

“The Preacher’s Power, and the Conditions of Obtaining it.”
by C. H. Spurgeon 1889AD

THE
SWORD AND THE TROWEL.

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The Preacher’s Power, and the Conditions of
Obtaining it.

AN ADDRESS BY C. H. SPURGEON, AT THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF
THE PASTORS’ COLLEGE, HELD ON TUESDAY, MAY 7TH, 1889.*

[*This address occupied one hour and thirty minutes in its delivery. The opening portion is all that we can give this month. It forms a subject by itself, and division further on was found to be too rough a breaking up of the discourse.—C. H. S.]

BRETHREN, we want to do our work rightly and effectively, and we cannot do it without power. Of course, no work of any kind is accomplished in this world without a certain expenditure of force, and the force employed differs according to the matter in hand. The sort of power of which we feel the need will be determined by our view of our work; and the amount of power that we shall long for will also very much depend upon our idea of how that work should be done. I speak as unto wise men, who know their object, and know also whence their strength must come. I speak also to men who mean to use their office as in the sight of God; but yet I think it desirable to stir up your pure minds, by way of remembrance, and put you and myself in mind of the grand design for which we need power.

We could be ministers, as some men are ministers, without any particular power, either natural, or acquired. Merely to perform services (to use an ugly word) “perfunctorily” does not require special endowments. Any speaking machine might do as well. There are ministers whose sermons, and whose whole services, are so much a matter of routine, and so utterly lifeless, that if power from on high were to come upon them, it would altogether bewilder them. Nobody would know them to be the same persons; the change would seem too great. The same things are said, in the same tone and manner, year after year. I have heard of a preacher, whom one of his people likened to a steeple, which had but two bells in it, for, he said, “It is always ding dong, ding dong, ding dong, ding dong.” “Oh!” said his friend, “you ought to be abundantly grateful that you have as much variety as *that*, for our man has only one bell, and his voice is for ever ding, ding, ding, ding.” When this is the case among Nonconformists it ruins the congregations, for it is death to every possibility of collecting people to hear; and still more is it murder to all hope

of their being improved if they do hear. I should think it is by no means difficult, with a liturgy, to be read without much alteration all the year round, to become a fine example of either the ding dong, or the ding, ding; but with us, whose devotion is of a free sort, there is less excuse for monotony, and if we fall into the fault the result will be more disastrous. It is possible, even without a liturgy, to pray in a very set and formal style; indeed, it is so possible as to be frequent, and then the long prayer becomes a severe infliction upon an audience, and the shorter prayers are not much better. When I have thought of the preaching of certain good men, I have wondered, not that the congregation was so small, but that it was so large. The people who listen to them ought to excel in the virtue of patience, for they have grand opportunities for exercising it. I have frequently said of myself that I would not go across the road to hear myself preach; but I will venture to say of certain brethren that I would even go across the road in the other direction not to hear them preach. Some sermons and prayers lend a colour of support to the theory of Dr. William Hammond, that the brain is not absolutely essential to life. Brethren, I trust that not even one of you will be content with mechanical services devoid both of mental and spiritual force. You will, none of you, covet earnestly the least gifts, and the dullest mannerisms, for you can obtain them without the exertion of the will. You desire to do your Master's work as it ought to be done, and therefore you long for excellent gifts, and still more excellent graces. You wish that people may attend to your discourse; because there is something in it worthy of their attention. You labour to discharge your ministry, not with the lifeless method of an automaton, but with the freshness and power which will render your ministry largely effectual for its sacred purposes.

I am bound to say, also, that our object certainly is not to please our clients, nor to preach to the times, nor to be in touch with modern progress, nor to gratify the cultured few. Our life-work cannot be answered by the utmost acceptance on earth; our record is on high, or it will be written in the sand. There is no need whatever that you and I should be chaplains of the modern spirit, for it is well supplied with busy advocates. Surely Ahab does not need Micahiah to prophesy smooth things to him, for there are already four hundred prophets of the grove who are flattering him with one consent. We are reminded of the protesting Scotch divine, in evil days, who was exhorted by the Synod to preach to the times. He asked, "Do you, brethren, preach to the times?" They boasted that they did. "Well, then," said he, "if there are so many of you who preach for the times, you may well allow one poor brother to preach for eternity." We leave, without regret, the gospel of the hour to the men of the hour. With such eminently cultured persons for ever hurrying on with their new doctrines, the world may be content to let our little company keep to the old-fashioned faith, which we still believe to have been "once for all delivered to the saints." Those superior persons, who are so wonderfully advanced, may be annoyed that we cannot consort with them; but, nevertheless, so it is that it is not now, and never will be, any design of ours to be in harmony with the spirit of the age, or in the least desirous to conciliate the demon of doubt which rules the present moment. Brethren, we shall not adjust our Bible to the age; but before we have done with it, by God's grace, we shall adjust the age to the Bible. We shall not fall into the error of that absent-minded doctor who had to cook for himself an egg; and, therefore, depositing his watch in the saucepan, he stood steadfastly looking at the egg. The change

to be wrought is not for the divine chronometer, but for the poor egg of human thought. We make no mistake here: we shall not watch our congregation to take our cue from it, but we shall keep our eye on the infallible Word, and preach according to its instructions. Our Master sits on high, and not in the chairs of the scribes and doctors, who regulate the theories of the century. We cannot take our keynote from the wealthier people, nor from the leading officers, nor even from the former minister. How often have we heard an excuse for heresy made out of the desire to impress “thoughtful young men”! Young men, whether thoughtful or otherwise, are best impressed by the gospel, and it is folly to dream that a preaching which leaves out the truth is suitable to men, either old or young. We shall not quit the Word to please the young men, nor even the young women. This truckling to young men is a mere pretence: young men are no more fond of false doctrine than the middle-aged; and if they are, there is so much the more necessity to teach them better. Young men are more impressed by the old gospel than by ephemeral speculations. If any of you wish to preach a gospel that will be pleasing to the times, preach it in the power of the devil, and I have no doubt that he will willingly do his best for you. It is not to such servants of men that I desire to speak just now. I trust that if ever any of you should err from the faith, and take up with the new theology, you will be too honest to pray for power from God with which to preach that mischievous delusion; and if you should do, you will be guilty of constructive blasphemy. No, brethren, it is not our object to please men, but our design is far nobler.

To begin with, *it is our great desire to bear witness to the truth*. I believe—and the conviction grows upon me—that even to know the truth is the gift of the grace of God; and that to love the truth, is the work of the Holy Spirit. I am speaking now, not about a natural knowledge, or a natural love to divine things, if such there be; but of an experimental knowledge of Christ, and a spiritual love to him: these are as much the gift of God in the preacher, as the work of conversion will be the work of God in his hearers. We desire so thoroughly to know, and so heartily to love the truth, as to declare the whole counsel of God, and speak it as we ought to speak. No small labour this. To proclaim the whole system of truth, and to deal out each part in due proportion, is by no means a simple matter. To bring out each doctrine according to the analogy of faith, and set each truth in its proper place, is no easy task. It is easy to make a caricature of the beautiful face of truth by omitting one doctrine and exaggerating another. We may dishonour the most lovely countenance by giving to its most striking feature an importance which puts it out of proportion with the rest; for beauty greatly consists in balance and harmony. To know the truth as it should be known, to love it as it should be loved, and then to proclaim it in the right spirit and in its proper proportions, is no small work for such feeble creatures as we are. In this grand, yet delicate labour, we have to persevere year after year. What power can enable us to do this? While so many complain of the monotony of the old gospel, and feel a perpetual itching for something new, this disease may even infect our own hearts. This is an evil to be fought against with our whole being. When we feel dull and stale, we must not imagine that the truth of God is so; nay, rather by returning more closely to the Word of the Lord we must renew our freshness. To continue always steadfast in the faith so that our latest testimony shall be identical in substance with our first testimony, only deeper, mellower, more assured, and

more intense—this is such a labour that for it we must needs have the power of God. Do you not feel this? I pray you feel it more and more. O brethren, if you propose to be true witnesses for God, your proposal is a very glorious one, and it will tend to make you feel the truth of what I am about to say, namely, that a more than human power must guide you, and make you sufficient for the difficult enterprise.

