

LUKEWARMNESS NO. 2802

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 26, 1902
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AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DURING THE WINTER OF 1880-1881

*“I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.
So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot I will spew thee out of my mouth.”
Revelation 3:15-16*

IF this had been an utterance of mine it would have been accounted vulgar, as a sentence of Scripture, I suppose it may be permitted to escape the censure of fastidious modern critics. The vernacular tongue and the homely figure may be decried as vulgarities, but if so, it will be by those whose tastes have been ill schooled. A vicious refinement has come into vogue. If men call things by their right names, and use good old Saxon words, they are perpetually brought under the lash for having indulged in vulgarities. A return to such “vulgarities” in the pulpit would be a return to power. I would far rather have back again the homely language of Hugh Latimer, with all its singularity—and I must confess, with some of its grossness—than have the namby-pamby style of modern times, in which sacred things are spoken of as if they were only meant to be whispered in drawing-rooms, and not to be uttered where men meet in everyday life.

The fact is, the Bible is a book which deals with things as they are—a book which, just like all God's works, is glorious because it is natural and simple. God has not polished the rocks in the valleys, He has not set the mountains all in order, nor has He yet been pleased to make all parts of the earth just as fair and beautiful as if they had been intended to form a lovely landscape, but at least, in some places, He has hewn them out, and left them rough and rugged, to stand in all their naked glory. So is it with this Book of God.

There are things in it at which the too polite shrug their shoulders—not so many, perhaps in the original as in our translation—but still, sufficient to shock a prudish taste. The Bible is none the less chaste because it scorns to call foul things by fair names. I love the Word of God because, while it is a God-like Book, it is also a man-like Book. In all the glory of His infinite wisdom, the Lord has written to us this divine message in the rugged grandeur and sublime simplicity of language which even a child can comprehend.

The Lord Jesus here uses a plain, homely metaphor. As tepid water makes a man's stomach heave, so lukewarm profession is nauseous to the Almighty. He could better endure either the coldness of apathy or the warmth of enthusiasm, but the man who is lukewarm in religion moves Him to the deepest loathing. He vomits Him forth from His mouth. His very name shall be dismissed from the lips of the Lord with an abhorrence the most sickening that fancy can paint. It is an utterance so strong that no sentence of the most vehement and impassioned orator could rival it. There is such a depth of disgust in this warning against lukewarmness that I know of no figure within the range of imagination, and no words in the whole vocabulary of language, which could have conveyed the meaning of “Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness,” so fully, or with such terrible force.

I am going to try to show you, from this text, first, *some reasons why lukewarmness in religion is so distasteful to Christ*, and then to point out to you *some dissuasives against lukewarmness*, urging you to be fervent in your Master's cause.

I. First, then, I am to give you SOME REASONS WHY LUKEWARM RELIGION IS SO DISTASTEFUL TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

And first, let me say that it is so *because it is a direct insult to the Lord Jesus Christ*. If I boldly say that I do not believe what He teaches, I have given Him the lie. But if I say to Him, “I believe what you teach, but I do not think it of sufficient importance for me to disturb myself much about it,” I do, in fact, more willfully resist His Word, I as much as say to Him, “If it be true, yet is it a thing which I so despise, and consider so contemptible, that I will not give my heart to it.”

Did Jesus Christ think salvation of such importance that He must needs come from heaven to earth to work it out? Did He think the Gospel, which He preached, so worthy to be made known that He must needs spend His life in proclaiming it? Did He think the redemption, which He wrought out, to be so invaluable that He must needs shed His own precious blood in order to complete it? Then, surely, He was in earnest, so, if I profess to believe the truths that He taught, and yet am indifferent, do I not insult Christ by seeming to insinuate that there was no need for Him to be in such dead earnest—that, in fact, He laid these things too deeply to heart?

His intense zeal was not on His own account, but on behalf of others, and according to all reason, those who are the interested parties, for whom Christ’s solemn engagements were undertaken, should be even more earnest than He Himself was, if that could be possible. Yet instead of that being the case, here is Christ in earnest, and we—too many of us—are lukewarm, “neither cold nor hot,” This lukewarmness does not merely seem to give God the lie, it does not merely appear to censure Christ, but it does, as it were, tell Him that the things, which He thought were so valuable, are of no worth in our esteem, and so it does insult Him to His face.

