

THINK WELL AND DO WELL

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A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

“For thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes: and I have walked in thy truth.”
Psalm 26:3

THROUGHOUT this psalm David is laboring under the fear that he should be judged and condemned with the ungodly world. He feels in his own heart that he is not one with the enemies of God, and he shudders lest having hated their society on earth he should be shut up in their company forever. His agonizing prayer is, “Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men.”

In urging reasons before the throne of grace why he should not be reckoned in the same condemnation as the ungodly, he urges not self-righteously, but truthfully and confidently that there was a difference made by grace between himself and them. “I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers. I have hated the congregation of evildoers; and will not sit with the wicked....Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honor dwells.”

There was a difference, he declares, between himself and the wicked, even in the current of his thoughts. While their thoughts ran upon the world, vanity, sin, rebellion, hypocrisy, and violence, his meditations were upon all the marvelous works of God, and especially upon His lovingkindness—“Thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes.” It is an encouraging fact when we can honestly feel as before God that our thoughts are habitually exercised upon Himself and upon divine truth. “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.”

We may form a better judgment of ourselves probably from the tenor of our thoughts than from any other evidence. If our thoughts all go downward, downward we ourselves are going, but if there are some breathings towards the heavenly, some aspirations of our spirit towards the pure and perfect Father of Lights, then may we have hope that we also are ascending towards the heavenly places, and shall dwell in them hereafter.

David could urge besides the secret evidence of his devout thoughts, the public proof of his holy acts—“I have walked in thy truth.” It would be vanity for a man to find evidence of a renewed heart in his private meditations, if those thoughts were not sufficiently deep to lead him to practical godliness. The thoughts become valuable evidence because of their influence upon the life, but if they were so powerlessly superficial that our daily life was in no degree affected by them, they would be as salt that has lost its savor.

If our actions are evil, it is vain to take comfort from our thoughts. If actions speak louder than words, they may well speak louder than thoughts. We must display outward holiness, or else our inward experience of grace exists only in pretense. Say you think of what you will, but if your whole conversation is according to the will of the flesh and not after the will of God, your thoughts are nought. You have deceived yourself as to their tenor, they cannot be as you say they are, thoughts truthful, holy, devout and divine.

Put the two together, holy thoughts and holy living, and you have two sure evidences of a renewed nature. And if God has given you both of these, though you will probably confess that you have them not in the measure in which you would desire to have them, yet bless the grace that has so worked upon you, and rejoice this morning, and go on in holy confidence to ask for a greater measure of the same divine working. Would to God our thoughts may become uniformly gracious, and our lives perfectly

consistent with our thoughts, and with the divine word. I mean, this morning, to take the two parts of the text separately, and then to consider the link which unites them.

First, then, we shall have to consider *the mind occupied with a fruitful subject*. Secondly, *the life ordered by a right rule*, and thirdly, *the link which connects the two*.

I. First then, may every Christian experientially know to a yet fuller degree what it is to have A MIND OCCUPIED WITH A FRUITFUL SUBJECT.

“Thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes.” It is exceedingly profitable to the Christian to have always some subject of thought upon his mind, for the mind that is vacant, frivolous, unoccupied, will be sure to issue in a barren and unprofitable life. I fear to a very large extent in this age the minds even of good people are empty, and void, and waste.

Years ago, when the influence of the Puritan Age yet lingered among us, the female members of Christian churches were generally women of very considerable education, whose range of reading was very different from that of their sisters in these days and their theological knowledge was profound.

While the men who were members of our Nonconformist churches, were as a rule persons of very clear doctrinal knowledge—perhaps rather too much given to controversy, and to pushing their own views without sufficient tolerance for the views of others—and on the whole, Nonconformist Christianity was highly intelligent, thoughtful, and meditative.

Men and women then when they joined the church, knew what they believed, and believed what they knew. They were prepared to be counted singular for their belief, but were equally prepared to justify themselves for taking up so separated a position. They were students of the Word of God and of such books as opened up to them the Word of God, so that our armies of believers, if they were fewer than now, were nevertheless very strong, because the warriors handled their weapons well, were well-drilled, and at home in the holy war.

