

A CONSISTENT WALK FOR TIME TO COME NO. 3030

A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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*“As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.”
Colossians 2:6.*

THOUGH the shepherd cares for the lambs and carries them in his arms, he does not cease his care when they become sheep. But, as long as they shall need to be tended, so long will he watch over them. Hence it is that our apostle, though always quick of eye after newborn souls and abundantly anxious to bring sinners to a knowledge of the truth of God as it is in Jesus, is equally in a conflict of soul for the spiritual healthfulness of those who have been born-again. Our text contains one of those loving admonitions. It is addressed, not to the ungodly, not to those who are strangers to our Lord and Master, but to those who have “received Christ Jesus the Lord.” Longing for their spiritual good and anxious that they should be established in the faith, he admonishes them thus, “As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.”

In endeavoring, by God’s help, to speak upon this subject, we shall have three points. There is here, *first, a fact stated concerning believers*—they have “received Christ Jesus the Lord.” Then there *is an exhortation, or a counsel, offered to such*—“walk in Him.” Besides which we have *a model held up for our imitation*. How are we to walk in Him? Why, just in the same way as we at first received Him! Let our first coming to Christ be to us the mirror of how we shall walk in Him all our days.

I. All true Christians are here described in the text as HAVING RECEIVED CHRIST JESUS THE LORD.

The first point to which I would particularly direct your attention *is the personality of this reception*. Believers have, it is true, received Christ’s words. They prize every precept, they value every doctrine, but this is not all. They have received Christ *Himself*. While they have received Christ’s ordinances and are not slow to walk in obedience to the things which He has commanded, they do not stay here. They have received Christ Himself—His person, His Godhead and His humanity. They have “received Christ Jesus the Lord.” And, mark you, there is a very great distinction here—and also a great mystery. A great distinction, I say, for there are some who do, I think, wholly believe the doctrines which Christ has taught, and are profoundly orthodox, full of an earnest controversial spirit for the faith once delivered to the saints and yet, for all that, they do not seem to have received Him, the very Christ of God! And, truly, there are many who have received both baptism and the Lord’s supper, yet, despite what any may say, we believe that they have not received Christ, but are still as great strangers to Him as though they had only passed through the rites common to mankind, or the rites in which heathens indulge! There is a vast difference between the outward reception of the doctrine, or the ordinance, and the inward reception of *Christ*.

We also said that herein is a mystery—such a mystery that only he who has received Christ can understand. The preacher cannot tell you what it is to receive Christ. Human language is not adapted to convey to the mind this deep enigma, this matchless secret. We know what it is, for “truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ.” We can describe it in such a measure that our friends who have also received Christ will know that we understand the mystery—but to the carnal mind it will always remain a puzzle how Christ can be “in us the hope of glory”—how we can eat His flesh and drink His blood. They run away to some carnal interpretation and suppose that the bread is turned into flesh at the Eucharist or that the wine is transformed into blood. That is *carnal* talk and this they talk because they know not what is the mystery of this receiving Christ and this walking in Christ.

This much, however, we may affirm. *The believer has received Christ into his knowledge*. He knows Him to be God and to be man. He knows Him to be set forth of the Father as the Redeemer, but, he also knows Him by a personal acquaintance. His eyes have not seen Him and yet he has

looked to Him and has, by faith, seen the King in His beauty! His hands have not handled Him and yet there has been a secret touch by which the virtue has come out of Christ and has flowed into him! He has never sat down at a communion table when Christ has been physically present and yet full often he could say, “He brought me to the banqueting house and His banner over me was love.” He has talked with me as a man talks with his friend and the strongest sense that can be attached to that sweet word, “communion,” is tame in reference to the believer’s connection with the person of the Lord Jesus Christ! And in that sense of knowing Him, intimately knowing Him, the believer has received Christ!

