

“WHERE ART THOU?”

A Question for Everybody

BY THE

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“And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him,
Where art thou? GENESIS iii. 9.”

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“Where art Thou?”

READER,

The question before your eyes is the first which God asked of man after the fall. It is the question He put to Adam in the day that he ate the forbidden fruit, and became a sinner.

In vain did Adam and his wife hide themselves among the trees of the garden of Eden. In vain did they try to escape the eye of the all-seeing God. They heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the cool of the day. “And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?” (Gen. iii. 9.) Think for a moment how awful those words must have sounded! Think what the feelings of Adam and Eve must have been!

Reader, 6,000 years have well-nigh passed away since this question was first asked. Millions of Adam’s children have lived and died, and gone to their own place. Millions are yet upon earth, and every one of them has a soul to be lost or saved. But no question ever has been, or ever can be asked more solemn than that which is before you:—Where art thou? *Where art thou in the sight of God?*—Come now, and give me your attention, while I tell you a few things which may throw light upon this question.

I know not who you are,—whether you are a Churchman or a Dissenter;—whether you are learned or unlearned;—whether you are rich or poor;—whether you are old or young: about all this I know nothing. But I do know that you have got an immortal soul, and I want that soul to be saved. I do know that you have got to stand before the judgment-seat of God, and I want you to be prepared for it. I do know that you will be forever in heaven or in hell, and I want you to escape hell, and reach heaven. I do know that the Bible contains most solemn things about the inhabitants of the earth, and I want every man, woman, and child in the world to hear them. I believe every word in the Bible; and because I believe it, I ask every reader of this paper, “*Where art thou in the sight of God?*”

I. In the first place, there are many people about whom the Bible shows me *I ought to be exceedingly afraid*. Reader, art thou one of them?

There are those, who, if Bible words mean anything, have not yet been converted and born again. They are not justified. They are not sanctified. They have not the Spirit. They have no faith. They have no grace. Their sins are not forgiven. Their hearts are not changed. They are not ready to die. They are not meet for heaven. They are neither godly, nor righteous, nor saints. If they are, Bible words mean nothing at all.

Some of these persons, to all appearance, think no more about their souls than the beasts that perish. There is nothing to show that they think of the life to come any more than the horse and ox, which have no understanding. Their treasure is evidently all on earth. Their good things are plainly all on this side of the grave. Their attention is swallowed up by the perishable things of time. Meat, drink, and clothing,—money, houses, and land,—business, pleasure, or politics,—marrying, reading, or company;—these are the kind of things which fill their hearts. They live as if there were no such book as the Bible. They go on as if resurrection and eternal judgment were not true, but a lie. As to grace, and conversion, and justification, and holiness,—they are things which, like Gallio, they care not for;—they are words and names they are either ignorant of, or despise. They are all going to die. They are all going to be judged. And yet they seem to be even more hardened than the devil, for they appear neither to believe nor tremble. Alas! what a state this is for an immortal soul to be in! But oh! how common!

Some of the persons I speak of have got a form of religion, but after all it is nothing but a form. They profess and call themselves Christians. They go to a place of worship on Sunday. But when you have said that, you have said all. Where is the religion of the New Testament to be seen in their lives? Nowhere at all! Sin is plainly not considered their worst enemy, nor the Lord Jesus their best friend,—nor the will of God their rule of life,—nor salvation the great end of their existence. The spirit of slumber keeps possession of their hearts, and they are at ease, self-satisfied, and content. They are in a Laodicean frame of mind, and fancy they have enough religion.

God speaks to them continually, by mercies,—by afflictions,—by Sabbaths,—by sermons; but they will not hear. Jesus knocks at the door of their hearts, but they will not open. They are told of death and eternity, and remain unconcerned. They are warned against the love of the world, and plunge into it week after week without shame. They hear of Christ coming upon earth to die for sinners, and go away unmoved. There seems a place in their hearts for everything but God;—room for business,—room for pleasures,—room for trifling,—room for sin,—room for the devil,—room for the world: but, like the inn at Bethlehem, no room for Him who made them,—no admission for Jesus, the Spirit, and the Word. Alas! what a condition of things this is! But alas! how common!

