

THE TWO EFFECTS OF THE GOSPEL NO. 26

A SERMON
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AT EXETER HALL, STRAND

“For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish; to the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?”
2 Corinthians 2:15-16

THESE are the words of Paul, speaking on the behalf of himself and his brethren, the apostles, and they are true concerning all those who by the Spirit are chosen, qualified, and thrust into the vineyard to preach God’s Gospel. I have often admired the fourteenth verse of this chapter, especially when I have remembered from whose lips the words fell, “Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.”

Picture Paul, the aged, the man who had been beaten five times with “forty stripes save one,” who had been dragged forth for dead, the man of great sufferings, who had passed through whole seas of persecution—only think of him saying, at the close of his ministerial career, “Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ”!

To triumph when shipwrecked, to triumph when scourged, to triumph in the stocks, to triumph under the stones, to triumph amidst the hiss of the world, to triumph when he was driven from the city and shook off the dust from his feet, to triumph at all times in Christ Jesus! Now, if some ministers of modern times should talk thus, we would think little of it, for they enjoy the world’s applause.

They can always go to their place in ease and peace. They have an admiring people and no open foes against them, against them a dog does move his tongue, everything is safe and pleasant. For them to say, “Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph” is a very little thing. But for one like Paul, so trampled on, so tried, so distressed, to say it—then, we say, out spoke a hero—here is a man who had true faith in God and in the divinity of his mission.

And my brethren, how sweet is that consolation which Paul applied to his own heart amid all his troubles. “Notwithstanding all,” he says, “God makes known the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.” Ah! with this thought, a minister may lay his head upon his pillow, “God makes manifest the savour of his knowledge.” With this he may shut his eyes when his career is over, and with this he may open them in heaven, “God hath made known by me the savour of his knowledge in every place.”

Then follow the words of my text, of which I shall speak, dividing it into three particulars. Our first remark shall be that *although the Gospel is “a sweet savour” in every place, yet it produces different effects in different persons*, “to one it is the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life.”

Our second observation shall be, that *ministers of the Gospel are not responsible for their success*, for it is said, “We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish.” And thirdly, *the Gospel minister’s place is by no means a light one*, his duty is very weighty, for the apostle himself said, “Who is sufficient for these things?”

I. Our first remark is that THE GOSPEL PRODUCES DIFFERENT EFFECTS.

It must seem a strange thing, but it is strangely true that there is scarcely ever a good thing in the world of which some little evil is not the consequence. Let the sun shine in brilliance—it shall moisten the wax, it shall harden clay. Let it pour down floods of light on the tropics—it will cause vegetation to be extremely luxuriant, the richest and choicest fruits shall ripen, and the fairest of all flowers shall

bloom, but who does not know that there the worst of reptiles and the most venomous snakes are also brought forth?

So it is with the Gospel. Although it is the very sun of righteousness to the world, although it is God's best gift, although nothing can be in the least comparable to the vast amount of benefit which it bestows upon the human race, yet even of that we must confess that sometimes it is the "savour of death unto death."

But then we are not to blame the Gospel for this. It is not the fault of God's truth. It is the fault of those who do not receive it. It is the "savour of life unto life" to every one that listens to its sound with a heart that is open to its reception. It is only "death unto death" to the man who hates the truth, despises it, scoffs at it, and tries to oppose its progress. It is of that character we must speak first.

1. The Gospel is to *some* men "a savour of death unto death." Now, this depends very much upon what the Gospel is, because there are some things called Gospel that are "a savour of death unto death" to everybody that hears them. John Berridge says he preached morality till there was not a moral man left in the village, and there is no way of injuring morality like legal preaching.

The preaching of good works and the exhorting of men to holiness, as the means of salvation, is very much admired in theory, but when brought into practice, it is found not only ineffectual, but more than that—it becomes even "a savour of death unto death."

So it has been found, and I think even the great Chalmers himself confessed that for years and years before he knew the Lord, he preached nothing but morality and precepts. But he never found a drunkard reclaimed by showing him merely the evils of drunkenness. Nor did he find a swearer stop his swearing because he told him the heinousness of the sin.

It was not until he began to preach the love of Jesus, in His great heart of mercy—it was not until he preached the Gospel as it was in Christ, in some of its clearness, fullness, and power, and the doctrine that, "by grace ye are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God," that he ever met with success. But when he did preach salvation by faith, by shoals the drunkards came from their cups, and swearers refrained their lips from evil speaking, thieves became honest men, and unrighteous and ungodly persons bowed to the sceptre of Jesus.