Your object is, however, so to bear your personal witness *that others may be convinced thereby* of the truth of what is so sure to your own soul. In this there are difficulties not a few, for our hearers are not anxious to believe the revelation of God; some of them are desirous not to do so. In the reign of Queen Elizabeth an order went forth that everybody should go to the parish church, at least, once on the Sunday. Of course, the bulk of the people were still Romish, and it went much against the grain for them to attend the Reformed service. I have read that when Romanists did go to the service prescribed by law, many of them put wool into their ears, that they might not hear. In a moral sense this practice is still in vogue. Certain parts of the truth men will hear, but other portions are disagreeable to them, and their ears are dull of hearing. You know—for you believe in the original sin of men (about the only thing original there is in many)—how Satan has most effectually blinded the minds of the ungodly, so that, speak we as wisely as we may, and as persuasively as we can, nothing but a miracle can convince men dead in sin of the truth of God. Nothing less than a miracle of grace can lead a man to receive what is so altogether opposite to his nature. I shall not attempt to teach a tiger the doctrine of vegetarianism; but I shall as hopefully attempt that task as I would try to convince an unregenerate man of the truths revealed by God concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment to come. These spiritual truths are repugnant to carnal men, and the carnal mind cannot receive the things of God. Gospel truth is diametrically opposed to fallen nature; and if I have not a power much stronger than that which lies in moral suasion, or in my own explanations and arguments, I have undertaken a task in which I am sure of defeat. Well said the writer of one of our hymns, when he spake of the Holy Spirit,

“‘Tis thine the passions to recall,
And upward bid them rise;
And make the scales of error fall
From reason’s darkened eyes.”

Except the Lord endow us with power from on high our labour must be in vain, and our hopes must end in disappointment.

This is but the threshold of our labour: our inmost longing is *to call out a people who shall be the Lord’s separated heritage*. A new theory has lately been started which sets forth as its ideal a certain imaginary kingdom of God, unspiritual, unscriptural, and unreal. The old-fashioned way of seeking the lost sheep, one by one, is too slow: it takes too much time, and thought, and prayer, and it does not leave space enough for politics, gymnastics, and sing-song. We are urged to rake in the nations wholesale into this imaginary kingdom by sanitary regulations, social arrangements, scientific accommodations, and legislative enactments. Please the people with the word “democratic,” and then amuse them into morality. This is the last new “fad.” According to this fancy, our Lord’s kingdom is, after all, to be of this world; and, without con-

version, or the new birth, the whole population is to melt into an earthly theocracy. Howbeit, it is not so. It seems to me that the Lord will follow up the lines of the Old Testament economy still, and separate to himself a people who shall be in the midst of the world as the Lord's kings and priests—a peculiar people, zealous for good works. I see, in the New Covenant, not less, but even more, of the election of grace, whereby a people is called out, and consecrated to the Lord. Through the chosen ones, myriads shall be born unto God; but beside these I know of no other kingdom. Brethren, the election of grace, which is so often denounced, is a fact which men need not speak against, since they do not themselves desire to be elected. I never can make out why a man should cavil at another's being chosen when he does not himself wish to be chosen. If he wishes that he were chosen to repentance, if he desires holiness, if he longs to be the Lord's, and if that desire be true, he is chosen already. But seeing that he does not desire anything of the kind, why does he cavil with others who have received this blessing? Ask an ungodly man whether he will take up the humble, often-abused, and persecuted position of a lowly follower of Christ, and he scorns the idea. If it were possible for him to get into that position for a time, how gladly would he shuffle out of it! He likes to be "in the swim," and to side with the majority; but to be a live fish, and to force his way up the stream, is not according to his desire. He prefers a worldly religion, with abundant provision for the flesh. Religious worldliness suits him very well; but to be out-and-out for Jesus, called out from the world, and consecrated to obedience, is not his ambition.

Do you not see in this your need of an extraordinary power? To call men out to a real separation from the world and a true union with Christ, apart from the power of God, is an utterly futile effort. Go, whistle eagles into an English sky, or beckon dolphins to the dry land, or lure leviathan till thou play with him as with a bird, and then attempt this greater task. They will not come, they have no wish to come; and even so our Lord and Master warned us when he said, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." They will read the Bible, "Ye search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life"; but they will not come to the Lord himself; that is too spiritual for their tastes. No, the command, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel," is too hard, too sharp, too humbling for them. Is not this enough to appal you? Dare you go forward unless your Lord shall gird you with heavenly power?

Stop: we have only yet begun. They are called out; but there is something further to be done through the instrumentality of our ministry: our hearers have to be born again, and made new creatures in Christ Jesus, or else our preaching has done nothing for them. Ah, dear friends, we get into deep waters when we come to this great mystery. Does any unregenerate man know the meaning of being born again? Ask the learned doctors whether they know anything about it, and they will try to conceal their ignorance beneath a sneer. Ask them if they think there is anything in it, and they will perhaps reply, "Yes, there must be such a phenomenon, for many respectable and even scientific people have professed to be the subjects of it." Still they smile, and express their wonder that it is so. The confession of many a candid scientist is that it may be so, but he is not himself able to comprehend it. Why, then, do they not hold their tongues? If they have not experienced the new birth, that fact is no proof that others have not. Why do they sneer as if they were our superiors? The regenerate in this matter are necessarily their superiors. A person who has

only one eye is a king among blind men; let not the blind affect to despise him. If any of us have personally experienced the new birth, even though we may be ignorant of many other things, we are in this point better instructed than those who have never felt the divine change. But, just in proportion as you know what it is to be born again, you will feel that herein is a task indeed. How sublime a position for you to become, under God, the spiritual parents of men! You could not create a fly, much less could you create a new heart and a right spirit. To fashion a world has less difficulty in it than to create a new life in an ungodly man; for in the creation of the world there was nothing in the way of God, but in the creation of the new heart there is the old nature opposing the Spirit. The negative has to be removed as well as the positive produced. Stand and look that matter over, and see if you are at all able in and of yourself to work the conversion or regeneration of a single child in your Sunday-school! My brethren, we are at the end of ourselves here. If we aim at the new birth of our hearers, we must fall prostrate before the Lord in conscious impotence, and we must not go again to our pulpits till we have heard our Lord say, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

Supposing that to be done, remember those who are brought to God are to be kept and preserved to the end; and your longing is that your ministry should be the means of keeping them from stumbling, and holding them fast in the way of righteousness even to the end. Do you propose to do that of yourself? How presumptuous! Why, look at the temptations which pollute this city; and I suppose that the seductions of evil are much the same in smaller towns, and in the villages; though differing in form. Their name is legion, for they are many. Look at the temptations which assail our youth in the literature of the hour! Have you even a slender acquaintance with popular literature Do you wonder that weak minds are made to stumble? The wonder is, that any are preserved. Yet this is only one of the many death-bearing agencies. How great is the leakage in our churches! The most faithful minister has to complain of the loss of many who appeared to run well, but have been hindered, so that they do not obey the truth. The great heap that we have gathered upon the threshing-floor is sadly diminished when he comes whose fan is in his hand. But we do propose, nevertheless, to be the means, in the hands of God, of leading the sheep of Christ to pasture, and continuing to lead them, until they feed on the hill-tops of heaven with the great Shepherd himself in their midst. But what a task we have undertaken! How shall we present them to Christ as pure virgins? How can we keep them from the pollution of the all-surrounding Sodom? How shall we, at the last, be able to say, "Here am I, and the children thou hast given me"? Brethren, we cannot do it at all; but the Lord can do it through us by the energy of his grace. If you have half-a-dozen converts, how greatly you will praise God, if you pass, with that half-a-dozen at your side, safely through the gate of pearl! Certain of us know many thousands whom we have instrumentally brought to the Saviour; but unless we have a power infinitely greater than our own, how shall we shepherd them to the end? We may announce them as our converts, we may associate with them as workers, and feel thankful for them as fellow-heirs, and yet bitter may be our disappointment, when all comes to all, and they turn aside unto perdition. How grievous to be, to all appearance, rich in usefulness, and on a sudden to find that our converts are like money put into a bag that is full of holes, and that our treas-

