

CHRISTIANS KEPT IN TIME AND GLORIFIED IN ETERNITY

NO. 634

A SERMON
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling,
 and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,
 to the only wise God our Saviour,
 be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”*
Jude 24-25

OMITTING all preface it will be well to observe in what state of mind Jude was when he penned this Doxology, what had been his previous meditations, and when we have done so, we will endeavor to come directly to the text, and observe what mercies he sums up in it, and what praise is due from us to Him of whom he thus speaks.

I. Then, UNDER WHAT INFLUENCE WAS JUDE’S MIND WHEN HE PENNED THIS DOXOLOGY.

Our first observation is that in writing this very short but very full epistle, he had been led to consider the *grievous faults* of many others, and in contemplating those failures he could not resist the impulse of penning these words, “Now unto him that is able to keep us from falling.”

You observe in reading that he mentions the Israelites who came out of Egypt. That was a glorious day in which the whole host met at Succoth, having just escaped from the thralldom of Egypt, and now found themselves delivered from the whips and the lashes of the taskmasters, and were compelled no longer to make bricks without straw, and to build up palaces and tombs for the oppressors.

That was, if possible, a more glorious day than when God divided the Red Sea to make a way for His people. The depths stood upright as a heap, when the elect multitude walked through. Do you not see them, as with songs and praises they are led all that night through the deep as on dry ground? They are all landed on the other side, and then their leader lifts up his rod, when immediately there comes a wind, and the waters return to their place.

The infatuated Egyptian king, who with his hosts had followed them into the depths of the sea, is utterly destroyed. The depths have covered them. They sank as lead in the mighty waters, there is not one of them left. Then sang Moses and the children of Israel, saying, “I will sing unto the LORD for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.”

Is it credible, is it not too sadly incredible, that this very people who stood by the Red Sea and marked the overthrow of God’s enemies, within a few days were clamoring to go back into Egypt, and before many months had passed, were for taking to themselves a leader that they might force their way back into the place of their bondage? Aye, and they who saw JEHOVAH’s work and all His plagues in Zoan, made to themselves a calf, and bowed down before it and said, “These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.”

With tears in your eyes, look at the many griefs which studded the pathway of their forty years’ wandering, and with many fears reflect that out of all that multitude which came out of Egypt, there were but two who lived to cross the Jordan. Aaron must put off the breastplate, for he has sinned against God, and even Moses, the meekest of men, must go to the top of Nebo, and is only permitted to gaze upon the prospect of that land which he must never actually enjoy, for save for Caleb and Joshua, there were none found faithful among all the tribes, and these alone shall enter into the goodly land which flows with milk and honey.

Now when Jude thought of this, I do not wonder that he began to consider the case of himself and of his fellow-believers united with him in church fellowship at Jerusalem and elsewhere. And knowing that all of them who were truly brought up out of Egypt by Jesus, shall surely enter into the promised rest, he cannot, he does not desire to resist the impulse of singing, “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever.”

If you read on to the next verse, you perceive that Jude had another example in his mind’s eye—the angels that kept not their first estate. We do not know much of angels, but from what we gather in Holy Scripture—perhaps tinged in our reading with some of the half-inspired ideas of Milton—we believe that angels are spirits vastly superior to ourselves.

In intelligence they may well be so, even if they had been created upon a par, for they have had many years in which to learn and gather experience, whereas man’s existence is but a handbreadth. We regard an angel with intense respect, and while never paying any worship to those noble beings, we cannot but feel how little we are when compared with them.

One of these angels appears to have been named Lucifer, son of the morning—perhaps he was a leader in the heavenly host, and first among the princes of heaven. He, together with multitudes of others, fell from their allegiance to God. We know not how. We have no idea that they were tempted, unless one of them tempted the other. But they kept not their first estate—they were driven out of heaven, they were expelled from their starry thrones, and henceforth they are reserved in chains of darkness until the great day of account.

Now, my brethren, can you think of the fall of angels without trembling? Can you think of the morning stars put out in blackness? Of the cherub, whose head did wear a crown, cast into the mire, and his crown rolled into the dust? Can you think of these bright spirits transformed into the hideous fiends that devils are?

Their hearts, once temples for God, now become the haunt of every unclean thing, themselves the most unclean? Can you think of that without feeling a tremor of fear lest you, too, should fall from your first estate? and without another and a higher thrill of joy, when you think of Him who is, “able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy”?

