

RESTRAINING PRAYER

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“You...restrain prayer before God.”
Job 15:4.

THIS is one of the charges brought by Eliphaz the Temanite against Job, “Yes, you cast off fear, and restrain prayer before God.” I shall not use this sentence as an accusation against those who never pray, though there may be some in this House of Prayer whose heads are unaccustomed to bow down and whose knees are unaccustomed to kneel before the Lord, their Maker. You have been fed by God’s bounty, you owe all the breath in your nostrils to Him, yet you have never done homage to His name! The ox knows his owner and the ass his master’s crib, but you know not, neither do you consider the Most High. The cattle on a thousand hills low forth their gratitude and every sheep praises God in its bleating—but these beings, worse than natural brute beasts—still continue to receive from the lavish hand of Divine Benevolence, but they return no thanks whatever to their Benefactor! Let such remember that that ground which has long been rained upon, and plowed, and sown which yet brings forth no fruit, is near unto cursing—whose end is to be burned. Prayerless souls are Christless souls, Christless souls are Graceless souls and Graceless souls shall soon be damned souls! See your peril, you that neglect altogether the blessed privilege of prayer! You are in the bonds of iniquity, you are in the gall of bitterness. God deliver you, for His name’s sake!

Nor do I intend to use this text in an address to those who are in the habit of formal prayer, though there are many such. Taught from their childhood to utter certain sacred words, they have carried through youth and even up to manhood, the same practice! I will not discuss that question just now, whether the practice of teaching children a form of prayer is proper or not. I would not do it. Children should be instructed in the *meaning* of prayer, and their little minds should be taught to pray, but it should be rather the matter of prayer than the words of prayer that should be suggested. And I think they should be taught to use their own words and to speak to God in such phrases and terms as their own childlike capacities, assisted by a mother’s love, may be able to suggest. Full many there are who, from early education, grow up habituated to some form of words which either stands in lieu of the heart’s devotion, or cripples its free exercise. No doubt there may be true prayer linked with a form, and the soul of many a saint has gone up to Heaven in some holy collect, or in the words of some beautiful liturgy, but, for all that, we are absolutely certain that tens of thousands use the mere language without heart or soul, under the impression that they are “praying.”

I consider the form of prayer to be no more worthy of being called prayer than a coach may be called a horse. The horse will be better without the coach, travel much more rapidly and find himself much more at ease. He may drag the coach, it is true, and still travel well. Without the heart of prayer, the form is no prayer—it will not stir or move—it is simply a vehicle that may have wheels that might move, but it has no inner force or power within itself to propel it. Flatter not yourselves that your devotion has been acceptable to God, you that have been merely saluting the ears of the Most High with forms! They have been only mockeries when your heart has been absent. What though a parliament of bishops should have posed the words you use? What though they should be absolutely faultless, yes, what if they should even be inspired? Though you have used them a thousand times, yet you have never prayed if you consider that the repetition of the form is prayer. No! There is more than the chatter of the tongue in genuine supplication! More than the repetition of words in truly drawing near to God! Take care lest, with the form of godliness, you neglect the power and go down to Hell having a lie in your right hand, but not the Truth of God in your heart!

What I do intend, however, is to address this text to the true people of God who understand the sacred art of prayer and are prevalent therein, but who, to their own sorrow and shame, must confess that they have restrained prayer. If there is no other person in this Congregation to whom the preacher will speak personally, he feels shamefully conscious that he will have to speak very plainly to himself. We know that our prayers are heard. We are certain—it is not a question with us—that there is an efficacy in the Divine office of intercession. And yet (oh, how we should blush when we make the confession!) we must acknowledge that we do restrain or neglect prayer. Now, inasmuch as we speak to those who grieve and repent that they should have done so, we shall use but little sharpness. But we shall try to use much plainness of speech. Let us see how and in what respect we have neglected prayer.

I. Do you not think, dear Friends, that we often neglect prayer IN THE FEWNESS OF THE OCCASIONS THAT WE SET APART FOR SUPPLICATION?

