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A NEW YEAR'S RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

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A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JANUARY
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

ON THE EVENING OF NEW YEAR'S DAY, 1871.

*“LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt so use
thine ear to hear.” — Psalm x.17.*

IT has been sometimes said that a good Sabbath makes a good week.

Sir Matthew Hale long ago said: —

“A Sabbath well spent Brings a week of content;”

while George Herbert quaintly wrote: —

*“The Sundays of man's life
Threaded together on Time's string,
Make bracelets to adorn the wife
Of the eternal, glorious King.
On Sunday, Heaven's gate stands open,
Blessings are plentiful and rife;
More plentiful than hope.”*

Sunday is the market-day of the week; and if a man does well at market, he considers that he has done well for all the week. The Sabbath oils the wheels of the week; its bodily rest is useful, but its spiritual anointing is far more so.

Now, if that be the case, and I think it is, I might venture to say that a good first Sabbath in the year will go a long way towards making a good year. Very often, things go on as they begin; It is very seldom that troubles come alone, and it is still more seldom that mercies are given to us singly. We may always say, when we get a blessing, "Gad, a troop cometh." So I would that we might receive a great blessing on this first Sabbath of another year, that a troop of blessings might follow on the heels thereof, and that a host of mercies might continue to come to us even till we reach the last day of the year, and then that we might begin again with new tokens of our Lord's lovingkindness and tender mercy.

I thought our text might be a very serviceable word for this first Sabbath evening in the year of grace, 1871. It is intended to be of use, not only for to-night's sermon, but to be remembered all the year round. I think there is something in it which will render it suitable to all of us at all times during the next twelve months; and, indeed, during the whole of the rest of our lives. We do not know, as we said in prayer just now, which way our pilgrimage may lead us; but I feel persuaded that, with this inspired passage laid up in our hearts, if we make a right use of it, beneath the covert of Jehovah's wings we may go happily on from this place till again we pitch our tent upon the borders of another year.

Looking at the text, we may divide it into two parts. In the first portion, we have *a very blessed fact*: "Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble." In the second part, we have *two very blessed assurances*: "Thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear."

I. We will begin with what the text says about A VERY BLESSED FACT: "Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble."

I call this a very blessed fact, first, because *it always has been a fact*. In all ages, and in all places, wherever there has been a humble heart that has lifted up its desire to God, the Lord has heard that desire. Whether Jew or Gentile, whether in the palace or in the poorhouse, whether in sickness or in health, whether in poverty or in wealth, whether in life or in death, no difference has ever been made; if the desire has been a humble one, from the first man who ever prayed down to this present time, God has always been ready to hear.

And, blessed be his holy name! it is not only an old fact, *it is as much a fact to-night* as it was when David first penned these words: "Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble." At this very moment, God's ear is hearing the beating of your hearts. O humble soul, Jehovah's heart discerns the throbbings of your desire, though they are unexpressed in words! His eyes of fire, which pierce us through and through, are reading every longing desire of every anxious bosom here.

It is so now; and *it will be a fact all through this year*, God will hear the desire of the humble. It is a fact of the olden times, but it is also a fact of present import, and of the future, too. Do notice how the psalmist puts this fact: "Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble." David does not say, "Thou hast heard the *prayer* of the humble;" he means that,

but he also means a great deal more. Sometimes, we have desires that we cannot express; they are too big, too deep; we cannot clothe them in language. At other times, we have desires which we dare not express; we feel too bowed down, we see too much of our own undesert to be able to venture near the throne of God to utter our desires; but the Lord hears the desire when we cannot or dare not turn it into the actual form of a prayer. I know you have sometimes said, "I wish I could pray like so-and-so." Often have you thought, "If I could only put a great many beautiful sentences together into goodly shape, then I might be heard." Do not talk so foolishly, if you cannot put two words together correctly, if your desire is right, God will hear the desire.

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire, Utter'd or unexpress'd."

The prayer is not in the expression or the non-expression; the prayer is the soul's sincere desire. The very bowels of the prayer are in the desire; the essence of the whole matter, the kernel of the nut, is the desire of the heart, not the utterance of the lip. Words without the desire are mere empty husks; but the desire, even without words, is sweet to God, and he accepts it. Can you catch the blessedness of this thought? I say again, before your desire takes a shape in which language could cover it, God will hear it. You sometimes can hear people's desires yourself. Many a mother hears her boy's desire. He has gone to sea; but before he went, his mother packed his box. She did not tell him all she put into it; there are some things there that he has not seen yet, and he will not find them till he searches to the bottom of the chest. How did she know that he would desire those things? Because she foresaw the position in which he would be placed, and the wants which would arise in such a case, and she gathered from that foresight what her boy's desire would be. You have seen a poor hungry person shivering in the cold. If he has not accosted you, and asked you for alms, yet you have heard the desire beating beneath that ragged coat, and you have said to yourself, "That man wants help." You have heard his desire even by just looking at him, his very silence seemed to speak to you of his great need. O soul, God can hear thy want, Jehovah can hear thine anguish, the Lord can hear what no one else can hear, and what thou canst not express! I have always thought that to be a very clever way of begging, when a man sits down, and huddles himself up at a street corner, and just writes on the pavement with a piece of chalk, "I am starving." But perhaps it is quite as efficient a plea if the beggar does not write the words, if his face looks like starvation, and his whole body appears emaciated with want and hunger. You know the man's desire from his very look. And oh, how sweet it is to think that God looks down, with a comprehensive glance, upon humble souls, takes in their whole condition and position with his compassionate eyes, and hears their desire, though they are unable or afraid to express it!

Notice, however, that David does not say, "Lord, thou wilt hear the desire of the humble," but, "Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble. As soon as ever it was born, thou didst hear it." You desire, and God hears the desire at the same moment; nay, let me correct myself, and say that, before it was a desire in your heart, God knew it would be there, and he heard it. He had looked on you when as yet you had not looked on him, and even then it might have been truly said, "Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble."

What kind of a desire is it that God hears? He does not accept all desires. Some are trifling, some are vain, some are foolish, some are wicked; and he is not pleased with such desires.

