

A MESSAGE FROM GOD TO HIS CHURCH AND PEOPLE

NO. 725

A SERMON
 DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 16, 1866
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 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“O LORD, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid:
 O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years,
 in the midst of the years make known;
 in wrath remember mercy.”
 Habakkuk 3:2*

“O LORD, I have heard thy speech!” This is the language of reverent obedience, and is a fit preface to a fervent prayer. If we are not willing to hear God’s voice, we cannot expect Him to hear our voice. It is an admirable preparation for prayer, first to hearken diligently to what God the Lord shall speak, and then to be obedient to His commands.

He who would hear God speak needs not to wait long, for God speaks to men continually by *the Scriptures*, which are given to us by inspiration. Alas that we should be so deaf to its teachings! This wonderful volume, so full of wisdom, is so little read that few of us could dare to gaze upon its pages and say, “O Lord, in this Book I have heard Thy speech.”

At other times, the Lord speaks by *providence*, both national providences and personal providences have a meaning, providences that are afflicting, and providences which are comforting, all have a voice, but alas! I fear that oftentimes to us providence is dumb because we are deaf.

How often, in our stubbornness, we are like the horse and the mule, which have no understanding, and when God speaks to us we do not regard Him. He therefore multiplies our afflictions, and holds us in with the bit and bridle of adversity, because we will not be governed by gentler means. Look, my brethren, at the providence of God throughout the whole of your lives, and I am afraid few of you can say of it, “O Lord, in providence I have heard thy speech.”

The God of heaven speaks to men by His *Holy Spirit*. He does this at times, in those common operations of the Spirit upon the ungodly which they resist, as did also their fathers. The Spirit strives with men. He calls, and they refuse. He stretches out His hands, and they regard Him not. The unregenerate man is like the deaf adder that will not hear, charm we never so wisely.

Even when the Holy Spirit speaks to us His people, we are not always willing and obedient, but though we have ears to hear, we frequently quench the Spirit, we grieve Him, we neglect His monitions, and if we do not despise His teachings, yet too often we forget them and listen to the follies of earth instead of regarding the wisdom of the skies.

I am afraid that in looking into our own hearts and studying them in connection with the operations of the Holy Spirit, not one of us could dare to say, without exception, “O LORD, I have heard thy speech.”

In the text before us we meet with a prophet whose ear had been spiritually opened, and who therefore heard the still, small voice of JEHOVAH, where others perceived neither sound nor utterance. There are times even with us when, being under the influence of the Holy Spirit, we hold near communion with our God, then are our hearts like wax to His seal, receiving the impress of the divine mind.

Are you not conscious of having been in such a state? It must be so, dear hearer, in a measure, with all the Lord’s servants, but especially must it be often so with those of us who are called to bear His messages to the people. I have most solemnly sought to hear the speech of JEHOVAH in my own soul

before I came into this pulpit, and pray that His divine power may enable me to convey that speech to you.

I have been afraid this week, as I have heard the voice of God in this land, trembling has taken hold upon me, as JEHOVAH has spoken in thunderclaps, and made the whole land to echo with His terrible accents. I may be to some of you as an interpreter, and you who are spiritual men, you will discern and judge whether I have heard the speech of God or not. If you shall find it to be God's voice to you, I hope you will be led to the farther carrying out of the language of the text in that much-needed prayer, "O LORD, revive thy work."

There are three things in the text, *an alarming voice*, *an appropriate prayer*, and *a potent argument*—"in wrath remember *mercy*."

I. Hear, with solemn awe, THE ALARMING VOICE.

The speech of God demands your humblest attention. We need not enter into particulars of the heavy tidings which came to the ear of Habakkuk when he set him upon the tower, and watched to see what the Lord would say to him. Our business, this morning is to tell you, in all solemnity, what the voice of God has been saying to us.

In my lonely meditations I heard a voice, as of one that spake in the name of the Lord. I bowed my head to receive the message, and the voice said, "Cry," and when I said, "What shall I cry?" the answer came to me as to Isaiah of old, "All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it; surely the people is grass."

