

THE EVERLASTING COUNSELLOR

NO. 3066

A SERMON
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“Is thy counsellor perished?”
Micah 4:9

THIS question is addressed to the church of God, for in the context it is written, “And thou, O tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem. Now why dost thou cry out aloud? is there no king in thee? is thy counsellor perished? for pangs have taken thee as a woman in travail.”

The poor church of God had lost its way—it was doubting with regard to its direction, it knew not whither to turn, to the right hand or to the left. In an agony of deep distraction, it bowed its head in fell dismay, and thought that its King had disappeared and its Counselor perished. Forth comes the prophet Micah, full of the Spirit, and addresses this question to the tried children of God, “Is thy counsellor perished?”

We have before us a question implying three things. First, *a doctrine*, namely, that our Counselor is not perished. Secondly, *a reproof*, for we sometimes act as if our Counselor had perished. And thirdly, *an encouragement* for, however we may be situated and whatever may have perished, our Counselor has not perished.

I. First, then, here is A QUESTION IMPLYING A DOCTRINE, namely, the doctrine that the church of God has a Counselor and that that Counselor has not perished.

In olden times, the Lord’s people, whenever they were in a difficulty, could always find direction. Any man who doubted whether he should build his house, or whether he should go to war, or whether in any matter of his business he should do this or that, could at once receive instruction and advice by referring to the high priest who wore the ephod. And being moved by the Spirit, the high priest spoke with his hand on the Urim and Thummim, and gave an authoritative answer.

Thus David told Abiathar to bring the ephod, and when he asked the Lord, “Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul?” the Lord said, “They will deliver thee up.” So, in other critical periods of the history of the saints, you will find it recorded that they were constantly in the habit of going to the priest and seeking for direction. Some of us may bewail the loss of such priests. We may be thinking, “I know not which way to go. I have no direction, I have no means of obtaining guidance.” O Christian! Is thy Counselor perished? Ah, no! The doctrine is assuredly taught us in Scripture that the church of God still has an infallible Guide.

There are some things, beloved, in which we do not need a guide. Concerning morality, for instance, we need no other guide than that of the Sacred Volume. Wherever our course has two phases to it, and the one is morally wrong and the other morally right, we have no need of a counselor. We only need, by the help of God’s Spirit, to come to the Bible and we can always see which road to take. Whenever a thing is a sin, we need scarcely appeal to Christ to know whether we shall commit it, for we are taught to avoid even the appearance of evil.

If we consider that a thing is wrong, we have no right to do it, even though it might tend to our advantage in worldly affairs. We must not do evil that good may come, for if we were to do so, then indeed our damnation would be just. We have no occasion to ask whether we should go the road of sin or the road of righteousness. Is there not a handpost clearly pointing, “This is the way”? When we see

that it is the path which Christ has marked out, in which the holy prophets have gone and that wherein apostles followed, we know we ought to walk in it.

But the difficulty is, when two things may be either one of them right and we do not know which to choose—when there are two courses which seem to us to be indifferent as to moral propriety—when there is no law against either, and we can do as seems to us best without staining our profession as Christians, or forgetting to honor God in all our ways. We are in a great difficulty then. We know not what to do.

We are resolved we will not commit a willful sin. Through divine grace, we are determined that we will not sin to rid ourselves of our embarrassments, but we are in such a strait, we do not know what to do. How are we to tell? Is there any means left in the church of God whereby a distressed and entangled traveler on the road to heaven may ascertain his way in the dubious paths of providence, when it is left to his own choice?

We answer—Yes, there is. The Counselor is not perished. There are appointed means still whereby the members of the church of Christ individually have found guidance. These means are not what some take them to be. For instance, they are not by casting lots. Mr. John Wesley very frequently cast lots to know what he should do. Now, I care not who it was that did so, it is all the same to me—it is tempting God. For a man to twist a piece of paper and say, “Black, I go. White, I stop,” is tempting God’s providence.

I remember a case that happened in the country, when twelve jurymen were almost equally divided as to the guilt of a certain prisoner—and they had the impudence to appeal to God in the matter—and to toss up, “heads or tails,” whether the person was innocent or guilty. They were Christian persons too, and they thought they were appealing to God, for they said that the lot was the end of contention.