ured converts fall out, because they were not truly gathered to the Lord Jesus after all! “Who is sufficient for these things.” Weak we are, exceeding weak, every one of us. If there is any brother here who is weaker than usual, and knows that he is so, let him not be at all cast down about that; for you see, brethren, the best man here, if he knows what he is, knows that he is out of his depth in his sacred calling. Well, if you are out of your depth, it does not matter whether the sea is forty feet or a full mile deep. If the sea is only a fathom deep you will drown if you be not upborne; and if it be altogether unfathomable, you cannot be more than drowned. The weakest man here is not, in this business, really any weaker than the strongest man, since the whole affair is quite beyond us, and we must work miracles by divine power, or else be total failures. We have all set up in the divine profession of working by omnipotence, or rather of yielding ourselves up to omnipotence that it may work by us. If, therefore, omnipotence be not within hail, and if the miracle-working power is not within us, then the sooner we go home and plough the fields, or open shop, or cast up accounts, the better. Wherefore should we undertake what we have not the power to perform? Supernatural work needs supernatural power; and if you have it not, do not, I pray you, attempt to do the work alone, lest, like Samson, when his locks were shorn, you should become the jest of the Philistines.

This supernatural force is the power of the Holy Ghost, the power of Jehovah himself. It is a wonderful thing that God should condescend to work his marvels of grace through men. It is strange that instead of speaking, and saying with his own lips, “Let there be light,” he speaks the illuminating word by our lips! Instead of fashioning a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, by the mere fiat of his power, he couples himself with our weakness, and performs his purpose! Do you not marvel that he should treasure his gospel in these poor earthen vessels, and accomplish the miracles, which I have very briefly described, by messengers, who are themselves so utterly unable to help him in the essential parts of his heavenly work! Turn your wonder into adoration, and blend with your adoration a fervent cry for divine power.—Oh Lord, work by us to the praise of thy glory!

(To be continued.)

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The Preacher's Power, and the Conditions of
Obtaining it.

AN ADDRESS BY C. H. SPURGEON, AT THE CONFERENCE.
(Continued from the above section.)

WE now purpose to consider the way in which we are to obtain the power we so much desire. WE NEED TO FEEL IT WITHIN OURSELVES WHEN WE ARE RECEIVING OUR MESSAGE. In order to have power in public, we must receive power in secret. I trust that no brother here would venture to address his people without getting a message fresh from his Lord. If you deliver a stale story of your own concocting, or if you speak without a fresh anointing from the Holy One, your ministry will come to nothing. Words spoken on your own account, without reference to your Lord, will fall to the ground. When the footman goes to the door to answer a caller, he asks his master what he has to say, and he repeats what his master tells him. You and I are waiting-servants in the house of God, and we are to report what our God would have us speak. The Lord gives the soul-saving message, and clothes it with power: he gives it to a certain order of people, and under certain conditions.

Among those conditions I notice, first, a *simplicity of heart*. The Lord pours most into those who are most empty of self. Those who have least of their own shall have the most of God's. The Lord cares little what the vessel is, whether golden or earthen, so long as it is clean, and disengaged from other uses. He sees whether there is anything in the cup; and if so, he throws it all out. Only then is the cup prepared to receive the living water. If there is something in it before, it will adulterate the pure word; or if what was there before was very pure, it would, at least, occupy some of the room which the Lord seeks for his own grace. The Lord therefore empties us, that we may be clear from prejudice, self-sufficiency, and foregone conclusions as to what his truth ought to be. He would have us like children, who believe what their father tells them. We must lay aside all pretence of wisdom. Some men are too self-sufficient for God to use. If God were to bless them largely, they would talk in Wolsey's style of "*Ego et meus rex*" (I and my king); but the Lord will have none of it. That straight-backed upstart letter I must bow itself down into its lower-case shape, and just look like a little pot-hook (*i*) of a thing, and be nothing more. Oh, to be rid of self! Oh, to quit every pretence of wisdom! Many are very superior persons, and so when they get God's message they correct it, and inter-

polate their own ideas; they dream that the old gospel cannot be quite suitable to these enlightened days, when “everything is done by steam, and men are killed by powder.” They not only interpolate, but they omit; because they judge that certain truths have become obsolete by the lapse of time. In this way, what with additions and subtractions, little is left of the pure words of God. The apostles are generally the first to be sent adrift. Poor Paul! Poor Paul! He has come in for very hard lines just lately, as if the Spirit of God did not speak through Paul with as much authority as when he spake through the Lord Jesus. Note well how our Lord deigns to put himself on a level with his apostles when he says, “The word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me”; and in his final prayer he prayed for those who would believe on him through the apostles’ word, as much as to say, that if they would not believe on him through the word of the apostles, they would not believe at all. John, speaking of himself and his fellow-apostles, has said by the Holy Ghost, “He that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.” This is *the* test of believers at the present time: the rejection of the apostles condemns the modern school.

Brethren, may the Lord give us *great humility of mind*. It ought not to be an extraordinary thing for us to accept what God says. It ought not to take much humility for such poor creatures as we are to sit at Jesus’ feet. We ought to look upon it as an elevation of mind for our spirit to lie prostrate before infinite wisdom. Assuredly this is needful to the reception of power from God.

I have noticed, too, that if God’s power comes to a man with a message, he not only has childlikeness of mind, but he has also *singleness of eye*. Such a man, trying to hear what God the Lord shall speak, is all ear. He honestly and eagerly desires to know what God’s mind is, and he applies all his faculties to the reception of the divine communication. As he drinks in the sacred message, with a complete surrender of soul, he is resolved to give it out with the entire concentration of his mental and spiritual powers, and with a single eye to the glory of God. Unless you have but one eye, and that one eye sees Christ and his glory in the salvation of men, God will not use you. The man whose eyes cannot look straight on, must not be admitted a priest unto the living God. There are certain defects which cut a man off from the divine employ, and anything like a sinister motive is one of them. If you aim at making money, winning ease, securing approbation, or obtaining position, or even if you aim at the exhibition of rhetorical talent, you will not be fit for the Master’s use. God would not have us entangled with subordinate designs. You do not keep a servant to go to the door that people may say, “What a fine girl she is, and how charmingly she dresses!” You may smile if it is so, and put up with it; but your sole wish is to have your message promptly and faithfully delivered. How contemptible it is when a minister so acts as to give the idea of childish display! He stands up to deliver his Lord’s message, but his hope is that people will say, “What a nice young man! How properly he speaks, and how prettily he quotes Browning!” Self-display is death to power. God cannot largely bless men with such small ideas. It were beneath the dignity of the Godhead for the Lord largely to use an instrument so altogether unadapted for his sublime purposes.