Then I thought I saw before me a great meadow wide and far reaching, and it was like a rainbow for its many colors, for the flowers of summer were in their beauty. In the midst thereof I marked a mower of dark and cruel aspect, who with a scythe most sharp and glittering, was clearing mighty stretches of the field at each sweep, and laying the fair flowers in withering heaps. He advanced with huge strides of leagues at once, leaving desolation behind him, and I understood that the mower's name was Death.

As I looked I was afraid for my house, and my children, for my kinsfolk and acquaintance, and for myself also, for the mower drew nearer and nearer and as he came onward a voice was heard as of a trumpet, "Prepare to meet thy God."

Moreover, as I mused on I heard a rumbling in the bowels of the earth, as though the destroyer were traversing the dark pathways which the miner has digged, and doing his fearful work among the stones of darkness which lie at the roots of the mountains.

I wondered with sore amazement, and behold there came up from the mouth of the pit a thundering cloud of vapor, of smoke and fire, and dust, and rushing whirlwind, which told to wailing women that they were widows and their children fatherless, and the angel of death again cried in mine ears, "All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it; surely the people is grass."

I have come here this morning sore afraid, and much bowed down because of the mortality of man, and the certainty of death. We shall soon be gone, every one of us, to his grave, if not by such an alarming catastrophe as that which has amazed and troubled us during this week, yet by the common processes of decay.

You whom I now see before me are the meadows, and death is in your midst. Ye are the flowers, and I hear the terrible blast, which, alas! must wither even you. I see you, but there is no joy in my eye, for the cheek of beauty shall pale, and the eyes of youth shall grow dim, and the sinews of the strong shall fail them, and the arms of the mighty shall be powerless in the tomb.

As the autumn leaves are gone, so are our fathers, and as the floods hasten to the ocean, even so are we hastening away. An irresistible torrent hurries us to our doom. A mighty wind from the Lord sweeps us forever onward. While we thus quietly consider it the great mystery is being enacted, a thousand graves are being digged, and a thousand corpses are being laid in new-made sepulchers. At this moment

hundreds are wading into the cold, chill stream of Jordan, passing into the disembodied state to hear the judgment of the Great King.

As I thought upon this matter, and desired to hear God's speech therein, I saw a precipice, whose frowning steep overhung a sea of fire. Leading up to its brink I saw a road exceedingly broad, a road which was crowded from side to side with a thronging multitude, who pressed and trod one upon another in their raging zeal to reach the summit of the crag. They went gaily on, merrily laughing, singing to sprightly music, many of them dancing, some of them pushing aside their fellows that they might reach sooner than was imperative upon them the end of which they knew so little.

As I looked at that end which none of them could see, I saw a cataract of souls, falling in ceaseless, headlong stream into depths unutterably profound. As the crowd came on rank by rank to the edge of this precipice, they fell, they leaped over, or were dashed from the treacherous crag, and descended amid cries and shrieks surpassing all imagination into the lake of fire, wherein they were submerged with an everlasting baptism, overwhelmed with destruction from the presence of the Lord.

I thought I heard their groans and moans their shrieks and sighs as they first caught sight of the terrible abyss and would have shrunk back from it, but were quite unable, for the time to pause was past. Even now I see before my eyes that terrific Niagara of souls descending by thousands every hour into the gulf unknown.

This is the broad road of which we had heard so often, wherein multitudes delight to walk. "Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that go in thereat." Sure and terrible is the doom of every one who treads therein.

Oh that men would forsake it at once and forever! Alas! Alas! are not the great mass of our fellow citizens beneath the scepter of our Queen, traveling in this broad road? Even if we could conceive that all who attend the places of worship were in the narrow way that leads unto life eternal, if we could be charitable enough to believe that, yet look at the multitude of outsiders!

Look at this city, with far more than a million for whom the sound of the church-going bell is meaningless, who know not God, neither regard Him, to whom the name of Christ is but a word to curse with or to ridicule. They are going, my brethren, men of the same country as yourselves, men of the same race and tribe, speaking our own language, they are going downward to destruction!