It is true that lots have been sanctioned in olden times. God has acknowledged lots and has blessed them, but we know of nothing to countenance lots now. We have no right to think we can appeal to God in such a manner. God by His providence can direct it and no doubt He does. “The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.” Still, God will take care that the direction will be such a painful one that we shall be chastised for our presumption in daring thus to appeal to Him. We do not believe in such things, “We have a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place.”

Again, there are some persons who think they are counseled by God when they certainly are not. They will even come to their minister to ask his advice concerning things—when they have already made up their minds what they will do. We have heard a story of a good minister who was applied to by a young woman, to know what she should do in a certain matter. He could perceive full well that she had made up her mind, so he said, “Go outside, and hear what the bells say.” The bells of course chimed in her ears, “Do it. Do it.” She went home and did it!

A little while later, she found she had got into disgrace by doing it, so she came back to the minister and said, “Sir, you have advised me wrong.” “No, I did not,” said the minister. “You did not interpret the bells right—go and listen again.” She went outside and the bells said, “Never do it! Never do it!”

There are many persons whom we might advise to listen to the bells, for they never seek counsel till they have made their own choice. They call it a guidance of providence, whereas the truth is that they determine beforehand what they will do—and if our advice happens to suit them, they take it—but if not, they prefer their own opinion and give their inclination the benefit of a doubt.

Having thus exposed some of the fallacies in respect to guidance, you will ask me to tell you how our Counselor really does guide us. I will try to explain this to you briefly. There were two or three different manners whereby the Lord guided the children of Israel when they were passing through the wilderness, which may serve to show us the methods of His counsel.

One of them was the fiery cloudy pillar of His providence. Another was the ark of the covenant which always went before them. Another was the advice of Hobab, the father-in-Law of Moses, who

knew the best places to pitch the tents. And yet again they had the priest with Urim and Thummim, who told them what they were to do. Each of these things has a spiritual meaning.

First of all, *the fiery cloudy pillar of God's providence is often a very precious guide to God's people*. Beloved, there may be those among you who will not be able to understand my meaning now, and yet, if you live long enough, you will review with pleasure in your old age the truth I am setting forth.

Many a time when the night was dark, the hosts of Israel moved forward by the light of that pillar of fire. There was a necessity for them to proceed in one direction, because there was no light in any other. So you will often find providence going before you. Just now, you are in a dilemma. You are saying, "Which road shall I take?" Suddenly, providence stops one of the roads up. Well, you don't need a guide then, because there is only one road to go.

You are saying, "Which of two situations shall I take?" One is taken by somebody else and there is only one left—so that you have no alternative but to follow the cloud. Look at that pillar of providence and you will find it will guide you better than anything else. Seek when you're in difficulty and you know not what to do, to come before God, and say to Him, "O Lord, show me by Your providence what to do! Let events so turn out that I cannot avoid doing that which would be for the best. If there are two doors and I know not which is the proper one, shut one of them up, Lord, even though it should be the one I like best—and then I must go through the other—and so I shall be guided by Your providence."

But instead of that, my hearers, we often run before the cloud, and as the old Puritans had it, "They who ran before the cloud went on a fool's errand and they soon had to come back again." Follow the cloud, beloved. Ask providence to give you direction. You have not perhaps looked to God in the matter, to see His hand in providence.

Good Mr. Muller (of the Orphan Home) says, "In regard to placing out my children in situations for life, in regard to what servants I shall take into my house, and whom I shall receive in my family, I always go and seek direction of God and exercise faith in His Word that, even in these little matters, He will direct and guide me. And when I do so, I do not hear a voice from heaven, but I hear something tantamount to it in providence, which teaches me that such-and-such a thing I ought to do, and that such-and-such a thing I ought not to do."

Do not expect, beloved, to hear voices, to see visions, and to dream dreams, but rather look at providence—see how God's wonder-working wheels turn round, and as the wheels turn so do you. Whichever way His hand points, thither go, and thus God shall guide you, for your Counselor has not yet perished.