Reader, I put it solemnly to your conscience, as in the sight of God, are you one of those persons whom I have just described? There are thousands of such people in our land,—thousands in Great Britain,—thousands in Ireland,—thousands in our country parishes,—thousands in our towns,—thousands among Churchmen,—thousands among Dissenters,—thousands among rich,—thousands among poor. Now, are you one of them? If you are,

I fear for you,—I tremble for you,—I am alarmed for you,—I am exceedingly afraid.

What is it that I fear for you? I fear everything. I fear lest you should persist in rejecting Christ till you have sinned away your own soul. I fear lest you be given over to a reprobate mind, and awake no more. I fear lest you come to such deadness and hardness of heart, that nothing but the voice of the archangel and the trump of God will break your sleep. I fear lest you cling to this vain world so closely, that nothing but death will part it and you. I fear lest you should live without Christ, die without pardon, rise again without hope, receive judgment without mercy, and sink into hell without remedy.

Reader, I must warn you, though I may seem, like Lot, as one that mocks. I do solemnly warn you to flee from the wrath to come. I entreat you to remember that the Bible is all true, and must be fulfilled,—that the end of your present ways is misery and sorrow,—that without holiness no man shall see the Lord,—that the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God,—that God shall one day take account of all your doings, and that Christless sinners like yourself can never stand in His sight, for He is holy, and a consuming fire. Oh! that you would consider these things! Where is the man that can hold his finger for a minute in the flame of a candle? Who shall dwell with everlasting burnings?

I know well the thoughts that Satan will put into your heart, as you read these words. I know well the excuses that you are going to make. You will tell me, “religion is all very well, but a man must live.” I answer, “it is quite true a man must *live*, but it is no less true that he must also *die*.” You may tell me, “a man cannot starve.” I answer, “that I do not want anyone to starve, but neither also do I want anyone to burn in hell.” You may tell me, “a man must mind his business first in this world.” I answer, “yes! and the first business a man should mind is his eternal business,—the business of his soul.”

Reader, I beseech you in all affection to break off your sins,—to repent and be converted. I beseech you to change your course,—to alter your ways about religion,—to turn from your present carelessness about your soul, and become a new man. I offer to you through Jesus Christ the forgiveness of all past sins,—free and complete forgiveness,—ready, present, everlasting forgiveness. I tell you in my Master’s name, that if you will turn to the Lord Jesus Christ, this forgiveness shall at once be your own. Oh! do not refuse so gracious an invitation. Do not hear of Christ dying for you,—Christ shedding His own blood for you,—Christ stretching out His hands to you, and yet remain unmoved. Do not love this poor perishing world better than eternal life. Dare to be bold and decided. Resolve to come out from the

broad way which leads to destruction. Arise and escape for your life, while it is called today. Repent, believe, pray, and be saved.

Reader, I fear for you in your present state. My heart's desire and prayer is that God may make you fear for yourself.

II. In the second place there are many people about whom the Bible shows me *I ought to stand in doubt*. Reader, art thou one of these?

There are many whom I must call "almost Christians", for I know no other expression in the Bible which so exactly describes their state. They have many things about them which are right, and good, and praiseworthy in the sight of God. They are regular and moral in their lives. They are free from glaring outward sins. They keep up many decent and proper habits. They are usually diligent in their attendance on means of grace. They appear to love the preaching of the Gospel. They are not offended at the truth as it is in Jesus, however plainly it may be spoken. They have no objection to religious company, religious books, and religious talk. They agree to all you say when you speak to them about their soul. And all this is well.

