

THE GLORIOUS RIGHT HAND OF THE LORD

NO. 363

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 BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
 AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

“And the Lord said unto Moses, Is the Lord’s hand waxed short? You shall see now whether My Word shall come to pass unto you or not.”
Numbers 11:23.

GOD had made a positive promise to Moses that for the space of a whole month he would feed the vast host in the wilderness with flesh. Moses, being overtaken by a fit of unbelief, looks to the outward means—calculates his commissariat—and is at a loss to know how the promise can be fulfilled. Shall the flocks and the herds be slain? How, then, should they have cattle wherewith to stock the land upon which they hoped soon to enter? And if they should slaughter *all* their beasts there would not be food enough for ravenous people for a month.

Shall all the fish of the sea leave their watery element and come to the tables of these glamorous hungry men? Even then, Moses thought there would be scarcely food enough to feed so vast a host for a month. You will see, my Brethren, right readily the mistake which Moses made. He looked to the *creature* instead of the *Creator*. Does the Creator expect the creature to fulfill his promise? No. He that makes fulfils. If He speaks, it is done—done by Himself. His promises do not depend for their fulfillment upon the cooperation of the puny strength of man.

God as a sovereign gives an absolute promise. And He can do it without fear of mistake, because He has Omnipotence wherewith to fulfill His greatest word. It was an error, indeed, to look to the sea for fish, instead of waiting upon Heaven for the promise. To look to the flocks for food, instead of believing on Him to whom belongs the cattle on a thousand hills. Suppose, my Friends, this country should be threatened by an invasion of some foreign power and you, in your wisdom and full of trembling should say to those whose province it is to guard our happy island—“I fear this land can never be protected, for the Emperor of China has but very little power. The Presidents of the Republics of South America have but little influence.” You would be stared at. Men would say, what has that to do with the question? The troops of Britain are to defend the land, not the troops of China, or Bolivia. What matters the weakness of those republics or kingdoms? They are not expected to defend our land!

You would be absurd in looking for help where help was neither expected nor promised. And yet how commonly we do the same. *God* has promised to supply our needs and we look to the *creature* to do what God has promised to do. And then because we perceive the creature to be weak and feeble we indulge in unbelief. Why do we look to that quarter at all? Will you look to the top of the Alps for summer heat? Will you journey to the north pole to gather fruits ripened in the sun? Or will you take your journey towards the equator that your body may be braced by cool invigorating breezes?

Verily you would act no more foolishly if you did this than when you look to the weak for strength, or the creature to do the Creator’s work. The great folly of Moses is the folly of most believers. Let us, then, put the question aright. The ground of faith is not the sufficiency of the visible means for the performance of the promise, but the all-sufficiency of the invisible God most surely to do as He has said. And, then, if after that we dare to indulge in mistrusts, the question of God comes home mightily to us: “Has the Lord’s hand waxed short?” And may it happen, too, in His mercy, that with the question, there may come also that blessed promise, “You shall see now whether My Word shall come to pass unto you or not.”

It is a singular thing that such a question as this should ever be asked at all: “Has the Lord’s hand waxed short?” If we look anywhere and everywhere, apart from the conduct of man, there is nothing to suggest the suspicion. Look to God’s *creation!* Is there anything there which would make you say, “Is the Lord’s hand waxed short?” What pillar of the heavens has begun to reel? What curtain of the sky has been rent or moth-eaten? Have the foundations of the earth begun to start? Do they not abide as the Lord has settled them? Has the sun grown dim with age? Have the starry lamps flickered or gone out in darkness?

Are there signs of decay today upon the face of God's creation? Have not howling tempests, the yawning ocean and death-bearing hurricanes asserted but yesterday their undiminished might? Say, is not the green earth as full of vitality, as ready to yield us harvests now as it ever has been? Do the showers fall less frequently? Has the sun ceased to warm? Are there any signs and tokens that God's creation is tottering to its decay? No, journey where you will, you will see God as potent upon the face of the earth and in the very bowels of the globe as He was when He first said, "Let there be light," and there was light."