Again, there is not only the fiery cloudy pillar of providence, but there is, next, *the ark of the covenant of the Lord, resting in the believer's heart, which often guides him*. You know that the ark is the type of Jesus, and Jesus often leads a Christian by His Holy Spirit immediately exercised upon the heart.

Perhaps when you have read the lives of some eminent Quakers, you have laughed at what they conceived to be the inspiration of the Holy Ghost "moving" them, as they called, to go to certain places. Never laugh at that, beloved. There is more in it than some of you imagine—some of you who are not moved by the Holy Spirit and who cannot understand it. Your nature is so hard and stubborn that you do not feel that gentle influence, that touch of God's hand moving you to do a thing.

But it is not a fancy, mark you—they who know most of spiritual life will attest its reality. I myself, sometimes, (I speak honestly what I do know. I testify what I have felt) have been moved to do certain things from altogether unaccountable reasons, not knowing in the least degree why I was to do them, or understanding why such things would be profitable. Perhaps a text has come forcibly to my mind and I have been obliged to take a certain course which I found afterwards was for the best.

I remember one incident which was a turning-point in my life and led me to this place. I had determined that I would enter a college. I had made up my mind and resolved to see the principal. In fact, I had waited at his house some time to see him, but by divine providence, though I waited in the

house, he was shown into one room and I into another. He never knew that I was there and I never knew that he was there. So there we sat waiting for each other all the time, and I left without seeing him.

I went home and the text came into my mind, “Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not.” Day after day, week after week, I could neither rest, sleep, nor do anything without these words ringing in my ears, “Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not.” And as I pondered them, I thought—I know what this means. I have been thinking of great things for myself, but I will no longer seek them. So I made up my mind the other way, and I said, “By God’s grace, I will never go there.”

Then I found rest for my spirit, by following God’s Word. I shall never doubt, as long as I live, that it was a divine impulse—nor shall I ever cast away that thought from my mind. At any rate, it was such an impulse that my conscience could not be easy till I obeyed it. And you, Christians, who look at the inner life—you who live in much fellowship with God—will have divine impulses, you will have divine moving of the Holy Ghost. You will, at certain seasons, be moved to do a certain thing—and I beseech you, if you are so moved, however strange it may seem to yourselves, if you hear the whisper of the Spirit within you—go and do it at once.

There is a remarkable anecdote of an old Christian man, who was stirred up, one night, to go to a certain house on a certain street. And though it was fifteen miles off and it was eventide, he saddled his horse and rode with all haste to the place. He arrived at the city. The lamps were glistening and as he crossed the bridge, he paused at the sound of the river murmuring in his ears, as if to break the solemn stillness of the night. Still he felt a sacred impulse within him urging his steps forward till, at length he reached the street and the house.

When he had arrived at the door and knocked, he waited a long time before there was an answer. Presently, down came a haggard-looking man, who asked, “What are you after?” “Friend,” said he, “I am told to come and see you at this hour of the night. Why and wherefore I cannot tell. I know the Lord has some message for your soul.”

The man started. “Bless God,” he said. “I had this halter around my neck five minutes ago to hang myself. Verily you were moved to come here.” Then he cast the rope aside and exclaimed, “Now I know that the Lord has not forgotten me, because He has sent His servant to deliver me out of the hand of the enemy.” If this is not a case of being moved by the Holy Spirit, I leave it to those who are so incredulous, or rather, so credulous in their unbelief, as to doubt it.

There are such things, beloved. They may not often happen in so remarkable a manner, but depend upon it, such things are occasionally experienced. The Counselor has not perished and He does speak to the heart. He does put divine impulses there. He does move the soul. He does make us do things of which we should not have dreamed. And thus a strong necessity may be laid upon our circumstances, or it may be laid upon our will, while our understanding is in either case kept in the dark, so that we are led in a way we think not, to prove that our Counselor is not perished.

But there was another mode of guidance. I told you that the children of Israel were guided by Hobab, the father-in-law of Moses. He knew the places where to pitch their tents, he knew where the palm trees grew, he knew the shady side of the rock, he knew where the rippling rills flowed from beneath the rocky mountainside, he knew the best place of shelter from their foes. *Hobab guided them and he was a type of the Gospel ministry.*

And those whom God has called to that honorable service will often be the means of guiding God’s people. We have known many come to God’s house seeking guidance and have heard them say that the minister described their case exactly. And they have gone away and said, “Although nobody could have told him about me, really, if I had told him all about myself, he could not have spoken more pointedly at me than he did.”

