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Charles Spurgeon





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Songs In the Night

A Sermon

(No. 2558)

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, February 27th, 1898,

Delivered By

C. H. SPURGEON,

At New Park Street Chapel, [Southwark](#).

NOTE: This edition of this sermon is taken from an earlier published edition. The sermon that appears in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. 44, was edited and abbreviated somewhat. For edition we have restored the fuller text of the earlier published edition, while retaining a few of the editorial refinements of the *Met Tab* edition.

"But none saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?"—[Job 35:10](#).

ELIHU was a wise man, exceeding wise, though not as wise as the all-wise Jehovah, who sees light in the clouds, and finds order in confusion; hence Elihu, being much puzzled at beholding Job thus afflicted, cast about him to find the cause of it, and he very wisely hit upon one of the most likely reasons, although it did not happen to be the right one in Job's case. He said within himself—"Surely, if men be tried and troubled exceedingly, it is because, while they think about their troubles and distress themselves about their fears, they do not say, 'Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?'" Elihu's reason was very right in the majority of cases. The great cause of the Christian's distress, the reason of the depths of sorrow into which many believers are plunged, is simply this—that while they are looking about, on the right hand and on the left, to see how they may escape their troubles, they forget to look to the hills whence all real help cometh; they do not say, "Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?" We shall, however, leave that inquiry, and dwell upon those sweet words, "God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night."

The world hath its night. It seemeth necessary that it should have one. The sun shineth by day, and men go forth to their labors; but they grow weary, and nightfall cometh on, like a sweet boon from heaven. The darkness draweth the curtains, and shutteth out the light, which might prevent our eyes from slumber; while the sweet, calm stillness of the nights permits us to rest upon the lap of ease, and there forget awhile our cares, until the morning sun appeareth, and an angel puts his hand upon the curtain, and undraws it once again, touches our eyelids, and bids us rise, and proceed to the labors of the day. Night is one of the greatest blessings men enjoy; we have many reasons to thank God for it. Yet night is to many a gloomy season. There is "the pestilence that walketh in darkness;" there is "the terror by night;" there is the dread of robbers and of fell disease, with all those fears that the timorous know, when they have no light wherewith they can discern objects. It is then they

fancy that spiritual creatures walk the earth; though, if they knew rightly, they would find it to be true, that—

"Millions of spiritual creatures walk this earth,
Unseen, both when we sleep and when we wake,"

and that at all times they are round about us—not more by night than by day. Night is the season of terror and alarm to most men. Yet even night hath its songs. Have you never stood by the seaside at night, and heard the pebbles sing, and the waves chant God's glories? Or have you never risen from your couch, and thrown up the window of your chamber, and listened there? Listened to what? Silence—save now and then a murmuring sound, which seems sweet music then. And have you not fancied that you heard the harp of God playing in heaven? Did you not conceive, that yon stars, that those eyes of God, looking down on you, were also mouths of song—that every star was singing God's glory, singing, as it shone, its mighty Maker, and his lawful, well-deserved praise? Night hath its songs. We need not much poetry in our spirit, to catch the song of night, and hear the spheres as they chant praises which are loud to the heart, though they be silent to the ear—the praises of the mighty God, who bears up the unpillared arch of heaven, and moves the stars in their courses.

Man, too, like the great world in which he lives, must have his night. For it is true that man is like the world around him; he is a little world; he resembles the world in almost every thing; and if the world has its night, so hath man. And many a night do we have—nights of sorrow, nights of persecution, nights of doubt, nights of bewilderment, nights of anxiety, nights of oppression, nights of ignorance—nights of all kinds, which press upon our spirits and terrify our souls. But, blessed be God, the Christian man can say, "My God giveth me songs in the night."

It is not necessary, I take it, to prove to you that Christian men have nights; for if you are Christians, you will find that *you* have them, and you will not want any proof, for nights will come quite often enough. I will, therefore, proceed at once to the subject; and I will speak this evening upon songs in the night, *their source*—God giveth them; songs in the night, *their matter*—what do we sing about in the night? songs in the night, *their excellence*—they are hearty songs, and they are sweet ones; songs in the night, *their uses*—their benefits to ourselves and others.

I. First, songs in the night—WHO IS THE AUTHOR OF THEM? "*God*," says the text, our "Maker:" *he* "giveth songs in the night."

Any man can sing in the day. When the cup is full, man draws inspiration from it; when wealth rolls in abundance around him, any man can sing to the praise of a God who gives a plenteous harvest, or sends home a loaded argosy. It is easy enough for an AEolian harp to whisper music when the winds blow; the difficulty is for music to come when no wind bloweth. It is easy to sing when we can read the notes by daylight; but the skillful singer is

he who can sing when there is not a ray of light to read by—who sings from his heart, and not from a book that he can see, because he has no means of reading, save from that inward book of his own living spirit, whence notes of gratitude pour out in songs of praise. No man can make a song in the night himself; he may attempt it, but he will feel how difficult it is. Let all things go as I please—I will weave songs, weave them wherever I go, with the flowers that grow upon my path; but put me in a desert, where no flowers are, and wherewith shall I weave a chorus of praise to God? How shall I make a crown for him? Let this voice be free, and this body be full of health, and I can sing God's praise; but stop this tongue, lay me upon the bed of languishing, and it is not so easy to sing from the bed, and chant high praises in the fires. Give me the bliss of spiritual liberty, and let me mount up to my God, get near the throne, and I will sing, ay, sing as sweet as seraphs; but confine me, fetter my spirit, clip my wings, make me exceeding sad, so that I become old like the eagle—ah! then it is hard to sing. It is not in man's power to sing, when all is adverse. It is not natural to sing in trouble—"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name:" for that is a daylight song. But it was a divine song which Habakkuk sang, when in the night he said—"Though the fig-tree shall not blossom," and so on, "yet will I trust in the Lord, and stay myself in the God of Jacob." Methinks in the Red Sea any man could have made a song like that of Moses—"The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea;" the difficulty would have been, to compose a song before the Red Sea had been divided, and to sing it before Pharaoh's hosts had been drowned, while yet the darkness of doubt and fear was resting on Israel's hosts. Songs in the night come only from God; they are not in the power of man.

But what does the text mean, when it asserts that God giveth songs in the night? We think we find two answers to the question. The first is, that usually in the night of a Christian's experience *God is his only song*. If it be daylight in my heart, I can sing songs touching my graces—songs touching my sweet experience—songs touching my duties—songs touching my labors; but let the night come—my graces appear to have withered; my evidences, though they are there, are hidden; I can not

"read my title clear

To mansions in the skies;"

and now I have nothing left to sing of but my God. It is strange, that when God gives his children mercies, they generally set their hearts more on the mercies than on the Giver of them; but when the night comes, and he sweeps all the mercies away, then at once they say, "Now, my God, I have nothing to sing of but thee; I must come to thee; and to thee only. I had cisterns once; they were full of water; I drank from them then; but now the created streams are dry; sweet Lord, I quaff no stream but thine own self, I drink from no fount but from thee." Ay, child of God, thou knowest what I say; or if thou dost not understand it yet, thou wilt do so by-and-by. It is in the night we sing of God, and of God alone. Every string

is tuned, and ever power hath its attribute to sing, while we praise God, and nothing else. We can sacrifice to ourselves in day light—we only sacrifice to God by night; we can sing high praises to our dear selves when all is joyful, but we can not sing praise to any save our God, when circumstances are untoward, and providences appear adverse. God alone can furnish us with songs in the night.