It is the desire of the humble that the Lord hears. "Ah!" says one, "I am afraid I am not humble." Brother, it is one mark of a truly humble man that he does not think himself humble. If you meet with a person who says he is humble, you may conclude at once that he is proud; for, usually, there is no boasting in the world that is so full of pride as the boasting of the man who talks of his humility. You humble? Ah, sir, you need to be humbled a great deal yet before that will be the truth! The very man who mourns over his pride is, probably, the really humble man.

A humble desire, or the desire of a humble man, has this characteristic, the man knows there is no merit in his desire. If it be a good desire that he has in his heart, he feels, "It will be all through the infinite mercy of God if this desire is realized." He does not compliment himself, and say, "Well done, self, you have right desires in your heart, there is something good in you." No, but he fears lest the desire should not be sincere; and when it is deepest and truest, he still strips himself of all rags of self-righteousness, for he cannot see any good whatever in the desire that is in his own heart.

A humble man does not desire anything of God for his own honor. He thinks too little of himself to wish to exalt himself, and he longs in all things to glorify God. He desires his own salvation; but he knows that he does not deserve it, and he therefore gives God all the glory even while he rejoices in his own deliverance from going down into the pit. He sings, with Toplady, —

*"Not to myself I owe
That I, O Lord, am thine
Free grace hath all the shades broke through,
And caused the light to shine.
"Me thou hast willing made
Thy offers to receive;
Call'd by the voice that wakes the dead,
I come to thee and live."*

A humble desire is one which leaves everything in God's hands. The man who has it says, "Now, though I desire this, it may be it is not a right desire; Lord, I desire only to desire what I ought to desire! My desire is that thy desire should be written on my heart, that I may desire what thou desires". Thy will be done in my soul, in my body, in my circumstances, and in me, in all respects."

Now, beloved friends, I think it will not be very difficult for you to see whether you have that desire of the humble which God hears; but to help you still further, let me give you some of these desires.

This is one of the desires of the humble: "Lord save me! I am lost, unless thy mercy come to my rescue. I am guilty; forgive me! I have been an enemy to thee; reconcile me! I am diseased with sin; heal me, for thou art the only Physician!" I cannot hear your desires. Let me stop and listen as long as I may, I cannot hear the longings of anyone here who wants God to save him; but, oh, dear soul, wherever thou art, and whoever thou art, there is a better ear than mine that has heard thy desire, and that ear belongs to One who will fulfill thy desire! Surely, some of you are praying that prayer that I uttered just now; perhaps one

who seemed least likely to offer it. God has dropped a hot coal of desire right into his bosom, right into her soul; and he or she is saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

That is one of the desires of the humble that God hears. I will suppose, however, that the Lord has heard that desire in your case, and that he has graciously fulfilled it. Now I think I hear some humble soul here saying, "Lord, save my children! Lord, convert my boys and girls! I have tried to train them up for thee; but I dare not hope that any teaching of mine will be effectual for their salvation unless thou dost put thy hand to the work." I cannot hear the beating of your hearts as you plead for your children; I cannot hear the wife's desires as she inwardly cried, "Lord, save my husband!" Neither can I hear that sister's longing as she says within her spirit, "O Lord, let my sister live before thee! May my brother learn to know Christ!" But, though I cannot hear those desires, and no human being can hear them, God hears them: "Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble." Make yours a large desire, beloved friends! Take in all your kinsfolk, take in mine, take in my hearers, take in all this congregation, take in this City of London, and let the desire go up that God would save tens of thousands of souls, for he will hear the desire of the humble.

Another desire should be this: "Lord, guide me aright this year!" The young man, who feels the force of his passion, should pray, "Lord, lead me not into temptation; but deliver me from evil!" The merchant, who knows the deadening influence of the cares of this world, should cry, "Quicken thou me, O Lord, according to thy Word!" The housewife, who looks forward to she knows not what of trouble in the family, — a suitable prayer for her is, "Let thy grace, O Lord so ever sufficient for me! Guide me, O Lord, lead me in a plain path direct my footsteps, and let me this year walk in holiness!" I say again, I do not know who is breathing that petition, I hope many of you are doing so; but there is One sitting in the highest heavens, hearing the songs of cherubim and seraphim, who yet condescends to hear the desire of the humble when it takes such a form as this.

I think I know some of you to-night who are saying, "Lord, glorify thyself in me!" I *do* hear that desire in one heart here, I *can* hear it in my own heart; but God hears it, I trust, in many others. The Sunday-school teacher is saying, "Lord, honor thyself in my class this year! Bring my boys, my girls, to the Savior's feet." You who are preachers are saying, "Lord, glorify thyself in our ministry; give us many souls that shall be our crown of rejoicing, but thy glory for ever!" You who have not had any particular form of duty are saying, "Lord, give me something to do this year! Do not let me be an idler; suffer me not to be a barren tree; get honor to thyself out of me this year, I beseech thee!" Now, wherever such a desire is going up, God hears it. I trust, also, that you are not only desiring God's glory through yourself, for, if so, that may not be a humble desire; but that you are also desiring God's glory through all his servants. Let this be your petition, "O Lord, prosper every minister of Christ, every Sunday-school teacher, every sick-visitor, every tract distributor, everyone who is doing anything for thee! O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years! O send out thy light and thy truth! Let multitudes of sinners be saved!" If that be your heart's desire, be thankful that God hears the desire of the humble this night, and be earnest in presenting that desire at the throne of grace.

Now I will leave this first part of my subject. I really think there is much in it which, while it causes you joy as you think of it this evening, may also cause you joy to-morrow, and

every other day in the year. Suppose you are in a workshop, and cannot kneel down to pray, you can desire, and God will hear that desire even if it is not expressed in words. Perhaps you work where there are ungodly men, and you cannot vocally offer your petition to the Lord; if so, you can desire. Therefore, thank the Lord that he hears the desire of the humble. Whatever can stop my voice, nothing can stop my heart's desire; I can go on desiring, and, glory be to God! he will go on hearing the desire of my heart.

II. Now we must pass on to the second part of our subject, TWO VERY BLESSED ASSURANCES: "Thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear."