But still there is no movement in the hearts of these people that even a microscope can detect. They are like those who stand still. Weeks after weeks, years after years roll over their heads, and they are just where they were. They sit under our pulpits. They approve of our sermons. And yet, like Pharaoh's lean kine, they are nothing the better apparently for all they receive. There is always the same regularity about them,—the same constant attendance on means of grace,—the same wishing and hoping,—the same way of talking about religion; but there is nothing more. There is no going forward in their Christianity. There is no life, and heat, and reality in it. Their souls seem to be at a deadlock. And all this is sadly wrong.

Reader, are you one of these people? There are thousands of them in this day,—thousands in our churches, and thousands in our chapels. I ask you to give an honest answer to the question: Is this the state of your soul in the sight of God? If it is, I can only say your condition is most unsatisfactory. As the apostle said to the Galatians, so I say to you, "I stand in doubt of you."

How can I feel otherwise about you? There are but two sides in the world,—the side of Christ and the side of the devil; and yet you make it doubtful on which side you ought to be placed. I dare not say you are altogether careless about religion, but I cannot call you decided. I shrink from numbering you among the ungodly, but I may not place you among the Lord's children. You have some light; but is it saving knowledge? You have some feeling; but is it grace? You are not profane; but are you a man of God? You may possibly be one of the Lord's people; but you dwell so near the borders, that I cannot discern to what nation you belong. You may not

perhaps be spiritually dead; but like a sickly tree in winter, I hardly know whether you are alive. And thus you live on without satisfactory evidences. I cannot help doubting about you. Surely there is a cause.

I cannot read the secrets of your hearts. Perhaps there is some pet bosom sin, which you are holding fast, and will not give up. This is a disease which checks the growth of many a professing Christian. Perhaps you are kept back by the fear of man: you are afraid of the blame or laughter of your fellow creatures. This is an iron chain that fetters many a soul. Perhaps you are careless about private prayer and communion with God. This is one reason why multitudes are weak and sickly in spirit, But whatever your reason be, I warn you in all affection to take care what you are doing. Your state is neither satisfactory nor safe. Like the Gibeonites, you are found in the train of Israel, but like them you have no title to Israel's portion, Israel's consolations, and Israel's rewards. Oh! awake to a sense of your danger! Strive to enter in.

Reader, you must give up this halting between two opinions, if ever you mean to enjoy good evidences of your salvation. There must be an alteration in you. There must be a move. There is no real standing still in true Christianity. If God's work is not going forward in a man's heart, the devil's is; and if a man is always at the same point in religion, the probability is that he has got no real religion at all. It is not enough to wear Christ's livery; we must also fight Christ's battle. It is not enough to cease to do evil; we must also learn to do well. It will not suffice to do no harm; we must also labour to do good. Oh! tremble, lest you should prove an unprofitable receiver of God's talents,—a barren cumberer of the ground, and your end be to be burned. Remember, he that is not with Christ, is against Him.

Reader, I charge you strongly never to rest till you have found whether you have grace in your heart or not. Wishes and desires, and good feelings, and convictions, are all excellent things in their way, but they alone will never save you. I like to see buds and blossoms on a tree, but I like better to see ripe fruit. The way-side hearers in the parable listened, but the word took no root in them;—they were not saved. The stony ground hearers listened with joy, but the word had no depth in them;—they were not saved. The thorny ground hearers brought forth something like fruit, but the word was choked by the world;—they were not saved. Do you tremble at the word? So also did Felix, but he was not saved. Do you like to hear good sermons and many things which are right? So also did Herod, but he was not saved. Do you wish to die the death of the righteous? So did Balaam, but he was not saved. Have you knowledge? So had Judas Iscariot, but he was not saved. And shall you be saved as you are? I doubt it. Remember Lot's wife.

Reader, once more I call upon you to take care what you are doing. If you will not stir up yourself to go forward, how should I feel anything but doubt about your soul.

But there are others about whom I stand in doubt, who are in worse case even than the “almost Christians”. These are those who once made a high profession of religion, but have now given it up. They were once reckoned to be true believers, but they have turned back again to the world and fallen away. They have gone back from the point in religion they once seemed to have reached. They walk no more in the ways they once seemed to choose. In short, they are backsliders.