There is nothing which would tempt us to surmise or suspect that the Lord's hand has waxed short. And look you, too, in *Providence*—is there anything there that would suggest the question? Are not His prophecies still fulfilled? Does He not cause all things to work together for good? Do the cattle on a thousand hills low out to Him for hunger? Do you meet with the skeletons of birds that have fallen to the ground from famine? Does He neglect to give to the fish their food, or do the sea-monsters die? Does not God still open His hand and supply the want of every living thing?

Is He less bounteous today than He was in the time of Adam? Is not the cornucopia still as full? Does He not still scatter mercies with both His hands right lavishly? Are there any tokens in Providence any more than in nature that God's arm has waxed short? And look, too, in the matter of *grace*—is there any token in the work of grace that God's power is failing? Are not sinners still saved? Are not profligates still reclaimed? Are not drunkards still uplifted from their sties to sit upon the Throne with princes? Are not harlots as truly reclaimed as were those in the days of Christ?

Is not the Word of God still quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword? Which of His arrows has been blunted? Where have you seen the sword of the Lord snapped in two? When has God assayed to melt a heart and failed in the attempt? Which of His people has found the riches of His grace drained dry? Which of His children has had to mourn that the unsearchable riches of Christ had failed to supply his need?

In grace, as well as in Providence and nature, the unanimous verdict is that God is still Almighty, that He does as He wills and fulfills all His promises and His counsels. How is it, then, that such a question as this ever came from the lips of God Himself? Who suggested it? *What* suggested it? What could there have been that should lead Him or any of His creatures to say, "Is the Lord's hand waxed short?" We answer there is but one creature that God has made that ever doubts Him. The little sparrows doubt not—though they have no barn nor field, yet they sweetly sing at night as they go to their roosts, though they know not where tomorrow's meal shall be found.

The very cattle trust Him. And even in days of drought, you have seen them when they pant for thirst, how they expect the water—how the very first token of it makes them show in their very animal frame, by some dumb language, that they felt that God would not leave them to perish. The angels never doubt Him, nor the devils either—devils believe and tremble. But it was left for *man*—the most favored of all creatures—to mistrust his God. This high, this black, this infamous sin of doubting the power and faithfulness of Jehovah was reserved for the fallen race of rebellions Adam.

And we alone, out of all the beings that God has ever fashioned, dishonor Him by unbelief and tarnish His honor by mistrust. I shall try now, as God shall help me, to mention some four or five cases in which men act as if they really believed that God's hand had waxed short and I pray that in the most of these cases, this malady may be at once healed by the fact that God has said, "You shall see now whether My Word shall come to pass unto you or not."

I. First of all, with regard to THE CHURCH AS A WHOLE. How often is it true that she so behaves herself as if she had a question in her mind as to whether the Lord's hand had waxed short? She believes that the Divine hand was once mighty enough to bring in three thousand in one day by the simple preaching of Peter. She believes that her God was with her in olden times so mightily that her poor illiterate preachers were more than a match for the scholars of Socrates and Solon and were able to overturn the gods of the heathen, though they had both poetry and philosophy to be their bulwarks.

She believes still this and yet how often does she act as though the Gospel had become effete and outworn and the Spirit of God had been utterly withdrawn from her? In those early days she sent her missionaries to the ends of the earth. They were unprovided for, but they went forth without purse or script, believing that He who called them to go would find them sustenance. They landed on islands that were unknown to man and ventured among barbarous tribes who knew nothing of civilization. They ventured their lives even to the death—but they won for Christ the empire of the whole earth till there was not a spot known to men at that time where the name of Jesus had not been preached and where the Gospel had not been proclaimed.

But, now, we—the degenerate sons of glorious fathers—are afraid to trust God. There are some who would shut out the Gospel from India, because, forsooth, it might disturb our pitiful empire over that people. There are others who think the Gospel ill-adapted to some minds and that civilization must go before the Cross and not the Gospel in the vanguard of all true civilization among barbarous tribes. The mass of us—it is common to us all—the mass of us would be afraid to go out trusting in God to supply our needs. We should need first that everything should be prepared for us and that the way should be paved. We are not ready to leap as champions upon the wall of the citadel, leading the forlorn hope and planting the standard where it never stood before.

