

“JESUS ONLY”—A COMMUNION MEDITATION
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A SERMON
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“Jesus only.”
Mark 9:8

THIS was the last sight the disciples had upon the mountain and it seems to me to have been the best. They saw “Jesus only.” Jesus was often with His people. He was usually with His disciples, but they did not often notice Him as “Jesus only.” They probably did so, in this case, because He had been accompanied by two great and notable personages, who, on a sudden, withdrew themselves, and then, “they saw no man any more, save Jesus only.” The disciples had seen their Lord transfigured and attended by Moses and Elias, representatives of the law and the prophets. Suddenly, Moses and Elias vanished from their sight, and then, “they saw no man any more, save Jesus only.”

Beloved, we shall never see “Jesus only,” till, like the disciples, we have seen Moses and Elias, too. Never was there an eye which saw “Jesus only,” until it had first seen Moses. We must first pass under the rigors of Sinai and the terrors of the law of God—we must first look upon the awful countenance of that dread lawgiver, whose words are thunder, and whose speech is fire.

We must be made to tremble beneath the denunciations of the divine law, and stand abashed, astonished, and amazed, whilst the thunders of the wrath of God roll over our heads. We must see Moses first, or else we shall never see “Jesus only.” We shall be trusting in our own self-righteousness, putting something with Christ—making it Christ and self, until Moses comes in and breaks self-righteousness into shivers, and stains self with the filth and mire of the streets. We must have the breaking down by Moses—the smashing hand, the terrible strife that the law brings into the conscience—or else we shall never know the sweetness of relying wholly upon Jesus and placing our confidence in Him alone.

And mark you, beloved, in another sense, we shall never see “Jesus only” till we understand something about the prophets. We must see Elias or else we shall not see “Jesus only.” There are some men who have not seen Elias yet—they do not understand the prophecies. They think they perceive in the future a great progress of civilization and they expect to see the spread of the Gospel. They expect to hear of great agencies employed, of multitudes of ministers going forth to preach the Word, and of a gradual conversion of the world to the religion of Christ.

But he who understands the prophets and has seen Elias, believes not in the immediate conversion of the world, nor in universal peace—he believes in “Jesus only.” He expects that Jesus will first come, and to him, the great hope of the future is the coming of the Son of man. “I know,” says he, “that God shall overturn, and overturn, and overturn, until He shall come whose right it is to reign. I know that empires shall totter to their bases, and that the world shall reel to and fro in terror and alarm until He shall appear whose name is Melchisedec, the King of righteousness and the King of peace, who shall set His hand upon the floods and His empire upon the rivers—and shall reign ‘from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.’”

We shall not see “Jesus only,” as the world’s great Deliverer, as the sinners’ one Redeemer, as the earth’s bright Sun, as well as her Morning Star, until we have studied the prophecies and seen how they all speak concerning Jesus, even of Him who is yet to come. We shall see Moses and Elias first—and when we have seen them, their united testimony will lead us to see “Jesus only.”

And now, beloved child of God, we are about to approach the Lord’s table. I shall only utter a few thoughts which may help you in your meditations there. When we come to the communion table, we are to think of “Jesus only.” We have no business with anything tonight, except “Jesus only.” We are to forget that we have a wife and children, that we have a house or a barn, that we have fields or a shop, we are not to recollect anything about these things, but to say, as far as we can,—

*“Far from my thoughts, vain world, be gone!
Leave my religious hours alone;
Gladly would my eyes my Savior see:
I wait a visit, Lord, from Thee.*

*“My heart grows warm with holy fire,
And kindles with a pure desire;
Come, my dear Jesus, from above,
And feed my soul with heavenly love.”*

By God’s grace, tonight, you have nothing to do with any other set of people under heaven. Remember that you are coming to the Lord’s table simply as God’s saints. There are many religious controversies which shake the world, but you have nothing to do with them tonight.

