GOD OF THE HILLS AND GOD OF THE VALLEYS

NO. 1311

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

"And there came a man of God, and spake unto the king of Israel, and said, Thus saith the LORD, Because the Syrians have said, The LORD is God of the hills, but He is not God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the LORD."
1 Kings 20:28

THE Syrians had been defeated by the Israelites whom they despised. This victory had been achieved by so small a number of men over so vast a host that the Syrians were driven to the conclusion that there was something supernatural about it, and they ascribed their defeat to the God of Israel. They were right in doing so. Brethren, let not these heathen shame us. They knew to whom the crown of the victory belonged, and little as they understood JEHOVAH, yet they recognized that His right hand and His holy arm had gotten for His people the victory.

Now, if the Lord has prospered you, if in your souls peace and joy are reigning, or if you have enjoyed success in Christian service, take heed that you do not lift up your horn on high and take honor to yourselves. Render all the glory to God, to whom it is most justly due. Let that psalm, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory," be always on your heart and often on your tongue.

The tendency of the human heart towards pride is very strong, and Satan, the great usurper, is always eager to stir us up to rob God of His glory. Yet nothing is more fatal to peace, nothing more sure to provoke God, nothing more certain to bring upon us times of disaster and distress. "The LORD thy God is a jealous God," and He is jealous of this thing amongst others, that He will not give His glory to another. He will not allow those whom He uses for His purposes to ascribe their victories unto themselves.

The Lord alone must be exalted. Whatever has been done by us, the great Worker who used us must have the praise. We have been nothing more than the axe in the hand of God if we have felled the cedar, nothing more than the net if we have brought the fish to shore. Unto Him therefore be praise forever. So far let us learn from the heathen Syrians.

While the Syrians thus ascribed their defeat unto JEHOVAH, they made a great mistake as to His character, for they supposed Him to be a local God, like their own imaginary deities. They had gods for the mountains and gods for the lesser hills, gods for the rivers, gods for the fields, gods for their houses, gods for their gardens, and these so-called gods were powerless out of their own sphere. They imagined the only living and true God to be a god like unto their idols. Let us abhor this dishonoring of God and avoid the sin by never daring to make unto ourselves a god after our own ideas.

The art of god-making is very common among men. Instead of going to revelation to see what God is, and humbly believing in Him as He reveals Himself, men sit down and consider what sort of God He ought to be, and in so doing they are no wiser than the man who makes a god of mud or wood or stone.

If we make a god in our own thoughts, after our own ideas, we have virtually made a similitude of Him to whom no creature can be compared. We have tried to comprehend the incomprehensible and limit the infinite, and in so doing we are idolaters, for we have made the likeness of something that is in our own mind, and consequently in the earth beneath, and even though it be not a material image, we have broken in spirit the first and second commands.

No man knows what God is, save only as He has revealed Himself, and thoughts and imaginings apart from this are idolatrous. Believe you what He reveals, but do not, after the fashion of the Syrians, begin to conceive of Him according to the darkness of your own feeble and foolish mind. Ben-hadad's counselors were led in their error to utter a blasphemy. They said, "He is the God of the hills, but not the God of the valleys," and I know not into what profanities our own proud thoughts may lead us also.

It is worthy of notice that because of this blasphemy of the Syrians, God was pleased to deliver His people Israel. It is not the only time by many in which the blasphemies of the adversary have wrought good for the people of God. You might have supposed that God would have said, "It matters nothing what these ignorant heathens say. Who cares for their slanderous falsehoods?" But our God is jealous—He is ever represented in Scripture as being tender of His own glory, and therefore, though Israel was guilty, and Ahab, their king, was detestable, yet God determines that Ahab and Israel shall smite Ben-hadad and Syria because of what Syria had said.

I would invite all of you who tremble for the ark of the Lord to draw courage from the naughty language of the ungodly. When the infidel scoffs at God you are sorry for his sin, but you may take heart and hope that perhaps God will now interpose. "It is time for thee, LORD, to work, because they have made void thy law."