And yet again: not only does God give the song in the night, because he is the only subject upon which we can sing then, but because *he is the only one who inspires songs in the night*. Bring me up a poor, melancholy, distressed child of God: I come into the pulpit, I seek to tell him sweet promises, and whisper to him sweet words of comfort; he listeneth not to me; he is like the deaf adder, he listens not to the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely. Send him round to all the comforting divines, and all the holy Barnabases that ever preached, and they will do very little—they will not be able to squeeze a song out of him, do what they may. He is drinking the gall of wormwood; he says, "O Lord, thou hast made me drunk with weeping, I have eaten ashes like bread;" and comfort him as you may, it will be only a woeful note or two of mournful resignation that you will get from him; you will get no psalms of praise, no hallelujahs, no sonnets. But let God come to his child in the night, let him whisper in his ear as he lies on his bed, and how you see his eyes flash fire in the night! Do you not hear him say,—

"'Tis paradise, if thou art here;
If thou depart, 'tis hell"

I could not have cheered him: it is God that has done it; and God "giveth songs in the night." It is marvelous, brethren, how one sweet word of God will make whole songs for Christians. One word of God is like a piece of gold, and the Christian is the gold-beater, and he can hammer that promise out for whole weeks. I can say myself, I have lived on one promise for weeks, and want no other. I want just simply to hammer that promise out into gold-leaf, and plate my whole existence with joy from it. The Christian gets his songs from God: God gives him inspiration, and teaches him how to sing: "God may Maker, who giveth songs in the night." So, then, poor Christian, thou needest not go pumping up thy poor heart to make it glad. Go to thy Maker, and ask him to give thee a song in the night. Thou art a poor dry well: thou hast heard it said, that when a pump is dry, you must pour water down it first of all, and then you will get some up; and so, Christian, when thou art dry, go to God, ask him to pour some joy down thee, and then thou wilt get some joy up from thine own heart. Do not go to this comforter or that, for you will find them Job's comforters, after all; but go thou first and foremost to thy Maker, for he is the great composer of songs and teacher of music; he it is who can teach thee how to sing: "God, my Maker, who giveth me songs in the night."

II. Thus we have dwelt upon the first point. Now the second. WHAT IS GENERALLY THE MATTER CONTAINED IN A SONG IN THE NIGHT? What do we sing about?

Why, I think, when we sing by night, there are three things we sing about. Either we sing about the yesterday that is over, or else about the night itself, or else about the morrow that is to come. Each of these are sweet themes, when God our Maker gives us songs in the night. In the midst of the night the most usual method for Christians is to sing about *the day that is over*. "Well," they say, "it is night now, but I can remember when it was daylight. Neither moon nor stars appear at present; but I can remember when I saw the sun. I have no evidence just now; but there was a time when I could say, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth.' I have my doubts and fears at this present moment; but it is not long since I could say, with full assurance, 'I know that he shed his blood for me; I know that my Redeemer liveth, and when he shall stand a second time upon the earth, though the worms devour this body, yet in my flesh I shall see God.' It may be darkness now; but I know the promises were sweet; I know I had blessed seasons in his house. I am quite sure of this; I used to enjoy myself in the ways of the Lord; and though now my paths are strewn with thorns, I know it is the King's highway. It was a way of pleasantness once; it will be a way of pleasantness again. 'I will remember the days of old; I will meditate upon the years of the right hand of the Most High.'" Christian, perhaps the best song thou canst sing, to cheer thee in the night, is the song of yester-morn. Remember, it was not always night with thee: night is a new thing to thee. Once thou hadst a glad heart, a buoyant spirit; once thine eye was full of fire; once thy foot was light; once thou couldst sing for very joy and ecstasy of heart. Well, then, remember that God, who made thee sing yesterday, has not left thee in the night. He is not a daylight God, who can not know his children in darkness; but he loves thee now as much as ever: though he has left thee a little, it is to prove thee, to make thee trust him better, and serve him more. Let me tell you some of the sweet things of which a Christian may make a song when he is in the night.

If we are going to sing of the things of yesterday, let us begin with what God did for us in past times. My beloved brethren, you will find it a sweet subject for song at times, to begin to sing of electing love and covenanted mercies. When thou thyself art low, it is well to sing of the fountain-head of mercy; of that blessed decree wherein thou wast ordained to eternal life, and of that glorious Man who undertook thy redemption; of that solemn covenant signed, and sealed, and ratified, in all things ordered well; of that everlasting love which, ere the hoary mountains were begotten, or ere the aged hills were children, chose thee, loved thee firmly, loved thee fast, loved thee well, loved thee eternally. I tell thee, believer, if thou canst go back to the years of eternity; if thou canst in thy mind run back to the years of eternity; if thou canst in thy mind run back to that period, or ere the everlasting hills were fashioned, or the fountains of the great deep scooped out, and if thou canst see thy God inscribing thy name in his eternal Book;—if thou canst read in his loving heart eternal thoughts of love to thee, thou wilt find this a charming means of giving thee songs in the night. No songs like those which come from electing love; no sonnets like those that are dictated by

meditations on discriminating mercy. Some, indeed, can not sing of election: the Lord open their mouths a little wider! Some there are that are afraid of the very term; but we only despise men who are afraid of what they believe, afraid of what God has taught them in his Bible. No, in our darker hours it is our joy to sing:

"Sons we are through God's election,
Who in Jesus Christ believe;
By eternal destination,
Sovereign grace we now receive.
Lord, thy favor,
Shall both grace and glory give."

Think, Christian, of the yesterday, I say, and thou wilt get a song in the night. But if thou hast not a voice tuned to so high a key as that, let me suggest some other mercies thou mayest sing of; and they are the mercies thou hast experienced. What! man, canst thou not sing a little of that blessed hour when Jesus met thee; when, a blind slave, thou wast sporting with death, and he saw thee, and said: "Come, poor slave, come with me?" Canst thou not sing of that rapturous moment when he snapped thy fetters, dashed thy chains to the earth, and said: "I am the Breaker; I came to break thy chains, and set thee free?" What though thou art ever so gloomy now, canst thou forget that happy morning, when in the house God thy voice was loud, almost as a seraph's voice, in praise? For thou couldst sing: "I am forgiven! I am forgiven:"

"A monument of grace,
A sinner saved by blood."

Go back, man; sing of that moment, and then thou wilt have a song in the night. Or if thou hast almost forgotten that, then sure thou hast some precious milestone along the road of life that is not quite grown over with moss, on which thou canst read some happy inscription of his mercy toward thee! What! didst thou never have a sickness like that which thou art suffering now, and did he not raise thee up from that? Wast thou never poor before, and did he not supply thy wants? Wast thou never in straits before, and did he not deliver thee? Come, man! I beseech thee, go to the river of thine experience, and pull up a few bulrushes, and weave them into an ark, wherein thine infant faith may float safely on the stream. I bid thee not forget what God hath done. What! Hast thou buried thine own diary? I beseech thee, man, turn over the book of thy remembrance. Canst thou not see some sweet hill Mizar? Canst thou not think of some blessed hour when the Lord met with thee at Hermon? Hast thou never been on the Delectable Mountains? Hast thou never been fetched from the den of lions? Hast thou never escaped the jaw of the lion and the paw of the bear? Nay, O man, I know thou hast; go back, then, a little way, and take the mercies of yesterday; and though it is dark now, light up the lamps of yesterday, and they shall glitter through the darkness, and thou shalt find that God hath given thee a song in the night.

"Ay," says one, "but you know, that when we are in the dark, we can not see the mercies God has given us. It is all very well for you to tell us this; but we can not get hold of them." I remember an old experimental Christian speaking about the great pillars of our faith; he was a sailor; we were then on board ship, and there were sundry huge posts on the shore, to which the ships were usually fastened, by throwing a cable over them. After I had told him a great many promises, he said, "I know they are good strong promises, but I can not get near enough to shore to throw my cable around them; that is the difficulty. Now, it often happens that God's past mercies and loving kindnesses would be good sure posts to hold on to, but we have not got faith enough to throw our cable round them, and so we go slipping down the stream of unbelief, because we can not stay ourselves by our former mercies.