But you must confess, as I said before, that though the Gospel does in the main produce the best effect upon almost all who hear it, either by restraining them from sin or constraining them to Christ, it is a great fact, and a solemn one, upon which I hardly know how to speak this morning, that to some men the preaching of Christ's Gospel is "death unto death" and produces evil instead of good.

(i.) And the first sense is this. *Many men are hardened in their sins by hearing the Gospel.* Oh! 'tis terribly and solemnly true that of all sinners, some sanctuary sinners are the worst. Those who can dive deepest into sin, and have the most quiet consciences and hardest hearts are some who are to be found in God's own house.

I know that a faithful ministry will often prick them and the stern denunciations of a Boanerges will frequently make them shake. I am aware that the Word of God will sometimes make their blood curdle within them, but I know (for I have seen the men) that there are many who turn the grace of God into licentiousness, make even God's truth a stalking-horse for the devil, and abuse God's grace to palliate their sin.

Such men have I found among those who hear the doctrines of grace in their fullness. They will say, "I am elect, therefore I may swear. I am one of those who were chosen of God before the foundation of the world, and therefore I may live as I like." I have seen the man who stood upon the table of a public house and grasping the glass in his hand said, "Mates! I can say more than any of you. I am one of those who are redeemed with Jesus' precious blood," and then he drank his tumbler of ale and danced again before them, and sang vile and blasphemous songs.

Now, that is a man to whom the Gospel is "a savour of death unto death." He hears the truth, but he perverts it. He takes what is intended by God for his good, and what does he do, he commits suicide therewith. That knife which was given him to open the secrets of the Gospel, he drives into his own

heart. That which is the purest of all truth and the highest of all morality, he turns into the panderer of his vice and makes it a scaffold to aid in building up his wickedness and sin.

Are there any of you here like that man—who love to hear *the Gospel*, as you call it and yet live impurely? who can sit down and say you are the children of God and still behave like liege servants of the devil? Be it known unto you, that you are liars and hypocrites, for the truth is not in you at all. “If any man is born of God, he cannot sin.”

God’s elect will not be suffered to fall into continual sin. They will never “turn the grace of God into licentiousness,” but it will be their endeavor, as much as in them lies, to keep near to Jesus. Rest assured of this, “By their fruits ye shall know them.” “A good tree cannot bring forth corrupt fruit; neither can an evil tree bring forth good fruit.”

Such men, however, are continually turning the Gospel into evil. They sin with a high hand from the very fact that they have heard what they consider excuses for their vice. There is nothing under heaven, I conceive, more liable to lead men astray than a perverted Gospel. A truth perverted is generally worse than a doctrine which all know to be false. As fire, one of the most useful of the elements, can also cause the fiercest of conflagrations, so the Gospel, the best thing we have, can be turned to the vilest account. This is one sense in which it is “a savour of death unto death.”

(ii.) But another. It is a fact that *the Gospel of Jesus Christ will increase some men’s damnation at the last great day*. Again, I startle at myself when I have said it. For it seems too horrible a thought for us to venture to utter that the Gospel of Christ will make hell hotter to some men than it otherwise would have been. Men would all have sunk to hell had it not been for the Gospel. The grace of God reclaims “a multitude that no man can number.” It secures a countless army who “shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.” But at the same time, it does to those who reject it, make their damnation even more dreadful. And let me tell you why.

First, *because men sin against greater light* and the light we have is an excellent measure of our guilt. What a heathen might do without a crime, would be the greatest sin to me, because I am taught better. And what some even in London might do with impunity—set down, as it might be, as a sin by God, but not so exceedingly sinful—would be to me the very height of transgression, because I have from my youth up been tutored to piety.

The Gospel comes upon men like the light from heaven. What a wanderer must he be who strays in the light! If he who is blind falls into the ditch, we can pity him, but if a man, with the light on his eyeballs dashes himself from the precipice and loses his own soul, is not pity out of the question?

*“How they deserve the deepest hell,
That slight the joys above!
What chains of vengeance must they feel,
Who laugh at sov’ reign love!”*

It will increase your condemnation, I tell you all, unless you find Jesus Christ to be your Savior, for to have had the light and not to walk by it, shall be *the* condemnation, the very essence of it. This shall be the virus of the guilt—that the “light came into the world and the darkness comprehended it not.” For “men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.”

