

THE GOD OF THE AGED NOS. 81-82

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 25, 1856
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK

**THE SUBSTANCE OF WHICH WAS ALSO DELIVERED AT STAMBOURNE, ESSEX,
ON THE COMMEMORATION OF THE JUBILEE OF HIS GRANDFATHER,
THE REV. JAMES SPURGEON
TUESDAY, MAY 27, 1856**

*“Even to your old age I am he, and even to hoar hairs will I carry you.
I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.”
Isaiah 46:4*

THOSE will be peculiar circumstances under which I shall stand up to address the people next Tuesday, circumstances which perhaps seldom occur—possibly may never have occurred before. It might have been more in order that the aged minister should himself address the people, but nevertheless, as it is his own choice, so it must be.

And I shall draw my consolation from the third verse, where it is declared, that though God be the God of the close of our life, yet He is also the God of its beginning. He carries us from the very womb, therefore the child may trust in God, as well as the grey head, and He who gives special blessings to the hoary hairs does also crown the head of the young with His perpetual favor, if they be His children

*“Even to your old age I am he;
And even to hoar hairs will I carry you.”*

Will you allow me to expound *the doctrine of this text* and then to show you how *it is carried out, especially in the time of old age?*

I. THE DOCTRINE OF THE TEXT I hold to be, *the constancy of God’s promise, its perpetuity, and its unchangeable nature.*

God declares that He is not simply the God of the young saint, that He is not simply the God of the middle-aged saint, but that He is the God of the saints in all their ages from the cradle to the tomb. “Even to old age I am he,” or as Lowth beautifully and more properly translates it, “Even to old age I am the same, and even to hoar hairs will I carry you.”

The doctrine, then, is twofold, that God *Himself is the same*, whatever may be our age. And that *God’s dealings towards us*, both in providence and in grace, His carryings and His deliverings, *are alike unchanged.*

1. As to the first part of the doctrine, that *God Himself is unchanged* when we come to old age, surely I have no need to prove that. Abundant testimonies of Scripture declare God to be an immutable being, upon whose brow there is no furrow of old age, and whose strength is not enfeebled by the lapse of ages.

But if we need proofs, we might look even abroad on nature, and we should from nature guess that God would not change during the short period of our mortal life. Seems it unto me a hard thing that God should be the same for seventy years, when I find things in nature that have retained the same impress and image for many more years?

Behold the sun! The sun that led our fathers to their daily labor, lights us still. And the moon by night is unchanged—the selfsame satellite, glittering with the light of her master, the sun. Are not the rocks the same? And are there not many ancient trees, which remain well-nigh the same for multitudes of years and outlive centuries?

Is not the earth, for the most part, the same? Have the stars lost their light? Do not the clouds still pour their rain upon the earth? Does not the ocean still beat with its one great pulse of ebb and flow? Do not the winds still howl or breathe in gentle gales upon the earth? Does not the sun still shine? Do not plants grow as heretofore?

Has the harvest changed? Has God forgotten His covenant of day and night? Has He yet brought another flood upon the earth? Does it not still stand in the water and out of the water? Surely, then, if changing nature, made to pass away in a few more years and to be “dissolved with fervent heat,” remains the same through the cycles of seventy years, may we not believe that God, who is greater than nature, the Creator of all worlds, would still remain the same God, through so brief a period? Does not that suffice?

Then we have another proof. Had we a new God, we should not have the Scriptures. Had God changed, then we should need a new Bible. But the Bible which the infant reads is the Bible of the grey head. The Bible which I carried with me to my Sunday school, I shall sit in my bed to read, when, hoary-headed, all strength shall fail save that which is divine.

The promise which cheered me in the young morning of life, when first I consecrated myself to God, shall cheer me when my eyes are dim with age, and when the sunlight of heaven lights them up, and I see bright visions of far-off worlds, where I hope to dwell forever.

The Word of God is still the same, there is not one promise removed. The doctrines are the same. The truths are the same. All God’s declarations remain unchanged forever. And I argue, from the very fact that God’s Book is not affected by years, that God Himself must be immutable and that His years do not change Him.

Look at our worship—is not that the same? Oh! hoary heads! well can you remember how you were carried to God’s house in your childhood and you heard the same hymns that now you hear. Have they lost their savor? Have they lost their music? At times, when prayer is offered, you remember that your ancient pastor prayed the same petition fifty years ago, but the petition is as good as ever. It is still unchanged.

It is the same praise, the same prayer, the same expounding, the same preaching. All our worship is the same. And with many it is the same house of God, where first they were dedicated to God in baptism. Surely, my brethren, if God had changed, we should have been obliged to make a new form of worship. If God had not been immutable, we should have needed to have sacrificed our sacred service to some new method. But since we find ourselves bowing like our fathers, with the same prayers, and chanting the same psalms, we rightly believe that God Himself must be immutable.