O my brethren and sisters, have you ever really thought what an insult it is to God when we come before Him with lukewarm prayers? There stands the heavenly mercy-seat, the road to it is sprinkled with the precious blood of Jesus, yet we come to it with hearts that are cold, or we approach it leaving our hearts behind us. We kneel in the attitude of prayer, yet we do not pray. We prattle out certain words, we express thoughts which are not our real desires, we feign wants that we do not feel.

Do we not thus degrade the mercy-seat? We make it, as it were, a common lounging-place, rather than an awful wrestling-place, once besprinkled with blood, and often to be besprinkled with the sweat of our fervent supplication. When we come to the house of God, to which Jesus Christ hath invited us as to the banqueting house full of rich provisions, do we not come up, full often, just as we go to our shops—nay, not with so much earnestness as we take with us to the Exchange or to the counting-house?

What do we thus seem to say but that God’s house is a common place, that the provision thereof is but ordinary food, and that the solemn engagements of God’s sanctuary are but everyday things, not worthy of the zeal and energy of a sensible man, but only meet to be attended to with lukewarmness of spirit. I think, if I were to pause longer here, I could prove to you that I went not too far when I said that lukewarmness is an insult to God. It insults Him in all that is dear to Him by casting a disparagement upon everything which He would have us to believe to be precious.

Does the Lord Jesus deserve such treatment at our hands? May He not well say to us, if we are lukewarm, “I would thou wert cold or hot”? O Jesus, your heart was full of love to those in whom there was nothing lovely! You did leave the glories of Your Father’s house, though there was no necessity for You to do so, save the divine necessity which was found in Your own heart, for You did love Your church so much that You did become bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh. You did fight her enemies, You didst rescue her out of the hand of him who was stronger than she was, You did pour out Your life’s blood as the ransom price for her redemption. Your pangs were grievous, Your sufferings were bitter, Your anguish was extreme. I look up to Your thorn-crowned brow, I gaze into Your marred face, and see those eyes red with weeping, and those emaciated cheeks, and I say, “O Jesus, You are worthy of the best place in the human heart! You ought to be loved as never one was loved before. If there be flames of love to You in my heart, let them burn like coals of juniper, and let them be fanned to a most vehement heat.” Oh, if it is possible for us ever to feel warm emotions, we ought to feel it here!

Is it not a sad thing that, after all Christ's love to us, we should repay it with lukewarm love to him? Which would you rather have—lukewarm love or positive hatred? Perhaps you have but little choice with regard to most people, but were it one very dear to you—the partner of your life, for instance—lukewarm love would be no love at all. What but misery could there be in a family where there was only lukewarm love? Is a father contented with half-hearted affection from His children? In those relationships, we give all our heart, but with regard to Christ, who has a far greater claim on us than husband, or father, or mother, or brother, how is it that we dare to offer him a distant bow, a cool recognition, a chill, inconstant, wavering heart? Let it be so no longer, beloved.

O my brethren, I conjure you, by His agony and bloody sweat, by His cross and passion, by all the pangs that went through His sacred body, and by the deeper anguish of His inmost soul, I beseech you, either love Him or hate Him, either drive Him from the door of your heart, and let Him know that you are not His friend, or else give Him, a whole heart full of affection, almost ready to burst with the fervor of your love toward Him!

But though these two things—insult and ingratitude to Christ—would be quite sufficient to justify the strong expressions in our text, let me remind you, further, that *the lukewarm professor compromises God, in the eyes of the world, by all that he does and says*. If a man be an infidel, openly profane, known to have no connection with Christ and His cause, let him do what he may, he brings no scandal on the Savior's name. He has no fear of God before his eyes, he is in open enmity against the Most High, and therefore, though he is rebellious and wicked, full of sedition and blasphemy, yet he does not compromise the dignity of God.

