

A SACRED SOLO NO. 1423

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in Him, and I am helped,
therefore my heart greatly rejoices and with my song will I praise Him.”*
Psalm 28:7.

THIS passage has, to my mind, a peculiar charm. I do not know whether it breaks on your ears with like pathos and power. To me it seems charged with softness and sweetness, like some gentle strain of tender music. Let us read it again. “The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in Him, and I am helped, therefore my heart greatly rejoices and with my song will I praise Him.” I think I see a battle raging furiously, yet he whom it most concerns, after having displayed his prowess and fought valiantly, steps aside and, sitting down in a quiet place, bomb-proof and almost out of sound of the cannons’ roar, thus talks with his heart. He forgets the raging strife—he is expecting a joyful victory! He knows his weaknesses, but he has caught a glimpse of the Divine strength which is guaranteed to him.

He is trembling, perhaps, from the toil of the fight, and yet he rests as one insensibly subdued to settled calm and mild composure—he rests in God. In like manner, I want you, dear Friends, to get out of the crowd a while, this evening, and take shelter in a quiet place. Forget, just now, the various troubles of business. The domestic cares which often harass you and the inward conflicts which vex your souls. Whatever there may be to disturb, distress, or distract you, let it alone! Now, for a while, revel in that sweet peace which God, alone, can give, the peace of God which passes all understanding—and say unto your soul—“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in Him, and I am helped, therefore my heart greatly rejoices and with my song will I praise Him.”

The sentence, you will notice, divides itself into three parts. The first tells us of an assured possession—“The Lord is my strength and my shield.” The second speaks of a definite experience—“My heart trusted in Him, and I am helped.” There are no, “ifs,” no, “buts,” no suspense of the soul midway between hope and fear—he speaks without a trace of hesitancy, for he tells of his own actual experience. The third part of our text very properly closes with an expressed emotion—a very deep emotion it is—“My heart greatly rejoices.” And then, you see, the inward emotion is interpreted in a most proper fashion by an audible utterance—“With my song will I praise Him.”

I beg to call your studious attention to the remarkable form of this verse! There is a pair in the case of each of my divisions and the pair in each case consists of inward and outward. Notice, “The Lord is my strength,” that is inward. “My shield,” that is outward. “My heart trusted in Him,” that is inward. “And I am helped,” that is outward. “Therefore my heart greatly rejoices,” that is inward. “And with my song will I praise Him,” that is outward. It is by no means trifling to note these arrangements in the structure of sacred poetry, for there is a lesson to be learned—it teaches us that truth and beauty are to be linked together and that to be holy we need not be uncouth.

Full often we may observe a beautiful form and an admirable fashion in the language which embodied the thoughts of the inspired Psalmist. If we look at them long enough and meditate upon them fondly enough, we shall discern a symmetry in all his hallowed compositions which charms the taste, rivets the attention and helps the memory. The sacred poet served the Lord with his best powers, reckoning nothing to be good enough for the Lord whom he loved so well! Slovenly preaching, doggerel verses and discordant singing ought to be avoided, if possible, and our devotion should have the sweetest possible expression.

I. Let us begin with the first division of our text and may the Spirit of God give us full faith to accept it in all its depth of meaning. We have here A SURE POSSESSION—“The Lord is my strength and my shield.” With a double grip he takes hold of the Divine Covenant. “The Lord is my strength and my shield.” He gets a two-handed grasp of the God of Salvation. A touch of the hem of the Savior’s garment will heal—what Divine virtue, then, must stream into a man who can hold with both hands—not merely the garment’s hem, nor even the garment itself, but the Lord Himself! “The Lord is my strength and my shield.”

Perhaps some of you cannot give the double grip. Then give the finger's touch and it will save you! But do not be always content with that touch—ask to lay hold upon Jesus and say, “I held Him and I would not let Him go.” Ask to grasp Him, like Jacob at the brook Jabbok with the brave resolve—“I will not let You go except You bless me.” No, get beyond that and pray to have Paul's hold of Christ, which was so strong and firm that he said, “Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?” Both hands take hold, for the Psalmist sees a double blessing! He knows, also, that he has a double *need*, and so he takes a double grip. “The Lord is my strength and my shield.”