Again, it must increase your condemnation if you *oppose the Gospel*. If God devises a scheme of mercy and man rises up against it, how great must be his sin? Who shall tell the great guilt incurred by such men as Pilate, Herod, and the Jews? Oh! who shall picture out, or even faintly sketch, the doom of those who cried, “Crucify him! Crucify him!”

And who shall tell what place in hell shall be hot enough for the man who slanders God’s minister, who speaks against His people, who hates His truth, who would, if he could, utterly cut off the godly from the land? Ah! God help the infidel! God help the blasphemer! God save his soul, for of all men least would I choose to be that man.

Think you, sirs, that God will not take account of what men have said? One man has cursed Christ. He has called Him a charlatan. Another has declared, (knowing that he spoke a lie) that the Gospel was false. A third has proclaimed his licentious maxims, and then has pointed to God's Word and said, "There are worse things there!" A fourth has abused God's ministers and held up their imperfections to ridicule.

Think you God shall forget all this at the last day? When His enemies come before Him, shall He take them by the hand and say, "The other day you did call My servant a dog and spit on him, and for this I will give you heaven!" Rather, if the sin has not been cancelled by the blood of Christ, will He not say, "Depart, cursed one, into the hell which you did scoff at. Leave that heaven which you did despise, and learn that though you said there was no God, this right arm shall teach you eternally the lesson that there is one. For he who discovers it not by My works of benevolence shall learn it by My deeds of vengeance—therefore depart again I say!" It *shall* increase men's hell that they have opposed God's truth. Now, is not this a very solemn view of the Gospel, that it is indeed to many "a savour of death unto death"?

(iii.) Yet, once more. I believe *the Gospel makes some men in this world more miserable than they would be*. The drunkard could drink and could revel in his intoxication with greater joy, if he did not hear it said, "All drunkards shall have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone." How jovially the Sabbath-breaker would riot through his Sabbaths, if the Bible did not say, "Remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy!"

And how happily could the libertine and licentious man drive on in his mad career, if he were not told, "The wages of sin is death, and after death the judgment!" But the truth puts the bitter in his cup. The warnings of God freeze the current of his soul. The Gospel is like the skeleton at the Egyptian feast. Though by day he laughed at it, by night he will quiver as the aspen leaf, and when the shades of evening gather around him, he will shake at a whisper.

At the thought of a future state, his joy is spoiled and immortality, instead of being a boon to him, is in its very contemplation the misery of his existence. The sweet woings of mercy are to him no more harmonious than peals of thunder, because he knows he despises them. Yea, I have known some who have been in such misery under the Gospel, because they would not give up their sins, that they have been ready to take their own lives. Oh! terrible thought! The Gospel is "a savour of death unto death."

Unto how many here is it so? Who are now hearing God's Word to be damned by it? Who shall retire to be hardened by the sound of the truth? Why, every man who does not believe it, for unto those that receive it, it is "a savour of life unto life," but to unbelievers, it is a curse and "a savour of death unto death."

2. But blessed be God, the Gospel has a second power. Besides being "death unto death," it is "a savour of life unto life." Ah! my brethren, some of us could speak, if we were allowed this morning, of the Gospel as being "a savour of life" to us. We can look back to that hour when we were "dead in trespasses and sins." In vain all Sinai's thunders, in vain the rousing of the watchmen. We slept on in the death-sleep of our transgressions, nor could an angel have aroused us.

But we look back with joy to that hour when first we stepped within the walls of a sanctuary and savingly heard the voice of mercy. With some of you, it is but a few weeks. I know where you are and who you are. But a few weeks or months ago you too were far from God, but now you are brought to love Him.

Can you look back, my brother Christian, to that very moment when the Gospel was "a savour of life" to you—when you did cast away your sins, renounce the lusts, and turning to God's Word, received it with full purpose of heart? Ah! that hour—of all hours the sweetest! Nothing can be compared therewith.

I knew a person who for forty or fifty years had been completely deaf. Sitting one morning at her cottage door as some vehicle was passing, she thought she heard melodious music. It was not music, it

was but the sound of the vehicle. Her ear had suddenly opened and that rough sound seemed to her like the music of heaven, because it was the first she had heard for so many years.

Even so, the first time our ears were opened to hear the words of love—the assurance of our pardon—we never heard the Word so well as we did then. It never seemed so sweet, and perhaps, even now, we look back and say,

*“What peaceful hours I then enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still!”*

When first it was “a savour of life” unto our souls. Then, beloved, if it ever has been “a savour of life,” it will *always* be “a savour of life,” because it says it is not a savour of life unto death, but “a savour of life unto life.”