I will, however, give you something that I think you can throw your cable over. If God has never been kind to you, one thing you surely know, and that is, he has been kind to others. Come, now; if thou art in ever so great straits, sure there were others in greater straits. What! art thou lower down than poor Jonah was, when he went down to the bottoms of the mountains? Art thou more poorly off than thy Master, when he had not a place where to lay his head? What! conceivest thou thyself to be the worst of the worst? Look at Job there scraping himself with a potsherd, and sitting on a dunghill. Art thou as bad as he? And yet Job rose up, and was richer than before; and out of the depths Jonah came, and preached the Word; and our Saviour Jesus hath mounted to his throne. O Christian! only think of what he has done for others! If thou canst not recollect that he has done any thing for thee, yet remember, I beseech thee, what his usual rule is, and do not judge hardly by my God. You remember Benhadad, when he was overcome and conquered, and Ahab was after him. Some said to him, "We know that the kings of Israel are merciful kings; let us send therefore unto Ahab, and it may be he will spare our lives." Benhadad sent to the king; he had received no kindness from Ahab before, he had only heard that he was a merciful king; so to the king he went; and what said the king? "Is my brother, Benhadad, yet alive?" Truly, poor soul, if thou hast never had a merciful God, yet others have had; the King is a merciful King; go and try him. If thou art ever so low in thy troubles, look to "the hills, from whence cometh thy help." Others have had help therefrom, and so mayest thou. Up might start hundreds of God's children, and show us their hands full of comforts and mercies; and they could say, "the Lord gave us these without money and without price; and why should he not give to thee also, seeing that thou also art a king's son?" Thus, Christian, thou wilt get a song in the night out of other people, if thou canst not get a song from thyself. Never be ashamed of taking a leaf out of another man's experience book. If thou canst find no good leaf in thine own, tear one out of some one's else; and if thou hast no cause to be grateful to God in darkness, or canst not find cause in thine own experience, go to some one else, and, if thou canst, harp his praise in the dark, and like the nightingale sing his praise sweetly when all the world has gone to rest. We can sing in the night of the mercies of yesterday.

But I think, beloved, there is never so dark a night, but there is something to sing about, even *concerning that night*; for there is one thing I am sure we can sing about, let the night be ever so dark, and that is, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, and because his compassions fail not." If we can not sing very loud, yet we can sing a little low tune, something like this—"He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." "O!" says one, "I do not know where to get my dinner from to-morrow. I am a poor wretch." So you may be, my dear friend; but you are not so poor as you deserve to be. Do not be mightily offended about that; if you are, you are no child of God; for the child of God acknowledges that he has no right to the least of God's mercies, but that they come through the channel of grace alone. As long as I am out of hell, I have no right to grumble; and if I were in hell I should have no right to complain, for I feel, when convinced of sin, that never creature deserved to go there more than I do. We have no cause to murmur; we can lift up our hands, and say, "Night! thou art dark, but thou mightst have been darker. I am poor, but if I could not have been poorer, I might have been sick. I am poor and sick—well, I have some friend left, my lot can not be so bad, but it might have been worse." And therefore, Christian, you will always have one thing to sing about—"Lord, I thank thee, it is not all darkness!" Besides, Christian, however dark the night is, there is always a star or moon. There is scarce ever a night that we have, but there are just one or two little lamps burning up there. However dark it may be, I think you may find some little comfort, some little joy, some little mercy left, and some little promise to cheer thy spirit. The stars are not put out, are they? Nay, if thou canst not see them, they are there; but methinks one or two must be shining on thee; therefore give God a song in the night. If thou hast only one star, bless God for that one, perhaps he will make it two; and if thou hast only two stars, bless God twice for the two stars, and perhaps he will make them four. Try, then, if thou canst not find a song in the night.

But, beloved, there is another thing of which we can sing yet more sweetly; and that is, we can sing of *the day that is to come*. I am preaching to-night for the poor weavers of Spitalfields. Perhaps there are not to be found a class of men in London who are suffering a darker night than they are; for while many classes have been befriended and defended, there are few who speak up for them, and (if I am rightly informed) they are generally ground down within an inch of their lives. I suppose their masters intend that their bread shall be very sweet, on the principle, that the nearer the ground, the sweeter the grass; for I should think no people have their grass so near the ground as the weavers of Spitalfields. In an inquiry by the House of Commons last week, it was given in evidence, that their average wages amount to seven or eight shillings a week; and then they have to furnish themselves with a room, and work at expensive articles, which my friends the ladies are wearing now, and which they buy as cheaply as possible; but perhaps they do not know that they are made with the blood and bones and marrow of the Spitalfields weavers, who, many of them, work

for less than man ought to have to subsist upon. Some of them waited upon me the other day; I was exceedingly pleased with one of them. He said, "Well, sir, it is very hard, but I hope there is better times coming for us." "Well, my friend," I said, "I am afraid you can not hope for much better times, unless the Lord Jesus Christ comes a second time." "That is just what we hope for," said he. "We do not see there is any chance of deliverance, unless the Lord Jesus Christ comes to establish his kingdom upon earth; and then he will judge the oppressed, and break the oppressors in pieces with an iron rod, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." I was glad my friend had got a song in the night, and was singing about the morning that was coming. Often do I cheer myself with the thought of the coming of the Lord. We preach now, perhaps, with little success; "the kingdoms of this world" are not "become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ;" we send out missionaries; they are for the most part unsuccessful. We are laboring, but we do not see the fruit of our labors. Well, what then? Try a little while; we shall not always labor in vain, or spend our strength for naught. A day is coming, and now is, when every minister of Christ shall speak with unction, when all the servants of God shall preach with power, and when colossal systems of heathenism shall tumble from their pedestals, and mighty, gigantic delusions shall be scattered to the winds. The shout shall be heard, "Alleluia! Alleluia! The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." For that day do I look; it is to the bright horizon of that second coming that I turn my eyes. My anxious expectation is, that the sweet Sun of righteousness will arise with healing beneath his wings, that the oppressed shall be righted, that despotisms shall be cut down, that liberty shall be established, that peace shall be made lasting, and that the glorious liberty of the gospel of God shall be extended throughout the known world. Christian! If thou art in a night, think of the morrow; cheer up thy heart with the thought of the coming of thy Lord. Be patient, for

"Lo! he comes, with clouds descending."

Be patient! The husbandman waits until he reaps his harvest. Be patient; for you know who has said, "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his works shall be."

One thought more upon that point. There is another sweet to-morrow of which we hope to sing in the night. Soon, beloved, you and I shall lie on our dying-bed, and we shall want a song in the night then; and I do not know where we shall get it, if we do not get it from the to-morrow. Kneeling by the bed of an apparently dying saint, last night, I said, "Well, sister, he has been precious to you; you can rejoice in his covenant mercies, and his past loving-kindnesses." She put out her hand, and said, "Ah! sir, do not talk about them now; I want the sinner's Saviour as much now as ever; it is not a saint's Saviour I want; it is still a sinner's Saviour that I am in need of, for I am a sinner still." I found that I could not comfort her with the past; so I reminded her of the golden streets, of the gates of pearl, of the walls of jasper, of the harps of gold, of the songs of bliss; and then her eye glistened; she

said, "Yes, I shall be there soon; I shall meet them by-and-by;" and then she seemed so glad! Ah! believer, you may always cheer yourself with that thought; for if you are ever so low now, remember that

"A few more rolling suns, at most,
Will land thee on fair Canaan's coast."

Thy head may be crowned with thorny troubles now, but it shall wear a starry crown directly; thy hand may be filled with cares—it shall grasp a harp soon, a harp full of music. Thy garments may be soiled with dust now; they shall be white by-and-by. Wait a little longer. Ah! beloved, how despicable our troubles and trials will seem when we look back upon them! Looking at them here in the prospect, they seem immense; but when we get to heaven, we shall then,

"With transporting joys, recount
The labors of our feet."

Our trials will seem to us nothing at all. We shall talk to one another about them in heaven, and find all the more to converse about, according as we have suffered more here below. Let us go on, therefore; and if the night be ever so dark, remember there is not a night that shall not have a morning; and that morning is to come by-and-by. When sinners are lost in darkness, *we* shall lift up our eyes in everlasting light. Surely I need not dwell longer on this thought. There is matter enough for songs in the night in the past, the present, and the future.

