

ANXIETY, AMBITION, INDECISION

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A SERMON

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“Neither be you of a doubtful mind.”
Luke 12:29.

THE chief concern of a man should be to see that his own soul is right in the sight of God. Solomon said, “Keep your heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” Many persons think a great deal about the adorning of the body, but do not think anything about the ornaments of the soul. The feeding of the physical frame engrosses much care, but the supply of spiritual food is often neglected. Yet, O Man, you yourself are better than your body! Your immortal soul is worth far more than that poor carcass of yours which will soon become food for worms! And all the things that you have, what are they compared with your inner self—your real self—your heart, your soul, your spirit?

In our text, our Savior bids us see to the condition of our mind—“Neither be you of a doubtful mind.” He thus calls our attention to the higher and nobler part of our mind and bids us see to it that it is in a right state. No doubt there are some people who are in easier circumstances than others—some who are in positions where they enjoy many comforts, while others are in places where they suffer many hardships. But, after all, happiness lies more in the mind than it does in the circumstances in which any individual is found and the man within has far more to do with his own joy or sorrow than anything outside of him has. There have been some who have been perfectly free in a prison, while others have been in absolute bondage with wide estates to roam over. We have known some whose spirits have triumphed when all around has tended to depress them. And we have seen others who were wretched and desponding when they had, apparently, all that heart could wish.

It is the *mind* which is the main thing—it will bring you daylight or midnight, wealth or poverty, peace or war. I wish, dear Friends, that half the time we spend in trying to better our circumstances were spent in bettering ourselves after the right fashion and that even a tenth of the trouble we take to fit our circumstances to our desires were used in fitting our desires to our circumstances. If we did that, how much happier men and women we would be! Try as you may, you cannot alter the world in which your lot is cast and you cannot alter God’s Providential arrangements. So, would it not be better that you should be altered so as to suit the Providence and be resigned to the will of God?

It is beautiful to see how often the Inspired writers of Holy Scripture were busy with what I may call indoor work—the work that has to be done within one’s own heart. “Bless the Lord, O my Soul,” says David, in the 103rd Psalm, “and all that is within me, bless His holy name.” This indoor work, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, will always pay us best. And our Lord Jesus, in His exhortations, often bids us attend to it. Did He not say to His disciples, “Let not your heart be troubled”? A little later, He said to them, “In the world you shall have tribulation.” And He says the same to His disciples in every age. It is no use for you to try to avoid it, for you will have tribulation, yet, “Let not your heart be troubled.” All the water in the sea will not hurt your vessel as long as you keep it outside—the danger begins when it gets inside the ship. So it matters little what is outside you, if all is right within. Have that little bird in your bosom that sings sweetly of the love of God! Wear the flower called heart’s-ease in your buttonhole and you may go merrily through a perfect wilderness of trouble and a desert of care! A hurricane of afflictions may beat about you, yet you shall be a blessed man—for all the elements of blessedness are within your own heart. God has given them to you and the devil himself cannot take them away!

In speaking upon this text, I mean to preach a good part of the sermon to myself, for I need it as much as anybody does. But I ask each Brother and Sister to take home to themselves any part that suits them. And before I have done, I shall have a word for you unconverted people—and I pray God that that word may do you good and that you may cease to be of a doubtful mind. The original of the text is not easy to explain, for the word translated, “doubtful,” is not used anywhere else in the New Testament. It appears to have something to do with meteors, so that the passage might be rendered, “Neither be you of a meteoric mind.”

As the word is so unusual, there have been a great many different opinions as to its meaning. Some have said that it relates to high things that float above, such as the clouds. If they are right, our text says to us, “Do not be like the clouds—do not have cloudy minds, blown about with every wind of Doctrine.” Others render it, “Do not be like the birds, high up in the air, always on the wing, unsettled and uncertain, ever flying about and never at rest.” Others find an allusion to the ship that is far out upon the sea—and the text says to them, “Do not always be at sea, tossed up and down. Have some anchorage. Do not be always drifting to and fro.” The word, “doubtful,” means so much that I do not expect to be able to tell you all that it means, but shall rather give you a few practical thoughts concerning it.