Beloved, I notice that God imparts his messages to those who have a complete subordination to him. I will tell you what has often crossed my mind when I have talked with certain brethren, or have read their lucubrations: I

have wondered which was the Master and which was the servant, the man or God. I have been sorry for the errors of these brethren; but I have been far more distressed by the spirit shown in those errors. It is evident that they have renounced that holy reverence for Scripture which is indicated by such an expression as this, "That trembleth at my word." They rather trifle than tremble. The Word is not their teacher, but they are its critics. The Word of the Lord is no longer enthroned in the place of honour with many; but it is treated as a football, to be kicked about as they please; and the apostles, especially, are treated as if Paul, and James, and John were Jack, Tom, and Harry, with whom modern wise men are on terms of something more than equality. They pass the books of Scripture under their rod, and judge the Spirit of God himself. The Lord cannot work by a creature that is in revolt against him. We must manifest the spirit of reverence, or we shall not be as little children, nor enter the kingdom of heaven. When some men come to die, the religion which they have themselves thought out and invented will yield them no more confidence than the religion of the Roman Catholic sculptor who, on his death-bed, was visited by his priest. The priest said, "You are now departing out of this life"; and, holding up a beautiful crucifix, he cried, "Behold your God, who died for you." "Alas!" said the sculptor, "I made it." There was no comfort for him in the work of his own hands; and there will be no comfort in a religion of one's own devising. That which was created in the brain cannot yield comfort to the heart. The man will sorrowfully say, "Yes, that is my own idea; but what does God say?" Brethren; I believe in that which I could not have invented. I believe that which I cannot understand. I believe that which compels me to adore, and I thank God for a rock that is higher than I am. If it were not higher than I, it were not a shelter for me.

"But still," says one, "we must be earnest students of the literature of the period, and of the science of the age." Yes: I did not say you were not to be so; but keep them in subordination to the Word of God. When the Israelites took captives in battle, it sometimes happened that among the prisoners there was a woman whom the captor might desire to marry, and the Lord did not forbid the alliance; but have you ever noticed the command to shave her head, and pare her nails? This must be done most carefully with all the literature of this period, whether it be secular or religious, whether it deal with fact or fiction. The shaving will need to be very close, and the paring to be very careful. Even when these operations are performed, a wise man will still see reason to question whether the subject of them had not, after all, be better let alone. There is an instructive precept of the ceremonial law which shuts out some things from ever being used in the service of the Lord. I quote it with trembling: "Thou shalt not bring the hire of a harlot, or the price of a dog, into the house of God." I question whether, in quoting certain poets and authors, we may not be contravening this statute. When men's lives have been foul, and their principles atheistic, there should be great hesitation as to quoting their language. The blasphemer of the living God is hardly to be mentioned in the Lord's house, however fine may have been the product of his rebellious heart. At any rate, all that is of man, even the best of men, must be altogether subordinate to the Word of the Lord.

I have mentioned simplicity of character, singleness of eye, and subordination of mind; and next to these, I notice, also, that, if God will speak to us, there must be a *deep seriousness of heart*. Let me remind you again of that

text: "That trembleth at my word." When George Fox was called a Quaker, because he trembled at the name of God, the title was an honour to him. The man was so God-possessed that he quaked, as well he might. Habakkuk describes the same feeling as having been his own; no unusual experience with the true child of God. In fact, God never comes to us without our trembling. The old Romish legend is that the tree that bore the Saviour was the aspen, whose leaves continually quiver. He that bears Christ within him, and feels the weight of the divine glory, must be filled with awe. Our brother Williams just now said that he feared and trembled for all the goodness that God had made to pass before him: this is my feeling and yours. We are so weak, and these divine inspirations are so weighty, that we are subdued into awe, and there is no room for levity. Brethren, avoid anything like trifling over sermon-making. Someone says, "Well, I take very little time over my sermon." Make no boast of that; it may be your sin. Listen! If a man had been put apprentice to cabinetmaking, and had worked at it for a lifetime, it may be he would have a great deal of skill and a store of prepared material, so that he could turn out a chair in a short time; but you must not, therefore, think that you could do the same, and that cabinet work is mere child's play. A certain minister may compose a sermon in a short time, but you must remember that this is the result of the labour of many years. Even he who, according to common parlance, speaks quite extemporaneously, does not really do so: he delivers what he has in previous years stored up. The mill is full of corn, and, therefore, when you put a sack in the proper place, it is filled with flour in a short time. Do not regard preparation for the pulpit as a trifling thing; and do not rush upon your holy duties without devout fitness for the hallowed service. Make your waiting upon God a necessity of your calling, and at the same time the highest privilege of it. Count it your joy and honour to have an interview with your Master. Get your message fresh from God. Even manna stinks if you keep it beyond its time; therefore, get it fresh from heaven, and then it will have a celestial relish.

One thing more upon this head. This power, which we so greatly need in getting our message, will only come where there is a *sympathy with God*. Brethren, do you know what it is to be in tender sympathy with God? Perhaps no man among us knows what perfect sympathy with God means; yet we must, at least, be in such accord with God as to feel that he could not do or say anything which we would question. We could not doubt any truth which he could reveal; neither in our heart of hearts would we quarrel with anything which his will could appoint. If anything in us is not in perfect agreement with the Lord, we regard it as evil, and groan to be set free from it. If anything in us contends against God, we contend against it, for we are one with God in intent and desire. We hear much nowadays of sympathy with man; and in a measure we agree with it. Sympathy with the fallen, the suffering, the lost, is good. But my sympathies are also with the Lord my God. His name is dishonoured; his glory is trailed in the mire. It is his dear bleeding Son that is worst used of all. Oh, to think that he should love so well and be refused! That such beauty as his should be unacknowledged, such redemption rejected, such mercy scorned! What are men, after all, compared with God? If they are like myself, it were a pity that they were ever made! As for God, does he not fill all things with goodness as well as with being! To me Calvinism means the placing of the eternal God at the head of all things. I look at everything through its relation to God's glory. I see God first, and man far down in the list. We think too

much of God to please this age; but we are not ashamed. Man has a will, and oh, how they cry it up! One said the other day—and there is some truth in it, too,—“I attribute a kind of omnipotence to the will of man.” But, sirs, has not God a will, too? What do you attribute to that will? Have you nothing to say about its omnipotence? Is God to have no choice, no purpose, no sovereignty over his own gifts? Brethren, if we live in sympathy with God, we delight to hear him say, “I am God, and beside me there is none else.”

I can hardly tell you how high a value I set upon this enthusiasm for God. We must be in harmony with all his designs of love towards men, whilst in secret we receive his message. To become apparently warm in the pulpit is not of much account unless we are much more intense when alone with God. Heart-fire is true fire: a housewife who perseveres in the old method of making her own bread, does not want a great blaze at the mouth of the oven. “Oh, no,” she says, “I want to get my fagots far back, and get all the heat into the oven itself, and then it becomes of use to me.” Sermons are never baked by the fire and flash at the month; they must be prepared through the heating of the inmost soul. That precious Word, that divine shewbread, must be baked in the centre of our nature by the heat that is put there by the indwelling Spirit.

The Lord loves to use a man who is in perfect sympathy with him. I would not say anything unbecoming, but I believe that the Lord finds pleasure in the sympathy of his children. When you have been very heavy of heart, even to weeping, if your little child has said, “Dear father, don’t cry,” or has asked, “What are you crying for, father?” and then has broken out into sobbing himself, have you not been comforted by him? Poor dear, he does not understand what it is all about; but you say, “Bless you, my dear child”; and you kiss him, and feel comfort in him. So doth the Lord take up his poor weeping minister into his bosom, and hear him cry, “Lord, they will not come to thee; Lord, they will not believe thee. They are running after evil, instead of thee. Lord, if I gave them a play, or a peepshow, they would come in crowds; but if I preach thy dear Son, they will not hear me.” The great God enters into your sorrows, and finds a content in your heart’s love. God is not a man; but as man was made in the image of God, we learn something of him from ourselves. He loves to clasp a sympathizing one to his bosom, and then to say, “Go, my child, and work in my name; for I can trust my gospel in thy hands.” Be with God, and God will be with you. Espouse his cause, and he will espouse yours. There can be no question about this.