III. And now I want to tell you, very briefly, WHAT ARE THE EXCELLENCES OF SONGS IN THE NIGHT ABOVE ALL OTHER SONGS.

In the first place, when you hear a man singing a song in the night—I mean in the night of trouble—you may be quite sure it is a *hearty one*. Many of you sang very prettily just now, didn't you? I wonder whether you would sing very prettily, if there were a stake or two in Smithfield for all of you who dared to do it? If you sang under pain and penalty, that would show your heart to be in your song. We can all sing very nicely indeed when every body else sings. It is the easiest thing in the world to open your mouth, and let the words come out; but when the devil puts his hand over your mouth, can you sing then? Can you say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him?" That is hearty singing; that is real song that springs up in the night. The nightingale singeth most sweetly because she singeth in the night. We know a poet has said, that if she sang by day, she might be thought to sing no more sweetly than the wren. It is the stillness of the night that makes her song sweet. And so doth a Christian's song become sweet and hearty, because it is in the night.

Again, the songs we sing in the night will be *lasting*. Many songs we hear our fellow-creatures singing in the streets will not do to sing by-and-by; I guess they will sing a different kind of tune soon. They can sing now-a-days any rollicking, drinking songs; but they will not sing them when they come to die; they are not exactly the songs with which to cross

Jordan's billows. It will not do to sing one of those light songs when death and you are having the last tug. It will not do to enter heaven singing one of those unchaste, unholy sonnets. No; but the Christian who can sing in the night will not have to leave off his song; he may keep on singing it forever. He may put his foot in Jordan's stream, and continue his melody; he may wade through it, and keep on singing still, and land himself safe in heaven; and when he is there, there need not be a gap in his strain, but in a nobler, sweeter strain, he may still continue singing his power to save. There are a great many of you that think Christian people are a very miserable set, don't you? You say, "Let me sing my song." Ay, but, my dear friends, we like to sing a song that will last; we don't like your songs; they are all froth, like bubbles on the breaker, and they will soon die away and be lost. Give me a song that will last; give me one that will not melt. O, give me not the dreamster's gold! He hoards it up, and says, "I'm rich;" and when he waketh, his gold is gone. But give me songs in the night, for they are songs I sing forever.

Again, the songs we warble in the night are those that show we have *real faith* in God. Many men have just enough faith to trust God as far as they can see him, and they always sing as far as they can see providence go right: but true faith can sing when its possessors can not see. It can take hold of God when they can not discern him.

Songs in the night, too, prove that we have *true courage*. Many sing by day who are silent by night; they are afraid of thieves and robbers; but the Christian who sings in the night proves himself to be a courageous character. It is the bold Christian who can sing God's sonnets in the darkness.

He who can sing songs in the night, too, proves that he has *true love* to Christ. It is not love to Christ to praise him while every body else praises him; to walk arm in arm with him when he has the crown on his head is no great deed, I wot; to walk with Christ in rags is something. To believe in Christ when he is shrouded in darkness, to stick hard and fast by the Saviour when all men speak ill of him and forsake him—that is true faith. He who singeth a song to Christ in the night, singeth the best song in all the world; for he singeth from the heart.

IV. I am afraid of wearying you; therefore I will not dwell on the excellences of night songs, but just, in the last place, SHOW YOU THEIR USE.

Well, beloved, it is very useful to sing in the night of our troubles, first, *because it will cheer ourselves*. When you were boys living in the country, and had some distance to go alone at night, don't you remember how you whistled and sang to keep your courage up? Well, what we do in the natural world we ought to do in the spiritual. There is nothing like singing to keep your spirits alive. When we have been in trouble, we have often thought ourselves to be well-nigh overwhelmed with difficulty; and we have said, "Let us have a song." We have begun to sing; and Martin Luther says, "The devil can not bear singing." That is about the truth; he does not like music. It was so in Saul's days: an evil spirit rested

on Saul; but when David played on his harp, the evil spirit went away from him. This is usually the case: if we can begin to sing we shall remove our fears. I like to hear servants sometimes humming a tune at their work; I love to hear a plowman in the county singing as he goes along with his horses. Why not? You say he has no time to praise God; but he can sing a song—surely he can sing a Psalm, it will take no more time. Singing is the best thing to purge ourselves of evil thoughts. Keep your mouth full of songs, and you will often keep your heart full of praises; keep on singing as long as you can; you will find it a good method of driving away your fears.

Sing in trouble, again, because *God loves to hear his people sing in the night*. At no time does God love his children's singing so well as when they give a serenade of praise under his window, when he has hidden his face from them, and will not appear to them at all. They are all in darkness; but they come under his window, and they begin to sing there. "Ah!" says God, "that is true faith, that can make them sing praises when I will not look at them; I know there is some faith in them, that makes them lift up their hearts, even when I seem to take away all my tender mercies and all my compassions." Sing, Christian, for singing pleases God. In heaven, we read, the angels are employed in singing: do you be employed in the same way; for by no better means can you gratify the Almighty One of Israel, who stoops from his high throne to observe the poor creature of a day.

Sing, again, for another reason: because *it will cheer your companions*. If any of them are in the valley and in the darkness with you, it will be a great help to comfort them. John Bunyan tells us, that as Christian was going through the valley he found it a dreadful dark place, and terrible demons and goblins were all about him, and poor Christian thought he must perish for certain; but just when his doubts were the strongest, he heard a sweet voice; he listened to it, and he heard a man in front of him saying, "Yea, when I pass through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." Now, that man did not know who was near him, but he was unwittingly singing to cheer a man behind. Christian, when you are in trouble, sing; you do not know who is near you. Sing! Perhaps you will get a good companion by it. Sing! Perhaps there will be many a heart cheered by your song. There is some broken spirit, it may be, that will be bound up by your sonnets. Sing! There is some poor distressed brother, perhaps, shut up in the Castle of Despair, who, like King Richard, will hear your song inside the walls, and sing to you again, and you may be the means of getting him a ransom. Sing, Christian, wherever you go; try, if you can, to wash your face every morning in a bath of praise. When you go down from your chamber, never go to look on man till you have first looked on your God; and when you have looked on him, seek to come down with a face beaming with joy; carry a smile, for you will cheer up many a poor way-worn pilgrim by it. And when thou fastest, Christian—when thou hast an aching heart, do not appear to men to fast; appear cheerful and happy; anoint thy head, and wash thy face; be happy for thy brother's sake; it will tend to cheer him up, and help him through the valley.

One more reason; and I know it will be a good one for you. Try and sing in the night, Christian, for *that is one of the best arguments in all the world in favor of you religion*. Our divines, now-a-days, spend a great deal of time in trying to prove Christianity against those who disbelieve it. I should like to have seen Paul trying that! Elymas the sorcerer withstood him: how did our friend Paul treat him? He said "O, full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" That is about the politeness such men ought to have who deny God's truth. We start with this assumption: we will prove that the Bible is God's word, but we are not going to prove God's word. If you do not like to believe it, we will shake hands, and bid you good-by; we will not argue with you. The gospel has gained little by discussion. The greatest piece of folly on earth has been to send a man round the country, to follow another up who has been lecturing on infidelity just to make himself notorious.