Reader, is this the state of your soul? If it is, know for a certainty that your condition is most unsatisfactory. It matters little what your past experience was. It proves little that you were counted among true Christians? It may have been all a mistake and a delusion. It is your present condition of soul that I look at, and as I do so, I stand in doubt.

I believe there was a time when all the saints of God who saw you rejoiced at the sight. You seemed then to love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, and to be willing to give up the broad way forever, and forsake all for the Gospel’s sake. The Word of God appeared sweet and precious to you; the voice of Christ’s ministers a most pleasant sound; the assembly of the Lord’s people the place you loved best; the company of true believers your chief delight. You were never missing at the weekly meeting. Your place was never empty at Church. Your Bible was never long out of your hands. There were no days in your life without prayer. Your zeal was indeed fervent. Your religious affections were truly warm. You did run well for a season. But, oh! reader, where, where are you now?

You have gone back to the world. You lingered; you looked back; you returned; I fear you had left your heart behind you. You have taken up the old man’s deeds once more. You have left your first love. Your goodness has proved like the morning clouds, and as the early dew it has gone away. Your serious impressions are fast dying off; they are getting weaker and fainter every day. Your convictions are fast withering up; they are changing colour like leaves in autumn—they will soon drop off and disappear. The grey hairs, which tell of decline, are coming here and there upon you. The preaching you once hung upon, now wearies you. The books you delighted in give pleasure no more. The progress of Christ’s Gospel is no longer interesting. The company of God’s children is no longer sought. *They or you must be changed.*—You are becoming shy of holy people, impatient of rebuke and advice, uncertain in your tempers, careless about little sins, not afraid of mixing with the world. *Once it was not so.*—You may keep up some form of religion perhaps, but as to vital godliness you are fast cooling down. Already you are lukewarm; by-and-by you will be cold; and before

long you will be icy, religion-frozen, and more dead than you were before. You are grieving the Spirit, and He will soon leave you. You are tempting the devil, and he will soon come to you; your heart is ready for him; your last state will be worse than your first. Oh! reader, strengthen the things which remain which are ready to die. How can I possibly help feeling doubt about your soul?¹

But I cannot let you go without trying to do you good. I do pity you indeed, because you are so unhappy. I know it; I am sure of it; it is useless to deny it. You have been unhappy ever since you fell away. You are unhappy at home, and unhappy abroad; unhappy in company, and unhappy alone; unhappy when you lie down, and unhappy when you rise up. You may have got riches, honour, love, obedience, friends; but yet *the sting* remains. There is a famine of consolation about you; there is an utter dearth of inward peace. You are sick at heart; you are ill-at-ease; you are discontented with everybody, because you are discontented with yourself. You are like a bird that has wandered from her nest—you never feel in your right place. You have too much religion to enjoy the world, and too little religion to enjoy God. You are weary of life, and yet afraid to die. Truly the words of Solomon are made good in your case, “You are filled with your own ways.”

Reader, notwithstanding all your backslidings, there is hope even for you. There is no disease of soul that the glorious Gospel cannot cure. There is a remedy even for your case,—humbling, pride-lowering, I know,—but a sure remedy; and I earnestly beseech you to take it. That remedy is the fountain opened for all sins,—the free mercy of God in Christ Jesus. Go and wash in that fountain without delay, and Jesus Christ shall make thee whole.

