

ADVANCE!
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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“The LORD our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount.”
Deuteronomy 1:6

IT is a good thing sometimes to look back—to take a retrospective view of our life. It is a very bad thing to live upon the past—to say, “I believe I am a child of God because I had certain spiritual enjoyments and experiences ten or twelve years ago.” Ah! such stale fare as this will not feed hungry souls. They need present enjoyment, or at least, present confidence in the ever-living God. Yet, brethren, we may sometimes gather fuel for today from the ashes of yesterday’s fire. Remembering the mercies of God in the past, we may rest assured concerning the present and the future.

If we have wisely learnt by experience, we may, from our own failures in the past, gain wisdom which shall enable us to avoid the evils which overcame us on former occasions. It is well to do as you may sometimes have seen the bargemen do on a river or canal. They walk backward, pushing with all their might backward, to drive their barge forward, and sometimes, we may go backward just far enough to help us to push forward, but no further than that.

Never must anyone of us say to himself, “What I was in my youth, or what I was in middle life, is a sufficient comfort for me now. Soul, take your ease, for I have much goods laid up for many years.” That will never do, for we need to exercise a present faith to enjoy a present love, and to live in present holiness and fear of the Lord. Yet it will help us if we remember all the ways whereby the LORD our God has led us these many years in the wilderness.

But coming to our text, we are reminded that *we must expect changes*—“Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount.” Secondly, *we ought not to make these changes without the authorization of our divine Leader*—“The LORD our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount.” But thirdly, *in our spiritual pilgrimage there are times when it becomes very clear that we have been long enough in a certain condition and have need to make an advance towards the Canaan which is our blest inheritance.*

I. To begin, then, WE MUST EXPECT CHANGES.

Israel was not always to dwell at Horeb and even the choicest place of divine manifestation is not always to be ours. The land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, and the Hill Mizar, though very precious to us because of the spiritual experiences we have enjoyed there, are not to be our permanent places of abode. We have to journey onward and pitch our tent somewhere else.

We need not wonder at this, my brethren and sisters, for *this is a changing world*. We should be out of gear with the whole creation if we did not frequently change. Behold how the year changes. It seems but yesterday that the rivers were locked in ice. Soon we saw the flowers peeping up from the soil and now we have reached midsummer—and shall soon be looking for the appointed weeks of harvest, and it will not be long before winter will be here again.

On this earth, on the greatest or on the minutest scale, all things change, whether it be an empire that rises and passes away, or a crocus or a harebell that blooms and fades. All things that are, once were not, and by and by shall not be, or at least, the place which knows them now shall know them no more forever. The forest once slept in an acorn cup. That some forest, beneath the axe, shall pass away and vanish into smoke. All things change and therefore we also must expect to change.

And mark you, *we have already changed*. Perhaps we had a happy childhood and can remember even now the songs of the nursery and the holy hymns of our cradle days. But there came a time when we had dwelt long enough in that mount, for it would have been ill for us always to continue children. Then we were youths and were at school, and perhaps we recollect with pleasure those free days of boyhood and girlhood when, if we did not know the value of knowledge, at any rate we found that those who taught us had more pleasant ways of teaching than our fathers knew.

But it was not well for us always to stay at school—there came a time when our parents felt, and we also felt, that we had stayed long enough in that mount. Since that, some of us have passed from change to change till we have come to the full maturity of spiritual life. And some of you I see, with the snows of many a winter lying on your brows, are approaching yet another change—you know that, by and by, you must come to another, for it will be said of you, “Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount.”

And so, through all the several stages of man we shall pass till we come to the blessed mount where we shall never dwell too long, nor ever feel that we have dwelt there long enough. But while we are beneath the moon, there must be waxing and waning to all who come under the moon’s spell. And where the very heart of the earth, like a great sea, has its ebbs and its floods, we cannot but expect that we, too, should have our ebbs and our floods without us and within us.