But we have better proofs than this that God is still unchanged. We learn this *from the sweet experience of all the saints*. They testify that the God of their youth is the God of their later years. They own that Christ “has the dew of his youth.” When they first saw Him, as the bright and glorious Immanuel, they thought Him “altogether lovely.” And when they see Him now, they see not one beauty faded and not one glory departed. He is the selfsame Jesus.

When they first rested themselves on Him, they thought His shoulders strong enough to carry them. And they find those shoulders still as mighty as ever. They thought at first His heart did melt with love and that His heart was beating high with mercy, and they find it still the same. God is unchanged and therefore, they “are not consumed.”

They put their trust in Him, because they have not yet marked a single alteration in Him. His character, His essence, His being, and His deeds are all the same. And moreover, to crown all, we cannot suppose a God, if we cannot suppose an immutable God. A God who changed would be no God. We could not grasp the idea of deity if we once allowed our minds to take in the thought of mutability.

From all these things, then, we conclude that, “even from old age he is the same, and that even to hoar hairs He will carry us.”

2. The other side of the doctrine is this, not only that God is *the same in His nature*, but that He is *the same in His dealings*. That He will carry us the same, that He will deliver us the same, that He will bear us the same as He used to do. And here also we need scarcely to prove to you that God’s dealings towards His children are the same, especially when I remind you that God’s promises are made not to ages, but to people, to persons, and to men.

It has been recently declared by some ministers that certain ages are more likely to be converted than other ages. We have heard persons state that should a man outlive thirty years of life, if he has heard the Gospel, he is not at all likely to be saved. But we believe a more palpable, bare-faced lie was never uttered in the pulpit, for we have, ourselves, known multitudes who have been saved at forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, and even bordering on the grave at eighty.

We find some promises in the Bible made to some particular conditions, but the main, the great, the grand promises, are made to sinners as sinners. They are made to the elect, to the chosen ones, irrespective of their age or condition. We hold that the man who is old can be justified in the same way as the man who is young. That the robe of Christ is broad enough to cover the strong full-grown man as well as the little child.

We believe the blood of Christ avails to wash out seventy years, as well as seventy days of sin, that “with God there is no respect of persons,” that all ages are alike to Him, and that “whosoever cometh unto Christ, he will in nowise cast out,” and sure we are that all the good things of the Bible are as good at one time as at another.

The perfect robe of righteousness that I wear, will that change by years? The sanctification of the Spirit, will that be destroyed by years? The promises, will they totter? The covenant, will that be dissolved? I can suppose that the everlasting hills shall melt. I can dream that the eternal mountains shall be dissolved, like the snow upon their peaks. I can conceive that the ocean may be licked up with tongues of forked flame. I can suppose the sun stopped in its career. I can imagine the moon turned into blood. I can conceive the stars falling from the vault of night. I can imagine “the wreck of nature and the crash of worlds.” But I cannot conceive the change of a single mercy, a single covenant blessing, a single promise, or a single grace, which God bestows upon His people, for I find every one of them in itself stamped with immutability, and I have no reason to put this merely upon guess-work.

I find, when I turn over the whole Bible, that the experience of the saints, one thousand, two thousand, three thousand years ago, was just the same as the experience of the saints now. And if I find God’s mercy is unchanged from David’s time till mine, can I conceive that God, who lasts the same for thousands, would change during the brief period of seventy? Nay, still we hold that He will carry us and He will bear us in old age as well as in our youth.

But besides that, we have living witnesses, living testimonies. I could fetch up from the ground floor of this place, and from the galleries, not one or two, but twenty, yea, a hundred living witnesses, who, rising up, would tell you that God does carry them now as He did of old, and that He still does bear them.

I need not appeal to my friends, or they would stand up in their pews, and with the tears trickling down their cheeks, they would say, “Young men, young women, trust your God. He has not forsaken me!” I find that,

*“Even down to old age, all His people do prove,
His sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love;
And when hoary hairs do their temples adorn,
Like lambs they now still in His bosom are borne.”*

Ask yon aged friend, ask any aged Christian, whether he finds God has in the least forsaken him, and you will see him shake his head and hear him say, “O young man, if I had another seventy years to live, I would trust Him still, for I have not found Him fail all the way that the Lord God has led me. Not one promise has failed, but all has come to pass.”

And I think I see him lifting up his hands in the midst of the assembly and saying, “I have nothing to regret but my sin. If I had to live over again, I should only want to put myself into the hands of the same Providence, to be led and directed by the selfsame grace.” Beloved, we need not prove to you farther, for living witnesses testify that God carries out His promise, “I have made and will bear; even I will carry and deliver you.”

II. But now we come to our real subject, which is, to consider THE TIME OF OLD AGE AS A SPECIAL PERIOD, and to mark, therefore, the constancy of divine love—that God bears and succors His servants in their later years.

I cannot imagine or dream that I need offer any apology for preaching to aged people. If I were in sundry stupid circles where people call themselves ladies and gentlemen, and always want to conceal their ages, I might have some hesitation. But I have nothing to do with that here. I call an old man, an old man and an old woman, an old woman, whether they think themselves old or not is nothing to me. I guess they are, if they are getting anyway past sixty, on to seventy or eighty. Old age is *a time of peculiar memories, of peculiar hopes, of peculiar concerns, of peculiar blessedness, and of peculiar duties*. And yet in all this, God is the same, although man be peculiar.

