

A PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH MILITANT NO. 768

A SERMON
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT SURREY CHAPEL, BLACKFRIARS ROAD.

*“Save Your people, and bless Your inheritance: feed them also, and lift them up forever.”
Psalm 28:9.*

LET me direct your attention to the verse before the text, and then let us read the text in connection with it, “The Lord is their strength, and He is the saving strength of His anointed. Save Your people, and bless Your inheritance: feed them also, and lift them up forever.” You have in the eighth verse, *the church militant reviewed*; and in the ninth verse, *the church militant prayed for*.

With regard to the Psalmist’s review of the militant church, it is summed up in two sentences: “Jehovah is their strength;” “Jehovah is the saving strength of His anointed.” The people of God are strong, then; for their strength is spoken of. They are weak in themselves, yes, they confess themselves to be weakness itself, yet by faith, when they grasp the power of the Almighty, they are no longer feeble, but they venture to say with the apostle, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” The power of the army of the Lord does not lie in connection with any one of His soldiers, in the man himself—the Lord is their strength. They may differ in many respects, but this is true of every single warrior in the host of the Lord, that the Lord is his strength. He has no strength in the flesh, he cannot find anything there which can assist him; all his springs are in his God, and he draws all his supplies for power in spiritual conflicts from God and from God alone. If you were to review the Prussian army, you might very properly say that the needle-gun is their strength—and years ago we used to feel quite sure that the Armstrong gun was our strength; but if you examine the ranks of the Lord’s people, you will perceive that they rest in no chariots, nor horses, nor weapons of war, whether carnal or spiritual, but the Lord Jehovah is the strength of the whole company. Can you not picture David reviewing his troops, looking along the ranks of the king’s mighties, who had been with him in the cave of Adullam, and had done good service in his attacks upon the Philistines, and in various skirmishes and battles in their youth, and their riper years? Can you not hear him say, “The Lord is their strength”? Can you not hear him, as he relates the heroics of his heroes, declaring that in every case they were made mighty by the God of Jacob? David adds that the Lord is his own strength, too. The confidence of the soldiers was also the confidence of the captain. “He is the saving strength of His anointed.” The margin has it, “He is the strength of salvation to His anointed,” for David had many salvation’s, many remarkable escapes and deliverances; and these he does not attribute to his own agility, foresight, wit, or wisdom, much less to the valor of his brave right hand, but he confesses that the Lord who was the strength of the soldiers, was also the Savior of their anointed monarch.

Put in David’s place tonight, before the eyes of your faith, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and He will say the same. He, in His day of feeble flesh, fought and overcame by the power of the Spirit, with which He was anointed. He fought the battle for us in the strength of the Most High; and now, looking all along the ranks of those whom He leads to battle and to ultimate victory, He testifies tonight, “The Lord is their strength. He is the strength of salvation to His anointed.”

I do not intend, however, to dwell upon that verse, but shall take you at once to the text, which is a *prayer for the church militant*, a prayer divided into four parts. We ought to pray constantly for the people of God, they always need it; it is always our duty to remember their necessities. It is always our privilege to pray for one another, prayer is always useful to the church, and therefore we should delight to exercise it. The fire upon the altar of intercession should never go out, neither by night nor by day. Our prayer for the Lord’s people should be comprehensive. The church of God needs many things, and we must not be content to ask for one thing when the church needs many. We must be thoughtful about our prayers, so that, like David, we may say much in little. Some people’s prayers have very little in them; they much abound with the chaff of utterance, but have but one grain of the wheat of meaning. We must not rush into God’s presence and there offer any words that may come to mind, but we should direct our

prayer to God, and meditate upon it, so that when we utter it, there may be something in it, some meaning; not asking for a shadowy something, but pleading wisely for what we intelligently desire. I make that remark because this prayer of David's is peculiarly rich, eminently suggestive, and full of meaning: "Save Your people, and bless Your inheritance: feed them also, and lift them up forever."