But when the lukewarm professor of Christianity goes forth before ungodly men, they say, "This man pretends to be a child of God, he professes to have been washed in the blood of Christ, he stands before us, and challenges our observation as one who declares that he is a new creature in Christ Jesus. He tells us that he is the workmanship of the Holy Ghost, that he has been begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

Now, whatever that man does, the world considers his acts to be those of a new creature in Christ Jesus—to be, in fact, acts inspired by God's Spirit within him. The world does not make distinctions, as we do, between the old Adam and the new. Their reason does not endorse our beliefs, true though they are, concerning the old and the new natures. Men of the world look at us as a whole, and if they see anything wrong in our principles or practice, they set it down at once to the account of our religion, and charge it with inconsistency.

Now, lukewarm professor, what do worldlings see in you? They see a man, who says he is going to heaven, but who is only travelling at a snail's pace. He professes to believe that there is a hell, yet he has tearless eyes, and never seeks to snatch souls from going down into the pit. They see before them one who has to deal with eternal realities, yet he is but half awake, one who professes to have passed through a transformation so mysterious and wonderful that there must be, if it is true, a vast change in the outward life as the result of it, yet they see him as much like themselves as can be. He may be morally consistent in his general behavior, but they see no energy in his religious character.

When they hear a solemn, stirring sermon concerning the wrath of God, they say, "It is all very well for the minister to appeal to our emotions, but what does it matter? The people, who constantly hear him, are not in earnest, the *saints*, who profess to believe what he says, trifle over it, and are, no doubt, in their hearts, as incredulous as we are ourselves." Let the minister be as earnest as ever he may, the lukewarmness of professors to a large extent neutralizes any effect which his ministry produces, because the world will judge the church, not so much by the pulpit as by the pew.

Worldlings say, by their conduct, if not in so many words, "There is no need for us to make any stir about religion, these 'saints' take it remarkably easy, yet they think all will be well, we do quite as much as they do. They seem to think that, after all, it would be fanaticism to look upon the things that they hear from the preacher as facts, they do not act as if they were realities, and so," say they, "doubtless

they are not realities, and as one form of religion is as good as another, and there is nothing of value in any one of them, we see no reason why we should have any religion at all.”

Thus, the careless worldling is lulled to sleep by the lukewarm professor, who, in this respect, acts the part of the siren to the sinner, playing sweet music in his ears, and even helping to lure him to the rocks where he will be destroyed. This is a solemn matter, beloved. In this way, great damage is done to the cause of truth, and God’s name and God’s honor are compromised by inconsistent professors. I pray you either to give up your profession, or to be true to it.

If you really are God’s people, then serve Him with all your might, but if Baal be your god, then serve him. If the flesh be worth pleasing, then serve the flesh, but if God be Lord paramount, then cleave to Him. Oh, I beseech and entreat you, as you love your own souls, do not play fast and loose with godliness! Either let it alone, or else let it saturate you through and through. Either possess it, or cease to profess it. The great curse of the church—that which brings more dishonor upon the Lord than all the ribald jests of scoffing atheists—is the lukewarmness of its members. Well may He say to His lukewarm church, as He does in our text, “I will spew thee out of my mouth.”

Yet once more, notice that, *wherever there is lukewarmness in religious matters, it is out of place.* There is no spot, near to the throne of God, where lukewarmness could stand in a seemly position. Take the pulpit, for instance. Ah, my brethren, of all spots in the world, if lukewarmness comes here, then is the preacher indeed undone! He should be, of all men, the most in earnest who undertakes the charge of souls, for he has that solemn charge ringing in his ears, “I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.” They who have to deal with hardhearted sinners—they who have to preach unpalatable truths—surely *they* should not make men’s hearts harder, and the truth more unpalatable, by uttering it in a half-hearted manner.