When you come to the Lord’s table, you have nothing to do with the question whether baptism is by immersion or by sprinkling, and nothing to do with the question whether church government should be Episcopal or Presbyterian. You have nothing to do with what anybody else in the whole world believes. Men may be Arminians, and you may combat their errors in other places, but not here.

You have nothing to think of, tonight, except these two things—you, a sinner, loved by a gracious Savior. Try, if you can, to fix your thoughts on these facts—“I was lost, perishing, and ruined through my own sins, but glory be to God, the all-sufficient atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ has set me free and made me an heir of heaven.”

Oh! make “Jesus only” the subject of your thought and your trust. And at this table, cast aside everything else and come, just as you are, to Him—and then it will be a precious Lord’s supper to you, indeed.

I am going to speak to you about “Jesus only” and to show you that it must be “*Jesus only*” for your justification. It must be “*Jesus only*” for your sanctification. It must be “*Jesus only*” for your object in life and it must be “*Jesus only*” for your hope of heaven.

I. First, it must be “JESUS ONLY” FOR YOUR JUSTIFICATION.

We were born fools and we shall continue fools till we get to heaven—and one of the foolish things that will always be sprouting out of us is our wanting to put something else with Christ in the matter of our justification. You tell me you never do that, but I am sure you do. You may be the most enlightened and intelligent saint, but unconsciously to yourself, you will be very often joining something to Christ and setting up an antichrist in your soul.

How often does even the most orthodox preacher give utterance to sentiments which seem to militate against the great truth that Christ Jesus is our only justifying righteousness. It is a hard thing to stick fast by this great fundamental truth—“Jesus only” as the rock and foundation of our salvation.

Remember, Christian, that the meritorious cause of your salvation is not in the least degree dependent upon yourself—it is dependent on “Jesus only.” Your responsibility is now merged in the divine responsibility of Christ on your behalf. The Lord Jesus has covenanted for you that—

*“He will present your soul,
Unblemished and complete
Before the glory of His face,
With joys divinely great.”*

O beloved! always hang your confidence where it ought to hang—on “Jesus only.” And when you find yourself full of sin and wickedness, grieve over it, but do not think that the ground of your hope is one whit the less firm for all that. When sin prevails and guilt rises, remember that as your righteousness cannot make Christ’s righteousness any better, so your sin cannot make it any worse—and, clothed in His righteousness, though black with sin, you may, with deep repentance, yet with holy faith, cry,—

*“When from the dust of death I rise,
To take my mansion in the skies,
E’en then shall this be all my plea,
‘Jesus hath lived and died for me.’*

*“Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who ought to my charge shall lay,
While through Christ’s blood absolved I am,
From sin’s tremendous curse and shame?”*

And then, will you please recollect that *all your good works do not make you any safer?* If you were to die the moment you believed and never did a good work at all, you would be as sure of heaven as you would be if you lived to love and serve your Maker with all your soul and all your might. Remember that the saint who lives from day to day, devoting all to Christ, spending and being spent in His Master’s service, has more happiness than the saint who is not so full of love, but he is not a whit more secure.

Be active and you will be happy—but do not be active in order to be safe. The heir of heaven is no more secure when he is abundant in good works and diligent in the service of God, so far as his ultimate salvation is concerned, than when he is suffered to backslide, and to become faint and weak in the cause of God, for our security lies not in anything that we do, or do not do—it lies only in the covenant of free and sovereign grace. And the only basis of our salvation is Christ who died for us, “yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”

I want you also to recollect that *all your sufferings do not make you any safer.* They make you better, by God’s grace, but they do not make you any more sure of heaven. They are not meritorious afflictions. Persons often misjudge concerning their troubles—they think that they are punishments for sin. Let the child of God remember that God never punishes His children for sin. He chastises them for it, but never with the penal punishment of a lawgiver.