1. First, *old age is a time of peculiar memory*. In fact, it is the age of memory. We young men talk of remembering such and such things a certain time ago. But what is our memory, compared to our father’s? Our father looks back on three or four times the length of time over which we cast our eyes.

What a peculiar memory the old man has! How many joys he can remember! How many times has his heart beat high with rapture and blessedness! How many times has his house been gladdened with plenty! How many harvest homes has he seen! How many treadings of the vintage!

How many times has he heard the laugh run round the fireplace! How many times have his children shouted in his ear and rejoiced around him! How many times have his own eyes sparkled with delight! How many hill Mizars has he seen! How many times has he had sweet banqueting with the Lord! How many periods of communion with Jesus! How many hallowed services has he attended! How many songs of Zion has he sung! How many answered prayers have gladdened his spirit! How many happy deliverances have made him laugh for joy!

When he looks back, he can string his mercies together by the thousand! and looking upon them all, he can say, though he will think of many troubles that he has had to pass through, “Surely, goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life.” God has been with him to hoary hairs and even to old age He has carried him. His joys he looks back upon as proofs of God’s constancy.

And how many griefs has he had! How many times has that old man been to the chamber of sickness! How many times has that aged sister been stretched on the bed of affliction! How many diseases can he or she look back upon! How many hours of bitter travail and pain! How many seasons of trouble, infirmity, and approachings to the grave! How many times has the old man tottered very near that brook from which no traveler can return! How many times has he had the Father’s rod upon his shoulders! And yet, looking back upon all, he can say, “Even to old age he is the same; and even to hoary hairs he hath carried me.”

How frequently, too, has that old man gone to the grave where he has buried many he has loved? There, perhaps, he has laid a beloved wife and he goes to weep there. Or the husband sleeps, while the wife is yet alive. Sons and daughters, too, that old man can remember—snatched away to heaven almost as soon as they were born. Or perhaps permitted to live until their prime and then cut down just in their youthful glory.

How many of the old friends he has welcomed to his fireside has he buried? How frequently has he been forced to exclaim, "Though friends have departed, yet 'there is a friend who sticketh closer than a brother,' on Him I still trust and to Him I still commit my soul."

And mark, moreover, how many times temptation has shattered that venerable saint! How many conflicts has he had with doubts and fears! How many wrestlings with the enemy! How often he has been tempted to forsake his faith! How frequently he has had to stand in the thickest part of the battle, but yet he has been preserved by mercy and not quite cut down.

He has been enabled to persevere in the heavenly road. How travel-sore are his feet! How blistered by the roughness of the way. But he can tell you, that notwithstanding all these things, Christ has, "kept him till this day and will not let him go," and his conclusion is, "even to old age God has been the same and even to hoary hairs He has carried him."

There is one sad reflection which we are obliged to mention when we look upon the bald head of the aged saint and that is, how many sins he has committed! Ah! my beloved, however pure may have been your lives, you will be obliged to say, "Oh! how have I sinned, in youth, in middle age, and even when infirmities have gathered around me! Would to God I had been holy! How often have I forsaken God! How frequently have I wandered from Him!

"Alas! how often have I provoked Him! How frequently have I doubted His promises, when I had no cause whatever to distrust Him! How frequently has my tongue sinned against my heart! How constantly have I violated all I knew to be good and excellent! I am forced to say now, in my grey old age,

***"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling.***

"I am still,

***"A monument of grace,
A sinner saved by blood.***

"I have no hope now save in the blood of Christ, and can only wonder how it is that Christ could have preserved me so long. Truly, I can say, 'Even to old age He is the same, and even to hoary hairs He has carried me.'"

2. The aged man, too, has *peculiar hopes*. He has no such hopes as I or my young friends here. He has few hopes of the future in this world. They are gathered up into a small space and he can tell you, in a few words, what constitutes all his expectation and desire.

But he has one hope and that is the very same which he had when he first trusted in Christ. It is a hope "undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them that are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." Let me talk a little of that hope and you will see from it that the Christian is the same as ever he was, and even down to hoary hairs God deals the same with him.

My venerable brother, what is the *ground* of your hope? Is it not the same as that which animated you when you were first united with the Christian church? You said then, "My hope is in the blood of Jesus Christ." I ask you, brother, what's your hope now, and I am sure you will answer, "I do not hope to be saved because of my long service, nor because of my devotedness to God's cause."

***"All my hope on Christ is staid,
All my help from Him I bring:
He covers my defenseless head
With the shadow of His wing."***

And my brother, what is *the reason* of your hope? If you are asked what reason you have to believe you are a Christian, you will say, "The selfsame reason I gave at the church meeting." When I came

before it, I said, then, "I believe myself to be a child of God, because I feel myself to be a sinner and God has given me grace to put my trust in Jesus."