We must expect to have changes, next, because *it is good for us to have them*. For, if not, we might become rooted to the earth. This is not our rest. But if we were always in one place and in one state, we would begin to think that it was. Have you not noticed, with regard to those brethren who are free from trouble—who, to use a Scriptural simile, have not been emptied from vessel to vessel—how they settle on their lees and what a scum generally rises upon the surface of such people’s hearts?

Because they have no changes, they begin to think that they shall continue forever as they are. They do not put that thought into words—they are not quite so foolish—yet they have the notion treasured up in their hearts that tomorrow will be as this day, only more abundant, and all the future in a similar fashion. If we have a long-continued spell of calm weather, we are apt to think that it will always be so.

And if it always were so, perhaps we should get into as bad a condition as Coleridge pictures in his “*Ancient Mariner*.” Because there was no wind to drive the ship along and the tropical sun was shining everywhere, everything was becoming corrupt. God knows that our tendency is in that direction and therefore He makes us to be pilgrims and strangers here—as all our fathers were.

Were it not for changes, too, *some would grow utterly weary*. Some of God’s children would welcome almost any change from their present condition. They suffer, perhaps, from abject poverty—perhaps from unkindness on the part of those who ought to love and care for them. It may be that their condition is one in which the iron enters into their soul.

Possibly their sorrow is a secret sorrow and the more severe because it must be kept to themselves and cannot be communicated to others. A worm, unseen by any human eye, is gnawing at their heart. They dare not mention it. If they did, they would not be sympathized with and might even be ridiculed. Ah! we little know the sorrows of others, and there are some who look most cheerful and are wise to look so, who ought to be praised because, with sacred patience, they keep their sorrow to themselves.

There are some whom you, perhaps, are envying, who far more need your pity than they deserve your envy. There is much sorrow even among God’s saints and it is a great mercy for them that the Lord sometimes turns their captivity. It seemed a pity that when Job had all his treasures, there should come such a change to him and that he should have to sit down among the ashes. But when he sat among the ashes, it was a happy circumstance for him that a change came and that, “the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning.”

What if you are the lowest spoke of the wheel just now? You will be the highest spoke in less than a minute, for the wheel is always turning round. You are not in a permanent position as to your low estate any more than as to your high estate—if prosperity does not endure, neither does adversity. It is written, “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.” The hours of the night will pass

away in due course and the joys of the morning will recompense you for the sorrows of the season of darkness.

Besides, dear friends, it is well that we should have these changes because, *if we did not, we might all of us become unwatchful*. I do not know anything that helps more to take away the freshness and vigor with which a man does a thing than for him to do that particular thing every day. The same kind of thing happens when he does something many times that at first is very trying.

If you put a man into one of the big boilers over in Southwark, when they are putting in the rivets—well, I should not like to be that man, for the hammering is apt to make him deaf. Yet I am told, by those who have to be inside the boiler to hold the rivet head, that they do not know anything about the great noise, for they have got used to it.

They are like the blacksmith's dog that will go to sleep under the anvil when the sparks are flying all around him—and it is possible to get used to anything in life. The sentinel, who stands still in his box, must not be very severely blamed if he goes to sleep. It is a good thing for him if he has a little walk to take, so that he can go to and fro with his rifle on his shoulder, and thus may be able to keep awake by a change of posture. He may have a difficulty in doing that, however, if the watch is continued too long.

The mill horse that goes round and round perpetually in a certain track, learns to sleep as he goes his round. There was a prisoner who was sentenced to the cruel punishment of being awakened every quarter of an hour throughout the night, but at last, he learned to answer to the knock and to still sleep right on—and so was not disturbed one whit.

I can well understand how, abiding in one state, we may get to be mechanical as a matter of routine, with no life and no vigor. I wonder how some of you would feel if you had to preach as often as I have? I wonder whether you would not find that it was apt to become rather mechanical? That is one of the things which I dread almost beyond all else and I trust that it will never become so with me, for I feel that if our ministry ever becomes merely mechanical, our usefulness will be completely destroyed.