Not only has he received Christ into his cognizance, but *into his understanding*. He understands, with all saints, the love of Jesus in its height, depth, length and breadth. He has so seen Christ as to understand of Him that He was before all time as the Ancient of Days and then had His delights with the sons of men in the great covenant decree of electing love. He understands how He became made flesh with us—married to us—when He came on earth, the Son of Mary, “bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh.” He knows by experience what is the meaning of the atonement. He can understand how Justice is satisfied and grace magnified. Without confounding or making mistakes, he knows how God was always gracious and full of love and yet how Christ Jesus came that the love of God might be shed abroad in our hearts and we were reconciled unto God by His death. Hence the Christian does not read of Christ as though He were a mere historical personage, nor of His work as a great mystery which he cannot comprehend, but he has received Christ into his understanding!

Ah, beloved! This is a very poor and shallow sense compared with the next. I have received but one ounce of Christ into my understanding, but, bless His name, I have received the whole of Him *into my affections*. Good Rutherford used to pray for a larger heart, that he might hold more of Christ and, perhaps, you remember that strange extravaganza of prayer in which he says, “Oh, that I had a heart as deep, and wide, and high as heaven, that I might hold Christ in it!” And then he said, “Since the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, oh, that I had a heart as vast as seven heavens, that I might get the whole of Christ into me and hold Him in my arms!” And truly, Christian, in one sense you have taken all of Christ into your soul, have you not? Do you not love Him—not a part of Him, but the whole of Him? I hope you can truly say to Christ—

***“Have You a lamb in all Your flock
I would disdain to feed?
Have You a foe, before whose face
I fear Your cause to plead?
You know I love You, dearest Lord
But oh, I long to soar
Far from the sphere of mortal joys—
And learn to love You more!”***

We must not leave this part of the subject without adding that the believer has received Christ *into his trust*, and this he did at his spiritual birth. He received Christ into the arms of his faith. He took Jesus Christ to be, henceforth, the unbuttressed pillar of his confidence, the one rock of his salvation, his strong castle and high tower. And, in this sense, every soul that is saved has “received Christ Jesus the Lord.”

Our text seems to point to a threefold character in which we have received Christ. *We have received Him as the Christ*. My Soul, have you ever seen Him as the Father’s Anointed One—as the Chosen and Sent One, ordained of old—as One that is mighty, upon whom help should be laid? Have you seen Him as God’s great High Priest, ordained as was Aaron, chosen of God from among men? Have you looked upon Him as David did, as One chosen out of the people? We must accept Christ as the Anointed One and the right way to thus receive Him is to receive Him as the garments of Aaron received the oil that flowed from his head. Christ is the Anointed One and then you and I become anointed ones through the Holy Spirit which distils from Him to us—and so we receive Him as Christ.

And then He is called, “Jesus,” and *we must receive Him as the Savior*. “You shall call His name, Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.” Justification is receiving Christ as Jesus. So is sanctification! Only I think I must say justification and pardon receive Christ as Jesus—and sanctification receives Him as Christ Jesus, both as the Anointed One and the Savior. May you and I be daily delivered from sin—the guilt and power of it—and so receive Him as Jesus!

There is a peculiar emphasis about the next expression. The article is emphatic here, “Christ Jesus *the Lord*.” To me, *if I receive Christ, He must be Lord*—not one of the lords that may have

dominion over me, but *the Lord*, peculiarly and specially. And though hitherto other lords have had dominion over me, now I am to obey Him and only Him. What do you say, professor? Have you received Christ Jesus *the Lord*? Is your will subject to His will? Do you desire only to act according to His bidding? Are His commands your desire? Is His will your will? Is He your Lord? For, mark you, you can never truly receive Him as Christ, or as Jesus, unless you receive Him as *the Lord*! Thus, another sense in which we receive Him is by subjecting ourselves entirely to Him, sitting at His feet, wearing His yoke, taking up His cross and bearing His reproach.