I think that is all the reason you have to believe yourself a child of God now. At times you have some evidence, as you call it, but there are hours when your graces and virtues are obscured and you cannot see them, for gloomy doubts prevail, and you will confess, I am sure, that the only way to get rid of your doubts will be to come and say, again,

*"A guilty, weak and helpless worm,
On Christ's kind arms I fall;
He's still my strength and righteousness,
My Savior and my all."*

And *the object or end* of hope, is not that the same? What was your hope when you first went to the wicket gate? Why, your hope was that you might arrive at the land of the blessed. And is it not the same now? Is your hope of heaven changed? Do you wish for anything else or for anything better? "No," you will say, "I thought when I started, I should one day be with Jesus. That is what I expect now. I feel that my hope is precisely the same. I want to be with Jesus, to be like Him, and to see Him as He is."

And is not *the joy* of that hope just the same? How glad you used to be when your minister preached about heaven, and told you of its pearly gates and streets of shining gold! And has it lost any of its beauty in your eyes now? Do you not remember, that in your father's house, at family prayer, one night, they sang,

*"Jerusalem, my happy home,
Name, ever dear to me!
When shall my labors have an end
In joy, and peace, and Thee"?*

Can you not sing that now? Do you want any other city besides Jerusalem? Do you remember how they used to rise up sometimes in the house of God, when you were children and sing,

*"On Jordan's stormy banks I stand,
And cast a wishful eye!"*

Will not that hymn do for you now even better than it did for you then? You can now sing it, as your old father used to sing it, with a firm heart and yet with a quivering lip. The hope that ravished you then, ravishes you now. You start at the same watchword. Heaven is your home still.

*"There your best friends, your kindred dwell,
There, God your Saviour reigns."*

Does not all this prove, again, that though our hopes are somewhat more contracted than they were, yet, "God is still the same and even to hoary hairs he will carry us"?

3. Again, old age is a time of *peculiar solicitude*. An old man is not anxious about many things, as we are, for he has not so many things for which to concern himself. He has not the cares of starting in business, as he once had. He has no children to launch out in business. He has not to cast his anxious eyes on his little family.

But his solicitude has somewhat increased in another direction. He has more solicitude about his bodily frame than he once had. He cannot now run as he used to do, but he must walk with more sober gait. He fears every now and then that the pitcher will be "broken at the cistern," for "the noise of the grinders is low."

He has no longer that strength of desire he once possessed, his body has begun to totter, to shake, and to quiver. The old tenement has stood these fifty years and who expects a house to last forever? A bit of mortar has gone off from one place and a lath out of another. And when a little wind comes to shake it about, he is ready to cry out, "The earthly house of my tabernacle is about to be dissolved."

But I told you before, this peculiar solicitude is but another proof of divine faithfulness, for now that you have little pleasure in the flesh, do you not find that God is just the same? And that though the days are come when you can say, "I have no pleasure in *them*," yet the days have not come when you can say, "I have no pleasure in *him*," but on the contrary,

*"Though all created streams are dry,
His goodness is the same.
With this you still are satisfied,
And glory in His name."*

If He had only been your God when you were a strong young man, you might have thought that He loved you for what you could do for Him. But now you have become a poor worn-out pensioner, have you any better proof that He is an unchanging God, because He loves you when you can do so little for Him? I tell you, even your bodily pains are but proofs of His love, for He is taking down your old tenement stick by stick, and is building it up again in brighter worlds, never to be taken down any more.

And remember, too, there is another solicitude—a failure of mind as well as of body. There are many remarkable instances of old men, who have been as gifted in their old age as in their youth. But with the majority, the mind becomes somewhat impaired, especially the memory. They cannot remember what was done yesterday, although it is a singular fact that they can remember what was done fifty, sixty, or seventy years ago.

They forget much which they would wish to remember. But still they find that their God is just the same. They find that His goodness does not depend on their memory. That the sweetness of His grace does not depend upon their palate. When they can remember but little of the sermon, they still feel that it leaves as good an impression on their heart as when they were strong in their memories. And thus they have another proof that God, even when their mind fails a little, carries them down to their hoar hairs, their old age, and that to them He is ever the same.

But the chief solicitude of old age is death. Young men may die soon. Old men *must* die. Young men, if they sleep, sleep in a siege. Old men, if they sleep, sleep in an attack, when the enemy has already made a breach and is storming the castle. A grey-headed old sinner is a grey-bearded old fool, but an aged Christian is an aged wise man.

But even the aged Christian has peculiar concerns about death. He knows he cannot be a long way from his end. He feels that, even in the course of nature, apart from what is called accidental death, there is no doubt but in a few more years he must stand before his God. He thinks he may be in heaven in ten or twenty years, but how short do those ten or twenty years appear! He does not act like a man who thinks a coach is a long way off and he may take his time. But he is like one who is about to go a journey and hears the post-horn blowing down the street, and he is getting ready.