Were you to leave out the, “my,” repeated again and again in this verse, how the sense would be spoiled! Let us try it—“The Lord is a strength and a shield.” Well, that is very true, but of what use is that to *me*? My comfort must come from the fact that, “the Lord is *my* strength and my shield.” Faith matured by *experience*, faith strengthened by the *promise*, faith invigorated by the *Holy Spirit*, who is the Nourisher as well as the Author of it—such faith is fired with sacred energy when it dares to lay hold on God and say, “The Lord is my strength and my shield!” This is blessed work! God grant that each of us may know how to perform it and to this end let us seek the help of the Holy Spirit, without whom we can do nothing.

Notice what it is that David lays hold upon with his hands. “The Lord is my strength and my shield”—it is not the Lord's promised Grace, nor is it the bounties of Providence which He has bestowed on me which I regard as my strength and my shield. It is not even the Lord's work in my soul, nor the assurance of my faith, nor the ardor of my love that has become my strength and my shield. It is not the Lord's Book, even, though its Inspired Oracles can enlighten the eyes, fortify the heart and refresh the spirit. It is not the Lord's attributes of power and faithfulness and watchfulness—no, but it is JEHOVAH Himself who is strength and shield to me!

Now, he that lays hold on God has done a daring deed, at which even, “the man greatly beloved,” might stand aghast, were it not written, “Let him take hold of My strength.” Oh to say, “*My God!*” There is more eloquence in those two words than in all the orations of Demosthenes or Cicero! All the genius, learning and penetration of the heathen world could never teach us how to claim the Deity and take possession of the God of the whole earth! What can we discover in the philosophy of Pythagoras, Aristotle, or Socrates that will compare with this? The man who can truly say, “The Lord is *mine*,” has an inheritance which death cannot wither, which space cannot compass, which time cannot limit, which eternity cannot explore!

He may be poor in pocket-money, as I suppose the owners of large estates occasionally are, but he is infinitely rich, for he has real property and an absolutely indefeasible title to it. He may feel distressingly weak, but he is infinitely strong. He may account himself to be empty, but he has all things and abounds—he, I mean, who can say—“The Lord is mine.” Come, my Brothers and Sisters, be bold enough to look into your privilege! Think of it! What if you could say, “The world is mine”? It will be consumed by fire. What if you could say, “Heaven is mine”? Yet if the God of Heaven were not there, it would be a wilderness. Oh, Beloved! If you can say, “GOD is mine—Father, Son and Spirit are mine”—what more do you need to gratify your eager quest for unspeakable joy?

Come, can you conceive satisfaction more substantial than to be sure that God is your Father, your Redeemer, your Sustainer, your All—your All in All? Do you wish for a better song than this—

*So I my best
Beloved's am,
So He is mine.”*

Can you imagine any sweeter music than the minstrelsy of a love so tuneful, touching as it does the strings of that mysterious instrument, the soul? Is not this the climax of all wishes, all passions, all desires, all delights? We hail you, son of Jesse, as the harmonious music of your sublime Psalms breaks on our ears! But oh, You Son of David! We adore You that You have taught us to take up the strains as our own! We, ourselves, have felt in *fact* what the sweet Psalmist felt in figure. We, as Your willing followers and Your acknowledged disciples, do now, by right and privilege which You have given us, appropriate to ourselves the poems, parables and prophecies which once vibrated in dark sayings from David's harp, as precious utterances concerning heavenly favors to which Your Sovereign Grace has made us to be fairly and fully entitled!