You will note that there is also, in this description of a Christian, the thought of his *entire dependence*. The apostle does not say, "As you have therefore fought for and won or earned Christ Jesus," but, "as you have therefore *received* Him." It is a humbling word which divests the creature of everything like boasting! What is there to glory in if I am a receiver? The apostle in another place says, "If you did receive it, why do you glory, as if you had not received it?" The vessel that is filled under the flowing stream cannot boast, though it is ever so full, for it was naturally empty and owes its fullness to the stream. The beggar in the street, let him receive gold, yet cannot boast of the gold because he is a receiver. He who gave must have the honor of the benefaction—not the person who received! So let your faith be ever so strong, let your confidence in Christ be ever so glorious, you have nothing to boast of in it, for you have "received Christ Jesus." Beloved, here is a test for us—is our religion a receiving religion, or is it a working and an earning religion? An earning religion sends souls to hell! It is only a *receiving* religion that will take you to heaven! You may tug and toil, and do your best and make yourselves, as you think, as holy as the best of the apostles—but when you have done your utmost, you have done nothing whatever! You have built a house of cards which shall soon fall down. But when you come as an empty-handed sinner, having nothing of your own—and *receive* Christ Jesus—then you have bowed your will to God's will. Or rather, divine grace has bowed it and you are saved according to the Lord's own word, "He that believes on Me is not condemned." Thus you have dependence connected with the personality of the Christian's faith!

We also have here *certainty*—"As you *have* received Christ Jesus the Lord." Oh, how many Christians—I hope they are Christians—talk as if they really thought it was impossible to attain to any assurance of faith whatever! It is the fashion with some Christians to say, "Well, I hope," and, "I trust"—and they have a notion that this is being very humble-minded. But to say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him," is thought to be pride! The declaration of Job, "I know that my Redeemer lives," or of the spouse in the Canticles, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His; He feeds among the lilies," is thought to be vain presumption and boasting. But indeed, beloved, it is no such thing! Doubting is pride, but believing is humility! Let me prove it.

I think I used this illustration among you some little time ago. There are two children of one parent and the father says to the two children, "On such a day I intend to give you both a toy which has been the object of your ambition for many a day." Well, the older boy of the two sits down and calculates that the present will be expensive—and he begins to doubt whether his father can afford to purchase it. He remembers many times in which he has offended his parent, or broken his parent's commands, and therefore he doubts whether he shall ever have it. He feels that he is unworthy—therefore he goes about the house without any joy, without any confidence. If anybody asks him whether his father will give him this present or not, he says, "Well, I—I hope so. I trust so."

Now, there is his little brother and the moment he heard that he was to have this present, he clapped his hands and ran out to his companions and said, "I am to have such-and-such a thing given me!" His brother checked him, "You are too presumptuous to say that." "No," said the little one, "for Father said he would give these toys to us." "Oh, but," said the other, "remember that you and I have often broken his commands!" "But he said he would." "Oh, but the thing is expensive!" "Ah, but Father said he would and unless you can *prove* that my father tells lies, I shall go and rejoice in the bright hope that he will keep his promise!" Now, I think that the younger of the two is less presumptuous than his brother, for certainly it is a high presumption for a child to doubt the veracity of his parent! No matter how excellent your reasoning may seem to be, and how clear it may be to the eyes of the flesh, it is always pride to doubt God! And to believe God—though, to the carnal mind which can never understand the bravery of faith, it may look like presumption—is always a badge of the truest and most reverent humility!

Beloved, you *may* know whether you are Christ's or not! I exhort you not to give sleep to your eyes till you know it! What? Can you rest when you do not know whether you are saved or not? O Sirs, can you sit down at your tables and feast—can you go about your daily business with this thought in your mind, “If I should drop dead, I do not know whether I should be found in heaven or in hell”? I tell you nothing but certainties will suit my soul! I hope I never shall rest comfortable while under a doubt of my interest in Christ. Doubts may come—these we can understand—but to be comfortable under doubts, we hope we never shall comprehend! No, nothing but to—

***“Read my title clear
To mansions in the skies”***

can give me joy and peace through believing! “You *have* received Christ the Lord.” Just pass the question around the gallery there, and ask yourselves down below, “Have I received Christ Jesus the Lord?” Say, “Yes,” or, “No,” and God help you to give the answer solemnly as in His sight!

