

SPRING
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A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 30, 1873
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

“As the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth. so the LORD God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.”
Isaiah 61:11

DURING the past week the air has been balmy with the breath of spring and all nature has felt the influence of the “ethereal mildness.” The earth—of which, through the long winter, we might have said, “She is not dead, but sleeps”—has now awakened, and she begins already to put on her garments of glory and beauty. Wild flowers are springing up in the hedgerows, buds upon the trees are hastening to burst, the time of the singing of birds is come, and if the voice of the turtle dove be not heard in our land, yet we trust the winter is past—the rain is over and gone.

Now, nature is not at work to amuse and please us merely—its mission is instruction. Spring, summer, autumn, and winter are God’s four evangelists, bringing each one a different version of the self-same Gospel of divine love. Spring has its own peculiar evangel, and it is for us to read it, and to interpret it, by the light of God’s Spirit.

A close analogy is often hinted at in the Old and New Testaments between the springtime, and the work of God in the hearts of men. As God has promised, in the outward world, that there shall be seed time and then a harvest—winter, and a following summer, so He declares, over and over again, that His Word, which when it goes forth, is like unto the sowing, shall not return unto Him void, but shall prosper in the thing for which He has sent it.

As surely as in due season the earth brings forth her bud, and the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so shall God’s great purposes be accomplished, and righteousness and praise shall spring forth before all the nations.

The teaching of this morning is, that there is a spiritual springtime appointed of God and it will surely come. As certainly as spring comes to the earth physically, so surely will it come to the church spiritually. As certainly as God keeps His covenant with the elements, so will He keep His covenant with His church and with His Son.

I. I shall want you this morning first to CONTEMPLATE THIS TRUTH IN REFERENCE TO THE BROAD FIELD OF THE WORLD.

Let our meditations go abroad, and let them range through history and into prophecy. God will surely, in the great world at large, cause the principles of righteousness, which bring praise to His name, to spring forth before all mankind.

This leads us, first of all, to expect that *there may be, in God’s work, and in our work for God, a period of unrequited labor.* The analogy between the processes of nature and God’s work in the church holds good not only as to the revivals of spring, but as to the depressing incidents of winter.

There is a time when the farmer is occupied with the plough, and with the scattering of the seed, while from day to day he sees no result from his labor. He trusts to the earth his golden grain, and buries it in hopes of a future upspringing, but month after month he has no return. He watches patiently. He sees the dreary months go round, but not a single ear is brought home to give him promise, much less do ample sheaves reward his toil.

“Dread winter reigns tremendous o’er the conquered year.” The vegetable world lies dead. As it is in the natural world, we must expect it to be in the spiritual world. There will ordinarily be a time of

unrequited sowing for the Lord's laborers. To a great extent this was so with the church of God in her early history. Then she was fitly imaged in these words, "A sower went forth to sow."

True, through the infinite compassion of the great Husbandman, there were souls saved at once by the preaching of the Gospel, but yet the wide spread of the Gospel was not a work of a few months—years of self-denial were needed. Good men had to toil throughout the whole of their lives, ay, and to lay down those lives, too, by painful and bloody deaths.

And yet, at the first, Christ's kingdom did not come. Generation after generation of holy martyrs and confessors went to prison and to death to bear testimony to the truth as it is in Jesus. It was the church's time of sowing, and her seed was steeped in tears and blood. God's presence and power did not so much reveal themselves in immediate success as in patient endurance, heroic fortitude, and boundless self-sacrifice.

Holy hymns were not sung by assembled thousands where passers-by could hear them, but in the crypts and in the catacombs the righteous praised the Lord. The Word of God was in those days hidden away like a buried thing, concealed like the seed-corn beneath the clods. The church parted with her holiest sons, who died that she might live and grow, and multiply, and subdue the earth.

But for many years it seemed as if the sacrifice had been made in vain, for her truths were still the scoff of the age, the butt of perpetual ridicule. It looked as if her principles, as well as her martyrs, would be buried. Imperial tyrants boasted that they would exterminate Christianity, and leave to the church neither root nor branch, nor place, nor name.