Here are *four choice blessings; let us take them one by one.*

I. The first is, "SAVE YOUR PEOPLE."

In how many ways may this be desired for the elect of God? It may be offered, first, *in reference to their conversion* from their natural estate of sin, darkness, and death. Brothers and sisters, we who are saved should never cease praying, "Lord, save the chosen who as yet are uncalled! Save those who are redeemed by blood, but who are not yet redeemed by Your power; save Your people!" If you do not pray for sinners, I am afraid you are a sinner yourself, and know nothing about prayer. The old proverb is, "He who would go to heaven alone, shall never go there at all;" and he who never has any melting of his heart towards the lost sheep who as yet are not gathered into the fold, is most probably a wolf himself. I am sure that one of the first instincts of the new nature is to begin to agonize for others. We may make our prayers as wide as we will, but still we must at times make them discriminating and peculiar; and while we say, "Let Your saving health be known among all nations," it becomes us also to recollect the doctrine of discriminating grace, and to say, "Save Your people, O Lord! You have ordained them to eternal life; fulfill Your purpose! O Lord Jesus, You have paid the price for them; rescue out of the jaw of the lion, and from the paw of the bear, Your own precious sheep!" We may plead here with mighty arguments. We may besiege the throne with irresistible weapons when we come with such a plea as this—"Lord, save Your people—some of them know nothing about You; some of them know more than they have ever practiced; some of them are soaked in the crimson dye of sin; some of them have grown gray in vice; some of them, despite warnings, have hardened their necks, and seem as if they would be suddenly destroyed without remedy; but, O Lord, we come in as intercessors for them; in the name of Jesus, we plead for them as He pleads for them: Lord, save Your people! By some means, by any means, by our means if it may please You to honor us with such an honor, save Your people, those whom You love, but who as yet do not love You!" It is well often to pray—

*"If some poor wandering child of Yours
Has spurned today the voice divine,
Now, Lord, the gracious work begin;
Let him no more lie down in sin."*

But the words may be applied, also, to *the carrying on of the work of sanctification in those who, in a certain sense, are saved.* All who have believed in Christ are saved from the guilt of sin, but they are not all as yet completely delivered from the power of sin; No, we believe that none of them are, so that we may daily pray, "Lord, go on with the work of saving Your people; If You have brought them up out of Egypt, Lord, lead them through the wilderness till they enter into the Canaan of perfect holiness and rest. Some of Your people have very weak faith, save them from their unbelief, for it is a great sin, and at the same time a great sorrow to them; some of Your children have hot and angry tempers, Lord, save Your people from being passionate; many of Your children are desponding, they give way to it, Lord, save them from unbelief; others of them are proud and high-minded, Lord, save them from that folly; numbers of them grow inactive, Lord, save them from lethargy; and others are slothful, Lord, save Your people from idleness." It should be our objective ourselves to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," and after that, we should seek our brothers and sisters good by the use of edification, and by the use of this prayer, "Lord, carry on the work of the saving of Your people."

The text may also be very very much used in our prayers in reference to *backsliders.* I am afraid we often forget that very numerous class of people, backsliders; but when we think of them, we should evermore cry, "Lord, save Your people." Some of them have been such dreadful hypocrites, and have brought such dishonor on the cross of Christ, that we can hardly pray for them as the Lord's people, let us then plead for them as sinners. On the other hand, there are some even among the worst backsliders who have the vital spark in them. They are the people of God; they are God's sheep, even though they have sadly gone astray, and for these our prayers must be constant, incessant, fervent, believing. "O Lord, save Your people." I exhort you who are walking in the light of God's countenance to pray for your poor brothers and sisters who have been allowed to fall into sin. They are often despised by those

who are at ease, but if you despise them, remember you may at some time fall into the same case yourself. “Let him who thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall.” Meanwhile, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of weakness. Let the prayer go up for that very, very numerous band of sadly broken hearts who, like David, have gone astray and brought shame upon themselves. Let us say, “Lord, save Your people; let them be as brands plucked out of the burning, and though we hate the garment spotted with the flesh, yet, Lord, save Your people.”