Follow me, my brethren, while I speak upon **THE POWER THAT IS NEEDED WHEN WE ARE DELIVERING THE MESSAGE ITSELF**. Brethren, if there is to be a divine result from God’s Word, the Holy Ghost must go forth with it. As surely as God went before Israel when he divided the Red Sea, as surely as he led them through the wilderness by the pillar of cloud and fire; so surely must the Lord’s powerful presence go with his Word if there is to be any blessing from it. How, then, are we to get that priceless benediction? Great natural forces are in the world, and when engineers wish to employ those forces, they go to work in a certain manner suitable thereto. They cannot create power by mechanism, but they can utilize it, and economize it. For instance, the wheel and pulley do not produce power; but by diminishing friction, they prevent the waste of power, and this is a great matter. We, also, can be great gainers by using methods to minimize friction with this present evil world, with which we unavoidably come into contact. Your own experience

will teach you the wisdom of this. Look earnestly to that holy separateness of spirit which shall preserve you from the distracting and down-dragging tendencies of things seen. Happily there is another kind of friction which has great power in developing latent force. Just as a certain form of electricity is produced by friction, so can we obtain power by coming in contact with God, and by means of the spiritual effect of truth as it operates upon a willing and obedient heart. To be touched by the finger of God, yea, to come into contact with even the hem of our Master's garment, is to obtain heavenly energy; and if we have much of it, we shall be charged with sacred strength in a mysterious but very palpable way. Be much with God in holy dialogue, letting him speak to you by his Word while you speak back to him by your prayers and praises. So far you will obtain force

The greatest generator of force which is available to man is heat. I suppose that nothing produces so much power for human purposes as fire; and even so, the burning and consuming element in the spiritual world is a great factor in the development of spiritual strength. We must be in downright earnest, and must feel the burnings of a zeal which consumes us, or we shall have little force. We must decrease: we must be burning if we would be shining lights. We cannot save our lives, and save others: there must be a destruction of self for the salvation of men.

Many other things suggest themselves to me on this point; but I waive them all, to come distinctly to the one most real and most sufficient power, namely, the Holy Ghost, to whom be glory evermore!

In order to have the Holy Spirit with us, there must be a very close adhesion to the truth of God, with clearness, boldness, and fidelity in the utterance of it. Do not dream that to have a formal creed, or a something which is said not to be a creed, but "a declaration," or some other style of confession—I know not how to mention the nondescript invention—is enough. Without intensely hearty belief of truth these precious documents are wretched affairs. Declarations of the kind I refer to may be compared to flags, which may be useful if carried by brave standard-bearers, or they may be tawdry ornaments, used for meaner ends. A teacher was once instructing a class in patriotism and nationality. He happened to see the national flag hanging up upon the wall, and he asked a child, "Now, my boy, what is that flag?" "It is the English flag, sir." "And what is the use of it?" The truthful boy replied, "It is used to cover the dirty place in the wall behind it." I need not interpret the parable. Let modern ecclesiastical history point the moral.

Do not let it be true of any of you, that a loudly professed orthodoxy is a mere coverlet for error, which is secretly held. No, dear brethren, stick to the truth, because the truth sticks to you. Wherever it leads you, follow it; down into the valley, or aloft upon the hills. Follow close at its heels, and only fear to be left behind in its course. When the road is miry, never fear that you will ever be hurt by the splashes of truth.

The truth of God is the best of all guests: entertain it, as Abraham did the angels. Spare not the best you have for its maintenance; for it leaves a rich blessing with those who deny themselves for it. But do not entertain any of the inventions of man; for these will betray you, as Judas betrayed Christ with a kiss. Do not be dismayed by the caricatures of truth which are manufactured by malicious minds. Nowadays it is the policy of men to misrepresent gospel doctrines. They remind me of Voltaire, of whom it is said that he could take

any book that he read and make whatever he liked out of it, and then hold it up to ridicule. Remember the Roman practice in persecuting times: they wrapped the Christians in skins of bears, and then set dogs to tear there to pieces. They treat us the same, morally, if we hold by unpopular truth. I have seen myself in several skins lately: I can only say they were no skins of mine. I return them to those who arrayed me in them.

If our declarations of truth are fairly and honestly stated, and then argued against—well and good; but when they are misrepresented, and tortured to mean what we never meant them to mean, then we are not careful to reply. When this happens to you, count it no strange thing. Reckon that because they cannot overcome the truth itself, they fashion an image of it stuffed with straw, and then burn it with childish exultation. Let them enjoy their game as they may. Brethren, I do not believe that God will set his seal to a ministry which does not aim at being strictly in accordance with the mind of the Spirit. In proportion as a ministry is truthful, other things being equal, God can bless it. Would you have the Holy Ghost set his seal to a lie? Would you have him bless what he has not revealed, and confirm with signs following that which is not truth? I am more and more persuaded that if we mean to have God with us we must keep to the truth. It is an almost invariable rule, that when men go aside from the old faith they are seldom successful in soul-winning. I could appeal to all observers whether it is not so, and whether men, powerful in other ways, do not become barren and unfruitful as to the salvation of others when they become doubters rather than believers. If you enquire into the worm which has devoured the root of their usefulness, you will find that it is a want of faith upon some great, cardinal principle—a want of faith which may not be displayed in their public ministry, but lurks within, poisoning their thoughts. You must be with the Holy Ghost if you are to have the Holy Ghost with you.

Beloved, have a genuine faith in the Word of God, and in its power to save. Do not go up into the pulpit preaching the truth, and saying, “I hope some good will come of it”; but confidently believe that it will not return void, but must work the eternal purpose of God. Do not speak as if the gospel might have some power, or might have none. God sends you to be a miracle-worker; therefore say to the spiritually lame, “in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk,” and men will rise up and walk; but if you say, “I hope, dear man, that Jesus Christ may be able to make you rise up and walk,” your Lord will frown upon your dishonouring words. You have lowered him—you have brought him down to the level of your unbelief, and he cannot do many mighty works by you. Speak boldly; for if you speak by the Holy Spirit you cannot speak in vain.

Oh, that we could make our people feel that we believe what we are saying! I have heard of a little girl, who said to her father, who was a minister, and who had been telling her a story, “Pa, is that real, or is it preaching?” I cannot object to your smiling at my anecdote; but it is a thing to weep over, that preaching should be suspected of unreality. People hear our testimony, and ask, “Is it a matter of fact, or is it the proper thing to be said?” If they saw a statement in a newspaper, they would believe it; but when they see it in a sermon, they say, “It is a pious opinion.”

This suspicion is born of want of fidelity in ministers. I saw, just now, outside the shop of a marine-store dealer, a placard which runs thus: “Fifty tons

of bones wanted.” “Yes,” I said to myself, “mostly back-bones.” Fifty tons of them! I could indicate a place where they could take fifty tons, and not be overstocked. As for us, let us be able to say, “I believed, therefore have I spoken.” Let us have a genuine faith in everything that God has revealed. Have faith, not only in its truth, but in its power; faith in the absolute certainty that, if it be preached, it will produce its results.

Closely adhering to the truth by a dogged faith, we are in the condition in which God is likely to bless us. But then, there must be in the preaching a concentration of heart upon the business in which we are engaged. We shall never do well in our sacred calling if half our energy goes to something else. The man who is doing half-a-dozen things generally fails in them all. Of course he does. We have not enough water in our streamlet to drive more than one mill: if we let it run over one wheel, that one wheel will turn to purpose; but if we divide the water, it will do nothing. God’s message deserves every fragment of my ability; and when I deliver it, I ought to be “all there,” every bit of me; none of me should go astray or lie asleep. Some men, when they get into the pulpit, are not there. One said to me, in conversation, “I do not know how it is, but I feel so different when I shut that pulpit-door.” I answered, “Have the door taken off.” That might not, however, produce the effect; it would have been better if it could be said of him as of Noah, “The Lord shut him in.”