The first assurance is this, "Thou wilt prepare their heart." Turn this declaration into a prayer, "Lord, prepare my heart!" We ought all to make some sort of preparation for coming days as far as prudence suggests and circumstances allow. There is a laying up in store for a rainy day, that every sensible man will make as far as he is able; but, brethren, the best preparation for the future lies in having a heart prepared. If you get all else prepared, but the heart is not, you have left the major part undone; and if the heart be prepared, and a good deal else unprepared, things may yet come right in the end. All gets right when the heart is right. Out of the heart are the issues of life; and those issues of life are true and good when the heart is right. God only can prepare the heart for that which is right; he alone can prepare it for holy living, and prepare it for happy dying, and prepare it for eternity. I want you to get hold of this assurance as a promise for you all through this year, "Thou wilt prepare their heart." How shall we understand this expression?

First, God will prepare the heart of the humble *to receive Christ*. "Oh!" says one, "I do not feel fit to come to Christ." All the fitness that is wanted, God will give you. "Thou wilt prepare their heart." You want to be empty, to be broken, to be wounded; all this the Spirit of God will work upon your conscience by the operation of the law of the Lord. Do not stand back from Christ because you are unprepared to come to him. God will prepare you for Christ as he has already prepared Christ for you.

Next, "Thou wilt prepare their heart" *to receive more of Christ*. Those of us who have had Christ as our hope and our trust want to get more of him. I should be very sorry if I thought that, this year, I should not learn something more of my Master than I have hitherto known. I should think it a dreary year if it should pass over my head, and I should have no fresh instruction concerning the beauties of his person, and the excellence of his character. Oh, that we might all receive Christ more fully into our heart! The heart wants sweeping, and cleaning, and preparing, and here is the promise that this work shall be divinely performed, "Thou wilt prepare their heart." Not only for grace, but for more grace, will God prepare the heart of the humble.

This year, dear brethren, we shall need heart-preparation for the many *duties we shall have to perform for God*. Look forward to them with trust in God. Those who examine the palms of the hand, and pretend to foretell futurity, are fools; those who believe them are not wise. We cannot tell what a day may bring forth, but we know that every day will bring its meed of service. Well then, God will prepare our hearts for it. "Thou wilt prepare their heart." I like to think that nothing shall come for me to do but God will fit me for it. I may be called to work that I have never attempted before; if so, I shall have grace given which I never had

before. You may change your condition of life this year, my dear friend; but you shall be prepared for that change. You may have to emigrate to the other side of the world, and find fresh duties awaiting you there; but you shall be prepared for your new sphere of service. You may be called from being a servant to be a master, or you may have to come down in the world, and from being a master you may have to become a servant; yet, whatever God shall put before you to do, he will prepare your heart for it. Only plead this declaration in prayer, and you may expect to have it fulfilled.

In addition to our active service, there may be, and probably will be for many of us, a great deal of passive service; *we may have to endure suffering this year*. Poverty may fall upon some who are now in a comfortable position in life. Bereavement may make a widow of that smiling sister, or that happy father over yonder may be left childless. Ere the year has run its course, who of us may have to toss upon the bed of sickness by the month together, who may be slandered, who may be persecuted, it is not for us to know; but here is something we may know, "Thou wilt prepare their heart." It is wonderful how God gets his people ready for trouble when it is coming. You remember what Solomon says of the wise woman, "She is not afraid of the snow for her household, for all her household are clothed with scarlet." She has made such warm garments for them that she says, "Let the snow come if it likes, they are prepared to resist the cold." So God's wisdom and grace will clothe us all with such warm garments of consolation that, when trouble comes, we shall be fully prepared to bear it. For duty, or for suffering, "Thou wilt prepare their heart."

And ah! this year, some of us may have to die. Many of our members passed away last year; some dear sweet souls, the very pick of this church, were taken up to heaven. It may be my lot, it may be your lot, dear brother or sister, to go home this year; but we will fall back on this gracious assurance, "Thou wilt prepare their heart." Why, it seems to me that, if I can keep this word in my heart and on my tongue all this year, nothing shall be able to disturb me; I shall be like the man of whom it is written, "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." "Thou wilt prepare their heart," and therefore they shall not be afraid of all the enemies that can come against them. Thou shalt not be afraid of sickness, of famine, or of death itself, for God will prepare thy heart to meet it. Slip aside now and again, during this year, when an unexpected trouble comes, and say, "Lord, prepare my heart for this sorrow!" When you meet with a strong temptation that comes all of a sudden, haste away into some quiet corner, and pray, "Now, my Master, prepare my heart to resist this assault of the adversary!" He will keep your sword sharpened for you, he will have your shield well bossed for you, he will keep you strong, he will keep you happy, he will keep you blessed, he will prepare your heart.

Now for the last part of my text. You do not know, perhaps, that I have a license to keep on as long as I like to-night, for my pulpit clock has stopped! I am obliged to look round to see how the time flies. Before I close, I should like to say a little about this last part of my subject, the second blessed assurance: "Thou wilt cause thine ear to hear." I think, brethren, that this preparation of the heart means, in the first place, that God will prepare his people's hearts to pray, then he will cause his ear to hear their prayers; but I will just take it out of its connection for a minute or two.

"Thou wilt cause thine ear to hear." I understand by this phrase that *the Lord will hear us*

soon. sometimes, when we pray, the answer does not come directly. Pray again, brother, for if God has not caused his ear to hear yet, he will cause his ear to hear. The answer to your prayer shall come speedily. Do not postpone your expectations too long; prepare to wait if God tarrys, but be prepared for the reply if he does not tarry. Some Christians do the first, but not the second; they seem so ready to wait that God makes them wait. Oh, prepare with such vigor and earnestness, when you are pleading for your own salvation, or for the salvation of others, that God shall make haste, and at once cause his ear to hear! He will hear you soon; expect, during this year, many speedy answers to your prayers.