And do you not think that the prayer should be frequently put up by us in private for *those of God’s people who are much tempted*? There are some who go on the road to heaven with finer weather than others, but there are not a few who always seem to have temptations dogging their heels. They are, perhaps, themselves, like Mr. Fearing, of whom John Bunyan writes that he did escape from the Slough of Despond, “but, somehow, he seemed to carry the Slough about with him.” He had got the Slough in his own heart. There are some such still. They not only sometimes get doubts and fears, but their constitutional temperament is such that it keeps on doubting. Or there may be some other besetting sin, and you may be constantly tempted by it. Let us pray for such. And, again, some of God’s people are placed in positions in life where they are more tempted than others are. You good people, you children of godly parents, you husbands and wives who live in happy family circles, perhaps scarcely know the miseries of some who are placed where ungodly people can dominate over them. It is a sad thing when the rod of the wicked rests upon the lot of the righteous, and the temptation is lest the righteous should put forth his hand unto iniquity. Let us pray for such. They are plants of God’s own right-hand planting, but they seem to be planted in a bleak soil—not house plants, as some of you are, who can go often to the house of God and hear the gospel, but, perhaps, they are living in some country town where there is no gospel ministry, or where there is a mere make-shift pulpit with somebody in it who knows nothing about the gospel. Now, these people are just like plants that are pinched by the frost. Pray for them, that the great Farmer may shelter and protect them. Pray for these shorn lambs, that the good Shepherd may temper the wind to them, and let this be the prayer in every case, “Save Your people.”

And, beloved, *this prayer may also be applied to the whole church*. The church of God at this day is said to be in great danger from a form of Popery. Certainly a form of Popery is very rampant just now in this land, and has a great deal of force about it, so that it is not to be laughed down, but is to be met with sterner weapons than mere arrows of raillery. But we can cry for the church, “Lord, save Your people; and whether it is philosophical speculation or superstitious error which may put Your church, as some men may think, in danger, do You be pleased to keep the gates of Zion, so that the gates of Hell may not prevail against her; save Your people!” Let us not tremble for the ark of the Lord, as if strange things were happening to us, and the church should be overcome by these delusions. Many false professors will fall, but the elect are safe. “Christ’s sheep will hear His voice and follow Him; a stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers.” We believe that if for a while they turn aside to cunningly devised fables, they will soon discover that it is not the pasture they desire, and He who restores our souls will bring back His wandering ones. We are not afraid for the church, but still it becomes us to fence her around, to ward off the foe, and to protect God’s chosen; therefore we must use all means, and none are better than this petition to the Great Shepherd to preserve His flock. I trust that as long as we live this will be one of our morning and evening prayers, “O Lord, save Your people!”

Before I leave this point, however, let me observe that *if we pray this prayer, we must take care that we also carry it out in practice*. To pray to God for that which I am not willing to promote by my own personal activity is to mock God. If, then, I say, “Lord, save Your people,” what ought I to do? Why, to put myself constantly on the alert to be the instrument of saving God’s people. For instance, if I meet with sinners, I should try to talk with them about Christ; if I meet with the ignorant, I should try to instruct them in the way of salvation: I should, whenever I go to the house of God, try, if possible, to get a word with somebody. How can I say, “Save Your people,” and yet not try to do something to save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins? If I mean what I say, I shall help the sanctification of my brothers and sisters who are believers; I shall try to reclaim the backslider; I shall endeavor to strengthen tempted men, and I shall, as far as possible, bear my witness against the errors of the times, or else how can I go to God and say, “Save Your people,” when I have not myself in any way contributed to that desirable result? And how can some of you pray this prayer, who have never cared for sinners? How can you say, “Save Your people,” when you only go up to a place of worship to get fed yourselves, and have

no thought, and no care about the dying sons of men; when you neither give to God's cause, nor speak for Christ's name? How can you dare to pray a prayer which must freeze upon your lips, or rise up in judgment against you to condemn you for your hypocrisy? O dear friends, let us take care that our prayers do not become swift witnesses against us to condemn us! Our bad example has a tendency to destroy others—can you and I pray, “Lord, save Your people,” when we are doing our best to lead them astray? Our mere silence has a tendency to make men think that the truth of God is not precious, and how can we pray, “Save Your people,” when, through our own slothful ignorance, we help to lull men's consciences into a slumber which could end in their everlasting destruction? Lord, burn this prayer into our souls as with a hot iron, but at the same time help us to feel its practical force in all the actions of our life: “‘Lord, save Your people;’ help us to save them through Your Spirit.”

II. And now we come to the second prayer, “BLESS YOUR INHERITANCE.”

After men are saved, they have still many needs. We should not be satisfied with being saved. Some people are. They are thankful for it, and they are satisfied with it, but we should not be so. There is a wreck yonder. The ship is going to pieces. Some brave men enter a lifeboat: they tug over those mountainous billows; they return in safety from the ship: they bring a half-drowned mariner on shore. He is saved! He is saved! Let us be thankful, but is that enough? Certainly not! Kind hands are preparing dry garments. Food is being procured. A cordial is ready for the man to drink; and if he has lost his all, a subscription is made for him that he may start anew in his business, and begin life again. That the man should be sent back to his friends, and to his country saved is a blessing, an unspeakable blessing. If only on broken boards and broken pieces of the ship we all get to land, it will be a great mercy; but when Paul and his crew got to shore in that way, it was not thought to be enough; they began to light a fire, and Paul gathered sticks. And so, saved men need comforts after they are rescued; and, consequently, the prayer of the text is not superfluous—“Bless Your inheritance.”