His one solicitude now is to examine himself whether he is in the faith. He fears that if he is wrong now, it will be terrible to have spent all his life dabbling in profession, and to find at last that he has got nothing for his pains, except a mere empty name, which must be swept away by death. He feels now how solemn a thing the Gospel is. He feels the world to be as nothing. He feels that he is near the bar of doom.

But still, beloved, mark God's faithfulness is the same. For if he be nearer death, he has the sweet satisfaction that he is also nearer heaven. And if he has more need to examine himself than ever, he has also more evidence whereby to examine himself, for he can say, "Well, I know that on such and such an occasion the Lord heard my prayers. At such and such a time He manifested Himself to me, as He did

not unto the world,” and though examination presses more upon the old, they still have greater materials for it. And here again is another proof of this grand truth, “Even unto old age I am the same,” says God, “and even to hoar hairs will I carry you.”

4. And now, once more, old age has its *peculiar blessedness*. Some time ago I stepped up to an old man whom I saw when preaching at an anniversary, and I said to him, “Brother, do you know, there is no man in the whole chapel I envy so much as you.” “Envy me,” he said, “why, I am eighty-seven.” I said, “I do, indeed, because you are so near your home, and because I believe that in old age there is a peculiar joy, which we young people do not taste at present. You have got to the bottom of the cup and it is not with God’s wine as it is with man’s. Man’s wine becomes dregs at the last, but God’s wine is sweeter the deeper you drink it.” He said, “That’s very true, young man,” and shook me by the hand.

I believe there is a blessedness about old age that we young men know nothing of. I will tell you how that is. In the first place, the old man has a good experience to talk about. The young men are only just trying some of the promises, but the old man can turn them over, one by one, and say, “There, I have tried that, and that, and that.”

We read them over and say, “I *hope* they are true,” but the old man says, “I *know* they are true.” And then he begins to tell you why. He has got a history for every one, like a soldier for his medals. And he takes them out and says, “I will tell you when the Lord revealed that to me, just when I lost my wife, just when I buried my son, just when I was turned out of my cottage and did not get work for six weeks, or at another time, when I broke my leg.” He begins telling you the history of the promises and says, “There, now, I know they are all true.”

What a blessed thing, to look upon them as paid notes, to bring out the old checks that have been cashed and say, “I know they are genuine or else they would not have been paid.” Old people have not the doubts young people have about the doctrines. Young people are apt to doubt, but when they get old, they begin to get solid and firm in the faith. I love to get some of my old brethren to talk with me concerning the good things of the kingdom. They do not hold the truth with their two fingers, as some of the young men do, but they get right hold of it and nobody can take it from their grasp.

Rowland Hill once somewhat lost his way in a sermon and he turned to this text, “Oh! Lord, my heart is fixed.” “Young men,” he said, “there is nothing like having your hearts fixed. I have been all these years seeking the Lord. Now my heart is fixed. I never have any doubts now about election or any other doctrine. If man brings me a new theory, I say, ‘Away with it!’ I stand hard and fast by the truth alone.”

An old gentleman wrote me a little time ago and said I was a little too high. He said he believed the same doctrines as I do, but he did not think so when he was as old as I am. I told him it was just as well to begin right as to end right, and it was better to be right at the beginning than to have to rub off so many errors afterwards.

An old countryman once came to me and said, “Ah! young man, you have had too deep a text. You handled it well enough, but it is an old man’s text, and I felt afraid to hear you announce it.” I said, “Is God’s truth dependent on age? If the thing is true, it is just as well to hear it from me as from anyone else. And if you can hear it better anywhere else, you have got the opportunity.”

Still, he did not think that God’s precious truths were suitable to young people. But I hold they are suitable for all God’s children, therefore I love to preach them. But how blessed it is to come to a position in life where you have good anchorage for your faith—where you can say,

***“Should all the forms that hell devise,
Assail my faith with treacherous art.”***

I shall not be very polite to them,

“I’ll call them vanity of lies

And bind the Gospel to my heart.”

And I think there are peculiar joys which the old Christian has, of another sort. And that is, he has peculiar fellowship with Christ, more than we have. At least, if I understand John Bunyan rightly, I think he tells us that when we get very near to heaven there is a very glorious land. “They came into the country of Beulah, whose air was very sweet and pleasant. The way lying directly through it, they solaced themselves there for a season. Yea, here they continually heard the singing of birds, and saw every day the flowers appear on the earth, and heard the voice of the turtle in the land.

“In this country, the sun shines night and day. Wherefore this was beyond the Valley of the Shadow of Death and also out of the reach of Giant Despair. Neither could they from this place so much as see Doubting Castle. Here they were within sight of the City they were going to. Also here met them some of the inhabitants thereof, for in this land the shining ones commonly walked, because it was upon the borders of heaven.

“In this land also, the contract between the Bride and the Bridegroom was renewed. Yea, here, ‘as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so doth their God rejoice over them.’ Here they had no want of corn and wine. For in this place they met with abundance of what they had sought for in all their pilgrimages. Here they heard voices from out of the City, loud voices, saying, ‘Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh. Behold, His reward is with him!’ Here all the inhabitants of the country called them, ‘the holy people, the redeemed of the Lord.’”