“Thou wilt cause thine ear to hear,” that means next, I think, that *the Lord will hear us always*. He will, as it were, exert himself to hear your supplication: “Thou wilt cause thine ear to hear.” This is a blessed word for this new year. My God, how earnestly I will pray now that I know I have thine ear! I remember that dear Mr. Cowper when he was in despondency and distress, writing to Mr. Bull, of Newport Pagnell, said, “You have advised me to pray; but there is no reason in the world in my praying, there is no passage of Scripture that gives me any right to pray.” He was, of course, insane at the time; yet he said, “If there were such a text, I would never leave off praying as long as I lived. You tell me that Jonah prayed in the whale’s belly, but I am in a worse plight than he was in. If I were only as bad as Jonah was, I would pray to God night and day.” I catch at that thought, — if I am permitted to pray, then I will pray; and if I may have whatsoever I ask of God in the name of Jesus, oh, I will ask! Do use your privilege in praying to the Lord, for he will cause his ear to hear. If you had the ear of the great ones at court, and could get whatever you liked, I am sure that you would use the privilege; and now that you have the ear of the great King of kings, O ye intercessors, ye who are the Lord’s remembrancers, plead with him day and night, “and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth,” for he will cause his ear to hear you. The Lord will always hear you, sinner, if you call upon him; he will soon hear you, he will effectually hear you.

When it is said, “Thou wilt cause thine ear to hear,” does it not mean that *the Lord will so hear as to answer our petitions*? As a church, we have prospered by prayer. Glasgow flourished by the preaching of the Word, and the Tabernacle has flourished by the prayers of believers. There has been the secret of our strength; therefore let us still believe in the efficacy of prayer. God does listen to the voices of his children; he does regard the cry of the humble; he is moved by the desires of his own people. Let us then, during this year, be more in prayer than ever. Let us pray in faith, pleading the precious blood of Jesus, and the promises of God’s Word, and let us hear the Lord saying to us, “Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me.” There is need of a great revival of religion; the wave of the late revival has gone, and now we want another. We have had a long winter spiritually; we need to have an awakening springtime, and a glorious summer, and a golden autumn in the church. Let us pledge ourselves to pray for it; and not merely pledge ourselves, but really pray. Let us cry mightily, till the Lord shall hear us, and bring in tens of thousands who shall be the reward of the Savior’s sufferings and death. The Lord bless you, dear friends, and make this year to be very rich in fruit-bearing to God’s glory in every one of us!

And as for such as were not saved when they came into the Tabernacle this evening, I do

trust that God will this very night make them to desire to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and that he will hear their desire, and lead them to look to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world. As we, who love the Lord, come to the communion-table, we can use our text, for I am sure the desire of the humble is that they may see Christ in the Supper: "Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart." Oh, it is sad to go to the Lord's table with an unprepared heart! Lord, prepare our heart to come to thy banqueting-table to-night; and then, "Thou wilt cause thine ear to hear;" thou wilt grant us grace to feed upon Christ, and to be satisfied! May it be so to every communicant! The Lord bless you all, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON.

PSALM 103.

One's heart naturally turns to this passage when one desires to magnify the Lord. It is specially suitable for a New Year's meditation.

Verse 1. *Bless, the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.*

Come, my soul, wake up! Bestir thyself! Thou hast great work to do, such work as angels do for ever and ever before the throne. Let no power or faculty exempt itself from this divine service. Come, my memory, my will, my judgment, my intellect, my heart, all that in me is, be stirred up his holy name to magnify and bless. "Bless the Lord, O my soul," — for the music must begin deep down in the center of my being; it must be myself, my very self, that praises God.

2. *Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:*

This shall be the first note: "We love him because he first loved us." We have not to go abroad for materials for praise, they lie at home. Forget not all his benefits to thee, my soul, his overwhelming, his innumerable benefits, which have to be summed up in the gross as "all his benefits" — forget them not.

3. *Who forgiveth all thine iniquities;*

Come, come, my soul, canst thou not praise God for sin forgiven? That is the first note, and it is the sweetest note, in our song of praise. "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities," — not some of them but the whole mass the blessed Scapegoat has carried into the "No man's land of oblivion."

3. *Who healeth all thy diseases;*

He is the Physician for thee, my soul: thy diseases are the worst of all diseases, for they would drag thee down to hell if they were not cured. But Jehovah Rophi healeth all thy diseases.

4. *who redeemeth thy life from destruction;*

Oh, my soul, praise God for redemption! If thou canst not sing about anything else,

sing of free grace and dying love. Keep on ringing those charming bells.

4. *Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies;*

What! can you wear a crown, and not praise him who placed it on your head? Can you wear such a crown as this, made up of lovingkindness and tender mercies, and not bless the Lord? Oh, let it not be so, let us each break forth in spirit in one song to-night, and say, "My soul doth magnify the Lord."

5. *Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.*

Heavenly feasting on heavenly bread; divine satisfaction from the finished work of Christ. Oh, my soul, pray to God to give thee new life to-night, so that thy youth may be renewed, so that thy wing feathers may grow again, and that thou mayest mount as eagles do! Surely, dear friends, this little list of mercies, so small for number, contains an immensity of mercy. Let us bless the Lord for every one of them.

6. *The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.*

Let the poor and the down-trodden sing unto the Lord. He will take care of you, he is the Executor of the needy and the Executioner of the proud. "The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed."

7. *He made known his ways unto Moses his acts unto the children of Israel.*

Therefore, let us bless him, the God of revelation, who does not hide himself from his creatures; but who makes known his ways and his acts unto his people. An unknown God is an unpraised God; but when he shows himself to his people, they cannot refrain from blessing his name.

8. *The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.*

Praise him for this. Bless his name at every single mention of his divine attributes; let your hearts beat to the music of praise to-night.

9. *He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever.*

Let the afflicted praise him; let the downcast and the despondent sinner praise him; if he cannot sing about anything else, let him bless the name of the Lord that he will not keep his anger for ever.

10. *He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.*

Let us thank God we are not in hell; we are yet on praying ground, and on pleading terms with him. Some of us will never go into perdition, for he hath saved us with an everlasting salvation. Truly, if we did not bless him, every timber in this house, and every iron column beneath this roof, might burst out in rebukes for our ingratitude; we must bless his name.

11. *For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.*

Look up into the blue sky, up, up beyond the stars, and say to yourself. "So great is his mercy." Let us therefore praise him accordingly.

“Loud as his thunders shout his praise, And sound it lofty at his throne.”

12. *As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.*

There is neither latitude nor longitude for praise. God’s grace is boundless; let us therefore unstintedly praise him.