God’s people were punished, once for all, in the person of their Scapegoat and Surety, Jesus Christ—and God will never punish twice for the same offense. The chastisements of God’s providence are the fatherly acts of His love—they are not the wrathful acts of His justice. As the righteous Judge, God cannot punish either you or me, if we are believers in Jesus.

As holding the scepter of righteousness, He cannot unsheathe the sword against a believer. He has punished our sins upon the Lord Jesus—the whole of the vials of His wrath were emptied on Christ’s head—and they cannot now come on yours or mine. But as a Father, God uses the rod. As a loving and tender Father, He uses chastisements and as a kind Physician, He gives us bitter medicines to take.

But for your own sake, and for Christ’s sake, dear brethren and sisters, do not get to mingling your own sufferings with the Savior’s. Remember, if you suffered ever so much, all your sufferings would not be any atonement for your sins, nor even a punishment for them. Except you are one of those who are not redeemed and therefore bear the penalty of your own sin and perish everlastingly. But as a child of God, as a redeemed and elect vessel of mercy, your sufferings are not penal. And suffer or not suffer, the atonement of Christ is enough for you, and you must say, “Jesus only is the ground of my justification. I will rest there and nowhere else.”

And now I will ask you, beloved, do you not frequently find, when you have been in a very good frame, when you have been praying well at the prayer meeting, and helping the poor, when the minister has patted you on the back, and said what a good fellow you were, and the deacons have looked lovingly

at you, and said you were a very useful man, and when you have got on well at Sunday school, and have had a letter from Mary James, telling you that she was converted through your teaching—do you not find that you have gone home and you do not know how it was, but in a day or two, you got so dull and low, you could not tell what was the matter with you? Have you ever thought what was the cause of it? You have lost all your hope and confidence, and you have been obliged to come, as a guilty sinner, to the footstool of Christ’s mercy, and take His love and blood to be your only trust? Do you know why it was you were so low in spirit?

It was for this reason. Unconsciously to yourself, you had been leaning a little on your own good works. You had said to yourself, “Well, now, I really begin to think I am sure of heaven. See, are not these things the fruits of the Spirit? Oh! may I not rejoice with confidence? Am I not secure? Surely, now I am safe! How I prayed the other day! What a blessed season I had in private prayer the other evening! Now I know I can trust Christ.”

Stop, my friend. You ought to say, “I know I can now trust in myself now,” for that is the English of it. And then you get into a heavy, dull frame of mind for a long time afterwards, only to make you spell out those two words, “Jesus only,” and He will make you spell them out, until you are bound to say, by a constraint upon your heart and conscience, that it must be there, and there alone, that you can put your confidence and trust.

That is the first point—“Jesus only” for our justification.

II. Next, it must be “JESUS ONLY” TO SANCTIFY US.

Some professors will not say so. “We are justified by God,” they say, “but we have to sanctify ourselves.” They believe in what they call progressive sanctification. Is that Scriptural or not? Well, I have always thought that sanctification is continual, but I am not sure that it is progressive. Many divines have written it down as a settled truth, that God’s people are sanctified progressively and that, the longer they are here, the more and more sanctified they get.

Did any of them ever stop and ask an old believer whether he found it so? I have asked many and I have heard a venerable saint, whose hairs are silvered o’er with grey, say, “I think my heart is as bad now as ever it was. And I am sure if it is not actually so, I think it is, and it plagues me more than it ever did.”

It has been the custom to pray God to protect young men in the slippery paths of youth. Why, the paths of old age are quite as slippery. They are all slippery paths—all the way to heaven! The old nature still remains in us, unchanged and unchangeable, and there will have to be a fight between the new nature and the old nature, between the house of David and the house of Saul, until at last the house of David shall overcome and we shall get clean free from sin.

Beloved, do not be looking, with regard to your sanctification, for any great progress. Expect it to be continual every day, but do not expect that your old nature will get holier every day—and in your sanctification take this for your motto, “Jesus only.”