Do not some show by their preaching, that their heart is not in it? They have come to preach, and they will get through what they have to say: but their deepest thoughts and liveliest emotions would come out better at a political meeting. They have not all their wits about them when preaching. They remind me of the legend of the two learned doctors down in the fen country, who thought that they would have a day’s shooting of wild ducks. They were extremely learned, but they were not at home in common pursuits. They came to a piece of water, into which it was necessary for them to wade to get at the ducks, and one said to the other, “I have not put on my water-boots.” The other replied, “I have forgotten my boots, too; but never mind.” They both waded in, for they were keen sportsmen. They reached a sufficient nearness for shooting the ducks. Then one whispered, “Now, brother, fire at them.” The brother replied, “I’ve forgotten my gun. Haven’t you brought yours?” “No,” said the other, I did not think of it.” There were sportsmen for you! Their deep thoughts had made them unpractical: their Hebrew roots had displaced their common sense. Have you never seen such preachers? They are “not there”—their minds are in the profound abysses of critical unbelief. The Holy Ghost will not bless men of this sort. He spake by an ass once, but that ass showed its sense by never speaking any more. I know creatures of like kind not half so wise.

Now, dear friends, see what I am driving at. I hope that I shall not miss it. It is plain to every thoughtful mind, that if we are not altogether in our work, we cannot expect a blessing. God the Holy Ghost does not work by a torso, or a bust; he uses our whole manhood. See a tradesman in our poorer quarters, on a Saturday night, outside his shop. He walks up and down, and cries, “Buy, buy,” with vehemence; he salutes every passer-by; he presses his commodities; he is everywhere at once; he compels men to come in; he urges each one to be a purchaser. So, also, must we serve the Lord with all diligence, if we hope for success in our sacred calling.

(To be continued.)

THE
SWORD AND THE TROWEL.

AUGUST, 1889.

The Preacher's Power, and the Conditions of
Obtaining it.

AN ADDRESS BY C. H. SPURGEON, AT THE CONFERENCE.
(*Concluded from previous section.*)

IF we would have the Lord with us in the delivery of our message, we must be in dead earnest, and full of living zeal. Do you not think that many sermons are "prepared" until the juice is crushed out of them, and zeal could not remain in such dry husks? Sermons which are studied for days, written down, read, re-read, corrected, and further corrected and emended, are in great danger of being too much cut and dried. You will never get a crop if you plant boiled potatoes. You can boil a sermon to a turn, so that no life remaineth in it. I like, in a discourse, to hear the wild-bird notes of true nature and pure grace: these have a charm unknown to the artificial and elaborate address. The music which we hear of a morning, in the spring, has a freshness in it which your tame birds cannot reach; it is full of rapture, and alive with variety and feeling.

It is a treat to hear a really good local preacher tell out his experience of how he came to Christ; and relate it in his own hearty, unaffected way. Nature beats art all to nothing. A simple, hearty testimony is like grapes cut fresh from the vine: who would lay a bunch of raisins by the side of them? God give us sermons, and save us from essays! Do you not all know the superfine brother? You ought to listen to him, for he is clever; you ought to be attentive to his words, for every sentence of that paper cost him hours of toilsome composition; but somehow it falls flat, and there is an offensive smell of stale oil. I speak advisedly when I say that some speakers want locking out of their studies, and turning out to visit their people. A very good preacher once said to me, "I feel discouraged; for the other Sunday I did not feel at all well, and I preached a sermon without much study; in fact, it was such a talk as I should give if I sat up in bed in the middle of the night, and in my shirt-sleeves told out the way of salvation. Why, sir, my people came to me and said, 'What a delightful sermon! We have so enjoyed it!' I felt disgusted with them. When I have given them a sermon that took a full week, and perhaps more, to prepare, they have not thought anything of it; but this unstudied address quite won their hearts." I replied to him, "If I were you I would accept their judgment, and give them another sermon of the same sort." So long as the life of the sermon is strengthened by it, you may prepare to the utmost; but if the soul evaporates in the process, what is the good of such injurious toil? It is a kind of murder

which you have wrought upon the sermon which you have dried to death. I do not believe that God the Holy Ghost cares one single atom about your classical composition. I do not think that the Lord takes any delight in your rhetoric, or in your poetry, or even in that marvellous peroration which concludes the discourse, after the manner of the final display at old Vauxhall Gardens, when a profusion of all manner of fireworks closed the scene. Not even by that magnificent finale does the Lord work the salvation of sinners. If there is fire, life, and truth in the sermon, then the quickening Spirit will work by it, but not else. Be earnest, and you need not be elegant.

The Holy Spirit will help us in our message, if there is an entire *dependence upon him*. Of course, you all receive this at once; but do you entirely depend upon the Holy Spirit? Can you? dare you, do that? I would not urge any man to go into the pulpit and talk what first came into his head, under the pretence of depending upon the Holy Spirit; but still, there are methods of preparation which denote the utter absence of any trust in the Holy Spirit's help in the pulpit. There is no practical difficulty in reconciling our own earnest endeavours with humble dependence upon God; but it is very hard to make this appear logical, when we are merely discussing a theory. It is the old difficulty of reconciling faith and works. I heard of a good man who had family prayer, and commended his house and household to the care of God during the night-watches. When burglaries became numerous in the neighbourhood, he said to a friend, "After you have asked the Lord to protect your house, what do you do?" His friend answered that he did nothing more than usual. "Well," said the first, "we have put bolts, top and bottom, upon all the doors, and we have a lock and also a chain. Besides that, we have the best patent fastenings on all the windows." "All that is well enough," said his friend; "is not that enough?" "No," said he; "when we go to bed my wife and I have two bolts on the door of the bedroom, and a lock and chain on the door. I have also got a spear-head fixed on a pole, and my wife has an electric apparatus which will ring a bell, and give an alarm outside." His friend smiled, and said, "And all that is faith in God, is it?" The good man replied, "Faith without works is dead." "Yes," said the other, "but I should think that faith with so many works would be likely to be smothered."

There is a medium in all things. I should not pray God to take care of me, and then leave my front door unfastened and my window open. So I should not pray for the Holy Spirit, and then go into the pulpit without having carefully thought upon my text. Still, if I had prepared thoughts and expressions so minutely that I never varied from my set form, I should think that my faith was, to say the least, encumbered with more works than would allow her much liberty of action. I do not see where the opportunity is given to the Spirit of God to help us in preaching, if every jot and tittle is settled beforehand. Do let your trust in God be free to move hand and foot. While you are preaching, believe that God the Holy Spirit can give you, in the self-same hour, what you shall speak; and can make you say what you had not previously thought of; yes, and make this newly-given utterance to be the very arrow-head of the discourse, which shall strike deeper into the heart than anything you had prepared. Do not reduce your dependence upon the Holy Ghost to a mere phrase; make it more and more a fact.

Above all, dear friends, if you want the blessing of God, keep up constant communion with God. We get into fellowship with God at this Conference; do

not let us get out of communion with God when we go home. When may a Christian safely be out of communion with God? Never. If we always walk with God, and act towards him as children towards a loving father, so that the spirit of adoption is always in us, and the spirit of love always flows forth from us, we shall preach with power, and God will bless our ministry; for then we shall know and utter the mind of God.