I. “Neither be you of a doubtful mind.” That is, first, CHILDREN OF GOD, BE NOT ANXIOUS. Be not tossed up and down by your outward circumstances. If God prospers you, do not ride high, as the vessel does when the tide lifts it up. And if He does not prosper you, do not sink down as the vessel does when the tide ebbs away again. Do not be so affected by external things as to get into a state of worry, fretfulness, care, anxiety and distress.

Our Savior’s injunction means, “Do not be anxious about your temporal affairs.” Be prudent. You have no right to spend the money of other people, nor yet your own, in wastefulness. You are to be careful and discreet, for every Christian should remember that he is only a steward and that he is accountable to his Master for whatever he has and the use he makes of it. But when you have done your best with your little, do not worry because you cannot make it more. And when you have done your best to meet your expenses, do not sit down and wring your hands because you cannot lessen them. You cannot make a shilling into a sovereign, but be thankful if you have the shilling! And if you sometimes find that you must live from hand to mouth, remember that you are not the first child of God who has had his manna every morning, nor the first of God’s servants to have bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening with nothing to lay by for the morrow. If this is your case, be not staggered and astonished, as though some new thing had happened to you! And do not begin to fret, and fume, and worry and trouble yourself about what you cannot help. Can you alter it with all your worrying?

Have you—you who are in the habit of worrying and fretting—ever made any profit by doing so? How much a year do you think that anybody would give you for all your fretting? How much has it brought you? Come, Brother, if it is a good business, I would like to go into partnership with you! But I should like first to know something about your profits. As I look at your face, I notice that it is care-worn and anxious. That does not seem to indicate that the business is a profitable one. If I listen to your speech, I hear you murmuring a great deal instead of praising God. That does not seem to me to be a profitable concern. In fact, as far as I have ascertained, either by my own experience or by the observation of others, I have never discovered that anxiety has comforted anybody, or that it has brought any grist to the mill, or any meal to the barrel! Well, if a thing does not pay, what is the good of it?

But perhaps you say, “I cannot help fretting and worrying.” No, my good Brother or Sister, but do you not think that the Lord can help you to help it and that your faith in Him, if it were what it ought to be, would soon be the end of your distress and trouble? Have you not found out yet—I have—that the very anxiety which arises through your being in a difficulty, unfits you to meet that difficulty? You are in a great hurry to do something or other and that something or other does more mischief than could possibly have happened if you had kept still, resting in the Lord and waiting patiently for Him! Instead of doing so, you rush this way and that way, and so add to your worries instead of decreasing them. You are like the servant with the basket of eggs on her head, who shakes her head because she is afraid her eggs will fall—and makes them fall by the very process of her trembling!

So, you go and make ten troubles in endeavoring to get out of one. There is a text that is very easy to repeat, but not always so easy to obey—“Stand still, and see the salvation of God.” But you want to see your own salvation, so you cannot stand still! There is many a man who has run before God’s cloud and who has been very glad to run or even to crawl back again. Some people are so anxious to carve for themselves that they cut their own fingers! They had better leave the

carving in the hands of God and take what He gives them, for He knows far better than they do what is good for them—and His hand is infinitely wiser than theirs can possibly be.

“Oh, but,” says one, “I feel that I must be doing *something*.” That, “doing,” will just be your undoing unless you stop and consider what God would have you do! The probability is that your action will be unwise and hasty while you are in your present feverish condition. Wait till you get quite cool, Brother—you will see your way far better then. At the present moment you are in such a fidget and flutter that you are very apt to mistake your right hand for your left and to put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

You say again that you cannot help being anxious. Then, my dear Friend, I must very solemnly ask you what is the difference between you and the man of the world? There is an orphan child and it is afraid it will not be fed—but you have a Father in Heaven—and if you are afraid, surely, it is of little use for you to have such a Father! Are you not dishonoring His holy name by such conduct as that? Do you not think that others who see you in this condition will say, “There is not much power in religion, for these people, who profess to be Christians, are not comforted by it in their time of trouble—and it will not be of much use to them in the hour of their death.” Remember Jeremiah’s questions, “If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, then how can you contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, wherein you trust, they wearied you, then how will you do in the swelling of Jordan?” Surely it is time that we plucked up courage and were not so easily disheartened, for we have worse trials on ahead than any we have yet been called to endure!