Unhappy you must be who cannot call this God your God, whatever else you may have to glory in! But happy you who know that God is yours, however little of this world's store may fall to your portion! Thus have we considered the

double grip and what it lays hold upon. Let us not pass on till we have imitated the grasp of faith and appropriated the infinite treasure. May the Holy Spirit enable us! Notice under what aspects God is thus laid hold of. Inwardly, first, as we have said, as our strength—"The Lord is my strength." Brothers and Sisters, do you know how strong you are? If you have said, "The Lord is my strength," I challenge you to say how strong you are! "Ah, Sir," you say, "I know how *weak* I am." That I will also take liberty to question, for albeit that you know yourself to be as weak as water, you are weaker yet—*weaker* than even your despondency has dreamed!

"I know I am nothing," you say. Yes, but you would not even have had Grace enough to know you were nothing if God had not given it to you! To be nothing is ours by nature, but to *know* that we are nothing and to *confess* that we are nothing is a *gift* of His Grace! Brethren, we are emptier than emptiness and more vain than vanity! We may tax language and use extravagant hyperboles, but we shall never be able, fitly, to estimate our own utter insignificance! We are weakness itself, hampered with the conceit of power! And yet, if we can say in truth, "The Lord is my strength," we cannot estimate how strong we are, for there is no measuring Omnipotence!

Come, let us consider the matter and let each Believer speak personally. He who made the heavens and the earth is my strength. He who fixes the mountains firm so that they start not from their places in the day of tempest, when the cedars are breaking, is my strength. Although He will one day rock Heaven and earth and before His Presence all creation shall flee away, yet He is my strength! These are but the hidings of power, but, truly, all the force reserved and lying latent in the Almighty bosom is engaged for His saints and is my portion. Whatever Omnipotence can do—and that is a wrong expression to use, for Omnipotence knows no frontier or confines to its sphere of possible action—is ours! All that God has done is but little in comparison with what He can effect when His arm shall be bared to complete His mighty purposes. Yet all the possibilities that pertain to God belong to His people! "The Lord is my strength."

With Jehovah for our strength, we obtain a matchless capacity for endurance! It is marvelous how much a Believer can bear when the Lord sustains him. "Out of weakness we are made strong." See that bruised reed over yonder? It is a fit emblem and a fair picture of a man alone. You cannot trust the weight of an ounce to it. It bends under its own slender weight even though there is no pressure to force it down. That is you, dear Brother! That is you, dear Sister! But see that strong and potent column which bears upon it a huge roof or an iron road across which will thunder thousands of tons? That is yourself when God is with you! Yes, you are *stronger* than that, for *nothing* shall be able to break the man to whom God is His strength!

"I could not bear that," you say, "I know I should be crushed." What are you thinking about—the loss of that favorite child? Thinking about the death of your dear husband? God grant that you may not have to suffer it. The death of a wife? The loss of all your goods, the cruel wounds of slander, or the desertion of friends? Are all those trials likely to befall you, and do you say, "Alas, I could not live if such afflictions should overtake me"? My dear Friend, if you can say, "The Lord is my strength," you can bear *anything* and *everything*! You could bear a martyr's death if the Lord should be your strength! He could make a stalk of wheat to bear up the whole world if He strengthened it—and the faintest and most trembling child of His that ever whispered a prayer—He can make to bear the greatest griefs and the heaviest trials without the slightest repining, for His Spirit can infuse unconquerable patience into the believing heart.

Of course, the power to endure depends upon the strength *imparted* and not upon the inherent fortitude of the individual. It does not make much difference what the struggle or what the sorrow if we have sufficient strength. A little child with a small basket may be overloaded, while His father with ten times the load to carry will walk briskly and whistle as he carries his burden along the street, thinking lightly of his burden. The increase of the burden is not the thing to groan about if there is a proportionate increase of strength! Emigrants have told us that they could labor with less fatigue in Australia than they could loiter in England! Whether that is so or not, assuredly it is easier to toil with Divine aid than to rest without it.