Why, let them lecture on; this is a free country; why should we follow them about? The truth will win the day. Christianity need not wish for controversy; it is strong enough for it, if it wishes it; but that is not God's way. God's direction is, "Preach, teach, dogmatize." Do not stand disputing; claim a divine mission; tell men that God says it, and there leave it. Say to them, "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned;" and when you have done that, you have done enough. For what reason should our missionaries stand disputing with Brahmins? Why should they be wasting their time by attempting to refute first this dogma, and then another, of heathenism? Why not just go and say, "The God whom ye ignorantly worship, I declare unto you; believe me, and you will be saved; believe me not, and the Bible says you are lost." And then, having thus asserted God's word, say, "I leave it, I declare it unto you; it is a thing for you to believe, not a thing for you to reason about." Religion is not a thing merely for your intellect; a thing to prove your own talent upon, by making a syllogism on it; it is a thing that demands your faith. As a messenger of heaven, I demand that faith; if you do not choose to give it, on your own head be the doom, if there be such; if there be not, you are prepared to risk it. But I have done my duty; I have told you the truth; that is enough, and there I leave it. O, Christian, instead of disputing, let me tell thee how to prove your religion. Live it out! live it out! Give the external as well as the internal evidence; give the external evidence of you own life. You are sick; there is your neighbor, who laughs at religion; let him come into your house. When he was sick, he said, "O, send for the doctor;" and there he was fretting, and fuming, and whining, and making all manner of noises. When you are sick, send for him; tell him that you are resigned to the Lord's will; that you will kiss the chastening rod; that you will take the cup, and drink it, because your Father gives it. You need not make a boast of this, or it will lose all its power; but do it because you can not help doing it. Your neighbor will say, "There is something in that." And when you come to the borders of the grave—he was there once, and you heard how he shrieked, and how frightened he was—give him your hand, and say to him, "Ah! I

have a Christ that will do to die by; I have a religion that will make me sing in the night." Let him hear how you can sing, "Victory, victory, victory!" through him that loved you. I tell you, we may preach fifty thousand sermons to prove the gospel, but we shall not prove it half so well as you will through singing in the night. Keep a cheerful frame; keep a happy heart; keep a contented spirit; keep you eye up, and your heart aloft, and you will prove Christianity better than all the Butlers, and all the wise men that ever lived. Give them the analogy of a holy life, and then you will prove religion to them; give them the evidence of internal piety, developed externally, and you will give the best possible proof of Christianity. Try and sing songs in the night; for they are so rare, that if thou canst sing them, thou wilt honor thy God, and bless thy friends.

I have been preaching all his while to the children of God, and now there is a sad turn that this subject must take, just one moment or so, and then we have done. There is a night coming, in which there will be no songs of joy—a night in which no one will even attempt to lead a chorus. There is a night coming when a song shall be sung, of which misery shall be the subject, set to the music of wailing and gnashing of teeth; there is a night coming when woe, unutterable woe, shall be the matter of an awful terrific *miserere*—when the orchestra shall be composed of damned men, and howling fiends, and yelling demons; and mark you, I speak what I do know, and testify the Scriptures. There is a night coming for a poor soul within this house to-night; and unless he repent, it will be a night wherein he will have to growl, and howl, and sigh, and cry, and moan and groan forever. "Who is that?" sayest thou. Thyself, my friend, if thou art godless and Christless. "What!" sayest thou, "am I in danger of hellfire?" In danger, my friend! Ay, more: thou art damned already. So saith the Bible. Sayest thou, "And can you leave me without telling me what I must do to be saved? Can you believe that I am in danger of perishing, and not speak to me?" I trust not; I hope I shall never preach a sermon without speaking to the ungodly, for O! how I love them. Swearer, your mouth is black with oaths now; and if you die, you must go on blaspheming throughout eternity, and be punished for it throughout eternity. But list to me, blasphemer! Dost thou repent to-night? Dost thou feel thyself to have sinned against God? Dost thou feel a desire to be saved? List thee! thou mayest be saved; thou mayest be saved as much as any one that is now here. There is another: she has sinned against God enormously, and she blushes even now, while I mention her case. Dost thou repent of thy sin? There is hope for thee. Remember him who said, "Go, and sin no more." Drunkard! But a little while ago thou wast reeling down the street, and now thou repentest. Drunkard! There is hope for thee. "Well," sayest thou, "What shall I do to be saved?" Then again let me tell thee the old way of salvation. It is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou art saved." We can get no further than that, do what we will; this is the sum and substance of the gospel. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and be baptized, and thou shalt be saved. So saith the Scripture. Dost thou ask, "What is it to believe?" Am I to tell thee again? I can not tell thee, except that it is to look at

Christ. Dost thou see that Saviour there? He is hanging on the cross; there are his dear hands, pierced with nails, nailed to a tree, as if they were waiting for thy tardy footsteps, because thou wouldst not come. Dost thou see his dear head there? It is hanging on his breast, as if he would lean over, and kiss thy poor soul. Dost thou see his blood, gushing from his head, his hands, his feet, his side? It is running after thee; because he well knew that thou wouldst never run after it. Sinner! To be saved, all that thou hast to do is, to look at that Man. Canst thou do it now? "No," sayest thou, "I do not believe it will save me." Ah! my poor friend, try it; and if thou dost not succeed, when thou hast tried it, I am bondsman for my Lord—here, take me, bind me, and I will suffer thy doom for thee. This I will venture to say: if thou castest thyself on Christ, and he deserteth thee, I will be willing to go halves with thee in all thy misery and woe. For he will never do it: never, *never*, NEVER!

"No sinner was ever empty sent back,
who came seeking mercy for Jesus' sake."

I beseech thee, therefore, try him, and thou shalt not try him in vain, but shalt find him "able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him." Thou shalt be saved now, and saved forever.

May God give you his blessing! I can not preach as earnestly as I could wish; but, nevertheless, may God accept these words, and send them home to some hearts this night! and may you, my dear brethren and sister, have songs in the night!

Spiritual Revival, the Want of the Church

A Sermon

(No. 2598)

Intended for Reading on Lord's-Day, November 27th, 1898,

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At Whitefield's Tabernacle, Tottenham Court Road,

at the Centenary Commemoration, on Tuesday Afternoon, November 11th, 1856.

NOTE: This edition of this sermon is taken from an earlier published edition of Spurgeon's 1856 message. The sermon that appears in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. 44, was edited and abbreviated somewhat. For edition we have restored the fuller text of the earlier published edition, while retaining a few of the editorial refinements of the *Met Tab* edition.

"O Lord, revive thy work."—[Habakkuk 3:2](#).

All true religion is the work of God: it is pre-eminently so. If he should select out of his works that which he esteems most of all, he would select true religion. He regards the work of grace as being even more glorious than the works of nature; and he is, therefore, especially careful that it shall always be known, so that if any one dare to deny it, they shall do so in the teeth of repeated testimonies to the contrary, that God is indeed the author of salvation in the world and in the hearts of men, and that religion is the effect of grace, and is the work of God. I believe the Eternal might sooner forgive the sin of ascribing the creation of the heavens and of the earth to an idol, than that of ascribing the works of grace to the efforts of the flesh, or to any thing else but God. It is a sin of the greatest magnitude to suppose that there is aught in the heart which can be acceptable unto God, save that which God himself has first created there. When I deny God's work in creating the sun, I deny one truth; but when I deny that he works grace in the heart, I deny a hundred truths in one; for in the denial of that one great truth, that God is the author of good in the souls of men, I have denied all the doctrines which make up the great articles of faith, and have run in the very teeth of the whole testimony of sacred Scripture. I trust, beloved, that many of us have been taught, that if there be any thing in our souls which can carry us to heaven, it is God's work, and, moreover, that if there be aught that is good and excellent found in his church, it is entirely God's work, from first to last. We firmly believe that it is God who quickens the soul which was dead, positively "dead in trespasses and sins;" that it is God who maintains the life of that soul, and God who consummates and perfects that life in the home of the blessed, in the land of the hereafter. We ascribe nothing to man, but all to God. We dare not for a moment think that the conversion of the soul is effected either by its own effort or by the efforts of others; we conceive that there are means and agencies employed, but

that the work is, both alpha and omega, wholly the Lord's. We think, therefore, that we are right in applying the text to the work of divine grace, both in the heart and in the church at large; and we think we can have no subject more appropriate for our consideration than the text. "O Lord, revive thy work!"

First, beloved, trusting that the Spirit of God will help me, I shall endeavor to apply the text *to our own souls personally*, and then *to the state of the Church at large*, for it well needs that the Lord should revive his work in its midst.