Now, what does this prayer mean? It means a great deal more than I can tell you tonight. I should need to preach 20 sermons on such a text as this, but I will just mention two or three points upon which, I hope, we pray that God would bless His heritage.

The first thing is, *that He would bless His church with greater unity.* The church of God is too much divided. I thank God there is a real and hearty love among the Lord's people in many places, and in this district I am sure there is no lack of it. Our being in this very Surrey Chapel tonight is a direct answer to the malicious lies of those who say that there is no love among God's people. *We do* love each other, and we seek each other's good. But it is not so everywhere. There are some places where Ephraim envies Judah, and where Judah vexes Ephraim. We cannot shut our eyes to the fact that there are some who are a great deal fonder of the tribe than they are of the nation, and much more earnest for the prosperity of a regiment than for the victory of the army. It must not be so among us; we must pray, “Bless Your inheritance! Unite their hearts, O God; give them to know ‘one Lord, one faith, one baptism;’ take away everything which divides them, every error which splits them into sections; bring them to be one in truth, one in Christ, one in love to each other.”

With this we ought to pray that *they may be more earnest.* Truly, this is the prayer that is needed, “Bless Your inheritance; bless them with a drop or two of the Savior's Love in their hearts; bless some of them with a little heavenly fire.” This is the great need of the times. The church of God is well organized. Perhaps never in the history of the world has the church of God been so potent in its organizations and possessions as it is now; but it lacks the first fire, the pristine zeal and energy which the apostles and their immediate successors had. We need to have again the spirit of revival, not merely as we have it now, I trust, in a measure, but with seven-fold energy. O that the Lord would bless His people in this way, knitting them together in one, and then sending the holy fire down upon the entire church. The church stands too often like a train made up at the station, waiting for the steam to rise. We need the fire which shall create the impetus to carry us forward in our onward career. It is not enough to have right forms and orthodox creed; we need the holy zeal to make all these things overflowing with life and power. Now, we can never work ourselves up into this state, we may pray ourselves into it, however. I do not believe in getting up a revival by the methods which some adopt. If we are to have a true quickening it will be by the Holy Spirit given to us in answer to fervent prayer. Therefore, I say pray to God, “Bless Your inheritance,” and He will give us the sacred zeal which is now so much needed. God grant us it for His Son's sake.

I believe that many of God's people also need blessing in another respect, and that is, *with more happiness*. It really is lamentable to see how, in certain quarters, misery is common among the people of God. They are a feeble folk in some places. Mr. Ready-to-Halt, whom John Bunyan speaks of, must have been the father of a very large family. I should say that the manufacture of crutches will never die out altogether; and really, in some places, it must be a most lucrative business, for many of the Lord's people never get beyond, "I hope so," or, "I trust so," and no hymn in the hymn book is so sweet to them as—

“Tis a point I long to know.”

I did not put that hymn in "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK." I had a debate with myself about it. I thought to myself, "Ah, well, they will know all about that without my putting it into the hymn book," and I thought that if any of you wanted to sing it, you could sing it alone at home, but it did not seem to me to be a hymn that a whole congregation should use. It is a blessed hymn: I have to sing it myself sometimes, I am sorry to say. It is an excellent hymn, as expressing the feelings of some of God's people, but it will not do for a whole congregation to get into that state. It is very well for the good wife to have a little black draught at hand when the child needs it sometimes, but to give the whole family the same might be a great deal more injurious than beneficial. And so it is with regard to that class of hymns. It is suitable to a certain case of diseased spiritual condition, but it would be wrong to suppose or to insinuate that all the people of God at any one time, in one congregation, could be found in exactly the same condition of sad decrepitude of faith. Brothers and sisters, we must pray for the entire church of God that it may be happier. May we have more faith in the promises, more reliance upon the "immutable things where it is impossible for God to lie;" more confidence in the power of the Holy Spirit; more dependence in the abounding presence of Jesus Christ to be the comfort and the help of His people, so that, setting up her banners, the church may not creep along under mists and clouds, but be "Fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." Lord, bless Your people; bless them with unity; bless them with earnestness; bless them with happiness; bless them with confidence! And, indeed, there might be made a list so long that you might never cease prayer; and when you had completed it, you might begin again, and your supplications would be an endless chain of blessings. "Bless Your inheritance."