"As your days your strength shall be." Mark that. If the Lord shall heap the load upon your poor shoulders, He will impart courage to your mind and vigor to your spirit so that you shall suffer all His righteous will and find your soul thrice blessed in the endurance! "The Lord is my strength." Then we can, like Samson, slay the lion and find honey in it, or smite the Philistines and divide their spoil—

*"Let me but hear my Savior say,
'Strength shall be equal to your day!'"*

*Then I rejoice in deep distress,
Leaning on all-sufficient Grace."*

If the Lord is our strength, our inward strength, we can do anything! At times we faintly reckon that we cannot get through our task, for the tale of bricks appears to be doubled and straw is hard to find. Look up, for the Great Taskmaster always bestows upon us special ability when He demands of us peculiar service!

Perhaps we are called to a high and solemn engagement of more than common responsibility. We shrink with timidity and put our mouths in the dust at the thought of it, and say, "Who am I, and what are my qualifications, that I should be summoned to speak for God, to act as His ambassador, or to fill a post of such vast importance? I am but a child! How shall I undertake an enterprise at which venerable sires might well be daunted?" But the Lord's answer is, "I will be with your mouth. I will be your strength." Well, then, we may cry with David, "I will speak of Your statutes before kings and will not be ashamed!" If the Lord make us strong, there is no office upon which we may not venture, there is no duty we cannot perform, there is no sacrifice which we cannot cheerfully offer, there is no battle in which we cannot prevail!

Very likely I may be addressing someone who does not know or appreciate the faith which thus fortifies the feeble followers of Christ. Are you a very strong man and do you boast of your strength? Friend, the strength of Samson served him a sorry turn when he was without his God—let his blindness warn you! Another man, conscious that he is a man of education and culture, doubts not that he can make his way in the world. Oh, Sir, Solomon's wisdom was of poor account when he forgot the statutes of the Lord, pursued the fashions of his times and suffered altars to be built to the strange gods of his wives whose sensual fascinations took away his heart! There is no strength of muscle or of mind but in God. "God has spoken once. Twice have I heard this, that power belongs unto God." Blessed are they who look for strength to the strong, for wisdom to the wise, for safety to the Savior. They shall say, in the words of our text, "The Lord is my strength."

David, in two grips, laid hold upon God as to the outward manifestation—"He is my strength and my shield." Looking back upon the past, I trust that many of you can say that God has been your shield. It is He who protects us from known adversaries, from the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil. He protects us from all the arrows that fly by day and from all the terrors that haunt us by night. From adversaries of whom we know and against whom we would be ever on our guard if we could, God is our shield. "No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper." He who has made the Lord his refuge and the Most High his habitation shall be safe. No real evil shall happen unto the just. "The Lord is my shield."

Nor is He only our shelter from open enemies, He is our guardian against those dangers which we know not. How many perils may have menaced your personal safety, your domestic happiness, or your fair reputation of which you never knew! Thank God for unknown mercies, as well as for hair-breadth escapes! Often in traveling you may be within an inch of death and never be aware of it. Our gratitude to God may be stirred when we perceive a danger and escape it, but are we not even *more* beholden to Him when we do not even perceive the peril and reach our journey's end, or awake in the morning, or live through a year without sickness, without calamity, without alarm? Without violently imagining mischiefs or nervously inventing perils, we may soberly judge that dangers have frequently hovered around us even in the calmest hours—and from all these we have been preserved because the Lord is our shield!

It is the greatest comfort to feel God's Spirit within you making you strong. But it is no small joy to know that God is round about you, making you safe. "He is my shield." Knowing, as we do, that our adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion walks about seeking whom he may devour, and that he may be, perhaps, trying to seize upon one of us at this very moment—our security from his hostile attacks is this—"The Lord is our shield." Satan wastes his arrows against the Eternal Buckler. There may be a plot formed against you by a cruel adversary whose hatred is unknown to you, but fret not yourself with fear of hidden dangers. Let them lie where God permits them to conceal themselves! Do not unearth the foxes nor stir up the young lions, for you are safe in your simplicity.