No, we can only follow in the track of others. We have few Careys and few Knibbs, few men who can go first and foremost saying, “this is God’s cause. Jehovah is the only God and in the name of the Eternal, let the idols be abolished.” O for more anointed ones to preach the Gospel, believing in its intrinsic might, assured that where it is preached faithfully, the Spirit of God is never absent! The doubts, the fears, the calculations, the policies, the judicious advisors of too many Christians prove my point that often the Church acts as if she thought the Lord’s hand were waxed short.

O Zion! Get up! Get up! Count no more your hosts for their strength is your weakness. Measure no longer your wealth for your wealth has often been your poverty and your poverty your wealth. Think not of the learning or the eloquence of your ministers and missionaries for full often these things do but stand in the way of the Eternal God. Come forth in simple confidence in His promise and you shall see whether He will not do according to His Word. You shall see a nation born at once. You shall behold the reign of Christ hastening on when you know how to deal with the world in the power of faith, believing in Christ, knowing that He shall have the beastly for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession.

I ought to say here that while this is a common sin of the Church, there are very many missionaries who have gone out from England during the last few years unconnected with any Society. And that there are now hundreds throughout the whole earth who have no visible means of support but who, by faith and prayer, depending simply upon God, find themselves as well provided for as those who have a Society at their back. I happen to be acquainted with some few of these men who have been foolish enough to trust God, who have been silly enough to believe His promise, who have been weak enough to rely only upon Him.

And I can say their testimony is that in all things God has been as good to them as His Word and I know they have been more useful as missionaries and more successful in evangelization because they believed God. They have proved their faith by their acts and God has honored their faith by giving them great success. I speak thus not of all—there are a few exceptions—but still it is the general rule that as a Church, the Church does not believe God. She believes her subscribers, she does not believe the Lord. She believes the committee, she does not trust in the Eternal. She trusts in the means, she does not rest on the bare arm of God. She wants to have her arm sleeved, girded about and robed with the weavings of man.

II. But I now pass on to a second point. WHEN BELIEVERS DOUBT THEIR GOD WITH REGARD TO PROVIDENCE, the question might well be asked of them, “Is the Lord’s hand waxed short?”

I do not doubt that I am speaking to some here this morning who have had many hisses and crosses in their business. Instead of getting forward they are going back and perhaps even bankruptcy stares them in the face. Or possibly, being hard working men, they may have been long out of employment and nothing seems now to be before their eyes but the starvation of themselves and their little ones. It is hard to bear this. This is an iron that enters into the very soul. The pangs of hunger are not very easily appeased and to have want and destitution constantly before our eyes is enough to bring down the strong man and make the mighty tremble.

Little do some of us know how sharp and how acute must be these trials of famine and nakedness. But do you doubt, O Believer, do you doubt as to whether God will fulfill His promises wherein He said, “His place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks; bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure”? Would you question the advice of your Master: “Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek”? “Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns. Yet your heavenly Father feeds them”? “Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They toil not, neither do they spin and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these”?

And so you think that your heavenly Father, though He knows that you have need of these things, will yet forget you? When not a sparrow falls to the ground without your Father and the very hairs of your head are all numbered, yet you must mistrust and doubt Him? Perhaps your affliction will continue upon you till you dare to trust your God and then it shall end. Full many there are who have been tried and sore vexed till at last they have been driven in sheer desperation to exercise faith in God and the moment of their faith has been the instant of their deliverance. They have seen whether God would keep His promise or not.

And now, O true Believer, what say you to this picture? In the cold, cold winter, when the snows have fallen thick on every tree and the ground is hard and crisp you have sometimes seen the charitable man open wide the window of his house and scatter crumbs along the white snow and you have seen the birds come from all the trees around and there they eat and were satisfied. A slanderer who lives next door tells you that that man starves his children. Do you believe him? Feed the sparrows and neglect the offspring of his loins? Give crumbs to birds and not feed his sons and daughters?