13. *Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.*

He has a tender heart: he never strikes without regret, but his love always flows freely. No father or mother is half so mild and loving as is the Lord of hosts.

14. *For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.*

Our bodies are but animated dust, and even our souls might be compared to dust in his sight. Not iron or granite, but mere dust are we. It is a wonder that men live no long when there are such mighty forces, even in nature, arrayed against them. Who can control earthquakes and volcanoes?

And when men cross the sea in times of storm, it is a wonder that they come to land again.

15. *As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.*

You are like the primrose by the river’s brim, or the buttercup and the daisy in the field that is visited with the scythe. That is all we are, not cedars, not oaks, not rocks, but flowers of the field.

16. *For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.*

Some of the hot winds of the East come over a meadow, and it is burned up immediately. I have seen the fairest and loveliest flowers look, in a short time, as if they had been burned with a hot iron when the Sirocco had blown across from Africa: and such are we. We speak of the breath of the pestilence; it is but a puff of wind, and we are gone.

17, 18. *But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children’s children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.*

“But”, — and this is a blessed “but.” “But the mercy of the Lord” — that is not a fading flower, that is not a withering wind, — “But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting.” Here are ten thousand blessings in one. You have everlasting mercy, covenant mercy. Oh, if we do not praise God when we think of the covenant, what has happened to us? We must be possessed with a dumb devil if we do not praise the name of him whose mercy is from everlasting to everlasting.

19. *The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.*

Now, children of a King, will you go mourning all your days? You that dwell in the light of his throne, will not you be glad? Rejoice, O Zion, for thy King liveth and reigneth for

ever! “The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice.”

20. *Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.*

“Bless the Lord, ye his angels.” We cannot do it well enough yet; help us, then, ye angels that excel in strength; put out all your strength when ye praise him, “ye that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his Word.” Your actions are your praises, O ye angels! Would God that we had learned to do his commandments as ye do them! We are praying for this, even as our Lord taught his disciples to say, “Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”

21. *Bless ye the LORD, all ye his host; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure.*

All living things, and all the forces and powers of nature, are calling upon men to praise the Lord; and all the hosts of God, the organs of Omnipotence, ring out the grand chorus, “Bless ye the Lord.”

22. *Bless the LORD, all his work, in all places of his dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul.*

I must not go grumbling up to heaven, nor stumbling among the works of God, I must gratefully come to him, and myself praise him, so with the psalmist I cry, “Bless the Lord, O my soul.”

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN PRAYERBOOK” — 1037, 10, 1042.

FAINT; BUT NOT FAINT- HEARTED.

NO. 2343

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY, JANUARY 14TH,
1894,**

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 17TH, 1889.

“Faint, yet pursuing.” — Judges 8:4.

THESE three hundred men, though faint, were not faint-hearted. If they had been cowards, they would have left Gideon when he made the proclamation, “Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead.” Twenty and two thousand accepted that permission, and left their general with ten thousand. Out of that smaller company, which was yet too large, these three hundred had been selected as the men that lapped. While others unloosed their helmets, and lay prone upon the grass, to take a luxurious drink, these men acted like a hasty dog who, running by the side of a stream, laps and runs, and laps and runs, and wastes no time in drinking. They were men who had given themselves wholly up to this holy war, and who were determined to smite these foes of God and his people; and yet they were faint. They were not faint because they were dispirited, for they had just won a great victory. They had broken the pitchers, and unveiled the lamps, and blown the trumpets, and they had shouted, “The sword of the Lord and of Gideon,” and they had seen the vast host of Midian melt away before their eyes. They had plunged with fervor into the battle, chasing the Dying foe and laying tens of thousands dead at their feet. Every man among them was a hero; and yet they were faint.

When you see men faint, do not blame them. Peradventure, by their faintness, they have proved of what true stuff they are made. They have done as much as flesh and blood can do, and therefore they are faint. They may not have been defeated, they may have gained a glorious victory, and yet for the moment they may be faint. Faintness, by itself, is a poor thing; but if you can truly say, “Faint, yet pursuing,” faintness becomes the foil to set off perseverance; and the man is all the nobler because, when faint, he still pursues.

I am going to talk, to-night, to some of God’s people who may be in the condition which the text describes: “Faint, yet pursuing.” I shall dwell a little, in the first place, upon *the weakness of the flesh*: “Faint.” Secondly, I shall ask you to admire *the strength of grace*: “Faint, yet pursuing.” When we have done that, I trust that we shall have a few minutes in which to learn *the lessons of example*, for these men shall be our schoolmasters.

I. First, let us think about THE WEAKNESS OF THE FLESH.

What is man, after all, at his very best? The best of men, at their best, are but men, and human nature, even at its best, is but a poor thing; and the strongest man may very soon be too weak to do anything, and the heroic man, who could stand against the shock of arms, may lie upon the ground, weary, and unable to go a step further. Why were these brave, strong men of Gideon’s band faint? I shall mention certain reasons which apply to us as well as to them.

Well, first, they grew faint because *they had lost their rest*. It was at night that they broke the pitchers, at night that they made that surprising attack upon the camp of their enemies, and they had ever since, with hot foot, been pursuing the flying crowd. There had been no time for them to have any sleep, that “tired nature’s sweet restorer” which is so necessary to us all. And there are Christian minds that have not rested, they have not had time to rest; and upon some there comes what is called insomnia, the inability to sleep. This, of course, is a physical malady, and over-busy men may be afflicted by it; but Christian men may suffer from spiritual insomnia. They may get so exercised about their work, so worried

about the Lord's work, they may lay so much to heart the needs and woes of men, they may be so fretted about how little they can do, and how feebly they do it, and how small is the result that follows from all they have done, that they may get into a state of spiritual insomnia and restlessness. Now, this is always evil. Christ would have Martha to care and to serve; but he would not have her cumbered with much serving; he would prefer that she should sit like Mary at his feet. We can do much for our Lord, some can do a great deal more than they are now doing; but it is very possible to attempt too much, and really to do next to nothing, because we have put ourselves into a condition in which we cannot do anything well. You may see a man, who is strong and vigorous, achieve with one blow what another cannot accomplish with twenty feeble strokes. It is not the doing much that is the important matter; it is the doing what you do with real force and power. You lose the ability thus to work unless you have needful rest. Did you never notice how the Master makes rest a privilege of the worker? "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me;.... and ye shall find rest unto your souls." You will never work like Christ unless you can rest like Christ. He had a great capacity for resting as well as great power for working. When he was in that little ship which was tossed with tempest, he was asleep in the hinder part of the vessel while the storm was at its height; to go to sleep was the best thing that he could do, and, at certain times, the best thing that a Christian can do, is to "rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him;" for in that way he will get back his lost strength and power for service. If he neglects to rest in Christ, he will become faint; and it will be a happy circumstance if, when faint, he is still pursuing.