II. As briefly as possible we turn to notice THE COUNSEL GIVEN—“As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.” There are three things suggested by the word, “walk”—continuance, progress, activity.

To walk in a certain way means *continuing in it*. Now, Christian, you took Christ to be your all-in-all, did you not? Well, then, *continue* to take Him as your all-in-all. The true way for a Christian to live is to live entirely upon Christ. Living by frames and feelings is a dying form of life. “He lived by a feeling experience,” said one—and a poor method of living, too! Christians have experiences and they have feelings, but, if they are wise, they never feed upon these things, but upon Christ, Himself. You took Christ to be your all-in-all at first. You did not, then, mix up your frames and feelings with Him—you looked entirely out of self to Him. Well now, continue in the same frame of mind! You sat down at the foot of the cross and you said—

***“Now free from sin, I'll walk at large
My Savior's blood's my full discharge!
At His dear feet myself I lay—
A sinner saved, and homage pay.”***

Well, then stay there! Stay there! Never get an inch beyond that position. When you get sanctified, still look to Christ as if you were unsanctified! When you are on the verge of being glorified, look to Him as if you were just newly come out of the hole of the Pit. Hang upon Christ, you who are the best, just as though you were the worst! The same faith which saved Mary Magdalene, which saved Saul of Tarsus—must save you in the moment when you shall be the nearest to the perfect image of Christ Jesus! It is “none but Jesus” now to your soul—let it be “none but Jesus—none but Jesus,” as long as you live!

In walking, there is not only continuance, but also *progress*. After a man becomes a Christian, he has not to lay again the foundation, but he has to go on and to advance in the divine Life. Still, wherever he shall advance, he is always to say, “None but Christ! Christ is all!” Depend upon it, every inch of progress that you make beyond a simple reliance upon the Lord Jesus Christ will entail the painful necessity of your going back. If you begin to patch Christ's robe of righteousness with the very best rags of your own, no matter how cleanly you may have washed them, every rag will have to be unraveled, and every stitch will have to be cut! There is the rock, Christ Jesus. Some Christians begin building their own stages on the rock. How carefully they tie the timbers together. How neatly they plane and smooth them. And then they get high up upon these stages that they have built and they feel so happy—they have such frames! Such feelings! Such graces! Such fullness! And they are inclined to look down upon those poor souls who are crying, “None but Jesus!” By-and-by there comes a storm and the edifice they have built begins to creak, and crack, and rock to and fro—and they begin to cry, “Ah, where are we now? Now we shall perish! Now Christ's love begins to dry up! Now He will fail us!” No—no such thing! It is not Christ who is failing you! It is not the rock that is shaking, but what you have built upon the rock! Come down from the stage which you have built and, as Job says, “Embrace the rock for want of a shelter.” I believe those souls have the most safety and comfort who simply trust to Christ. Was it not Irving who said that he believed his good works had done him more harm than his bad works had done him, for his bad ones drove him to Christ, but his good ones led him to rely upon them? And, after all, are not our good works, bad works, for is there not something in all of them to make us fly to the fountain of the Savior's blood for cleansing?

“As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,” also implies *activity*. Christians are not to be lie-a-beds, nor forever to sit still. There is an *activity* in religion without which it is of little worth. Feed the hungry. Clothe the naked. Help the poor. Teach the ignorant.

Comfort the miserable. But take care that when you do all this, you do it in Christ, and for Christ—and let no thought of merit stain the act! Let no reflection of getting salvation for yourself come in to mar it all, but in Christ Jesus walk day by day. Ah, brothers and sisters, if a thunderstorm were to come on just now while we are sitting here, and if the lightning should come flashing in at these windows and run with its blue flame down these columns, you and I might begin to feel some alarm! And if one were struck dead in our presence, in what kind of state would you and I likely to be amidst such confusion and alarm? If I were to choose the words which I would like to say at such a moment, they would be these—