You feel instinctively that the kind heart which remembers the fowls of Heaven must yet more remember his own offspring. But what say you to this picture concerning yourself? Your God hears the young ravens when they cry and gives liberally to all the creatures that His hands has made and will He forget His sons and His daughters? His people bought with blood, His own peculiar heritage? No. Dare to believe Him *now*. His hand has not waxed short. Dare to trust Him *now*. Please not Satan and vex not yourself by indulging any more those hard thoughts of Him. Say, “My Father, You will hear my cry. You will supply all my needs.” And according to your faith, so shall it be done unto you.

Look back, Sir, look back upon the peat! How many deliverances have you had? You have been in as bad a plight as this *before*—did He leave you then? He has been with you in six troubles and are there not six arguments why He should not leave you in the seventh? You are growing gray-headed and you have found Him faithful for sixty years. Ah, how few more you have to live! Suppose you live till seventy—there are but ten! He has been faithful to you in sixty and can you not trust Him with ten?

Surely you ought to say and you must say, I think, if you are actuated by a right spirit, “O God, I leave all things in Your hand. I will have done with these cares. I will leave everything to You. I know that You love me and will not forsake Your own but will surely deliver them out of all their temptations.” You shall have my text fulfilled to you, I trust—“You shall see now whether My Word shall come to pass unto you or not.

III. But to proceed—there is a third way by which this question might be very naturally suggested and that is **WHEN A MAN WHO HAS FAITH IN CHRIST IS EXERCISED WITH DOUBTS AND FEARS WITH REGARD TO HIS OWN FINAL PERSEVERANCE OR HIS OWN PRESENT ACCEPTANCE IN CHRIST.**

I must confess here, with sorrow, that I have seasons of despondency and depression of spirit which I trust none of you are called to suffer. And at such times I have doubted my interest in Christ, my calling my election, my perseverance, my Savior’s blood and my Father’s love. I am sorry I ever told you that, but having done so on one occasion, I make now my humble apology as before God for it.

I met with a sharp rebuke this last week. A Brother who lives very near to God—I believe one of the honest men living—told me he never had a doubt of his acceptance once he believed in Christ and another Christian confirmed his testimony. I do not question the Truth of my Brethren, but I do envy them. ‘Tis a wondrous position to stand in!

I know how it is. They both of them live by simple faith upon the Son of God and one of them said to me, “When I speak to some of the friends and tell them they should not doubt and fear, they say, ‘Yes, but our minister has doubts and fears.’ ” When he said that, I felt how wrong I had been, because the pastor should be an example to the flock and if I have sinned in this respect, as I must sorrowfully confess I have, at least *there was no necessity that I should have said so*, for now it gives cause to some of the weak of the flock to excuse themselves.

My Brethren, if I should stand here and say I occasionally steal my neighbor’s goods, you would be shocked at me. But when I said that I sometimes doubt my God, you were not shocked. There is as much guilt in the one as in the other. There is the highest degree of criminality in connection with doubting God and I feel it so. I do not see that we ought to offer any excuse whatever for our doubting our God. He does not deserve it of us—He is a true and faithful God and with so many instances of His love and of His kindness as I have received and daily receive at His hands, I feel I have no excuse to offer either to Him or to you for having dared to doubt Him.

‘Twas a wicked rein. ‘Twas a great and grievous offense. But I pray you, do not use that sin on my part as a cloak for yourselves. I pray that I may be delivered from it entirely and with an unstaggering faith, like Abraham, know that what He has promised He is able also to perform. And then I trust I shall not have under my pastoral care a puny race of men who cannot trust their God and who cannot, therefore, do anything—but a strong host of heroes who live by faith upon the Son of God—who loved them and gave Himself for them. Who shall be a thundering legion. Whose march to battle shall be but a march to victory and the drawing of whose swords shall be but the prelude and prophecy of their triumph.

Take not me as an example further than I follow my Lord, but pray for me that my faith may be increased. Doubt not, I pray you. Believe your God and you shall prosper. The joy of the Lord is our strength, not the melancholy of our hearts. It does not say, “He that doubts shall be saved,” but “He that *believes* shall be saved.”