Take down your neglected Bible, and see how David fell and lay in foul sin a whole year, and yet when he repented and turned to God, there was mercy for him. Turn to the history of the apostle Peter, and see how he denied his Master three times with an oath, and yet when he wept and humbled himself, there was mercy for him. Hear what comfortable words our Lord and Saviour sends to you this day, “Come unto me all ye that labour and are

¹ I find that many people object to the expression, “You are grieving the Spirit, and He will soon leave you.” On calm reflection I am not disposed to alter it. I think it dangerous to attempt to be more systematic than the Bible in our theology. I think there is Scriptural warrant for saying that an unconverted man who possesses great light and knowledge in the things of religion, and yet refuses to give up sin and the world, does, in a certain sense, grieve the Holy Spirit. I would refer to Isai. lxiii. 10; Acts, vii. 51; Heb. x. 29. In taking this ground, I believe I am in entire harmony with one of the most Scriptural divines that ever lived; I mean John Bunyan. In “Pilgrim’s Progress” he represents the man in the iron cage at the Interpreter’s house, saying to Christian, “I sinned against the light of the word, and the goodness of God. I have grieved the Spirit, and He is gone. Tempted the devil, and he has come to me. I have provoked God to anger, and He has left me.”

The length to which people may go in a profession of religion, and yet remain unconverted in heart and be lost at last, is one of the most awful and soul-searching points in theology.

heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, yet, return again to me.” “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” “Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.” Oh! that you may take up the words of Israel this day, and reply, “Behold, I come unto thee, for thou art the Lord my God.” (Matt. xi. 28; Jer. iii. 1; Isai. i. 18; Jer. iii. 22.)

Reader, I pray God these words may not be brought before you in vain. But remember, until you turn from your backslidings, I must stand in doubt about your soul.

III. In the third place there are some people about whom the Bible tells me *I ought to feel a good hope*. Reader, art thou one of these?

The people I speak of have found out that they are guilty sinners, and have fled to Christ by faith for salvation. They have found out that sin is a miserable and unhappy thing, and they hate it, and long to be free from its presence altogether. In themselves they see nothing but weakness and corruption, but in the Lord Jesus they see the very things their souls require;—pardon, peace, light, comfort, and strength. Christ’s blood, Christ’s cross, Christ’s righteousness, Christ’s intercession,—these are the things on which their minds love to dwell. Their affections are now set on things above. They care for nothing so much as pleasing God. While they live, their chief desire is to live to the Lord. When they die, their only desire is to die in the Lord. After death, their hope is that they shall be with the Lord.

Reader, is this the state of your soul? Do you know anything of the faith and hope, and affections and experience, which I have just described? Do you find anything in your heart which answers to the account I have just given?—If you do, I thank God for it,—I congratulate you in your condition,—I feel a good hope about your soul.

I know well that you live in a world full of trials. You are yet in the wilderness; you are not at home. I know well that pride, and unbelief, and sloth are continually struggling for the mastery within you. You have fightings without and fears within. I doubt not your heart is so treacherous and deceitful that you are often sick of yourself and say, “Never was heart like mine.” But notwithstanding all this. I must hope well for your soul.

I hope, because I believe that God has begun a work in you which He will never allow to be overthrown. Who taught you to hate sin and love Christ? Who made you come out from the world and delight in God’s service? These things do not come from your own heart. Nature bears no such fruit. These things are the work of God, who, where He begins, always finishes; who, where He gives grace, will also give glory. Surely, here is ground for hope.

I hope, because I believe you have an interest in an everlasting covenant, a covenant ordered in all things and sure. The stamp of heaven is upon you. The marks of the Lord Jesus are on your soul. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, have all engaged to carry out your soul's salvation. There is a threefold cord around you which never yet was broken. Surely, here is ground for hope.

I hope because you have a Saviour, whose blood can cleanse from all sin,—a Saviour who invites all, and casts out none that come to Him,—a Saviour who will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax,—a Saviour who can be touched with the feeling of your infirmities, and is not ashamed to call you brethren,—a Saviour who never alters, the same yesterday, today, and forever, always able to save to the uttermost, always mighty to save. Surely here is ground for hope.

I hope, because the love of Christ is a love that passeth knowledge. So free and undeserved! So costly, even unto death! So powerful and all-conquering! So unchanging and enduring! So patient and forbearing! So tender and sympathizing! Truly our sins pass knowledge, and this is the very love our souls need. Surely here is ground for hope.

