

OUR BANNER

NO. 2979

A SERMON

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 15, 1906

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

IN THE YEAR 1863

*“Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth.”
Psalm 60:4*

MOST writers upon this Psalm, after having referred the banner to the kingdom of David, say that there is here a reference to the Messiah. We believe there is. Nor is that reference an obscure allusion. In the Lord Jesus we find the clue to the history and the solution of the prophecy. He is the banner—He is the ensign that is lifted up before the people. He is JEHOVAH-NISSI, “the LORD my banner,” whom it is our joy to follow, and around whom it is our delight to rally, we shall not stay to prove—though we might readily do so—that the banner here intended is no other than the Lord Jesus Christ in the majesty of His person—in the efficacy of His merit—in the completeness of His righteousness—in the success of His triumph—in the glory of His advent.

If you read it with an eye to Him, you have the meaning at once, “Thou hast given Christ as a banner to them that fear thee, to be displayed because of the truth.” So let us consider *our Lord Jesus Christ*, first, *as He is compared to a banner*, secondly, *by whom He is given*, thirdly, *to whom He is given*, and fourthly, *for what purpose*.

I. Let us consider OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST AS HE IS COMPARED TO A BANNER.

The banner was far more useful, I suppose, in ancient than it is in modern warfare. Times have changed, and we are changed by them. Yet we still speak with reverence of the old flag. There is much meaning in the phrase, “the flag that’s braved a thousand years the battle and the breeze.” The soldier still waves the flag of his country, and the sailor still looks with patriotic pride to the flag that has so long floated at England’s masthead. Our metaphor, however, rather points to ancient than present use.

We should notice, first of all, that *the banner was lifted up and displayed as the point of union*. When a leader was about to gather troops for a war, he hoisted his banner, and then every man rallied to the standard. The coming to the standard, the rallying round the banner, was the joining with the prince, the espousing of his cause. In the day of battle, when there was ever a likelihood that the host would be put to flight, the valiant men all fought around the banner. Its defense was of the first and chief consequence. They might leave the baggage for a while, they might forsake the smaller flags of the divisions, but the great blood-red banner that with prayer had been consecrated, they must all gather round it, and there, if need be, shed their heart’s blood.

Christ, my brethren, is the point of union for all the soldiers of the cross. I know of no other place where all Christians can meet. We cannot all meet—I am sorry that we cannot—at the baptismal stream. There are some who will not be baptized, they persist still in the sin of putting drops of water in the place of the ordained flood, and bringing infants where faith is required.

We cannot all meet even around the table of the Eucharist, there are some who thrust aside their brethren, because they do not see eye to eye with them, and even the communion table has sometimes become a field of battle.

But all Christians can meet in the person of Christ, all true hearts can meet in the work of Christ. This is a banner that we all love, if we be Christians, and far hence be those who are not. Hither to thy cross, O Jesus, do we come! The Churchman, laden with his many forms and vestments, the

Presbyterian, with his stern Covenant and his love of those who stained the heather with their blood, the Independent, with his passion for liberty and the separateness of the free churches, the Methodist, with his intricate forms of church government, sometimes forms of bondage, but still forms of power, the Baptist, remembering his ancient pedigree, and the days in which his fathers were hounded even by Christians themselves, and counted not worthy of that name—they all come to Christ.

Various opinions divide them, they see not eye to eye on many matters, here and there, they will have a skirmish for the old landmarks, and rightly so, for we ought to be jealous, as Josiah was, to do that which is right in the sight of the Lord, and neither decline to the right hand nor to the left. But we rally to the cross of Christ, and there, all weapons of internecine warfare being cast aside, we meet as brethren, fellow comrades in a blessed Evangelical Alliance, who are prepared to suffer and to die for His dear sake.

Forward then, Christians, to the point of union! In the crusade against the powers of darkness, with the salvation of sinners for my one undivided aim, little care I for anything but the lifting up of my Master's Gospel, and the proclamation of the Word of mercy through His flowing blood.