There are peculiar communings, peculiar openings of the gates of paradise, peculiar visions of glory, just as you come near to it. It stands to reason that the nearer you get to the bright light of the celestial city, the clearer shall be the air. And therefore, there are peculiar blessednesses belonging to the old, for they have more of this peculiar fellowship with Christ.

But all this only proves that Christ is the same, because when there are fewer earthly joys, He gives more spiritual ones. Therefore, again, it becomes the fact, “Even to old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you.”

5. And now, lastly, the aged saint has *peculiar duties*. There are certain things which a good man can do, which nobody else ought to do, or can do well. And that is one proof of divine faithfulness. For He says of His aged ones, “They shall bring forth fruit in old age,” and so they do. I will tell you some of them.

Testimony is one of the peculiar duties of old men. Now, suppose I should get up and say, “I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread,” someone would reply, “Why, you are not twenty-two yet. What do you know about it?” But if an old man gets up and says, “I have been young and now am I old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread,” with what power that testimony comes!

Suppose I say to you, “Trust in God with all your troubles and trials. *I* can bear witness that He will not forsake you.” You will reply, “Oh! yes, young man, but you have not had many troubles. You have not been a child of God above these six years, how should you know?” But up gets an old Christian—and well do I remember an ancient Christian rising up at the sacramental table and saying, “Dear brethren, we are met again around this table, and I think all an old man can do is to bear testimony to his Master. These five-and-forty years I have walked in His truth. Young people, hear what I have to say. He has been my God these five-and-forty years and I have no fault to find with Him. I have found religion’s ways to be ways of pleasantness and her paths to be paths of peace.”

You know, if you hear an old man talk, you pay greater attention to what he says from the fact that he is old. I remember hearing the late Mr. Jay. I fancy that if I had heard the same sermon preached by a young man, I should not have thought so much of it. But there appeared such a depth in it because it came from an old man, standing on the borders of the grave. It was like an echo of the past coming to me, to let me hear of my God’s faithfulness, that I might trust for the future.

Testimony is the duty of old men and women. They should labor whenever they can to bear testimony to God's faithfulness and to declare that now also, when they are old and grey-headed, their God forsakes them not.

There is another duty which is peculiarly the work of the aged and that is the work of comforting the young believer. There is no one more qualified that I know of than a kindhearted old man to convert the young. I know that down in some parts of the country there is a peculiar breed of old man, who for the good of the church, I heartily hope will soon become extinct.

As soon as they see a young believer, they look at him with suspicion, expecting him to be a hypocrite. They go off to his house and find everything satisfactory, but they say, "I was not so confident as that when I was young. Young man, you must be kept back a bit." Then there are some hard questions put and the poor young child of God gets hardly pressed, and is looked upon with suspicion, because he does not come up to their standard.

But the men I allude to are such as some I have here, with whom I delight to speak, who tell you not hard things, but utter gentle words. Who say, "I was imprudent when I was a young man. I know that when I was a little child, I could not have answered these questions. I do not expect so much from you as from one who is a little older." And when the young Christian comes to them they say, "Do not fear, I have gone through the waters and they have not overflowed me, and through the fire and have not been burned. Trust in God 'for down to old age he is the same, and to hoar hairs he will carry you.'"

Then there is another work that is the work of the old and that is the work of *warning*. If an old man were to go out in the middle of the road and shout out to you to stop, you would stop sooner than you would if a boy were to do it, for then you might say, "Out of the way, you young rascal," and go on still. The warnings of the old have great effect and it is their peculiar work to guide the imprudent and warn the unwary.

Now I have done, except the application. And I want to speak to three classes of persons.

What a precious thought, young men and women, is contained in this text, "That even to old age God will be the same to you; and even down to your hoar hairs he will not forsake you!" You want a safe investment, well, here is an investment safe enough. A bank may break, but heaven cannot. A rock may be dissolved, and if I build a house on that, it may be destroyed.

But if I build on Christ, my happiness is secure forever. Young man! God's religion will last as long as you will. His comforts you will never be able to exhaust in all your life, but you will find that the bottle of your joys will be as full when you have been drinking seventy years, as it was when you first began.

Oh! do not buy a thing that will not last you, "Eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." Oh! how pleasant it is to be a young Christian! How blessed it is to begin in the early morning to love and serve God! The best old Christians are those who were once young Christians. Some aged Christians have but little grace, for this reason—that they were not young Christians.

Oh! I have sometimes thought that if there is any man who will have an abundant entrance into heaven, it is the man who in early life was brought to know the Lord. You know, going into heaven will be like the ships going into harbor. There will be some tugged in almost by miracle, "saved so as by fire." Others will be going in just with a sheet or two of canvas—they will "scarcely be saved!"

But there will be some who will go in with all their canvas up and unto these "an abundant entrance shall be ministered into the kingdom of their God and Saviour." Young people! It is the ship that is launched early in the morning that will get an abundant entrance and come into God's haven in full sail.