From hoary tradition and modern precedents we have come to believe that the morning should be opened with the offering of prayer and that the day should be shut in with the nightly sacrifice. We do ill if we neglect those two sessions of prayer. Do you not think that often, in the morning, we rise so near to the time of labor, when duty calls us to our daily avocation, that we hurry through the familiar exercises with unseemly haste, instead of diligently seeking the Lord and earnestly calling upon His name? And even at night, when we are very weary and jaded, it is just possible that our prayer is uttered somewhere between sleeping and waking. Is not this restraining or neglecting prayer? And throughout the 365 days of the year, if we continue to pray thus, and this is all, how small an amount of true supplication will have gone up to Heaven!

I trust there are none here present who profess to be followers of Christ who do not also practice prayer in their families. We may have no positive commandment for it, but we believe that it is as much in accord with the genius and spirit of the Gospel, and that it is so commended by the example of the saints, that the neglect thereof is a strange inconsistency! Now, how often is this family worship conducted in a slovenly manner? An inconvenient hour is fixed and a knock at the door, a ring at the bell, the call of a customer may hurry the Believer from his knees to go and attend to his worldly concerns. Of course, many excuses might be offered, but the fact would still remain that in this way we often neglect prayer!

And then, when you come up to the House of God—I hope you do not come up to this Tabernacle without prayer—yet I fear we do not all pray as we should, even when in the place dedicated to God’s worship. There should always be a devout prayer lifted up to Heaven as soon as you enter the place where you would meet with God. What a preparation is often made to appear in the assembly! Some of you get here half an hour before the service commences—if there were no talking, if each one of you looked into the Bible, or if the time was spent in silent supplication—what a cloud of holy incense would go smoking up to Heaven!

I think it would be comely for you and profitable for us if as soon as the minister enters the pulpit, you engaged yourself to plead with God for him. For me, I may especially say it is desirable. I claim it at your hands above every other man. With this overwhelming congregation and with the terrible reliability of so numerous a church, and with the Word of God spoken here published within a few hours, and disseminated over the country, scattered throughout all Europe, no—to the very ends of the earth—I may well ask you to lift up your hearts in supplication that the words spoken may be those of truth and soberness, directed of the Holy Spirit and made mighty through God, like arrows shot from His own bow, to find a target in the hearts that He means to bless!

And in going home, with what earnestness should we ask the Master to let what we have heard live in our hearts! We lose very much of the effects of our Sabbaths through not pleading with God on the Saturday night for a blessing upon the day of rest, and through not also pleading at the end of the Sunday, beseeching Him to make that which we have heard abide in our memories and appear in our actions. We have restrained prayer, I fear, in the fewness of the occasions.

Indeed, Brothers and Sisters, every day of the week, and every part of the day should be an occasion for prayer. Cries such as these, “Oh, would that!” “Lord, save me!” “Help me!” “More light, Lord!” “Teach me!” “Guide me!” and a thousand such, should be constantly going up from our hearts to the Throne of God. You may enjoy a refreshing solitude, if you please, in the midst of crowded Cheapside, or contrariwise, you may have your head in the whirl of a busy crowd when you have retired to your closet. It is not so much where we *are* as in what state our *heart* is. Let the regular seasons for devotion be constantly attended to. These things ought you to have done, but let your heart be habitually in a

state of prayer—you must not leave this undone. Oh, that we prayed more, that we set apart more time for it! Good Bishop Farrar had an idea in his head which he carried out. Being a man of some substance and having some 24 persons in his household, he divided the day and there was always some person engaged either in holy song or else in devout supplication through the whole of the 24 hours! There was never a moment when the censor ceased to smoke, or the altar was without its sacrifice. Happy shall it be for us when, day and night, we shall circle the Throne of God rejoicing, but till then, let us emulate the ceaseless praise of seraphs before the Throne of God, continually drawing near unto God and making supplication and thanksgiving.