***“Nothing in my hands I bring—
Simply to Your cross I cling.”***

You are on board ship in a storm just now. There goes a mast into the water! The lifeboats have all drifted away. The ship is pretty sure to be dashed on yonder rock! Pallor is on every cheek and turmoil every side. What is your prayer as you kneel down? What are your thoughts? Do you think, now, about your sermons, about your visiting the sick, about your prayers and your experiences? No! I tell you that they will seem to you to be nothing better than dross and dung when you are in such a state of apprehension! But you will cling to Christ’s cross and be conveyed to heaven, let the stormy winds blow as they will! And if everything were silent, tonight—could we hear nothing but the ticking of the clock were we, ourselves, reclining on our death pillow? While loving friends wiped the clammy sweat from our brow, surely we would, each one, wish to say—

***“My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness!
I dare not trust the sweetest frame
But wholly lean on Jesus’ name.
On Christ, the solid rock, I stand!
All other ground is sinking sand.”***

Well, walk in Him just as you would walk in the valley of the shadow of death, but walk on the mountaintops of life’s activities!

III. Let us now say a few words on our third point—THE MODEL WHICH IS PRESENTED TO US HERE. We are to walk in Him *as we received Him*.

And how did we receive Him? Let us remember. You will not have to strain your memories much, for, I think, though other days have mingled with their fellows and, like coins worn in the circulation, have lost their impression, yet the day when you first received Christ will be as fresh as though it were newly minted in time. Oh, that first day!—

***“Do mind the place, the spot of ground
Where Jesus did you meet?”***

Some of us can never forget either that place or that time. Well, how did we receive Christ?

We received Him very gratefully, having no claim whatever to His grace. We felt that we had done everything to deserve God’s wrath. We confessed that there was no merit in us, but we perceived that there was mercy in Him—

***“We saw One hanging on a tree
In agonies and blood”***

—and as He told us to look at Him and assured us that there was life in a look, we did—and we were lightened, and we found life in Him! Surely we had shaken our hands of all merit, as Paul shook off the viper into the fire at Melita. We had no confidence, then, in any resolutions of our own, in any performances yet to come, much less in anything past. Well, then, we are to come now as empty-handed as we came then! Our song is to be—

***“Nothing in my hands I bring—
Simply to Your cross I cling.”***

How did we receive Christ? Well, *we received Him very humbly.* Whatever pride may be in our heart—and there is much of it—and, I suppose we shall never get rid of it till we are wrapped in our winding-sheets—there was as little that day as we ever had at any other time. Oh, how humbly did we creep to the foot of the cross! We were then broken in heart and contrite in spirit. Ah, Christian, can you remember what humble views you had of yourself—what a sink of depravity you felt your heart to be? Do you not recollect Augustine’s expression when he compares himself to a walking dunghill? And did you not feel yourself to be something of that kind—so base, so loathsome that you could only stand afar off and cry, “God be merciful to me, a sinner”? And you cried to Christ just as Peter did, “Lord, save me!” And just as the sea seemed about to swallow you up,

you laid hold upon His outstretched hand and you were saved! Now, tonight, do the same. Your danger is as great as ever out of Christ. Your sin is as great as ever out of Him. Come then, casting away all the pride which your experiences and graces may have worked in you—come to Him and take Him for your all-in-all!

How did we receive Christ? If I recollect rightly—and I think I do—we *received Him very joyfully*. Oh, what joy my soul had when first I knew the Lord! It was holy day in my soul that day. Perhaps we have never had such joyous days since then, and the reason has been, most likely, because we have been thinking about other things and have not thought so much about Christ Jesus the Lord. Come, let us again take Him! The wine is as sweet—let us drink as deeply as ever. Christ, the bread of heaven, is as nourishing. Come, let us eat as heartily as ever. Fill your omers, O you poor and weak ones! Gather much, for you shall have nothing left over. This Manna is very sweet—it tastes like wafers made of honey. Come to my Master as you came at first and He will give you to drink of the living waters once again!