I. First, then, to OUR OWN SOULS PERSONALLY.

In this matter, we should begin at home. We too often flog the church, when the whip should be laid on our own shoulders. We drag the church, like a colossal culprit, to the altar; we bind her, and try to execute her at once; we bind her hands fast, and tear off thongfull after thongfull of her quivering flesh—finding fault with her where there is none, and magnifying her little errors; while we too often forget ourselves. Let us, therefore, commence with ourselves, remembering that we are part of the church, and that our own want of revival is in some measure the cause of that want in the church at large. Now, I directly charge the great majority of professing Christians—and I take the charge to myself also—with a need of a revival of piety in these days. I shall lay the charge before you very peremptorily, because I think I have abundant grounds to prove it. I believe that the mass of Christian men in this age need a revival, and my reasons are these:

In the first place, look *at the conduct and conversation* of too many who profess to be the children of God. It ill becomes any man who occupies the sacred place of a pulpit to flatter his hearers, and I shall not attempt to do so. The evil lies with too many of you who unite yourselves with Christian churches, and in practically protesting against your profession. It has become very common now-a-days to join a church; go where you may you find professing Christians who sit down at some Lord's table or another; but are there fewer cheats than there used to be? Are there less frauds committed? Do we find morality more extensive? Do we find vice entirely at an end? No, we do not. The age is as immoral as any that preceded it; there is still as much sin, although it is more cloaked and hidden. The outside of the sepulcher may be whiter; but within, the bones are just as rotten as before. Society is not one whit improved. Those men who, in our popular magazines, give us a true picture of the state of London life, are to be believed and credited, for they do not stretch the truth—they have no motive for so doing; and the picture which they give of morality of this great city is certainly appalling. It is a huge criminal, full of sin; and I say this, that if all the profession in London were true profession, it would not be nearly such a wicked place as it is; it could not be, by any manner of means.

My brethren, it is well known—and who dares deny it that is not too partial, and who will not speak willful falsehood?—it is well known that it is not in these days a sufficient guaranty even of a man's honesty, that he is a member of a church. It is a hard thing for

Christian ministers to say, but we must say it, and if friends say it not, enemies will; and better that the truth should be spoken in our own midst, that men may see that we are ashamed of it, than that they should hear us impudently deny what we must confess to be true! O sirs, the lives of too many members of Christian churches give us grave cause to suspect that there is none of the life of godliness in them all! Why that reaching after money, why that covetousness, why that following of the crafts and devices of a wicked world, why that clutching here and clutching there, that grinding of the faces of the poor, that stamping down of the workman, and such like things, if men are truly what they profess to be? God in heaven knows that what I speak is true, and too many here know it themselves. If they be Christians, at least they want revival; if there be life in them, it is but a spark that is covered up with heaps of ashes; it needs to be fanned, ay, and it needs to be stirred also, that, haply, some of the ashes may be removed and the spark may have place to live.

The Church as a whole needs revival in the persons of its members. The members of Christian churches are not what once they were. It is fashionable to be religious now; persecution is taken away; and ah! I had almost said, the gates of the church were taken away with it. The church has, with few exceptions, no gates now; persons come in, and go out of it, just as they would march through St. Paul's cathedral, and make it a very place of traffic, instead of regarding it as a select and sacred spot, to be apportioned to the holy of the Lord, and to the excellent of the earth, in whom is God's delight. If this be not true, you know how to treat it; you need not confess to sin you have not committed; but if it be true, and true in your case, O! humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God; ask him to search and try you, that if you be not his child you may be helped to renounce your profession, lest it should be to you but the gaudy pageantry of death, and mere tinsel and gewgaw in which to go to hell. If you be his, ask that he may give you more grace, that you may renounce these faults and follies, and turn into him with full purpose of heart, as the effect of a revived godliness in your soul.

Again, where the *conduct* of professing Christians is consistent, let me ask the question, Does not *the conversation* of many a professor lead us either to doubt the truthfulness of his piety, or else to pray that his piety may be revived? Have you noticed the conversation of too many who think themselves Christians? You might live with them from the first of January to the end of December, and you would never be tired of religion for what you would hear of it. They scarcely mention the name of Jesus Christ at all. On Sabbath afternoon all the ministers are talked over, faults are found with this one and the other, and all kinds of conversation take place, which they call religious, because it is concerning religious places. But do they ever—

"Talk of all he did, and said,
and suffer'd for us here below;
The path he mark'd for us to tread,

And whet he's doing for us now"?

Do you often hear the salutation addressed to you by your brother Christian, "Friend, how doth thy soul prosper?" When we step into each other's houses, do we begin to talk concerning the cause and truth of God? Do you think that God would now stoop from heaven to listen to the conversation of his church, as once he did, when it was said, "The Lord hearkened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon his name?" I solemnly declare, as the result of thorough, and, I trust, impartial observation, that the conversation of Christians, while it can not be condemned on the score of morality, must almost invariably be condemned on the score of Christianity. We talk too little about our Lord and Master.

That ugly word "sectarianism" has crept into our midst, and we must say nothing about Christ, because we are afraid of being called sectarians. I am a sectarian, and hope to be so until I die, and to glory in it; for I can not see, now-a-days, that a man can be a Christian, thoroughly in earnest, without winning for himself the title. Why, we must not talk of this doctrine, because perhaps such a one disbelieves it; we must not notice such and such a truth in Scripture, because such and such a friend doubts or denies it; and so we drop all the great and grand topics which used to be the staple commodities of godly talk, and begin to speak of any thing else, because we feel that we can agree better on worldly things than we can on spiritual. Is not that the truth? and is it not a sad sin with some of us, that we have need to pray unto God, "O Lord, revive thy work in my soul, that my conversation may be more Christlike, seasoned with salt, and kept by the Holy Spirit?"

And yet a third remark here. There are some whose conduct is all that we could wish, whose conversation is for the most part unctuous with the gospel, and savory of truth; but even they will confess to a third charge, which I must now sorrowfully bring against them and against myself, namely, that there is *too little real communion with Jesus Christ*. If, thanks to divine grace, we are enabled to keep our conduct tolerably consistent, and our lives unblemished, yet how much have we to cry out against ourselves, from a lack of that holy fellowship with Jesus which is the high mark of the true child of God! Brethren, let me ask some of you how long it is since you have had a love-visit from Jesus Christ—how long since you could say, "My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies?" How long is it since "he brought you into his banqueting house, and his banner over you was love?" Perhaps some of you will be able to say, "It was but this morning that I saw him; I beheld his face with joy, and was ravished with his countenance." But I fear the greatest part of you will have to say, "Ah, sir, for months I have been without the shinings of his countenance." What have you been doing, then, and what has been your way of life? Have you been groaning every day? Have you been weeping every minute? "No!" Then you ought to have been. I can not understand how your piety can be of any very brilliant order, if you can live without the sunlight of Christ, and yet be happy.

Christians will sometimes lose the realization of Jesus; the connection between themselves and Christ will at times be severed, as to their own conscious enjoyment of it; but they will always groan and cry when they lose their Jesus. What! is Christ thy Brother, and does he live in thine house, and yet thou hast not spoken to him for a month? I fear there is little love between thee and thy Brother, for thou hast had no conversation with him for so long. What! is Christ the Husband of his church, and has she had no fellowship with him for all this time? Brethren, let me not condemn you, let me not even judge you, but let your conscience speak. Mine shall, and so shall yours. Have we not too much forgotten Christ? Have we not lived too much without him? Have we not been contented with the world, instead of desiring Christ? Have we been, all of us, like that little ewe lamb that did drink out of the master's cup, and feed from his table? Have we not rather been content to stray upon the mountains, feeding anywhere but at home? I fear many of the troubles of our heart spring from want of communion with Jesus. Not many of us are the kind of men who, living with Jesus, his secrets must know. O! no; we live too much without the light of his countenance; and are too happy when he is gone from us. Let us, each of us, then, for I am sure we have each of us need, in some measure, put up the prayer, "O Lord, revive thy work!" Ah! methinks I hear one professor saying, "Sir, I need no revival in my heart; I am every thing I wish to be." Down on your knees, my brethren! down on your knees for him! He is the man that most needs to be prayed for. He says that he needs no revival in his soul; but he needs a revival of his humility, at any rate. If he supposes that he is all that he ought to be, and if he knows that he is all he wishes to be, he has very mean notions of what a Christian is, or of what a Christian should be, and very unjust ideas of himself. Those are in the best condition who, while they know they want reviving, yet feel their condition and groan under it, and pray to the Lord to revive them.