Again, *the banner, in time of war, was the great guide-star*, it was the direction to the soldier. You remember what special care they took in the day of battle, that, in case the standard-bearer should fall, there might still be some means of guiding the warriors.

So, to this day, Christ is the great Guide of the Christian in the day of battle. There is no fear that Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever, will ever fail. Fix your eye upon Him, Christian, and if you would know the best way to fight, fight in His footsteps, imitate His every action, let your life be a copy of His life. You need never stop to ask for directions, the life of Christ is the Christian's model. You need not turn to your fellow-believer, and say, "Comrade, what are we to do now? The smoke of battle gathers, and the cries are various, which way shall I go?"

The apostle Paul has given us our directions, "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Press forward, in Christ's footsteps, saying, "God hath given thee, my Savior, to be to me a banner because of the truth."

In these two respects, as the central point for rallying, and as the direction to the warrior, Christ is our banner.

And *the banner*, let it be remembered, *is always the chief object of attack*. The moment the adversary sees it, his object is to strike there. If it be not the most vulnerable point, it will be at least the point where the adversary's power is most felt. Did they not of old aim their shots at the flagstaff so as to cut down the banner? Whenever the old Knights of the Red Cross fought the Saracens, they always endeavored to make their steel ring upon the helmet of the man whose hand held the standard of Mohammed, the fight was ever fiercest around the standard.

Sometimes, when the battle was over, the field would be strewn with legs, and arms, and mangled bodies, but in one place, there would be a heap where they were piled one upon another, a great mountain of flesh and armor, broken bones and smashed skulls, and one would ask, "What means this? How came they here? How trampled they so one upon another, and fought in pocks of human blood?"

The answer would be, "'Twas there the standard-bearer stood, and first the adversary made a dash, and stole the banner, and then fifty knights vowed to redeem it, and they dashed against their foes, and took it by storm, and then again hand to hand they fought with the banner between them, first in one hand and then in another, changing ownership each hour."

So, dear friends, Christ Jesus has always been the object of attack. You remember that, when divine justice came forth against Christ on Calvary, it made five rents in the great banner, and those five rents, all glorious, are in that banner still. Since that day, many a shot has sought to riddle it, but not one has been able to touch it. Borne aloft, first by one hand and then by another, the mighty God of Jacob being the strength of the standard-bearers, that flag has bidden defiance to the leaguered hosts of the world, the

flesh, and the devil, but never has it been trailed in the mire, and never once carried in jeering triumph by the adversary.

Blessed are the rents in the banner, for they are the symbol of our victory. Those five wounds in the person of the Savior are the gates of heaven to us. But thank God, there are no more wounds to be endured, the person of our Lord is safe for ever. “A bone of him shall not be broken.” His Gospel, too, is an unwounded Gospel, and His mystical body is uninjured. Yes, the Gospel is unharmed after all the strife of ages. The infidel threatens to rend the Gospel to pieces, but it is as glorious as ever. Modern skepticism has sought to pull it thread from thread, but has not been able so much as to rend a fragment of it.

Every now and then, fresh adversaries have found out some new methods of induction or declamation, essaying to prove the Gospel to be a lie, and Christ an impostor. Have they succeeded? Nay, verily, they have all had to fly from the field. The good old banner of the Lord Omnipotent, even Christ Jesus, still stands erect above them all.

And why should the banner be the object of attack but for this very reason, that *it is the symbol of defiance*? As soon as ever the banner is lifted up, it is, as it were, flaunted in the face of the foe. It seems to say to him, “Do your worst—come on! We are not afraid of you—we defy you!” So, when Christ is preached, there is a defiance given to the enemies of the Lord. Every time a sermon is preached in the power of the Spirit, it is as though the shrill clarion woke up the fiends of hell, for such a sermon to say to them, “Christ is come forth again to deliver His lawful captives out of your power, the King of kings has come to take away your dominions, to wrest from you your stolen treasures, and to proclaim Himself your Master.”