This was but the Lord's winter, with its bitter chills, driving tempests, and stormy winds fulfilling His Word. And we also must expect to see the great sowing work of the church proceed under the same trying conditions. We must not always reckon to see nations converted the moment the Gospel is preached to them. And especially where new ground has been broken up, where countries have just received the Gospel message, we must not be disappointed if neither today nor tomorrow we are rewarded with abundant results.

God's plan involves ploughing, sowing, waiting, and after these the up-springing and the harvest. "Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain."

While the seed is under the ground, a thousand adversaries present themselves, all apparently in array against its ever rising from the earth. The seed might look up from the soil and say of the frosts and storms of winter, "All these things are against me."

It was but a few weeks ago that the earth wherein the farmer had sown his grain was frozen as though it were of iron. Beneath his foot it was hard as the share with which he had formerly ploughed it. Then came the snow and buried the green blades beneath its fleecy showers. Who could imagine that harvests would spring forth from frost-bound clods or from beneath so thick a shroud of snow?

Then came the rain, again and again. It deluged everything. The weeping months followed each other in mournful procession. It has rained this year as our forefathers have seldom seen it, and yet despite frost, snow, rain, and flood, seeds are peeping forth in the garden. The almond blossom is in its beauty. The golden cup of the crocus is brimmed with sunshine, and the trees are bursting into leaf.

So we must expect to see the same in the church of God. Desperate obstacles will obstruct the spread of the Gospel, fearful disappointments will wither hope, solemn calamities will overthrow success, iniquity will abound, and the love of many will wax cold! When we survey the condition of affairs apart from faith in God, it may even seem to us that our cause is hopeless, and the further prosecution of it a forlorn endeavor. We must expect to see it so. If it be so in nature, so may it also be in grace, and I sometimes think that we have fallen upon such times even now.

Probably there was never a period less favorable to the advance of true religion than the present one. I admit that there is a tendency among men advanced in years to depreciate the present, and to say that the former times were better than now. With that feeling I think I have little or no sympathy, neither my

age nor my temperament lead me in that direction, yet I fear that in some respects, the present era is peculiarly trying to the Christian church in this country.

Our nation has grown enormously rich. Unequalled prosperity has continued with us for several years, and out of this has grown a worldly and luxurious spirit. Pride and fullness of bread have taken off men's thoughts from God and His salvation. Boundless luxury has bred indifference to the Gospel. The lower classes, as they are called, are less than ever within the reach of the Gospel.

In some districts working men appear to have no mind for anything but their beer, their dogs, and their sports. Even politics do not stir them as once they did and religion they regard as a matter of perfect indifference. Extra wages, which should mean mental elevation and increased family comfort, are converted into increased self-indulgence and profligacy.

The enormous amount derived by our national revenue from the sale of strong drink, largely represents excess of riot and drunkenness. God's great mercy to us, of leading us gratefully to serve Him, is perverted into an occasion for greater sin. Alas! that it should be so.

But those who love the cause of God and truth must not be discouraged, as though some new thing had happened to us. Dark times and wintry seasons there have been before, sharp frosts and drenching rains are no novelties. We are passing through a spiritual winter, but the spring shall surely come, and with it spiritually—

*“A season of refreshing,
A waking as from sleep,
A longing and a singing
That make the pulses leap.*

*“A sense of renovation
Of freshness and of health,
A casting off of worldliness,
A love for heavenly wealth.”*

While our text leads us to expect a time of unprofitable sowing, it excites *the hope of a sacred spring time*. God's Gospel cannot perish, His kingdom cannot fail, His truth cannot be overcome! And that for many reasons, among which are these—that which is sown in the garden springs up from out of the ground because there is vitality in it. The life is dormant for a while, but it displays itself in due season.

There is at the appointed hour, for all the buried seeds, a bursting of grave clothes, a rending of sepulchres, and an upheaval of the earth, and then in resurrection freshness comes forth the blade, to be succeeded by the ear, and that by the full corn in the ear.

Even so the truth of God is a living and incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever. Or to use another figure, it is as the teel tree and as the oak, whose substance is in it when they lose their leaves. It is not possible that the truth of God should perish. Even if it be cut down, at the scent of water it will bud and send forth new shoots.

