

THE MINISTER'S PLEA

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A SERMON
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BY C. H. SPURGEON
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“Through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.”
Philippians 1:19

THE apostle was in prison, in great jeopardy of his life. He was much troubled by many who had begun to preach Jesus Christ, but did not preach Him in a proper spirit. He was often depressed by that which came daily upon him, the care of all the churches. Yet, while he looked in the face the evils which surrounded him, he was able to see beyond them, and to believe that the consequences of all his trials would be a real and lasting good.

He felt sure that it was a good thing for him to be in prison, that it would be a good thing even if he had to die there. That it was well that many were preaching Christ—even though some did it of ill-will, for Christ was preached, and the result could not be evil. And that the troubles and trials of the churches were good, for somehow or other they would be overruled for God's glory.

Let us learn from him to look at the end as well as at the beginning of things. The bud of our present trouble may have no beauty in it, but fair will be the flower which will ultimately develop from it. The clouds hang heavily above our heads, but let us not, like little children, be alarmed at their blackness, but remember that they are—

*“Big with mercy and will break
 With blessings on our head.”*

Whatsoever happens to the true servant of the Lord will turn out for the furtherance of the Gospel. Therefore will we rejoice in tribulations, and accept God's will, whatever it may be.

But observe that the apostle did not expect that good would arise out of everything, apart from prayer. He believed that it would be through the prayer of his beloved friends at Philippi, and the supply of the Spirit, that everything which happened to him would work to promote his salvation, his spiritual advantage, and his success as a minister of Christ.

He looked for the transformation of the evil into good by that sacred alchemy of heaven which can transmute the basest metal into purest gold. But he did not expect this to happen apart from the ordained methods, and ordinary institutions of grace. He counted upon the result because he saw two great agents at work, namely, prayer and the supply of the Spirit. Whoever else may be foolish enough to look for effects apart from causes, the apostle was not of their mind.

This morning, my sermon will be mainly upon my own behalf, and on the behalf of my brethren in the ministry. We ought sometimes to have a sermon for ourselves, for we preach a great many for others. And we may the more boldly become pleaders on our own account, inasmuch as what we ask for is really intended for the profit of our people, and for the good of Christ's cause.

My real subject will be, “Brethren, pray for us.” The end to which I shall drive at will be to excite you to be much in prayer, both for myself and all ministers of Christ Jesus, so that everything that is occurring abroad, and happening personally to any one of us, may be turned to the best account, “Through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit.”

Let us speak, first of all, upon *the prayer of the church*. And then concerning the *supply of the Spirit*. The two matters are closely connected, and cannot be separated.

I. THE PRAYER OF THE CHURCH.

The apostle evidently expected to be prayed for. He had the fullest confidence that his brethren at Philippi were praying for him. He does not ask for their prayers so much as assume that he is already receiving them. And truly I wish that all pastors could always, without doubt, assume that they enjoyed the perpetual prayers of those under their charge.

Some of us are very rich in this respect, and this is our joy and comfort, the reward of our labor, and the strength of our hands. We have abundant evidence that we live in the hearts of our people. But I am afraid that there are many of my brother ministers who are sad because they hear not their people's loving intercessions. Weak because they are not prayed for, and unsuccessful because they have not so gained their people's affections that they are borne upon their hearts at the mercy seat. Unhappy is that minister who dares not take it for granted that his people are praying for him.

Paul exceedingly valued the prayers of the saints. He was an apostle, but he felt he could not do without the intercessions of the poor converts at Philippi. He valued Lydia's prayers, and the prayers of her household. He valued the jailer's prayers, and the prayers of his family. He desired the prayers of Euodias and Syntyche, and Clement and the rest—the most of them, probably, persons of no great social standing, as the world has it—yet he valued their supplications beyond all price, and was as grateful for their prayers as for those temporal gifts whereby the Philippians had again and again ministered to his necessities.

If the apostle thus felt indebted to the pleadings of the brethren, how much more may we, who are so far inferior to him!