When you see a skeptical philosophy growing, as it is at this day, more and more daring and insulting towards the truth of God, do not be downhearted because of that, but rather say, "They will provoke the Lord, and by and by He will pluck His right hand out of His bosom, He will rend the heavens and come down, and make the mountains to flow at His feet: He will give to His Gospel great power, so that His truth shall be triumphant, and His adversaries shall know that verily there is a God in Israel."

As choice flavors are by a happy chemistry extracted from poisonous substances, so may we draw comfort from the blasphemous letter of Rabshakeh, and from the impious language of Ben-hadad, for God will be provoked against them, and will come forth to the avenging of His chosen nation and the establishment of His own cause.

Now, this morning I have one lesson to teach, which is this. As the Syrians fell into a great and blasphemous sin by thinking that God was a local God, a God of the hills and not of the valleys, we may fall into much evil by the same surmising. The subject of this morning's discourse will be a warning against imitating the Syrians by limiting the Holy One of Israel under any circumstances whatever. We may do so on several occasions, and in several ways.

I. WE MAY LIMIT THE LORD BY MISTRUSTING THE SUCCESS OF HIS CAUSE.

We are very often tempted to tremble for the ark of the Lord, and to stretch out a presumptuous hand to steady it as Uzzah did.

Our fathers tell us, and we are getting a little into their modes of thinking, that we have fallen upon evil days and degenerate times. We have seen them shake their heads and call the present age a day of blasphemy and rebuke, and although we have not quite thought so, for there has been enough of youth left in us still to look more hopefully upon things, and we have said, and we think we are not wrong in saying, that these are good times and hopeful, and that there are many things which should make the Christian wear a cheerful aspect and rejoice in the hope of better times. Yet we have in a measure shared in their fears.

The temptation is at times heavy upon us to think that the Gospel cannot conquer the world, that the truth of Jesus cannot spread in the midst of the thick darkness which surrounds us, that the good old cause is falling into a desperate condition, and that, mayhap, the victory we have looked for will not come after all. Here let us convict ourselves of having thought God to be the God of the hills and not the God of the valleys, for we have generally based our fears upon our perception that the front of the battle has changed.

In the olden times the church of God was persecuted beyond measure, the furnace was heated seven times hotter. *Extirpations* was the word, the emperors of Rome determined to stamp out Christianity as

though it were a disease, and they vowed to put an end to its very name. But the church of God triumphed over all opposition. Like a good ship in stormy waters, she mounted the waves which sought to engulf her, and made headway by the winds which howled around her.

We all perceive that God was with His church in those tempestuous times, and yet we are apt to fear that the petty persecutions suffered by our village churches, and the cold contempt that is often poured upon Christian men in polite society, will prove too much for the faithful.

God, who could help Christians to play the man in the amphitheater at Rome and enable them to die at the stake, or on the gridiron, is yet mistrusted, and we dare to suspect that He will not gain the victory in the battle which is waged by a few poor peasants in a village against a popish priest and a persecuting squire.

For shame! Do we really dream that He is the God of the hills, and not the God of the valleys? We have heard good men argue mistrustfully from another point of view. They say that persecution after all does not hurt the church, it only winnows her and drives away her chaff. But these are far worse days, for prosperity undermines piety. Christians take things easy and there are so many false professors, so much of a name to live while spiritual death abounds, and all of which is deadly to the church of God. Depend upon it, since Satan could not kill the church by roaring at her like a lion, he is now trying to crush her by hugging her like a bear.

There is truth in this, but it is not all the truth. Do you really think, my brethren, that God cannot preserve His church in the particular trial through which she is now passing? Is He the God of the hills of persecution, but not the God of the valleys of prosperity? Chase away the thought. Besides, you are in great fear, my brother, because a new heresy has sprung up, or an old one has revived. Dreadful doctrine dismays you. You are saddened by teaching which assails the vitality of Christianity and is so insidious that it is hard to meet it, and you say, "Any other than this the church could have resisted, but this will deaden her very soul, it does eat as does a canker."