Life in garden seeds may be destroyed—under certain influences the life-germ may perish, but the living truth of God is immortal and unconquerable. The Lord has Himself declared that it abides forever, “The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand for ever.” Therefore do we assuredly look for a blessed spring time. We wait to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Yea, we expect to see the universal reign of the everlasting Gospel.

But seed springs up not only because of its own vitality, but because of its surrounding circumstances. Put the seed away in the mummy's hand, and hide it in the pyramid, and though it may be vital, still it is not quickened into growth. The seed under a clod waits awhile till all its surroundings become propitious, and then it begins to germinate. The moisture and the warmth cooperate, and the soil begins to yield its nourishment to the little life-germ.

So we may rest assured that God will make all things propitious in His providence to the growth of His own truth. He knows under what conditions religious thought will spring up in the minds of men and He can create those conditions. He has created them and He will! The dews, are they not in His hand? The rains, does He not pour them forth from His palm? The sunlight, is it not the smiling of His face? And the heat, is it not the breath of His love?

Is not the residue of the Spirit with Him? Can He not open the bottles of heaven? Is He not the Father of lights also, who can pour forth the brightness of His grace upon men's hearts? We may rest assured that because all conditions are in the hand of God and He can order them according to His own will, He will cause the seed which He has sown in the earth to spring up.

Why, methinks I may say of the Gospel, that under the divine superintendence, everything is in league with it. They fight from heaven—the stars in their courses fight for the Gospel of Jesus. For it winds blow and tempests rage. It is in league with the stones of the field and the beasts of the field are at peace with it.

The stupendous wheels of providence, as they revolve, are full of eyes, and all those eyes are fixed upon Christ and upon His cross, and as they turn upon their mystic axles, they revolve forever with one design—methought I heard them speak as they moved onward, and a voice from among them said, “Let the nation of God be glorious, and let the Christ of God be King among the people.”

The Gospel must spread, therefore. It is, in itself, vital and energetic, and the Lord of hosts orders all things to secure its growth.

But the corn comes not up out of the earth because it is vital, or because of its surroundings merely, for, as we believe, there is the actual power of God at work throughout nature. We have never been able to agree with the theory that nature, once started, works of itself, like a clock which has been wound up. We believe that its operations conform to certain laws, but there must be some power to carry out the laws or else that would be a dead letter.

Everything that exists is a continuous emanation from the Most High, and everything that is done anywhere in the world, God lends the strength, and gives the power whereby it is done. If we were to see performed upon this stage, in a single moment, the turning of one grain of wheat into a full-grown ear, we should exclaim, “Wonderful!” and regard it as a miracle!

But if God is pleased to take some few months in performing the same operation, it is not the less wonderful. If spring came but once in a century, what wonder it would excite in all hearts! If it had never happened but once, it would be considered to be the crown of miracles, and skeptics would ridicule those who believed in its possibility.

Yet God creates our harvests as surely as if there never had been a harvest before, and He forms our ripe fields by His omnipotence as truly even as He fashioned man in the garden of Eden, perfect at once! God is alive and God is at work. He has not betaken Himself into His secret chambers, and shut the door behind Him, and left us orphans in the world, and the earth without a ruler and without a friend!

He works everywhere. In the deepest caverns of the sea and among the highest pinnacles of the heavens. And there, He works among the violets of yonder bank, and the primroses which peer forth from amidst the sere leaves around the underbrush of the copse. And there also, where the bees begin to hum, the lark to sing, and the lambs to play.

It is God that sends “Spring, the Awakener,” to fill earth's bosom with flowers. He does it all! And it is because of this that we expect the Gospel to flourish—not merely because the Word of God is vital, and because God will order providence in its behalf, but because He is at work in it—mysteriously at work it is true, but certainly at work, for the Spirit of the living God which was given at Pentecost has never gone back to heaven. It is here still, and He that wrought amongst the crowds of the streets of Jerusalem and made them cry out, “Sirs, what must we do to be saved?” is working in our cities even at this day.

Where Jesus Christ is preached, His Spirit is pledged to be present. God's Spirit works evermore. He is breaking hard hearts as the winter pulverizes the clods. He is melting stubborn wills into obedience as

the vernal showers soften the hard earth. And He is awakening the young germs of hope, and prayer, and desire, just as the warm sunlight is calling up the green blades and the flowers. The Spirit of God works ever.