He expected great results from the prayers of the church. that is certain from the text. He expected evil to be turned to good, and himself to be helped onward in the divine life. Beloved, my heart has no deeper conviction than this, that prayer is the most efficient spiritual agency in the universe, next to the Holy Ghost. He is omnipotent, and does as He wills. But next to the omnipotence of the in-dwelling Spirit is the power of prayer.

“Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you.” This great charter of the church of Jesus Christ confers upon her powers which are almost, if not quite, omnipotent. And if a church will but pray, it shall set in motion the second most potent agent under heaven. The apostle knew the power of prayer, and we know it too, and hope to prove it more and more.

Paul expected the people at Philippi to be praying for him all the more, because his troubles were just then more heavy than usual. He was sure that this would excite their sympathy, and so make them plead more eagerly. Truly, if ever there were times when the people of God should pray for their ministers, these are the times, for the minister of Christ is beset by legions of evils of all kinds, and has to cut his way through perpetual opposition.

The church is sailing, now, like a vessel in the Arctic Sea when the frost is setting in and is turning the sea into plates of iron, and each wave into an iceberg, to block up the vessel's path. These are evil days, almost beyond any age that has gone before, and therefore we may exhort the church to pray more importunately, because her prayers are more than ever needed.

Plunging into the middle of my subject, I would say, first, that *ministers may justly claim the prayers of their brethren*. Every Christian should be prayed for. We have each a claim upon the other for loving intercession. The members of the body of Christ should have a care for one another, but especially should the minister receive the prayers of his flock.

I have sometimes heard *his duties* called arduous, but that word is not expressive enough. The works in which he is occupied lie quite out of the region of human power. The minister is sent to be God's messenger for the quickening of the dead. What can he do in it? He can do nothing whatever unless the Spirit of God be with him through the prayer of his brethren.

He is sent to bring spiritual food to the multitude, that is to say, he is to take the loaves and fishes, and with them, few as they are, he is to feed the thousands. An impossible commission! He cannot perform it. Apart from divine help, the enterprise of a Christian minister is only worthy of ridicule.

Apart from the power of the Eternal Spirit, the things which the preacher has to do are as much beyond him as though he had to weld the sun and moon into one, light up new stars, or turn the Sahara into a garden of flowers.

We have a work to do concerning which we often cry, "Who is sufficient for these things?" And if we are put to this work, but have not your prayers, and in consequence have not the supply of the Spirit, we are of all men the most miserable.

Remember also that in addition to extraordinary duties, the minister is burdened by remarkable *responsibilities*. All Christians are responsible for their gifts and opportunities, but peculiar responsibilities cluster around the preacher of the Word. "If the watchman warn them not, they shall perish; but their blood will I require at the watchman's hands."

When I look at Paul laboring night and day, weeping, praying, pleading, pouring out his soul in his ministry, I feel his example to be so high that I cannot attain unto it, and yet I shall never feel satisfied with anything below that standard. The responsibilities resting upon one minister are the same as those which press upon another, in proportion to his sphere and capacity of service.

Oh, unhappy men, if we be found unfaithful!—of criminals, the chief—murderers of immortal souls. If we have not preached the pure Gospel, we shall be wholesale poisoners of the bread of men, the bread which their souls require. We, if we be not true to God, are the choice servants of Satan. Judas, himself, was not more the son of perdition than the man who calls himself an ambassador for Christ, and yet dares to be unfaithful to the souls of men. Brethren, we claim your prayers by the solemnity of the responsibility which rests upon us.

Remember, too—what I think is not often noticed—that every true minister of Christ, who is sent to men's souls, has an *experience* singular and by itself. A physician who has to treat the diseases incident to our flesh need not have personally suffered from the sicknesses with which he deals. But a physician of souls never handles a wound well unless he has felt a like wound himself.

The true shepherds, who really feed the sheep, must themselves have gone through the experiences of the flock. Did you ever read the life of Martin Luther? Then you must have remarked the mental storms and spiritual convulsions which shook the man. he could not have been so influential with his fellow men if he had not felt within himself a sort of aggregation of all their sorrows and their struggles.

You can not bring forth God's living Word to others till first you have eaten the roll, and it has been in your own bowels like gall for bitterness, and yet at times like honey for sweetness. Every successful husbandman in the Lord's vineyard must first have been a partaker of the fruit, yea, and of each kind of fruit too.