There is a stern joy that the minister sometimes feels when he thinks of himself as the antagonist of the powers of hell. Martin Luther seems to have felt it when he said, “Come, let us sing the forty-sixth Psalm, and let the devil do his worst!” That was lifting up the standard of the cross. If you want to defy the devil, don’t go about preaching philosophy, don’t sit down, and write out fine sermons, with long sentences, three quarters of a mile in extent, don’t try and cull fine, smooth phrases that will sound sweetly in people’s ears. The devil doesn’t care a bit for this, but talk about Christ, preach about the sufferings of the Savior, tell sinners that there is life in a look at Him, and straightway the devil takes great umbrage.

Look at many of the ministers in London! They preach in their pulpits from the first of January to the last of December, and nobody finds fault with them, because they prophesy such smooth things. But let a man preach Christ, let him declaim about the power of Jesus to save, and press home Gospel truth with simplicity and boldness, straightaway the fiends of darkness will be against him, and if they cannot bite, they will show that they can howl and bark.

There is a symbol of defiance in the banner of the cross, it is God’s symbol of defiance, His gauntlet thrown down to the confederated powers of darkness, a gauntlet which they dare not take up, for they know what tremendous power for good there is in the uplifting of the cross of Christ. Wave, then, your banner, O ye soldiers of the cross, each in your place and rank keep watch and ward, but wave your banner still, for though the adversary shall be full of wrath, it is because he knows that his time is short when once the cross of Christ is lifted up.

We have not quite exhausted the metaphor yet. *The banner was ever a source of consolation to the wounded.* There he lies, the good knight, right well has he fought without fear and without reproach, but a chance arrow pierced the joints of his harness, and his life is oozing out from the ghastly wound. There is no one there to unbuckle his helmet, or give him a draught of cooling water, his frame is locked up in that hard case of steel, and though he feels the smart, he cannot gain relief. He hears the mingled cries, the hoarse shouts of men that rush in fury against their fellows, and he opens his eyes—as yet he has not fainted from his bleeding.

Where, think you, does he look? He turns himself round. What is he looking for? For friend? For comrade? No. Should they come to him, he would say, “Just lift me up, and let me sit against that tree,

but go you to the fight.” Where is that restless eye searching, and what is the object for which it is looking? Yes, he has it, and the face of the dying man is brightened. He sees the banner still waving, and with his last breath he cries, “On! on! on!” and falls asleep content, because the banner is safe. It has not been cast down. Though he has fallen, yet the banner is secure.

Even so, every true soldier of the cross rejoices in its triumph. We fall, but Christ does not. We die, but the cause prospers. As I have told you before, when my heart was most sad—as it never was before nor since—that sweet text, “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name,” quite cheered my soul, and set me again in peace and comfort. Is Jesus safe? Then it never matters what becomes of me. Is the banner all right? Doth it wave on high? Then the adversary has not won the day, he has felled one and another, but he himself shall be broken in pieces, for the banner still glares in the sun.

And, lastly, *the banner is the emblem of victory*. When the fighting is over, and the soldier comes home, what does he bring? His blood-stained flag. And what is borne highest in the procession as it winds through the streets? It is the flag. They hang it in the minster, high up there in the roof, and where the incense smokes, and where the song of praise ascends, there hangs the banner, honored and esteemed, borne in conflict and in danger. Now, our Lord Jesus Christ shall be our banner in the last day, and when all our foes shall be under our feet. A little while, and He that will come shall come, and will not tarry. A little while, and we shall see—

*“JEHOVAH’S banner furled,
Sheathed His sword; He speaks! ’tis done,
And the kingdoms of this world
Are the kingdoms of His Son.”*

And then Jesus, high above us all, shall be exalted, and through the streets of the holy city the acclamations shall ring, “Hosanna, Hosanna, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”

II. Let us turn to our second point for a few moments. It is this: Who gave us this banner? **BY WHOM WAS CHRIST GIVEN TO US?**

Soldiers often esteem the colors for the sake of the person who first bestowed them. You and I ought greatly to esteem our precious Christ for the sake of God who gave Him to us, “*Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee.*” God gave us this banner in old eternity. Christ was given by the eternal Father, from everlasting, or ever the earth was, to His elect people, to be the Messiah of God, the Savior of the world. He was given in the manger, when “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” He was given upon the cross when the Father bestowed every drop of His Son’s blood, and every nerve of His body, and every power of His soul, to bleed and die, “the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.” “*Thou hast given a banner.*”

That banner was given to each one of us in the day of our conversion. Christ became, from that time forth, our glory and our boast. And He is given to some of us, especially, when we are called to the ministry, or when the Holy Spirit’s guidance puts us upon any extraordinary work for Christ. Then is the banner, in a direct and especial manner, committed to our care.