If you cannot see Christ in your prayers, and in your good works, away with them! Your good works are sins, unless Christ Jesus lies in them. Unless through Him, and for Him, and by Him, you perform your works, your best works are bad works. Remember, it is not the outward fashion of the work, it is the inward spirit of it that makes it good. Therefore it is not the mere outward appearance of sanctification, it is the inward spirit of it that makes it true sanctification.

Pant thou, then, if you pant after sanctification, not after the virtues of a Paul, or after the glories of an evangelist, or the magnificent excellences of some of God’s saints—but pant thou, first and last, after the character of Jesus, in all its sublimity and perfection. And pant thou after the Spirit of Jesus to sanctify you. For “Jesus only” is enough in sanctification, as the pattern to which you are to attain, and as the One who, by His Spirit, shall make you conformable unto Himself.

Keep your eyes on your Savior, as much in your good works as in your bad ones. After your prayers, look to the cross, as well as after your sins. After the Lord’s supper, look to the cross, as well as after a fall. Look to the Savior as much in almsgiving, as much in Bible reading, as much in preaching, as much

as ever you do in looking to Him for justification, for unless you do, your sins will unman you yet, and bring you down again with some sad fall, to make you learn the truth of this motto, “Jesus only.”

III. Now, dear friends, thirdly, I will speak of “JESUS ONLY” AS THE OBJECT OF OUR LIVES.

It was my privilege, this morning, to address a congregation, most of you being present, from the text, [Sermon #144, Waiting Only Upon God] “My soul, wait thou only upon God.” Now, if you please, just extract the marrow out of the morning’s discourse and put that into the third head. Let “Jesus only” be the object of your life.

Oh! I pray the Holy Spirit so to enter into our hearts, and minds, and consciences, and judgments, and affections, that every idolatrous love—all affection towards everything but Christ—may be cast out of all the Lord’s family, and that they may be brought to set Jesus upon the throne of their hearts, and to utterly crush every rival.

O brethren, after all, we do not love Jesus Christ much! Oh! if we saw the ocean of Christ’s love running towards us, and the streamlet of our love running towards Him, what a shocking contrast it would be on our part! There is His love—I cannot see across it. It is a sea without a shore. The wings of imagination flag with fatigue before they can cross that shoreless sea. There is His love—I cannot fathom it. The plumb line fails.

But oh! here is our love—it is a little stream that is almost dry. The heat of worldly joys will sometimes absorb it till the stones stand in the bed of its little brook, unwashed and dry. Oh! it is so small that, sometimes, it takes an hour to scoop up so much as a cupful of it to give to the Lord’s poor family. It will take us, perhaps, a week to get even a consciousness that we love Christ—and we will be singing for hours together,—

*“Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought;
Do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I His, or am I not?”*

That is because we have so little love—otherwise we should know whether we did love Him or not. If we loved Him more, there would be no doubt about it. But we love Him so little that we have reason to cry, “O Jesus, fill our hearts with Your love. Come and enter our souls and reign there forevermore!”

I beseech you, dear friends, do not be content with the poor little paltry love you have already. Ask Him, who gave you that little which you have, to give you a thousand times more. Do not sing that hymn,—

*“Had I ten thousand tongues, they all
Should join the harmony.”*

Do not wish for so many tongues. Do not say,—

*“Had I ten thousand hearts, dear Lord,
I’d give them all to Thee.”*

Try and give Him the one you have—that will be enough for you. Ask that your whole heart may be offered on the altar, that your whole tongue may be dedicated to God, and that your body, soul, and spirit may be a whole burnt-offering, holy, and acceptable unto God, presented to Him as your reasonable service.

“Jesus only.” Put that on your banner and go on fighting for “Jesus only.” Strive not for sect or party. Strive not for self or family. Strive not for your own aggrandizement or wealth, but sanctify all you do, sacred or secular, with this motto, “I do it for Jesus only.”

