

PREFACE

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HOW soon has 1863 hurried forward to the years beyond the flood! Truly our years fly as the eagle and are as the swift ships. We cannot say that our days are here, but only that they are gone. As the waters of the cataract are ever leaping down the rock and hurrying on their way, even so our days hasten as a torrent and are gone as the bubble on the stream.

Let us be content that it is so, for the unmoving air yields no music to the harp of Aeolus and the stagnant pool turns not the wheel of industry. A horse in its stable wins not the race—it must speed if it would serve its owner. Time, like a ship, brings no wealth except as it makes its passages. To stay the flight of time were to clip the wings of angels.

If we use our hours in the service of God, they are better spent than hoarded—to have a wealth of time to come is not to be compared with the riches of time already spent for the God of heaven. Our days unused are the ploughed field, but the good time past has already yielded its harvest. As the shipwright is happy that the vessel is launched—as the warrior shouts that the battle is fought—and as the woman in travail rejoices that a man-child is born—so are we grateful to the eternal God that another year has gone.

When our year's ministry is over, we feel a sweet relief. We sit down upon the milestone of our preface and remember that we are nearer home. Looking back with gratitude upon the steps already trodden, we are cheered in our onward way. This volume is the record of another year's campaign against sin and Satan—the memorial of another series of struggles, contentions, buffetings, wrestlings, defeats, and triumphs.

Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof—we began with trembling hope, we close with deep repentance for our shortcomings, and hearty thanksgiving for our successes. Little does any man know, beside the man who endures the like, the agonies and joys of a preacher—a stranger intermeddles not therewith.

As the weaver sees every thread dyed with the sweat of his brow, and marks in the fabric his own nerves and sinews interwoven in its tissue, even so does the minister of God, when he reviews his sermons. The farmer has been *first* partaker of the fruits, and in that first feasting he tasted his own labors, anxieties, and hopes, sweetened with the dew of heaven and flavored with the genial sunshine of God—no other man can partake of the fruits with such a zest as he.

Permit me, then, to pour out my whole soul unto God in praise for the unceasing mercy, which has given me this series of discourses. O God, most gracious, be Thou extolled, and be Thou very high! You have dealt well with Your servant according to Your Word.

Here, reader, you have the fragments of the bread and of the fishes with which the Master has fed the multitude in the wilderness—that the cakes were made of barley is our fault, that the fishes were little is due to the small net which caught them—but that they have been blessed and multiplied is to the Master's honor and should make you bless His name.

None were more surprised than the disciples when the crowd was supplied from their meager store, and no one marvels more than the preacher that the Lord works such great things by his slender abilities. You have here, reader, ox-goads which have slain Philistines, stones which have smitten Goliaths, and nails which have pierced the brains of Siseras. Call these sermons blasts of the ram's horn if you will, Jericho is fallen, go you up and smite the inhabitants there.

As no man might despise the youth of Timothy, so contemn not the weakness of the author. But as the Lord was seen in the bush, so behold you His glory in our bramble. So far from desiring to be esteemed eloquent and learned, the preacher glories in his infirmities, because the power of Christ does rest upon him.

The vessel is earthen and may be clearly seen to be such—but the golden treasure is put into such keeping that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us. It is not the pole, but the brazen serpent to which men are bidden to look and live. Woe unto us if we attract gazers to ourselves rather than to our Lord. Look, reader, look to Jesus as our subject matter. Look to the Holy Spirit as our only strength, and to the eternal Father as the alone object of praise.

During the year, we have heard with joy of conversions wrought by the Holy Spirit from most of these discourses. But to assist the judgment of those who wish to distribute the most useful, we would mention as having had many seals put upon them—“The Voice from Heaven,” “Nominal Christians—Real Infidels,” “The Root of the Matter,” “Comfort to Seekers from what the Lord has not said,” “The Bridgeless Gulf,” “Believing with the Heart,” and “Mealtime in the Cornfields.”

The sermon entitled, “The Warrant of Faith,” has caused some little controversy, and one very absurd pamphlet has been issued in order to disprove it, but the writer was far too ignorant of Scripture and the fundamental principles of all theology to be worthy of an answer. It is greatly to be desired that those who are led captives by ultra-Calvinistic theories would weigh the arguments of this sermon carefully, and begin to preach the whole Gospel instead of a part, and preach it freely to sinners in the name of Jesus.

Truth is no more to be contained in one rigid system than the ocean in a shell. Divine sovereignty is a great and undoubted fact, but human responsibility is quite as indisputable. God in His plan of grace contemplates man as a reasonable being, and not as a stone or a beast. His deeds of grace never violate the will, but sweetly constrain it to consent.

Salvation is all of grace—but God works by means. Faith is God’s gift, but it is also the act of renewed manhood. Damnation is the result of justice, not of arbitrary predestination. O that the time were here when seeming opposites would be received, because faith knows that they are portions of one harmonious whole.

Would that an enlarged view of the dispensations of God to man would permit ministers to be faithful to the human race, and at the same time true to the Sovereign Lord of all. The Lord knows with what earnestness of soul this preacher has striven to declare not a part, but the whole of the counsel of God.

Thanks are hereby very affectionately tendered to those earnest friends who have diligently circulated these sermons. May their reward be great in the day of account.

Many friends send us texts, requesting us to preach from them—this we cannot engage to do. Our habit has been to look to the Lord for our guidance, and when a text comes with power to our soul, we preach from it without hesitation. But as we dare not select our own themes, so neither can we receive those suggested to us unless our Master seals them upon our heart.

Remarks are also occasionally made upon our style, and our reflections upon different denominations and doctrines. These we accept with deferential respect—but at the same time venture to observe that we can never hope to please all and do not aim to gratify any. That our style has been useful hitherto to the many and we shall be very slow to change it to oblige the few. We must work in our own way, however rough that way may be.

Saul’s armor we have not proved, and without finding fault with it as worn by Saul, we must be permitted to go out as aforetime, with our sling and stone. Indeed, without any human allowance, our mind is made up to do so.

As to sharp remarks upon the errors of different churches, fidelity compels us to make them, and no one should wish us to be faithless to our sense of duty and our reverence to God.

Believers, we entreat you give your continued prayers for a blessing upon our endeavors. Let all who read to profit pray with fervor and who can tell the blessed result? O for an unction from on high! This is the one thing needful. Let us pray that the ever-present Spirit may work among us more and more. O Lord, send now prosperity. Amen.

Reader, your Friend,

C. H. Spurgeon

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