What? My brethren, are you now afraid? Do you not remember when the church was full of gnostic heresy, and when, afterwards, Arianism afflicted her? Have you not read of the times when the deity of Christ was almost universally denied, and yet the Gospel lived on. Every truth was in its turn assailed, and the professing church itself for centuries was almost universally apostate. And yet the Gospel is not dead, nor its voice silenced.

The Lord was the God of the hills, and put these heresies down, and trod them under foot as straw is trod for the dunghill. And let new heresies come, let men assail the Gospel with fresh errors, God is God of the valleys as well as God of the hills, and He will defeat them one by one as they arise. Ritualism, Spiritualism, and Materialism will go the way of all the other adversaries of the Lord, into smoke shall they consume away.

"But," says one, "infidelity is now so rampant, it takes the form of science and philosophy, and calls into its aid the very thoughtfulness of man which once seemed to be on the side of the Gospel. Therefore there is cause for great alarm." Yet will we not fear, for many infidelities have shone forth and have died out as meteors of the night. They come like shadows, and like shades they vanish. As successive summers have brought forth new harvests of leaves upon the trees of the forest, which in the following autumns have faded and gone, even so new infidelities have flourished and decayed, but God's eternal truth shine on the same as ever, like the sun in the heavens, without variableness or shadow of turning.

Trust you in the Lord forever. He who confounded the first races of blasphemers against His holy cause, and turned their craftiness into folly and made the wise men mad, can do the same again, yea, and will do it even unto the end. If the church be assailed in any novel method by new modes of Satanic influence, or fresh inventions of human craft and philosophy, let us never entertain a doubt concerning the cause whose banner Christ has stained with His heart's blood, and whose honor the eternal power and Godhead of the Almighty are sworn to maintain.

Let the times shift and change as they may, but God is master of the times. Circumstances alter cases, but they do not alter God. New modes of attack may threaten us with new fears, but they do not

really involve any new dangers, for God, who knoweth all things, can meet the new adversary and foil him as He did His foes of old.

I have known this despondency of heart arise from another cause. "Ah," say some, "I do not know what is to become of the church, because in those olden times which you have mentioned, it is true she had great enemies, but then she had great men in her midst. Look at the Fathers and how they fought. Remember the Reformers and the men who took up their descending mantles, the godly and learned Puritans. Consider the great names of church history, and say where do you find such men in these days? Have we not fallen on an age of little men and nobodies?"

Well, suppose we have. I do not anticipate any ill results from that, since great men are only men, and little men are still men. The God who used those men whom we call great first made them great. They were nothing of themselves, and He is just as able to use the men whom we call little, and to make them so efficient that the next generation will think them as great as those who went before. The so-called greatness or littleness of men must, after all, depend on the power of God which is shown in them.

I dare to hope that if the instruments grow less and less likely to claim the honor of success for themselves, they are growing more and more fit to be used by the Lord our God. For this reason I look for even greater displays of divine power in this time of supposed decline. He is the God of the hills truly, the God of Augustine and Luther, the God of Knox and Whitfield, but the God of the valleys also, and therefore our God and our confidence. He can use the men of our own time to build up His church and convert the nations!.

"Ah," says one, "But I do not so much lament the lack of eminent men as the absence of the grand old spirit of the early church." What was that spirit, think you? There was a freshness, an enthusiasm, a heroism about the first Christians which we see not now. I grant you there was, but if it were real power, whence came it but from the Holy Spirit. And has the Holy Spirit ceased to illuminate, quicken, and strengthen the minds of men? Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Do the heavens no longer drop with dew? Is the horn of anointing oil emptied? Is there no sacred breath with which to fan the gracious flame in the church?

No, my brethren, the Spirit of God has not ceased to work. If we cannot evince the enthusiasm of the church's youth, we will cultivate the undying perseverance of the church's manhood, and strive and struggle on, God helping us, till our Lord appears, for the day must and shall come when the truth shall prevail and the God of truth shall be exalted, and to the moles and bats the demon gods and their images shall be cast forever.