Would it not be well, dear brothers and sisters, for us to *select some out of God's inheritance* when we are praying the prayer? In order to make this distinction, and pray especially for them, it is not a bad habit of mentioning some persons in prayer before God in private by name; only do not do that in the way in which a man I used to know did it. Whenever he was offended with anybody, he used to threaten them that he would pray for them, and really such prayer as that, which was offered out of a sort of gracious malice, is to be avoided. But do it without saying anything to anybody about it, and not making a boast of it. Put down some of God's people who need certain blessings. For instance, there are certain ministers who need to be helped; say, "Lord, bless Your inheritance." There are certain workers in the Sunday school and elsewhere; certain Christians you know to be weak; certain others you perceive to be in peril. Put up prayers for such; that special blessings may come to them. Remember how our Lord said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." We know that He prayed for all of His elect, because we have His prayer in the gospel of John; but here He prayed for Peter by name, apart from the others, because Peter needed it. So must we particularize at times our prayer for the church, and plead for some by name. I am sure that Christians can never err if they pray for their own pastors, and plead with God on behalf of those who watch over them as those who must give an account of the souls of all their hearers. The apostle says, "Brethren, pray for us;" and all God's servants ever since have felt the need of the church's prayers. Pray for me, my hearers; and you who worship here, pray for your esteemed pastor; and all of you pray much for those who minister to you in holy things.

And before I leave this point, let me add, *take care that you practically prove the genuineness of your prayer*. "Bless Your inheritance." Take care that *you* bless them. So far as is in your power, seek to confer blessings upon all your fellow Christians. There are some of you who are always grumbling at the church of God. You pretend to say, "Lord, bless Your church," and yet you curse it. Why should you go and spread abroad the faults and follies of your own brothers and sisters? Remember what Noah's sons did with their father? Imitate them, and not bring upon yourselves the curse of Ham. True, there is much

that is mischievous in the church of God, and, among other mischiefs, there is the habit of always finding fault with Christian people. Pray, "Bless Your inheritance." Bless that inheritance yourselves; and if it is in your power, by conveying to others any spiritual or temporal gift, to confer a blessing upon any of the purchase of the Savior's blood, be not slack to do so, lest your prayer should be a witness against your unfaithfulness to and your forgetfulness of the Lord's people. "Bless Your inheritance."

III. The third prayer is, "FEED THEM ALSO."

God's people need, after they have eternal life, to have that life sustained. They must have food, or they will become faint with hunger; food, or they will become weak from lack of nourishment; food, or they would actually die for want of the staff of life.

In order that God's people may be fed, I believe that it is His usual appointment to provide them ministers. When you pray, therefore, "Feed them also," do not forget to ask for those disciples to whom Christ gives His bread, that they may break it to the multitude. When you are praying for the sheep, ask God to send those under-shepherds, whose business it is to lead the flock, into the green pastures in their Master's name. Do not forget to pray for students to be raised up and guided into the ministry. I remind the church of this, for ought we not to pray that the Lord would send forth laborers into His harvest? Is not this a prayer that is constantly forgotten? When Jesus Christ ascended up on high, we are told He received gifts for men, and those gifts were apostles, evangelists, and pastors. I am afraid we do not plead for these ascension gifts. We do not use the office of an ascended Savior as we should, but let us try to do it from now on, and never forget to say, "Lord, send pastors after Your own heart, who shall feed Your people with knowledge and with understanding."

This prayer includes not only the agent by which they are to be fed, but *the very food with which they are to be fed*. Pray, therefore, that the Lord would give His people a clear insight into the truth of God, that they may not be mistaken, and so feed upon pernicious herbs, instead of the sweet and tender grass by the still waters. Ask the Lord to illuminate His people's minds as to the doctrines of covenant grace that they may see into the ancient things, so that they may get to the depth that lies under and that rolls beneath, and may reach to the precious things of the everlasting hills. Why, half of the Lord's people do not feed because they do not believe that that is bread which God puts on the table. They are afraid of some of His truths, because they have been told, "Oh, they are so high; it is such high doctrine." "Savory meat," I say, "such as my soul loves!" O that these people had but an appetite to feed upon these things from which they are kept back, not because the things are not good, but because they have been warned against them, though, whatever is in this Book is fit for our souls to live upon. If God has revealed the truth, O believer, be not ashamed to accept it, and to make it the nutriment of your soul.