Among them your own children, perhaps your wives, your husbands, your sons, your daughters, your parents, going in that motley crew, onward, swiftly onward, towards their dreadful end. My God will cast them away, their end will be destruction, they will be driven from the presence of the Lord.

Let these two thoughts, my brethren, burn in your souls until all coldness and indifference are consumed. Men die, and their souls are lost. Men die and their bodies are laid in the grave, but their souls descend into hell. Scarcely were the first death a thing to be mourned over, if it were not for the second.

It might be superfluous to shed so much as a single tear for all the men that died, if we knew that they rested in the arms of Jesus, and were forever blessed. But this is the sting of death, its bitterness, its wormwood and its gall, that sinners are condemned by justice, and driven by vengeance from the presence of mercy into the place where hope can never follow them. Christian men and women, hear ye this voice of God and be afraid.

Over and above all this, there came upon me a horror of great darkness as I perceived something even more terrible than this. You will say to me, "How more terrible?" In certain aspects so it seemed to me. Hear it and judge. What if it be true that within the last twelve months the church of the Living God has scarcely made the slightest approach to an advance? What if this be true as respects a far longer period? Let the first sad fact rise before us with its proof. For the last twelve months no apparent increase has been made to the number of professed disciples of the Lord Jesus. Do you ask me for the proofs? I can prove it alas! too surely.

Our own body, the Baptist denomination, is upon the whole, and all things considered, in as sound and healthy a state as any Christian community now existing. I am persuaded that in some respects it is

more sound and more healthy, but do you know what will have been the increase during the twelve months of the entire denomination in England, Scotland, and Ireland, so far as we can ascertain it? Well, with the exception of London and the county of Glamorgan, in Wales, there will be no increase worthy of the name.

In many parts of Wales, where we are strongest, there will be a positive decrease, and I think, in fifteen counties of England, we shall have lost numbers instead of making any advance, and when the whole are put together, the good with the bad, and this London of ours, wherein God has greatly blessed us of late, is counted with the rest, our entire increase for all the churches with all their ministers will not make up four thousand souls.

It is true that our statistics are not very accurate, but if they were more accurate I believe the result would be more unfavorable. This is the more fearful to me to contemplate, because the increase of the denomination, which by God's grace we might naturally look for merely from the increase of population, should have been very much more than this.

If other Christian churches have not increased more, and I am persuaded that most of them have increased less, far less than we have, then I am correct in saying that positively the church of God in Great Britain and Ireland, instead of making any real advance, has, in proportion to the increase of population, absolutely gone back, and I believe it would be accurate and truthful, and could be borne out by statistics, that if at this day there were taken a census of the number of persons who commune at the Lord's table, it would be found to be smaller instead of larger than the number at the corresponding period of last year.

As for abroad, what have our missions done? Brethren, if there were but one soul we ought to rejoice, but the result of missions has been of late so terribly little as to call for great searching of heart. Is it not a fact that there are missionaries of ten years' standing who have never had a convert? Is it not also a sad fact that the number of members in all our native churches is probably less now than it was twelve months ago?

Where is the nation that has been born in a day in this year one thousand eight hundred and sixty-six? Where are the kings that have bowed down before King Jesus? Where are the nations that have called Him "Blessed"? Is there so much as one little tribe, however insignificant, that has owned Christ during the past year? Not one, not one! There has been no visible advance.

The armies of the living God have rather suffered a repulse than gained a victory, and instead of the morning coming and the light arising, and the sun advancing to a noonday height, it seems as though at the best he stood still, if the light did not even retrograde. Surely there is a voice from God here, and as I hear it I am afraid.

Meanwhile, what kind of an age has this been in which we have lived? Is it so impassive and thoughtless that progress is impossible? Are we living in one of those dark ages in which mind is rocked to sleep and the soul is stupefied? Has this last year been one in which the somnolence of the human intellect has prevented our presenting the truth to the sons of men? I think not.