How did we receive Christ? I am sure *we received Him very graciously*. He stood at the door and knocked, and we said, “Come in.” Your Savior, my dear friends, was long a stranger to your hearts. “Come in,” we said. We knew that He meant to take the best seat at the table. We understood that He came as Master and Lord, but we said, “Come in.” We did not quite know all that the cross might mean, but whatever it might mean, we meant to take it! Surely that day, when He asked us, “Can you drink of My cup, and can you be baptized with My baptism?” our soul said, “We are able.” And though we have been unfaithful to Him, yet I hope tonight we can take Christ as unreservedly as ever. Had I dreamed, when first I preached His gospel, that the way of the ministry would be so rough and thorny, my flesh would have shunned it! But, despite all, let it be what it is and ten thousand times worse, come in, my Master! Come and take Your servant—let me lie like a consecrated bull upon the altar, to be wholly burned, and not an atom left! Brothers, do you not feel the same? On this platform I have sometimes prayed that if the crushing of us might lift Christ one inch higher, it might be so! And if the dragging of our names through mire and dirt could make Christ’s Church more pure, we have prayed that it might be so! We have prayed that if any shame, if any dishonor, if any pain might put one more jewel in His crown than could be there in any other way, we might have the honor of suffering and being made ashamed for His sake!

And I think, brothers and sisters, though the flesh struggles, we may pray tonight, “Lord, bind the sacrifice with cords, even with cords to the horns of the altar.” We have received Christ and in that same way—*unreservedly*, we desire to walk in Him—

***“Have you counted the cost? Have you counted the cost
You followers of the cross?
And are you prepared, for your Master’s sake,
To suffer all worldly loss?
And can you endure with that virgin band,
The lowly and pure in heart
Who, where ever the Lamb does lead,
From His footsteps never depart?
Do you answer, ‘We can’? Do you answer, ‘We can,
Through His love’s constraining power’?
But do you remember the flesh is weak,
And will shrink in the trial-hour?
Yet yield to His love who around you now
The bands of a man would cast.
The cords of His love who was given for you
To His altar binding you fast.
You may count the cost, you may count the cost
Of all Egypt’s treasure,
But the riches of Christ you can never count—
His love you can never measure.”***

“As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.”

But oh, some of you have never received Him, so my last word is to them. Do you ask, “What is the way of salvation?” It is by receiving Christ. Oh, then come and receive Him! May the Holy Spirit’s power lead sinners to Christ! You need not bring anything to Him. You need not bring a soft heart to Him. You need not bring tears of repentance to Him. But just come and take Christ. Remember, it is not what you are, but it is what Christ is that saves you! Never look at yourself, but look at the wounds of Jesus! There is life there. God help you to look—to look tonight! And if

you shall find Him, our prayer shall be that from this day forth, you shall walk in Him and He shall have the glory!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 90.

A Prayer of Moses, the man of God.

It may help us to understand this Psalm if we recollect the circumstances which surrounded Moses when he was in the desert. For forty years he had to see a whole generation of people die in the wilderness. In addition to the deaths which might occur among those who were born in the wilderness, the whole of that great host which came out of Egypt, numbering, probably, between two and three million persons, must lie in their graves in the desert so that there must have been constant funerals—and the march of the children of Israel could be perceived along the desert track by the graves which they left behind them. You do not wonder, therefore, at this expression of the awe of “Moses, the man of God” as he was so continually reminded of the mortality of mankind. And note how reverently and trustfully he turns to the ever-living and eternal God and rests in Him.

Verse 1. *LORD, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.* “Did not Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all our fathers dwell in You? And though we are now weary-footed pilgrims who have no fixed dwelling place on earth, we do dwell in You. You, Lord, are the true home of all the generations of Your people.”

2. *Before the mountains were brought forth, or before You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.* God is the only being who has had eternal and essential existence independently of all others—and all others have owed their existence to Him.

3. *You turn man to destruction and say, Return, you children of men.* He sends us forth into life, and He calls us back again in death.

4. *For a thousand years in Your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.* Yesterday, while it was with us, was a short period of 24 hours. But when it is past, it seems like nothing at all. A thousand years, all big with events which we consider to be full of weight and importance, make up a long period in which myriads of men come and go—yet those thousand years, in God’s sight, “are but as yesterday when it is past,” or but as the few hours in the night during which the mariner keeps watch at sea and then is relieved by another. A thousand years are but “as a watch in the night” to the Eternal—and He needs no one to relieve Him, for “He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.”