Now, I think I have in some degree substantiated my charge, I fear with too strong arguments; and now let me notice, that the text has something in it which I trust that each of us has. Here is not only an evil implied in these words—"O Lord, revive thy work;" but there is an evil evidently felt. You see Habakkuk knew how to groan about it. "O Lord," said he, "revive thy work!" Ah! we many of us want revival, but few of us feel that we want it. It is a blessed sign of life within, when we know how to groan over our departures from the living God. It is easy to find by hundreds those that have departed, but you must count those by ones who know how to groan over their departure. The true believer, however, when he discovers that he needs revival, will not be happy; he will begin at once that incessant and continuous strain of cries and groans which will at last prevail with God, and bring the blessing of revival down. He will, days and nights in succession, cry, "O Lord revive thy work!"

Let me mention some groaning times, which will always occur to the Christian who needs revival. I am sure he will always groan, *when he looks upon what the Lord did for him*

of old. When he recollects the Mizars and the Hermons, and those places where the Lord appeared of old to him, saying, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love," I know he will never look back to them without tears. If he is what he should be as a Christian, or if he thinks he is not in a right condition, he will always weep when he remembers God's loving-kindness of old. O! whenever the soul has lost fellowship with Jesus, it can not bear to think of the "chariots of Aminadab;" it can not endure to think of "the banqueting house," for it hath not been there so long; and when it does think of it, it says,

"Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and his Word?
"What peaceful hours I then enjoy'd!
How sweet their memory still!
But now I find an aching void
The world can never fill."

When one who is in this state hears a sermon which relates the glorious experience of the believer who is in a healthy state, he will put his hand upon his heart, and say, "Ah! such was my experience once; but those happy days are gone. My sun is set; those stars which once lit up my darkness are all quenched; O! that I might again behold him; O! that I might once more see his face; O! for those sweet visits from on high; O! for the grapes of Eschol once more." And by the rivers of Babylon you will sit down and weep. You will weep, when you remember your goings up to Zion—when the Lord was precious to you, when he laid bare his heart, and was pleased also to fill your heart with the fullness of his love. Such times will be groaning times, when you remember "the years of the right hand of the Most High."

Again, to a Christian who wants revival, *ordinances* will be also groaning times. He will go up to the house of God; but he will say of himself when he comes away, "Ah! how changed! When I once went with the multitude that kept holy day every word was precious. When the song ascended my soul had wings, and up it flew to its nest among the stars; when the prayer was offered, I could devoutly say, 'Amen;' but now the preacher preaches as he did before; my brethren are as profited as once they were; but the sermon is dry to me, and dull. I find no fault with the preacher; I know the fault is in myself. The song is just the same—as sweet the melody, as pure the harmony; but ah! my heart is heavy; my harp strings are broken, and I can not sing;" and the Christian will return from those blessed means of grace, sighing and sobbing, because he knows he wants revival. More especially at the Lord's Supper he will think, when he sits at the table, "O! what seasons I once had here! In breaking the bread and drinking the wine my Master was present." He will bethink himself how his soul was even carried to the seventh heaven, and the house was made "the very house of God and the gate of heaven." "But now," he says, "it is bread, dry bread to me; it is wine, tasteless

wine, with none of the sweetness of paradise in it; I drink, but all in vain. No thoughts of Christ. My heart will not rise; my soul can not heave a thought half way to him!" And then the Christian will begin to groan again—"O Lord revive thy work!"

But I shall not detain you upon that subject. Those of you who know that you are in Christ, but feel that you are not in a desirable condition, because you do not love him enough and have not faith in him which you desire to have, I would just ask you this: Do you groan over it? Can you groan now? When you feel your heart is empty, is it "an aching void?" When you feel that your garments are stained, can you wash those garments with tears? When you think your Lord is gone, can you hang out the black flag of sorrow, and cry, "O my Jesus! O my Jesus! art thou gone?" If thou canst, then I bid thee do it. Do it, do it; and may God be pleased to give thee grace to continue to do it, until a happier era shall dawn in the reviving of thy soul!

And remark, in the last place, upon this point, that the soul, when it is really brought to feel its own sad estate, because of its declension and departure from God, *is never content without turning its groanings into prayer*, and without addressing the prayer to the right quarter: "O Lord, revive thy work!" Some of you, perhaps, will say, "Sir, I feel my need of revival; I intend to set to work this very afternoon, as soon as I shall retire from this place, to revive my soul." Do not say it; and, above all things, do not try to do it, for you never will do it. Make no resolutions as to what you will do; your resolutions will as certainly be broken as they are made, and your broken resolutions will but increase the number of your sins. I exhort you, instead of trying to revive yourself, to offer prayers. Say not, "I will revive myself," but cry, "O Lord, revive *thy* works!" And let me solemnly tell thee, thou hast not yet felt what it is to decline, thou dost not yet know how sad is thine estate, otherwise thou wouldest not talk of reviving thyself. If thou didst know thy own position, thou wouldest as soon expect to see the wounded soldier on the battle-field heal himself without medicine, or convey himself to the hospital when his limbs are shot away, as thou wouldest expect to revive thyself without the help of God. I bid thee not do any thing, nor seek to do any thing, until first of all thou hast addressed Jehovah himself by mighty prayer—until thou hast cried out, "O Lord, revive thy work!" Remember, he that first made you must keep you alive; and he that has kept you alive must restore more life to you. He that has preserved you from going down to the pit, when your feet have been sliding, can alone set you again upon a rock, and establish your goings. Begin, then, by humbling yourself—giving up all hope of reviving yourself as a Christian, but beginning at once with firm prayer and earnest supplication to God: "O Lord, what I can not do, do thou! O Lord, revive thy work!"

Christian brethren, I leave these matters with you. Give them the attention they deserve. If I have erred, and in aught judged you too harshly, God shall forgive me, for I have meant it honestly. But if I have spoken truly, lay it to your hearts, and turn your houses into a "Bochim." Weep men apart, and women apart, husbands apart, and wives apart. Weep,

weep, my brethren: "It is a sad thing to depart from the living God." Weep, and may he bring you back to Zion, that you may one day return like Israel, not with weeping, but with songs of everlasting joy!

II. And now I come to the second part of the subject, upon which I must be more brief. In THE CHURCH ITSELF, taken as a body, this prayer ought to be one incessant and solemn litany: "O Lord, revive thy work!"

In the present era there is *a sad decline of the vitality of godliness*. This age has become too much the age of form, instead of the age of life. I date the hour of life from this day one hundred years ago when the first stone was laid of this building in which we now worship God. Then was the day of life divine, and of power, sent down from on high. God had clothed Whitefield with power: he was preaching with a majesty and a might of which one could scarcely think mortal could ever be capable; not because he was any thing in himself, but because his Master girded him with might. After Whitefield there was a succession of great and holy men. But now, sirs, we have fallen upon the dregs of time. *Men* are the rarest things in all this world; we have not many left now. We have no men in government hardly, to conduct our politics, and scarcely any men in religion. We have the *things* that perform their duties, as they are called; we have the good, and, perhaps, the honest things, who in the regular routine go on like pack-horses with their bells, for ever in the old style; but men who dare to be singular, because to be singular is generally to be right in a wicked world, are not very many in this age. Compared with the puritanic times even where are our divines? Could we marshal together our Howes and our Charnocks? Could we gather together such names as I could mention about fifty at a time? I trow not. Nor could we bring together such a galaxy of grace and talent as that which immediately followed Whitefield. Think of Rowland Hill, Newton, Toplady, Doddridge, and numbers of others whom time would fail me to mention. They are gone, they are gone; their venerated dust sleeps in the earth; and where are their successors? Ask where, and the echo shall reply, "Where?" There are none. Successors of them, where are they? God hath not yet raised them up, or, if he have, you have not yet found out where they are.