Now I must aim another blow at my antagonists the Arminians. I cannot help it. They will have it that sometimes the Gospel is a savour of life unto death. They tell us that a man may receive spiritual life and yet may die eternally. That is to say, a man may be forgiven and yet be punished afterwards. He may be justified from all sin and yet after that, his transgressions can be laid on his shoulders again. A man may be born of God and yet die. A man may be loved of God and yet God may hate him tomorrow.

Oh! I cannot bear to speak of such doctrines of lies. Let those believe them that will. As for me, I so deeply believe in the immutable love of Jesus that I suppose that if one believer were to be in hell, Christ Himself would not long stay in heaven, but would soon cry, “To the rescue! To the rescue!”

Oh! if Jesus Christ were in glory with one of the gems wanting in His crown, and Satan had that gem in hell, Satan would say, “Aha! Prince of Light and Glory, I have one of Your jewels!” And he would hold it up and then he would say, “Aha! You did die for this man, but You had not strength enough to save him. You did love him once—where is Your love? It is not worth having, for You did hate him afterwards!”

And how would he chuckle over that heir of heaven and hold him up and say, “This man was redeemed. Jesus Christ purchased him with His blood” and plunging him in the waves of hell, he would say, “There, purchased one! See how I can rob the Son of God!” And then again he would say, “This man was forgiven. Behold the justice of God! He is to be punished after he is forgiven. Christ suffered for this man’s sins and yet,” says Satan with a malignant joy, “I have him afterwards, for God exacted the punishment twice!”

Shall that e’er be said? Ah! no. It is “a savour of life unto life,” and not of life unto death. Go with your vile gospel, preach it where you please, but my Master said, “I give unto my sheep eternal life.” You give to your sheep temporary life and they lose it. But says Jesus, “I give unto my sheep ETERNAL life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hands.”

I generally wax warm when I get to this subject, because I think few doctrines more vital than that of the perseverance of the saints, for if ever one child of God did perish, or if I knew it were possible that one could, I should conclude at once that I must, and I suppose each of you would do the same. And then where is the joy and happiness of the Gospel?

Again I tell you the Arminian gospel is the shell without the kernel. It is the husk without the fruit and those who love it may take it to themselves. We will not quarrel with them. Let them go and preach it. Let them go and tell poor sinners that if they believe in Jesus they will be damned after all, that Jesus Christ will forgive them, and yet the Father send them to hell.

Go and preach your gospel and who will listen to it? And if they do listen, is it worth their hearing? I say no. For if I am to stand after conversion on the same footing as I did before conversion, then it is of no use for me to have been converted at all. But whom He loves He loves to the end.

*“Once in Christ, in Christ forever;
Nothing from His love can sever.”*

It is “a savour of life unto life.” And not only “life unto life” in this world, but of “life unto life” eternal. Everyone who has this life shall receive the next life. For “the LORD will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”

I am obliged to leave this point, but if my Master will but take it up and make His Word “a savour of life unto life” this morning, I shall rejoice in what I have said.

II. Our second remark was that THE MINISTER IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS SUCCESS.

He *is* responsible for what he preaches. He is accountable for his life and actions, but he is not responsible for other people. If I do but preach God’s Word, if there never were a soul saved, the King would say, “Well done, good and faithful servant!” If I do but tell my message, if none should listen to it, He would say, “You have fought the good fight: receive your crown.” You hear the words of the text, “We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, as well in them that perish, as in them that are saved.”

This will appear more clear, if I just tell you what a Gospel minister is called in the Bible. Sometimes he is called an *ambassador*. Now, for what is an ambassador responsible? He goes to a country as a plenipotentiary. He carries terms of peace to the conference. He uses all his talents for his master. He tries to show that the war is inimical to the prosperity of the different countries. He endeavors to bring about peace, but the other kings haughtily refuse it.

When he comes home, does his master say, “Why did you not make peace?” “Why, my Lord,” he would say, “I told them the terms, but they said nothing.” “Well, then,” he will say, “you have done your duty. I am not to condemn you if the war continues.”

Again, the minister of the Gospel is called a *fisherman*. Now a fisherman is not responsible for the quantity of fish he catches, but for the way he fishes. That is a mercy for some ministers, I am sure, for they have neither caught fish, nor even attracted any round their nets. They have been spending all their life fishing with most elegant silk lines, and gold and silver hooks. They always use nicely polished phrases, but the fish will not bite for all that, whereas we of a rougher order have put the hook into the jaws of hundreds.