Have I not had hundreds of cases of that sort? Why, I have had letters written to me telling me not to be so personal, when I never knew anything whatever of the person who felt aggrieved. What, do any of you object to my being personal? As long as I live, I will be personal to all of you. And if there be an error in any man’s conduct or judgment—by the help of God I will show him where he is wrong.

Personal preaching is the best kind of preaching. We are not going to avoid personalities. We are striving to reach individual cases as much as possible, that every man may hear the Word of God in his own tongue—and hear it speaking to his own heart.

But how singularly, at times, you have heard your case described! You have gone to the house of God, and sat down in the pew, and the minister has gone into the pulpit, and taken a text just adapted to yourself. He begins to tell you what your position is exactly and then he tells you the way you should go. You cannot help saying as you retire, “That man is a prophet.”

Ay, and so he is, for as you will remember, I have often told you this is the way to find out a true servant of the Lord. Daniel was acknowledged to be a true servant of the Lord because he could tell the king both the dream and its interpretation. The astrologers could only tell the interpretation after they had been told the dream. Many can give you advice when they know your case, but the true servant of the Lord does not need to be informed about your case—he knows it beforehand.

You come up here unobserved by your fellow creatures, but what you have done in your closet, that the Lord has told His servant. What you have done in your business, that He has revealed to him in secret communion, and it will be made manifest to your conscience. He will tell you your dream and the interpretation of it, too. And you will say, “Verily, he is a servant of the Lord God of Israel.” That is the way to tell a true prophet of the Lord, and I beseech you believe no other.

Do not go to the astrologer or the soothsayer, who wishes to know your experience before he will open to you the future—but go where your experience is unfolded, and where you have all your difficulties grappled with and removed. The Counselor has not perished. Though speaking not in visions, He still leads His people by providence, by divine impulses in the mind, and by a holy ministry which is the oracle of the most high and living God. Still does the gracious Counselor deign to counsel His people.

And the children of Israel were also guided in another way—when the priest inquired of the Lord by the Urim and Thummim. There is a sacred mystery about this, “of which we cannot now speak particularly.” Still, I doubt not that by this ordinance, God put a very high honor upon the priesthood and conferred a great privilege on His people.

Now *the peculiar privilege of this dispensation* is not the Urim and Thummim—it is *the gift of the Holy Spirit*. This is the promise of the Lord Jesus Christ to all His disciples, to all who believe on His name. Ah, beloved, you know not much of counsel and guidance if you have not yet received the Holy Ghost. Observe how it is written, “The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.”

Do you ask me, “How does the Spirit of God guide us?” I answer, not by making fresh revelations as the Swedenborgians pretend, but by shining upon the Word that has been revealed of old—and by shining in our hearts. So the Spirit witnesses with our spirits. So does He apply to us the promises. So does He open the Scriptures to our understanding and He opens our understanding to understand the Scriptures.

The blessed Spirit also makes intercession for us on earth even as Christ makes intercession for us in heaven. Then He takes of the things of Jesus and shows them unto us. And He guides us by the old paths, where we see the foot-tracks of patriarchs and prophets, apostles and martyrs. Such is the doctrine implied in the inquiry of my text, “Is thy counsellor perished?”

II. Then, secondly, THIS QUESTION SUGGESTS A REPROOF—“Is thy counsellor perished?”

It is a reproof, because the child of God does not believe, doctrinally, that his Counselor has perished, but he does so practically. He at times runs of his own accord instead of waiting for the guidance of God. At other times, he is afraid to move forward, even when the finger of Him who “is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working,” has clearly pointed the way and made the vision so plain “that he may run that readeth it.”

How often does the child of God nurse his difficulties as Asaph did when he said, “When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me.” But then he adds, “until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.” O beloved, remember how Habakkuk, in a time of danger, stood upon his watch, and sat upon his tower, to see what the Lord would say unto him.