Is it not written that "the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den"? "Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel." Though earth and Hell should blend their malice, they are safe whom God protects! The close designs and crooked counsels of those who conspire against the saints shall all be foiled, for there is One who frustrates every evil device and

takes the wise in their own craftiness. “Where would you hide yourself,” said one to Luther, “if the elector of Saxony should withdraw his protection?” He smiled, and said, “I put no trust in the Prince of Saxony. Beneath the broad shield of Heaven I stand secure against Pope and Turk and devil.”

So he did and so do we. If we have but faith in God, we can sing, in the language of the text, “The Lord is my strength and my shield. He strengthens me within and He protects me without. What more do I need?” Before I leave those first two sentences, I want you to notice that this is a matter of fact, a fact which many here present can attest—“The Lord is my strength and my shield.” It is not a pretty speech that we have selected as an appropriate slogan for a retrospect, nor is it a piece of sentimental religious poetry which counterfeits a Christian’s experience! It is a positive *fact*, to which full many of us who have been tried and tutored in the pilgrimage of life can bear our personal testimony. “The Lord has been my strength.”

At this moment I set my hand and seal to that statement before you all. I should have proved myself to be weakness itself in many an emergency had not Eternal Power upheld me! I should have been far from calm resolution and drifted near to madness—not firm and steady, but frail and faltering—had He not interposed on my behalf and kept this heart in the hour of trouble! Is not the same confession due from each of you? You have waded through your trouble, dear Sister. You have escaped from that dilemma, my Brother. And do you not ascribe your deliverance to the Lord who strengthened you? Come, now, from where else did you get your strength? You cannot trace it to any other than a Divine source! Has not the Lord been your shield? Have not some of you been in positions in which no one else could have guarded you?

Perhaps your own fault has placed you in predicaments out of which you could never have extricated yourself had He not stretched out His hand and plucked your feet out of the net. Then you said to your soul, “This is no fiction. This is the finger of God!” It is right-hearted sincerity and not wrong-headed enthusiasm which prompts us, personally, to avow—“The Lord is our strength and our shield.” We can say it as deliberately as the miser might say, “The bank is my confidence, my money is my trust,” or as the merchant might say, “My wealth is on the sea, my ships bring me in my yearly income,” or as the mother might say, “My children are my joy.” We can boldly publish it and challenge all gainsayers, for it is really so, “The Lord is our strength and our shield!” Beyond doubt or question this is an assured possession!

II. Now, have patience with me while I endeavor, in the second place, to expound to you A DEFINITE EXPERIENCE. It is related in these words—“My heart trusted in Him, and I am helped.” Here, too, we have both inward and outward, as I told you before—“My heart trusted in Him,” that is work done indoors, within the soul. “I am helped,” that is mercy received outdoors, openly and actually. Notice the scrupulous loyalty of the Believer whose entire confidence is centered in God. “My heart trusted.” I did not say, ‘I trusted,’ as one who makes a profession with his lips, but rather with strong conviction and profound emotion, “my *heart* trusted.”

It is truly shocking to see people stand up and recite a creed to the truth of which they attach no importance. They say or sing, “I believe this and I believe that,” and as they repeat the words prescribed for them, they superstitiously turn in a certain direction. But happy is that man who, turning east, west, north, or south, does in his heart trust—does in his secret soul believe! There is no believing worthy of the name except heart-believing. If your head believes a thing, it is of small consequence. But in soul-saving faith the heart is so believing as to trust and the mind is so assured as to be at peace. “My heart trusted in Him. My poor heart fluttered in the time of trouble, it was agitated, it was distressed, for all its visible refuge had fled away. But at last I said, ‘I must hang upon my God and to Him I must cling.’ In very despair of all other things, I cast myself at the foot of His Throne. My heart trusted in Him.”