I believe, brethren, that this year has been one of the most wakeful in the annals of human history. At this moment London is like the city of which the prophet said, "It is full of stirs." There are political stirs in which the Christian minister finds no theme for sorrow, for when men's minds are but awake for anything there is then an opportunity for the propagation of truth. Truth dreads nothing so much as a sleepy audience. Give her but minds on the wing, and she will train them to the skies.

This has been a year in which both upon politics and religion the human mind has been active, and had the Christian churches been filled with the Spirit, and therefore zealous and faithful, I cannot comprehend that she would at the close of the year have had to cry, "Who hath believed our report?" We have indulged the fancy that we have had a general revival, and that our churches are in a healthy state, but is it so? Let our non-success answer the question.

In the meantime, while truth slumbers, the legions of evil spirits cease not their mischievous endeavors. How swiftly have the locusts of priestcraft ascended from the smoke of the bottomless pit

and covered the land! While we are compelled to fear that evangelical truth has made no advance, we cannot say this of ritualism, for its progress has been perfectly astounding.

Though a prophet should have told us that this Anglican Popery would have made so great an advance in so short a time, we should have said, "Impossible! England is soundly Protestant, she will never bear to have incense smoking under her nose, and to see the millinery of the church of Rome flaunted before her face," But she has borne it, and she likes it well.

Despite much that has been said concerning Puseyism being non-English, we are inclined to question the statement. Where are the greatest crowds in the Establishment? Are they not at the feet of these priests of Baal? Do not rank and fashion gather most readily in those places where their senses are delighted while their souls are deluded? Yes, through the means of our Popish establishment there has been an onward rush of error which is perfectly appalling. Watchman, when they ask you, "What of the night?" can you say, "the morning cometh"?

You that love the Savior, will you open your ears to catch the meaning of all these things? Men dying, men perishing, the church slumbering, and error covering the land—does not God say something in all this? Do you not hear out of this thick darkness the voice saying, "O my people, I have somewhat against you"? Did I not hear the Lord saying, "They shall perish, but their blood will I require at the watchman's hands"?

I saw the church of God folding her hands, given to slumber, saying, "I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing," and all the while she was suffering multitudes to perish for lack of knowledge, leaving the banner of truth to be moth-eaten, or to be trailed in the mire, and permitting the friends of error to ride roughshod over all the land.

As I saw her thus I said within my heart, surely the Lord will chasten such a people as this, and I feared that He would send judgments upon His church, and perhaps take away her candlestick out of the place, and give the light unto another people that might serve Him more faithfully.

Then I felt as Habakkuk did, I heard the voice of the Lord, and I was afraid. I was afraid for my fellow men, thinking of the multitudes of them that had already gone beyond recall to the land of darkness and to the regions of doom, and for the millions hastening to the same end.

I was afraid for the Christian church, lest it should have a name to live and be dead, lest the Lord should give up the church in Britain as He did His church in Shiloh, of which He said, "Go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel." I feared lest He might do for the church in Britain as He has to the church in Rome—given it over to become an antichrist, and an abomination before the eyes of God and men.

I was afraid with exceeding great fear for my fellow ministers, for I feared that all this people could not have perished without their being guilty of some of their blood! How could all this ignorance have remained in this land if the preachers had been faithful? I fear that the blood of souls will be required at the hands of many a minister.

What do I see? A gathering of ministers. And what is this I see upon their garments? I see blood on them. I see blood sprinkled on grey heads, and alas! I see blood upon the brows of young men who have but lately entered into the work—blood upon them all. Herein do I much fear for myself, lest I also, addressing this multitude so constantly, should have much blood upon my skirts because of my many responsibilities! O God! it is enough to make us afraid.

Why look, my brethren, when God's servants were truly active, as the first twelve were, did the cause stand still? Did they win here and there a soul, and have now and then a conversion? Did the cause of Christ go back like an army put to the rout?

