

**THE BEGINNING, INCREASE,
AND END OF THE DIVINE LIFE**
NO. 311

**A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, APRIL 29, 1860
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND**

“Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase.”
Job 8:7

THIS was the reasoning of Bildad the Shuhite. He wished to prove that Job could not possibly be an upright man, for if he were so, he here affirms that his prosperity would increase continually, or that if he fell into any trouble, God would awake for him, and make the habitation of his righteousness prosperous, and though his family were now all destroyed and his wealth scattered to the winds, yet if he were an upright man, God would surely appear for him, and his latter end would greatly increase.

Now the utterances of Bildad and of the other two men who came to comfort Job, but who made his wounds tingle, are not to be accepted as being inspired. They spoke as men—as *mere* men. They reasoned no doubt in their own esteem logically enough, but the Spirit of God was not with them in their speech, therefore with regard to any sentiment which we find uttered by these men, we must use our own judgment, and if it be not in consonance with the rest of Holy Scripture, it will be our bounden duty to reject it as being but the word of man—of a wise and ancient man it is true, but still of a man only.

With regard to the passage which I have selected as a text, it is true—altogether apart from its being said by Bildad, or being found in the Bible at all, it is true, as indeed the facts of the book of Job prove, for Job did greatly increase in his latter end. His beginning *was* small, he was brought down to poverty, to the potsherd and to the dunghill, he had many graves, but no children, he had had many losses, he had now nothing left to lose, and yet God did awake for him, his righteousness came out from the darkness which had eclipsed it, he shone in sevenfold prosperity, so that the words of Bildad were prophetic, though he knew it not, God put into his mouth, language which did come true after all.

Indeed, we have here a great principle—a principle against which none can ever contend. The beginning of the godly and the upright man may be but very small, but his latter end shall greatly increase.

Evil things may seem to begin well, but they end badly, there is the flash and the glare, but afterwards the darkness and the black ash. They promise fairly, *their* sun rises in the zenith, and then speedily sets, never to rise again. Evil things begin as mountains, they end as molehills. You sail upon their ocean at first and as you sail onward it grows into a river, and afterwards into a dry bed, if not into burning sands.

Behold Satan in the garden of Eden. Sin begins with the promise, “Thou shall be as gods!” How grand is its beginning! Where ends it? Shivering beneath the trees of the garden, complaining of nakedness, sin comes to its end. Or see it in Satan himself. He stretches out his right hand to snatch the diadem of heaven, he would be Lord paramount. He cannot bear to serve, he longs to reign.

Oh! glittering vision that enchants the eye of an arch-angelic spirit! But where ends it? The vision is all gone, and is succeeded by “the blackness of darkness forever,” and the chains reserved in fire for those that kept not their first estate.

So will it be with you too, my friend, if you have chosen the path of evil. Today your mirth is as the crackling of thorns under a pot, it blazes, it crackles with excess of joy, tomorrow you shall find nothing there but a handful of ashes, and darkness, and cold. Ay, the path of evil is downhill, from its sunny

summits to its dark ravines—from the pretended loftiness, which it assumes when it professes to be a cherub, to that lowliness in which it finds itself to be a fiend. Evil goes downward, it has its great things first, and then its terrible things last. Not so however, with good.

With good the beginning is even small, but its latter end does greatly increase. “The path of the just is as the shining light,” which sheds a few flickering rays at first, which exercises a combat with the darkness, but it “shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”

As the coming forth of stars at eventide, when first one and then another, and yet another struggles through the darkness, till at last the whole starry host are marshaled on the heavenly plains—so it is with good—it begins with grains of sand, it goes on to hills, and later it swells up to mountains, it begins with the rippling rill—then a little cascade leaps from its secret birthplace, and down the mountain it dashes, it swells to a joyous stream, wherein the fish do leap anon it becomes a river which bears upon its surface the navigation of nations, and then it rolls at last an ocean that belts the globe.

Good things progress. They are like Jacob’s ladder—they ascend round by round. We begin as men, we end as angels, we climb until the promise of Satan is fulfilled in a sense in which he never understood it, we become as gods, and are made partakers of the divine, being reconciled unto God, and then having God’s grace infused into us.