II. But to proceed to a second remark, dear Friends, I think it will be very clear, upon a little reflection, that we constantly restrain or neglect prayer BY NOT HAVING OUR HEARTS IN A PROPER STATE WHEN WE COME TO ITS EXERCISE.

We rush into prayer too often. We would think it necessary, if we were to address the Queen, that our petition should be prepared. But often we dash before the Throne of God as though it were but some common house of call, without even having a thought in our minds of what we are going for. Now, just let me suggest some few things which I think should always be subjects of meditation before our season of prayer and I think if you confess that you have not thought of these things, you will also be obliged to acknowledge that you have restrained prayer.

We should, *before prayer, meditate upon Him to whom it is to be addressed*. Let our thoughts be directed to the living and true God. Let me remember that He is Omnipotent, then I shall ask large things. Let me remember that He is very tender and full of compassion, then I shall ask little things and be minute in my supplication. Let me remember the greatness of His Covenant, then I shall come very boldly. Let me remember, also, that His faithfulness is like the great mountains and that His promises are sure to all the seed, then I shall ask very confidently, for I shall be persuaded that He will do as He has said. Let me fill my soul with the reflection of the greatness of His majesty, then I shall be struck with awe, with the equal greatness of His love, then I shall be filled with delight! We would pray better than we do if we meditated more, before prayer, upon the God whom we address in our supplications!

Then, let me *meditate also upon the way through which my prayer is offered*. Let my soul behold the blood sprinkled on the Mercy Seat before I venture to draw near to God. Let me go to Gethsemane and see the Savior as He prays. Let me stand in holy vision at the foot of Calvary and see His body torn, that the veil which parted my soul from all access to God might be torn, too, that I might come close to my Father, even to His feet. O dear Friends, I am sure if we thought about the way of access in prayer, we would be more mighty in it, but our neglect of so doing has led us to restrain prayer.

And yet, again, *ought I not, before prayer, to be duly conscious of my many sins?* Oh, when I hear men pray cold, careless prayers, surely they forget that they are sinners, or else, renouncing gaudy words and flowing periods, they would smite upon their breast with the cry, “God be merciful to me a sinner!” They would come to the point at once, with force and fervency—“I, black, unclean, defiled, condemned by the Law, make my appeal unto You, O God!” What prostration of spirit, what zeal, what fervor, what earnestness and then, consequently, what *prevalence* would there be if we were duly sensible of our sin!

If we can add to this *a little meditation upon what our needs are*, how much better we would pray! We often fail in prayer because we come without an errand, not having thought of what our necessities are. But if we have reckoned up that we need pardon, justification, sanctification, preservation—that, besides the blessings of this life, we need that our decaying Graces should be revived, that such-and-such a temptation should be removed, and that through such-and-such a trial we should be carried and prove more than conquerors—then, coming with an errand, we would prevail before the Most High! But we bring to the altars bowls that have no bottom—and if the treasure should be put in them, it would fall through! We do not know what we need and, therefore, we ask not for what we really need. We try to lay our necessities before the Lord without having duly considered how great our necessities are. See yourself as an abject bankrupt, weak, sick, dying—and this will make you plead. See your necessities to be deep as the ocean, broad as the expanse of Heaven—and this will make you cry. There will be no restraining of prayer, Beloved, when we have got a due sense of our soul’s poverty. But because we think we are rich, increased in goods and have need of nothing, therefore it is that we restrain prayer before God.

How well it would be for us if, *before prayer, we would meditate upon the past with regard to all the mercies we have had during the day.* What courage that would give us to ask for more! The deliverances we have experienced through our life, how boldly should we plead to be delivered yet again! He that has been with me in six troubles will not forsake me in the seventh! Do but remember how you passed through the fires and was not burnt, and you should be confident that the flame will not kindle upon you now. Christian, remember how before, when you passed through the rivers, God was with you, and surely you may plead with Him to deliver you from the flood that now threatens to inundate you. Think of the past ages too, of what He did of old, where He brought His people out of Egypt and of all the mighty deeds which He has done—are they not written in the Book of the Wars of the Lord? Plead all these and say unto Him in your supplications—“O You that are a God that hears prayer, hear me now and send me an answer of peace!” I think, without needing to point that arrow, you can see which way I would shoot. Because we do not come to the Throne of Grace in a proper state of supplication, therefore it is that too often we restrain prayer before God.