But the same thing may happen in Christian life—you may get to live mechanically. I have seen professedly Christian people who have done the right thing, but they have done it while they have been sound asleep. Did you ever go into a congregation—it has not been my lot to see such a sight often, but I have seen such a sight—where the minister has been fast asleep and the preaching has been nothing better than articulate snoring?

There, the people sing while they are asleep and pray while they are asleep—there is no life, no force, no power, no change of any sort. Well now, if you could burn that meeting house down and the good man had to preach tomorrow in the little meadow by the side of it, why, he would be wide awake then and so would all his people be. The mere change of position would do them good.

Sometimes, sitting in a different seat might help people to feel a little more attentive to the message. It is for this reason that the Lord comes and shakes us up, and we begin to awake out of sleep and each one says, "Where am I? New troubles have given me new grace and new comforts, so, Lord, I bless You for them. Give me new praises."

Thus the change begins to do us good. It lifts us out of the old ruts and sets us doing something different from what we have done before—which we are able to do with a measure of freshness which we have not previously known. That may be one reason why we have changes.

Another reason is this—*if we have no changes in our pilgrimage, it is quite clear that we shall make no progress*. If the children of Israel had remained at Horeb, they would never have reached the land of Canaan. We cannot stay in one place and go on to another at the same time. So, shifts and changes often promotive of growth.

See, there is a tree which has grown in the place it now occupies as much as it can grow there, because there is not much earth there, and there is, besides, a pan of rock just underneath it from which it cannot derive any nutriment. Now, if with care the husbandman lifts the tree and shifts it to another position where the soil is deeper and richer, the tree will develop wondrously.

And sometimes, it is so with us. We have grown as big in Christ as we ever shall grow in that particular position, so now we must be shifted into a new one. Why, our very comforts may be like a pan of rock under the tap-root of our soul. We cannot get down any deeper and it may be that our circumstances shut us in like huge walls through which the roots of our spiritual being cannot penetrate to get fresh nourishment. To make us grow, it is a good thing that we do not always remain in one position.

And moreover, I believe that *our removes help us to grow in proportion*, for one condition of life may make us grow only in one way. There is one set of trials that we have and they develop a certain set of graces. Or there is one kind of service that we perform which brings out one special faculty, and strengthens and sanctifies it.

But God does not want His children to grow so as to have their arms twice as long as their legs, and He does not want the trees of His own right-hand planting to be lop-sided trees, sending all their branches out either toward the East or the West, and having no boughs for the other points of the compass. God would have us to be developed as manhood should be—each faculty and limb and muscle having its fair share of harmonious growth, and the whole keeping up that equilibrium which is characteristic of all God's works.

My dear brethren, you have been in a very comfortable position for a long time and you know that you have never had a trial to test your patience. The result is that you have not any patience. You are very impatient if you have ever such a little trouble. Now the Lord is going to shift you into a place where you will need a great deal of patience, but He will give it to you.

And there is another side of your character of which you know next to nothing—and which none of your friends suppose that you possess—but the Lord is going to bring that out. He has painted one part of your portrait and He is now going to turn His attention, by His blessed Spirit, to another side of it, that it may be seen that you are a representation of all the graces of the Christian character. You ought to be glad that it is so, for who knows how much of glory God is about to get from you through this change, which, perhaps, you are looking upon with the greatest possible dread?

Once more, and then I shall have given reason enough why we must expect changes. It may be, brethren, that *we undergo changes in order that we may do more good*. Some Christian man, perhaps, who has long been in one position, has practically brought to Christ all who ever will be brought in by him in that place. I know that it is so with ministers. We sow our seed and we reap our harvest, and it would be very wise of some brethren if they would just take their sickles and go off to another field—and sow and reap there.

After you have been a long while fishing in one pond and have caught all the best of the fish, it will be a weary task to go on fishing there, so, do as a wise angler would do—take your rod and line off to another pond and try there. Changes for God's servants are not at all things for which they ought to be blamed. At least, I know some ministers, whom I would not blame if they were to make a change. Neither do I think that the people of their charge would be particularly anxious to retain them.