On the contrary, did they not as soon as ever they received the truth, use it like a fire-brand to set the nations on a blaze? They met with persecutions which do not stand in our way. They were assaulted by threats of death which we have not to brave, and yet nothing could stand against their indomitable zeal, the omnipotence of the Holy Ghost rested on them, and they went on conquering and to conquer!

And what are we? Oh we are cold and dead where they were full of fire and life. We are the degenerate sons of glorious fathers. Do you think the church could have had it said that she remained a year without increase if there were not blame somewhere?

You may remind me of divine sovereignty, if you will, but I remember that divine sovereignty always acts with wisdom and with love, and that the Lord has not said to us, "Labor in vain." If we had labored, and if all the Christian church had labored as they should have labored, I believe the promise would have been proved, "Your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

II. When one is thus bowed down with the voice of God, the most natural prompting of the regenerate soul is to pray, so we turn to the second part of the text which has in it AN APPROPRIATE PRAYER.

I wish I had power this morning to make you feel the weight of what I have already brought before you. I know I have not put it in such language as I should have chosen, but it seems to me to be perfectly dreadful that there should be this constant dying, this constant ruin, this constant spread of error, and no progress in the church. I am sure when I heard it, if a messenger had told me that I was a beggar, that I had lost everything on earth, I would have been more pleased with such an announcement than to know that God's church had not increased in the space of twelve months.

It seems to me to be a thing to mourn over, a thing to make us go to God with a humble heart, and to feel as if one had been sorely chastened by the Most High. For the Lord knows some of us have worked with all our might, and we hope it is not pride when we say the blame does not rest with us, and yet the question must go to us all. We must deal faithfully with ourselves and not be flattered. We would honestly inquire, How much of this lies at my door? How much of this burden of God ought I to bear today? Certainly enough to lead us to such prayer as that before us.

Habakkuk, being bowed down, first turns himself to God. His first word is, "O LORD." To the Most High we must carry both our own and our church's troubles. Habakkuk turns not to another prophet to ask of him, "My brother, what shall we do," but he turns to the Master, "O LORD, what wilt *thou* do?" It will be well for us to confer with one another as to the causes of defeat and the means for securing success, but all conference with flesh and blood is idle unless it be preceded by solemn conferences with God. For God's church, God is needed. For God's work, God's own arm must be made bare.

Is it not delightful to notice how heavy trials drive us to God when we might not have gone to Him else? The little child, when walking abroad runs before his father, but if he meets some strange man of whom he is afraid, he runs back and takes his father's hand directly. So should it be with us.

If God had prospered all our churches, and everything had gone on as we had desired, we might perhaps have grown self-confident and have said, "O Lord, You have given us power in ourselves," but now, that we see the contrary, let us run back to closer fellowship and nearer communion with our God than ever, and taking hold upon the arm of His strength, let us stir Him up by our continued and fervent prayers.

Notice next that the prayer of Habakkuk is about God's church. He knew that there were dark days coming over Palestine, but he does not pray about that land in particular. "O LORD," saith he, "revive *thy* work." Certain would-be prophets tell us that many wonders will occur in 1866 and 1867, though I notice a propensity to postpone the whole business to 1877. Is this postponement intended that there may be ten years longer in which to sell their books?

But whatever is to come, whether the Turkish empire is to be destroyed, or Louis Napoleon is to annex Germany, whether Rome is to be swallowed up by an earthquake, does not seem to me to matter as much as the turn of a button. The great thing to a Christian is not the fate of earthly empires, but the state of the heavenly kingdom. As to what is to become of this principality or that empire, what have you and I to do with these things? We are the servants of a spiritual King, whose kingdom is not of this world. Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth, and break each other as they will, our business is with King Jesus and His throne.

It is delightful to see the prophet rising beyond the narrow range of the Jew, getting out of nationalities and praying, "O LORD, revive thy work." That is the one ship we care for in the storm, that one vessel in which Jesus Christ is riding at the helm, the Captain of salvation, and the Lord High Admiral of the seas.