IV. And then, beloved, to conclude—“JESUS ONLY” IS OUR ONE HOPE OF HEAVEN.

What do I hope to have when I die? I may answer, in the words of my text, “Jesus only.” “Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.” Be not beguiled with the poet’s visionary heaven—he tells you of a heaven of the intellect, a heaven of imagination. Be not carried away, like children, by any such fictitious paradise.

The heaven of your heart, and the only heaven that can content it, is “Jesus only.” To lie in His embrace, to be pressed to His bosom, to feel the kisses of His lips, to drink the wine of His eternal love, to be forever steeped in the ocean of His grace, to know His heart, to behold His countenance, to admire His beauties, and to be swallowed up in His glory, is the highest ambition of the believer.

There is nothing in heaven that is equal to Christ. There is no flower in all the gardens of paradise that blooms so sweetly as the Rose of Sharon. There is not a gem with which the crowns of the glorified are now adorned that glistens one half so gloriously as the eye of Christ. There is not a splendor in the realms of paradise, however God-like and divine, that is one half so majestic as that head of His, the locks whereof are bushy and black as a raven’s.

Well may we sing—

*“When shall I see Thy smiling face,
That face which often I have seen?
Arise, Thou Sun of Righteousness,
Scatter the clouds that intervene.”*

And—

*“Oh when, thou city of my God,
Shall I thy courts ascend,
Where congregations ne’er break up,
And Sabbaths have no end?”*

Oh! when shall I behold my Savior and wrapt in His embrace, be forever blest? So “Jesus only” is our one hope of heaven.

Now, poor Christian, you have this precious treasure, have you not? I was wondering how a man would feel if he could say that he had nothing in the world but “Jesus only.” You do not know and I do not know. You have a pretty fair income now—you are tolerably well off and you have good strong limbs. You can work and earn your own living. But now suppose a case.

Suppose there is a man, somewhere on the face of the earth, who can say, “There, now, I have not a rag nor a crust. I have not in the whole world so much as would fetch a solitary half-farthing. I have no health, I am as sickly as I can be. I have no fame—foul slanders have blasted my character. I have no friends. I have buried the last of my family. I have no earthly hopes, no prospects. All that I have is ‘Jesus only!’”

Now, I can imagine, nay, I can express my firm belief, that a consciousness of the possession of Jesus would have such an overcoming effect upon the heart of this poor beggar that he would forget his poverty, and forget his nakedness, and forget his lack of kindred, and forget his hopelessness. This one thought would swallow up all his misery—“I have Christ, then, how can I be poor when I have Him?”

But now, there is another case which you need not suppose. Perhaps such a man is here tonight. You have a fortune. Or you have money enough for your needs. You have a wife and children. You have houses, and lands, and name, and honor, and reputation. You seem to have everything. What is there that you have not?

I go into your pantry—it is well-stored. I go into your parlor—it is well-furnished. I go into your treasury and see your coffers—there is abundance—your business yards and warehouses are filled with goods. The whole place is busy, from the highest room to the lowest, and a stream of wealth is pouring in upon you every day. You have everything that heart can wish—except Christ.

Now, I cannot, by any flight of imagination, think of you as a happy man. I did not need to stretch my thoughts to think of that poor penniless beggar as being happy, after all. But I cannot imagine that if

you know what it is to be without Christ, you can be a happy man. Just think a moment what will happen to you if you continue living as you now are.

You will die and your soul will be driven into hell. Within a little while, your riches will “take to themselves wings, and fly away.” Your family may die, or if they do not, you will die—you cannot take your money with you. If you are buried in a gold coffin, it will not enrich you. All your lands will belong to another. Somebody else’s eyes must see your fair acres. Somebody else’s hands shall pluck the fruit from your trees. Think of this and then remember that, all this while, you will be in hell—in torments! I cannot think of you as a happy man.