The principle then, upon which I have to speak this morning, is this—that though the beginnings of good things are small, yet their latter end shall greatly increase. Instead however, of dealing with this as a mere doctrine, I propose to use it practically, assume the fact and then make a practical use of it. Three ends shall I hope to serve—first, *to quiet the fears of those who are but beginners in grace*, secondly, *to confirm their faith*, and thirdly, *to quicken their diligence*.

May I ask the prayers of God’s people here, that I may be strengthened in this preaching? I cannot tell how it is—the cold clammy sweat comes over me now I am about to address you, and I feel almost quivering with weakness, nevertheless, this is a subject which may strengthen me as well as you, and therefore let us go to it at once.

I. First then, for THE QUIETING OF YOUR FEARS.

You say, my hearer, “I am but a beginner in grace, and therefore I am vexed with anxiety and full of timorousness.” Yes and it shall be my business, if God the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, shall enable me, to give you some few sweet words which, like wafers made with honey, you may roll under your tongue and find them satisfactory and pleasant, even as that manna which came down from heaven and fed the Israelites in the wilderness.

Perhaps your first fear, if I put it into words, is this—“My beginning is so small that I cannot tell when it did begin, and therefore I think I cannot have been converted, but am still in the gall of bitterness.”

O beloved! how many thousands like yourself have been exercised with doubts upon this point! They were not converted in an instant, they were not stricken down as in the Revivals, they were not nerved with terrible alarms, such as John Bunyan describes in his “Grace Abounding,” but they were called of God, as was Lydia, by a still small voice. Their hearts were gradually and happily opened to receive the truth, it was not as if a tornado or a hurricane rushed through their spirits, but a soft zephyr blew, and they lived and came to God.

And you doubt, do you, because from this very reason you cannot tell when you were first converted? Be encouraged, it is not necessary for you to know when you were regenerated, it is but necessary for you to know that you are so. If you can set no date to the beginning of your faith, yet if you believe now, you are saved. If in your diary there stands no red-letter day in which your sins were pardoned, and your soul accepted, yet if your trust be in Jesus only, this very day you are pardoned, and you are accepted, despite your ignorance of the time when.

God’s promises bear no date, our notes are dated because there is a time when they run due, and we are apt to forget them, God’s promises bear none, and His gifts sometimes do not bear any. If you are saved—though the date is erased—yet do you rejoice and triumph evermore in the Lord your God.

True, there are some of us who can remember the precise spot where we first found the Savior. The day will never be forgotten when these eyes looked to the cross of Christ and found their tears all wiped away. But thousands in the fold of Jesus know not when they were brought in, be it enough for them to know they are there. Let them feed upon the pasture, let them lie down beside the still waters, for whether they came by night or by day they did not come at a forbidden hour. Whether they came in youth or in old age, it matters not, all times are acceptable with God, “and whosoever cometh,” come he when he may, “He will in no wise cast out.”

Does it not strike you as being very foolish reasoning if you should say in your heart, “I am not converted because I do not know when?” Nay, with such reasoning as that, I could prove that old Rome was never built, because the precise date of her building is unknown, nay, we might declare that the world was never made, for its exact age even the geologist cannot tell us. We might prove that Jesus Christ Himself never died, for the precise date on which He expired on the tree is lost beyond recovery, nor does it matter much to us.

We know the world was made, we know that Christ did die, and so you—if you are now reconciled to God, if now your trembling arms are cast around that cross, you too are saved—though the beginning was so small that you cannot tell when it was.

Indeed, in living things, it is hard to put the finger upon the beginning. Here is a fruit—will you tell me when it began to be? Was it at the time when first the tree sent forth its fruit bud? Did this fruit begin when first the flower shed its exhalations of perfume upon the air? Indeed, you could not have seen it if you had looked. When was it? Was it when the full-ripe flower was blown away, and its leaves were scattered to the wind, and a little embryo of fruit was left? ’Twere hard to say it did not begin before that, and equally hard to say at what precise instant that fruit began to be formed.