I know some ministers preach up doubts and fears so much that you would really think that doubting was the way to Heaven. And the more you could doubt and fear, the more proof there would be that you were a child of God. The fact is—the children of God *do* doubt and fear. I am sorry to say *all* of them (not all of them—I question whether all of them do not, but still my Brother says *he* does not and I believe him. I fear, however, he will doubt one of these days, I hope he never may. But when he does, it will be very wrong and very wicked of him, indeed, just as it has been with me and as it has been with you), for when we doubt, it is sin.

Oh cursed sin of unbelief! Most damnable of sins, because it so stains God’s honor and so makes the enemy to blaspheme. “There,” say they, “there is a man who cannot trust his God. A minister who cannot trust his God. A Christian that cannot repose upon the promise of the Almighty.” We cannot *measure* the guilt of sins—all sins are all base and vile—but there are crimes which we set down as being very heinous, which, I believe, are but little when compared with that which we think so trivial—the sin of doubting God and mistrusting His promise.

If unbelief is like a thistle in the field, which proves that the soil is good, or it would not produce thistles—at any rate that is no reason why you and I should sow thistle seed. Let us cut the thistles up if there are any and may the Holy Spirit plant the evergreen fir of hope, the towering pine of love and the hardy box tree of faith. Trust in the Lord. “Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say, rejoice.” Let your joy be full. Be you not cast down and troubled, but rejoice in Him evermore.

IV. I shall now pass on to a fourth point very briefly—“is the Lord’s hand waxed short?” This is a question which I may well ask of any here present who are CONVINCED OF SIN, BUT ARE AFRAID TO TRUST THEIR SOUL NOW, AT THIS VERY HOUR, IN THE HAND OF A LOVING SAVIOR.

“Oh, He cannot save me, I am so guilty, so callous! Could I repent as I ought, could I but feel as I ought, *then* He could save me. But I am naked and poor and miserable. How can He clothe, enrich and bless *me*? I am cast out from His presence. I have grieved away His Spirit. I have sinned against light and knowledge—against mercy—against constant grace received. He cannot save me.” “*And the Lord said unto Moses, Is the Lord’s hand waxed short? You shall see now whether My Word shall come to pass unto you or not.*”

Did He not save the chief of sinners, Saul of Tarsus? Why, then, can He not save you? Is it not written, “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son, cleans us from all sin”? Has that blood lost its efficacy? Have Christ’s merits lost their savor? Are they no more an offering of a sweet smell before the Throne of God? Has His sacrifice lost its plea and the plea its authority? Is He no longer prevalent before the Father’s face? Soul! Soul! Soul! Would you add to your sin? Then doubt Christ’s power to save you. Would you seal your doom? Then through this mock humility distrust Christ.

But would you be saved? Then dare, I pray you, in the teeth of all your sins, to trust my Master—

*“He is able
He is willing: doubt no more.”*

He is able, for He is God. What can He not perform? He is willing, for He was the slaughtered Man. And He that died and had His heart rent for us cannot be unwilling. Do you wish to stab Him in the most tender point and vex Him? Then indulge that mean, ungenerous thought that He is unwilling to forgive. But would you wish to honor Him and relieve yourself at the same time? Then step out of all appearances, all hopes and fears suggested by your own feelings. Come to the foot of His Cross and looking up into those eyes full of languid pity and to those hands streaming with precious blood, say, “Jesus, I believe. Help You my unbelief,” and so you shall see whether He will not keep His Word.

If you should come to Him and He should refuse, then would He not have broken His promise? Did He not say, “Him that comes unto He, I will in no wise cast out”? “But, O Sir, I am so black a sinner, I am one of Satan’s castaways.” But what if you are? Christ did not make any exception. He said, “*Him that comes,*” and that means any “him” in all the world who comes. If with weeping and with supplication, mourning for past sins, you will go to Him now, poor Sinner, you will find Him quite as good as His Word and you shall wonder and be astonished to find your own hardness of heart suddenly taken away and all your load of guilt removed.