Dishonor not your God by unbelief, faint-hearted soldiers, bring not defeat upon yourselves by your cowardly fears. Believe in God, and so shall you be established!. God waits till you believe in Him, and when His whole church shall with brave confidence be sure of victory, victory shall certainly come to her. The Lord increase our faith, and henceforth in this respect let us never dream that JEHOVAH the God of the hills is not the God of the valleys.

II. WE MAY COMMIT THE SIN OF SYRIA BY DOUBTING THE HELP WHICH THE LORD WILL RENDER TO US.

Sometimes we are brought into sore trouble, and then we imagine that the Lord will not help us as He helped the old saints of whom we read in the Bible. We can believe all about Abraham and Moses and David, but we question whether the Lord will help *us*. We look at those men as the great hills, and we regard ourselves as the valleys, and we dare not hope that the Lord will deal with us as He did with His servants in the days of yore.

Now, is not this making God to be a local God, think you? Ought we not have the same faith in God as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had? And if we had such confidence, should we not see like wonders, not miracles perhaps, but something quite as marvelous? God would perform His purpose by ordinary providences, but the purpose would be quite as surely achieved as if miracles were wrought. Let us never admit the thought that the divine promises are now fictions, and that divine aid will not be given.

The God of the patriarchs and prophets fainteth not, neither is He weary, He is our God from generation to generation, and is the same yesterday, today, and for ever.

Now that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh the Lord has not become less gracious. He still shows Himself strong in behalf of those who trust in Him, and there is no reason for doubt.

When we get into deep trouble we are apt not only to forget the days of old, but even to overlook the Lord's former lovingkindnesses to ourselves, or to regard them as exceptional cases, the like of which we cannot again look for. We unbelievingly think, "The Lord helped me when I put my trust in Him at the first, but I cannot expect Him to help me now. In my young days I was full of vigor—the Lord was very gracious to me, and wrought wonders. But now I am less vigorous, my youthful energy is failing, I cannot cope with difficulties as I once did, and I cannot expect the Lord to help me now."

I am almost ashamed to mention such fears, they are so unworthy of a Christian man, and he who has indulged them ought most heartily to repent of them. Has the Lord changed? Because *you* are older and feebler is *He* the weaker? Does He only help us when we can help ourselves, and leave us in our extremity? God forbid. He saith, "I am God; I change not. Even to hoar hairs I am He. I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry." Yet so it is, we readily imagine that the difference of time alters the hope of divine deliverance.

Oh fools, and slow of heart, thus to mistrust immutable love and infallible wisdom. In every time of need God will work our deliverance, for having loved His own He loves them to the end.

The circumstances of our troubles also form occasions for unbelief when we are in that vein. "The Lord helped me when I was very poor," says one, "and if I were poor again I could trust Him concerning it. But now I am passing under slander and reproach, and that is far more bitter to my soul." Your heart unbelievingly supposes that now you will fall by the hand of the enemy, but dear brother, do you really think that God can only help us in certain sets of troubles, and that when we enter upon new trials we shall find Him fail us?

"Oh, but the scene is so changed. I could trust Him if I had to suffer as I did before, but this is so surprising to me." Is it also new to God? You are perplexed, is *He* perplexed? You are now at a nonplus, is *He* nonplussed? Think over this, and do not imagine that He who could help you yesterday will leave you today or tomorrow. If your condition alters for the worse a thousand times it will signify little if your faith can but maintain its hold upon the unchanging God.

I have even known Christians to say, "I cannot go to God about my trials, they are so ordinary and commonplace. I can pray about spiritual things, but may I pray about temporals? I can take my sins and burdens of serious care to Him, but may I pray about little domestic troubles?"

How can you ask that question? He tells you the hairs of your head are all numbered, those are not spiritual things surely. You are told to cast *all* your cares on Him. Is He the God of the hills of the higher spiritual interests of His children, and is He not the God of the valleys of their hourly troubles? Does He not bid us ask Him to give us day by day our daily bread? Has He not given His angels charge to bear us up lest we dash our foot against a stone? Has He not said of His people that they shall lack no good thing? Oh, what mistakes unbelief makes about God and what questions it raises which ought never to be raised at all.