Remember what Hezekiah did with the letter which he received from the hand of the messengers of Sennacherib, king of Assyria. When he had read it, “he went up into the house of the Lord and spread it before the LORD.” Alas, alas! that your lives should be constantly vexed with trifling cares, instead of “casting all your care upon God.” The knowledge that “He careth for you” ought to drive all your anxious cares away.

One reason why many of us are slow to take counsel of the Lord is this—*we are not thoroughly emptied of our own conceits*. Let me remind you of that memorable passage in the history of the children of Israel when they came to Kadesh and were proceeding along the borders of Canaan. The spies were sent forth by Moses to bring in their report of the land. And of the twelve, two only brought in a cheering report. The other ten discouraged the hearts of the people with a pitiful tale of walled cities and their giant population.

In vain does Moses admonish them, “Dread not, neither be dismayed.” In vain does he assure them, “The LORD shall go before you, he shall fight for you.” In vain does he call to remembrance the wonders which the Lord had done in Egypt before their eyes. Faint-hearted and desponding, in this thing they did not believe the Lord their God.

Look again and you shall behold the counterpart. They were not more timid than they were presumptuous. The heart that is prone to misgive is equally liable to presume. No sooner has the commandment been given to return into the wilderness than they gird on every man his weapons of war and go presumptuously up the hill to fight with the Amalekites and the Canaanites—and so they were smitten and fled before them.

Who would imagine that the people who cringed at the mention of the sons of Anak yesterday, would dare to fly in the face of the commandment of God on the morrow? With more of humility, they would have been braver men. Ah, beloved! How closely we resemble those Israelites in measuring ourselves by ourselves! One day we feel so faint that we can attempt nothing for God, and another day our hearts beat so high that we could presume on anything.

The young convert in particular will often complain that he is too weak in faith to pray—and then again he will boast that he feels so strong in faith that he could preach. The oldest of you have never yet learnt the full meaning of these precious words, “*In every thing* by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.”

Ah, you may make a deal of ceremony about laying your great troubles before Him, but you do not seem to understand the length and breadth of “everything”—every little thing as well as every great thing. Paul could go into particulars and say, “Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatever ye do.” You seek counsel in foul weather but not when the sun shines. You consult the weather instead of watching “the cloud” to regulate your movements.

The reproof is intended to rebuke our folly as well as our sin. “Is thy counsellor perished?” What would you think of a captain, out at sea, near a coast where there are many rocks—as on the British coast, which is exceedingly dangerous—if he should say, “Now, sailors, reef your sails. You must be kept still on the ocean, for there are so many rocks, we don’t know which way to go”? Imagine him as he walks up and down the deck in melancholy anxiety and says, “Sailors, we can’t go on. I don’t know which way to steer. I can’t tell what to do!”

What would the sailors say? “Sir, are all the pilots dead?” “No, they are not.” “Then run up a signal and fetch a pilot.” That is the way to steer through your difficulties, but very often, you are pacing up and down the deck and saying, “Oh, I shall never be able to steer through this narrow channel! I shall never be able to escape these dangers. I shall never be able to avoid that rock.”

But run up the signal and fetch the Pilot. That is the way, for our Counselor is not perished. There is yet a Pilot on shore yet—He will see your signal, and as sure as, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, you make known your requests unto God, He will guide you by His counsel and afterward receive you to glory.

But you often act as if you had no Counselor. You run to one friend, and then to another friend, and you ask their advice. But let me tell you that if you asked advice of the creature all day long, to however many different counselors you went, you would have as many different pieces of advice.

We have heard of a man who, in order to test the doctors and ascertain whether they were true, wrote, I think, to four hundred of them for a prescription, giving them all the same case. And I think he had three hundred eighty different prescriptions, many of them diametrically opposite to one another—and not above two of them at all like each other in the smallest degree.

Astonishing, is it not, that there should be such division? But there is equal division of opinion when you come to ask advice of your friends. One says, “I would do it.” Another says, “I would not do it.” Some of old said, “This is the blind man.” Others said, “He is like him.” There were those, again, who denied his identity. But there were some who said, “The best way is to go to the blind man himself.” And he said, “I am he.”