It is the same with us in our Christian life. It may be that we have done all the good we can do in our own family at home. Well, then, God is going to put us into another family. It may be that from our present standpoint we are only capable of a certain form of good—so the Lord is going to shift us and make different men and women of us, that we may be fitted for another form of service. And it is a blessed thing to be furnished and equipped for all the work of the Lord, whatsoever it may be that He commits to our charge.

II. And now, secondly, and very briefly, THE LORD'S PEOPLE ARE TO BE CAREFUL THAT THEY DO NOT MAKE CHANGES WITHOUT DIVINE AUTHORIZATION—"The LORD our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount."

The children of Israel had a fiery-cloudy pillar to guide them in their many wanderings. And if the pillar did not move, they stopped. Whether it was a day, or a week, or a month, or a year, they stopped while the pillar stopped. And when the pillar moved, then they moved, even though they had scarcely

pitched their tents. And brethren, let us also always seek divine guidance, let us put ourselves under the protection of providence—especially in making changes.

Some make changes out of mere love of novelty. Some make changes because they think that anything new will be better than what they have at present. My dear brother, you know the temptations that assail you now, so I would not advise you to seek to have a new set, about which you know nothing. My dear sister, the cross that you have been carrying did not at first seem to fit your shoulders, but your shoulders have by degrees become fitted to it, so you had better keep that cross than seek another.

There are many people who leap out of the frying pan into the fire, as our old proverb says. They think that things are going to be much better with them as soon as they make a change, but they had better “let well alone,” as another proverb says, for “as a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place.”

There have been many people who have changed from side to side, just as sick persons restlessly move to and fro, merely shifting their position, yet all the while keeping their pain. One of the greatest blessings that we can have is a contented mind—and if we have that, we shall not be anxious for a change.

Do not change because of a mere whim—let not that be your reason for altering your position. Do not change from worldly motives and be not always seeking the best for yourself. Do not change because of distrust or because of anger with your God. If He bids you stand where you are, stand you there and die at your post if need be. But if He bids you go, then go, though it would make a rent as if your very heart were cleft in twain. It will be better for you thus to suffer than to disobey your Lord.

We do not make many mistakes in life where we absolutely give ourselves up to God’s guidance, because though we do not hear a voice speaking out of the oracle, and we have not our way mapped out for us as on a chart, yet somehow or other, if we are honestly seeking to do right and yet are about to make a mistake, God graciously interposes and prevents the mistake, or He overrules what evidently was a mistake in such a way that it turns out to be the right thing after all.

Commit your way unto the Lord. Trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass. You are not fatherless. You are not left without a guide. Poor tempest-tossed and weather-beaten barque, you still have a Helmsman. You are not a derelict, left to drift upon the sea, at the mercy of every current and every gale. There is within you, O believer, One who is strong of hand and keen of eye, who steers you through the fiercest storms and direst tumults of the sea, making even these to contribute to your progress towards the desired haven.

Be not swift to change because of any reason of your own, but be not slow to change if God bids you do so. When the time comes and you have dwelt long enough in this mount, up with the stakes, roll up the tent lines, and put the canvas on the camel’s back, and be off to the next halting-place which the Lord has marked out for you, for He has gone before you to prepare your way.

III. I will not dwell longer upon that topic, but pass on to notice that THERE ARE SOME PLACES, SPIRITUALLY, IN WHICH GOD’S PEOPLE HAVE DWELT QUITE LONG ENOUGH. I wish to speak to the heart of everyone here—take home what belongs to you and may the Spirit of God be pleased to apply it to your soul!

Some of you know that you are not happy and that you lack something, but you do not know what it is that you lack. Some of you used to be very happy, at one time, in the pleasures of the world, but somehow, either they have changed or else you have. You have an empty space in your heart now and you cannot fill it. The glass seems to have come off the world’s amusements. And your business, which used to occupy you from morning to night, has become distasteful to you. You feel that you want something, but you do not know what that something is.