However, if we cast the Gospel net in the right place, even if we catch none, the Master will find no fault with us. He will say, “Fisherman! Did you labor? Did you throw the net into the sea in the time of storms?” “Yes, my Lord, I did.” “What have you caught?” “Only one or two.” “Well, I could have sent you a shoal, if it so pleased Me. It is not your fault. I give in My sovereignty where I please or withhold when I choose. But as for you, you have well-labored, therefore there is your reward.”

Sometimes the minister is called a *sower*. Now, no farmer expects a sower to be responsible for the harvest. All he is responsible for is, does he sow the seed? And does he sow the right seed? If he scatters it on good soil, then he is happy. But if it falls by the wayside and the fowls of the air devour it, who shall blame the sower? Could he help it? Nay, he did his duty. He scattered the seed broadcast and there he left it. Who is to blame? Certainly not the sower.

So, beloved, if a minister comes to heaven with but one sheaf on his shoulder, his Master will say, “O reaper! Once a sower! where did you gather your sheaf?” “My Lord, I sowed upon the rock and it would not grow, only one seed on a chance Sabbath-morning was blown a little awry by the wind, and it fell on a prepared heart. And this is my one sheaf.”

“Hallelujah!” the angelic choirs resound, “one sheaf from a rock is more honor to God than a thousand sheaves from a good soil, therefore, let him take his seat as near the throne as yon man, who, stooping beneath his many sheaves, comes from some fertile land, bringing his sheaves with him.” I believe that if there are degrees in glory, they will not be in proportion to success, but in proportion to the earnestness of our endeavors.

If we mean right and if with all our heart we strive to do the right thing as ministers, if we never see any effect, still shall we receive the crown. But how much more happy is the man who shall have it in heaven said to him, “He shines for ever, because he was wise and won many souls unto righteousness”?

It is always my greatest joy to believe that if I should enter heaven, I shall in future days see heaven’s gates open and in shall fly a cherub, who, looking me in the face, will smilingly pass along to

God's throne, and there bow down before Him. And when he has paid his homage and his adoration, he may fly to me, and though unknown, shall clasp my hand, and if there were tears in heaven, surely I should weep and he would say, "Brother, from your lips I heard the Word. Your voice first admonished me of my sin. Here I am and you the instrument of my salvation."

And as the gates open, one after another still will they come in, souls ransomed, souls ransomed. And for each one of these a star—for each one of these another gem in the diadem of glory—for each one of them another honor and another note in the song of praise. Blessed be that man that shall die in the Lord and his works shall follow him, for thus says the Spirit.

What will become of some good Christians now in Exeter Hall, if crowns in heaven are measured in value by the souls that are saved? Some of you will have a crown in heaven without a single star in it. I read a little while ago a piece upon the starless crown in heaven—a man in heaven with a crown without a star! Not one saved by him! He will sit in heaven as happy as he can be, for sovereign mercy saved him, but oh! to be in heaven without a single star!

Mother! What say you to be in heaven without one of your children to deck your brow with a star? Minister! What would you say to be a polished preacher and yet have no star? Writer! Will it well-become you to have written even as gloriously as Milton, if you should be found in heaven without a star? I am afraid we pay too little regard to this.

Men will sit down, and write huge folios and tomes that they may have them put in libraries forever and have their names handed down by fame! but how few are looking to win stars forever in heaven! Toil on, child of God, toil on, for if you wish to serve God, your bread cast upon the waters shall be found after many days. If you send in the feet of the ox or the donkey, you shall reap a glorious harvest in that day when He comes to gather in His elect. The minister is not responsible for his success.

III. But yet, in the last place, TO PREACH THE GOSPEL IS HIGH AND SOLEMN WORK.

The ministry has been very often degraded into a trade. In these days, men are taken and made into ministers who would have made good captains at sea, who could have waited well at the counter, but who were never intended for the pulpit. They are selected by man, they are crammed with literature, they are educated up to a certain point, they are turned out ready dressed, and persons call them ministers.

I wish them all God-speed, everyone of them, for as good Joseph Irons used to say, "God be with many of them, if it be only to make them hold their tongues." Man-made ministers are of no use in this world and the sooner we get rid of them the better. Their way is this—they prepare their manuscripts very carefully, then read it on the Sunday most sweetly in *sotto voce*, and so the people go away pleased.