In addition to losing their rest, *these men had endured a very heavy strain*. There is much work to be done, that we might go on doing for a century if we lived so long, yet we should never be worn out by it, the ordinary jogtrot work of every day does not kill men. But there are superhuman efforts to be made on special occasions, and those extraordinary tasks put a tremendous strain upon the soul. It was a superhuman effort when the three hundred brave warriors remained with Gideon; over thirty thousand of his first great army melted away, but the three hundred stalwarts stood fast. It may seem to you to be simple enough to stand fast when thirty thousand flee; but you will not find it so if ever you are put to the test. And then to go down, at dead of night, under Gideon's leadership, against at least a hundred and fifty thousand Midianites, with lamps, pitchers, and trumpets as their only weapons, might seem a small thing to do; but it took courageous men to do such a daring deed as that, and to believe that by such a simple stratagem God would defeat their numerous foes. O sirs, believe me, faith is not child's play; and, though a simple faith, exercised from day to day about ordinary things, is not to be despised, yet there come special moments when you must have the faith of God's elect, and an elect faith, too, and a high degree of it; and if you have that, and exert it to the full, you will find that it will tell upon your whole frame.

These men had also experienced the strain of great success. Stand still, and see that mighty host dividing into parties, and beginning to slay one another. Behold the whole power of Midian suddenly broken. Oh, the joy that must have filled the hearts of Gideon's three hundred! Their spirits must have leaped within them with ecstasy and delight, they must have felt that they could hardly contain themselves for very joy while God was working such a glorious deliverance; and if you have ever been indulged by your heavenly Father with some great success in service for the King, you have felt afterwards as if your

moisture was turned into the drought of summer. It takes the very soul out of a man to see God at work, and himself to be the instrument, in the Lord's hands, of accomplishing some high and wondrous purpose of judgment or mercy. These three hundred men had endured a great strain upon their faith, and they had also had that which is a greater strain still, the triumph of their faith in God; and so, exhausted and worn out, they were ready to faint.

Beside that, remember, dear friends, that *these men had put forth great strength*. It was not merely mental wear and tear that they had to endure, but there was much actual conflict with the enemy. At first, the Midianites killed one another, but after they took to flight, Gideon's men pursued them up hill and down dale, slaying them wherever they could, for they would not leave one of these enemies of their country who had dared to invade the land of the holy, they resolved to cut them all off. It was a hard day's work, and many deeds of daring had they done; and now, as they go by Succoth, they are faint though they are still pursuing the flying foe. If you, dear brethren and sisters, will give yourselves wholly to God's work, although you will never get tired of it, you will often get tired in it. If a man has never tired himself with working for God, I should think he never has done any work that was worth doing. If a sister has never spent herself in trying to win souls, I should suppose that the number of souls which she will win will be very few indeed. We can never expect God's blessing on our work till every faculty of our being is aroused, and the whole of our strength is put forth in the divine service. Now, if this is the case with us, it is no wonder if sometimes we get weary, and feel ready to faint.

Note also that *these brave men had endured a long march*. They had first fought the battle of the night, and this had been followed by the pursuit of the enemy during the day. They wanted to prevent them from crossing the fords, and all along that forced march there had been fighting; and the fighting after a battle is often the most severe. Many generals have been able to win a battle; but they have not known how to use it after they have won it. The toughest part of the fight full often is after the enemy begins to flee; and these men had endured a long day of this trying work. Now, dear friends, I believe that it is very often, not the pace, but the time that makes Christian people tired. When I have thought the matter over, I have many times said that I could die for Christ, by his grace, if I might lay my head down on a block, and have it chopped off at once. I think that I could endure that; but what about being roasted alive by a slow fire? Well, that is rather a different thing. One might feel in such a case that human strength would very soon be dried up. Ah, dear friends, to stand bravely for Christ for a week or two, is a simple matter; but to keep on month after month, and year after year, is another affair! It is the length of life that tries the reality of religion. Some are able to stand against the temptations of youth, and yet succumb amid the business of middle life; and alas! as many horses fall at the bottom of the hill, so we have known many men who have sinned sadly in old age. In fact, as nearly as I can recollect, all the great falls recorded in Scripture are those of old men, or of persons far beyond the age of youth, as if to teach us that, when we think that we have grown wise by experience, we shall be great fools if we trust to ourselves even then. But it is that length of endurance, that year after year of trial, that long fight of affliction, or that long-continued temptation, that tries the man; and it is little wonderful if sometimes the very heroes of the cross are faint and weary.

And, once more, *these brave men had taken no refreshment*. We read that the people took

victuals in their hand when they went down to the fight; but that food was all gone, for soldiers have fine appetites when they have had much to do, and they grow very faint if they cannot get refreshment. Ah, dear children of God, if you live where you do not hear the gospel faithfully preached, I do not wonder if you faint! Or, if you have given up hearing the Word, and have been busying yourself, always teaching, it may be that you have been giving out too much, and taking in too little. I like the plan adopted by many of our dear friends who come here on Sabbath mornings; they are always here in the morning, but they are never here on Sabbath evenings. Where are they? They are happily engaged in some good and gracious work; but they will not give up the hearing in the morning, for that, they say, is their week's meal, and strengthens them for service during the rest of the day. I think that they do wisely. Young Christians, especially, cannot do without their food. There are not many of us who would be in vigorous health if we did not have our food regularly; and I do not think that the majority of Christians can afford to be so busy in the Master's service as not to get opportunities for meditation, contemplation, and hearing and studying the word of God. Perhaps some brother here may be faint to-night for that very reason, and he may receive a hint that it is necessary for him to take refreshment if he is to go on with his work. "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile," said Christ to his disciples; and as to the people who followed him, when he saw them hungry and faint, he multiplied the loaves and fishes, and fed them to the full, and they were revived.