Has it been so with you of late? Has your heart been trusting in God? That is a very strong expression of the Prophet when he speaks of the heart going a whoring from God. The language is vehement even to coarseness, but it is none too forcible, for it involves the commission of a spiritual uncleanness when the heart trusts any other helper than God. “My heart trusted in Him.” Oh, it is so easy for the heart to get to trusting in itself! And he that trusts his own heart is a fool! It is frightfully easy for the heart to rely upon man, as we know right well! Did you ever notice the middle verse of the whole Bible? It is the eighth verse of the 118th Psalm—“It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man.” The comparison will not bear a thought, the preference is infinite—for confidence in man will betray your hopes, but

faith in God will enrich you beyond your expectations! May our heart always keep to that—trusting God—trusting in God alone. “My heart trusted in Him.”

In the next clause of the sentence, which is the outward manifestation of the inward experience, we have the result—“I am helped.” If I had been writing this Psalm of my own head, I think I should have written it thus—“My heart trusted in Him, and I *was* helped,” for it is a rule in composition that if you bracket two sentences together you should write them in the same tense. But, as old Master Trapp says, faith has no tenses, because faith deals with a God who has no tenses except the present, for His name is, “I AM.” Faith does not say, “I trusted in Him and I *was* helped.” No, she has all former mercy present before her eyes and she sings, “*I am* helped.” Nor does Faith say, “My heart trusted in Him, and I *shall* be helped.” Perhaps the needed help has not yet arrived, but she is so sure that it will come that she cries, “*I am* helped! Am I as poor as I was before I prayed? No, I am not, for I have obtained the blessing I asked for. I appear to be as weak as I was before I trusted Him, but I am not, for the Lord is my strength and, having trusted in Him, I am helped.” I wish we lived more in that blessed present tense in which God dwells!—

*“He fills His own eternal ‘now,’
And sees our ages pass.”*

Now, Brothers and Sisters, let all the past of God’s mercy come up to your memory and let that be a part of the “now.” And then just take, as it were, a spring, and bounce forward into the future—yes, leap right across life, as though it were a narrow rivulet, into Heaven, and put the eternal future into the present, “now,” and sing as our sweet poet does—

*“Lo! A ‘new song’ is in my mouth,
To long-loved music set:
Glory to You for all the Grace
I have not tasted yet.”*

“I am helped.” I have now the good I crave. By faith I realize it as a present possession. I am helped. I am helped. The past lives in my gratitude, the future lives in my confidence and both alike meet in the present and my soul is glad! “My heart trusted in Him and I am helped.” You must notice, reverting again to the words of the text, that this confidence was, from first to last, confidence in *God* and, therefore, was it honored with a gracious result. “My heart trusted in Him, and I am helped.” Many and many a time we have been obliged to say, “My heart trusted in So-and-So, and I am deceived.” But here it is, “and I am helped.”

Sometimes it happens, “My heart trusted in such an one and I am disappointed, though not deceived. He would have helped me, but he could not.” But here it is, “My heart trusted in Him, and I am helped,” All has happened according to promise—there has been no failure of faithfulness, no breach of Covenant, no forgetfulness, no delay. I am helped sufficiently, punctually, continually and so I always shall be helped till toiling and traveling days are over! Glory be to God for this! Dear Friends, have all of you who are Christians attained to a Christian experience? Doctrine, you know, is very important. It is well that you should learn it, understand it and adhere to it—but doctrine is only the Truth of God in which you are instructed and is useless for growth in Divine Grace until you *experience* the power of it in your own souls!

Do you know why so many people run away from the Truth, as it is in Jesus, and take up with strange conceits and new-fangled notions? It is because they have no inward *experience* of the old Truths of God. Let a man once have a deep experience of the evil of sin and I will guarantee you he will feel his need of a Savior and the necessity of the Atonement made by blood. Let him have an experience of the power of the blood upon his conscience, the peace that comes out of Substitution, and he will cling to the Cross! He will be ready to *die* for the Cross! He has such joy rising out of it as he never found elsewhere. I am obliged to cling to the Gospel, for if it is not true I am a lost man! I must hold fast to it, for all my hope is fixed there and if it is taken away, my sun is quenched, the well of my joy is dried up and life becomes a lingering death!