*“When any turn from Zion’s way,
(Alas! what numbers do,)
Methinks I hear my Saviour say,
‘Wilt thou forsake Me too?’*

*“Ah, Lord! with such a heart as mine,
Unless Thou hold me fast,
I feel I must, I shall decline,
And prove like they at last.”*

But we can also sing right joyously,

*“The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,
He will not, He will not, desert to its foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavour to shake,
He’ll never, no never, no never, forsake.”*

We might continue to follow Jude, but we will not do so. We prefer to add something which Jude has not put in his epistle. Our first parent, Adam, lived in the midst of happiness and peace in the garden. Unlike ourselves, he had no depravity—no bias towards evil. God made him upright. He was perfectly pure, and it was in his own will whether he should sin or not. The balance hung evenly in his hands. But

you have not forgotten how on that sad day he took of the forbidden fruit, and ate, and thereby cursed himself and all of us.

My brethren, as you think of Adam, driven out of the garden of Eden, sent out to till the ground whence he was taken, compelled in the sweat of his face to eat bread, when you recollect the bowers he left, the happiness and peace that have forever passed away through his sin, do you not hear the voice that says to you, as a depraved and fallen creature, “Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall”?

Conscious of your own weakness as compared with your parent Adam, you are ready to cry out, “O God, how can I stand where Adam falls!” But here comes the joyous thought—Christ, who has begun with you, will never cease till He has perfected you. Can you help singing with Jude, “Now unto him that is able to keep us from falling”?

It strikes me that every time we mark an apostate, and see the fall of a sinner or of a fellow professor, we should go down on our knees and cry, “Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe,” and then rise up and sing,

*“To our Redeemer God
Eternal power belongs,
Immortal crowns of majesty,
And everlasting songs.*

*“He will present our souls
Unblemished and complete
Before the glory of His face,
With joys divinely great.”*

This partly accounts for the text before us. But on a further reference to the epistle we get another part of the thoughts which had exercised the apostle’s mind. Observe, dear friends, that the apostle had a very vivid and distinct sense of the *nature of the place* into which those fell, and of their utter ruin and destruction. Notice, concerning the children of Israel, he says that, “God destroyed them that believed not.”

What is it to be destroyed? Destroyed! This does not end with the white skeleton and the bleached bones which lay in the wilderness, a horror to the passerby. He means something more than even that. Brought out of Egypt and yet destroyed! Take heed, professor. You may be brought into something like Gospel liberty, and yet may perish.

Take heed, you carnal professor, I say! You may fancy you have escaped the bondage of the law, but yet you shall never enter into the rest which remains for the people of God, but you shall be destroyed. Let that word “destroyed” ring in your ears, and it will make you bless God, who is able to keep you from falling, if it shall lead you to flee to Him for help.

Next he says of the fallen angels, that they are “reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.” What that may be, we can but roughly guess. Satan is allowed to go about the world, but still wears his chains, he has a tether, and the Lord knows how to pull him in, both by providence and direct acts of power.

We believe that these spirits are under darkness. A gloom, a thick darkness that may be felt, hangs perpetually over their minds wherever they may be, and they are waiting till Christ shall come to summon them as rebellious creatures before His bar, that they may receive their sentence, and begin afresh their dreadful hell.

And remember, dear brethren and sisters, unless eternal love shall prevent it, this case must be yours. We too must enter into places reserved in darkness, wearing everlasting chains, to endure eternal fire. We should do so, we must do so, if it were not for Him “who is able to keep us from falling, and present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.”

Nor is this all, for if you will patiently read the next verse, you will see that Jude has, if possible, introduced a more graphic picture. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are bright as the sun goes down. The inhabitants are merry with boisterous laughter, there is plenty in the barn, there is luxury in the hall, for the plain of Sodom was well-watered, and lacked for nothing. Down went that sun upon a disastrous eve, never to rise upon the most of those who were in that doomed city.

At daybreak, just as the sun is beginning to shine upon the earth, angels had hastened Lot and his family out of the city, and no sooner had they reached the little city of Zoar than straightway the heaven is red with supernatural flame, and down descends a terrific rain, as if God had poured hell out of heaven. He rained fire and brimstone upon the cities, and the smoke of their torment went up, so that Abraham, far away to the west, could see the rolling cloud, and the terrible brightness of the fire, even at midday.