Troubled one, you may go to your heavenly Father about anything, about everything. He will help you in every trial wherever you may be. Though the thing be little, yet remember everything is little to Him, and the difference between an archangel and a sparrow is not so very great with God. The difference between the ruling of a kingdom and the guidance of your Sunday school class may seem great to you, but it is almost invisible to God, to whom the nations are as a drop in a bucket.

As you feel you could trust Him with great troubles, so be sure that you rely upon Him as to the minor ones. Yea, tell Him all your griefs, and cast all your burdens upon Him. Truly He is the God of the hills, but He is the God of the valleys too.

Sometimes this fear that God will not help us arises from a change in our inward experience. "Oh," saith one, "I have been in deep waters of soul-trouble before now, and the Lord has helped me. I have

fought with dragons, and done battle with the Prince of Darkness in the valley of the shadow of death, and Jesus was with me, and I do not wonder at it, for the fight seemed worthy of a God. But now it is only a little thorn in the flesh that worries me, and I hardly dare beseech the Lord to remove it, or help me to bear it.

"I have experiences of a different sort altogether from that of former days. I grow cold, torpid, indifferent, careless. I do not seem to live the grand struggling life I once lived when I was familiar with gigantic spiritual difficulties, and tasted exalted delights, "Can I expect God to help me now? Will He arouse me from my lethargy? Will He stir me to devotion when I feel that I cannot pray? Will He bring back my spiritual feeling when I feel numbed and dead to all but pain? Can the Lord revive Laodicea? Can He heat again the lukewarm? Will He quicken such a dead lump, such a mass of lifeless flesh as I am?"

O my brother, do not ask such questions. There is no condition into which a believer can fall but God can and will deliver him out of it. There is no trial or temptation, though it be low, degrading, base, but what the Lord can as much assist you when laboring under it as in the more sublime struggles of the most noble life. Commit yourself to God, and entertain no fears as to His all-sufficiency and faithfulness.

But you say, "I would not entertain any of these fears if I were like eminent saints, but I am far inferior to the godly men of whom I read and hear. I am obscure and insignificant. I have little talent, and even less grace. I am a nobody."

Be it so, but is our God the God of the hills and not the God of the valleys? Will God help Oliver Cromwell and not help a private soldier who trusts in God and keeps his powder dry? Will God aid a Whitfield and not help a poor local preacher holding forth upon the green? Will He assist the earnest minister who addresses thousands, and desert the simple girl who teaches a dozen little children the old, old story of the cross? Is this after the fashion of God, to patronize the eminent and neglect the lowly? Does Jesus despise the day of small things?

Surely you have misread the Scriptures if you think so, for the Christ of the Gospels took note of a widow's two mites, and was pleased with the hosannas of boys and girls. He rejoiced that His Father revealed His great things not to the wise and prudent, but to babes. And He called to His work, not the high priests and the philosophers, but the fishermen and the publicans. So do not, because you see a difference between yourself and others, and a change in the circumstances of your trials, and all the rest of it, begin to think that the heavenly Father will desert you, or else I shall again have to tell you that He is God of the valleys as well as the hills.

III. IT IS VERY EASY TO FALL INTO THIS SIN BY COMPARING AND CONTRASTING THE EXPERIENCES OF OURSELVES AND OTHERS.

Some minds are rugged and craggy, broken up and tossed about. In them you are astounded by seeing great rifts of conflict and terrible chasms of unbelief. Their hearts wear awful scars where the tempests of trial have swept all before them, and laid bare the roots of their being. And then on the other hand they show such wonderful elevations of thought their soul mounts aloft beyond the clouds into the blue serene sky where God dwells, among the things unlawful for a man to utter. Everything about them is stupendous, majestic, sublime, or terrible. And little men who have heard of their awful experiences suspiciously inquire whether such feelings and conflicts can be consistent with the grace of God.