“That is just what I dread,” says one. What would you do, then, Brother? “I have been thinking that perhaps I had better turn back.” But you have no armor for your back—and the perils of going back are far worse than the perils of going forward! Therefore I charge you, if you are, indeed, a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, to play the man and let your faith overcome your fear! Obey that gracious word, “Casting all your care upon Him; for He cares for you.” Do you not believe that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose”? You say that you do. Do you not believe that?—

*“He sits a Sovereign on His Throne
And rules all things well”?*

You say that you do. Do you not believe He loves you with an everlasting love? Do you not know that He spared not His only-begotten Son, but delivered Him up for you? And do you think that, after having done so much for you, He will withhold from you anything that is necessary for your well-being? You must not think so. Brother, Sister, it would be unkind, ungenerous, ungrateful to think so! Therefore, be not of an anxious or doubtful mind concerning temporal things.

“Well,” says one, “as far as temporal supplies are concerned, I can leave them entirely in the hands of God, but my anxieties arise from quite another form of trouble. There is a Christian Brother who is at enmity against me and he has been spreading an ill report about me, although I have earnestly sought to walk before God in holy fear and have watched every step that I have taken. And I feel so worried that I do not know what to do.” Well, dear Friend, there is one rule which you will generally find to be applicable in such a case as yours. When you do not know what to do, do not do anything at all! And, usually, if the trouble has arisen through false reports about your own character, “the least said, the soonest mended.” I believe that if there is anything you want to have well done, you had better do it yourself, but there is one exception to that rule and that is the matter of defending yourself. No defense is needed for a good man who can say, “By the Grace of God I am what I am.” Therefore you may leave that matter of your own character and, as to the good Brother not getting on with you, if you have done anything that has grieved him, confess the wrong. “Well, perhaps if I did, he might not meet me in the same spirit.” You have nothing to do with that, dear Friend—that is his business and God’s. You go and do the right thing and then be no longer anxious about it, but leave the result with God.

I hear another Brother say, “My anxiety has nothing to do with my personal affairs. I am anxious about the cause of God—the Church over which I preside—the Bible class that I conduct—the mission field that I try to cultivate. Somehow, things do not go as I wish and I am greatly concerned that they are not more prosperous.” And what are you doing, good Friend, to bring about that result? Are you telling the Lord about it and agonizing before Him in prayer? That is right, but if you are telling *yourself* about it and your anxiety is confined to yourself, no good will come of that. “But, Sir, all things seem to be going amiss.” Yes, I am constantly hearing that. There are some of our friends who believe that

we have fallen upon the worst days that have ever been known in this world! Well, it may be so. I cannot say much about that. But I will say this, my dear Friends—that you and I are not of anything like so much importance to the Church of God as we may have imagined! And the particular department of work which has been entrusted to us, though we ought to think well of it, and to do it well, it is not, after all, the hinge upon which the whole universe turns! God managed the world very well before we were born and He will manage it quite as well when we are dead! His Church will not die, for the Lord still lives and His Spirit still abides in the Church and, therefore, it must live.

But there will be trouble for us if we begin to think that everything depends upon us. Uzza was well intentioned, no doubt, yet God killed him for putting forth his hand to stop the Ark of the Lord from falling. Let none of us become guilty of Uzza's sin! It is our business to serve the Lord with all our heart and soul, just as Martha, with all her energy, sought to prepare a supper for Jesus. But when we begin to be cumbered about our service, then we may expect the Master to say to us, as He did to Martha, "You are careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is necessary; and Mary has chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." It is not well that we should be cumbered about our service! No, Brothers and Sisters; the Lord loves His Church far better than we do and He knows far better than we do how to manage her affairs, so we must—

*“Just do the little we can do,
And leave the rest with Him.”*

May His blessed Spirit help us so to get rid of all improper anxieties!