I fear a great many Christian people do not *think* much about their religion. They give their guinea subscription, they occupy their seat at the meeting house, they attend the prayer meetings, but they are little given to thinking out a system of doctrines, or to ransacking the meaning of Scripture. Contemplative pursuits are not so general among Christian professors as I could wish. Not that I desire to see an increase of a certain dilettante class of people who are always expounding prophecy, or spelling out types, and leaving ragged people to perish in ignorance, and the masses of our city to remain not evangelized.

The sooner we bury the last of our prophetic pretenders the better. They expose truth to ridicule and rather hinder than promote the cause of religion. Louis Napoleon was to be the Antichrist and to conquer all Europe, I wonder how they will play their cards now! Of late they have grown so impudent as to foretell the future with all the brass of a Sidrophel, a Lilly, or a Dr. Dec. I hope their failures will open the eyes of the public to their folly.

I so reverence the inspired prophecies that I wish a race of students would succeed these charlatans. We need devoutly meditative people who will think about the precious things of God in a practical gracious way, such as the Holy Ghost inspires, men who are not forever occupying themselves with theories and speculations, but with the solidities and with the practical parts of theology. A band of such men, strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, would have a great influence for good, and if all professors were such, the church would be rich indeed.

Observe, that when the mind does not receive holy matters to feed upon, as a rule it preys upon itself. Like certain of our bodily organs which, if not supplied with nutritive matter, will soon begin to devour their own tissues, and then all sorts of aches, pains, and ultimately diseases will set in. The mind, when it eats into itself, forms doubts, fears, suspicions, complaints, and nine out of ten of the doubts and fears of God’s people come from two things—walking at a distance from God, and want of spiritual nutriment for the soul.

If you, believer, do not meditate upon some scriptural subject, your minds will probably turn to vanity or to some evil within yourselves, and you will not long think of the corruption within without

becoming the subjects of a despondency which will turn you into Mistress Despondencies or Mr. Feebleminds. Whereas by musing on the promises of the Holy Spirit, you would grow into good soldiers and happy pilgrims. Of some who do not feed their souls constantly with spiritual nourishment Satan takes an advantage, and fills them with unholy thoughts.

It is a very frequent complaint with persons who desire to be in the fear of God all day long, that they are molested with horrible insinuations, dreadful suggestions, and revolting ideas, and they fly to the pastor sometimes to know whether they can be the children of God at all, or if the children of God, what remedy they can use by which they shall be able to escape from this horrible torment.

I suggested yesterday to a friend laboring under this serious complaint that he should take care never to go out in the morning without placing under his tongue a text of Scripture like a wafer made with honey. And I exhorted him at all times to occupy his mind with heavenly subjects, so that there should be the less likelihood of the thoughts running after that which is evil. The best way to prevent a bushel measure from being filled with chaff is to fill it first with wheat.

If the channel of the soul be filled with a strong stream of devout thought, there cannot be much mud and filth lying in the bottom. A powerful stream of holy contemplation will scour the thoughts and bear away the foul deposits of unholy thought. There is nothing like keeping the mind occupied, for Satan finds some evil for idle brains to think upon. It is true that weeds and nettles choke the good seed, but it is equally true that when the good seed gets strong above ground it will choke the weeds.

Where Jesus is, the buyers and sellers are driven out of the temple. Dagon falls where the ark comes. When Israel comes in the Canaanite must go out. Fill the cage of your heart with the birds of Paradise, and the foul birds will not have it all to themselves. If our soul shall become so full of thoughts of God and things divine, that vain thoughts shall be banished, it will be a fine growing time for the plants of the Lord's right hand planting. Learn from the text the usefulness of having some sacred topic before the mind's eye.

David, in selecting the topic of divine lovingkindness did well, for let us remark upon that subject, that it is, first of all, *a rightful subject* of meditation. I mean, it is our bounden duty to think much upon it. Some things we may not think of, certain other topics we are barely allowed to think of, but other themes we *must* think of. Now the lovingkindness of God is one of the things which is not left to our choice. We are bound to meditate much upon that. As Dr. Watts says—

*“Oh, bless the Lord, my soul,
Nor let His mercies lie
Forgotten in unthankfulness,
And without praises die.”*

Shall God, day after day, send such stores of mercy to such unworthy ones as we are, and shall we treat His continuous generosity as a matter of course, and not even think of it? Base ingratitude! Let us scorn such meanness. If we ought to think of our duty to God, and of our violation of that duty, yet much more of the lovingkindness which makes our duty pleasure, and which covers over with a mantle of His love the transgressions of our lives. Infinite goodness is a rightful subject of meditation, and it deserves a large share of our thoughts.