Hence it often happens, that to comfort yonder desponding heart, we must have been ourselves despondent. To console yonder downcast, despairing spirit, we must have been despairing too. To direct the perplexed, we must ourselves have been in dilemma. To ride the whirlwind, and come as God's messenger to the help of those who are in the storm, we must have ourselves been tossed with tempest and not comforted.

David could not have written his Psalms, which, as in a mirror, reflect all changes of the human mind, if he had not himself been the epitome of the lives of all men. And in proportion as God qualifies His minister really and effectually to feed the souls of His people, that minister must go through the whole of their experience.

And I ask you, whether in such a case, he does not have a claim, and should not have, the prayers of the church of God?

Remember, too, that the *temptations* of those who serve God in the public ministry are subtle, numerous, and withal peculiar. Do you suppose that when a man attracts thousands to listen to him, that when he conducts large agencies successfully, that when he wins souls to Christ, and edifies the household of faith, and that the temptation to pride never crosses his soul?

Have you not seen men who have been set upon a pinnacle of eminence, and their heads have been turned, and they have fallen, to their own disgrace, and to the church's sorrow? Do you wonder at it? If you do, you know not what is in men.

And do you wonder that ministers are often tempted to grow formal in service? Here, so many times in the year, must I come and speak to you, whether I am fit to do so or not. How can I be always alike zealous, when even the weather has an effect upon nerves and brain? Are you always earnest in your hearing? Do you wonder, therefore, that sometimes the preacher does not find it easy to be earnest in his speaking.

And yet he would loathe himself if he dared speak to you what he did not feel, and would think himself accursed if he dared to preach with cold and chilly lips those matchless truths which have been bedewed by the bleeding heart of Jesus. We, who would instruct others, must keep up our spiritual life to a high point.

And yet the temptation is, from our familiarity with holy things, to become mechanical in our service, and to lose the freshness and ardor of our first love. I might instance many of temptations which are peculiar to us, but the recital might be of no benefit to you. Suffice it to say that there are such.

And if by your choice, you place any man, in the name of God, in a place where he is so peculiarly assailed by the enemy, surely you will not be so ungenerous as to leave him without the perpetual support of your extraordinary prayer. Fail not your standard-bearer, but form around him a bodyguard of valiant intercessors.

And then, mark you, if any man shall lead the way in the church of God, he will be the main object of the *assaults* of the enemy. The private Christian will have some persecution, but the minister must expect far more. His words will be misrepresented and tortured into I know not what of evil, and his actions will be the theme of slander and falsehood. I

If he shall speak straight out and boldly, fearless of man, and only fearful lest he should grieve his God, he will stir the kennels of hell, and make all the hounds of Satan howl at his heels. And he may count himself happy if he shall do so, for who is he that wants to be on good terms with this evil generation, which cares nothing whatever for God's truth, but sets up, for its own church, a church which has made a league with Antichrist, and a compromise between the Gospel and idolatry, so that it may drag down this nation into the deeps of Romanism!

I say, who cares to have honor from this adulterous generation? And yet, if a man once dares to provoke its wrath by his faithfulness, he needs the prayers of those who believe with him, that he may be sustained. Many are the archers who sorely shoot at us and grieve us. Pray you, therefore, that our bow may abide in strength, and that the arms of our hands may be made strong by the Mighty God of Jacob.

One plea more, and I will not further add to the points of my argument. Amongst the worst trials of the ministry are the *discouragements* of it. I do not just now refer to discouragements from the outside world. We expect opposition from that quarter, and are not discouraged by it. If the world hate us, we know that it hated the Lord before it hated us.

But our saddest discouragements arise from within the church and congregation. There are those whom we hoped to see converted, who go back to their old sins and disappoint us. And others who are a little impressed, relapse into their natural indifference. There are those who are, we hope, right at heart, who nevertheless live inconsistently—for many walk so far from Jesus that they pierce us with sorrow.