There are some here who have had this banner given to them to carry in the midst of the Sunday school. A dear sister here has it. A beloved brother has it to bear in the midst of many of this congregation. The young men of our College, of our Evening Classes, and many others of you, workers for Christ, have that banner, that you may bear it in the streets, that you may lift up the name of Jesus in the causeways, and in the places of assembly. And, in a certain measure, all of you, who love the Lord, have that banner given to you, that in your various spheres of service you may talk of Jesus, and lift up His holy name.

Now, inasmuch as God Himself gives us this banner, with what reverence should we look upon it, with what ardor should we cluster round it, with what zeal should we defend it, with what enthusiasm should we follow it, with what faith and confidence should we rush even into death itself for its defense!

III. Thirdly, TO WHOM IS THIS BANNER GIVEN?

The text says, “Thou hast given a banner *to them that fear thee.*” Not to all men. God has a chosen people. These chosen people are known, in due time, by their outward character. That outward grace-wrought character is this, they fear God, and *they that fear God are the only persons who ought to carry this banner.* Shall the banner be put into a drunkard’s hands? Shall the great truth of Christ be left to those who live in sin?

Oh, it is a wretched thing when men come into the pulpit to preach who have never known and felt the power of the Gospel themselves! Time was—but times are changed somewhat—when, in multitudes of our parish pulpits, men whose characters were unhallowed preached to others what they never practiced themselves. To such, the banner ought not to be given. Men must fear God, or else they are not worthy to bear it.

Moreover, *none but these can bear it.* What others bear is not the banner, it is but an imitation of it. It is not Christ they preach, it is a diluted thing that is not the Gospel of Jesus. They cannot proclaim it to others till they know it themselves. It is given to them that fear God, because they will have courage to bear it. Fear is often the mother of courage. To fear God, makes a man brave. To fear man, is cowardly, I grant, but to fear God, with humble awe and holy reverence, is such a noble passion that I would we were more and more full thereof, blending, as it were, the fear of Isaac with the faith of Abraham. To fear God, will make the weakest of us play the man, and the most craven of us become heroes for the Lord our God.

Now, inasmuch as this banner is given to those that fear God, *if you fear God, it is given to you.* I do not know in what capacity you are to bear it, but I do know there is somewhere or other where you have to carry it. Mother, let the banner wave in your household. Merchant, let the banner be fixed upon your house of business. Let it be unfurled and fly at your masthead, O sailor! Bear the banner, O soldier, in your regiment! Yours is a stern duty, for alas! the Christian soldier has a path of trial that few men have trodden. God make you faithful, and may you be honored as a good soldier of Jesus Christ!

Some of you are poor, and work hard in the midst of many artisans who fear not God. Take your banner with you, and never be ashamed of your colors. You cannot be long in a workshop before your companions will pull their colors out. They will soon begin talking to you about their sinful pleasures, their amusements, perhaps their infidel principles. Take your banner out likewise. Tell them that it is a game two can play at, never allow a man to show his banner without also showing yours.

Do not do it ostentatiously, do it humbly, but do it earnestly and sincerely. Remember that your banner is one that you never need be ashamed of, the best of men have fought under it, nay, He who was God as well as man has His own name written on the escutcheon. Surely, then, you need not be ashamed to wave it anywhere and everywhere. You can think bravely, now be great in act as you have been in thought.