II. Another meaning of the text will make a second division of our subject. "BE NOT AMBITIOUS." That is, do not fly high. Do not be as the clouds and the meteors, that not only move about and are uncertain in their movements, but are also high and lofty.

Some people are troubled because they are *aiming at amassing great wealth*. Years ago if anybody had told them they would one day possess what they have already obtained, they would have thought it was an amazing sum, more than sufficient to satisfy all their desires. If somebody had asked them, "Will you retire from business then, and be quite happy and content?" they would have answered, "Oh, yes, certainly!" Well, they have already gathered far more than that, yet they are as grasping as ever and they want more, and more, and more and they are by no means content with what they have, much as it is. We should all be happier than we are if we were more contented with what is really all that we need, namely having food and clothes, having neither poverty nor riches. Many men have been like that dog in the fable that had meat in his mouth, but did not eat it because he saw the reflection of it in the water and was so anxious to get that reflection as well as the substance that he already had that he lost the piece that he might have eaten! Such people are always trying to grasp the reflection instead of enjoying what God has given them. Let us not be of such a mind as that.

There are others who are *ambitious to attain a higher position*. They might be very well content with the kind, good friends they have, but there was a lord who once looked at them—and ever since that time they have thought it a very wonderful thing to know a real, live lord. I have heard of a man who used to boast that the king once spoke to him and though his majesty only told him to get out of the way, he was very proud of having been addressed by the king! And there are many people who think a great deal of that sort of thing. They are only shillings now, but they are anxious to get among the sovereigns. I have no sympathy with that desire—the best society in the world for me is a company of the Lord's people and whether they are poor or rich, so long as they are God's saints, I feel myself at home with them! If a Brother spoils the Queen's English and makes a great many mistakes in pronunciation, that does not matter to me. The real piety that is in the man—the Grace of God that is in his soul—that is the thing which ought to please us! To be proud of our association with the great ones of the earth is both a folly and a sin on the part of any child of God.

Sometimes we are *ambitious in the service of God beyond what we ought to be*. You are doing well in that little Chapel, my Brother—the place is full and God is blessing you—but you want a bigger place, or you want to get away from those poor people whom the Lord has helped through your ministry. Possibly, my Friend, you are a Sunday school teacher and you have charge of the infants, and they love you. And you are fitted for the work, yet you are not content to be an infant class teacher, you would like a senior class—and a great stupid you would make of yourself if you had such a class, for you are not adapted for it! It is always well to be seeking to do more for the Lord Jesus Christ, but I would earnestly discourage you from endeavoring to attain to a higher position merely for the sake of occupying it. Dear Brothers and Sisters, be not ambitious in this sense, for, after all, what is human greatness?

Have you ever met with a really great man who would have given a penny for his own greatness? Do you not know that the higher you rise, even in the Church of Christ, the more responsibility you have and the heavier burdens you have to carry? Do you not also know that the way to be really great is to be little—and that he who is greatest of all is the one who has learned to be least of all? He who is chief in the Church of Christ is he who serves the Church most and who is willing to go lowest for Christ's sake! Cultivate *that* kind of greatness as much as you like, but put aside the other, and be not of ambitious mind even in your Lord's service!

I meet, every now and then, people who are, I hope, God's children, but they seem to me to have got into a very curious state of mind. They have notions that are not at all according to the realities of everyday life—flighty notions—romantic notions about their own rights, dignities, importance and so on. Ah, dear Brothers and Sisters, some of us were, in our own estimation, very important individuals, were we not, before the Grace of God came into us? But when the Grace of God works in us, we are made to feel that the very lowest and meanest place is a better position than we have any right to take. When we are in our right senses, we never give ourselves those high and mighty airs. A truly humble Believer does not say, “So-and-So did not treat me with proper respect.” Oh, dear me, what is the proper respect to which you and I are entitled? May the Lord preserve us from such a spirit as that!