And then there are others who were great things, and unite themselves with the church of God, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ. They shame us. They make the world ask, "Is this your religion?" They open the mouths of atheists, and infidels, and ungodly men of all sorts, against the precious Christ Himself, so that He is wounded in the house of His friends, and put to an open shame by those who ought rather to have laid down their lives to promote His cause and kingdom.

Oh, if you be called of the Lord to shepherd His flock, and if you bear in your bosom the church of God, and the cause of Christ, and live for it with all your heart and soul, you shall not live many days

without many heartbreaking trials. And you will greatly need the supply of the Spirit in answer to the prayers of the people of God!

Now, having stated the case, and pleaded not for myself only, but for all my brethren, let me say, next, that *the prayers which are wanted are the prayers of the entire church*. From some other labor some of you might be exempted, but from this service not a single one can be excused.

“*Your prayer*,” says the apostle, and he means the prayer of all the faithful. My brother, my fellow worker, you of the Sunday school, you of the Evangelistic Society, you who visit from house to house—I want your prayer, my brother. You can sympathize with us. You know something of this way. You can, therefore, bear us up with hands that have been exercised in the same warfare.

We want your prayers also, who are not workers in any public capacity—you who feel you have not the ability or the opportunity. If there be such among us, you ought to pray doubly for those who are working, and so in some measure make amends for your own lack of energy. If you feel laid aside from actual service yourselves, so that you have to abide by the stuff, let your prayers go up doubly for those who go down to the battle. Hold up their hands, I pray you, if you can do nothing else.

We ask the prayers of all who profit by our ministry. If you feed upon the Word, pray to God that we may feed others also. If your hearts are ever made glad within you by the Word we speak, do plead for us that we may have the power of God resting upon us yet further.

If you do not profit, we have an equal claim upon you. We beseech you pray that you may profit. If we are not suited to teach you, pray the Lord to make us suitable. If you discover some lack or deficiency which mars our ministry, do not unkindly go and speak of it everywhere, but tell the Lord about it.

You will be doing more good and acting more after the mind of Christ. And—who knows?—the very ministry which is flat and unprofitable to you now, may yet become a great blessing to you when you have prayed concerning it.

Some of you are our spiritual children, begotten unto God by us. And surely we hardly need to take you by the hand and say, “Brethren, children, pray for us.” There is between us and you a tie which neither life nor death can break. We shall recognize it in eternity. When fathers, and mothers, and husbands, and wives will find all human relationship forgotten, the relationship which exists between the spiritual father and his children shall last on. Therefore, as you feel the tie, yield to its gentle persuasions, and let your pastor have a very warm place in your prayers.

You aged men and matronly women, you of experience, you of power with God, you who are mighty in your private wrestlings—we want your prayers. And you young Christians with your newborn zeal—in the freshness and vigor of your spiritual life—we want your entreaties too. My little children, you who have been added to the church while yet you are boys and girls, there are no intercessions more precious than yours. Do not forget your minister when you say, “Our Father which art in heaven.” God will hear the petitions of little children who love Him.

As for those who are not, and could not be here this morning, my voice will reach them through the press, and therefore let me say to them, You cannot come up to the house of God, but are appointed to lie tossing upon the bed of pain, and yet from you also we ask intercessory prayer. You are especially set to do this service for the church.

If you cannot appear in the public assembly, you may in secret wrestlings bring down power upon that assembly. You keep the watches of the weary night when pain forbids your eyelids to find rest—let each weary hour be cheered for yourselves, and enriched for us by prayers for the church of God and prayers for us.

Perhaps to this end some among the saints are always sick, that warders for the hours of night may not be wanting. The sleepless sufferers change guard before the mercy seat, lest perchance there should be an hour in the night unhallowed by a prayer, in which the world should pass away beneath the unrestrained wrath of God.

Prayer must be kept up like the quenchless fire on Israel's altar. We must belt and girdle the world with prayer—and the sick ones are they to whom much of the sacred work is allotted. I believe in the efficacy of united prayer, but each one must pray.

There would be no clouds unless the drop of dew from each blade of grass were exhaled by the sun. Each drop ascending in vapor falls again in the blessed shower which removes the drought. So the grace that trembles upon each one of you, my brethren, must exhale in prayer, and a blessing will come down upon the church of God.