There is, nowadays, much preaching, and what is it? O Lord, help thy servant to preach, and teach him by thy Spirit what to say." Then out comes the manuscript, and they read it. A pure insult to Almighty God! We have preaching, but it is of this order. It is not preaching at all. It is speaking very beautifully and very finely, possibly eloquently, in some sense of the word; but where is the right down preaching, such as Whitefield's? Have you ever read one of his sermons? You will not think him eloquent; you can not think him so. His expressions were rough, frequently very coarse and unconnected; there was very much declamation about him; it was a great part, indeed, of his speech. But where lay his eloquence? Not in the words you read, but in the tone in which he delivered them, and in the earnestness with which he felt them, and in the tears which ran down his cheeks, and in the pouring out of

his soul. The reason why he was eloquent was just what the word means. He was eloquent, because he spoke right out from his heart—from the innermost depths of the man. You could see when he spoke that he meant what he said. He did not speak as a trade, or as a mere machine, but he preached what he felt to be the truth, and what he could not help preaching. When you heard him preach, you could not help feeling that he was a man who would die if he could not preach, and with all his might call to men and say, "Come! come! come to Jesus Christ, and believe on him!"

Now, that is just the lack of these times. Where, where is earnestness now? It is neither in pulpit nor yet in pew, in such a measure as we desire it; and it is a sad, sad age, when earnestness is scoffed at, and when that very zeal which ought to be the prominent characteristic of the pulpit is regarded as enthusiasm and fanaticism. I ask God to make us all such fanatics as most men laugh at—to make us all just such enthusiasts as many despise. We reckon it the greatest fanaticism in the world to go to hell, the greatest enthusiasm upon earth to love sin better than righteousness; and we think those neither fanatics nor enthusiasts who seek to obey God rather than man, and follow Christ in all his ways. We repeat, that one sad proof that the church wants revival is the absence of that death-like, solemn earnestness which was once seen in Christian pulpits.

The absence of sound doctrine is another proof of our want of revival. Do you know who are called Antinomians now, who are called "hypers," who are laughed at, who are rejected as being unsound in the faith? Why, the men that once were the orthodox are now the heretics. We can turn back to the records of our Puritan fathers, to the articles of the Church of England, to the preaching of Whitefield, and we can say of that preaching, it is the very thing we love; and the doctrines which were then uttered are—and we dare to say it everywhere—the very self-same doctrines that he proclaimed. But because we choose to proclaim them, we are thought singular and strange; and the reason is, because sound doctrine hath to a great degree ceased. It began in this way. First of all the truths were fully believed, but the angles were a little taken off. The minister believed election, but he did not use the word, for fear it should in some degree disturb the equanimity of the deacon in the green pew in the corner. He believed that all men were depraved, but he did not say it positively, because if he did, there was a lady who had subscribed so much to the chapel—she would not come again; so that while he did believe it, and did say it in some sense, he rounded it a little. Afterward it came to this. Ministers said, "We believe these doctrines, but we do not think them profitable to preach to the people. They are quite true: free grace is true; the great doctrines of grace that were preached by Christ, by Paul, by Augustine, by Calvin, and down to this age by their successors, are true; but they had better be kept back—they must be very cautiously dealt with; they are very high and dreadful doctrines, and they must not be preached; we believe them but we dare not speak them out." After that it came to something worse. They said within themselves, "Well, if these doctrines will not do for us to preach,

perhaps they are not true at all;" and going one step further, they said they dare not preach them. They did not actually say it, perhaps, but they began just to hint that they were not true; then they went one step further, giving us something which they said was the truth; and then they would cast us out of the synagogue, as if they were the rightful owners of it, and we were the intruders. So they have passed on from bad to worse; and if you read the standard divinity of this age, and the standard divinity of Whitefield's day, you will find that the two can not by any possibility stand together. We have got a "new theology." New theology? Why, it is any thing but a *Theology*; it is an ology which hath cast out God utterly and entirely, and enthroned man, as it is the doctrine of man, and not the doctrine of the everlasting God. We want a revival of sound doctrine once more in the midst of the land.

And the church at large, may be, wants *a revival of downright earnestness in its members*. Ye are not the men to fight the Lord's battles yet. Ye have not the earnestness, the zeal, which once the children of God had. Your forefathers were oaken men; ye are willow men. Our people, what are they many of them? Strong in doctrine when they are with strong doctrine men; but they waver when they get with others, and they change as often as they change their company; they are sometimes one thing, and sometimes another. They are not the men to go to the stake and die; they are not the men that know how to die daily, and so are ready for death when it comes.

Look at our prayer-meetings, with here and there a bright exception. Go in. There are six women; scarcely ever enough members come to pray four times. Look at them. Prayer-meetings they are called; *spare* meetings they ought to be called, for sparely enough they are attended. And very few there are that go to our fellowship-meetings, or to any other meetings that we have to help one another in the fear of the Lord. Are they attended at all? I would like to see a newspaper printed somewhere, containing a list of all the persons that went to those meetings during the week in any of our chapels. Ah! my friends, if they should comprise all the Christians in London, you might find that a chapel or two would hold them all. There are few enough that go. We have not earnestness, we have not life, as we once had; if we had, we should be called worse names than we are; we should have viler epithets thrown at us, if we were more true to our Master; we should not have all things quite so comfortable, if we served God better. We are getting the church to be an institution of our land—an honorable institution. Ah! some think it a grand thing when the church becomes an honorable institution! Methinks it shows the church has swerved, when she begins to be very honorable in the eyes of the world. She must still be cast out, she must still be called evil, and still be despised, until that day shall come, when her Lord shall honor her because she has honored him—shall honor her, even in this world, in the day of his appearing.

Beloved, do you think it is true that the church wants reviving? Yes, or no? "No," you say, "not to the extent that you suppose. We think the church is in a good condition. We are not among those who cry, 'The former days were better than these.'" Perhaps; you are

not: you may be far wiser than we are, and therefore you are able to see those various sings of goodness which are to us so small that we are not able to discover them. You may suppose that the church is in a good condition; if so, of course you can not sympathize with me in preaching from such a text, and urging you to use such a prayer. But there are others of you who are frequently prone to cry, "The church wants reviving." Let me bid you, instead of grumbling at your minister, instead of finding fault with the different parts of the church, to cry, "O Lord revive thy work!" "O!" says one, "if we had another minister. O! if we had another kind of worship. O! if we had a different sort of preaching." Just as if that were all! It is, "O if the lord would come into the hearts of the men you have got. O! if he would make the forms you do use full of power." You do not want fresh ways of fresh machinery; you want the life in what you have. There is an engine on a railway; a train has to be moved. "Bring another engine," says one, "and another, and another." The engines are brought, but the train does not move at all. Light the fire, and get the steam up, that is what you want; not fresh engines. We do not want fresh ministers, or fresh plans, or fresh ways, though many might be invented, to make the church better; we only want life in what we have got. Given, the very man who has emptied your chapel; given, the self-same person that brought your prayer-meeting low; God can make the chapel crowded to the doors yet, and give thousands of souls to that very man. It is not a new man that is wanted; it is the life of God in him. Do not be crying out for something new; it will no more succeed, of itself, than what you have. Cry, "O Lord, revive thy work!"

I have noticed in different churches, that the minister has thought first of this contrivance, then of that. He tried one plan, and thought that would succeed; then he tried another; that was not it. Keep to the old plan, but get life in it. We do not want anything new; "the old is better"—let us keep to it. But we want life in the old. "O!" men cry, "we have nothing but the shell; they are going to give us a new shell." No, sirs, we will keep the old one, but we will have the life in the shell too; we will have the old thing; but we must, or else we will throw thee old away, have the life in the old. O! that God would give us life. The church wants fresh revivals. O! for the days of Cambuslang again, when Whitefield preached with power. O! for the days when in this place hundreds were converted sometimes under Whitefield's sermons. It has been know that two thousand credible cases of conversion have happened under one solitary discourse. O! for the age when eyes should be strained, and ears should be ready to receive the word of God, and when men should drink in the word of life, as it is indeed, the very water of life, which God gives to dying souls! O! for the age of deep feeling—the age of deep, thorough-going earnestness! Let us ask God for it; let us plead with him for it. Perhaps he has the man, or the men, somewhere, who will shake the world yet; perhaps even now he is about to pour forth a mighty influence upon men, which shall make the church as wonderful in this age, as it ever was in any age that has passed. God grant it, for Christ's sake! Amen.