And as men go to the “Lacus Asphaltites,” or the Dead Sea, they see to this day where death has reigned. There are masses of asphalt floating still upon the surface of that sea, where there is nought that lives. No fish swim in its turbid streams. There are indubitable evidences there of some dread judgment of God.

And as Jude thought of this, he seemed to say, “Oh God, preserve us from such a doom, for this is the doom of all apostates, either in this world or in that which is to come, thus to be consumed with fire.” And as he remembered that God would keep His people, he blessed that protecting hand which covers every saint, and he wrote down, “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling.”

I have a thought in my mind, I cannot of course tell whether it is right or not, but it strikes me just now—the author’s name is Jude—Judas. Did he recollect Judas, his namesake who was called Iscariot, as he penned these words? He had known him, probably had respected him as the others had done. He had marked him that night when he sat at the table, and like others said, “Is it I?”

Probably Jude was very surprised when he saw Iscariot take the sop and dip in the dish with the Savior, and when he went out he could scarcely believe his own ears, when the Savior said, that he that betrayed Him had gone forth. He must have known how Judas kissed the Son of Man and sold Him for thirty pieces of silver. He could not but be aware how in remorse he hanged himself and how his bowels gushed out.

And methinks the shadow of the doom of Judas fell upon this better Judas while he penned these words, and he seems to say with greater emphasis, “Unto him that is able to keep you from falling, unto him be glory for ever and ever.” Thus you see, dear friends, we are getting into the track, I think, of Jude’s thoughts—he thought about the failures of others and the terrible way in which they had fallen.

Yet again, by your leave, Jude had a very clear view of the *greatness of the sins into which apostates fall*. Probably there is not in the whole compass of Holy Writ a more fearful picture of the sin of backsliders and apostates than in the epistle of Jude. I remember preaching to you one evening from that text, “Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.” I remember how you trembled, myself trembling most, with such a terrible message to deliver.

Where could such a text or simile be found but in the book of Jude? The sins of apostates are tremendous. They are usually not content with the average of human guilt. They must make themselves giants in iniquity. None make such devils as those that were once angels, and none make such reprobates as those who once seemed to bid fair for the kingdom of heaven.

These go into filthy dreams, into sensuality, “They give themselves over to fornication, and go after strange flesh,” as he has put it. In fact, where can we set the bounds to which a man will go, when he crucifies the Lord who bought him and puts Him to an open shame?

Oh, beloved, as I think of the sin into which these apostates have gone, I cannot but feel that you must bless God with Jude, that there is one “who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.”

II. I might continue in this strain, but perhaps I had better not. I would rather turn to THE BLESSINGS OF WHICH JUDE SPEAKS.

He seems to ascribe in this doxology three blessings, at least, to the power of the Lord Jesus. The first is *ability to keep you from falling*, and for this, I am sure, the highest praise is due, when you consider for a moment *the dangerous way*. In some respects the path to heaven is very safe. It is so as God made it, but in other respects there is no road so dangerous as the road to eternal life. It is beset with difficulties.

In some of our mountain climbings, we have gone along narrow pathways where there was but a step between us and death, for deep down beneath us was a gaping precipice, perhaps a mile in perpendicular descent. One's brain reels at the thought of it now, and yet we passed along quite safely. The road to heaven is much like that. One false step (and how easy it is to take that, if grace be absent) and down we go. What a slippery path is that which some of us have to tread.

You know that there are a million opportunities in a single week for your foot to slip and for your soul to be ruined. There are some spots, I believe, upon some of the more difficult Swiss mountains where no man ought to go at all, I think, and where, if any must go, they should be only such as have become most accomplished mountaineers, through years of practice, for one has to cling to the rock side, to hold on, perhaps, by bushes or stones that may be there, with nothing for the feet to rest upon except, perhaps, an inch of projecting crag, and so we go creeping on with our backs to the danger, for to look down upon it would be to make the brain reel, and cause us to fall, and the result of falling, of course, would be the end of life—the body would be dashed into a thousand pieces.

Such is truly the way to heaven. You must all have passed some such difficult places, and in looking back, I can only myself say, "Unto Him who has kept me from falling, when my feet had well nigh gone, and my steps had almost slipped, unto Him be glory forever and ever."