It is, besides, *a good subject*. It is good in itself, and it will do us good. The lovingkindness of God, by no possibility can any harm come to us from retaining that subject too long in our minds. A man who has but one idea will sometimes become an unbalanced, inharmonious man. Oftentimes he will fall into obstinacy, bigotry, or rashness, through the excessive indulgence of that one thought, just as one feature exaggerated out of proportion with the rest will make an ugly countenance.

But you cannot think too much upon the divine lovingkindness. You may make this, if you will, the one sole topic of your thought, and yet escape narrow-mindedness or one-sidedness. It has so many links

of union with all other subjects, that when you consider this it will bring up, as it were, compendiously a whole circle of profitable meditation.

Think of the divine lovingkindness and it shall be good, only good, and that continually. As you muse upon it your thoughts will humble you. “Why such goodness to me, to me who is less than the least of all thy mercies?” The same theme will be equally sure to comfort you. “Is the Lord so good to me? Then amid every adversity my spirit shall rejoice in the Lord, and glory in the God of my salvation.”

To think of this will stimulate you to be full of lovingkindness to others who may have acted unjustly or ungenerously towards you. As God has loved you so bounteously you will be bound to pity and assist the poor and needy. This subject will benefit you in all respects, and harm you in none. Ring this silver bell again and again, it is good for the hearing.

Moreover, dear brethren, it is *a wide subject*. To set His lovingkindness before our eyes is not to select a narrow theme, which we can soon exhaust. It is a boundless topic. The lovingkindness of the Lord has no beginning. You may fly backward to the ages past, in meditation deep and long—divine lovingkindness shall have no end. You may look into the ages yet to come with joyful musings. Lovingkindness is high as heaven, to which it shall lift you. It is deep as hell, from which it has redeemed you. It is wide as the east is from the west, for so far has He removed all your transgressions from you.

Here is a subject in which you may expatiate without limit or fear of repetition. if hitherto you have bathed in this stream up to the ankles, proceed in meditation deeper still, for you shall find it a river to swim in, a very broad river that cannot be passed over. The width of the subject is one thing which leads me to commend it to you as a theme for the most expanded intellect in time and in eternity.

And it is *a pleasing subject*. “Thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes.” Nobody need grow weary of this. It is like traversing a country in which every single inch of the road opens up a new prospect. Here you see the lovingkindness of God in the land in which you were born, in the times in which your life is cast, in the mercies with which your life is surrounded. You may see the lovingkindness of God in your temporal mercies, you cannot go to your house or bedchamber without seeing it there.

You see that lovingkindness even more clearly in spirituals. What a blessing to be interested in the covenant of grace! How many a holy hymn awakens memories of the tender mercies past! How this very house and the seat you sit on, refreshes your recollections as to what God has done for you in days gone by!

“The lovingkindness of the Lord.” I never knew a man grow heavy in spirit from meditating upon this, never knew a man become weary of the cares and burdens of life through thinking of God’s lovingkindness. Nay, but he has grown stronger to bear his burden, or to fight his way through time’s conflict, when the lovingkindness of the great Preserver of men has come visibly before his mind.

And you may add, it is *a very plain* and simple subject, and one that is suitable to us all. The lovingkindness of the Lord is a topic that can be reached by the babe in grace, and yet will not be superfluous to the most advanced.

There are topics in Scripture so profound and surrounded with such metaphysical difficulties, and rendered so much more perplexing by the wisdom, or the unwisdom, of divines, that one might almost say to the Christian thinker, “You may pass those by, for you will never get much out of them, the quartz is too hard, there is too little gold to pay for breaking up.” But when you come to this subject the unskilled convert may sit down and meditate on the lovingkindness of God, and be edified. While at the same time the most proficient scholar in the school of Christ shall find something fresh and new every time he meditates thereon.

You are little read, you say. You have little access to the thoughts of great men. Your Bible is your only book. Ah, well! but the providence of God will make you a second, and the experience of your heart, touching Christ and things divine, will make you a third volume. And put the three together, the book of revelation, the book of providence, the book of your inward experience, and with these three

you have a wondrous library. And in them all you may read the lovingkindness of the Lord towards your soul.