But that is not God's way of preaching. If so, I am sufficient to preach forever. I can buy manuscript sermons for a shilling, that is to say, provided they have been preached fifty times before. But if I use them for the first time, the price is a guinea, or more. But that is not the way. Preaching God's Word is not what some seem to think, mere child's play, a mere business or trade to be taken up by anyone.

A man ought to feel first that he has a solemn call to it. Next, he ought to know that he really possesses the Spirit of God, and that when he speaks, there is an influence upon him that enables him to speak as God would have him, otherwise out of the pulpit he should go directly. He has no right to be there, even if the living is his own property. He has not been called to preach God's truth and unto him God says, "What hast thou to do, to declare my statutes?"

But you say "What is there difficult about preaching God's Gospel?" Well it must be somewhat hard, for Paul said, "Who is sufficient for these things?" And first I will tell you, it is difficult because it is so hard as not to be warped by your own prejudices in preaching the Word. You want to say a stern thing and your heart says, "Master! In so doing you will condemn yourself." Then the temptation is not to say it.

Another trial is, you are afraid of displeasing the rich in your congregations. You think, "If I say such and such a thing, so-and-so will be offended—such a one does not approve of that doctrine. I had better leave it out." Or perhaps you will happen to win the applause of the multitude and you must not

say anything that will displease them, for if they cry, “Hosanna,” today, they will cry, “Crucify, crucify,” tomorrow.

All these things work on a minister’s heart. He is a man like yourselves and he feels it. Then comes again the sharp knife of criticism, and the arrows of those who hate him and hate his Lord, and he cannot help feeling it sometimes. He may put on his armor and cry, “I care not for your malice,” but there were seasons when the archers sorely grieved even Joseph.

Then he stands in another danger, lest he should come out and defend himself. For he is a great fool whoever tries to do it. He who leaves his detractors alone, and like the eagle cares not for the chattering of the sparrows, or like the lion will not turn aside to rend the snarling jackal—he is the man and he shall be honored. But the danger is, we want to set ourselves right. And oh! who is sufficient to steer clear from these rocks of danger? “Who is sufficient,” my brethren, “for these things?”—to stand up and to proclaim Sabbath after Sabbath and weekday after weekday “the unsearchable riches of Christ”?

Having said this much, I may draw the inference—to close up—which is, if the Gospel is “a savour of life unto life,” and if the minister’s work is solemn work, how well it becomes all lovers of the truth to plead for all those who preach it, that they may be “sufficient for these things.” To lose my prayer-book, as I have often told you, is the worst thing that can happen to me. To have no one to pray for me would place me in a dreadful condition.

“Perhaps,” says a good poet, “the day when the world shall perish will be the day it is unwhitened by a prayer.” And perhaps the day when a minister turns aside from the truth, was the day when his people left off to pray for him, and when there was not a single voice supplicating grace on his behalf. I am sure it must be so with me.

Give me the numerous hosts of men whom it has been my pride and glory to see in my place before I came to this hall. Give me those praying people, who on the Monday evening met in such a multitude to pray to God for a blessing, and we will overcome hell itself, in spite of all that may oppose us. All our perils are nothing, so long as we have prayer.

But increase my congregation, give me the polite and the noble—give me influence and understanding—and I should fail to do anything without a praying church. My people! Shall I ever lose your prayers? Will you ever cease your supplications? Our toils are nearly ended in this great place and happy shall we be to return to our much-loved sanctuary. Will you then ever cease to pray?

I fear you have not uttered so many prayers this morning as you should have done. I fear there has not been so much earnest devotion as might have been poured forth. For my own part, I have not felt the wondrous power I sometimes experience. I will not lay it at your doors, but never let it be said, “Those people, once so fervent, have become cold!” Let not Laodiceanism get into Southwark. Let us leave it here in the West-end, if it is to be anywhere. Let us not carry it with us.

Let us “strive together for the faith once delivered unto the saints” and knowing in what a sad position the standard bearer stands, I beseech you rally round him. For it will be ill with the army,

*“If the standard bearer falls, as fall full well he may.
For never saw I promise yet, of such a deadly fray.”*

Stand up my friends. Grasp the banner yourselves and maintain it erect until the day shall come, when standing on the last conquered castle of hell’s domains, we shall raise the shout, “Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! The Lord God omnipotent reigneth!” Till that time, fight on.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.