Ay, and so is it with divine grace, the desires are so faint at the beginning, the convictions are but the etchings upon the plate, which afterwards must be engraven with a harder instrument, and they are such flimsy things, such transient impressions of divine truth, that ’twere difficult to say what is transient and what permanent, what is really of the Spirit of God, and what is not, what has saved the soul, or what only brought it to the verge of salvation, what made it really live, or what was really the calling together of the dry bones before the breath came, and the bones began to live. Quit your fears, my hearers, upon this point, for if you are saved, no matter when, you never shall be unsaved.

Another doubt also arises from this point. “Ah! sir,” says a timid Christian, “it is not merely the absence of all date to my conversion, but the extreme weakness of the grace I have.” “Ah,” saith one, “I sometimes think I have a little faith, but it is so mingled with unbelief, distrust, and incredulity, that I can hardly think it is God’s gift, the faith of God’s elect.

I hope sometimes I have a little love, but it is such a beginning, such a mere spark, that I cannot think it is the love which God the Holy Spirit breathes into the soul, my beginning is so exceedingly small, that I have to look, and look, and look again, at times, before I can discern it for myself. If I have faith, it is but as a grain of mustard seed, and I fear it will never be that goodly tree, in the midst of whose branches the birds of the air might rest.”

Courage, my brother, courage, however small the beginnings of grace, they are such beginnings that they shall have a glorious end. When God begins to build, if He lay but one single stone He will finish the structure, when Christ sits down to weave, though He casts the shuttle but once, and that time the thread was so filmy as scarcely to be discernible, He will nevertheless continue till the piece is finished, and the whole is wrought.

If your faith be never so little, yet it is immortal, and that immortality may well compensate for its littleness. A spark of grace is a spark of deity—as soon may deity be quenched as to quench grace—that grace within your soul given you of the Spirit shall continue to burn, and He who gave it shall fan it with His own soft breath, for “He will not quench the smoking flax,” He will bring it to a fire and afterwards to a furnace, till your faith shall attain to the full assurance of understanding.

Oh! let not the littleness of God's beginnings stagger you. Who would think, if he stood at the source of the Thames, that it would ever be such a river as it is—making this city rich? So little is it that a child might stop it with his hand, and but a handful of miry clay might dam its course, but there it rolls a mighty river that man cannot stop. And so shall it be with you, your faith is so little that it seems not to exist at all, and your love so faint that it can scarcely be called love, but thy latter end shall greatly increase, till you shall become strong and do exploits, the babe shall become a giant, and he that stumbled at every straw shall move mountains, and make the very hills shake.

Having thus spoken upon two fears, which are the result of these small beginnings, let me now try to quiet another.

“Ah!” saith the heir of heaven, “I do hope that in me grace has commenced its work, but my fear is that such frail faith as mine will never stand the test of years. I am,” saith he, “so weak, that one temptation would be too much for me, how then can I hope to pass through yonder forest of spears held in the hands of valiant enemies? A drop makes me tremble, how shall I stem the roaring flood of life and death? Let but one arrow fly from hell it penetrates my tender flesh, what then if Satan shall empty his quiver? I shall surely fall by the hand of the enemy. My beginnings are so small that I am certain they will soon come to their end, and that end must be black despair.”

Be of good courage, brother, have done with that fear once for all, it is true, as you say, the temptation will be too much for *you*, but what have *you* to do with it? Heaven is not to be won by your might, but by the might of Him who has promised heaven to you. Your crown of life is to be obtained, not by your arm, but by that arm which now holds it out and bids you run towards it.

If your perseverance rested upon yourself, you could not persevere an hour, if spiritual life depended on itself it would be like the shooting star, which makes a shining trail for a moment and then is gone. But thanks be unto God, it is written—“Because I live, ye shall live also.” “For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”

*“The feeblest saint shall win the day,
Though death and hell obstruct the way,”*

because that feeble saint is girded with JEHOVAH's strength.

If I had to fight in another man's strength, and I knew that he had gigantic force, I would not estimate the power of my own limbs and muscles, but of his limbs and muscles, and so if I have to fight in the strength of God, I am not to reckon by what I can do, but what He can do—not what I am able, but what He is able to accomplish.