Let me tell you that what you really want is your God. Surely you have lived long enough without Him, you have lived long enough in sin, you have lived long enough in impenitence, you have lived long enough in danger of the wrath to come. O prodigal son, your Father calls you to come home! You surely have had enough of riotous living, enough of the swine-trough and the company of the hogs,

enough of the citizens of that country, and their scorn and cruelty, enough of rags, and enough of the husks that the swine feed upon.

Say right now, “I will arise, and go to my Father.” And if you say this, the Spirit of God helping you so to do, this very hour you shall be in the embrace of your God, you shall receive the kisses of His love, the best robe shall be put upon you, and you shall be welcomed home even as the prodigal in the parable was.

The mount mentioned in our text was *Mount Horeb, or Sinai*—the mount that burned with fire, the mount around which they set boundaries so that, if so much as a beast touched the mount, it should be stoned or thrust through with a dart. It was that mountain from which they heard the thunder pealing while the law was being proclaimed in a voice so terrible that they entreated that they might not hear it anymore.

I believe there are some here—I had almost said that I hope there are—who have been long standing at the foot of Sinai. You have heard the thunder of that dreadful voice and you have felt condemned. Your soul is in bondage even now. If ever there was a slave in this world, you are one. You have the fetters on you and you have the cruel whip perpetually flagellating your conscience. Other slaves have rest sometimes, but you get none—you are tortured and tormented—you are almost like the fiend himself when he walked through dry places, seeking rest and finding none.

Well do I remember when I was in your present condition, and I was in it, oh, so long! And blessed was the day when my Lord said to me, “Thou hast dwelt long enough in this mount,” and then I came to Calvary and the blood of sprinkling, and I had done with Sinai. Yet I have never felt regret that I lingered so long at the foot of Sinai. I shall regret it if any of you do so, but I do not regret it in my own case, because I think it was necessary for one who was to be a public teacher, that he should have more depression of spirit and more trial than anybody else, that he might know the ins and outs of this matter in his own experience, and so be able to help others who may be tortured in a similar way.

But there is no reason why you, my friend, should have this experience, for it may be that you are not to be a public teacher, and it would be well for you if, this very moment, the spirit of bondage were cast out of you and the Spirit of adoption took possession of your soul. You need not remain at the foot of Sinai, for, as I found out, *there is another hill, called Calvary*.

You need not listen to the threatenings of the law, for there is another voice—the voice of the blood of Jesus—“which speaketh better things than that of Abel.” If you will, by simple faith, but listen to that voice, you will learn that it speaks peace, not punishment, and cries out for mercy, not for justice. O tempted, distressed, despairing soul, you have dwelt long enough in mount Sinai! At this glad hour, the silver trumpet proclaims a jubilee for you. Your inheritance, which you have forfeited, has been redeemed, and you yourself, once sold into slavery, are now manumitted, for the price of your redemption has been paid to the utmost farthing.

There is another mount, a little further on, to which some of my friends have come—*the mount of Little Faith*. They do believe in God now. They have looked to Jesus and have been lightened, yet they still see men as trees walking. Now and then, they have high days and holidays, and then they know whom they have believed, and have great joy in the Lord. But at other times, they get down in the dumps and sing—or rather, moan,—

*“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?’”*

Some of these are the very best people in the world, and I would sooner see a man always doubling his interest in Christ, and walking humbly and carefully before God than presuming upon his own safety and getting proud—and then venturing into temptation and falling into sin. There are some of God’s

children who are truly His, but who seem to be like those flowers that grow best in shady places. If they had too much sunshine, I do not know what might become of them. But these people do not allow themselves that luxury. They are constantly troubled. They say that they believe, yet the petition always has to be added, "Lord, help our unbelief."

Now, my brother or my sister, if you are in this condition, do you not think that you have dwelt long enough in this mount? I knew you when you used to be raising such doubts and questions five years ago. Is it not time that you abandoned that bad habit? You never complain of a baby for cutting its teeth and you do not wonder if it has a lot of little complaints while it is a baby, but you do not expect it to cut its teeth and to have all these little infantile diseases when it gets to be a man.