But next, you have to think of the *weakness of the person*. Some men may travel roads which would not be safe for others, and what are you, my brother pilgrim, but a little babe? It is unsafe to trust you along the pathway to glory. In the best roads you are soon tripped up. These feeble knees of yours can scarce support your tottering weight. A straw might throw you and a pebble could wound you. Oh, if you shall be kept, how must you bless the patient power which watches over you day by day.

Reflect upon your tendency to sin. The giddiness of that poor brain, the silliness of that deceitful heart. Think, how apt you are to choose danger, how the tendency is to cast yourselves down, how you rather are inclined to fall than to stand, and I am sure you will sing more sweetly than you have ever done, "Glory be to Him who is able to keep me from falling."

Then, you have to notice further the *many foes* who try to push you down. The road is rough enough, the child is weak enough, but here and there is an enemy who is in ambush, who comes out when we least expect him, and labors to trip us up or hurl us down a precipice.

I suppose you never did see a man fall from a precipice. Some of you may have been fools enough to go and see a man walk on a rope, in which case, I believe, you have incurred the guilt of murder. Because if the man does not kill himself, you encourage him to put himself where he probably might do so.

But if you have ever really seen a man fall over a precipice, your hair must surely have stood on end, your flesh creeping on your bones, as you saw the poor human form falling off the edge, never to stand in mortal life again. Surely as you left the place where you stood, and fled away from the edge of the precipice, you cried, "O bless the God that made me stand and kept my feet from falling."

How alarmed you would be if you were in such a position and had seen one fall, and that same monster who had pushed him over, should come to hurl you over also, and especially if you felt that you were as weak as water and could not resist the gigantic demon. Now, just such is your case. You cannot stand against Satan. Yea, your own flesh will be able to get the mastery over your spirit.

A little maid made Peter deny his Master, and a little maid may make the strongest among us tremble sometimes. Oh, if we are preserved in spite of such mighty enemies, who are ever waiting to destroy us, we shall have great cause to sing praise “unto him that is able to keep us from falling.”

Christ has the power to take us into heaven. You may keep a man from starving, but you cannot take him into the king’s palace and present him at court. Suppose that a man had been a rebel, you might hide him from the pursuers and aid in his escape, but you could not take him into the presence of the king, and cause him to live in the royal castle of the land. But you see that Christ preserves His people though they have offended God and daily provoke His justice.

And He does more, for He presents them to the King of kings in the high court of heaven itself. This it is which makes the other blessing so great. We are not anxious to live in this world always. We find ourselves in a strange land here, and would be glad to fly away, and be at rest. This is to us a wilderness state, and we rejoice to know that Canaan lies beyond.

Our heavenly Joshua can lead us into it. He can fight for us against Amalek, and slay all our foes, and preserve us from falling. But better still, He can and He will take us into the promised land, and give us to see the “better country, even the heavenly,” and thither will He conduct all the host, so that not one shall perish or be left behind. Christ gives preservation, but He adds glorification, and that is better still.

Here then, my brethren, is a thought of incomparable sweetness, we are safe while in this world,

*“More happy, but not more secure
The glorified spirits in heaven.”*

And we too shall be, before long, as happy as they are, because He will present us with them before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

We cannot, however, enlarge on this point, though there is much, very much, that ought to be said. We proceed to notice *the condition in which the saints are to be when presented*—they are to be “faultless,” for our Lord never stops short of perfection in His work of love. That Savior who means to keep His people to the end, will not present them at last just alive, all black and foul as when He helped them out of the miry places. He will not bring them in, as sometimes gallant men have to do those whom they have rescued from drowning, with just the vital spark within them.

No, our Savior will carry on His people safe from falling, through this life, and He will present them, how?—faultless. Oh, that is a wondrous word, “faultless”—we are a long way off from it now. Faulty, aye, we are now faulty through and through, but Jesus Christ will never be content till we are faultless.

And this He will make us in three ways—He will *wash us* till there is not a spot left, for the chief of sinners shall be as white and fair as God’s purest angel. The eye of justice will look, and God will say, “No spot of sin remains in you.” You may have been a drunkard, a thief, an adulterer, and what not, but if Christ in mercy undertakes your case, He will wash you in His blood so thoroughly that you shall be faultless at the last. You will be without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

Now we are defiled and covered with sin as if we had “lien among the pots.” We have reveled in uncleanness till we are as if we had been “plunged in the ditch.” Our own flesh must abhor us if we could but see how defiled we are by nature and by practice. Now all this shall be completely removed and we shall be whiter than snow.