Let me suggest for a moment, in passing on, that the prayers of God's people ought to go up for the minister in many forms. I think it should be daily work. I was pleased to hear one of our brethren say the other day, what I am sure was true, and true of a great many besides himself, that he never did pray for himself without praying for me. That he never bowed his knee, morning or night, without remembering the work carried on in this place. It ought to be so with us all.

Besides that, if we expect a blessing on our families through the ministry, we should as a family, ask God to bless that ministry. When we come around the family altar, among the petitions never to be forgotten should be this—that he who is set to feed our souls may himself receive the bread of heaven.

Then there are our prayer meetings, our public gatherings for intercession. Ah, beloved! I may well glory in our prayer meetings, for I know not where the like have been found continuously, year after year. Still, though *I* may glory, I am not sure that all of you could.

For as I look around upon you today I cannot help remarking that I see some faces on the Sabbath which I have never had the pleasure of seeing on the Monday evening. Or if ever I did, I remember it very well, because it has not been so common an occurrence that it is likely to slip out of my mind.

I know there are some who could not come, and would be neglecting family duties if they did. Their duty and their calling keep them from it. At the same time, there are others to whom a gentle hint may be serviceable. Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together for earnest prayer, as the manner of some is.

Beside the prayer meetings, there ought to be meetings very frequently of Christian friends who gather by appointment for this very purpose. When they come together, professors often waste time in idle talk, which would be used to great profit if they spent it in prayer. When two Christians meet together for united prayer, amongst their other supplications should be one that the Lord would bless throughout all England the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus.

Oh, dear friends, we want more than anything else to have the Gospel preached with power. God forbid we should criticize severely those who may be doing their best, but how much preaching is utterly powerless. We want a telling ministry. We want a ministry which cuts like a two-edged sword, and goes through into the very heart.

God, send us thousands of men armed with His Spirit's own sword, endowed with the muscle of grace, and gifted with manliness to use the celestial weapon. Pray for such often, not at set times only, but at all convenient seasons.

And here, let me remark, should there not be especial prayer by each Christian for his own minister before every service, before going up to the house of the Lord, and when he arrives there? Many people have a habit of looking into their hats to see the name of the maker whenever they get inside a place of worship.

They are themselves the best judges whether it is not a piece of Pharisaic formalism or fashionable hypocrisy. There is a formalism about it, and we are the very last to care about outward forms. Still, what can be a better beginning for a service than secret prayer? Then, during the service, how much of prayer there should be for the preacher, "Lord, help him to speak the truth out-right. And put Your power into it to send it home to the hearts and consciences of the hearers."

It is well to pick out someone in the congregation, and pray, "Lord, bless the Word to him." You would often find God hearing you in that respect. Then, after the whole service is done, what can be better than to rake in with earnest prayer the good seed which has already been sown.

I must not keep you longer on this point. Suffice it to add that the prayers of the church of God must always be true prayers to be good for anything, and if they are true prayers, they will be attended with consistent lives. The man who says, "I pray for the church, and pray for the minister," and then is a thief in his business, or is guilty of some secret vice—why, he is pulling down, not building up. Can unclean hands ever be acceptable in prayer? Consistent living there must be, or prayer will be a vanity of vanities.

And there must be consistent effort, too. If I want God to bless the church, I must try to bless it myself, by the gift of my substance, by the consecration of my talents, by the laying out of my time for the glory of God. For to pray one way, and to act another is to be a hypocrite. When the wheel sticks in the mire—to pray to God to help the cart out of it—and never to put my shoulder to the wheel is to mock the Most High. We must act as well as pray.

And we must believe as well as act. We must have faith in the Gospel, and faith in prayer. And if, beloved friends, such prayer as this shall go up from this church, we shall continue to enjoy the prosperity we have had for many years. And we may hopefully look for an increase of it, though sometimes I must confess I can hardly look for an increase, for God has blessed us so much that we have rejoiced and wondered as we have seen that His hand is stretched out still.