Still, even if we had the prayer answered as to good pastors and sound doctrines that is not all we need—the soul's food is to really feed upon Christ Himself. Jesus Christ is received by the heart through *communion with Him*; and it is only by fellowship with Jesus that, after all, we get the marrow and the fatness of the gospel; for "the truth as it is in Jesus" is the only truth of God which really nourishes the spiritual man. Talking this day with a brother in the ministry, one who has been many years a preacher, he was telling me that he had been to the British Museum library, looking for sermons upon Christ, and in turning the books over, he said, he thought he had found pretty well 500 upon any other subject to one upon the Lord Jesus! Perhaps he was wrong in his estimate; but even supposing he had found but five upon other subjects to one upon the Lord Jesus, would not that account for the fact of the lamentations that are made about the leanness of the pulpit? Leave Christ out? O my beloved, better leave the pulpit out altogether. If a man can preach one sermon without mentioning Christ's name in it, it ought to be his last, certainly the last that any Christian ought to go to hear him preach. If I saw a notice in the Blackfriars Road that there was a baker there who made a loaf of bread without any flour in it, I would deal with him. He might say, "Well, I only did it that once." Never mind, sir; if you did it once, that is enough; if you could do it once, you have a fatal faculty that renders it impossible for me to confide in you. And if you can get through a sermon without Christ, my dear friend, you may get whom you like, I shall not help you at your place, at any rate. No, we must have the Lord Jesus Christ preached; and even the proclamation of Christ is not enough unless the Holy Spirit brings Christ home to the soul, opens up the spiritual faculty to receive Him, gives us a heavenly appetite, and then enables us to assimilate Christ, to take Him into ourselves, into our inward parts, and make Him part and parcel of ourselves by a holy appropriating faith. Unless this comes we cannot be fed! Though it seems a strange thing to say, yet I be-

lieve this prayer, “Feed Your people,” has a literal meaning about it in spiritual things. God Himself must absolutely put the spiritual food into our mouths, or else all the pastors with the best doctrines and the best preaching of Christ will not accomplish the purpose. We are babes; we must receive our nourishment from our God, and from nowhere else; and if He is not pleased to convey it to our souls, we shall hear the word, and see the word, but feed upon the Word we never shall. Now, what a good prayer this will be for next Sunday morning when you go to your places of worship, “Lord, feed Your people,” and as soon as ever the minister is seen, “Lord, feed Your people.” As soon as ever he opens his mouth, and you begin to enjoy the word, do not stop short, but say, “Lord, make it real food to me, and to all my brothers and sisters; feed them, also, for You alone can do it.”

I think I ought to say before I leave that last point, that if you pray, “Feed them also,” you *must remember that you must practically carry it out*, just as Peter did, to whom the Lord said, “Feed My sheep; feed My lambs.” If you know anything, tell it; if you have had any experience, declare it; if you have had any illumination, reveal it. Do not eat your honey alone, or it will turn sour; give it to others. If the Lord has given you but a crust, go and share it with some other hungry soul. If you would have God’s people fed, feed them with what God has given you. “Oh,” says one poor widow woman here, “how can I feed any of God’s people? I know so little.” Ah, you are like the woman of Zarephath who said, “As the Lord your God lives, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it and die.” Ah, but still that woman fed the greatest prophet that was in the land, and with that very handful of meal! So it may be with you. A simple word which you may speak to some of God’s greatest servants may be a comfort to them for many a day. Do not despise in your soul the day of small things. Thank God for a little experience of His divine grace, and tell others of that little experience; for God can make your barrel of meal so that it shall not be exhausted, and your cruse of oil so to be multiplied as never to dry up.

IV. And now the last prayer is, “LIFT THEM UP FOREVER.”

God’s people need lifting up. They are very heavy by nature. They have no wings, or, if they have, they are like the dove that lies among the pots; and they need divine grace to make them mount on wings covered with feathers of silver, and of yellow gold. By nature sparks fly upward, but the sinful souls of men fall downward. “Lift them up forever.” David himself said, “Unto You, O God, do I lift up my soul,” and he here feels the necessity that other people’s souls should be lifted up as well as his own.