5. *You carry them away as with a flood.* They have no power to stem the torrent.

5. *They are as a sleep.* Our earthly existence is but “as a sleep.” Many things are not what they seem to us to be in our fevered dreams. The time of awaking is coming and then things will appear very different to us from what they seem to be now.

5. *They are like grass which grows up.* Fresh, green, vigorous, lovely, restful to the eyes.

6. *In the morning it flourishes, and grows up; in the evening it is cut down and withers.* It needs no long period, ages upon ages, to destroy its beauty. Only let the swiftly-passing day come to its waning and the grass “is cut down and withers.”

7. *For we are consumed by Your anger, and by Your wrath are we troubled.* If we had to endure the flames of God’s anger, we would be consumed by it. But I think that Christians should not read this passage as though it applied to them. They are not under the divine anger, nor need they fear being troubled by the divine wrath, for His anger is turned away from them through the great atoning sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ. But the children of Israel in the wilderness were being consumed by God’s anger, and by His wrath they were being troubled, so that the words of Moses did apply to them.

8, 9. *You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your countenance. For all our days are passed away in Your wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told.* Like a romance, with which the Orientals still delight to beguile the passing hours. Such is the life of man—“as a tale that is told.”

10. *The days of our years are threescore years and ten.* This was a gloomy fact to Moses, who lived to be 120 years of age and who probably remembered other men who had been far older than himself. Yet it is well that the ordinary period of human life has been shortened. It is still far too long for those who do evil, though it may not be too long for those who do good. Yet there are,

even now, some who outlive their usefulness, and who might have been happier if they had finished their course sooner. “The days of our years are threescore years and ten.”

10. *And if by reason of strength they are fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow: for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.* Where do we fly? That is the all-important point! The cutting of the string that holds the bird by the foot is a blessing or a curse according to the way in which it takes its flight. If we fly up to build our nest on yonder trees of God that are full of sap, then, indeed, we do well when we fly away. And we may even long for the wings of a dove, that we may fly away and be at rest.

11, 12. *Who knows the power of Your anger? Even according to Your fear, so is Your wrath. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.* It has been well said that many men will number their cows, and number their coins, but forget to number their days! Yet that is a kind of arithmetic that would be exceedingly profitable to those who practiced it aright. Counting our days and finding them but few, we should seek to use them discreetly—we should not reckon that we could afford to lose so much as one of them! Who would be a spendthrift with so small a store as that which belongs to us?

13, 14. *Return, O LORD, how long? And let it repent You concerning Your servants. O satisfy us early with Your mercy that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.* “If they are but few, yet let them be happy. Give us an abundance of Your mercy, O Lord, and let us have it at once, so that however few our days may be, every one of them may be spent in the ways of wisdom and, consequently, in the ways of peace and happiness.”

15. *Make us glad according to the days wherein You have afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil.* “Balance our sorrows with an equal weight of joys. Give us grace equivalent to our griefs and if You have given us a bitter cup of woe, now let us drink from the golden chalice of Your love, and so let our fainting spirits be refreshed.”

16. *Let Your work appear unto Your servants.* May we have grace to devote ourselves entirely to God’s service and do the work which He has appointed us to do!

16. *And Your glory unto their children.* If we may not live to see the success of our efforts, may our children see it! If the glory of that bright millennial age, which is certain to come in due time, shall not gladden our eyes before we fall asleep in Jesus, let us do the Lord’s work as far as we can that our children may see His glory.

17. *And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish You the work of our hands upon us.* Even if we die, let our work live. May there be *something* permanent remaining after we are gone—not wood, hay, and stubble, which the fire will consume, but a building of gold, silver, and precious stones which will endure the fire that, sooner or later, will “try every man’s work of what sort it is.”

17. *Yes, the work of our hands establish You it.*

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