You remember that when the disciples looked at Jesus on the mount of transfiguration, they saw that His garments were white and glistening, whiter than any fuller could make them. Now, so shall we be hereafter, whiter and fairer than any earthly art can attain to. The sea of glass, clear as crystal, will not be whiter nor purer than we shall be when washed in the blood of the Lamb.

But that is only one way. If a man had no fault, yet it would be necessary for him to have some virtues. A man cannot enter heaven simply because transgression is put away. The law must be kept, there must be a positive obedience to divine precepts. Religion is no negation, an absence of things evil merely. It is the presence of the good, the true, the pure.

But since even when we do our best, we shall be unprofitable servants, we need something higher than we can ever produce by these our feeble and sinful powers. Therefore *the Lord our God imputes to us the perfect righteousness of His Son Christ Jesus*, for,

*“Lest the shadow of a spot
Should on my soul be found;
He took the robe the Saviour wrought,
And cast it all around.”*

The righteousness of Jesus Christ will make the saint who wears it so fair that he will be positively faultless. Yes, perfect in the sight of God. There is a fullness in this which it delights my soul to dwell upon. A man may be faultless in my sight, but not in the sight of those who know him intimately. A Christian may be so holy as to escape the censure of all just men, but ministering spirits, who read the heart and deal with the inner man, can speak of evil which has not come to light before human eyes.

But we know that God sees even more clearly than angelic spirits, for He charges them with folly. Now, God is to see no iniquity in us, no shortcoming. We shall be tried in His scales, and set in the light of His countenance, and be pronounced “*faultless.*” God’s law will not only have no charge against us, but it will be magnified in us and honored by us. We shall have imputed to us that righteousness which belongs to Him who has done all this for us that He might “present us faultless before the presence of his glory.”

Fourthly and best, perhaps, *the Spirit of God will make new creatures of us.* He has begun the work and He will finish it. He will make us so perfectly holy that we shall have no tendency to sin any more. The day will come when we shall feel that Adam in the garden was not more pure than we are. You shall have no taint of evil in you. Judgment, memory, will—every power and passion shall be emancipated from the thralldom of evil. You shall be holy even as God is holy, and in His presence you shall dwell forever.

How altered we shall be, for look within, and see if your experience is not like the apostle Paul’s, who found a potent law in his members, so that when he would do good evil was present with him, and when he desired to escape some evil, he did at times the very thing he allowed not, but would most heartily condemn. So is it with us. We would be holy, but we are like a ball that has a bias in it, we cannot go in a straight and direct line. We try to hit the mark, but we are prone to start on one side like a deceitful bow.

There is a black drop in our hearts which taints all the streams and none of them can be pure. But it will be all changed one day, we shall be re-made, and all the evil gone, gone forever. How joyous must have been the entrance of Naaman, the Assyrian, into his house after he had washed in Jordan’s stream, and found his flesh restored to him as the flesh of a little child.

I think I see him as the watchman on the tower has given notice of his approach in the distance, the whole household is at the gate to meet him, and to see if he comes back in health. His wife, if Eastern customs would not permit her going forth in public, would look from her casement to catch a glimpse of his face, to see if the dread spot was gone. How joyful the shout, “He is cured and clean!” But this is nothing compared with the rapture of that hour when the everlasting doors will be lifted up, and we, made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, shall enter into the joy of our Lord.

Or take another illustration from Scripture, and try and realize the happiness which reigned in the family of the maniac out of whom the legion of devils had departed. Perhaps he had been home before when under the evil influence of the foul fiends—how terrified they doubtless were with the mad frenzy of the poor unhappy wretch as he cut himself with stones, and broke all bonds put on him in tenderness and love in order to restrain his self-imposed misery and wounds.

And now that he comes once more to his house, they see him approach, and the old terror seizes them because they know not that he is a changed man, but suppose him still to be the demented being of days gone by. But as he enters the door as calm and composed as if he had returned from a long journey, and were only

anxious to relate the incidents of the pilgrimage and greet loved friends once more. With no fierce frenzy rolling in his eye, no loud discordant shrieks rending the air, but all is the demeanor of a well-regulated, joyful, yet chastened mind.