I hope because God has given to you exceeding great and precious promises,—promises of being kept unto the end,—promises of grace for every time of need, and strength according to your day,—promises that never yet were broken, all yea and amen in Christ Jesus. Surely here is ground for hope.

Oh! reader, if you are a believer, these things are a strong foundation. If God be for you, who shall be against you? There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. Nothing shall ever separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Come now, and let me tell you what I want you and every true Christian, to aim at. I want you to seek *more hope*. I want you not to rest satisfied with that little mite of confidence which forms the whole stock of many of God's children. I want you to seek the full assurance of hope,—that lively hope which makes a man never ashamed.

I speak as a fellow traveller in the narrow way. I speak as one who desires that his own hope may grow and increase every year that he lives, and wishes the hope of all his brethren to grow too. I know and am persuaded that I write things which are for your peace. As ever you would have a few days of darkness,—as ever you would feel God's face smiling on your soul,—as ever you would have joy and peace in believing,—by all your recollections of past short-comings,—by all your desires of comfort in time to come,—I charge you, I exhort you, I beseech you, to seek the full assurance of hope.

Ah! reader, if you are a true believer, you know well that we need these mutual exhortations. You and I are but children in the Lord's service at our

very best. Our souls are ever ready to cleave to the dust. There is room for improvement in us every day. Listen then while I tell you a few things which we must never forget, if we would enjoy more hope,—which we must never lose sight of, if we would keep it when we have got it.

If we want to grow in grace, and have more hope, *we must seek more knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ*. How little do we know of Him! Our cold affections towards Him are a witness against ourselves. Our eyes can never be open to what He is and does for us, or we should love Him more. There are some Christians whose minds seem ever running on the doctrine of sanctification, to the exclusion of everything else. They can argue warmly about little points of practice; yet they are cold about Christ. They live by rule, they walk strictly, they do many things, they fancy in a short time they shall be very strong. But all this time they lose sight of this grand truth,—that nothing is so sanctifying as knowledge of the Lord Jesus, and communion with

“Abide in me,” He says Himself, “and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.” Christ must be the spring of our holiness, as well as the rock of our faith. Christ must be all in all. I doubt not He is precious to you that believe. Precious He ought to be, because of His offices, and precious because of His work. Precious He ought to be, for what He has done already;—He has called us, quickened us, washed us, justified us. Precious He ought to be for what He is doing even now;—strengthening us, interceding for us, sympathizing with us. Precious He ought to be for what He will do yet;—He will keep us to the end, raise us, gather us at His coming, present us faultless before God’s throne, give us rest with Him in His kingdom. But oh! reader, Christ ought to be far more precious to us than He ever has been yet. I take you to record, if it were the last word of my life, I believe that nothing but the knowledge of Christ will ever feed a man’s spirit. All our darkness arises from not keeping close to Him. The forms of religion are valuable as helps,—and public ordinances are profitable to strengthen us;—but it must be Christ crucified for sinners,—Christ seen with the eye of faith,—Christ present in the heart,—Christ as the bread of life, and Christ as the water of life,—this must be the doctrine we must ever cling to. Nothing else will either save, satisfy, or sanctify a sinful soul. We all need more knowledge of Christ. If we would grow in grace and hope, let us begin here.

If we want to grow in grace, and have more hope, *we must seek more knowledge of our own hearts*. We fancy we are acquainted with them, and we are not. The half of the sin that is in them has hitherto been hidden from our eyes. We have not the slightest idea how much they might deceive us if tried, and into what depths of Satan the very best of us might fall. But we all know by bitter experience, that by trusting our hearts we have often made

sad mistakes. We have sometimes committed such errors that we have lost sight of our hope, and been ready to believe we had no grace at all. Oh! if we would be happy Christians, let us cease to put confidence in our hearts. Let us learn to expect nothing from them but weakness and feebleness. Let us cease to look to frames and feelings for our comforts. Hope built on anything within us must always be wavering and unstable.