Go home and take your wine—and see damnation in its dregs. Go home and walk over your farm and see death in its clods, and damnation in its meadows. Go home to your house and climb its topmost story, and look abroad upon your estates and see the autumn coming on—and remember that “we all do fade as a leaf,” and that, if not in Christ, our transgressions, like the wind, shall carry us away. Go home and let the thoughts of eternal fire mingle with all you have. You have all things but Christ. Go, then, and stir up in your most joyous pleasures the prospect of eternal wrath. And if you can be happy after that, you must not be men. You must be brute beasts.

But if you can say, “Jesus,” do not be afraid to say, “Jesus only.” If you have a prospect of losing all, gladly give it up for Christ. If you are afraid you should not have enough, just be sure of this—that if you have Jesus, you have enough. And remember, if the worst should come to the worst, and you were locked up in prison, without a bed to lie on or a crust to eat—if you had Jesus with you, you might be as happy as an angel in your prison. But if you had all the wealth of India, you might be as wretched as a devil, if you had not Christ with you. Oh! treasure up the text and make it true of yourself, “Jesus only.”

And you, poor souls, who are panting to know the way to heaven, remember, there is only one ladder that can ever take you there. The rounds of it are made by sovereign grace. That ladder is called Jesus. The foot rests on the earth, in His humanity. The top leans in heaven, on His Godhead. Poor sinner, run up the staves!

Do you think you are so heavy that you will break the rounds? Oh, no! There have been some stout old sinners up that ladder before now. Many a guilty one has run up it with enough weight of sin upon his back to have crushed the heavens into hell, if God had put their sin there. But the ladder has never been broken yet, and it never will be!

Up with you, sinner! If your feet are ever so black, they will not soil the ladder. Run up, with all your sin, and care, and woe! Come to the Lord Jesus and He will not cast you away, for He has said, “Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.”

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

HEBREWS 11

This is a very familiar chapter, but it is none the less precious. It is the roll of the heroes of faith. Here you have a list of the men who believed in God and who therefore did great things.

Verses 1-2. *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report.*

“The elders”—that is, those who lived in the ancient times—worked wondrous works by faith and the “report” of them still encourages others to try to do likewise.

3. *Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*

That is one of the earliest lessons of faith. We do not discover the secrets of Creation by mere reason, or the teachings of science—it is only by revelation that the marvelous story can reach us. Faith accepts the inspired declaration that God made all things, and that the things that are seen were made out

of things that are not seen, so that, after all, the foundation of everything is that which is not seen. The visible is but a dream. The things which are round about us are the transient things that shall all pass away. The things that are not seen are eternal and shall abide forever. The things which are seen were made out of the invisible, not out of things which are seen.

4. *By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.*

Paul begins his list of heroes of faith with Abel. And you will notice that faith works differently in each one of these mighty men. It is the same living principle in all of them, but they are different men and their faith is seen in very different circumstances. Faith is able to work in all manner of ways—it is good at everything. There is nothing that God calls us to do but faith can enable us to accomplish it.

In Abel’s case, we see that faith is grand at worshipping. Faith brings a right sacrifice—brings it in the right way and speaks even after she is dead, for the blood of Abel cried out of the ground. Oh, that all of us might so live that, even out of our graves, there might come a voice speaking for God!

5-6. *By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

See, here, how faith has learnt the secret art of pleasing God. God is the thrice-holy One. He is a jealous God and a very little sin greatly provokes Him. But faith knows how to please Him. I do not wonder that Enoch did not die—it was a less thing to be translated to heaven than it was to please God. To live for three hundred years in constant communion with God, as he did, to be ever pleasing God, was a mighty triumph of faith. May God grant that, during all the years that we live, whether they are few or many, we may so live as always to please Him! “But without faith it is impossible to please him.”