I will finish this part of my subject by saying that this is always *a suitable and a seasonable topic*. The young Christian, in the early flush of his joy, may think on the lovingkindness of God, it will help to keep him joyful and yet to make him sober.

The venerable Christian matron may, ere she departs, dwell still upon this topic, and tell to her children and her children's children of what God has done for her. In your health or in your sickness, in your wealth or in your poverty, in your joy or in your sorrow, still this theme of the loving kindness of God will be congenial and healthful.

This you may study on the top of Amana when you have passed by the leopards' dens. This you may rehearse in the Valley of Humiliation when you lie down with the shepherd boy among the flocks and sing—

*“He that is down need fear no fall,
He that is low, no pride.”*

This you may think of when you are fighting with Apollyon and the darts fly thick as hail, yea, fiery darts that burn as well as wound. And this you may think of in the Valley of the Shadow of Death, when heart and flesh fail you. This may be your last song, and as you enter into glory it may be your first.

*“Soon shall I pass the gloomy vale,
Soon all my mortal powers must fail;
O may my last expiring breath
His lovingkindness sing in death!*

*“Then let me mount and soar away
To the bright world of endless day;
And sing, with rapture and surprise,
His lovingkindness in the skies.”*

I have thus introduced to you the topic for mental contemplation. We will at once proceed to the second part of our subject.

II. The psalmist sets before us A LIFE ORDERED BY A RIGHT RULE.

“I have walked in thy truth.” I wish we could say this as positively as he does, each of us. I am afraid we should have to alter it and say, “I desire to have thy lovingkindness before mine eyes, and to walk in thy truth.” I shall invite each of you to look over your diaries to see how you could make such a statement, and the following remarks I offer as reflections to help you.

He means, first, by the words, “thy truth,” “I have tried to order my religion according to the truth concerning God and the way in which He would be worshipped. I have worshipped the true God in the true way. I have searched to see what and who God is, how He would be served, and in what way, and according to what I have learned from Himself I have walked in His truth.”

Can you all say that? Why, even all Christians cannot say as much! They worship God—yes, but how? as their fathers did or their grandmothers? Why have they worshipped God as they now do? Because the Word of God so teaches? No, but because their family has been so brought up. They never took the trouble to see whether it was right, and would not like to take the trouble now. Their family always did it, therefore they will always do it.

Such people can say, “I have walked according to my ancestors.” But they cannot say, “I have walked in thy truth.” If their fathers had worshipped the devil, they would have done the same. If their family had worshipped Juggernaut, they would have worshipped him too. It makes no consequence to some people what it is, they go in for “Follow my leader.”

They are of one mind with the old Saxon king who, when he was about to be baptized, stood with one leg in the water, and inquired of the bishop, "Where do you say my ancestors are gone? they knew nothing about your Christianity." "All cast into hell," said the bishop. "Well, then," said this fine old conservative, "I will go with them. I should not like to be parted from my kith and kin."

Very much of this principle rules our country still. The mass of men do not walk in God's truth, nor care to know what God's truth is. I know they will say there are so many sects, and so on, as if there after all, was such a difficulty about the Word of God that a simple-minded man could not find out what the truth is. The Bible is a plain enough book, and if a man wishes to understand it he can.

Dear brethren, if you are Christians, do pray to be able to say, "I have desired to know the truth about Thyself, O my God, and how Thou wouldst be worshipped, and so far as I have learned I have walked in Thy truth."

He means next that he had walked according to *God's law*. He believed God's law to be the essential right, the just rule of action, and he had tried to do right in all respects. There is a line of truth which you can clearly see, which need not be laid down in words. And it is a glorious thing when a man can say, "I may not have been always prosperous in business. I may not have succeeded as some have done, but what does that matter? I have kept a conscience void of offense, as a Christian man I have done the right and left the consequences with God."

This is true evidence of grace reigning in the heart, when we can confidently say before God that, notwithstanding all our sins, transgressions, and infirmities, yet towards men we have walked in the truth as God would have us walk. This it is to have the outward life ordered in truth.