If we want to grow in grace, and have more hope, *we must seek more holiness in life and conversation*. This is a humbling lesson to dwell upon, but one that cannot be dwelt upon too much. There is an inseparable connection between a close walk with God and comfort in our religion. Let this never be forgotten. Truly the vessels in the Lord's house are many of them very dull and dingy. When I look around I see many things missing amongst us, which Jesus loves. I miss the meekness and gentleness of our Master: many of us are harsh, rough-tempered, and censorious, and we flatter ourselves that we are faithful.—I miss real boldness in confessing Christ before men: we often think much more of the time to be silent than the time to speak.—I miss real humility: not many of us like to take the lowest place, and esteem every one better than ourselves, and our own strength perfect weakness.—I miss real charity: few of us have that unselfish spirit which seeketh not its own: there are few who are not more taken up with their own feelings and their own happiness than that of others.—I miss real thankfulness of spirit: we complain, and murmur, and fret, and brood over the things we have not, and forget the things we have. We are seldom content; there is generally a Mordecai at our gate.—I miss decided separation from the world: the line of distinction is often rubbed out. Many of us, like the chameleon, are always taking the colour of our company; we become so like the ungodly that it strains a man's eyes to see the difference. Reader, these things ought not so to be. If we want more hope, let us be more zealous of good works.

If we want to grow in grace, and have a more lively hope, *we must seek more watchfulness in seasons of prosperity*. I know no time in a believer's life when his soul is in such real danger as it is when all things go well with him. I know no time when a believer is so likely to contract spiritual diseases and lay the foundation of many days of darkness and doubt in his inward man. You and I like the course of our life to run smoothly, and it is natural to flesh and blood to do so. But you and I have little idea how perilous this smooth course is to our religion. The seeds of sickness are generally sown in health. It is the holiday time when lessons are forgotten. It is the sweet things which do harm to the children and not the bitter. It is the world's favour which injures believers far more than the world's frown. David committed no adultery while fleeing before the face of Saul:—it was when Saul was dead and he was king in his stead, and there was peace in Israel. Christian in "Pilgrim's Progress" did not lose his evidence while he was fighting

with Apollyon:—it was when he was sleeping in a pleasant arbour, and no enemy seemed near. Oh! if we would have a lively hope, let us watch in the days of prosperity, and be sober.

If we want to grow in grace, and have a lively hope, *we must seek more faith and contentment in time of trial*. Trial often makes a righteous man speak unadvisedly with his lips, and say and do things which rise like mist between his soul and Christ. Trial is a fire which often brings much dross to the surface of a believer's heart, and makes him say, "God has forgotten me, there is no hope for my soul; I am cast out of the Lord's sight; I do well to complain." Yet trial is the hand of a Father chastening us for our profit, however slow we may be to believe it. The rod is often sent in answer to a prayer for sanctification:—it is one of God's ways of carrying on that work of sanctification which we profess to desire. Jacob, and Joseph, and Moses, and David, all found this. Blessed are they who take patiently the Lord's medicines—who bear the cross in silence, and say, "It is well". Afflictions well borne are spiritual promotions. Patience having a perfect work in the time of affliction, will sooner or later yield a precious harvest of inward hope.

If we would grow in grace, and have a more lively hope, *we must seek more preparedness for Christ's second coming*. I know no doctrine more sanctifying and quickening than the doctrine of Christ's second advent. I know none more calculated to draw us from the world, and make us single-eyed, wholehearted, and joyful Christian. But alas! how few believers live like men who wait for their Master's return! Who that narrowly observes the ways of many believers would ever think that they loved and longed for their Lord's appearing? Is it not true that there are many hearts among God's children which are not quite ready to receive Jesus? He would find the window barred,—the door shut,—the fires almost out;—it would be a cold and comfortless reception. Oh! believing reader, it ought not so to be. We want more of a pilgrim's spirit:—we ought to be ever looking for and hastening to our home. The day of the Lord's advent is the day of rest, the day of complete redemption, the day when the family of God shall at last be all gathered together. It is the day when we shall no longer walk by faith, but by sight:—we shall see the land that is far off,—we shall behold the King in His beauty. Surely we ought to be saying daily, "Come, Lord Jesus, let thy kingdom come." Oh! let us set Christ's advent continually before our eyes. Let us say to ourselves every morning, "The Lord will soon return," and it will be good for our souls.