Let the nations mix in dire confusion as they will, God rules over all, and brings out His church in triumph from all the strife of earth. The one anxiety of our souls should be, the blood-stained banner of the cross, will *it* wave high? Will King Jesus get to Himself the crown, for we have neither will nor wish beyond.

So, Christian men, if you have heard God's voice in the great judgments that are abroad, let those judgments lead you to pray, "Lord, remember Thy church—*Thy* church—Thy church in England, Thy church in America, Thy church in France, Thy church in Germany, Thy church anywhere, Thy church everywhere. O God, look upon Your elect ones. Let the separate ones, scattered through all nations, receive of Your benediction, as for all else, in providence, we leave it to Your will, for You know what is best."

Observe next that the prophet uses a word which is singularly discriminative. "O LORD, revive *thy* work." He does not say, "Lord, prosper *my* work." How often do I go to God in concern about the work that is going on in this Tabernacle! I am thankful for all the blessing we have seen, and I grow increasingly anxious lest the Lord should withdraw His hand. But when one looks abroad upon the world, and upon all the Lord's people in different denominations, one cannot pray, "Lord, prosper *my* work." At least, one *can* pray that, but then cover that over with another—"O LORD, revive *thy* work."

For what about my work? Well, as far as it is mine it is very faulty. And what about the work of the Baptists? Well, there is doubtless much that is wrong about it. And what about the work of the Methodists, and the work of the Congregationalists, and so on? May God prosper them according as they walk in His truth! but the way to come to the core of our prayer is to cry, "O LORD, revive *thy* work; whatever is of Thee, whatever is Thy truth, whatever is Thy Spirit's work in the hearts of men, whatever is genuine conversion and vital godliness—Lord, revive it."

Cannot you, dear friends, in the presence of death which we have been speaking of, and in the presence of judgment, and in the presence of the fact that the Christian church has not been increased these twelve months, shake off all the bitterness of everything that has to do with self, or with party, and now pray, "'Lord, revive *thy* work,' and if Your work happens to be more in one branch of the church than in another, Lord, give that the most reviving. Give us all the blessing, but do let Your own purposes be accomplished, and Your own glory come of it, and we shall be well content, though we should be forgotten and unknown. 'O LORD, revive thy work.'"

Note that the particular blessing he asks for is a *revival* of God's work, by which we mean, in our time that there should be a revival of the old Gospel preaching. We must have it back. It comes to this—our ministers must return to the same Gospel which John Bunyan and George Whitefield preached. We cannot get on with philosophical gospels, we must bring together all these new geological gospels and neological gospels, and semi-Pelagian gospels, and do with them as the people of Ephesus did with the books—we must burn them, and let Paul preach again to us. We can do without modern learning, but we cannot do without the ancient Gospel. We can do without oratory and eloquence, but we cannot do without Christ crucified.

Lord, revive Thy work by giving us the old-fashioned Gospel back again in our pulpits. It is to be lamented that there are so many who are considered not to be bad preachers who scarcely ever mention Christ's name, and are very loose concerning atonement by His precious blood. You will hear people say they have gone to such and such a chapel, and whatever the sermon might have been about it certainly was not about the Gospel.

Oh may that cease to be the case! May our pulpits ring with the name of Jesus, may Christ be lifted up, and His precious blood be the daily theme of the ministry! Oh that thousands might be brought to put

their trust in the Lamb slain, and to find salvation by faith in Him whom God has appointed to be the Savior of men!

This, however, would not bring back a revival unless there came with it a revival of the Gospel Spirit. If you read the story of the Reformation, or the later story of the new Reformation under Whitefield and Wesley, you are struck with the singular spirit that went with the preachers. The world said they were mad, the caricaturists drew them as being fanatical beyond all endurance, but there it was, their zeal was their power.

Of course the world scoffed at that of which it was afraid. The world fears enthusiasm, the sacred enthusiasm which love to Christ kindles, the enthusiasm which is kindled by the thought of the ruin of men and by the desire to pluck the firebrands from the flame, the enthusiasm which believes in the Holy Ghost, which believes that God is still present with His church to do wonders. This is what the world dreads, and what the church wants. Pray for it, pray to be baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire. O Lord, send forth Your unconquerable Spirit! O God, revive Thy work!