And, Beloved, an experience of those blessed Truths which God has revealed to us by His Spirit writes them where they cannot be erased! Not upon the tablet of the *brain*, from which they may be erased, for men forget, but upon the tablet of the *heart* from which they cannot be obliterated, for men do not disclaim that which has become a part of their inward consciousness and which God has made as dear to them as their lives! May you all have such a definite experience as the text sets before us. The Holy Spirit will work it in all the saints.

III. Lastly, here we have A DECLARED EMOTION—“Therefore my heart greatly rejoices and with my song will I praise Him.” Here, again, is the *inward* phase, you see, “My heart greatly rejoices,” and then there is the *outward* embodiment of the internal feeling—“and with my song will I praise Him.” Behold a heart rejoicing with a sacred and intense delight! Some people’s rejoicing is but skin deep. They laugh, their face is surfaced over with smiles and their mouth bubbles up with silly glee. To my mind there is hardly anything more sad than the frequent laughter which exposes a vacant mind. The moment company has gone, this volatile mirthfulness subsides and the jolly companions resolve into solitary individuals, each one dull and dreary—far enough from any of them being happy.

You may, perhaps, have heard of Carlini, one of the most celebrated clowns of the beginning of this century. He was a man whose wit and humor kept all Paris in a roar of laughter! But he, himself, had little share of the cheerfulness he simulated so well and stimulated so much. His comedies brought *him* no comfort. Though a professor of mirth, he was a victim of melancholy. He consulted a physician and asked him for a prescription to relieve his lowness of spirits and habitual despondency. His physician gave him some medicine, but advised him by way of recreation to go to the theater and hear Carlini, whose fun and frolic were of such repute. “If he does not fetch the blues out of you, nobody will.” “Alas! Sir,” said he, “*I am Carlini.*”

And so, doubtless, it has often happened that men make glee for others when they are full of gloom themselves. The face smiles like summer, but the heart is freezing with the cold of winter. Not so the man who has laid hold on God. “My heart rejoices,” he says, “my heart rejoices.” No, he puts in the word, “greatly.” “My heart *greatly* rejoices,” as if it were as full of joy as ever it could be! As though it throbbed and danced joyously with a fullness of delight. “My heart greatly rejoices!” And Christians can say this whenever they lay hold on God, even though they are surrounded with a world of trouble! We know, sometimes, what it is to wear a sad face with a glad heart, just as some others are wearing a glad face with a sad heart. Blessed is the man whom God has taught greatly to rejoice! Let him indulge the holy humor to the best of his ability!

What, now, is the outcome of this sacred, soul-satisfying joy? He says, “With my song will I praise Him.” Whenever you feel exceedingly glad in the Lord, be sure to let people know! This is one of the emotions which ought never to be concealed. When I have been preaching among the Primitive Methodists, at the very mention of joy in the Lord, I have heard them shout out, “Hallelujah.” In Wales I have heard the, “Gogoniant”—glory be to God! We do not commit such improprieties here, do we? We are too quiet and proper to transgress the rules of enforced decorum! And yet, sometimes, it might be the most natural thing in the world for a Christian to feel that he could not hold his strong emotions in stiff restraint, but must shout aloud, “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name!”

Do you think, dear Friends, we sing enough? I do not think we do. The world is very pleased with singing of a certain sort. Tuneful airs are tacked on to trashy words. What foolishness we hear in the popular songs of the day! I have been quite unable to understand the sense when the sound has jingled in my ears. When I have asked, “What does it mean?” nobody has been able to interpret, or at least to make me comprehend it. To them it may have appeared like a clever ballad, but to me it seemed mere empty doggerel! Well, if they are not ashamed to sing their bacchanalian songs and sometimes to make night hideous with their choruses, surely we need not be ashamed to sing the songs of Zion—and to sing them with spirit, too!