II. The apostle has put in connection with your prayer THE SUPPLY OF THE SPIRIT.

"The Spirit of Jesus Christ," does he not say? Yes, because the Spirit we want is the Spirit that rested upon Jesus Christ, the Spirit which gave His power to His ministry, for He said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me." That same Spirit we need, even the Spirit who represents Christ on earth. For Jesus is gone, but the Comforter abides with us as His vicegerent. He moves at Jesus Christ's will, and operates upon human thought and heart and will, subduing all to God.

Now the Holy Spirit is essential to every true minister. We must have Him. A preacher may save souls without being learned—it is a pity but what he should possess a good education, but he can be useful without it.

The preacher can save souls without eloquence—it is well if he be fluent—but even stammering lips may convey the life-message from God. But the man of God is nothing without the Spirit of God. It is the *sine qua non* of a ministry from God that it should be in the power of the Spirit. For the preacher must be himself first taught of the Spirit, else how shall he speak?

And being taught, he must be led as to which shall be the proper theme for each occasion, for much of the power of true ministry lies in the fitness of the Word to the case of the hearer, so that the hearer perceives that his experience is known, and is met at the time by the ministry. The Spirit of God must teach us the truth, and then guide us as to which truth of God is to be spoken.

Then the Holy Spirit must inflame the minister. The man who never takes fire—how is he sent of God? He who never glows and burns—what knows he of the baptism of the Holy Ghost, which is also the baptism of fire? Pray, therefore, for the supply of the Spirit.

Without the Spirit every ministry lacks that subtle—I was about to say indescribable—something which is known by the name of *unction*. Nobody here can tell what unction is. He knows that the Spirit of God gives it, and he knows when it is in a discourse, and when it is absent. Uction is, in fact, the power of God.

There is an old Romish story, that a certain famous preacher was to preach on a certain occasion, but he missed his way, and was too late, and the devil, knowing of it, put on the appearance of the minister, took his place, and preached a sermon to the people, who supposed they were listening to the famous divine whom they had expected.

The devil preached upon hell, and was very much at home, so that he delivered a marvelous sermon, in which he exhorted persons to escape from the wrath to come. As he was finishing his sermon, in came the preacher himself, and the devil was obliged to resume his own form.

The holy man then questioned him, "How dare you preach as you have done, warning men to escape from hell." "Oh," said the devil, "it will do no hurt to my kingdom, for I have no unction." The story is grotesque, but the truth is in it.

The same sermon may be preached, and the same words uttered, but without unction there is nothing in it. The unction of the Holy One is true power. Therefore, brethren, we need your prayers that we may obtain the supply of the Spirit upon our ministry—for otherwise it will lack unction—which will amount to lacking heart and soul. It will be a dead ministry, and how can a dead ministry be of any service to the people of God?

The supply of the Spirit is essential to the edification of the church of God. What if the ministry should be the best that ever was produced, its outward form and fashion orthodox and ardent? What if it should be continued with persevering consistency? Yet the church will never be built up without the Holy Ghost.

To build up a church, life is needed—we are living stones of a living temple. Where is the life to come from but from the breath of God? To build up a church, there is needed light, but where is the light to come from but from Him who said, "Let there be light"?

To build up a church, there is needed love, for this is the cement which binds the living stones together. But whence comes true genuine love, but from the Spirit who sheds abroad in the heart the love of Jesus!

To build up a church, we must have holiness, for an unholy church would be a den for the devil, and not a temple for God. But whence comes holiness but from the Holy Spirit? There must be zeal, too, for God will not dwell in a cold house. The church of God must be warm with love, but whence comes the fire except it be the fire from heaven.

We must have the Holy Ghost, for to build up a church there must be joy—a joyous temple God's temple must always be. But the Spirit of God alone produces the fruit of heavenly joy. There must be spirituality in the members, but we cannot have a spiritual people if the Spirit of God Himself be not there. For the edification of the saints, then, we must have beyond everything else the supply of the Spirit.

And O brethren, we must have it for the salvation of sinners. Here comes the tug of war indeed. Who can enlighten the blind eye? Who can bring spiritual hearing into the deaf ear? Yea, who can quicken the dead soul, but the eternal, enlightening, quickening Spirit?