But there are some people—professing Christians, too—whose heads are always being filled with that kind of nonsense. They do not seem to have learned that the spirit of Christ is a spirit of meekness which teaches us to bear and forbear, to forgive until seventy times seven, to expect to have our rights trampled on and to be willing to lay them all down for any who please to tread upon them. It is blessed to feel, “I will be content to take any place, so long as I can love others and do them good by loving them. As long as I can but love them to Christ and help them to love Christ and manifest the love of Christ to them, I will, by His Grace, be content.” O Brothers and Sisters, we all need to go to school to our dear Lord and Master! You have never read that He said anything about His rights, or about defending His dignity. No, He who is the King of kings, and Lord of lords, was the Servant of servants when He was here upon earth! And, truly, he that serves most is the most royal of all. Therefore, “let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus,” and then you will not be anxious or ambitious to be great.

III. A third meaning of the text is this, “BE YOU NOT OF AN IRRESOLUTE MIND, WITHOUT DECISION OF CHARACTER.”

If you look at the connection of the passage, you will see that this meaning fits in exceedingly well. There are persons in the world who may be described as time-servers. The main consideration with them is what they shall eat, or what they shall drink, or how they shall be clothed—so they are always watching to see which is the best way to go in reference to those matters. As the old proverb has it, they know on which side their bread is buttered, or, according to another familiar saying, they are waiting to see which way the cat jumps! And when they have ascertained that, their “principles” will lead them to jump in that particular direction.

Mr. John Bunyan, in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, has well described just such persons—Mr. By-Ends and Mr. Fair-Speech—and some of us have known their descendants. You remember hearing of the waterman who got his living by looking one way, and pulling another. And that waterman has had a great many sons of very much the same character as himself—and they have made a certain kind of progress in the world by that sort of scheming. But you and I, Beloved, are not to be of an irresolute mind. Every Christian should say, “By the Grace of God my mind is made up to serve Him, cost what it may. Does my Lord desire me to keep the Sabbath holy? Sunday is the best day in my particular line of business, but that does not matter to me. My mind is made up to serve the Lord—and whatever it costs will make no difference to me. There is a party to be held tonight and I know that if I go to it, I shall have to witness the utmost frivolity, and I shall have to be a partaker in what will be, to me, a good deal of sin. Uncle Jonas will be angry if I don't go, but I mean to do the right thing—whether Uncle Jonas is pleased, or not.” That is the way all you who have the love of God shed abroad in your hearts ought to speak. The question, “What is right?” being answered, you have only to do the right, whatever happens. This is what our Lord meant when He said to His disciples, “Neither be you of a doubtful mind.”

“Oh, but,” some say, “we really must look at both sides of that question. There may come a time when we know that a certain course is right, but, if we take it, we may bring ruin upon ourselves and upon others, too.” Let me read the 4th and 5th verses of this chapter—and when I have done so, there will be no need for you to say anything—“Be not afraid of

them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: Fear Him, which after He has killed, has power to cast into Hell; yes, I say unto you, Fear Him.” And the 8th and 9th verses—“Whoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God: but he that denies Me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.” Does not that decide you? God grant that it may and that you may henceforth say, “I will confess Christ and act for the right and the true and, by the aid of His blessed Spirit I will never hesitate to do as He bids me—

*“Through floods and flames, if Jesus leads,
I’ll follow where He goes’—*

“neither will I be of a doubtful mind.”

IV. A fourth meaning of the text is, BE YOU NOT AT SEA SO FAR AS YOUR OWN PERSONAL SALVATION IS CONCERNED.

Brothers and Sisters, *there are some who are not saved, who yet imagine that they are.* There are many who know nothing of vital godliness, yet who sing as joyfully as the brightest of saints, never suspecting their real condition in the sight of God. Whenever I meet with a man who never has had a doubt about his own condition, I feel inclined to quote to him those lines of Cowper—

*“He has no hope who never had a fear
And he that never doubted of his state,
He may perhaps—perhaps he may—too late.”*

Beware of all presumption! There are some who even decry anything like self-examination. They cannot bear for us to look for the signs and tokens of the Holy Spirit’s work within them. And if we talk about practical holiness, they say that we are getting upon legal ground and turning aside to the “beggarly elements” of the Law of God. From all such turn away, for they can do you no good! You are exhorted in the Scriptures to examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith, and to prove yourselves. No, self-examination alone is not sufficient—you must cry with the Psalmist, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