But, beloved, what child of God, who engages faithfully in the work and warfare of this life, does not at times feel ready to faint? Stand in the position of one who finds himself deserted by those who seemed to be his friends, but who prove faithless, and, without a protest for the truth, glide away in the general current of error. Your heart grows sick as you think of the cowards who ought to have been at your side in the battle for the standard. Your soul is ready to faint as you note the slackness of others whom you do not suspect of going astray, but who, in the day of battle, are like Meroz, and come not up to the help of the Lord against the mighty. Battling for Christ in the midst of the crowd where you want hundreds of helpers, and can scarcely find one, trying to carry the light into some of the dark slums of London, thinking that every Christian will sympathize with you, but finding that none do so, — these are the trials that make even brave hearts feel faint.

Well, brethren, I think I have said enough, and perhaps too much, upon that first point, the weakness of the flesh, so I turn with great pleasure to the next point.

II. In the second place, let us admire THE STRENGTH OF DIVINE GRACE. These three hundred men were "faint, yet pursuing." They could march but slowly, but they did march; they could strike but feebly, but they did strike.

Observe that, although they were faint, they were not faint in their heart. They still believed, they still had a brave stomach for the fight, they had not wavered in their resolution, they meant still to go forward, they intended to conquer the enemies of their country before them, or die in the attempt, and not one of them proposed to turn back; they were "faint, yet pursuing." Every man of them kept on the track of the Midianites; they were still determined to go forward. They did not demand substitutes, saying, "We have done so much; now let somebody else come in, and finish the work." No, no, they were still

pursuing, each man resolved that his own right arm should wield his weapon till the fray was over. Nor did they rest on their laurels. Some of us, perhaps, would have done so if we had been in their places; we might have said, "We have done bravely, we have already broken the neck of Midian, we are victors; there is no need to do more." No, but they reckoned that nothing was done while there was anything undone. They were not content while as yet a single foeman lived. They must carry the warfare right through to the bitter end; and they meant to do it. Sternly resolved were they that, though they were faint, and even if they died, they would die with their faces to the enemy, fighting for the Lord God of Israel. Brothers in Christ, is not that our resolve to-night? My Christian sisters, do you not feel the same? We have lifted our hand to the Lord, and we will never go back; we could not give up his truth, his love, his service. To whom should we go if we left our Lord? If we did not keep on still pursuing, what should we do? Lie still, we cannot; there is something in us which will not let us rest while there is work to be done for God, by which Christ can be glorified.

These men were driven forward by hope. Although they were faint, they felt that he who had brought them so far would bring them through to the end. He had done so much for them that they might have said, —

"His love in time past forbids us to think He'll leave us at last with hunger to sink;"

and so they kept on, hopeful still that they should win a complete victory. They were resolved that, if it were not so, yet still they would keep on. So let it be with us. If I am faint, I will still continue fighting against sin. If everybody else forsakes the cross, yet a genuine Christian cannot. If every flag were taken away, and rolled in the mire, our Master should still find us, by his grace, prepared to bear disgrace and dishonor for his sake, and still to cling to the grand old cause, "faint, yet pursuing."

Now, beloved, you who are here to-night may belong to various classes, and faintness may come upon you in reference to different things. Let me just mention them in the hope that the strength of grace may come to you even as it did to Gideon's band.

Are you a student, my dear brother? Are you studying the Scriptures? Are you endeavoring to learn the deep things of God? Do you know that you have learned very little as yet? Do the great mysteries stagger you? Are you driven to feel what a fool you are? Have you come to those great deeps where such as you can never see the bottom? Ah, well, though you are faint in your study of the Scripture, still pursue it! Get close to the Word of God, search it through and through, study it, meditate on it, give yourself wholly to it, seek to know all that God has revealed, for the things which are revealed, however mysterious they are, belong to you. If you are faint in the pursuit of divine truth, yet continue to pursue it.

Perhaps, you are fighting against some inbred sin. It may be that I address some who see a swarm of sins within their nature. By God's grace, you have determined to put every sin to the sword; but you have been baffled by their numbers and their strength. This very morning, when you got up, you thought that you would make this the holiest day you have ever lived; but it has been a very poor day, after all. The other week, when you went to business, you said to yourself, "By God's help, I will show all I meet today how a Christian can live." But you tripped and stumbled very sorrowfully. Well now, my dear

brother, you are faint because of these failures. Yet, I pray you, do not give up the struggle, for God will help you. In the power of his Spirit you are able to overcome these sins, and you may yet sing, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Up and at them, brethren! If faint, yet still be pursuing. The Lord help you in this battle!

Possibly, you are a worker for Christ. You have begun well; I am thankful that you have begun. After continuing a little time in the Lord's service, you do not want to give it up, but you do not seem to get on at it; and Satan has been saying to you, "You might as well give it up, for you are doing no good. Do not worry yourself with that work any longer." There is a friend who is not Satan, but perhaps Satan is using that friend, and getting that friend to say to you, "This work will be too much for you, I know it will; you are not adapted for it, why do you not take things more easily?" Ah! but, dear friend, permit me to say to you, "If you are faint, yet still be pursuing. There is a great blessing coming, and the devil does not want you to receive it. Defeat the devil by giving yourself more earnestly than ever to the cause of your Lord, for, depend upon it, there is something going to happen soon that will abundantly repay you, and the arch-enemy wants to prevent you from getting the blessing."

Is the conflict concerning prayer? Have you been pleading for a soul, and you have not yet won the victory? Is it your husband? Is it your wayward boy? Is it a friend? Have you been at Jabbok, near where Gideon was at this very time? Have you wrestled with the angel, have you been expecting to prevail, and have you not yet been successful, and has something said to you, "Do not pray about it any more"? Oh, beloved, if that is the case, I beg you to pluck up courage! Though faint, yet still be pursuing. Continue pleading with God, and do not let the angel go until he blesses you.