O you adversaries of the Gospel, it is not the Gospel alone that you have to stand against, but the God over all, blessed forever, omnipotent and eternal, is engaged in the battle! If the Gospel be His sword, you may well tremble at its edge, but you may be much more afraid when you remember the arm which wields that deadly weapon—which can divide asunder soul and spirit.

The Gospel is His arrow and His bow, but He who draws that bow and directs that arrow is the same God who launches thunderbolts in the day of tempest, and touches the hills and they smoke. The God of the Gospel is He who wheels the earth in its orbit and marshals all the stars. JEHOVAH invisible, but also almighty, is engaged to show Himself strong for the Gospel, therefore do we expect victory.

Despite the times of depression and of sorrow, days of refreshing must come from the presence of the Lord. The spring must follow the winter, “As the earth bringeth forth her buds, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the LORD God will cause righteousness and peace to spring forth before all the nations.”

If at any time our mind should grow desponding concerning the progress of the Gospel, and I confess mine is very heavy at times, it ought to encourage us to remember that the Gospel will conquer, not because it looks as if it would, but because God has declared and decreed that it shall do so.

I know of no efforts which have been made to promote the advent and progress of spring. We have had a blustering March. We had a cold February. We were deluged with rain and swathed in mist all through November, December, and January. I saw nothing in the atmosphere or the sky to help on spring.

Did it want any helping? Did it need human aid? No. The earth pursued its ordained orbit, and every hour it neared the point where spring, laden with flowers, laid in kind ambush, longing to scatter her garlands over the glad earth. God wants no helpers to create spring. He sends it in His own time and lo it comes.

Even thus the Lord stands in no need of creature help to cause the designs of His grace. Spring has never lingered until assembled Parliaments have permitted and commanded its coming. Neither has it waited for Emperors to smile, and say, “Let the buds come forth.” Far away in the dense forest, and here in merry England in a thousand woods, the sap is flowing in the trees, and myriads of buds are swelling, but not by man’s art or aid.

The daffodils are blooming in the meadows where no man planted them and the bluebells in the dells where gardener’s spade has never come. Yea, and I know right well that the dew of divine grace, and the showers of regenerating love tarry not for man, nor wait for the sons of men. If there had been a general revolt against spring, it would not have been delayed. If the kings of the earth had set themselves, and the rulers taken counsel together, no single gleam of sunlight would have hesitated to shine forth.

If the Pope himself, in his infallibility, had issued a bull forbidding the sun to re-cross the equator and advance to the northern tropic, I venture to predict that it would have pursued the even tenor of its way, despite the bidding of his Holiness. None can stay the marches of the year or turn the seasons from their course.

Who is he that can fight against the Lord or withstand the power of the Most High? Our help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth. We do not reckon upon the progress of the Gospel because we have a company of rich men to help us, a goodly fellowship of eloquent divines to advocate the cause, and a considerable number of respectable persons to support the good work.

No, sirs, our Master has not come to such a beggarly state of dependence that He needs a mortal’s help. He has told us that, “Cursed is he that trusteth in man and maketh flesh his arm,” and He has not come to trust in man Himself and make flesh His arm, “Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.”

As comes the spring by God, JEHOVAH'S own arrangement, so shall come the time of the church's triumph and the victory of truth, by God's appointment, let men say what they will.

Be it never be forgotten that the disheartening circumstances of the winter may have been, all of them, promotive of the success of the spring. I cannot tell what connection there may have been between the sharp frost and the coloring of the cowslip, but I have no doubt that if the flowers could speak they could tell.

I do not know what the connection is between the drenching showers and the gushes of song from the woodlands, but doubtless the larks and the thrushes hold the secret among them. Neither do I know how howling winds are linked with leafy bowers, but what the oak or the elm could say if they were permitted to prophesy for a while, it is not for me to guess.

There is an intimate inter-marriage and commingling of the dark and of the bright, the chill, and the warm. And from this has come forth the joy of spring. Every child knows that March winds and April showers bring forth the sweet May flowers, so all the sorrows and troubles which the church has borne, and shall yet bear, are mothers of the victories she shall yet achieve. Her days would never be so bright if her nights had not been so dark.