But, on the other hand, *there are some who think that doubts and fears are necessary to a child of God.* I draw a very grave distinction between doubting the Truth of God’s promise and questioning whether that promise is made to me—they are two very different things. To doubt the power of the blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse from all sin is one thing, but, sometimes, to question whether I really have trusted in that blood is quite another thing. The first is sinful. The second is only proper and discreet. I would advise everyone to often look to the foundation of their faith, to see whether they really have believed in Jesus and have in their heart the true life which grows out of such faith. But, Brothers and Sisters, there is really no reason in a man saying, “Whether I am a child of God, or not, I am sure I do not know. I sometimes hope I am,” and so on.

I suppose there are few men who have not, at some time or other suffered pain, but it is not necessary for us to always have a toothache in order to prove that we really are men. And, in like manner, there are few Christians who have never had any doubts, yet it is not necessary to be always doubting in order to prove that we are Christians! But, as we are glad enough to get rid of pain, so are we to be glad to get rid of doubt by fully trusting our Lord who is so worthy of our trust! Dear Brothers and Sisters, you *ought* to know, you *can* know, you can know *now*, whether you are saved or not! At any rate, if I did not know myself to be saved, I would give no sleep to my eyes, nor slumber to my eyelids, till I had found the Savior. If a shadow of a doubt about my being washed in the blood of Christ were on my soul, I would get to my knees and not rise from them until I did really know that Christ had saved me!

If you are in doubt and yet are content about your condition, I fear that you know nothing at all about the matter, for the true child of God, if he is in any doubt about his salvation, is uneasy till that doubt is gone. He cannot rest till he knows that he is saved and, after all, that is not a very difficult thing to know, for we are told, over and over again in this blessed Book, that he that believes in Christ is not condemned, but has everlasting life! If you have believed in Him, you are not condemned—you have His word for it. He who trusts to Jesus only, builds on a sure foundation! So, if you are trusting in Him, you may have the full assurance that you have passed from death unto life and shall never come into condemnation. Do not, Brothers and Sisters, go limping along all your life when you might run in the way of God’s commandments! A good old minister of my acquaintance, when people used to say to him that they hoped, and hoped,

and never got any further than that, was in the habit of replying, “You are always hoping and hopping. I hope you will learn to run one of these days—to run without weariness in the ways of God.”

The last thing I have to do is to bid all here present who have not believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, to do so at once. My dear Friends, my text says, “Neither be you of a doubtful mind.” But you cannot help being of a doubtful mind while you remain as you are and I really wish that your conscience would trouble you even more than it now does—that your uneasiness might become even greater and your unrest yet more unrestful! Look at yourself, my dear Hearer. You have not believed in Christ, so you are in debt to Divine Justice and you are hopelessly bankrupt, for you cannot meet one in a million of the claims that are recorded against you! How can you rest as long as you are thus indebted to God? You are a prisoner, too. When Marshal Bazaine had many of the comforts of life on the Isle of St. Marguerite, off the coast of the South of France, he could not rest till he had regained his liberty. And I marvel how you can be so happy, even with the joys of this world, while you are without the great blessing of spiritual liberty! I wish you felt that you could not rest till you had become emancipated from the bondage of sin and been made the Lord’s freeman. How would you like to be in a condemned cell and not to know when your execution was to take place? I am sure that you would pity any poor creature, whatever his crime, if you could see him under such circumstances. Perhaps you say that you are living in a wide world and not in a prison. Yet you are condemned already! It was said of the old Roman Empire that if a man once broke the law, the whole world was a prison for him, for Caesar had almost universal sway. And God sees you wherever you are and everywhere you are in the condemned cell and, perhaps, before the sun shall rise again, your execution will have taken place.