Lastly, if we want to grow in grace and have more hope, *we must seek more diligence about means of grace*. It is vain to suppose that our hope is not dependent in any sense on the pains we take in the use of God's appointed ordinances. It is dependent, and that to a very great extent. God has

wisely ordered it so that lazy Christians seldom enjoy any assurance of their own acceptance. He tells us that we must labour, and strive, and work, to make our calling and election sure. Oh! that believers would remember this, and lay it to heart. I suspect that many of God's people are very lazy in their manner of using means. They know little of David's spirit when he said, "My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the house of my God." I doubt whether there is much private prayer before and after sermons. Yet, remember, hearing alone is not everything: when all is said in the pulpit, only half the work is done. I doubt whether the Bible is as much read as it should be. Nothing in my own short experience has surprised me so much as the contented ignorance of Scripture which prevails among believers. I doubt whether private prayer is as often made a business of as it should be. We are often satisfied to get up from our knees without having really seen or heard anything of God and His Christ. And all this is wrong.—It is the diligent soul that enjoys lively hope.

Reader, let us lay to heart the things that I have mentioned. Let us resolve, by God's help, to set them before us continually, to pray for them, strive after them, and endeavour to attain them.

This is the way to be *useful Christians*. The world knows little of Christ beyond what it sees of Him in His people. Oh! what plain, clearly-written epistles they ought to be! A hopeful growing believer is a walking sermon. He preaches far more than I do, for he preaches all the week round, shaming the unconverted, sharpening the converted, showing to all what grace can do. Such an one does good indeed by his life, and after death what great broad evidences he leaves behind him! We carry him to the grave without one unpleasant doubt! Oh! the value and the power of a growing Christian! The Lord make you and me such.

This is the way to be *happy Christians*. Happiness is the gift of God, but that there is the closest connection between full following of God and full happiness, let no man for an instant doubt. A hopeful, growing believer has the witness within himself. He walks in the full light of the sun, and therefore he generally feels bright and warm. He does not quench the Spirit by continual inconsistencies, and so the fire within him seldom burns low. He has great peace because he really loves God's law, and all that see him are obliged to allow that it is a privilege and not a bondage to be a Christian. Oh! the comfort of a tender conscience, a godly jealousy, a close walk with God, a heavenly frame of mind! The Lord make us all of such a spirit.,

And now, dear readers of every class to whom I have spoken, I heartily pray God to bless these pages to your souls. Whether you are of those for whom *I fear*,—whether you are of those about whom *I doubt*,—whether you are of those whom *I look at with hope*, my heart's desire and prayer is, that

you may lay down this tract a wiser and better man than when you took it up.

We live in strange times. The world seems getting old and shaking. The shadows are long drawn. The evening appears to be coming on. The night will soon be upon us, when no man can work. Oh! that every reader of this tract would turn in upon himself while it is called today, and consider his own ways. Oh! that each would ask himself the question, Where am I? What am I? Where am I going? What will be the end of my present course? What is the hope of my soul?

Reader, once more I ask you not to despise my question. Think of it: consider it: pray over it. Oh! that it may take firm hold of your heart, and never leave you! Oh! that it may be to your soul as life from the dead. Time is fast ebbing away. Life is a vast uncertainty. Death is drawing nearer and nearer. Judgment is sure to come. Reader, where art thou? Where art thou in the sight of God?

I remain,

Your affectionate Friend,

J. C. RYLE.