It is the wisest plan to go to the Master and ask *Him*, instead of going to our fellow men. You may go round and round and round and take all the advice you like, but you will obtain no guidance, nor direction. Rather follow the example of the disciples who went to Jesus when they were in difficulties. He will guide you through the desert and bring you safely to heaven.

“But” says one, “how may I draw near to this great Counselor, for I am in deep distress?” Ah! then the question comes to you with full power as a reproof. Are you asking how you may find Him? What! Does He not abide with you? Do you not live with Him? Has your Counselor perished? Is He gone? Has He forgotten you? Or do you cease to remember Him—your Friend, your bosom Companion? Do you not hold to Him to walk with you and lodge with you? Do you not live in Him? Verily, this is a reproof to you, for you have lived as if your Counselor had perished. And if you ask, O Christian, how you may draw near, even to His seat, let me tell you there is the sacred ladder of prayer and faith up which you may climb, even to heaven, and talk with Jesus. Let your difficulties be ever so great, go and tell them to your Lord.

You say, “Why, He knows them. There is no necessity for telling them to Him.” I would have you all, when you are in doubt, go and tell the Lord what you are in doubt about. Go and cross-examine yourselves in prayer. Draw out your confessions. Tell Him all your circumstances. Do not say, “I need not utter them with my mouth, for He knows them”—but tell Him all about them. It will do you good and it will ease your aching hearts.

God likes His people to make a clean breast of it. Speak it in plain English to God. Don’t go quoting human prayer-books, but breathe out the plaintive melody of your own sighs. Tell Him, “I am in such-and-such distress and I ask Your gracious guidance.” Don’t go round about, but go straight to the point. Tell Him what it is and when you have confessed your difficulty, the Lord will help you.

Cast the anchor out and let the Pilot come on board. After that, you may ship your anchor again, and let the Almighty God of Jacob take the tiller, guide you over the stormy billows, and land you in the haven of peace. The Counselor has not perished.

Here, then, is a reproof which may be often of use to us. When we observe the temper and the conduct of Christian people, we frequently think them ill-advised, as if they had no Counselor. Why so timorous and so craven-hearted when duty calls? Why is zeal so wild and so little tempered with discretion? Why does adversity cast you down so much? Why does prosperity make you vaunt yourselves and behave so unseemly?

The answer to such questions, I suppose, is not to be found in any wanton disrespect to the Word of God, or the statutes of His mouth, but you draw not near to the Lord as your Counselor—you hold not sweet fellowship with Him. You may spell over His ancient oracles with diligent care and yet, if you

have no communion with your Counselor, if you order not your cause before Him, and fill your mouth with arguments, then the reproof belongs to you, “Is thy counsellor perished?” He is an ever-living Advocate. His secret is with them that fear Him. Our blessed Master did not leave His disciples, like orphans, to shift for themselves. Why then should you perplex yourself with strange fears and forebodings? Why run hither and thither to one and another for advice? “Is thy counsellor perished?”

III. Now, lastly, here is a word of comfort to the desponding. THE QUESTION IS INTENDED FOR ENCOURAGEMENT. “Is thy counsellor perished?”

There are many things that have perished. There is one of you now lamenting the loss of a dear, pious father. And another is groaning over the corpse of a mother. The yet unburied body of a husband lies within your house. Or perhaps your dead child is yet uncoffined, and you have come here to seek some cordial for your griefs. Well, these have perished—objects of your sweet affection! As a dream they have passed away and lo, they are not! The place that knew them once shall know them no more.

You may weep, mourner, for Jesus wept. Yet you may not despair. If these be gone, your Counselor is not perished. You have lost some friends, but your Counselor is not dead. Some of the private soldiers are slain, but the General is alive. Some of the common people have fallen prey to a disease, but the Counselor lives still.

If anyone had met poor Little-Faith and said to him, “Well, Little-Faith, you have been met by the robbers—what have you lost?” “Oh!” he would have said, “thank God! Thank God! Thank God!” “What for, Little-faith?” “Why, I have lost a great many things, but look here! I have not lost my jewels!”

One of you goes home from business to your private house. As you go, you have to take a large bag with £500 in it. Going along, somebody comes behind you and steals your handkerchief. What do you say when you get home? “I did not like to lose the handkerchief, certainly, but never mind, the £500 are safe! I am glad they did not steal that.”