III. Now, thirdly, it is not to be denied by a man who is conscious of his own error, that **IN THE DUTY OF PRAYER, ITSELF, WE ARE TOO OFTEN STRAITENED IN OUR OWN HEART, AND SO RESTRAIN PRAYER.**

Prayer has been differently divided by different authors. We might roughly say that prayer consists, first, of *invocation*. “Our Father, which are in Heaven.” We begin by stating the title and our own apprehension of the Glory and majesty of the Person whom we address. Do you not think, dear Friends, that we fail here, and restrain prayer here? Oh, how we ought to sound forth His praises! I think, on the Sabbath, it is always the minister’s special duty to bring out the titles of THE ALMIGHTY ONE, such as “King of kings, and Lord of lords!” He is not to be addressed in common terms. We should endeavor, as we search the Scripture through, to find those mighty phrases which the ancient saints were known to apply to Jehovah! And we should make His Temple ring with His Glory and make our closet full of that holy adoration with which prayer must always be linked! I think the rebuking angel might often say, “You think that the Lord is such an one as yourself, and you talk not to Him as to the God of the whole earth but, as though He were a man you address Him in slighting and unseemly terms.” Let all our invocations come more deeply from our soul’s reverence to the Most High and let us address Him, not in high-sounding words of fleshly homage, but still in words which set forth our awe and our reverence while they express His majesty and the Glory of His holiness.

From invocation we usually go to *confession*, and how often do we fail here! In your closet are you in the habit of confessing your real sins to God? Do you not find, Brothers and Sisters, a tendency to acknowledge that sin which is common to all men, but not that which is certainly peculiar to you? We are all Sauls in our way—we want the best of the cattle and the sheep. Those favorite sins, those Agag sins—it is not so easy to hew them in pieces before the Lord. The right-eye sin—happy is that Christian who has learned to pluck it out by confession. The right-hand sin—he is blessed and well taught who aims the axe at that sin and cuts it from him! But no, we say that we have sinned—we are willing to use the terms of any general confession that any church may publish! But to say, “Lord, You know that I love the world, and the things of the world! You know that I am covetous.” Or to say, “Lord, You know I was envious of So-and-So, because he shone brighter than I did at such and-such a public meeting. Lord, I was jealous of such-and-such a member of the church because I evidently saw that he was preferred before me!” And for the husband to confess before God that he has been overbearing, that he has spoken rashly to a child. For a wife to acknowledge that she has been willful, that she has had a fault—this would be *letting out* prayer—but the hiding of these things is *restraining* prayer and we shall surely come under that charge of having restrained prayer unless we make our private confessions of sin very explicit, coming to the point.

I have thought, in teaching children in the Sunday school, we should not so much talk about sin in general as the sins in which children most commonly indulge, such as little thefts, naughty tempers, disobedience to parents. These are the things that children should confess. Men in the dawn of their manhood should confess those ripening evil imaginations, those lustful things that rise in the heart, while the man in business should always make this a point—to see most to the sins which attack businessmen. I have no doubt that I might be very easily led, in my confession, to look to all the offenses I may have committed against the laws of business because I should not need to deal very harshly with myself there, for I do not have the temptations of these men. And I should not wonder if some of you merchants will find it very easy to examine ourselves according to a code that is proper to me, but not to you! Let the workman pray to God as a workman and confess the sins common to his craft. Let the trader examine himself according to his standing and let each man make

his confession like the confessions of old, when everyone confessed apart—the mother apart and the daughter apart, the father apart and the son apart. Let each one thus make a clean breast of the matter and I am sure there will not be so much need to say that we have restrained prayer before God.