There are three ways in which God’s people need to be lifted up. *They need to be elevated in character.* “Lift them up; O Lord, do not allow Your people to be like the world’s people; lift them up forever. The world lies in the wicked one, lift them out of it; the world’s people are looking after silver and gold, seeking their own pleasures, and the gratification of their lusts; but, Lord, lift Your people up above all this; keep them from being ‘muck-rakers,’ as John Bunyan calls the man who was always looking after gold; keep them from having their eyes always downwards; spare them from becoming carnal and sensual, lest they also become like others, devilish. O let Your grace lift Your people up, so that in whatever neighborhood they may be found, they may be lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.” O my brothers and sisters, this is a prayer for which we might all go down on our knees 10 times a day for ourselves and for our fellow Christians, that God would elevate the general tone of true religion, that Christianity might become more powerful. I am not saying it is a fact, but I sometimes am afraid that the greatest mischief that there is in the world at the present time is an abundance of religious profession which is not genuine. You know very well how bad it is for trade when there is a great quantity of paper money about, and not enough sterling bullion to back it up with; there is sure to come a panic and a crash. I am afraid that the Christian church issues a great deal of paper religion, and has not enough bullion to back it up. After all, in God’s sight, it is nothing but the solid gold that is worth having, and the paper profession will be burnt to ashes in the fire. May God “lift up” His church, and make her a truly golden church; that her piety may be a true bullion piety; that the circulation of the church may be a truly golden medium, and not a mere bill and paper piety. Elevate Your people in character, O God.

In the next place, “Lift them up forever,” that is, *prosper Your people in conflict.* In the battle, if they seem to fall, yet be pleased to give them the victory. If the foot of the foe is upon their necks for a moment, yet help them to grasp the sword of the Spirit, and eventually to win the triumph. Lord, encourage Your people. Do not let them sit in the dust, mourning forever—

***“Why should the children of a king
Go mourning all their days?”***

Allow not the adversary to vex them and make them afraid; but if they have been, like Hannah, persecuted, let them, like Hannah, sing to the mercy of a delivering God. “Lift them up forever.”

And then, thirdly, *lift them up at the last*. Lift them up by taking them Home; lift them up forever by bidding them dwell in Your presence where there is fullness of joy; lift them out of that sick bed; lift them out of the tomb; lift them up from the worm, from the rottenness of the grave; lift them up at the last blast of the archangel’s trumpet, not their souls alone, which You lift up as soon as they die, but their bodies also, which are the temples of the Holy Spirit; lift them up in both their natures, the spiritual and the material; lift them up forever and cause them, as complete men, made perfect in Christ Jesus, to forever rejoice in Him; lift every one of them up—

***“From beds of dust and silent clay,
To realms of everlasting day;
Feed them also, and lift them up forever.”***

O my brothers and sisters, that you and I may but get home at the last! How I love that desire of David’s, in the 27th Psalm, where he says, “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord.” That one desire sucked all the others up, and this is the one desire, I trust, which we have—

***“Jerusalem! My happy home!
Name ever dear to me;
When shall my labors have an end,
In joy, and in thee?”***

Oh, to see the king’s face at home in His own land! To see Him here in this exile through the perspective glass of faith is rich delight; but when this cheek shall lie upon His bosom and these lips shall feel the kisses of His love, oh what ravishment, what infinite delight, what perfection of bliss to our complete manhood! Courage, my brothers and sisters! Set your faces against the steep; go up the hillside with Christ in the rough weather, for the top of the hill and the Palace Beautiful will make amends for it all, in that land where the windows are agates, and the gates carbuncles, and all the borders are of precious stones, where the saints shall be lifted up forever. Oh, it will be joy and bliss to be there indeed! Till then, we will put the prayer together, and say, “Save Your people, and bless Your inheritance: feed them also, and lift them up forever.”—

***“Pray that Jerusalem may have
Peace and felicity:
Let them who love You and Your peace
Have still prosperity.
Therefore I wish that peace may still
Within your walls remain,
And ever may your palaces
Prosperity retain.
Now, for my friends’ and brethren’s sakes,
Peace be in you, I’ll say;
And for the house of God our Lord,
I’ll seek your good always.”***

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