapons of the warfare of this life are to be found in the arsenals of holiness, in the armories of confidence in God! In this sense we have again the promise of the life that now is.

With a Christian *all things that happen to him work for good.* Is not this a rich part of the promise of the life that now is? What if the waves roar against him, they speed his bark towards the haven? What if the thunders and lightning come forth? They clear the atmosphere and promote his soul's health. He gains by his losses, he grows healthy by his sicknesses, he lives by dying, he is enriched by being despoiled of his goods. Do you ask for any better promise than this?

Is it not better that all things should work for my good, than that all things should be as I would wish to have them? They might all work my pleasure, and yet might all work my ruin. But now if they do not always please me, yet if they always benefit me, is not this the best promise of the life that now is?

The Christian enjoys his God under all circumstances. That, again, is the promise of the life that now is. I spoke of his being reconciled to God, but he is much more than that—he delights himself in his God. He finds God in nature. The landscape glows for him with a diviner color than any other eye can see. As for the heavens, with their starry glories, there is a light in them which has not yet been beheld by the natural man.

He sees God in his solitude, and peoples his loneliness with the spirits that are akin with the Most High. He is, wherever he may be, never debarred from the society he loves best. A wish will find his God, a tear will bring him his best Beloved. He has but to sigh and cry when on the bed of sickness, and God cometh and maketh his bed for him.

Blessed man, he has indeed the promise of the life that now is, for in it all, and over it all, he sees the divine love shining for him with a supernal splendor, and making earth but the porch of heaven. This is to have the life that now is in the fullness of the promise.

I am sure you will agree with me that the genuine possessor of godliness has the promise of the life that now is, in *his freedom from many of those cares and fears which rob life of all its luster.* The man without godliness is weighted with the care of every day, and of all the days that are to come, the dread remembrance of the past, and the terror of the future as well.

The godly man knows that all the past is forgiven, his transgressions are blotted out. As for the present, he casts that burden on the Lord. As for the future, he would not pry into it with anxious eye, but he leaves God to rule and govern as He wills. He sits down, calmly content that his Father's will is right and good towards him.

And as he is thus free from care, so is he *free from the fear of men.* Ungodly men, many of them, are truckle to their fellow men. It is to them a most important question whether they are smiled upon or

frowned at by their fellow worms. The godly man has learned to lift his head above the common race of mankind, and when he lives as he should, he neither thinks a thing the better because men praise it, nor the worse because they censure it.

His rule is not popular opinion, nor the dictates of the philosophy of the hour. He believes what God tells him to be true, and what God prescribes he knows to be right, and he does this careless of man's judgment, for none can judge him but his Master.

That man has the promise of the life that now is who is in full enjoyment of the sweets of a clear conscience, who can afford to snap his fingers in the face of all mankind, and declare that if the heavens themselves should fall, he would do the right, and dare all things for God. Oh, to have the yoke of human judgment from off your neck, and the bondage of man's domineering opinion from off your spirit! This is to receive the promise of the life that now is.

Moreover, the fear of death has gone from the Christian. This with many deprives the life that now is of everything that is happy and consoling. They are afraid in their merriest moments that the skeleton will disturb the feast, and when the dance is merriest, they think they hear the sound of the trumpet that will silence all.

But the Christian is not afraid. To him the prospect of departure is rather joyous than grievous, and the breaking up of this mortal state is an event he looks for as the clearing away of multitudes of sorrows and the bringing in of mighty joys. Brethren, to be free from the fear of death is to make life truly life, and he has it who leans wholly upon Christ, and knows that Jesus is the resurrection and the life.

Put these things together, peacefulness with his fellow men, peace with God, a sense that all things are working for his good, fearlessness of man's judgment, communion with the Most High, and surely you have described in a few words the very flower of life, the thing that makes it worth while to live.

This does not lie, as I have said before, in accumulated treasure. It does not blush in the rosy cheek. It does not dwell in the trump of fame. It resides within, when the man walks with God and subdues the earth beneath his feet, when the soul communes with the spiritual and makes the visible to glow in the light of the unseen, when the man's peace and joy all stream from the deep springs of God's love, and the man lives in God, and God lives in him. Herein lies the highest kind of life. It is the flower of the life that now is, and godliness it is that has the promise of it.