As to the next part of prayer, which is *petition*, we all fail lamentably, indeed! We have not, because we ask not, or because we ask amiss. We are ready enough to ask for deliverance from trial, but how often we forget to ask that it may be sanctified to us! We are quite ready to say, “Give us this day our daily bread.” How often, however, do we fail to ask that He would give us the Bread which comes down from Heaven and enable us blessedly to feed upon His flesh and His blood? Brothers and Sisters, we come before God with little desires and the desires we get have so little fervency in them. And when we get the fervency, we so often fail to get the faith which grasps the promise and believes that God will give, that, in all these points, when we come to the matter of spreading our needs before God, we restrain prayer!

Oh, for the Luthers that can shake the gates of Heaven by supplication! Oh, for men that can lay hold upon the golden knocker of Heaven’s gate and make it ring and ring again as if they meant it to be heard! Cold prayers court a denial. God hears by fire and the God that answers by fire let Him be God! But first there must be prayer in Elijah’s heart—fire in Elijah’s heart—before the fire will come down in answer to the prayer! Our fervency goes up to Heaven and then God’s Grace, which gave us the fervency, comes down and gives us the answer.

But you know, too, that all true prayer has thanksgiving in it. “Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever.” What prayer is complete without the doxology? And here, too, we restrain prayer. We do not praise, and bless, and magnify the Lord as we should. If our hearts were more full of gratitude, our expressions would be far more noble and comprehensive when we speak forth His praise. I wish I could put this so plainly that every Christian might mourn on account of his sin and mend his ways. But, indeed, it is only mine to speak—it is my Master’s to open your eyes, to let you see and to set you upon the solemnly important duty of self-examination! In this respect, I am sure even the prayers that you and I have offered today may well cry out against us, and say, “You have restrained prayer.”

IV. Yet, again, I fear we must all join in acknowledging A SERIOUS FAULT WITH REGARD TO THE AFTER-PART OF OUR PRAYERS. When prayer is done, do you not think we very much restrain it?

For, *after prayer, we often go immediately into the world.* That may be absolutely necessary, but we go there and leave behind us what we ought to carry with us. When we have got into a good frame in prayer, we should consider that this is like the meat which the angel gave to Elijah that he might go on his forty day’s journey in its strength. Have we felt Heavenly-minded? The moment we cross the threshold and get into the family or business, where is the Heavenly mind? Oh, to get real prayer, inwrought prayer—not the surface prayer, as though it were a sort of sacred masquerading, but to have it *inside*, in the warp and woof of our being—till prayer becomes a part of ourselves! Then, Brothers and Sisters, we have not restrained it! We get hot in our closets—when I say, “we,” oh, how few can say as much as that!—but, still, we get hot in our closets and go out into the world, into the draughts of its temptations, without wrapping ourselves about with promises—and we catch well-near our death of cold! Oh, to carry that heat and fervor with us!

You know that as you carry a bar of hot iron along, how soon it begins to return to its common ordinary appearance and the heat is gone. How hot, then, we ought to make ourselves in prayer, that we may burn the longer and how, all day long, we ought to keep thrusting the iron into the fire so that, when it ceases to glow, it may go into the hot embers once more and the flame may glow upon it and we may once again be brought into a vehement heat. But we are not careful enough to keep up the Grace and seek to nurture and to cherish the young child which God seems to give in the morning into our hands that we may nurse it for Him.

Old Master Dyer speaks of locking up his heart by prayer in the morning and giving Christ the key. I am afraid we do the opposite—we lock up our hearts in the morning and give the devil the key—and think that he will be honest enough not to rob us! Ah, it is in bad hands when it is trusted with him. He keeps stealing all day long the precious things that were in the safe until, at night it is quite empty and needs to be filled all over again! Would God that we put the key in Christ’s hands, by looking up to Him all day!