*“Presence of mind and courage in distress
Are more than armies to procure success.”*

IV. This is our last question, FOR WHAT PURPOSE WAS THIS BANNER GIVEN TO US?

Our text is very explicit upon that point, it was given to us to be *“displayed because of the truth.”* It is to be displayed. In order to display a banner, you must take it out of its case. Members of this congregation, brethren in the church, I pray you study the Scriptures much. I would not have men attempt to preach unless they have some power. To go forth without some study, would be like a man attempting to do execution with a gun that had much powder in it and no shot.

Do unfurl the banner, to this end, husband well your time. Young men, save your spare hours to study the Bible. Steal them from your sleep if you cannot get them anyhow else. Sunday school teachers,

be diligent in your preparations for your classes. Let your banner out of the case. It is of little service lifting it up in the midst of the ranks without its being unfurled. See that you know the holy art of unfurling it. Practice it, study it, be well acquainted with Him who is the wisdom of God and the power of God.

And *after the flag is unfurled, it needs to be lifted up*. So, in order to display Christ, you must lift Him up. Lift Him up with a clear voice, as one who has something to say which he would have men hear. Speak of Him boldly, as one who is not ashamed of His message. Speak affectionately, speak passionately, speak with your whole soul, let your whole heart be in every word you say, for this is to lift up the banner.

But besides lifting up the banner, *you must carry it*, for it is the business of the standard-bearer, not merely to hold it in one place, but to bear it here and there if the plan of battle shall change. So, bear Christ to the poor lodging-houses, to the workhouses, to the prisons, if you can get admittance, to the back streets, to the dark slums, to the cellars, to the solitary attic, to the crowded rooms, to the highways and the byways, and you especially who are private Christians, and not preachers, bear it from house to house.

We had a complaint the other day, that some of you had been going from house to house to try and talk to others about their souls, you had entrenched upon the parochial bounds of the authored gamekeeper! I pray you to entrench again. What is my parish? The whole world is my parish, let the whole world be your parish likewise. What does it matter to us if the world be parceled out amongst men who probably do little or nothing? Let us do all we can. No man hath any right to say to me, "Visit in such-and-such a district, not here—this is my ground." Who gave it to you? Who gave him lordship of the world, or any portion of it? "The earth is the LORD'S, and the fullness thereof." The earth is your field, and no matter upon whose district, territory, or parish. Let me encourage you who love the Savior, you who have the pure Gospel, to go and spread it. Let nothing confine you, or limit your labors, except your strength and your time.

Still, after all, if we carry the Gospel, and lift up the banner, *it will never be displayed unless there is wind to blow it*. A banner would only hang like a dead flag upon the staff if there were no wind. Now, we cannot produce the wind to expand the banner, but we can invoke heavenly aid. Prayer becomes a prophecy when we say, "Awake, O heavenly wind, and blow, and let this banner be displayed." The Holy Spirit is that gracious wind who shall make the truth apparent in the hearts of those who hear it.

Display the banner, talk of Christ, live Christ, proclaim Christ everywhere. He is given to you for this very purpose. Therefore, let not your light be hid under a bushel. "Ye are the light of the world." "Let your light so shine before men." Let the old flag be held up by fresh hands. Go ye forth in new times, with new resolves, and may you have constant renewings as new opportunities open before you!

Oh, but are there not some of you who could not bear this banner? Let me invite such to come and take shelter under it. My Master's banner, wherever it goes, gives liberty. Under the banner of old England, there never breathes a slave. They tread our country, they breathe our air, and their shackles fall. Beneath the banner of Christ, no slave can live. Do but look up to Jesus, relying upon His suffering in your stead, and bearing your sins in your place and room, and forthwith you shall have acceptance in the Beloved, and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your heart and mind through Jesus Christ. So may God enlist you beneath the banner, to His glory! Amen.

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON

GENESIS 32, PSALM 119:33-40

Genesis 32. Verse 1. *And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him.*

What an encouragement the visit of these angels must have been to Jacob after the strife which he had had with Laban! But dear friends, angels often come to meet us, though we know it not. As in the

old classic story, the poor man said, “This is a plain hut, but God has been here,” so we may say of every Christian’s cottage, “Though it be poor, an angel has come here,” for David says, “The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.” As the angels of God met Jacob, I trust that, if you have come here after some stern battle, and trial, and difficulty, you may find the angels of God meeting you here. They do come into the assemblies of the saints. Paul tells us that the woman ought to have her head covered in the assembly “because of the angels,” that is, because they are there to see that all things are done decently and in order.