I must add here, that if we are to enjoy the power of God, we must manifest great holiness of life. I would not ask any brother to profess that he has a higher life than other believers; for, if he did so, we might suspect that he had no very eminent degree of humility. I would not invite any brother to talk about having more holiness than his brother-ministers; for, if he did so, we might fear that he hung out the outward sign because the inward grace was absent. But we must have holiness to a high degree. Unholy living! How can God bless it? I heard of one who, on the Sabbath morning said to his people, "I was at the play last night, and I saw So-and-so"; and he used what he saw as an illustration of his subject. It saddened me to hear the story: may the like never be done again. Alas! acts of worldly conformity are not only tolerated nowadays, but they are, in some quarters, commended as signs of a large mind. If a man can enjoy the theatre, it is his own concern; but when he invites me to hear him preach, I decline to accept his invitation. Even worldlings look with scorn upon loose habits in a preacher. I know a certain clergyman who is fond of cards. Speaking to a man-servant, a friend said, "Where do you go on Sunday; I suppose you attend the church?"—the place being very near. "No," said the man, "I never go and hear that gentleman." "Why not?" "Well," he said, "you know he is very much taken up with card-playing." "Yes," said my friend, "but you play cards yourself." This was the answer: "Yes, I play cards; but I would not trust my soul with a man who does it. I want a better man than myself to be my spiritual guide." The remark is open to many criticisms, but there is about it a ring of common sense. That is how the world regards matters. Now, if even men of the world judge trifling preachers to be unfit for their work, depend upon it the Holy Ghost has not a better opinion of them, and he must be sorely vexed with unspiritual, unholy intruders into the sacred office. If we can lie; if we can be unkind to our families; if we do not pay our debts; if we are notorious for levity, and little given to devotion; how can we expect a blessing? "Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord." As I have said before, he does not mind what the vessel is, even though it be but of earth or of wood; but it must be clean. It is not fit for the Master's use if it is not clean. Oh, that God would keep us pure, and then take us in his own hand for his own purposes!

Once more: if we are to be robed in the power of the Lord, *we must feel an intense longing for the glory of God and the salvation of the sons of men*. Even when we are most successful, we must long for more success. If God had given us many souls, we must pine for a thousand times as many. Satisfaction with results will be the knell of progress. No man is good who thinks that he cannot be better. He has no holiness who thinks that he is holy enough; and he is not useful who thinks that he is useful enough. Desire to honour God grows as we grow. Can you not sympathize with Mr. Welsh, a Suffolk minister, who was noticed to sit and weep; and one said to him, "My dear Mr. Welsh, why are you weeping?" "Well," he replied, "I cannot tell you"; but when they pressed him very hard, he answered, "I am weeping because I cannot love

Christ more.” That was worth weeping for, was it not? That man was noted everywhere for his intense love to his Master, and, therefore, he wept because he could not love him more. The holiest minister is the man who cries, “O wretched that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” No common Christian sighs in that fashion. Sin becomes exquisitely painful only to the exquisitely pure. That wound of sin which would not be a pin’s prick to coarser minds, seems a dagger’s wound to him. If we have great love to Jesus, and great compassion for perishing men, we shall not be puffed up with large success; but we shall sigh and cry over the thousands who are not converted.

Love for souls will operate in many ways upon our ministry. Among other things, it will make us very plain in our speech. We shall say to ourselves, “No, I must not use that hard word, for that poor woman in the aisle would not understand me. I must not point out that recondite difficulty, for yonder trembling soul might be staggered by it, and might not be relieved by my explanation.” I heard a sentence the other day which stuck to me because of its finery rather than its weight of meaning. An admirable divine remarked, “When duty is embodied in a concrete personality, it is eminently simplified.” You all understand the expression; but I do not think that the congregation to which it was addressed had more than a hazy idea of what it meant. It is our old friend, “Example is better than precept.” It is a fine thing to construct sounding sentences, but it is only an amusement; it ministers nothing to our great end. Some would impress us by their depth of thought, when it is merely a love of big words. To hide plain things in dark sentences is sport rather than service for God. If you love men better, you will love phrases less. How used your mother to talk to you when you were a child? There! do not tell me. Don’t print it. It would never do for the public ear. The things that she used to say to you were childish, and earlier still, babyish. Why did she thus speak? for she was a very sensible woman. Because she loved you. There is a sort of tutoyage, as the French call it, in which love delights. Love’s manner of addressing men disregards all the dignities and the fineries of language, and only cares to impart its meaning, and infuse the blessing. To spread our heart right over another heart is better than adorning it with the paint and varnish of brilliant speech. If you greatly love, you are the kind of man that knows how to feel for men, and with them. Some men do not know how to handle a heart at all. They are like a stranger at the fish-market, who will so touch certain fish, that they at once erect their spines, and pierce the hand that touches them. A fishwife is never hurt in that way, for she knows where to take them. There is a way of handling men and women, and the art is acquired through intense love. How do the mothers of England learn to bring up their children? Is there an academy for maternal tuition? Have we founded a guild of motherhood? No; love is the great teacher, and it makes the young mother quick of understanding for her babe’s good. Get much love to Christ, and much love to immortal souls, and it is wonderful how wisely you will adapt your teaching to the need of those around you.

I will mention a few things more which are necessary to the full display of the power which regenerates sinners, and builds up saints. *Much care should be bestowed upon our surroundings.* Brethren, do not think that if you go, next Lord’s-day, to a place you have never visited before, you will find it as easy to preach there as it is at home among a loving, praying people. Are you not conscious, when going into some assemblies, that they are cold as ice-wells? You

say to yourself, "How can I preach here? "You do not quite know why, but you are not happy. There is no quickening atmosphere, no refreshing dew, no heavenly wind. Like your Lord, you cannot do anything because of the unbelief around you. When you begin to preach, it is like speaking inside a steam-boiler. No living hearts respond to your heart. They are a sleepy company, or a critical society; you can see it, and feel it. How they fix their eyes on you, and concentrate their spectacles! You perceive that they are in what a countryman called "a judgmental frame of mind." No good will come of your warm-hearted address. I have had great success in soul-winning, when preaching in different parts of the country; but I have never taken any credit for it; for I feel that I preach under great advantages: the people come with an intense desire to hear, and with an expectation of getting a blessing; and hence every word has its due weight. When a congregation expects nothing, it generally finds nothing even in the best of preachers; but when they are prepared to make much of what they hear, they usually get what they come for. If a man goes fishing for frogs, he catches them; if he fishes for fish, he will catch them, if he goes to the right stream. Our work is, no doubt, greatly affected, for good or evil, by the condition of the congregation, the condition of the church, and the condition of the deacons.

Some churches are in such a state that they are enough to baffle any ministry. A brother minister told me of a Congregational chapel in which there has not been a prayer-meeting for the last fifteen years; and I did not wonder when he added that the congregation had nearly died out, and the minister was removing. It was time he should. What a blessing he will *not* be somewhere else! "But," said he, "I cannot say much about this state of things; for in my own church I cannot get the people to pray. The bulk of them have not been in the habit of taking public part in the prayers, and it seems impossible to get them to do so. What shall I do?" "Well," I replied, "it may help you if you call in your church officers on Sunday mornings, before the service, and ask them to pray for you, as my deacons and elders do for me. My officers know what a trembling creature I am; and when I ask them to seek strength for me, they do so with loving hearts." Don't you think that such exercises tend to train men in the art of public prayer? Besides, men are likely to hear better when they have prayed for the preacher. Oh, to get around us a band of men whose hearts the Lord has touched! If we have a holy people about us, we shall be the better able to preach. Tell me not of a marble pulpit; this is a golden pulpit. A holy people who are living what you preach make the best platform for a pleader for Christ. Christ went up into the mountain and taught the crowd; and when you have a company of godly people around you, you do, as it were, go up into the mountain and speak with the people from a favoured elevation. We need a holy people; but, alas! there is too often an Achan in the camp. Achan is more generally harboured than he used to be, because goodly Babylonish garments and wedges of silver are much in request, and weak faith feels that it cannot do without these spoils. Carnal policy whispers, "What shall we do with the chapel debt if the wealthy deacon leaves, and his silver goes with him? We should miss the respectability which his wife's goodly Babylonish garment bestows upon the place. We have very few wealthy people, and we must strain a point to keep them." Yes, that is the way in which the accursed thing is allowed to debase our churches and defeat our ministries. When this pest is in the air, you may preach your tongue out, but you will not win souls.

One man may have more power for mischief than fifty preachers have power for good. May the Lord give you a holy, pleading people, whom he can bless!