Do you not think that it is time that you had grown from being little children to become young men? And should not the young men begin to grow into fathers in the Christian church? We watch and tend you while you are the lambs of the flock, but are you always going to be lambs? You, who are forty, fifty, sixty years of age, and who ought to set an example to others by being courageous and full of confidence, are you always going to be Feeble-minds and Ready-to-halts?

What, are you always going to use crutches? Will you never outgrow them? Must we always wheel you about in a baby carriage of rich consolation? Will you never walk alone? Will you never outgrow your days of weakness? Ye have dwelt long enough, and far too long, in this mount. Remember that Jesus Christ declared that He had come that His people "might have life." Well, you have that, have you not? But He added, "and that they might have it *more abundantly*." You have not that, but do not rest satisfied until you have it.

There is another company of professors—men of brain, but with less heart than brain—men of the Thomas order, who want a great deal of evidence to convince them—who tarry in *the mount of questioning*. We have some persons of this kind, who, we trust, are Christians, but they always have some question to ask—and they come to see the pastor about it. And after that one is answered, they ask another, and then another and another.

We are very glad to see them so thoughtful—we wish everybody was thoughtful and we do not want people to take things for granted just because we say them—we like to have them inquiring. But these people are always inquiring and they seem to have been always inquiring. If I have lost my way on a foggy night, I do not mind inquiring, but I like to move on a little and not stand still and keep on inquiring which is the way.

There are some people who are always in a fog and always inquiring—and every new heresy that is started gives them a new set of inquiries. It is a wretched life that they lead themselves, and other people, too—and I may well say to them, "Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount."

Just think, my Christian brother, while you have been vainly trying to find out how many angels can stand on the point of a needle, your brother has been winning souls for Jesus Christ. You have been sitting up at night seeking to discover the meaning of the tenth toe of the great image mentioned in the book of Daniel, and of the little horn and the fourth beast, and you have been puzzling yourself as to what is going to happen at a certain period of the world's history, but you have not found out much yet.

Now, if you had been visiting the sick, and the poor, and the ignorant, and going after the lost sheep of the house of Israel, would not your occupation have been much more remunerative? Would it not have brought you a brighter crown at the last great day? Inquire, certainly, as to all truth revealed in the Scriptures, but many of you have already dwelt quite long enough in that mount of questioning. It is time that you had ascertained that there are some things that are settled.

I spoke with a man some time ago who said that he made his creed every week. I thought that he must be a disciple of the moon, though I did not call him a lunatic, yet he was very like one, and you might as well measure the moon for a suit of clothes as judge such a man by the creed which he is constantly changing.

Oh, but there are some things about which we are sure. And I bless God that some of us can say that the Gospel, which we preached more than twenty years ago, is precisely the same Gospel that we preach

now. We are not conscious of having shifted our ground with regard to any of its doctrines, precepts, warnings, or invitations. It is a grand thing when an old divine is able to say, as my own dear grandfather said to me not long before he died, “For sixty years I have preached the Gospel, and the sermon that I preached the first time I went into the pulpit, I could have preached the last time I went there, for I have made no alteration in my sentiments. The truths that God taught me at the beginning, I have held fast, though I have been continually learning more and more of the meaning of them.”

It is very needful, if we are to do any good to others, though for a while we go to the mount of inquiry, that we should feel that there comes a time when we have made up our minds and have learned something which we never mean to question again—we have dwelt long enough in that mount.

At Horeb, Moses divided the people, and marshaled them, and said that such and such a tribe should go first, and another second, and another last. He drilled them as an army, yet they were not always to be content with being marshaled and drilled—they were to go forward and possess the land of Canaan. They had dwelt long enough in that *mount of marshalling and drilling*, and some of you Christian people have had quite enough marshalling and drilling.

Is it not time for those of you, who are not doing anything for Christ, to begin to do something for Him? I do not think that, when a young man is converted, he ought at first to begin working for Jesus Christ as the main business of his life. He should go to Christ’s school and try to learn something that he can afterwards talk about to others.