2. *And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God’s host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim.*

He gave it a name to commemorate God’s having sent the angels and called it “two camps” or “two hosts.”

3. *And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom.*

He is out of one trouble with Laban, now he is into another with Esau. Well did John Bunyan say—

*“A Christian man is seldom long at ease;
When one trouble’s gone, another doth him seize.”*

4-5. *And he commanded them, saying, Then shall ye speak unto my lord Esau; Thy servant Jacob saith thus, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now: and I have oxen, and asses, flocks, and menservants, and womenservants: and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight.*

This is very respectful language, and rather obsequious too, but when a man knows that he has done wrong to another, he ought to be prepared to humble himself to the injured individual, and though it happened long ago, yet Jacob really had injured his brother Esau, and it was but right that, in meeting him again, he should put himself into a humble position before him. There are some proud people who, when they know that they have done wrong, yet will not own it, and it is very hard to end a quarrel when one will not yield, and the other feels that he will not either. But there is good hope of things going right when Jacob, who is the better of the two brothers, is also the humbler of the two.

6-7. *And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him. Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed:*

And well he might be, for an angry brother, with four hundred fierce followers, must mean mischief.

7-8. *And he divided the people that was with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands; and said, If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape.*

This is characteristic of Jacob. He was a man of plans and arrangements, a man of considerable craftiness, which some people nowadays call “prudence.” He used means, and he sometimes used them a little too much. Perhaps he did so in this case, but at the same time, he was a man of faith, and therefore he betook himself to prayer.

9-12. *And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shown unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.*

A prayer most humble, most direct in its petitions, and also full of faith. That was a grand argument for him to use, “Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good.” This is one of the mightiest pleas that we can urge in praying to God, “Do as thou hast said. Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou

hast caused me to hope.” O brethren, if you can remind God of his own promise, you must win the day, for promised mercies are sure mercies.

*“As well might He His being quit,
As break His promise, or forget.”*

“Hath he said, and shall he not do it?” Only for this will He be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them, and we must take care that we call His promise to mind and plead it at the mercy seat.

13-21. And he lodged there that same night; and took of that which came to his hand a present for Esau his brother; two hundred she goats, and twenty he goats, two hundred ewes, and twenty rams, thirty milch camels with their colts, forty kine, and ten bulls, twenty she asses, and ten foals. And he delivered them into the hand of his servants, every drove by themselves; and said unto his servants, Pass over before me, and put a space betwixt drove and drove. And he commanded the foremost, saying When Esau my brother meeteth thee, and asketh thee, saying, Whose art thou? and whither goest thou? and whose are these before thee? Then thou shalt say, They be thy servant Jacob's; it is a present sent unto my lord Esau: and, behold, also he is behind us. And so commanded he the second, and the third, and all that followed the droves, saying, On this manner shall ye speak unto Esau, when ye find him. And say ye moreover, Behold, thy servant Jacob is behind us. For he said, I will appease him with the present that goeth before me and afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept of me. So went the present over before him: and himself lodged that night in the company.

If Jacob had been true to his faith in God, he would have dispensed with these very prudent preparations, for after all, the faithfulness of God was Jacob's best defense, it was from God that his safety came, and not from his own plotting, and planning, and scheming. There are some of you, dear brethren, who have minds that are naturally given to inventions, and devices, and plans, and plots, and I believe that, where this is the case, you have more to battle against than those have who are of a simple mind, and who cast themselves more entirely upon the Lord. It is a blessed thing to be such a fool that you do not know anyone to trust in except your God. It is a sweet thing to be so weaned from your wisdom that you fall into the arms of God.