And did not he mean this also, that as God had been truthful to him, so he had been enabled by grace to be truthful to God? "I have walked in thy truth." My God, You have never lied to me. I have also striven to be true to You. I have found Your promise to be always certain. I have labored to make my vows, which I have presented to You, as certain as the fulfillment of Your promises." Have you all done this?

Years ago some of you put on Christ and avowed yourselves His followers. By your baptism you made a declaration of death to the world and of life in Christ. Has it been so? have you walked in God's truth? He has never failed in anything towards us. Alas! what is there in which we have not failed towards Him?

He has been true to us in the covenant of His grace, have we kept the pledge and bonds which bind us to His church and to His cause? Can we say, "As thou hast walked in thy truth to me so have I walked in truth to thee"? If we have failed here I should not wonder it is because we have failed in the first part of the text. Our thoughts have not been enough with God and therefore our lives have not been true to Him.

May we be helped in both parts of the text, so that while our hearts feed upon His truth our feet may walk in His truth, and we may be faithful Christians before the Lord our God.

III. But time flies, and I need space for the third head, which is, THE LINK WHICH BINDS THE TWO PARTS OF THE TEXT TOGETHER.

"Thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes: I have walked in thy truth." The one has been the consequence of the other. Because I thought much of Thy love, therefore have I walked in Thy truth. Our thoughts very greatly influence our actions. It is questionable whether a man could long think on any subject without the course of his life being colored by it. Like certain silkworms which yield silk colored according to the food they have fed on, so our life gradually takes the tinge and hue of the thoughts to which we most accustom ourselves.

We have had in our police courts of late frequent instances of this. Boys have been studying literature of the Jack Sheppard and Dick Turpin order—and they have become thieves of necessity. Men who have been deeply read in French novels, Byronic poetry, and German metaphysics, have become dissolute and skeptical, and none could wonder. You cannot send the mind up the chimney, and expect it

to come down white. Whatever road the thoughts traverse, all the faculties of manhood will go after them.

So you see, brethren, David had thought upon God's lovingkindness, and very soon his whole spirit went after big thoughts, and he walked in God's truth.

Let me show you a little of this. I will suppose this morning, that you and I are meditating upon the subject suggested. Let us set God's lovingkindness before our eyes, and one of its most striking points is its *eternity*. It is certain that God loved those whom He now loves before time began. Those who are the favored sons of God have not lately come into the possession of His love, they were loved of Him before the foundation stone of creation was laid. It is a glorious doctrine, there is room for the soul to revel and riot with holy delight in it. Everlasting love, love without beginning towards unworthy worms!

Well now, what comes of it? Why, naturally, the moment the heart gets into the enjoyment of it, it cries, "I will walk in God's truth. This great doctrine leads me to receive other great doctrines. I am not afraid, now, of doctrinal knowledge. If it is so that God has loved me before the world began, and has blessed me with all spiritual blessings accordingly as He chose me in Christ Jesus, then I am not afraid to consider the doctrine of the covenant of grace, the doctrine of His foreknowledge and of His predestination, and all the other doctrines that spring therefrom. The brightness of this one gem has attracted me to enter into the mines of divine thought, and I will seek henceforth to be conversant with the deep things of God." Many would be much more sound in doctrine if they meditated more upon the eternity of divine lovingkindness.

Now turn that lovingkindness round again, get another view of it. Let another ray of light flash from this diamond. Think of *the freeness* of it! God's lovingkindness to us was utterly undeserved. He loved us, not because there was anything lovable about us, but because He chose to do so. He is an absolute sovereign, and He does as He wills with His own. It is because He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, that He has had mercy upon us.

Unworthy, did I say? more unworthy was I than any, least likely as it seemed of any of the sons of men to be a partaker of divine love. If He so freely loved me, what shall I say? I must freely love Him in return. I cannot but reciprocate this love. If I cannot love Him as He loves me in degree, yet will I at any rate love Him as freely and willingly. Has He chosen me? I choose Him. Has He ordained me that I should be saved? My heart ordains that He shall be glorious, and if there is anything that I can do to serve Him, let me know what it is, for it must be, it shall be done.

Turn that lovingkindness round again, look at another side of it, namely, its *certainly*. It is no fiction that God loves His people. If you are believers in Christ Jesus, trusting alone to His merits, God as surely loves you as He is God. There is no question about the matter. His divine love is as certainly yours as His power is displayed in creation. Well, then, let your obedience be real in return.