Believe, therefore, that the worst times are working on towards something better. Beloved, we have God's promise to sustain us in all our efforts to spread abroad His kingdom. He has Himself declared that, "As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

The Lord God cannot lie. He must keep His promise, and He cannot be disappointed by unforeseen difficulties. His power is irresistible. Therefore we feel quite sure that His Word must win the day!

Bethink for a moment, you who are growing weary through the long night, whose watches seem as if they would never end. I hear you cry, "When will the day break, and the shadows flee away." Be not dispirited, but encourage yourselves with these thoughts.

Remember what a sowing has already gone before. Christ sowed the earth with His own self. A sower went forth to sow, and as He sowed, He passed by the garden of Gethsemane and cast a precious handful there, steeped in His own bloody sweat. Thence He went up to Gabbatha and sowed full handfuls there, where the ploughers made deep furrows.

Then He went up to the cross, and you know how He sowed there, for there He was that grain of wheat which fell into the ground and died, and therefore cannot abide alone, but must bring forth much fruit. Did God Himself become man to save men and shall not men be saved? Did Christ Himself come from heaven to fight with the dread enemy, and did He fight him, and return victorious with dyed garments from Bozrah, and shall the enemy win the day after all?

Is Calvary nothing? Is Gethsemane nothing? The Son of God in anguish and in death—is He nothing? Yet so it must be if the Gospel do not conquer and the world be not converted to God. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied."

Remember, too, who is the husbandman of this field. He has not bidden His church till the world without divine help. "My Father is the husbandman." God Himself is watching over the broad field of the world to promote the growth of what the Savior sowed and shall He fail? Shall it be said at the close of the great Husbandman's work, there is no result from it?

The idols are still firm on their pedestals. Antichrist sits upon her seven hills in pompous state and the simple Gospel is still in the minority! Will the Almighty fail? What think you, sirs? Can Omnipotence be defeated? No! It cannot be. As JEHOVAH lives, it cannot be! The living God must conquer. The right hand of the Lord shall be exalted, for it does valiantly.

He may for a while permit the conflict to tremble in the balances, but divine power must overcome. We cannot dream otherwise.

Moreover, there is the Spirit of God Himself, as well as the Father and the Son, and He has designed to dwell in the midst of the church. The Spirit of God is here and is specially at work. He moved upon chaos and turned it into order. He it is also that quickens the dead, and shall He be defeated and disappointed in the conversion of this world? Let the thought be accursed, for it is near akin to blasphemy, if it be not blasphemy itself.

The triune God must make the knowledge of Himself to “cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.” God’s honor is engaged in the matter. On this battle-field of the world, He has flung down the gauntlet to the powers of hell, and Satan has taken up the gage of battle, and the fight has raged long, but it must end in victory for God, it cannot be otherwise!

My soul loathes the theory of some that this world will get worse, and worse, and worse, and never will be won to obedience to the Lord God. Scripture is against that theory—a theory so desponding, so fitted to make God’s soldiers fling away the sword. Surely there shall come a time when the nations shall know the Lord and the multitude of the people shall worship before the most High God. The winter shall be succeeded by its spring, therefore be you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

II. Now, I shall spend just a minute or two upon the same topic, setting it in another light. Dear brethren, I want you to CONTEMPLATE THIS TRUTH IN REFERENCE TO THE GARDEN COMMITTED TO YOUR OWN PERSONAL CULTURE.

As God’s people you have all something to do for Him. I want you to do it and to do it in the best possible manner. But I am sure you will not do so unless you are of good heart and full of comfort. Be not impatient with regard to the result of what you are doing. A little child puts his seed into the ground, and he goes in an hour or two and stirs the ground to see whether the seed is growing. That is because he is a little child—if he were a man, he would know better.

You go and teach your Sunday school class, and you expect to see all the children converted there and then. It may be God will grant you your desire in a measure, but if He does not, do not be impatient—go on, go on, go on! Do not wonder if your seed does not spring up immediately. Work on! and do not be disheartened.