Now, you middle-aged men, you are plunged in the midst of business and are sometimes supposing what will become of you in your old age. But is there any promise of God to you when you suppose about tomorrows? You say, "Suppose I should live to be as old as so and so, and be a burden upon people, I should not like that."

Don't get meddling with God's business, leave His decrees to Him. There is many a person who thought he would die in a workhouse, that has died in a mansion, and many a woman that thought she

would die in the streets, has died in her bed, happy and comfortable, singing of providential grace and everlasting mercy.

Middle aged man! Listen to what David says again, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." Go on, then, unsheathe your sword once more. "The battle is the LORD'S." Leave your declining years to Him and give your present years to Him. Live to Him now and He will never cast you away when you are old.

Do not lay up for old age and keep back from the cause of God, but rather trust God for the future. Be "diligent in business," but take care you do not hurt your spirit by being too diligent, by being grasping and selfish. Remember you will—

***"Want but little here below,
Nor want that little long."***

And lastly, my dear venerable fathers in the faith, and mothers in Israel, take these words for your joy. Do not let the young people catch you indulging in melancholy, sitting in your chimney corner, grumbling and growling, but go about cheerful and happy, and they will think how blessed it is to be a Christian. If you are surly and fretful, they will think the Lord has forsaken you. But keep a smiling countenance and they will think the promise is fulfilled, "And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you; I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you."

Do, I beseech you, my venerable friends, try to be of a happy temperament and cheerful spirit, for a child will run away from a surly old man. But there is not a child in the world but loves his grandpapa if he is cheerful and happy. You can lead us to heaven if you have got heaven's sunlight on your face, but you will not lead us at all if you are cross and ill-tempered, for then we shall not care about your company.

Make yourselves merry with the people of God and try to live happily before men. For so will you prove to us—to a demonstration, that even to old age God is with you, and that when your strength fails, He is still your preservation. May God Almighty bless you, for the Savior's sake! Amen.

The foregoing sermon exceeding the limits of the usual Penny Number, and it being desirous that it should be given in full, it has been deemed advisable to make the present a double number. The two appended Tracts have been inserted as a specimen of a series called, "The New Park Street Tracts," printed in large type, at 1s. 4d. per 100.

THE NEW PARK STREET TRACTS

EDITED BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON

Printed and Sold By the Publishers,
ALABASTER & PASSMORE,
No. 34, Wilson Street, Finsbury Square;
to be had also of J. Paul, Chapter-house Court, Paternoster Row,
G. J. Stevenson, 54, Paternoster Row, and of all Booksellers.

THE INFIDEL'S SERMON TO THE PIRATES

A NATIVE of Sweden, who had imbibed infidel views, had occasion to go from one port to another in the Baltic Sea. When he came to the place from where he expected to sail, the vessel was gone. On inquiring, he found a fishing boat going the same way, on which he embarked. After being, for some

time out to sea, the men, observing that he had several trunks and chests on board, concluded he must be very rich, and therefore agreed among themselves to throw him overboard.

This he heard them express, which gave him great uneasiness. However, he took occasion to open one of his trunks, which contained some books. Observing this, they remarked among themselves that it was not worth while to throw him into the sea, as they did not need any books, which they supposed were all the trunks contained.

They asked him if he were a priest. Hardly knowing what reply to make them, he told them he was. And at this they seemed much pleased and said they would have a sermon on the next day, as it was the Sabbath. This increased the anxiety and distress of his mind, for he knew himself to be as incapable of such an undertaking as it was possible for anyone to be, as he knew very little of the Scriptures, neither did he believe in the inspiration of the Bible.

At length, they came to a small rocky island, perhaps a quarter of a mile in circumference, where was a company of pirates, who had chosen this little sequestered spot to deposit their treasures. He was taken to a cave and introduced to an old woman, to whom they remarked that they were to have a sermon preached the next day. She said she was very glad of it, for she had not heard the Word of God for a great while.

His was a trying case, for preach he must, still he knew nothing about preaching. If he refused, or undertook to preach and did not please, he expected it would be his death. With these thoughts, he passed a sleepless night, and in the morning his mind was not settled upon anything. To call upon God, whom he believed to be inaccessible, was altogether vain. He could devise no way whereby he might be saved. He walked to and fro, still shut up in darkness, striving to collect something to say to them, but could not think of even a single sentence.

When the appointed time for the service arrived, he entered the cave where he found the men assembled. There was a seat prepared for him and a table with a Bible on it. They sat for the space of half an hour in profound silence, and even then, the anguish of his soul was as great as human nature was capable of enduring.

At length these words came to his mind, "Verily, there is a reward for the righteous: verily, there is a God that judgeth in the earth." He arose and delivered them. Then other words presented themselves and so on, till his understanding became opened and his heart enlarged in a manner astonishing to himself. He spoke upon subjects suited to their condition. The reward of the righteous, the judgments of the wicked, the necessity of repentance, and the importance of a change of life.