If He really loves me, then will I really love Him, and truly serve Him. It shall not be talk, and resolution, and pretense. There shall be that gift given, even if I deny myself to give it. There shall be that deed done, whatever self-denial it may cost me. The cross I will take up, the singularity of being a Christian I will dare to encounter, the persecution it will bring I will rejoice in, the love of God to me shall produce obedience in my heart in return.

Then again, another view of it. Set the lovingkindness of God before your eyes, and think of *the faithfulness* of it. God's lovingkindness never pauses a minute. It has been as constant as the flight of time, never a moment but there has been love for that moment, never an hour, but there has been the hour's portion of lovingkindness. You have often forgotten the Lord, but He never forgotten you. You have turned aside from your fidelity ten thousand times, but He never once. If He had dealt with you justly, and not graciously, He had long ago divorced you from His heart. But you are as dear to Him now as ever, and you shall be dear to Him when heaven and earth shall pass away.

Well, what then? Why, then, as constantly seek to serve Him. Let every day have its duty, and let each day's duty be your pleasure and privilege. Do not be receiving without also giving out, but as the sovereign goodness of God comes to you without a pause, and there are no miscarriages in divine grace,

so let there never be any forgetfulness, negligence, or delay in your gratitude, and the obedience which spring's of it.

I would like you to think of *the minuteness* of God's lovingkindness, and how it goes into detail with us in little things. Much of our life's happiness depends upon little things happening rightly, and if God ordained only the great events, and left the little things to chance, we should be very unhappy. But the lovingkindness of God, while it gilds the whole landscape with sunlight, also has a beam for the tiniest insect and a ray for the eye of the smallest bird. Let our love to God also go into the minutest details. Let us be earnest to be right in matters essential, but let us not be indifferent to things nonessential, as men call them.

God's lovingkindness goes into detail, so let my obedience do. Let my gratitude to God permeate my entire life. Let it flood the whole of my faculties. Let it saturate my manhood through and through. Great God, Your love surrounds me, I breathe it, I live upon it, I shall die in it, I shall live forever in it, it shall make my eternity bliss. So would my soul in obedience give up herself, her thoughts, her works, her desires, her judgment, her tastes, her everything to Thy sweet love, which has so wondrously embraced and encompassed me.

You see there is a logical consistency between thinking of the love of God, getting to see its details and attributes, and the ordering of our life in the way of truth, the one is the natural cause from which the other is sure to spring.

Once more, let me say when we are thinking upon God's lovingkindness, we must not forget what it is preparing for us. Within a short time you and I shall have faced the last article of death, or Christ Himself shall have come, and we shall be forever with the Lord. We have been washed in the blood of Jesus, our souls have been renewed by the Holy Spirit, and for us there is prepared and reserved a crown of life that fadeth not away.

Anticipate the triumphant hour when this head which often aches with weariness shall be encircled with the crown of glory, think of the time when the hands that are worn with toil shall grasp the palm branch, and the feet that are weary with this pilgrimage shall stand upon the sea of glass, when our constant occupation shall be to glorify Him who has uplifted us from the miry clay, and set our feet upon a rock, and established our goings forever.

All this lovingkindness is prepared for us, entailed upon us, ordained for us, and we are ordained to it by a decree which neither death nor hell can change. What then? Why then the trials of this life shall be treated as "light afflictions which are but for a moment." And if duty at anytime involves these trials, we will not take them into consideration, but for the joy that is set before us will endure the cross, despising the shame.

Men of God, God's lovingkindness has prepared for you this heritage inconceivable, which heart cannot imagine, and therefore, tongue cannot express to you. Will you not, for the sake of this, be willing to be despised, and be ready, if need be, to be spit upon and rejected from the society of men? Why, this I think it was that glistened in the martyrs' eye. There they stood at the stake, all calm and confident, though every bone was soon to be burned to cinder and the whole frame of their bodies to become a mass of agony.

The light that shone in the martyrs' eye was not the flame of the torch which kindled the twigs, but the light of everlasting glory. The joy that made glad their hearts was not that of obstinacy which holds fast to its own way, but it was the firmness of a soul that is one with the immortal Christ, and anticipates being with God forever and forever.