Yet who would say of the bleak and desolate mountains that the Lord is not there? Was He not on Sinai? Did He not come from Paran? Is not the strength of the hills the heritage of the Lord? Among the cloud-capped Alps JEHOVAH's voice is often heard, and the rocks are riven by His flames of fire. The thoughtful soul may often hear the rustle of the skirts of JEHOVAH's garments in the stillness of those lone hills.

God is in rugged souls, in the ravines of a broken heart, and in the caves of dread despair. He overrules the whirlwind of temptation and the tempests of Satanic blasphemy, and anon He is seen in the bow of hope and the sunshine of full assurance. The Lord is in every heroic struggle against sin, and in

that eager clinging to His word which is seen in so many tempted souls. Yet men judge their fellows and say, "The Lord cannot be there," even where He is most mightily.

On the other hand, I have known persons fashioned in this rough mold look down on the gentle, quiet life of the useful, less thoughtful, and perhaps less intelligent Christian, who is like the valley, and they have said, "Lord, what shall this man do? He does not sympathize with my soul-troubles. He has had little or no law work. He does not understand my grand conceptions of truth. He enters not into the deep things of God."

Remember that this may be true, and yet the brother may be a far better man than you are. He may be one of the fields which the Lord has blessed, a low lying valley, cultivated by God's Spirit till it yields golden sheaves by which multitudes are fed. If He blesses many by his quiet menial life, who are you that you should condemn him?

Brother from the valley, do not misjudge the dweller in the mountain, and inhabitant of the crag. Do not look down with contempt upon the tenant of the plain, for God is in both your lives. God is in the stormy life of the afflicted, and God is in the restfulness of the humble and contented. In the tried life and in the useful life God is variously but equally manifested, and I beg you always to see God as far as He can be seen in all His people. Recognize the virtues of your brother wherein *you* are deficient, and not the graces wherein *he* fails. Condemn not the man whom God has approved. He is God of the hills and He is God of the valleys, take your delight in both.

Then about yourself, dear friend, do not mournfully complain, "Alas, I have never experienced what I perceive has been the lot of my brother in the Lord. He has had a deep, rugged, amazing experience of fightings with the devil, and of contests with his own corruptions, I know very little of these matters." Do not desire to know them, for if you know Christ it will suffice you.

Or if, on the other hand, you are much buffeted and tossed about, do not condemn yourself and say you are no child of God because you have not the constant enjoyment, the sweetness and rest of other believers, it is enough for you that Christ is yours. You are a crag Christian, be satisfied to have your feet upheld upon your high places, God is the God of the hills as surely as He is God of the valleys.

Thus I have shown how in a third way we may fall into this error, but time fails me, and I cannot enlarge thereon. May the Holy Spirit further instruct you therein in all wisdom and prudence.

IV. A VERY COMMON SHAPE OF THIS SIN IS LIMITING THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL.

Listen to this, you who would fain be saved but fear you cannot be. I have known you limit the power of the Gospel by supposing that it will only save certain sinners. You heard of a great drunkard who was converted, of a swearer who turned to God, and you said to yourself, "I do not wish to be a drunk or a swearer, but I have seen many of that sort of people saved, and I, who have led a moral life, have not been renewed in heart, it makes me envy them."

Dear friend, why should not you also obtain salvation? Is Jesus the Savior of open and gross sinners and not of the more secret offenders? Is the very foulness of sin an aid to salvation? Impossible! There is certainly no want of adaptation in the Gospel to meet the case of the naturally moral and excellent, and you must not think there is.

Jesus, who saves publicans and harlots, also blesses the truth-seeker, and sows the honest and good ground. When you read of such and such a person who has been a great offender being suddenly struck down and turned to God, you do not wish that you were like him in his sin, but you could endure that evil if there might but be in you as manifest a change as can be seen in him. I know the feeling, but it is based upon an error, and tends to foster the idea that more of God's grace is displayed in one case than in another.