The matchless love of God to the children of men had such a powerful effect upon the minds of these wretched beings, that they were melted into tears. Nor was he less astonished at the unbounded goodness of Almighty God, in thus interposing to save his spiritual as well as his natural life. And well might he exclaim, "This is the Lord's doing and marvellous in our eyes."

Under a deep sense of God's goodness, his heart became filled with thankfulness, which it was out of his power to express. What a marvellous change was thus suddenly brought about by divine interposition! He who a little while before disbelieved in communion with God and the soul, became as humble as a little child. And they who were so lately meditating on his death, now were filled with love and goodwill towards each other, particularly towards him, manifesting affectionate kindness and willing to render him all the assistance in their power.

The next morning they fitted out one of their vessels and conveyed him where he desired. From that time he became a changed man. From being a slave to the influence of infidelity, he was brought to be a sincere believer in the power and efficacy of the truth as it is in Jesus.

[How marvellous the providence of God and the sovereignty of His grace! Who is he that has stepped beyond the range of Almighty love? Or has sinned too much to be forgiven? Reader! Are you an infidel? What would you do in a similar situation? What other doctrine than that of Scripture would benefit pirates? Certainly not your own.

What would you like to teach your own children? Certainly not your own sentiments. You feel that you would not wish to hear your own offspring blaspheming God. Moreover, forgive us if we declare our opinion, that you know that there is a God, though with your lips you deny Him. Think, we beseech you, of your Maker and of His Son, the Savior, and may eternal love bring even you to the Redeemer. C. H. S.]

NO. 3—THE ACTRESS

AN actress, in one of the English provincial or country theatres, was one day passing through the streets of the town in which she then resided, when her attention was attracted by the sound of voices, which she heard in a poor cottage before her. Curiosity prompted her to look in at an open door, where she saw a few poor people sitting together, one of whom, at the moment of her observation, was giving out the following hymn, which the others joined in singing,

*“Depth of mercy! Can there be
Mercy still reserved for me?”*

The tune was sweet and simple, but she heeded it not. The words had riveted her attention and she stood motionless, until she was invited to enter by the woman of the house, who had observed her standing at the door. She complied and remained during a prayer which was offered up by one of the little company. And uncouth as the expressions might seem in her ears, they carried with them a conviction of sincerity on the part of the person then employed.

She left the cottage, but the words of the hymn followed her. She could not banish them from her mind, and at last she resolved to procure the book which contained the hymn. The more she read it, the more decided her serious impressions became. She attended the ministry of the Gospel, read her hitherto neglected and despised Bible, and bowed herself in humility and contrition of heart before Him whose mercy she felt she needed, whose sacrifices are those of a broken heart and a contrite spirit, and who has declared that therewith He is well-pleased.

Her profession, she determined at once, and forever, to renounce. And for some little time excused herself from appearing on the stage, without, however, disclosing her change of sentiments or making known her resolution finally to leave it.

The manager of the theater called upon her one morning and requested her to sustain the principal character in a new play which was to be performed the next week for his benefit. She had frequently performed this character to general admiration. But she now, however, told him her resolution never to appear as an actress again, at the same time giving her reasons.

At first he attempted to overcome her scruples by ridicule, but this was unavailing. He then represented the loss he would incur by her refusal and concluded his arguments by promising that if to oblige him she would act on this occasion, it should be the last request of the kind he would ever make.

Unable to resist his solicitations, she promised to appear, and on the appointed evening went to the theater. The character she assumed required her, on her first entrance, to sing a song. And when the curtain was drawn up, the orchestra immediately began the accompaniment. But she stood as if lost in thought and as one forgetting all around her and her own situation. The music ceased, but she did not sing.

And supposing her to be overcome by embarrassment, the band again commenced. A second time they paused for her to begin and still she did not open her lips. A third time the air was played and then, with clasped hands and eye suffused with tears, she sang, not the words of the song, but—

*“Depth of mercy! Can there be
Mercy still reserved for me!”*

It is almost needless to add that the performance was suddenly ended. Men ridiculed, though some were induced from that memorable night to “consider their ways,” and to reflect on the wonderful power of that religion which could so influence the heart and change the life of one hitherto so vain and so evidently pursuing the road which leads to destruction.

It would be satisfactory to the reader to know that the change in Miss _____ was as permanent as it was singular. She walked consistently with her profession of religion for many years. and at length, became the wife of a minister of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[Perhaps, dear reader, you are a great transgressor, then you fear there is no forgiveness for you. Let this remove your fears. You may be the vilest creature out of hell and yet grace can make you as pure as the angels in heaven. God would be just should He damn you, but He can be just and yet save you. Do you feel that the Lord has a right over you to do as He pleases? Do you feel that you have no claim upon Him?

Then, rejoice, for Jesus Christ has borne *your* guilt and carried *your* sorrows, and you shall assuredly be saved. If you are a *sinner* in the true sense of that word, then remember Jesus came to save sinners, and you among the rest, if you know yourself to be a sinner. C. H. S.]

*“Lo, th’ incarnate God ascended,
Pleads the merit of His blood:
Venture on Him, venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude;
None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good.”*

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.