I think, too, that *after prayer, we often fail in unbelief.* We do not expect God to hear us. If God were to hear some of you, you would be more surprised than with the greatest novelty that could occur! We ask blessings, but do not think of having them. When you and I were children and had a little piece of garden, we sowed some seeds one day and the next

morning, before breakfast, we went to see if they were up. And the next day, seeing that no appearance of the green blade could be discovered, we began to move the dirt to look for our seeds. Ah, we were children then! I wish we were children now with regard to our prayers. We would go out, the next morning, to see if they had begun to sprout and disturb the ground a bit to look after our prayers, for fear they should have miscarried. Do you believe God hears prayer?

I saw, the other day, in a newspaper, a little sketch concerning myself in which the author, who is evidently very friendly, gives a much better description of me than I deserve. But he offers me one rather pointed rebuke. I was preaching at the time in a tent and only part of the people were covered. It began to rain just before prayer, and one petition was, "O Lord, be pleased to grant us favorable weather for this service and command the clouds that they rain not upon this assembly!" Now he thought this very preposterous. To say the least, it was rash, if not blasphemous! He admits that it did not rain a drop after the prayer, still, of course, he did not infer that God heard and answered the prayer. If I had asked for a rain of Grace, it would have been quite credible that God would send that, but when I ask Him not to send a temporal rain, that is fanaticism! To think that God meddles with the clouds at the wish of a man, or that He may answer us in temporal things is pronounced absurd! I bless God, however, that I fully believe the absurdity, preposterous as it may appear! I know that God hears prayer in temporal things! I know it by as clear a demonstration as ever any proposition in Euclid was solved. I know it by abundant facts and incidents which my own life has revealed. God does hear prayer! The majority of people do not think that He does. At least, if He does, they suppose that it is in some high, clerical, mysterious, unknown sense. As to ordinary things ever happening as the result of prayer, they account it a delusion! "*The Bank of Faith!*" How many have said it is a bank of nonsense and yet there are many who have been able to say, "We could write as good a book as Huntington's '*Bank of Faith,*' that would be no more believed than Huntington's was, though it might be even more true."

We restrain prayer, I am sure, by not believing our God. We ask a favor, which, if granted, we attribute to "accident" rather than ascribe it to Grace, and we do not receive it. Then the next time we come, of course we cannot pray, because unbelief has cut the sinews of prayer and left us powerless before the Throne of God.

You are a professor of religion. After you have been to a party of ungodly people, can you pray? You are a merchant, and profess to be a follower of Christ. When you engage in a hazardous speculation and you know you ought not to, can you pray? Or, when you have had a heavy loss in business and repine against God and will not say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord"—can you pray? Pity the man who can sin and pray, too! In a certain sense, Brooks was right when he said, "Praying will make you leave off sinning, or else sin will make you leave off praying." Of course, that is not meant in the absolute sense of the term, but as to certain sins, especially gross sins—and some of the sins to which God's people are liable, are gross sins—I am certain they cannot come before their Father's face with the confidence they had before, after having been rolling in the mire, or wandering in By-Path Meadow.

Look at your own child—he meets you in the morning with a smiling face, so pleased. He asks what he likes of you and you give it to him. Now he has been doing wrong. He knows he has and you have frowned upon him, you have chastened him. How does he come now? He may come because he is a child and with tears in his eyes because he is a penitent—but he cannot come with the power he once had. Look at a king's favorite—as long as he feels that he is in the king's favor, he will take up your suit and plead for you. Ask him tomorrow whether he will do you a good turn and he says, "No, I am out of favor. I don't feel as if I could speak now." A Christian is not out of Covenant favor, but he may be experimentally under a cloud—he loses the Light of God's Countenance and then he feels he cannot plead—his prayers become weak and feeble.

Take heed unto yourselves and consider your ways. The path of declension is very abrupt in some parts. We may go on gradually declining in prayer till faith grows weak, love cold and patience is exhausted. We may go on for years and maintain a consistent profession, but, all of a sudden, the road which had long been descending at a gradual incline may come to a precipice and we may fall, and that when we little think of it. We may have ruined our reputation, blasted our comfort, destroyed our usefulness and we may have to go to our graves with a sword in our bones because of sin. Stop while you may, Believer! Stop and guard against the temptation. I charge you, by the trials you must meet with, by the temptations that surround you, by the corruptions that are within, by the assaults that come from Hell and by the trials that come from Heaven, "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation."