Good woman, why don’t you sing? You would handle that box-iron just as well if you sang a Psalm. You could mend those children’s clothes quite as cleverly if you would sing a hymn. Good Friend, there, you could crack your whip as you walked along by the side of your pair of horses pulling the cart and yet hum a favorite tune. To get alone and sing some sacred melody by yourselves is very refreshing. My father had, years ago, a servant who was always singing. And when he asked her why, she said that it helped to keep bad thoughts away. I knew a boy who was so fond of singing the praises of the Lord that his employers would let him go out on the Common, sometimes, to give vent to his vocal powers, for he sang rather too much and too loud for a quiet house.

I love to see young Christians fall of joy! It is good, sometimes, to get away and have a time to yourself, as much as if you said, “I am not singing for any of you, but I am singing to God.” I listened one night and heard the nightingale with its delicious, “joog, joog, joog,” pouring forth such sweet music that it seemed to make the moon stand still, charmed with the strain! I know that the nightingale did not sing to *me*. He did not know that I was listening, nor would he have cared if he had known! Perhaps if he had noticed that I had been so close, he might have flown away! He was singing

without regard to human ears. It is a sweet thing just to sing unto the Lord. Classical music is all very well, but *heart* music is the essence of sweetness. “My heart trusted in Him, and I am helped, therefore my heart greatly rejoices and with my song will I praise Him.”

Did you ever, when you walk through the woods in springtime, come upon a stretch of blue hyacinth? You fancy that a piece has been torn away from the azure mantle of the sky and thrown down among the trees! Why are those hyacinths clothed in such cerulean splendor? For what purpose is their sweet perfume poured forth in such lavish profusion? Do you say, “They waste their sweetness on the desert air”? No, O Man! Know, rather, that God is near! Those flowers are His and this is His garden! He delights to gaze on their living sapphires! Did you ever light upon a clump of lovely flowers in a lone spot of forest, moor, or common where the foot of man has seldom profaned the soil? Have you not paused to admire?

There they stand with their golden cups, like chamberlains of a king! Why are they here in such gorgeous livery? Who is all this beautiful variety of form and color intended to greet? “Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.” What king has come to dine here and sip from those jeweled chalices? It is the eternal God who made them and who takes delight in the work of His hands! It is He who walks among these solitary beauties in the cool of the day. Did you not see the flowers bow their heads in worship as they felt His breath among their foliage? Down deep at the bottom of the sea the coral grows in luxuriant abundance and many-tinted shells that seem like unfinished rainbows are lying there unseen, never to be seized by human hands, or bartered in the market for gain. The Lord visits those cool grottoes and takes pleasure in His own delicate handiwork!

All things are not for greedy man! The Lord has His reserved gardens, His springs shut up, His fountains sealed. So let it be with us. Do not let us wait to praise the Lord till we can get an audience of our fellow creatures, though we may sometimes wish that our songs would charm their ears and win their love for Jesus. But let us, oftentimes, retire into holy solitude and *then*, all alone, break the silence of our loneliness, saying, “My heart greatly rejoices, and with my song will I praise the Lord. As long as I live and when I die, and when I rise again, and through eternity, with my song will I praise Him.”—

*“In blessing You with grateful songs,
My happy life shall glide away.
The praise that to Your name belongs,
Hourly with lifted hands I’d pray.
Abundant sweetness! While I sing
Your love, my ravished heart overflows;
Secure in You, my God and King,
Of glory that no period knows.”*

How I wish that some would begin at this moment a life of praise! Begin by taking God to be your strength—begin by trusting in Christ to be your shield! Begin by an experience of the power of prayer to bring you help! If you do, you shall rise from height to height in your flights of praise! You shall, first, join with us below to sing as best you can and, afterwards, you shall mount into the upper orchestra where all the chosen singers meet and sit and chant with them the endless anthem which ascends unto Jehovah, our strength and our song!

God bless you, Beloved, and give you to know and prove the sweetness of this blessed text—and make you to sing David’s Divine song to the stringed instruments of your renewed hearts all the days of your lives. Amen.

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307.