I am not to go forth bound, and limited, and cramped, and bandaged by my own infirmity, but made free, and valorous, and unconquerable through that divine omnipotence, which first spoke all things into existence, and now maintains all things by the word of His power.

Stand up, poor brother, full of fears though you be, and for once glory in your infirmities, and boast in your Master. I say it in your behalf and on my own—you principalities and powers of darkness, you leaguered hosts of hell, you enemies in human form, or in form of demons, I challenge you all, more than a match for every one of you am I, if God be with me, less than nothing were I, if left alone.

But were I weaker than I am I would defy you all, for God is my strength. JEHOVAH is become my strength and my song, He also has become my salvation, therefore will we tread down our enemies, and Moab shall become as straw that is trodden down for the dunghill. In God will we rejoice, yea, in God will we greatly rejoice, and in Him will we rejoice all the day.

Thus have I dealt with a third fear. Let me seek to quiet and pacify one other fear. “Nay, but,” say you, “I never can be saved, for when I look at other people, at God's own true children—I am ashamed to say it—I am but a miserable copy of them. So far from attaining to the image of my Master, I fear I am not even like my Master's servants.

“Look at such a one, how he preaches the truth with power—what fluency he has in prayer, what service he undertakes! but I—I am such a beginner in grace, that—

*“Hosannas languish on my tongue,
And my devotion dies.”*

“I live at a poor dying rate. I sometimes run, but oftener creep, and seldom or ever fly. Where others are shaking mountains, I am stumbling over molehills. The *saints* seem to bestride this narrow world like some great colossus, but *I* walk under their huge legs and peep about, to find myself a poor dishonored slave. I have no power, no strength, no might.”

Pause, brother, pause, stop your murmuring for a moment. If some little star in the sky should declare it was not a star because it did not shine as brightly as Sirius or Aroturus, how foolish would be its argument! If the moon should insist upon it that she was never made by God because she could not shine as brightly as the sun, fie on her pale face, that she cannot be content to be what her Lord has made her!

If the nettle would not bloom because it was not a pine, and if the hyssop on the wall refused to grow because it was not a cedar, oh! what dislocation would there be in the noble frame of this universe! If these murmurings that vex us vexed the whole of God’s creatures, then were this earth a howling wilderness indeed.

Now, let me talk to you a moment, to calm your fears. Have you, my brother, ever learned to distinguish between grace and gifts? For know that they are marvelously dissimilar. A man may be saved who has not a grain of gifts, but no man can be saved who has no grace.

Yonder brother who prayed, yonder friend who preaches, yonder sister who spoke—all these perhaps acted so well because God had given them excellent gifts. It might not be that it was because of grace. When you are in the prayer meeting and hear a Brother extremely fluent, remember that there are men quite as fluent about their daily business, and that fluency is not fervency, and that even the appearance of fervency is not absolutely an evidence that there is fervency in the soul.

If you are so mean a thing that you cannot spell a word in any book, or put six words together grammatically, if you can offer no prayer in public, if you are so poor a scholar that every fool is wiser than you are, yet if you have grace in your heart, you are saved, and that is the matter in point just now, whether you are saved or not.

“Covet earnestly the *best* gifts,” but still, sit not down and murmur because you have them not, for one grain of grace outweighs a pound of gifts, one particle of grace is far more precious than all the gifts that a Byron ever had, or that Shakespeare ever possessed within his soul, vast and almost infinite though the gifts of those men certainly were.

And yet another question would I put to you. My dear brother, have you ever learned to distinguish between grace that saves, and the grace which develops itself afterwards? Remember, there are some graces that are absolutely necessary to the saving of the soul, there are some others that are only necessary to its comfort. Faith, for instance, is absolutely necessary for salvation, but assurance is not. Love is indispensable, but that high decree of love which induces the martyr’s spirit, does not reign in the breast of every one, even of those who are saved.

The possession of grace in some degree is needful to salvation, but the possession of grace in the highest degree, though it is extremely desirable, is not absolutely necessary for an entrance into heaven.