I have been told that some years ago there went into the chamber of horrors at Madame Tussaud’s exhibition, a young gentleman who was foolish enough to put himself under the guillotine—in the place which had been occupied by criminals. And as he lay there, with his bare neck exposed to the terrible knife, he was so struck with horror that he was unable to move—and people who went by thought he was one of the wax figures and he could not stir until someone took him away! And, oh, if you did but know where you really are, with that dreadful axe of Divine Justice just above your head, you might well be paralyzed with horror! Only let your breath fail, or your pulse stop and down it descends to your utter destruction! But alas, you are insensible to these things. May the Spirit of God awaken you! May He make you feel your true position and then, I am sure, you will not be content to remain a moment longer of a doubtful and undecided mind!

Listen, my Friend! That sin of yours can be forgiven, for Jesus died for sinners! That heart of yours can be renewed by Grace, for Jesus lives again! You can be delivered from the wrath to come, for Jesus has gone up on high to plead for just such sinners as you are! What are you to do in order that you may have Christ as your Savior? Why, as the hymn says—

*“Only trust Him, only trust Him,
Only trust Him now!”*

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

PSALM 57:1-6.

Verse 1. *Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusts in You: yes, in the shadow of Your wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities pass.* The heading of this Psalm—“To the chief musician, Al-Taschith, Michtam of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave”—tells us when it was written. It is one of David’s “Golden Psalms.” What a mixture of febleness and strength there is in this first verse—the febleness so beautified by being clothed with the strength of faith! What a turning away from man and what a turning wholly unto the Lord! And, in coming to the Lord, what humility and what pleading for mercy, and for mercy only! “Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me.” Yet what holy boldness also! “For my soul trusts in You.” And what joyous confidence and what sweet repose in God! “Yes, in the shadow of Your wings, will I make my refuge.” “If I cannot see the brightness of Your face, the shadow of Your wings shall be enough for me. Only let me get near You—only permit me humbly to trust You, and it shall be enough for me, ‘until these calamities pass.’”

2. *I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performs all things for me.* Do you pray like that, my Brother, my Sister? I hope you do “cry unto God most high.” But do you pray to Him as the One “that performs all things” for you—not merely who *can* perform all things for you, but who is actually *doing* it at the present moment—working out your lasting good by everything that is transpiring around you?

3. *He shall send from Heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah.* If all the forces on earth are not sufficient to save His saint, God will send sufficient reserves from the ranks of the heavenly host to preserve His people. Or if He does not determine to preserve them on earth, He will take them away from the earth, to be with Him in Glory. But, in one way or another, they shall be eternally secure!

Mark what the Psalmist says of the voracity of his enemy—he speaks of Saul as “him that would swallow me up.” And the Believer in Jesus is, at times, such an objective of the unbeliever’s detestation that he would annihilate him if he could. But God will sooner send help from Heaven for His people than that such a calamity should ever happen.

3, 4. *God shall send forth His mercy and His truth. My soul is among lions.* What peril David was in and what dangers often surround the best of the men—if not from arrows, swords and spears—from the hellish artillery of unbridled tongues! A human tongue is soft, but it can cut to the very quick. And the wounds from a cruel tongue are not easily healed. Many a man will bear, as long as he lives, the scars that were made by a slanderous tongue. God can save us, however, even from this great trial, and enable us to actually rejoice in this sharp affliction. It is no strange thing that has happened unto us, for so evil men persecuted the Prophets that were before us—as they said all manner of evil against them falsely. God Himself was slandered by the old serpent in the Garden of Eden, so it is not surprising that His children should be still slandered by the serpent’s seed.

5. *And I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword. Be You exalted, O God, above the heavens; let Your glory be above all the earth.* A grand burst of praise and all the grander because of the condition of the man from whom it came! “My soul is among lions,” he says, “but, ‘be You exalted, O God,’” as if he would say, “It does not matter what becomes of me. I shall be content even in this den of lions, so long as You are exalted above the heavens and Your glory above all the earth.”

6. *They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have dug a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves. Selah.* He knew that it would be so and he looked upon it as already accomplished—their nets and pits would only injure themselves.

Now look at the next verse in the light of the prayer David had been praying. See what a marvelous act of faith and what a grand result of unwavering confidence in God it is, for a man to be able to sing as David does even when his soul is among lions and fierce and powerful enemies are all round him, seeking his harm!

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