7. *By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.*

Fear and faith may sometimes dwell together. There is a holy, humble fear that perfect love never casts out, but entertains and cherishes—and this is the kind of fear that Noah possessed. “Being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, he prepared an ark.” Noah was a practical life-saver—an ark-builder. And so he became the second father of the human race—a sort of new Adam—and that simply by his faith. Oh! what is there that is impossible to the man who believes in God? “All things are possible to him that believeth.”

8. *By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.*

He was self-exiled from his home—a wanderer upon the face of the earth. Yet, when called of God, it mattered not to him where he was bidden to go. He seemed to say, “Appoint my way, great God. It is for me not to ask the reason why, but to obey Your command.”

9-11. *By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.*

So that faith made the barren woman to keep house and to be a joyful mother. Faith has caused our spiritual barrenness to bring forth abundantly. Oh, that some barren soul here might catch the blessed influences of faith and begin at once to bear fruit for God!

12. *Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.*

“Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead.” That “one” was Isaac, for he was given up to die, and apparently, nothing could save him from death. Yet God did save him, and from

him there sprang “so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.”

13. *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*

“These all”—Paul means Abraham, and Sarah, and Isaac, and Jacob—“died in faith.” They “embraced” the promises—threw their arms round them—hugged them to their hearts—embraced them as those who dearly loved them.

14-15. *For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.*

If they were seeking a country, might they not have gone back to their own country, from whence they came out? No. True believers know nothing about going back. We are bound to go forward to the better land that is before us. Almighty grace will not permit the people of God to turn aside and find their rest anywhere else. We are bound for the kingdom of God, and by the grace of God, we shall not rest until we enter it, to go no more out forever.

16-19. *But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city. By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.*

See how faith consecrates natural affection. See also how faith laughs at impossibilities. Abraham expects that God will raise his son from the dead, or do something equally wonderful, so that the promise He had given shall be fulfilled. It was not Abraham’s business to keep God’s promise for Him. It was God’s business to do that for Himself and He did it.

You remember how Rebecca tried to make God’s promise come true for Jacob, and what a mess she made by her plotting and scheming. When we give our attention to keeping God’s precepts, and leave Him to fulfill His own promises, all will be well. It was Abraham’s part to offer up his son—it was God’s part to fulfill the promise to his seed according to the covenant which He had made.

20. *By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.*

Looking into the future, although he was blind. Poor old man, lying upon his bed, with his eyes so dim that he could not tell one of his sons from another, he could yet look into the future and bless his sons “concerning things to come.” Oh, what sharp eyes faith has, even when the eyes of bodily vision have become dim! We may see far more by faith than we can by sight.

21. *By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.*

Ah, that staff of his!—you know why he used it? I believe he loved it, because it made him remember the brook Jabbok where “he halted upon his thigh.” It had long been his companion, for he said, “With my staff I passed over this Jordan.” But it became more than ever necessary to him after he had won that victory and had also learned his own weakness.

And now, as if in memory of the God who had blessed him, he leans upon the top of his staff and blesses the sons of Joseph.

Now the chapter goes on with a long list of those who, by faith, wrought wonders.

22-31. *By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones. By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's*

daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them. By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days. By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.

What! Has the unchaste Rahab got in here with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph—the chaste Joseph? Yes. “By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.” She hid them in her house, although that action would have cost her her life if they had been discovered. And though there was some deception mixed with her faith, which we need not dwell upon now, yet God the Holy Spirit records her faith and hides her fault.

32-39. *And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again : and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword : they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins ; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:*

They did not live to see Christ come. They expected Him, but before the time when Paul was writing—before the actual coming of Christ—they had all passed away. “These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise.”

40. *God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.*

Is it not wonderful that we, who bring up the rear of the army of faith, are necessary to its completeness? It cannot be perfect without us. Ay, heaven itself will not be complete without us who are on the road to it. There would be empty seats in the holy orchestra, gaps in the sacred circle—so we who believe must all go there to make them perfect. God help us to hasten on our road, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

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.