Think you then thus to yourself, if I am the meanest lamb in Jesus’ fold, I would be happy to think that I am in the flock. If I am the smallest babe in Jesus’ family, I will bless His name to think that I have a portion among the sanctified. If I be the smallest jewel in the Savior’s crown, I will glisten and shine as best I can, to the praise of Him that bought me with His blood. If I cannot make such swelling music in the orchestra of heaven as the pealing organ may, then will I be but as a bruised reed, which may emit some faint melody. If I cannot be the beacon fire that scares a continent, and throws its light

across the deep, I will seek to be the glowworm that may at least let the weary traveler know something of its whereabouts.

O Christians! you who have but little beginnings, quiet your fears, for these little beginnings, if they be of God, will save your soul, and you may in this rejoice, yea, rejoice exceedingly.

I must ask your patience now while I turn to the second head, and I shall dwell upon that very briefly indeed.

II. Upon this head I wish to say a word or two for THE CONFIRMATION OF YOUR FAITH.

I am sure you will give me your prayerful attention while I speak for the confirmation of my own faith as well as yours.

Well, brothers and sisters, the first confirmation I would offer you is this—our beginnings are very, very small, but we have a joyous prospect in our text. Our latter end shall greatly increase, we shall not always be so distrustful as we are now. Thank God we look for days when our faith shall be unshaken, and firm as mountains be. I shall not forever have to mourn before my God that I cannot love Him as I would. I trust that He in my latter end will give me more of His Spirit, that I shall love Him with all my heart, and soul, and strength.

We have entered into the Gospel school, we are ignorant now, but we shall one day understand with all saints what are the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths, and know the love of Christ which passes knowledge. We have hope that, as these hairs grow grey, we shall “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

Time, that plows its furrow in the brow, we hope will sow the seeds of wisdom there. Experience, which shall furrow our back with many a sorrow and a wound, shall nevertheless, we trust, work patience, and hope that maketh us not ashamed, and holy fellowship with Christ and His sufferings, and nearer and sweeter fellowship than as yet we have come to know.

Think not, Mr. Ready-to-halt, that you shall always need your crutches, there may come days of leaping and of dancing even for you. Oh, Mistress Despondency, the dungeons of Giant Despair’s castle are not to be your perpetual abode, you too, shall stand upon the top of Mount Clear, and you shall see the Celestial City, and the land that is very far off.

We are *growing* things. I think I hear the green blade say this morning, “I shall not forever be trodden under foot as if I were but grass, I shall grow, I shall blossom, I shall grow ripe and mellow, and many a man shall sharpen his sickle for me.”

I hear the little sapling say, “I shall not forever be shaken to and fro by winds, I shall grow into an old stalwart oak, gnarled though the roots may be, and twisted though my branches are, I shall one day stand and out-laugh the tempest, while all its waves of wind break harmlessly over me.”

I shall be strong through Him who strengtheneth me, for I feel a growth within me that can never stop till I have grown to be next to a God—a son of God, a partaker of the divine nature. Courage then, courage, I say, brothers and sisters! these weak days are not always to last, we are not to be shorn lambs always, not always the weaklings of His cattle. We shall one day be as the firstlings of His bullocks, and we shall push our enemies to the ends of the earth, and tread upon them and destroy them.

But further, this cheering prospect upon earth is quite eclipsed by a more cheering prospect beyond the river Death. “Our latter end shall greatly increase.” Faith shall give place to fruition, hope shall be occupied with enjoyment, love itself shall be swallowed up in ecstasy. Mine eyes, ye shall not forever weep, there are sights of transport for you. Tongue, you shall not forever have to mourn, and be the instrument of confession, there are songs and hallelujahs for you. Feet, ye shall not always be weary with this rough road, there are celestial leaping for you.

O my poor heart, often cowed and broken, often disappointed and trod down, there waits for you the palm branch, and the robe of victory, and the immortal crown.

*“My spirit leaps across the flood,
And antedates the hour,”*

when I shall come into possession of these joys which could not belong to my childhood here, but which await me in my manhood up there, when the spirit shall be perfected, and made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. Courage, Christian!

“The way may be rough, but it cannot be long;”

and the end will make amends for all the toil that you can endure when on the road. Oh! quicken your footsteps, sit not down in despair. Your latter end shall greatly increase, though your beginnings be but small.