I must not detain you longer, except to make an application of the subject to the present assembly. Brethren and sisters, you who have godliness, and live in the fear of God, let me entreat you to believe that there is provided for you in godliness, comfort, joy, and delight for the life that now is. You need not postpone your feasting upon Christ till you see Him face to face.

Feed on Him this day. You need not wait for the joys of the Holy Spirit till you have shaken off this cumbrous clay. The joy of the Lord is your strength today. You need not think that your peace and rest remain as yet in the future, hidden from you. Eternal life with its blessings is a present possession. They that believe do enter into rest, and may enter into rest *now*.

The clusters of Eshcol are before you, brought to you by a divine hand before you cross the Jordan.

*“The men of grace have found
Glory begun below,
Celestial fruits on earthly ground
From faith and hope do grow.”*

We do not say that godliness has made all believers rich, for some here will be content always to be poor. The whole body of the faithful cannot claim that godliness has brought them earthly treasure, for some of the greatest of them have written that if in this life only they had hope, they would have been of all men the most miserable. But without exception, the whole of us can unanimously declare that we have found in godliness the highest happiness, the supreme delight, the richest consolation.

I pray you, therefore, who profess godliness, be not content unless you have the promise of the life that now is. Believe that you can not only make this life sublime, but make it joyous. Believe that you can now be raised up together, and made to sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. You cannot find a heaven in things below, for the moth is there, and the rust that corrupteth, but you can, while here, if you set your affections upon things above, and not on things on the earth, find glory begun within you, and a young heaven already shining about your path. The life that now is, claim it.

Up, ye sons of Israel, and slay the Amalekites that would take away from you your comfort. Arise, ye men that fear the Lord, and demand that doubts and fears, like the accursed Canaanites, shall be chased from the land, for the promise of God ought to be believed, and in the believing of it, your peace shall be like a river, and your joy shall overflow.

Another application of the text is this. There is a bearing of it upon the sinner. It is quite certain, O ungodly man, that the promise of the life that now is belongs only to those who are godly. Are you content to miss the cream of this life?

I pray you, if you will not think of the life to come, at least think of this. You desire to be happy, you have intelligence enough to know that happiness does not consist in externals, but in the state of your mind. I assure you, and there are thousands of my brethren who can affirm the same, that after having tried the ways of sin, we infinitely prefer the ways of righteousness for their own pleasure's sake even here, and we would not change with ungodly men even if we had to die like dogs.

With all the sorrow and care which Christian life is supposed to bring, we would prefer it to any other form of life beneath the stars. There is no man like the Christian after all. Happy art thou, O Israel, a people saved of the Lord!

We do not come to you, and tell you that godliness will make you rich, although there is no need that it should make you poor. We do not tell you it will make you healthy, it certainly will not make you the reverse. But these are not the things with which we would bribe you, these are inferior blessings, which we dare not set before you as worthy of your seeking after in the first instance.

But we do tell you that if you will but seek the Lord while He may be found, and put your trust in His Christ, who came to put away sin, you shall have the happiest, best, noble, most desirable life that can be enjoyed on earth.

Now many of you believe this. I know you do. In your hearts you envy Christians—even poor Christians. You feel that you would gladly be as sick or as poor as yonder pious saint, if you might have his hope, if you might have his God. Well, if you *know* which is best, have which is best. “May I have it?” saith one. Who said you might not? Does not the Lord invite you to taste and see that He is good? Has not He even commanded you, and are not these His words, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved”?

Simply to trust, and to rely, this is to begin the divine life, and this will introduce you into a nobler sphere than mortals know of. They rejoice when corn and wine fill their barns and their vats, but you will say, “Lord, lift up the light of Thy countenance upon me,” and in that you will find a richer joy than they. “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” God bless you, for Christ's sake.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 71 AND 1 TIMOTHY 6

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.