As all this is realized by his friends, and they hear what great things the Lord has done for him, what joy must have been in that family circle. I should like to have seen it. I am sure it was a choice exhibition of real human bliss, such as earth only witnesses now and then. A beam of purest radiance lighting up the scene, like the splendor which Saul of Tarsus saw on the road to Damascus as it lit up the day, when he was made a new creature in Christ Jesus.

Here also we can most truthfully say that the joy, though great, was not comparable to the joy which shall be ours when we are changed into new creatures, when we shall be clothed and in our right mind—no longer prone to wander among the black mountains of iniquity, and no more tempted to abide amongst those dead in trespasses and sins, but ever holy, and always living unto God, and made like unto Him.

Oh this is joy indeed! Not only will He keep us from falling, but present us faultless. My brethren and sisters, at the thought of this I think you must join with Jude, and say, “Now unto him that is able to do all this, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever.”

I cannot speak to you as I would wish upon such a theme as this—who could? But when we get to heaven, our song there shall be more sweet, more loud, because we shall understand better the dangers from which we have escaped, and how very much we owe to Him who has kept us, and brought us safely through all the vicissitudes of life, unto the place He has prepared for us. Meanwhile, never let us be forgetful of that mighty goodness which holds us fast and will not let us go.

III. Still I have not done with the text. I have already forestalled my next thought, but I think it requires a special notice. Observe, the apostle adds, “To present us faultless before his presence, WITH EXCEEDING GREAT JOY.”

Who will have the joy? My brethren, *you* will have it. Have you ever mused upon the parable of the Prodigal Son? I know you have. No one can have diligently read the Bible without staying to think over, again and again, of that most tender and instructive of our Lord’s parables. Now, I ask who was happy at that feast? Was not the prodigal, think you? What was the character of those thoughts filling his heart and making it heave as if it would burst?

How overjoyed he must have been. How utterly crushed down with his father’s love, and all the unexpected marks of kindness and affection. He had had his days of feasting and sinful merriment, but no songs could ever have been as sweet as those which rung round the old roof-tree to welcome him home. No viands had ever tasted so delicious as that fatted calf. And no voice of boon companion or witching charmer at his guilty feasts had ever sounded such melodious notes in his ears as those words of his father, “Let us eat and be merry.”

So will it be with us when we have been restored to ourselves, when wearied of the world, and hungering and thirsting after righteousness, we shall have been led to the Father’s house by the cords of love which the Spirit shall cast around us. When safely brought through all the weary pilgrimage from the far-off country, we shall tread the golden streets, and be safe inside the pearly gates, and have the past all gone forever amongst the things we never shall meet again.

What rapture will be ours. This will be heaven indeed. When sin shall be gone, Satan shut out, temptation gone forever, you shall have a joy of which you cannot now conceive. Rivers of pleasure shall flow into your soul. You shall drink such draughts of bliss as your soul has never known this side the grave. Oh, be joyful now with an antepast of the joy which is to be revealed. And afterwards you shall have the fullness of divine bliss forever and ever.

Who shall be happy? Why, the *minister* will be happy. What pleasure was there in the heart of the shepherd youth David, the son of Jesse, when he had gone forth to do battle with the lion and bear, in order to rescue the lamb out of their jaws, and when God had delivered him and made him successful in his attempt. How gladly he must have watched the little lamb run to the side of its dam, and in the mutual pleasure of these poor dumb animals I am sure he found a joy.

And so all the shepherds in heaven, all who have been faithful pastors, who have cared for and tended their flocks, shall find a bliss unspeakable in welcoming to glory those darling ones preserved from the

power of the devil, “who goeth about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.” Yes, ministers will be sharers in this happiness.

I think we shall have a special joy in bringing our sheaves with us. If it may please God to keep me from falling, if I just get inside the door of heaven, with some of the many thousands that God has given to me as my spiritual children, I will fall prostrate before His feet, the greatest debtor to His mercy that ever lived, and one who has more cause than any other of His creatures to thank Him, and ascribe to Him glory and honor, dominion and power, forever and ever. Here I am, and the children whom You have given me. Unto You be praise.

And what will be the joy of *angels* too? How exceeding great their bliss will be. If there be joy among the angels over one sinner that repents, what will there be over ten thousands times ten thousands, not of repenting, but of perfected sinners, cleansed from every stain, set free from every flaw. Oh, you cherubim and seraphim, how loud will be your music! How you will tune your harps anew, how shall every string wake up to the sweetest music in praise of God. “Let the sea roar and the fulness thereof” at the thought of the glorious joy at God’s right hand.