Yet, if you do feel that it is right to make such plans as Jacob made, take care that you do what Jacob also did. Pray as well as plan, and if your plans be numerous, let your prayers be all the more fervent, lest the natural tendency of your constitution should degenerate into reliance upon the arm of flesh, and dependence upon your own wisdom, instead of absolute reliance upon God.

22-24. And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two womenservants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok. And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over what he had. And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.

It was the man Christ Jesus putting on the form of manhood before the time when He would actually be incarnate, and the wrestling seems to have been more on His side than on Jacob's, for it is not said that Jacob wrestled, but that “there wrestled a man with him.” There was something that needed to be taken out of Jacob—his strength and his craftiness, and this angel came to get it out of him. But on the other hand, Jacob spied his opportunity, and finding the angel wrestling with him, he in his turn began to wrestle with the angel.

25. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.

So that he was made painfully to realize his own weakness while he was putting forth all his strength.

26. And he said, let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

Bravely said, O Jacob! And ye sons of Jacob, learn to say the same. You may have what you will if you can speak thus to the covenant angel, “I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.”

27-28. *And he said unto him, what is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob,—*

The supplanter,—

28. *But Israel:—*

A prince of God,—

28-29. *For as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name.*

That has often been the request of God's people, they have wanted to know God's wondrous name. The Jews superstitiously believe that we have lost the sound of the name of JEHOVAH—that the name is unpronounceable now altogether. We think not so, but certainly, no man knows the nature of God, and understands Him, but he to whom the Son shall reveal Him. Perhaps Jacob's request had somewhat of curiosity in it, so the angel would not grant it.

29. *And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.*

He did not give him what he asked for, but he gave him something better, and in like manner, if the Lord does not open up a dark doctrine to you, but gives you a bright privilege, that will be better for you.

30-32. *And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh. Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew which shrank.*

Psalms 119. Verse 33. *Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes;—*

The psalmist is constantly talking about "the way." We have that expression in the twenty-seventh verse, then in the twenty-ninth, the thirtieth, and the thirty-second, and now again we have it here, "Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes,"—

33-34. *And I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.*

That is not true or right understanding which permits us to go into sin, those who are really wise in heart hate evil and love righteousness.

35. *Make me to go in the path—*

Or way—

35. *Of thy commandments; for therein do I delight.*

"Make me to go." Not only show me the way, but make me to go, like a nurse does with a child when she puts her hands under its arms and strengthens its tottering footsteps. This is a very beautiful expression, "Make me to go." Lord, we are very weak, we are like little children, make us to go in the path of thy commandments, for therein do we delight.

36. *Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.*

The heart must love something, it will either love that which is good, or that which is evil. "O Lord," the psalmist seems to pray, "incline my heart in the right direction. Make it lean towards that which is good, cause me to count thy grace better than all the riches of the world."

37. *Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity;*

"Do not let me even look at it, for one may look at an ugly thing until the sense of its deformity gradually disappears, and it becomes attractive. Lord, never let me so fix my eyes upon sin that, at last, I come to reckon it a desirable thing."

37. *And quicken thou me in thy way.*

"A man who travels quickly has not time to stop and look at the things in the road. Lord, let me go so fast to heaven that, when the devil hangs his baubles in his shop window, I may not have time even to stop and look at them, 'Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way.'"

38. *Stablish thy word unto thy servant, who is devoted to thy fear.*

That is, “Make thy word to me real and true. Put away my natural skepticism, my proneness to question, my tendency to doubt.” “Stablish thy word.” “Make me to know how firm, how true, how real it is, for I would love it more and more. I do believe it, for I am devoted to thy fear, but I long to be still further established in the faith.”

39. *Turn away my reproach which I fear:*

Are any of you fearing reproach? If so, you may well fear it, for you deserve it, yet even then, you may ask the Lord to turn it away from you.

39-40. *For thy judgments are good. Behold, I have longed after thy precepts:*

Some people, whom I know, long after the promises, and others long after the doctrines. I hope that they will all get an equal longing for the precepts, for true believers love the precepts as much as they love the promises or the doctrines, “Behold, I have longed after thy precepts.”

40. *Quicken me in thy righteousness.*

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.