I speak especially to the members of this church. Think of what has God worked for us! When we were a few people, what intense agony of prayer we had! We have had Prayer Meetings in Park Street that have moved our souls. Every man seemed like a crusader besieging Jerusalem, each man determined to storm the Celestial City by the might of intercession and the blessings came upon us, so that we had not room to receive them! The hallowed cloud still rests over us! The holy drops still fall! Will you now cease from intercession? At the borders of the promised land, will you turn back to the wilderness, when God is with us and the standard of a King is in the midst of our armies? Will you now fail in the day of trial? Who knows but you have come to the Kingdom for such a time as this? Who knows but that He will preserve in the land a small company of poor people who fear God intensely, hold the faith earnestly and love God vehemently—that infidelity may be driven from the high places of the earth—that Naphtali again may be a people made triumphant in the high places of the field?

God of Heaven, grant this! Oh, let us restrain prayer no longer! You that have never prayed, may you be taught to pray, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” uttered from your heart, with your eyes upon the Cross! You will receive a gracious answer and you shall go on your way rejoicing, for—

*“When God inclines the heart to pray,
He has an ear to hear!
To Him there’s music in a groan,
And beauty in a tear.”*

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 JOHN 2.**

1 John 2:1-4. *My little children, these things I write unto you, that you sin not. And if any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. And hereby do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that says, I know Him, and keeps not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.* Holy living is the sure fruit and proof of anyone being in Christ. Where it is not manifest, the profession of being in Christ is a lie.

5. *But whoever keeps His Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him.* Note the gradation—we know Him, we are in Him—we know that we are in Him.

6. *He that says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk even as He walked.* Abiding in Christ helps us to live as Christ lived, not, as one well observes, that we can walk on the water as Christ walked upon it, but that we can walk in our daily life even as He did because we abide in Him.

7. *Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you but an old commandment which you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you have heard from the beginning.* The old commandment is the word which we have heard from the beginning, yet it is always fresh and new.

8-10. *Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in Him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shines. He that says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him.* Love is the great and sure way of abiding in the light, abiding in Christ.

11-14. *But he that hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and knows not where he goes, because that darkness has blinded his eyes. I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name’s sake. I write unto you, fathers, because you have known Him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because you have overcome the Wicked One. I write unto you, little children, because you have known the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because you have known Him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because you are strong, and the Word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the Wicked One.* Having overcome him, at the first by your faith in Christ, you still go on to conquer him by abiding in Christ.

15-17. *Love not the world neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust thereof: but he that does the will of God*

abides forever. Everything else is transient, fleeting and soon passes away. But he that does the will of God has entered into the eternal regions and he has become one of those who abide forever. Do not be carried away, therefore, from your old firm foundation and from your eternal union to Christ.

18-20. *Little children, it is the last hour and as you have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many Antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. But you have an unction from the Holy One, and you know all things.* You are taught of God, so you know all that is necessary for the attainment of true godliness, and the accomplishment of the Divine purposes.

21-25. *I have not written unto you because you know not the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he that denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is Antichrist that denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son, the same has not the Father: [but] he that acknowledges the Son has the Father also. Let that therefore abide in you, which you have heard from the beginning. If that which you have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, you also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise that He has promised us, even eternal life.* Not transient life, but eternal life is the great promise of the Covenant of Grace, and abiding in Christ we possess it.

26, 27. *These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which you have received of Him abides in you,* What a wonderful declaration this is—not only that we have this holy anointing, but that we have it always!

27, 28. *And you need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teaches you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it has taught you, you shall abide in Him. And now little children, abide in Him.* See how the Apostle rings out this note again and again? Our Savior repeated the word, “abide,” or, “remain,” many times in the short parable of the Vine, and now John strikes this same silver bell over and over again—“And now, little children, abide in Him”—

28, 29. *That when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone that does righteousness is born of Him.*

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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