Never listen to any voice which says to you, “Leave off work.” If such a voice should ever whisper in your ear, know it to be the voice of Satan, and redouble your diligence, because Satan is likely to put such a thought into your mind when you are nearest to success. Be of good comfort—your seed will come up. God’s grace insures the harvest. If you want your seed to come up more quickly, water it again with your tears and your prayers, but never despair, success will come to it. Work on! work on! and never be unhappy about it.

Recollect that if a farmer were to sigh every morning, it would not make his wheat or his barley grow the faster. And if he were to stand and weep all day because he could not see a harvest, it would not become one whit more visible for his tears. Love souls, and do all you can for them, but be not unbelieving. Exercise faith as to results.

Anxiety may be good, but it is only so to a degree, beyond that it unfits us for duty and dishonors God. Take heed of being unbelieving. “But,” say you, “what a poor worker I am.” Beloved, wherefore do you despair on that account? The trees in a man’s garden do not bring forth less fruit because the owner is a sickly man. The fruit depends upon the trees and the season. A harvest will not be bounded by the sower’s feebleness.

I saw some little children in the fields the other day and they were putting in the seeds, but the result will be none the smaller because the children were little. If God’s work were as weak as God’s workers are, it would be weak indeed, and if the kingdom of Jesus depended upon the strength of His disciples, it would soon come to nought.

But the garden causes the seeds that are sown in it to spring forth, though a consumptive hand may have dropped them into their places. My dear fainting brethren, work on, wait on, pray on, watch on.

You shall have your reward ere long, “He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” I may not linger longer upon this point.

III. I beg you, in the third place, to CONTEMPLATE THIS SAME TRUTH IN REFERENCE TO THE BELIEVER’S SPIRITUAL STATE.

Do you not sometimes fall into a wintry condition? I mean you who love the Lord. I think I need hardly ask you, for one of us may generally serve as a specimen of the rest. There are times when we feel as if we had no life at all. We hope we do love God and our faith is fixed in Christ, but we cannot see much evidence of it.

We read the Bible and it is dull. We try to pray, and we get through a sort of exercise which we hope is prayer, but it does not refresh us. And even the prospect of going up to the house of God on on the Sabbath makes us groan out, “Lord send us a blessing,” but we hardly think He will. We feel so dull, and dead, and cold.

Well, it is not to be wondered at. We are living in a world whose influences are never helpful to grace, and we bear about us a body of sin and death, which never will aid us in the way to heaven. At such times we are like the earth in the winter. The seed is there, but it lies hidden. The sap is in the tree, but it has gone down to the root, and is not actively flowing and revealing itself.

Now, in such times as these we cannot make any change in ourselves. “All the king’s horses and all the king’s men,” as we have already said, could not turn winter into spring. Neither can we warm ourselves into energy. We say, “I will read the Bible and I will pray.” Well, we do it, but it is no better than a dead form. We are none the better for it.

But there is comfort in store for us, for what we cannot do in that we are weak through the flesh, God can do. How sweetly He has appeared for some of us! “Or ever I was aware,” says the sweet singer in the Canticle, “My soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib.” We could not move or stir, yet all on a sudden, we found ourselves borne onward, like the swiftly-driven chariots of Ammi-nadab.

We were full of life, full of love, full of joy, full of strength—and all in a moment. Just as in a moment God sends the thaw and melts the ice, and the frozen brooks leap on their way in living rills, so will our soul leap with holy joy in the presence of God, because the Lord has come to us and has revived us. Are you not conscious that such things have happened to you many times, my brethren and sisters?

“Oh, yes,” say you. Very well, expect them again. Even now ask for them and look up to God for them. Anything is better than everlastingly poring over yourself, and your own frames and feelings. The cold of the winter will not, by being thought of, give a man any warmth. All the frosts that ever were will not create heat by our meditating upon them.

Neither does any man rise into life and joy through merely meditating upon his own spiritual death and misery. Turn away from the darkness and look at the light. Spring comes from yonder sun, and so must our revival in religion, our restored joy and peace come from God our Father. Blessed be His name, it has come from Him before, and it will come from Him again.

Let us wait upon Him in solemn confidence that He has not left us forever, but will return to us in mercy.