Perhaps someone may say, “How is it that we are so sure that our latter end will increase?” I give you just these reasons—we are quite sure of it because there is a vitality in our piety. The sculptor may have oftentimes cut in marble some exquisite statue of a babe. *That* has come to its full size, it will never grow any greater. When I see a wise man in the world, I look at him as being just such an infant. He will never grow any greater. He has come to his full. He is but chiseled out by human power, there is no vitality in him.

The Christian here on earth is a babe, but not a babe in stone—a babe instinct with life. It is a happy thought sometimes to have of one’s-self as sitting down here, compressed, small, and insignificant, and one day death shall come and say, “Rise to thy proper altitude,” and we shall begin to grow and expand, and bursting all our cerements and every limit of humanity, we shall become greater than the angels are.

I think it is Milton who pictures the spirits in Pandemonium as condensing themselves, so that multitudes of them could sit in a little space, and then at their own volition mounting up till they attained a prodigious height. So is it now. We are little spirits, but we shall grow and increase, and we know this because there is life in us—eternal life. Now the life of twenty years develops itself into something vastly superior to what it was in childhood, and what will the eternal life be when that vitality within us shall make the littleness of our beginning seem as nothing at all, when our latter end shall have greatly increased?

Besides this, we feel that we must come to something better because God is with us. We are quite certain that what we are cannot be the end of God’s design. When I see a block of marble half chiseled, with just perhaps a hand peeping out from the rock, no man can make me believe that that is what the artist means it should be. And I know I am not what God would have me to be, because I feel yearnings and longings within myself to be infinitely better, infinitely holier and purer than I am now.

And so is it with you, you are not what God means you to be, you have only just begun to be what He wants you to be. He will go on with His chisel of affliction, using wisdom and the graving tool together, till by and by it *shall* appear what you shall be, for you shall be like Him, and you shall see Him as He is.

Oh! what comfort this is for our faith, that from the fact of our vitality and the fact that God is at work with us, it is clear, and true, and certain, that our latter end shall be increased. I do not think that any man yet has ever got an idea of what a man is to be. We are only the chalk crayon, rough drawings of men, yet when we come to be filled up in eternity, we shall be marvelous pictures, and our latter end indeed shall be greatly increased.

And now, one other thought and I will turn to the last point. Christian! remember, for the encouragement of your poor soul, that what you are now is not the measure of your safety, your safety depends not upon what *you* are, but on what Christ is. If the Rock of our salvation were within us, indeed the house would soon be overturned, but we live by what Christ is.

*“What Adam had and forfeited for all,
That Jesus is, who cannot fail or fall.”*

Till He can falter, my spirit need not tremble, till Jesus sins, till Jesus dies, till Jesus is overcome, till He is powerless with His God, till He ceases to be divine, the soul that trusts Him *must* be secure. Look not within you for consolation, but look above, where Jesus pleads before the throne the efficacy of His once-offered blood, and if you will look at your own state, and then judge your eternal standing by your own feelings, or willings, or doings, you will be an undone and miserable wretch.

Measure yourself by Jesus' doings, by Jesus' standing, by Jesus' acceptance, by the love of His heart, by the power of His arm, by the divinity of His nature, by the constancy of His faithfulness, by the acceptance of His blood, by the prevalence of His plea, and so measuring, your faith need never, never fear—

*“For should the earth’s old pillar’s shake,
And all the walls of nature break,
Our steadfast souls need fear no more
Than solid rocks when billows roar.”*

III. Now for our last point, namely, FOR THE QUICKENING OF OUR DILIGENCE.

It was never intended that the promises of God should make men idle, and when we tell them that their small beginnings shall doubtless come to glorious endings, we tell them this for their encouragement—not that they may sit still and do nothing, but that they may gird up the loins of their mind, confident of their success, to do all that lies in them, God helping them.

Men and brethren, there are many of you here, who, like myself, have to mourn over little beginnings. Let me say to you, be very diligent in the use of those means which God has appointed for your spiritual growth.