I was very pleased with a dear brother, a working man, who joined the church here a month or two ago. When I put to him the question, “What are you doing for Christ?” he said, “Well, sir, I have the heart to do a good deal and I hope I shall yet do it, but at the present time, I am trying to learn more about Him. For, if I were to go and speak to some of my mates about Jesus Christ, they would be more than a match for me and I should not like to have my Savior made a subject of ridicule.”

I thought there was sanctified common sense in that answer and I would advise other young Christians to go and do likewise—only do not forget to serve your Master when you have learned the way to do it. You Mr. Recruit, have surely practiced “the goose step” long enough—can you not now go forward? To my certain knowledge, you have been in the army for a dozen years—could you not do a little fighting if you were to try? Could you not learn to load a gun and fire it? Have you been studying the properties of gunpowder all this time and done nothing else to prove that you are a soldier? Fie on you!

I fear that the church of Christ as a whole has been tarrying far too long in the mount of marshalling and drilling. Some clever brother draws up a fine plan and the next thing is to form a committee, with a president and a vice-president and all manner of officers. You are getting on now, like a house afire and that is how the thing usually ends—in smoke!

There is the paraphernalia. There is the marshalling. There is the grand parade and there is the army—on paper! But when will the army begin the battle in real earnest? When will the church of Christ get to close quarters with sinners? When will every Christian man and woman really begin working for Christ and cease talking about it?

We have had the resolutions which have been proposed and seconded, and carried unanimously—and then forgotten! It is significant that there is no book containing the resolutions of the apostles, but we have the *Acts* of the apostles. And there will be something worth recording in the Lord’s “book of remembrance” if we turn our good resolutions into acts of holy service. Let us get to work, for we have tarried long enough in this mount.

There are many other “mounts” that I might mention, but I do not think I need to do so. Unto whatsoever truth you have attained, dear friend, make sure of that and then go on to something beyond. Do not stop anywhere, for you have not yet attained, neither are you yet perfect. You can buy a box of the patent perfection paint, and cover over all the knots and imperfections in the wood, but the wind and the rain will test your fine-looking house, and you will find the paint cracking and the bad joints and the holes in the wood showing before long.

At least it is so with me in a spiritual sense. Imperfections will reveal themselves very soon and the paint will not answer after all. But brother, never be satisfied with yourself, for self-satisfaction is the end of all progress.

A painter said to his wife, one morning, "I shall never paint again." "Why, my husband?" asked the good woman. "Because the picture that I have just finished, perfectly satisfies me—it realizes my ideal and therefore I know that, now, my genius is exhausted."

When a man says, "Yes, I am a splendid fellow. I will tell everybody what I am, only I will do it very cunningly and say this is what grace has done for me. I will thank God for it, for the Pharisee in the temple had grace enough to do that." Then, depend upon it, brother, the very power to grow has gone from you. For, if you were growing, you would have growing pains. You would feel like the chick in the egg that wants to get out.

Oh, how often my soul feels cribbed, and cabined, and confined, within my imperfect self! She will get completely free one day, and in anticipation of that blessed time, I joyously sing,—

*"Welcome, sweet hour of full discharge,
That sets my longing soul at large,
Unbinds my chains, breaks up my cell,
And gives me with my God to dwell."*

Till that "sweet hour" arrives when you will dwell with God forever, do not delude yourself with the notion that you have got where you may stop. "Forward, onward," must still be your motto. O eagle of God, if you are of the true royal breed, though you have looked the very sun in the face with eye undimmed, and soared till you have left the clouds far below you, yet still higher, higher, higher, must you soar!

If you could distance the sun himself, and reach a yet more distant orb, still higher, higher, must you soar. "Excelsior" is the motto of every Christian until, at last, he comes into the very presence of his God and sees Him face to face. You never see an eagle roosting upon a thorn bush and saying, "I can get no higher."

And if any of God's birds of paradise do that, I would bid them beware of the fowler. My self-satisfied brother, he is after you and his big net will enclose you if you are not careful. Mount higher, brother! Higher yet, for however high you have ascended, you have dwelt long enough in that mount, and must advance to something higher and better still.

May God help you to do so, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—741, 703, 850

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.