*“In all the years that have been
The spring hath greened the bough;
The gladsome, healthful spring time
Keep heart, it cometh now.”*

Do not suffer Satan to get an advantage over you by saying, “God has forsaken us. We shall backslide from bad to worse, we shall fall from grace, we shall perish.” You shall do no such thing. You shall be restored. You shall be revived! Yea, perhaps you came here this very morning to the intent that God might work a wonder of grace in you, that again you should abound in fruits of righteousness, and your tongue should sing to His praise.

And from this day forth you shall be one of the happiest and most useful of Christians, instead of being as you have been for some months past—one of the dullest and least useful of the holy brotherhood.

IV. Now the last point shall be this—WE WILL CONTEMPLATE ALL THIS IN REFERENCE TO THOSE WHO ARE NEWLY AWAKENED.

I may have some present this morning who are saying, “Oh, that I could be saved! Oh, that I knew where I might find Christ! What would I give if I could but have a good hope through grace!” Dear brother, dear sister, those very desires of yours show that there is some good seed sown in you. God’s grace has taught you to desire, and to long.

We never knew a man sincerely desire Christ, till Christ had first worked in Him by the Spirit. No sinner can be beforehand with Christ. If you want Christ, He has wanted you long ago, and has already come to you. “Ah,” say you, “but I feel so dull. I cannot pray as I used to do. I do not feel my sins as I ought. In fact, I feel nothing at all as I ought to feel it.”

It is winter-time with you, dear friend, may that winter do you good. “It is very painful,” say you, “and very dangerous.” Yes, and God means to make you see what a poor thing you are, and to make you know what a wretched sinner you are, and how lost you are. Do you not know that He will strip you before He will clothe you? It is always His way to kill before He makes alive. He will not begin filming over proud flesh. He will take the knife and cut it out, and with many a cruel gash, too, as it may seem, for He means to have a lasting cure. Therefore you must pass through these winters.

But let me remind you that your only hope of anything better than what you are passing through lies in Christ. You cannot save yourself. As long as you have any lingering idea that you can do so, you never will be saved. You can no more save yourself than the arctic regions can turn themselves into the torrid zone.

“Why,” you say, “that could never be done, except God were to reverse the poles.” Ah, and He must do as great a thing for you as that would be, or else you will always be in the cold winter you are now in. And worse, you will perish utterly unless He appear for you. You do not deserve that He should appear for you, you deserve to be left to be what you now are, and to go from hardness to greater hardness still, till you make your own destruction sure.

The power to save you lies wholly with Him. What shall I say to you, then? Why, look to Him. Cry to Him. Ask Him to visit you. If you want the full light of God’s love, you will see it yonder, on the cross, where hangs the Son of God bleeding out His life for the sins of men. God’s love is concentrated there as the beams of the sun are focused by a magnifying glass.

If you want to feel the full heat of God’s love, go to the cross. And if you will look up to Jesus dying there, to your own surprise you will feel that spring has come to your heart, and your winter is over and gone.

*“Thy mercy is more than a match for my heart,
Which wonders to feel its own hardness depart;
Dissolved by Thy goodness I fall to the ground,
And weep to the praise of the mercy I’ve found.”*

O, what a wonderful passage that is, from darkness to light, from death to life, from damnation to salvation, from being an enemy of God to friendship with Him. Yet that passage does not occupy a moment. It is effected in an instant! One look and it is done! A glance of the eye at a dying Savior and the sinner is saved.

The garden has caused the things that were sown in it to spring forth. The earth has brought forth her bud, for God has visited the earth and the garden, and the miracle of grace is performed!

I pray that these thoughts may bring comfort to many. I have labored earnestly to encourage workers, but I would be yet much more earnest to encourage seekers. Do not let the devil tell you, my

dear hearer, that the Lord will never appear for you. He will—He must! There was never a soul that humbled itself at His feet, and cried for mercy through His Son, that He left to perish—not one.

There has never been a year without its spring and its summer, and there is never a poor soul that has sorrowed for sin that has been left to end its life without consolation. The Lord must appear to you. He must come and bless you. And I pray He may do it for you now!

And when He is gracious to you, mind that you give Him the glory of it. Come and tell His people, and join with them. As long as you have breath in your body, praise Him, and then in heaven forever shout His praises who has done great things for you.

The Lord add His blessing for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 62 AND 63

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.