First, take heed to yourself that you obey the commandments which relate to the *ordinances* of Christ. Neglect not baptism. True, there is nothing saving in it, nothing meritorious, but baptism is a means of grace. There have been many who have found, like the eunuch, that when they have been baptized they have gone on their way rejoicing—rejoicing as the effect of grace given when they have obeyed their Master.

Be careful too, not to neglect that most blessed supper of our Lord Jesus Christ. Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is, but let Him be known to you in the breaking of bread and in pouring forth of wine. Do this often in remembrance of Him.

Ah! I am speaking to some here today who love Jesus, but who have neglected His last dying injunction, “This do in remembrance of me,” and you have not grown in grace, and are still little in Israel, as you used to be. Do you wonder at it? You have neglected God’s appointed means. “Oh,” saith one, “but I am a spiritual man, I do not need these carnal ordinances.” There is no man so carnal as he who calls God’s ordinances carnal, and no man more spiritual than he who finds spiritual things best brought home to him by what others have ventured to call “beggarly elements.”

We do not know ourselves if we think we can dispense with these divine signs. Christ knew what was best for us. He has said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and be baptized.” He would not have appended the last command if it were not important. He has bidden us also, as often as we drink the cup, to do it in remembrance of Him. He would not have commanded us that, if it were not for our benefit and for His glory.

But further, if you would get out of the littleness of your beginnings, wait much upon the means of grace. Read much the Word of God alone. Seek out one who understands it well—a man whom God has taught in it—and listen you with reverence to the Word as it is preached. Frequent sermons, but prayers most. Praying is the end of preaching. Make use of every means that lies before you. Be not like the fool, who calls the books of the old fathers “dead men’s brains.” What God spoke to seers of old, what He spoke to mighty men who preached, is not to be despised. Read you as you can, and learn as you can.

Take care too, that you are not content with skimming over a page of Scripture, but seek to get the very marrow out of it. Be not as the butterfly, which flits from flower to flower, but rests nowhere, be you as the bee, which enters the flower bell, and sucks the honey and bears it off upon its heavily-laden thigh. Rest not till you have fed on the Word, and thus shall your little beginnings come to great endings.

Be much also in prayer. God's plants grow fastest in the warm atmosphere of the closet. The closet is a forcing-place for spiritual vegetation. He who would be well fed and grow strong, must exercise himself upon his knees. Of all training practice for spiritual battles, knee practice is the most healthy and strengthening. Note that, if you forget aught besides.

And lastly, if your beginning be but small, make the best use of the beginning that you have. Have you but one talent? Put it out at interest, and make two of it. Have you two? Seek to have them multiplied into four. Are you a babe? If you cannot walk, nor lift, nor carry, you can cry. Take care to cry right lustily. Are you a child? You cannot climb, you cannot as yet teach, but you can run. Take care to run in the ways of heavenly obedience.

Are you a young man? You cannot as yet give the reverend advice of hoary age, but be strong, and overcome the wicked one. Are you an old man? You cannot now fight the battles of your youth, nor lead the van in heroic deeds, but you can abide with the stuff, and guard those old doctrines which, like the heavy baggage of the army, must not be lost, lest the battle itself should go from us. Every man to his place and to his post. And so by using what we have, we shall gain more.

Rivers increase by their onward flow, flames by burning, sunlight increases by the sun's shining, lights by kindling other lights. And so do you. Do you grow rich by enriching others—rich by spending. Lengthen out yourself by cutting off the ends that you can spare from all you have, for it is the way to grow, by giving up that which was an excrescence you shall get that which shall be a real growth.

Oh! use yourself, and God shall make use of you, come out, and God shall lead you forth. Be a man, and God shall make you more than an angel, be an angel, and God shall make you something more. He will make you better, holier, happier, greater. Oh! do this, and so shall thy latter end be joyous, thy peace shall be like a river, and thy righteousness like the waves of the sea.

Thus, I have spoken this for the comfort of God's people—would that I could hope that all I have said belonged to all of you! but ah! if it does not, may God convert you, may the new life be given to you! Oh! remember, if you are longing for it, the way of salvation is freely opened to you. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

God bless us now and ever, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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.