It will go hard with the man who has exercised his ministry with indifference. “If,” said one of old, “there be a man who finds the ministry an easy place, he will find it a hard matter, at the last, to give in his account before God.” If, my brethren, there should be any professed ministers of Christ, who never know what it is to travail in birth for souls, if there be men who take up the ministry merely as a profession, and exercise it as they might do in any secular calling, if they preach merely as a matter of routine, or because they consider it is a pleasant occupation, it would have been better for them if they had never been born. Far better would it have been for them to have broken stones by the wayside than to have been preaching the Gospel, and leaving their hearts out of their sermon, yea, I know not whether it would not have been better to have been a devil in hell than to have been a minister in the pulpit without his heart in his work.

Baxter’s “Reformed Pastor” stirs my very soul whenever I read its glowing periods—those fiery thunderbolts which he hurls at the heads of idle shepherds and lazy ministers. I have read nearly the whole book through to those who are studying for the ministry in connection with this church, and often have I seen the tears start from their eyes while listening to the burning language of that fervent preacher and writer. Every time I have read a chapter in that book, I have felt that, the next Sabbath, I could preach—I must preach—with greater earnestness after reading the solemn words of that mightiest of ministers, Richard Baxter.

Ah, beloved, we need to have more of that earnestness in the pulpit! What though my young brethren should study less and be more earnest? Rather let them study as much as ever they can, but, oh! if the Holy Spirit will but shed His sacred fire upon the dry fuel of their studies, how much more will be accomplished for the kingdom of Christ than is done now! So you see, dear friends, that lukewarmness is out of place in the pulpit.

So it is, my brethren and sisters, in the Sunday school, with the tract distributor, and even with the private Christian, the humble attendant upon the means of grace. Everywhere, lukewarmness in religion is to be loathed and abandoned, for it is a gross and glaring inconsistency. I would not have you go, with

a lukewarm heart, even to distribute tracts. I would not have you dare to visit the sick unless your heart is filled with love to Christ. Either do such work well, or do not do it at all. Either put your heart into the work, or let someone else do it.

We have had too many men of straw filling up our ranks, we have had too many automatons going forth to fight our battles. We have counted our legions and said, "A brave host they will be," but if our army is sifted, if our ranks are thinned, we shall probably find that fewer true soldiers of the cross will accomplish more if they are not impeded in their onward march by the mixed multitude of those who pretend to join the army of the living God.

I hope that lukewarm professors will find themselves thoroughly out of place amongst us, I do not think they could long be happy here. There are so many brethren here with a red-hot spirit that they would soon get burned and they would say "This is not the spot for us." If you, lukewarm professors, come amongst us, you will be asked to do fifty things, and you will be teased till you do them, for the good people here will not be content unless you do all that you can, and they will probably want you to do two or three times more than you can. I am sure that, in all places where God has sent warm-hearted men to preach the Gospel, you will find yourselves extremely uncomfortable if you want to be lukewarm.

I certainly could tell you of some chapels where you could take your seat, and where you would be greatly needed for the support of the ministry. The minister would never wake you, I daresay, if you paid an extra half-crown a quarter, he would let you sleep on as long as you liked. If you did not join the church, nobody would ever think of asking you whether you were a member or not. In our fashionable churches, of course, people do not speak to one another, that would be quite beneath their assumed dignity. No man would dare, in such a place as that, to turn to his neighbor and say, "Are you a child of God?"

Well, if you mean to be lukewarm, go to one of those places, but do not stay here, lest we should worry you by our importunities. I question whether anybody would come here for a few Sundays, without some brother walking up to him, and asking him whether he was a follower of Christ or not, and the question would be repeated, by one or another, until he came to some decision concerning his soul.

II. Now I will turn to the second part of my subject, in which I am to give you SOME DISSUASIVES AGAINST LUKEWARMNESS. I have exposed its evils now let me try to dissuade you from it.

Let me remind you that, *as Christians, you have to do with solemn realities.* You have to do with death, with eternity, with heaven, with hell, with Christ, with Satan, with souls that must live forever, can you deal with these things in a cold spirit? If you can deal thus with them successfully, it will be one of the greatest marvels in the world, for these things demand the whole man. If but to praise God requires that we call up all the powers of our soul, how much more is needed to serve God, and to serve Him, not in the hewing of wood and the drawing of water, but in the winning of souls, in preaching His Gospel, in propagating His cause, and extending His kingdom. Here, my brethren, are stern and solemn things for us to deal with, and they must not be touched by any but those who come warm-heartedly to deal with them.