There it lies before us, a vast valley, full of bones. Our mission is to raise them from the dead. Can we do it? No, by no means, of ourselves. Yet are we to say to those dry bones, "Live." Brethren, our mission is absurd—it is worthy of laughter, unless we have your prayer and the supply of the Spirit with us—and if we have those, the bones shall come to their bones, the skeleton shall be fashioned, the flesh shall clothe the bony fabric, the Holy Ghost shall blow upon the inanimate body, and life shall be there, and an army shall throng the charnel house.

Let us but invoke the Spirit, and go forth to minister in His might, and we shall do marvels yet. And the nation, and the world itself, shall feel the power of the Gospel of Jesus. But we must have the Spirit.

And oh! we must have the Spirit of God just now I am sure. It is essential to the progress of the Gospel, and to the victory of the truth. At this moment the Gospel is on its trial. It has had its trials before, and has come out of them like gold from the furnace, purified by the heat.

But just now they are telling us on all hands that the old-fashioned Gospel is effete. I have found myself dubbed in the public prints by the honorable title of *Ultimus Puritanorum*—the last of the Puritans—the last preacher of a race that is nearly extinct, the mere echo of a departed creed, the last survivor of a race of antiquated preachers.

Ah, my brethren, it is not so! They come, they come, a mighty band, to bear on the truth to future ages, and even yet there are among us men who hold the truth and preach it. Yet everywhere we encounter the sneer of the servants of error. They dress themselves out in many colors—in blue, and

scarlet, and fine linen, and I know not what—and they tell us that the day of our stern, gaunt religion has passed.

Then your wise men, the philosophers, the men of thought, the men of culture—they sneer at us. Such preaching of the Gospel as ours might have done for two hundred years ago—might even, perhaps, have sufficed for Whitefield and Wesley, and the Methodists who followed at their heels. But now, in this enlightened nineteenth century, we do not want any more of it.

From this insult we make our appeal to the God of heaven. O God, the God of Israel, avenge Your own truth. O Thou whose mighty hammer can yet break rocks in pieces, You have not changed your hammer. Smite, and make the mountains fall before You. O Thou whose sacred fire burns in Your Word, forever the same flame, You have forbidden us to offer strange fire upon Your altar, and we have not done so, but kept the faith and held the truth. Own it, we beseech You, and prove that it is the Gospel of the blessed God. Let the sacrifice that is now before You in the midst of this great nation be consumed with the flame from heaven, and let the God that answers by fire be God.

The fact is, the church only lives in the esteem of men by what she does. If she does not convert sinners, she has not a reason for existing. The proof of the Gospel is not to be found in theories and problems, and propositions in catechisms or creeds, or even in Scriptural texts alone.

The proof of the Gospel lies in what it does—and if it does not raise the depressed, if it does not save the sinful, if it does not send light into the dark places of the earth—in fact, if it does not make sinners into saints, and transform the nature of men—then let it be thrown on a dunghill, or cast away, for if the salt has lost its savor, it is thenceforth good for nothing.

But we cry to God that the savor of our salt may continue in all its pungency, and penetrating, and preserving power. I ask you to pray that it may be so—that God will bring to the front the old Gospel, the doctrines of Whitefield, and Calvin, and Paul, the old Gospel of Christ, and once for all by a supernatural working of the Holy Spirit give an answer to those who, in this age of blasphemy and of rebuke, are reviling the Gospel of the living God, and would have us cast it behind our backs.

By the name of Him who never changes, our Gospel shall never change. By the name of Christ who is gone to heaven, we have nothing to preach but Christ and Him crucified. By the name of the Eternal Spirit who dwells in us, we know nothing but what the Holy Ghost has revealed.

To your knees, my brethren, to your knees, and win for us the victory. Feeble as we are, and unable as we are to cope with our antagonists in any other field but this, we will vanquish them by the power of prayer through the supply of the Spirit of God.

With you I leave it, my own beloved friends. Through your prayers and the supply of the Spirit all will be well. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PHILIPPIANS 2

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—175, 454, 953

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.