For large blessing we must have union among our people. God the Holy Spirit does not bless a collection of quarrelling professors. Those who are always contending, not for the truth, but for petty differences, and family jealousies, are not likely to bring to the church the dove-like Spirit. Want of unity always involves want of power. I know that some churches are greatly at fault in this direction; but certain ministers never have a harmonious people, although they change frequently and I am afraid it is because they are not very loving themselves. Unless we are ourselves in good temper we cannot expect to keep the people in good temper. As pastors, we must bear a great deal; and when we have borne as much as possible, and cannot bear any more, we must go over it again, and bear the same things again. Strong in the love which “endureth all things, hopeth all things,” we must quietly resolve not to take offence, and before long harmony will be created where discord reigned, and then we may expect a blessing.

We must plead with God that our people may be all earnest for the spread of the truth and the conversion of sinners. How blessed is that minister who has earnest men around him! You know what one cold-hearted man can do, if he gets at you on Sunday morning with a lump of ice, and freezes you with the information that Mrs. Smith is offended, and all her family, and their pew is vacant. You did not want to know of that lady’s protest just before entering the pulpit, and it does not help you. Another dear brother tells you with great grief (he is so overcome that it is a pity his voice does not fail him altogether) that one of the best helpers is very much hurt at your not calling to see him last Friday, when you were a hundred miles away preaching for a struggling church. You ought to have called upon him at any inconvenience, so the brother will tell you, and he does his duty with a heart “as cool as a cucumber.” It may even happen that when you come down from the mount where you have been with God, and preached with your soul on fire, that you come right down into a cold bath of commonplace remark, which lets you see that some of your hearers are out of sympathy both with your subject and yourself. Such a thing is a great hindrance, not only to your spirit, but to the Spirit of God; for the Holy One notices all this unkind and unspiritual behaviour. Brethren, what a work we have to do! What a work we have to do! Unless the Spirit of God comes to sanctify these surroundings, how can it ever be done? I am sure you feel the necessity of having a truly praying people. Be much in prayer yourself, and this will be more effectual than scolding your people for not praying. Set the example. Draw streams of prayer out of the really gracious people by getting them to pray whenever they come to see you, and by praying with them yourself whenever you call upon them. Not only when they are ill, but when they are well, ask them to join in prayer with you. When a man is upstairs in bed, and cannot do any hurt, you pray for him. When he is downstairs, and can do no end of mischief, you do not pray for him. Is this wise and prudent? Oh, for a pleading people! The praying legion is the victorious legion. One of our most urgent necessities is fervent, importunate prayer.

Brethren, in addition to co-operation in service, we need that our friends should be *looking out for souls*. Whenever a stranger comes into the chapel, somebody should speak to him. Whenever a person is a little impressed, an earnest brother should follow up the stroke. Whenever a heart is troubled,

some genial voice should whisper to him words of comfort. If these things were so, our ministry would be quadrupled in effort, and the result would be fourfold. May all our chapels be cooperative stores for zeal and earnestness, wherein not one man but every man is at work for Christ

I have done when I say just this. *Let each man bethink him of the responsibility that rests upon him.* I should not like to handle the doctrine of responsibility with the view of proving that it squares with the doctrine of predestination. It does do so, assuredly. I believe in predestination without cutting and trimming it; and I believe in responsibility without adulterating and weakening it. Before you the man of God places a quiver full of arrows, and he bids you shoot the arrow of the Lord's deliverance. Bestir yourself, and draw the bow! I beseech you, remember that every time you shoot there shall be victory for Israel. Will you stop at the third shooting? The man of God will feel angry and grieved if you are thus straitened, and he will say, "Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times, and then Syria would have been utterly destroyed." Do we not fail in our preachings in our very ideal of what we are going to do, and in the design we set before us for accomplishment? Having laboured a little, are we not very satisfied? Shake off such base content! Let us shoot many times. Brethren, be filled with a great ambition; not for yourselves, but for your Lord. Elevate your ideal! Have no more firing at the bush. You may, in this case, shoot at the sun himself; for you will be sure to shoot higher if you do so, than if some grovelling object were your aim. Believe for great things of a great God. Remember, whether you do so or not, great are your responsibilities. There never was a more restless time than now. What is being done to-day will affect the next centuries, unless the Lord should very speedily come. I believe that if we walk uprightly and decidedly before God at this time, we shall make the future of England bright with the gospel; but trimming now, and debasing doctrine now, will affect children yet unborn, generation after generation. Posterity must be considered. I do not look so much at what is to happen to-day, for these things relate to eternity. For my part, I am quite willing to be eaten of dogs for the next fifty years; but the more distant future shall vindicate me. I have dealt honestly before the living God. My brother, do the same. Who knows but what thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this? If thou hast grit in thee, quit thyself like a man. If thou hast God in thee, then thou mayest yet do marvels. But if not, bent, doubled up, proven to be useless, thou shalt lie on that foul dunghill which is made up of cowards' failures and misspent lives. God save both thee and me from that!

I would enhance our sense of responsibility by the remembrance of the death-beds of our people. Unless we are faithful to them, it will be a painful sight to be present when they come to die. Suppose that any one of our hearers should stretch out his bony band, and say, "I am lost, and you never warned me; you always gave me some idea that it might be a little way round-about, but I should get right all the same; and I chose the round-about way of the larger hope, instead of the divine hope that is set before us in the gospel." I would rather never have been born than have anybody speak thus to me when he shall come to die. My brother said to me the other day what Charles Wesley said to John Wesley: "Brother, our people die well!" I answered, "Assuredly they do!" I have never been to the sick bed of any one of our people without feeling strengthened in faith. In the sight of their glorious confidence, I could sooner battle with the whole earth, and kick it before me like a football, than

have a doubt in my mind about the gospel of our Lord. They die gloriously. I saw, last week, a dear sister, with cancer just under her eye. How did I find her? Was she lamenting her hard fate? By no means; she was happy, calm, joyful, in bright expectation of seeing the face of the King in his glory. I talked with a tradesman, not long ago, who fell asleep, and I said, "You seem to have no fears." "No," he said, "how can I have any? You have not taught us what will make us fear. How can I be afraid to die, since I have fed these thirty years on the strong meat of the Kingdom of God? I know whom I have believed." I had a heavenly time with him. I cannot use a lower word. He exhibited a holy mirth in the expectation of a speedy removal to the better world.

Now, dear brethren, suffer one last word. You and I will soon die ourselves, unless our Master comes; and blessed will it be for us, if, when we lie in the silent room, and the nights grow weary, and our strength ebbs out, we can stay ourselves upon the pillows and say, "O Lord, I have known thee from my youth, and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works; and now that I am about to depart, forsake me not." Thrice happy shall we be, if we can say, in the last article, "I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God."

Brethren, I resolve, God helping me, to be among those that shall walk with our Lord in white, for they are worthy. "These are they," it is said, "who have not defiled themselves," entered into no contracts and confederacies that would have stained their consciences, and polluted their hearts. These are they who have walked apart for his dear sake, obeying this word, "Come out from among them: be ye separate, touch not the unclean thing; and I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." A special enjoyment of adoption is given to the conscience that is true to the separated path, and is never degraded by compromise. God help you in this! I believe that in fidelity will be your power. "You may well make a little slit in your conscience," said one to a Puritan, "for other people make great rents in theirs." "Yes," said he, "you call me precise; but I serve a precise God." Hear you that solemn word, "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God." This jealousy burns like coals of fire, and it is cruel as the grave; for God is so sternly jealous of those he loves much, that he will not bear in them that which he will endure in others. The greater his love, the more fierce his jealousy if in any way his chosen depart from him.

I shall be gone from you ere long. You will meet and say to one another, "The President has departed. What are we going to do?" I charge you, be faithful to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine of his grace. Be ye faithful unto death, and your crowns will not be wanting. But oh! let none of us die out like dim candles, ending a powerless ministry in everlasting blackness. The Lord himself bless you! Amen.