True conversion is in all cases the work of God, and consequently a display of omnipotent power. The Lord presents the Gospel to every creature, and whosoever believeth in Jesus, whether he has been a gross offender or only a common sinner, shall find salvation through the blood of the atonement. Jesus is not the Savior of a class, but His power is unto all and upon all them that believe. To men of all sorts His grace extends, He blesses both hills and valleys.

"Ah," says another, "I could believe in Jesus, whatever my sins had been or had not been, if I had known the awful conviction and painful sense of sin which some have known. I read of one that he was ready to lay violent hands upon himself when tormented by conscience. I have never felt like that. I know that sin is a dreadful thing, but I do not feel driven to despair by it as I have heard others say, or else I could believe."

Friend, do you think that Christ's ability to save depends upon your fearful apprehensions of your guilt? O soul, He is not the God of the hills only, but of the valleys also. He saves a Saul of Tarsus, whom He strikes down as a proud hill sinner, but He also saves Lydia, whose heart He opens to the truth, as one of the dwellers in the plain. Those who are gently brought to Christ, if they do but rest in Him, are as truly saved as those who are driven to Him by fierce terrors and terrible forebodings of the wrath to come. Jesus is essential to every saving experience, but no form of experience is essential to fit a man for Jesus.

"Yet," cries another, "I am afraid that the Lord Jesus will never conquer the kind of sin which has set up its dominion in my soul. I believe He can drive out of men their great and crying sins, but my tendencies are more subtle and injurious. I feel a dreadful indifference stealing over my spirit, where shall I find awakening and enlivening?" I answer, you will find help to overcome your sin just where the blasphemer and the drunkard find theirs, namely, in Christ Jesus, and the sanctifying power of His Holy Spirit.

Jesus can overcome one sin as well as another. There is no sin in the whole catalog but what the blood of Christ can wash its guilt away, and the water which flowed with the blood can take away its power over the soul. Jesus can give us the double deliverance, both from the criminality and the bondage of sin, whether the sin is of the mountain or of the valley. Only trust Him, and the dominion of sin shall be broken.

Christian people, I shall now speak to you, and remind you that too frequently when you are about to tell of Jesus and His love you feel a desire to select your congregation. In your heart you dream that certain persons are more conquerable by the power of God than others. "It is of no use trying after the conversion of So-and-so," say you. You put certain characters down on the black list and regard them as hopeless, while for others you feel more hopeful and work among them with more spirit. Have you not, in a measure, fallen into the sin of Syria? Is not your Christ, evidently, the God of the hills and not the God of the valleys?

Your business is to preach the Gospel to every sort of sinner, to every class of mind, and to every rank of persons. And when you do so, believing that the Gospel in the hands of the Holy Ghost has an omnipotent power and works on all sides, and among all classes of people, then shall you see the hand of God with you working mightily.

V. Upon the last point we must only give a hint or two, WE CAN, AFTER THE FASHION OF SYRIA, LIMIT THE POWER OF GOD BY NOT EXPECTING HIS DIVINE AID TO BE GIVEN TO US IN HIS SERVICE.

When we are urged to labor for the Lord we are tempted to excuse ourselves upon various grounds, and we speak as if we could not reckon upon divine assistance. Often the plea is that gifts and talents are scanty with us. This may be quite true, but it does not prevent our being used of the Lord for His gracious purposes. God is the God of the many-gifted and gracious man, but He is also the God of the one-talented man who seeks to glorify Him. We are accepted according to what we have, not according to what we have not.

"But I have such peculiarity of disposition, I am so retiring that I cannot hope for a blessing." Brother, is this an argument which will hold water? Is God the God of the impudent and bold, but not the God of the modest? Is grace given to brazen faces, but not to those who are meek and lowly? I am sure it is not so. Cease from such vain excuses.

"Ah, but my sphere of life is a very difficult one. I dwell among such strange people. I find no sympathy, and very few back me up in what I attempt."

Ah, you would like a sphere made on purpose for you, would you not? And when you had it there would be no necessity for your entering upon it, because all the good would be done already. Here is a lamp well lit! It objects to be placed where it is dark, it would like to be hung up in the sunshine. But what is the good of a lamp in the daylight? And what is the use of a Christian man in a place where everything is already as he desires it to be?