The lovingkindness of God before our eyes is that which can make us walk in God's truth though it is to prison and to death. God grant us more of the holy contemplation, and we shall be quite certain to have more of holy, consistent walking in the truth.

I have done when I have made two or three more remarks. I have set these things before you as they ought to be, but things are not in this world as they should be. There are some men who have the first part of the text, at least they say they have, but they despise the second.

They have set God's lovingkindness before their eyes, but do not walk in God's truth. They talk about being God's elect, God's beloved, God's dear people. Alas! some of them are dear at any price, their lives being in many cases utterly inconsistent with their profession. What do we say of men who make the doctrines of grace an excuse for licentiousness? They have the doctrine of grace, but not the grace of doctrine. What say we of them? Why, what Paul said—"Their damnation is just." All their pretences to soundness, all their talk about orthodoxy, is so much wind, nothing more. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

The man who can cheat in business, the man who can lie, the man who is an unkind husband, a bad father, an unholy man, he may believe what he likes, or disbelieve what he likes, but he will be swept away from the presence of God and the glory of His power, when He whose fan is in His hand shall purge His floor and gather the wheat into His garner, and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

There are also men who say, "I have walked in God's truth," but God's lovingkindness is never before their eyes. They boast about their admirable character, but they never think upon the grace of God. They indulge the Pharisaic spirit. Permit us to say to such that they know not what spirit they are of.

That life of theirs which they think to be so blameless, seems to be correct because they are blind. If the light shone in upon their actions they would discover their imperfections. Then would they find that they needed a Savior, and finding that they needed a Savior they might then be led to apply for one, and find one.

But as long as they wrap themselves up in the notion that they are good, and that they keep the law and have done so from their youth up, we must remind them with all earnestness that they are shutting themselves out of heaven, they are denying to themselves all prospect of everlasting life, for, "by the works of the law there shall no flesh be justified." We must be saved by grace and by grace alone.

My last word is this. Brethren, depend upon it that you shall find, each of you when you get dull and flagging in the practical part of your religion, that the proper way to revive it is to think more than you have done upon the lovingkindness of God. I do not know whether you ever feel stupid, I do, dreadfully. When one gets a bad cold, the mind feels terribly dead and dull. Some people are dull enough even when they are well, but what they are when illness is added it were hard to say.

Well then one says, "How can I consider myself to be a child of God? Why, I cannot pray. I kneel down and pour out what ought to be my desires, but I am afraid I do not desire them. I read the Bible, but it does not glow and glisten before my eyes as it once did. I try to love God, but do not seem to have any emotion left. I am like a dead log or a stone."

What is the best way to quicken one's self when you have got to be just a mere inanimate mass, and cannot awaken yourself into life? Of course, the Holy Spirit is the Quickener, but what means shall we use? "Why," says one, "turn over your sins and begin to think of them." Well, I have known some become more dead than they were before through that, and the little life they had seemed to go out of them as they saw their transgressions.

I believe there is no reflection that has so much, under God the Holy Spirit, of quickening power in it as a remembrance of the lovingkindness of the Lord. I have said unto my soul, "Thou art dull and heavy today, my soul, but Jesus did not love thee because of thy brightness and liveliness. You have at any rate a desire not to be so dull. Who gave you that? Was not it His own grace that made you hate yourself for being so dull and stupid? and He loves you just the same." Why then or ever I am aware, my soul makes me like the chariots of Amminadab, before I have hardly got through a little meditation upon my Lord's love my love is kindled.

Dr. Watts hit the mark when he said—

*"Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,
With all Thy quickening powers,
Come, shed abroad a Savior's love,*

And that shall kindle ours.”

If you doubt Christ’s love to you, you will not love Him, but remember that He still loves you, believe it, hold on to it, and your love will revive.

*“And when thine eye of faith is dim,
Still hold on Jesus, sink or swim,
Still at His footstool bow the knee,
And Israel’s God thy help shall be.”*

If I am a dead soul and a lost soul, and have not a grain of grace, and have everything that is bad about me, still I will cling to the cross and say, “I will never depart from this place: if I perish, I will perish here.” Light will come unto you again, and the joy of the Lord will return, and your heart will wonder to find its own hardness depart, and your dumb tongue shall sing, and you, though once so lame, shall leap as a hart.

God the Holy Ghost cause these meditations to be the means of quickening our spirits, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 139

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.