Oh, I would that I had words, that this heart had language and needed not to employ dull flesh with which to utter its thoughts! Soul, Soul, my Lord is worthy of your faith! I trusted Him. This poor man cried and the Lord heard him. I looked unto Him and was lightened and my face was not ashamed and—

*“Ever since by faith I saw the stream,
His flowing wounds supply;
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.”*

Oh, if you knew my Savior. If you knew Him, you *must* trust Him! Surely if you will but think of the tens of thousands that are around the Throne today, singing the song of grace, each one of these would seem to say to you, “Sinner, trust Him. He was true to me.” If God’s people who are here this morning could stand up and speak, I know their testimony would be, “Soul, trust Him—He has been good and true to me.” Ah, my Lord, why have You not cast some of us away long ago? When we think of our unbelief and our repeated backsliding, the wonder is that You have not torn up the marriage-bond and said, “He shall go—he shall go—he has rebelled against Me. He is as a backsliding heifer and as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke.”

But no. The strong love of God which first laid hold of us has never let go its grip. He has kept us when we have forsaken Him, pardoned all our shortcomings and blotted out all our trespasses. And here we are to bear witness that He is a God ready to forgive, passing by iniquity, transgression and sin. Sinner, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, I command you—believe on Christ and—“As though God did beseech you by me, I pray you, in Christ’s place, be reconciled to God.” Think not that He is hard towards you. Jehovah’s heart yearns to clasp His Ephraims to His breast. Prodigal! Your Father sees you—come, He will meet you—He’ll kiss you, He’ll clothe you, He’ll make a banquet for you. He will bring forth music and dancing. And His own heart will have the sweetest of the music in itself. Come, then, come, I pray you—trust Him and leaving all else behind, of good or bad which belongs to you, come empty to be filled. Come naked to be clothed.

V. I have but now one other point and I shall not detain you, probably two moments, while I dwell upon it. The subject would not be complete without it. It has been said of some preachers of the Word and especially of me that we delight to preach damnation and the fires of Hell. I think that all who have heard me constantly know that a more unfounded libel was never uttered against any living man. I have preached terrible sermons. They have been few and far between. But I have never preached them with a tearless eye. It has ever been to me a far greater misery to preach than it has been to any to hear. And this last sentence or two, with which I conclude, is wrung from my very soul.

And you say, do you, that God will not avenge your sins upon you—that you may go on in your iniquities and yet meet with no punishment? That you may reject Christ and do it safely? Trample on His blood and yet God is so calm that His anger will never flame forth against you? Well Soul, well Soul, “you shall see whether His Word shall come to pass or not.” But let me tell you His hand is not waxed short. He is as strong to punish as when He bade the floods cover the earth. As powerful to avenge as when He rained hail out of Heaven upon the cities of the plain.

He is today as mighty to overtake and punish His enemies as when He sent the angel through the midst of Egypt, or afterwards smote the hosts of Senacherib. You shall see whether He will keep His Word or not. Go on in the neglect of His great salvation. Go to your dying bed and buoy yourself up with the false hope that there is no hereafter, no Hell to come. But, Sinner, you shall see. You *shall see*. This point in dispute shall not long be a matter of question to be laughed at on the one side and to be taught with tears on the other. You shall see and *we* are willing enough ourselves to wait that time, only, Soul, when *you* shall see, it will be too late to escape.

When the fire gets hold upon *you*. When the hail of God begins to dash you in pieces and there shall be none to deliver, where will your infidelity be then? Where your hard sayings against God’s earnest ministers then? You will use an-

other note and sing another tune and yell another cry. O God, grant that none among us may ever dare to doubt You here and think that You can not and will not punish us.

By Your grace may we come to the Cross as sinners and be saved, lest unhappily in the world to come when You say, “Depart you cursed,” we shall see whether Your Word shall come to pass unto us or not.

May God add His own blessing for Jesus’ sake!—

*“From where then shall doubts and fears arise?
Why trickling sorrows drown our eyes?
Slowly, alas, our mind receives
The comfort that our Maker gives.
Oh for a strong, a lasting faith,
To credit what the Almighty says!
To embrace the message of His Son,
And call the joys of Heaven our own!
Then should the earth’s old pillars shake,
And all the wheels of nature break,
Our steady souls should fear no more
Than solid rocks when billows roar.
Our everlasting hopes arise
Above the venerable skies,
Where the eternal Builder reigns,
And His own courts His power sustains.”*

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