You perceive that the prophet desires this boon at once. He does not say, “*at the end* of the years,” but “*in the midst* of the years.” His prayer is for a present and immediate revival of genuine religion. Let it be ours, not from the teeth outward but from the heart outward to pray for revival. Let us long for it with heart and soul and strength, and God will give it to us.

Once more note that the prayer of Habakkuk is a very intelligent one, for he indicates the means by which he expects to have it fulfilled, in the midst of the years *make known*. It is by making known the Gospel that men are saved, not by mere thumping of the pulpit and stamping of the foot, but by telling out something which the understanding may grasp and the memory may retain.

To publish the doctrine of a reconciled God, to tell men that the Lord has laid help upon Jesus by punishing Him instead of us, to proclaim that there is life in a look at the Crucified One, to tell them that the Holy Ghost creates men new creatures in Christ Jesus, to give a full and comprehensive view of the doctrines of grace, this is one of the surest ways, under God, of promoting a revival of religion.

I cannot talk to you but I think I could pray to God, and I hope many of you will do so today. O God, send us a revival, this will purge the blood of souls from our skirts, nothing else will. This will roll back the tides of error, nothing else can. This will give to the Christian church triumph of an unusual kind, this will cover the earth with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the deep, but nothing else can or will. Thou gracious God, revive Thy work.

III. And now we close with A POTENT ARGUMENT.

He uses the argument of mercy—“in wrath remember mercy.” If God were to say to the churches in England, “I will have nothing to do with you, you have been so idle, so worldly, so purse-proud, so prayerless, so quarrelsome, so inconsistent, that I will never bless you again,” the churches of God in England might remain as astounding monuments of the justice of God towards the people who forsake His ways.

Sorrowfully, not wishing to be an accuser of the brethren, it does seem to me that considering the responsibilities which were laid upon us, and the means which God has given us, the church generally (there are blessed exceptions!), has done so little for Christ that if “Ichabod” were written right across its brow, and it were banished from God’s house, it would have its deserts. We cannot therefore appeal to merit, it must be mercy.

O God, have mercy upon Your poor church, and visit her, and revive her. She has but a little strength, she has desired to keep Your Word, oh, refresh her, restore to her Your power, and give her yet to be great in this land.

Mercy is also wanted for the land itself. This is a wicked nation, this England. Its wickedness belongs not to one class only, but to all classes. Sin runs down our streets, we have a fringe of elegant morality, but behind it we have a mass of rottenness.

There is not only the immorality of the streets at night, but look at the dishonesty of business men in high places. Cheating and thieving upon the grandest scale are winked at. Little thieves are punished,

and great thieves are untouched. This is a wicked city, this city of London, and the land is full of drunkenness, and the land is full of fornication, and the land is full of theft, and the land is full of all manner of Popish idolatry.

I am not the proper prophet to take up this burden, and to utter a wailing, my temperament is not that of Jeremiah, and therefore am I not well called to such a mission, but I may at least, with Habakkuk, having heard the Lord's speech concerning it, be afraid, and exhort you to pray for this land, and be asking that God would revive His work in order that this drunkenness may be given up, that this dishonesty may be purged out, that this great social evil may be cut out from the body politic, as a deadly cancer is cut out by the surgeon's knife.

O God, for mercy's sake, cast not off this island of the seas, give her not up to internal distraction, leave her not in darkness and blackness forever, but "revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy."

While I have been addressing Christians, my object has been to bless the ungodly too, and I do trust that some here who are not converted will inquire, "What then is God's voice to me?" May you be led to seek salvation, and remember you shall find it, for whosoever trusts Christ shall be saved.

If there be a man, woman, or child among you who will now humble himself under the hand of God, and look to the crucified Savior, you shall not perish, neither shall the wrath of God abide upon you, but you shall be found of Him in peace in the day of His appearing. God accept this humble weak testimony for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—HABAKKUK 3

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.