Remember, too, that these were very solemn things with you once. Perhaps you have been converted ten or twenty years, yet can it be that these truths now fall lightly upon your ear and excite but little emotion? There was a time when it needed little to make you earnest, you were, then—

"Laden with guilt, and full of fears."

Your groans were deep, you could not sleep at night, you were laboring under such a heavy burden that it seemed to crush your soul all but into the lowest hell. Then, you prayed in earnest, and you sought God in earnest. Oh, how you used, in those days, to long to be able even to stand in the aisle, if you could but hear the Word! Though the distance you had to come was great, and the pressure of the crowd

to enter the house of prayer was inconvenient, and though you were almost ready to faint sometimes before the sermon was finished, you bore up through an insatiable desire to listen to the Gospel message which might be the means of your salvation. Do you not remember how, at that time, you thought every unsaved person was a fool, and especially thought that you yourself were a fool for having so long left these great realities untouched, and almost unthought of, while the trifles of a day were engrossing all your thoughts?

Oh, then, I conjure you, by those days long gone by, think as earnestly now of those things as you did then! Let your past experience be the standard of your present zeal. You ought to have advanced beyond that, but if you have not, be patient enough to go back, and begin again where you began before, be humble enough to ask God to revive the sincerity of your penitence, the reality of your grace, the eagerness of your desires, and the flaming passion of your heart.

And remember, further, that *there have been times with you, when these things did seem worthy of a warm heart*. Perhaps you recollect when a child out of your Sunday school class died, and then you thought, "Oh, that I had taught that child more earnestly, and prayed over it with all my heart!" Possibly, when your own child died you cried, "O Absalom, my son, my son!" and the thought wounded you to the quick, that you had not taught that child as you might have done, and that you had not wrestled with God in prayer for that child's soul as you ought to have done.

Have not I also had to think like this when I have buried some of your kinsfolk or acquaintances? As I have looked down into the grave of some unconverted hearer, the tears have streamed from my eyes, and afterwards, I have awoke at night with some solemn and terrible dream embodying this black thought—"Have I been faithful to that soul? Have I dealt with that spirit, now departed, as I would deal with it if I had another opportunity of preaching to it?" Sometimes, I feel that I can even say with the apostle Paul, "I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."

But there are other seasons of awful questioning when I tremble lest, out of so numerous a flock, the loss of even one should be attributed to the shepherd's neglect. Do not some of you remember, when the cholera was so rife, how solemn you thought the things of God to be? And when the fever came into your house, and one after another died, you thought there was nothing worth living for but to be prepared to die, and that your whole business from that time, should be to seek to warn others, lest they should perish, and go to the dread place of torment.

Let me remind you, also, that *the day is coming when you will think these things worthy of your whole heart*. When you and I shall be stretched upon our dying beds, I think we shall have to regret, above everything else, our coldness of heart. Among the many sins which we must then confess, and which, I trust, we shall then know were pardoned, and "laid upon the Scapegoat's head of old," perhaps this will lie the heaviest upon our heart and conscience, "I did not live as I ought to have done, I was not as earnest in my Lord's cause as I should have been."

Then will our cold sermons, like sheeted ghosts, march before our eyes in dread array. Then will our neglected days start up, each one seeming to wave its hair as though it were one of the seven furies, and to look right into our hearts, and make our very blood curdle in our veins. Then will our Sunday school classes appear again before us, and those who taught us to teach others will come, and reprove us for having despised their training, and not having profited by that holy instruction which we received when we were set apart for God's cause, and were first trained to serve in His great army.

We may reckon these things of small importance now, but when we lie on the borders of eternity, we shall think them worth living for, and worth dying a thousand deaths for. I believe that, then, some of those truths which we have kept back, and those ordinances which we have neglected, and those precepts which we have despised, will seem to grow into an awful mass, too heavy for your soul to endure, just as, sometimes, in a dream, a mountain appears to rise from a single grain of sand, and to swell, and swell, and swell, till its stupendous weight seems to oppress your brain, and to crush the very

life out of you. If you have lived lukewarmly, the things of God will then, even though you be a child of His, darken your dying hour, and weigh down your spirit with a fearful load of sad reflections.