Who will have joy, I ask again. Why *Christ* will have the most joy of all. Angels and ministers, and you yourselves will scarcely know such joy as He will have—all His sheep safely folded, every stone of the building placed in its proper position. All the blood-bought and blood-washed ones, all whom the Father gave Him, delivered out of the jaw of the lion. All whom He covenanted to redeem effectually saved—His counsel all fulfilled, His stipulations all carried out, the covenant not only ratified, but fulfilled in all its jots and tittles. Verily, none will be as happy as the great Surety in that day.

As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall Christ rejoice over you. You know it is written that, “For the joy set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame.” And also, “He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be abundantly satisfied.” Now this satisfaction and joy will be our Lord’s, when the whole church is faultless and complete in the presence of His glory. But not till then.

In that hour, when all His jewels are reckoned up and none found missing, He shall rejoice anew in spirit, and shall thank God with yet more of joy than He did when here on earth, and thought of this day in prospect, and by that thought nerved Himself for cruel suffering and a death of shame. Yes, Christ will be glad. Our Head will have His share of joy with all the members, and happily He will be able to bear more, as He most certainly deserves and will have more.

Who will have joy? Why, *God Himself* will have joy. It is no blasphemy to say that the joy of God on that occasion will be infinite. It is always infinite. But it will be then infinitely displayed before His creatures’ gaze. Listen to these words—you cannot fathom them, but you may look at them. It is written, “The LORD your God will rejoice over thee with joy; he will joy over thee with singing.”

As I have said on this platform before, I think that is the most wonderful text in the Bible in some respects—God Himself singing! I can imagine, when the world was made, the morning stars shouting for joy. But God did not sing. He said it was “very good,” and that was all. There was no song. But oh, to think of it, that when all the chosen race shall meet around the throne, the joy of the Eternal Father shall swell so high, that God, who fills all in all, shall burst out into an infinite, godlike song.

I will only put in this one more thought, that all this, beloved, is about YOU. All this you have a share in, the least in the church, the poorest in the family, the most humble believer—this is all true of you, He will keep you from falling, and present you spotless before His presence with exceeding great joy. Oh, cannot you join the song and sing with me, “To the only wise God and Saviour be glory and honor, dominion and majesty for ever. Amen.”

For my part I feel like that good old saint, who said that if she got to heaven, Jesus Christ should never hear the last of it. Truly He never shall.

*“I’ll praise my Saviour with my breath;
And when my voice is last in death,
Praise shall employ my nobler powers:
My days of praise shall ne’er be past,
While life and thought and being last,*

Or immortality endures.”

I want you to go away with a sense of your own weakness and yet a belief in your own safety. I want you to know that you cannot stand a minute, that you will be damned within another second unless grace keep you out of hell, and yet I want you to feel that since you are in the hand of Christ you cannot perish, neither can any pluck you out thence.

And, poor sinners, my heart’s desire is that you may be put into the hand of Christ tonight, that you may have done with trusting yourselves. You can ruin, but you cannot save yourselves. “Oh Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help found.” Christ alone can save you, oh look out of self to Christ. Trust yourselves in His hands. He is “able to keep you from falling.” You cannot even stand upright yourselves, and if He should set you upright you cannot keep so for a minute without His protecting care.

If saints need to be kept, how much more need have you to seek the shelter of the Savior’s wounded side. Flee thither as the dove to the cleft of the rock. If holy men of God cry daily for pardon, and profess to have no right of themselves to heaven, how much more urgent is your case? You will perish if you die as you are. You can never make yourself *faultless*, but Christ can. He wants to do it, He has opened a fountain for sin and for uncleanness, wash and be clean.

Again, I say, look to Jesus. Away with self, and cling to Christ, down with self-confidence, and up with simple faith in Christ Jesus. I shall not let you go, dear friends, without singing one verse which I think will express the feeling of each one of us,

*“Let me among Thy saints be found,
Whene’er the Archangel’s trump shall sound,
To see Thy smiling face;
Then loudest of the crowd I’ll sing,
While heaven’s resounding mansions ring
With shouts of sovereign grace.”*

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—LUKE 15

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.