So it is with you—some of your earthly comforts have been taken from you, but do not despair. “Is thy counsellor perished?” “No, He is not. He is my Counselor still, and He has not ceased to love me, nor has He ceased to live for me. His affection is not abated. His grace is unchanged. His understanding is unsearchable. He knows the way that I take.”

But another says, “I have not lost my friends by death. I could almost wish I had. But sir, they have deserted me. I am a minister. I had deacons who stood by me once, but now they have turned their backs upon me. I had an affectionate church, but there are some who, like Diotrophes, have loved the pre-eminence and turned against me.”

Is that your state, brother? I can pity, if I cannot sympathize with your trouble. I have not felt the same, for my people love their pastor and gather round him in every possible way. But I can tell you this for your comfort, your Counselor is not perished. What though your principal supporter be determined that you should leave the place? What if your familiar friend, with whom you went to the house of God in company, has betrayed you? Your Counselor is not perished.

I think again I hear a whisper from one who says, “I am not a minister, but I am engaged in seeking the welfare of my people. I had helpers once, I thought I was doing good, but one by one they have all withdrawn, and I am left alone, faint and cheerless.” You may wish them back for they were good men, but console yourself with this thought—the Counselor is not gone and He is able to support you.

We have heard of an ancient orator, who, when he was speaking, had only one auditor. All who had come to listen at the commencement went away—but he still kept on with his oration. When he closed, the question was asked him, how he could keep on when there was only one person to hear him. “It is true,” he said, “I had only one auditor, but that auditor was Plato, and that was enough for me.”

So, you may have only one friend, but that one friend is Jesus and He is enough—a host in Himself—the “Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God.” O deserted soul, you who walk in solitary places—you who have neither friend nor helper—your Counselor is not perished.

And you son of poverty, bereaved of your wealth—you child of indigence, bereft of all that you had—you whose health is weak, and whose spirits are low and desponding!—what though you have lost wealth, health, and friends—yea, though you are a total wreck now, there still remains one blessed reserve, “Is thy counsellor perished?” No, Jesus lives! Write that down—Jesus lives! Then let every believer in Jesus make his own application of that truth.

A great minister is dead, but Jesus lives. A kind friend is dead, but Jesus lives. My property is gone, but Jesus lives. My comfort has failed, but Jesus lives. And because He lives—He Himself has said it—I shall live also. “Where I am, there shall also my servant be.” Then trust Him, and give no quarter to fear or despondency. Your life is secure. He will preserve you.

O my friends, my friends, how much I mourn that there are some of you who are without a guide! Oh, that I could picture that sad thought so that you might see your own unhappy case—without a guide! See yonder desert? It is in the midst of Arabia. There are no trees, no shrubs, no cooling streams—nothing but the hot sky above and the burning sand beneath.

And there is a man wandering there in awful solitude! Do you see him? He looks haggard, worn, forlorn. He is gazing on the ground to see if he can find a camel’s track, that he may follow it. He runs hither and thither seeking a path of escape, but he runs in vain. He turns round and round in a perpetual circle, while the fiery desert still encompasses him.

Why does he wander thus? Because he has no guide. Watch him a while longer. He casts his eye around, but there is no hope. Deluded by the mirage for a moment, he thinks there are green plains around him, but alas! the vision mocks his hope. Stooping down to drink, he fills his mouth with hot sand. O man! why so foolish as to pursue the phantom? Because he has no guide.

Watch him again. He lays himself upon the ground, the subject of despair. He groans and casts his eyes up at the death-bird wheeling in the air, expectant of his prey, for he has scented him from a distance and is come to devour him. Why does he not rouse himself? Because he has no guide.

And now he is dead, the vulture is upon him and his flesh is cleared away by the horrid bird. And as you go through the desert, there is nothing but a bleached skeleton to tell the harrowing tale. Why did that man die? Because he had no guide. And so shall the wicked perish. But the righteous “shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.”

God give you His Holy Spirit, that you may receive the instruction, hearken to the reproof, and enjoy the comforts of this Counselor evermore!

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.