If the servant of the Lord be wise, he will look at the needs of the people as a call for his labors. He will regard disadvantages as advantages, and difficulties as things to be overcome. Indeed, to the believer, even impossibility is only another name for a matter in which the power of God is more than ordinarily to be manifested in answer to believing prayer. The man who knows his God is strong and performs great exploits, he judges all things to be alike easy with the Lord, and he knows nothing of a God of the hills who is not also God of the valleys.

"Ah," says one, "but I cannot expect God to bless me, for I feel so unworthy." Do you suppose, then, that those whom God greatly blesses are worthy? If you ever meet with a man who feels worthy to be blessed he is the very person whom God does not bless at all. The most favored feel most their unworthiness of such favors. Your sense of unworthiness must not be taken as a reason why God cannot bless you. It may rather be regarded as itself a blessing.

"Still," say you, "I do not know how it is, but I feel such a trembling about my work, and the place in which I live, and the people among whom I labor." Now, to be brief, this feeling is your great hindrance, and you must get rid of it. There is no reason for trembling if you look the matter in the face. Has God sent you? Then God is with you, and why should you fear? If you give yourself up to God entirely, desiring that He should use every atom of you exactly as He pleases, and *where* He pleases, then there can be no cause for fear.

All things are equally possible with God, and every sphere is equally hopeful when God leads the way. Every time, and every age, and every man are all in the hands of the omnipotent and eternal Lord. If God sends you to prophecy to dry bones with Ezekiel, or to preach to Ninevites with Jonah, He will be with you in either case, and you will be quite as happy in your preaching as if He sent you to expound the Scriptures to Bereans or tell of Jesus to devout and honorable women. Your surroundings should not be the cause of fear to you, for they are of small weight in the scale.

Is the Father with you? Is Jesus with you? Is the Holy Spirit with you? Then though you are one man, like Samson, the lone champion, and have no weapon to fight with except that which your enemies compare to an ass's jawbone, yet lay hold of it man and throw yourself upon the whole army of foes, and heaps upon heaps shall they lie before you. Greater is He that is for you than all they that be against you. "Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain."

Do I hear you sigh, "Would God I could get to this faith and stay there." I pray the Lord to help you, for if you believe the utmost you can concerning the Lord, it will not be one whit too much. If you trust Him most implicitly, you will not trust Him too fully. You shall often be ashamed of your unbelief, but never of your hope. You shall often have to blush to think you doubted, but never because you trusted. Nobody shall ever meet you, not even a devil, and say, "You fool, you have relied on the Lord too much." Time will prove the contrary, Therefore rest in the God of the valleys and in the God of the hills, and glory in Him forever and ever.

It is possible for unconverted men to fall into the sin of which we are speaking, and I would like to give them this caution before dismissing them. Do any of you unconverted ones hope to escape from the punishment which God will bring upon the ungodly? If you do, your reasons are vain and will turn out to be lies. God punished Pharaoh and others in this life, and He will punish all the ungodly in the life to come. As surely as He smote sinners of old, He will smite *you* ere long.

You may say, "I am not a thief or a drunkard." Very well. But He who is the God of the hills is the God of the valleys, and if you remain unregenerate, even though you have never been an open offender, you shall be visited for your heart sins. God will smite the valley sinners as well as the hill sinners, and though you say, "I have always attended the house of God and used the outward means," yet assuredly,

unless you believe in Jesus, God who smites the thoughtless heathen will smite the yet more guilty hearer of the word who rejects the blood of Christ. God will deal out equal justice to all mankind. He is the God both of the hills and of the valleys, and no impenitent sinner shall escape the rod of His justice. If you believe not on Christ you shall be lost, whoever you may be. If you will now trust Jesus you shall be saved, whether you dwell in hill or vale. God grant you grace to believe at once, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON-1 KINGS 20:1-30

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—92, 212, 499

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.