Or, once more, have you been bearing witness for the truth, and in bearing witness for it have you met with losses and crosses? Have you been brought under suspicion and misrepresentation? Have you lost some of your dearest friends, and have they even become your bitter enemies? Do you get very faint, and are you tempted to say, "Why should I protest? Let things go as they will. The age is rotten through and through; what is the use of my standing out?" Oh, say not so! Where would the Reformation have been if it had not been for two or three brave hearts? How will any truth be preserved in the world if men are craven and chicken-hearted? Nay, my brother, speak not so, but rather say to-night, "Though I may appear to achieve nothing by my protest, that is not my affair. My business is to do my duty, results must rest with God; and, by his grace, faint as I am, I will still be pursuing."

III. Now I close by pointing out to you THE LESSONS OF EXAMPLE that we may learn from Gideon's brave men.

The first lesson is this: *Serve the Lord*: Brothers and sisters, we are saved by grace. Some of us were saved years ago; we were washed in the blood of the Lamb, and clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

We rejoice in a finished work whereby we are saved. Now let us serve because we have been saved, and let us serve our Lord to the last fragment of strength. I do not think that Christ can be rightly served with half our manhood; it must be with the whole of our

powers. All my goods, all my alms, all my talents, all that I can invent, all that I can achieve, I must give to him. Is there any part of us that we dare reserve for self? Shall the broad arrow of the King never be stamped on this or that portion of our being?

Ah, then, a curse will come upon us! Nay, let it not be so; but let us give him all the strength we have until we become fairly exhausted, and are ready to faint, and even then let us be pursuing.

Let us also serve the Lord when every movement is painful, when even to think is wearisome. These men were faint. You know what it is for a soldier to be faint; it is no nonsense, no pretence, it is real fainting. Yet to go running on when you are ready to faint, to keep right on when you are ready to drop, this is very trying work; yet let us do it, brethren, by God's grace. Some people only pray when they feel like praying; but we need most to pray when we feel that we cannot pray. If we were only to preach, — some of us, — when we felt like preaching, we should not often preach. If some people I know would only give when they felt like giving, they would never give; perhaps for the matter of that they never do. But you are not to do a thing merely when it is a pleasure to you; do it when it is a pain to you. When faint, yet be pursuing; when, instead of your legs carrying you, you have to drag your legs along the ground, yet still pursue the enemy. When you feel that, absolutely, you could not go another foot, yet still go many another yard, for there is such a thing as doing as much as you can, and yet, by divine power and grace, keeping on after that. The work that you felt you could not do, will have more acceptance with God than that which you performed in your ordinary strength.

Serve the Lord when every movement is painful, and serve him when difficulties thicken. There were only three hundred of Gideon's men, and there were fifteen thousand of the enemy, and the people who ought to have been their friends would not even give them a loaf of bread to eat. Then is the time to serve the Lord. There is little in your service when everybody says, "Hurrah!" but there is something in the man who can follow the Lord when they cry, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" To run with the crowd, any fool can do that; but to face that crowd, and go the other way; to stand right alone, like a brazen pillar that cannot be stirred though the whole earth should push against you; there is something in such action that is worthy of the grace of God; and it is true grace alone that helps a man to act thus. Brothers and sisters, do not count the difficulties; count your God as everything, and let the rest go which way they will. The more difficulties there are, the better; and the fewer friends, the better; there shall be the more glory to the grace that helps you your loneliness to stand firm, and to be faithful to your God.

Next, *be stimulated by past success*. Success for God is good. You win a victory over the Midianites, and you feel faint. Do not faint. Why! it does not become you to faint after that victory. You who are red to the elbows with the blood of the enemy, are you going to faint? You who just now smote Oreb and Zeeb, are you going to turn cowards? You know what confusion there is in battle when a standard-bearer fainteth. See, the standard begins to tremble, it falls almost down; somebody holds it up, but the standard-bearer faints, and down goes the banner, and everybody thinks that the battle is lost. Standard-bearer, standard-bearer, I beseech thee, do not faint! Cry to thy God, standard-bearer, for so many depend upon thee! Teacher of a class, minister of a congregation, leader of a clan, stand in the strength of Jehovah himself, and having done all, stand!

Lastly, *be hopeful when you are feeblest*, just as these men were: “Faint, yet pursuing.” When there were so very, very, very few of them, and they were faint, then they expected victory; and when there are very, very few of us, and we too are weary and fainting, then, perhaps, our extremity will be God’s opportunity. Watch the hourglass. How fast the sands are blowing! The time is almost up; there are only two or three sands yet to trickle down. Just so; but when the hour is up, then God’s eternity comes in. When our time comes to an end, then God’s great leisure shall come to an end, too; and he will pluck his right hand out of his bosom, and he will do a work in our day that shall make both the ears of him that heareth thereof to tingle. Wherefore, beloved brethren and sisters, let us give ourselves more to Christ than ever.

As for you who do not belong to Jesus, to whom do you belong? You who are not servants of Christ, whose servants are you? Tremble, I pray you, for your master pays terrible wages: “The wages of sin is death.” Remember the rest of the verse, “but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” God grant us that glorious gift, for Jesus sake! Amen.

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON.

Judges 7:19-25; Judges 8:1-27.

Judges 7:19-21. *So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the-beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that were in their hands. And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal: and they cried, The sword of the LORD and of Gideon. And they stood every man in his place round about the camp: and all the host ran, and cried, and fled.*

This was at the dead of night, when the hosts of Midian were fast asleep. They were startled from their slumbers by the blast of three hundred trumpets, and the flaming of three hundred torches. They gathered that these were only the bugles and the lamps at the head of vast regiments of Israelites, and they hardly dared to calculate how great the whole host must be. Filled with fear, astonished at the sound of the trumpets, and the shouting of Gideon’s band all round their camp, they took to their heels: “all the host ran, and cried, and fled.”

22. *And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the LORD set every man’s sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host:*

They were a motley company, every man afraid of his fellow. They had gathered together to share the spoil, and now, when fear demoralized them, the hordes of wild warriors began to destroy one another.

22-23. *And the host fled to Beth-shittah in Zererath, and to the border of Abel-meholah, unto Tabbath. And the men of Israel gathered themselves together out of Naphtali, and*