Ay, and there will come a time when the things of God will seem yet more real than even on our dying bed, that will be *when we stand at the bar of God*. Am I prepared to stand there with a ministry half discharged? What shall I do if I have to give account before God for sermons preached without my heart being put into them? How shall I appear before my Maker if I have ever kept back anything which I thought might have been useful to you, if I have shunned to rebuke any of you when I ought to have done so, if I have not warned you faithfully, and loved you tenderly, even as my own soul, and sought to woo you to the Savior? How can I give in my account, as a steward of the Lord, if I have only served Him half-heartedly? O God, grant, I beseech thee, that notwithstanding a thousand infirmities, thy servant may ever be free from that great sin of being lukewarm in thy cause!

And what think you, sirs, will you do, as professed followers of Christ, if you have been lukewarm professors, if you have had a name to live, and yet have been dead, or if you have been only half alive, with all your energies paralyzed? Ah, sirs! Ah, sirs! I would not, for all the world, live as some of you are living—just observing some of the externals of godliness without the vital power thereof, giving Christ a little of your substance just for a mere show, offering him a little of your time just to pacify your conscience, taking His name upon you to hide your own defects, but still a stranger to His grace—unconsecrated, undevoted—not yielding yourself wholly to Him, but still living to the flesh while pretending to be quickened by the Spirit, with your heart in your business, but no heart in your religion, closely pursuing the world, but following Christ afar off, firmly grasping the world's plough, but only now and then lightly touching Christ's plough, and looking back even as you do so.

O sirs! I tell you, when the earth begins to reel, when the heavens begin to shake, when the stars fall from their places, and begin to dash abroad like men bewildered, you will be bewildered too, your heart, too, shall shake, and your grand hopes totter to destruction, if you have only served Jesus with a lukewarm heart. God give us grace to make our religion *all*, that we may put our whole heart into it, and live it out, and then be prepared to die for it, if need be, and God so please, that we may live to enjoy the results of it in glory everlasting!

I am fearful, full often, in addressing the same congregation, Sabbath after Sabbath, and week after week, now by the space of seven years, lest my voice should grow stale to you, and I can truthfully say that, I would rather cease to preach at all than preach to people to whom my voice had become so familiar that it was only like the ringing of an old bell to which they gave no heed. No, there must be feeling in the congregation as well as earnestness in the preacher, otherwise, let me resign my commission. I pray God, if I am spared to minister to you, year after year, and you are spared to sit in the pew to hear the Word, that there may be earnestness in you, and earnestness in me, that we may never come down to the dead level of some of the churches of which I spoke a little while ago—as you may think, in a spirit of censure, but as God knows, in a spirit of loving faithfulness—old churches that have come to be like pools without outlets, covered over with the sickly duckweed of respectability.

Stagnation in a church is the devil's delight. I do not think he cares how many Baptist chapels you build, nor how many churches you open, if you have only lukewarm preachers and people in them. He cares not for your armies if your soldiers will but sleep, nor for your guns if they are not loaded. "Let them build as much as they like," says he, "for those buildings are not the batteries that shake the gates of hell."

What we want is new zeal, fresh energy, more fire, our old Baptist cause has become very slack. The great mass of Baptists appear to be ashamed of their opinions, and many of our ministers say so little about baptism that people forget that there is such an ordinance of Christ. If we have held our tongues concerning baptism, we have that sin lying at our door, for which we shall have to give account, and I trust that we shall not continue in it any longer. If believers' baptism is an ordinance of Christ—and we know that it is—we ought to speak out plainly about it. I recommend our brethren and sisters to distribute tracts upon the subject, as widely as ever they can, and especially, to make known the teaching

of the New Testament upon this matter. If Paedo-Baptist ministers will only preach upon it, I need not do so, for that will send some of their people to search the Scriptures, and that is all that we want. If our views are not in accordance with God's Word, let us abandon them, but if they are in harmony with our Lord's teaching, let us not hold our tongues concerning them. We have had too much of this guilty silence, let us boldly proclaim the whole truth, and by terrible things in righteousness, answer Thou, O God! Bring on the clash of arms once again, and let Thy church win the victory! Give the victory to the right and the true, and let all error be trampled underfoot! So be it, O Lord, and unto Thy name be all the glory! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

DANIEL 9:1-13

Verses 1-2. *In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; in the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.*

And therefore, discovering that the end of the captivity had nearly come, he set himself to plead mightily with God that now He would turn the hand of His love upon the destroyed and desolate city of Jerusalem. Notice that Daniel recollected the exact date when the captivity was to end, and when you and I have had a term put to any trial or chastisement from God, we ought to remember it, and record it among our special memoranda. I am afraid it is not always so.

We do not forget when a great sorrow overtook us, we can, probably, recollect when some dear one died, we remember the very day of the week and month when that happened, but are we equally tenacious of the memory of God's loving-kindness? I am afraid not, yet it should be so. We should be able to write about it as definitely as Daniel did when he said, "In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes," and then mention the time when we had some peculiarly choice communion with God, or when we were led out in more than usually earnest prayer, or when we had a specially gracious answer from our God.

3. *And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:*

"I set my face unto the Lord God." This expression is full of meaning. When men resolutely set their faces to prayer, bending their whole mind that way, seeking God, with their faces towards Him, not in pretense, but in deep and solemn earnestness, then it is that they succeed with their supplication. Daniel speaks of "prayer and supplications," by which we may understand that he prayed much and prayed often, setting apart a regular and considerable portion of his time for the holy exercise. He was a very busy man, for he was the first of the presidents over the hundred and twenty princes, yet for all that, or because of that, he would have his time for communion with God, and he was wise in so acting, for any portion of our time that is stolen from prayer is also stolen from ourselves. The old saying is true, "Prayer and provender hinder no man's journey."

4. *And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments;*

You must have noticed how, in prayer, holy men of old were wont to vary the names of God. Here, we find Daniel addressing Him as "the great and dreadful God," but that title was not chosen at haphazard, for the prophet felt that, as Jerusalem had remained so long a desolation, the terrible aspect of God's character was more conspicuous even than the tender one, yet he coupled with it that gracious truth, "keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments."

5-6. *We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments: neither have we hearkened u to thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.*

Daniel confesses the sins of the nation, and he spares no proper epithets in describing them, “We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled.” He saw at least a shade of different meaning in each word that he employed. These are not vain repetitions, Daniel multiplied his expressions because he had an intense sense of the sinfulness of sin and the guilt of his people.

Observe too, how he notes the aggravation of their sin in their refusal to listen to the messages which God had sent to them by His servants. If there is anything in the world that can make sin to be more than ordinarily sinful, it is when sin is persisted in notwithstanding the manifest warnings of God.

7. *O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee.*

This verse might be just as truly spoken now as in the first year of Darius, the Mede, for we also can say, “O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee,”—we cannot find it anywhere else, and the other part of the verse is equally true, for unto us belongs confusion of faces, as it did to the men of Daniel’s day.

8-9. *O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him;*

What a precious assurance this is! Just in proportion to your sense of sin, will you value it. If you feel that confusion of face belongs to you, you will also rejoice to know that mercies and forgivenesses belong to the Lord, and that He is waiting to bestow them upon all who seek His face in penitence and faith.

10-11. *Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him.*

It was a part of that old covenant that, if they sinned against the Lord, they should be scattered among all the peoples of the earth, and their sufferings exactly tallied with what God had threatened. This fact is used by the prophet in some measure as a source of consolation, for he argues that, if God is true to the black side of the covenant, He will also be faithful to the bright side of it, and it is so, He who faithfully fulfils His threatenings will just as faithfully keep His promises.

12-13. *And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem. As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth.*

Oh, sad hardness of heart and impenitence that, though Jerusalem had been so sorely smitten, yet the people turned not unto God in prayer!

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. 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.