

A Dirge for the Down-grade and a Song For Faith

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon passionately laments the spiritual decline and doctrinal compromise within the Church while calling believers to mourn with Zion and rejoice in faith.

Scripture: Isaiah 66:10, Galatians 6:2, Romans 5:8, John 3:16, Revelation 3:15-16

Topics: "Spiritual Decline", "Faith and Holiness", "Church Revival"

Description

In this prophetic sermon, C.H. Spurgeon mourns the spiritual decline, doctrinal errors, and worldliness infiltrating the Church of his day. He calls believers to share in this mourning with Zion, to recognize the seriousness of the Church's condition, and to hold fast to the true Gospel. Yet, Spurgeon also offers hope rooted in God's promise to restore and beautify His people, urging a revival of faith, holiness, and fervent prayer. This sermon challenges Christians to examine their own hearts and recommit to the cause of Christ.

Transcript

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

"Rejoice for joy with her, allyou that mourn for her." Isaiah 66:10.

A MOURNER is always an interesting person. We pass by joyful people without a thought. But when we see the ensigns of woe we pause and sympathize even if we dare not enquire. The new widow, the fatherless child, the bereaved husband—these have a history in which our common humanity is interested. "One touch of nature makes the whole world kin." And when that natural touch comes from the hand of sorrow that kinship is quick to show itself.

The highest style of mourner is one whose griefs are neither selfish nor groveling. He who bears spiritual sorrow on account of others is of a nobler order than the man who laments his personal woes. This man has not only bowed his shoulder to the inevitable load of personal trouble but he is obeying the command, "Bear you one another's burdens and so fulfill the Law of Christ." The most excellent style of mourner is the mourner in Zion, the mourner for Zion, the mourner with Zion. If you love the Church of God you will share her joys. But when she passes through the dark defiles of persecution, or the rushing waters of discord, you will mourn with her.

God has a great regard for mourners in Zion—for in loving the city, they love the King. Christ Himself has come "to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." It is no small work of Divine Grace to make a man so one with Christ and with Christ's mystical body that he sorrows with the Lord and His spouse. Whenever the ways of God languish, and we languish also, it is a mark that Divine Grace is in active exercise. Those who have learned this heavenly mourning are called to rejoice—"Rejoice for joy with her, all you that mourn for her."

When I take up my parable, I shall, at the first seem as though I had a roll written within and without with lamentations. Under the first head we shall enquire, "Who are those that mourn with Jerusalem?" Next, I would pass the cup of consolation from hand to hand, while we consider, "Why may they yet rejoice with her?" Thirdly, I shall press upon each one this question, "Why should we personally mourn with Jerusalem?" Surely we have each a portion here.

I. WHO ARE THOSE THAT MOURN WITH JERUSALEM? Those that love the Church of God and desire her prosperity. And when they do not see that prosperity they are depressed in spirit. At this present time the causes for such depression are exceedingly numerous.

Nothing can make the heart of the people of God more heavy than to think that the Gospel glory of the Church is declining. There was a time when the Gospel of the Free Grace of God sounded forth from our pulpits as from a trumpet. But that time is past. In years gone by you could pretty surely reckon upon hearing the Gospel if you went into a Nonconformist place of worship. But you cannot reckon in that fashion nowadays—for in some places false doctrine is openly taught and in others it is covertly advanced. In former times good men differed, as they always will, as to the form of their doctrinal system. But with regard to fundamental points they were at one—it is not so now.

The Deity of our Lord and His great atoning sacrifice, His resurrection and His judgment of the wicked were never moot points in the Church. But they are questioned at this time. The work of the Holy Spirit may be honored in words. But what faith can be placed in those to whom He is not a Person but a mere influence? God Himself is, by some, made into an impersonal being, or the soul of all things—which is much the same as nothing. Pantheism is atheism in a mask. The plenary inspiration of Holy Scripture as we have understood it from our childhood is now assailed in a thousand insidious ways.

The fall of Adam is treated as a fable. And original sin and imputed righteousness are both denounced. As for the Doctrines of Grace—they are ridiculed as altogether out of vogue and even the solemn sanctions of the Law are scorned as bugbears of the dark ages. For many a year, by the grand old Truths of the Gospel, sinners were converted and saints

were edified and the world was made to know that there is a God in Israel. But these are too antiquated for the present cultured race of superior beings! They are going to regenerate the world by Democratic Socialism and set up a kingdom for Christ without the new birth or the pardon of sin. Truly the Lord has not taken away the seven thousand that have not bowed the knee to Baal but they are, in most cases, hidden away—even as Obadiah hid the Prophets in a cave.

The latter-day Gospel is not the Gospel by which we were saved. To me it seems a tangle of ever-changing dreams. It is, by the confession of its inventors, the outcome of the period—the monstrous birth of a boasted "progress"—the scum from the caldron of conceit. It has not been given by the infallible Revelation of God—it does not pretend to have been. It is not Divine—it has no inspired Scripture at its back. It is, when it touches the Cross, an enemy! When it speaks of Him who died thereon, it is a deceitful

friend. Many are its sneers at the Truth of Substitution—it is irate at the mention of the precious blood.

Many a pulpit, where Christ was once lifted high in all the glory of His atoning death, is now profaned by those who laugh at Justification by Faith. In fact, men are not now to be saved by faith but by doubt. Those who love the Church of God feel heavy at heart because the teachers of the people cause them to err. Even from a national point of view, men of foresight see cause for grave concern. Cowper sang, in his day, words worthy to be remembered now—

"When nations are to perish in their sins,

It is in the Church the leprosy begins—

The priest, whose office is with zeal sincere,

To watch the fountain, and preserve it clear,

Carelessly nods and sleeps upon the brink,

While others poison what the flock must drink.

His unsuspecting sheep believe it pure,

And, tainted by the very means of cure,

Catch from each other a contagious spot,

The foul forerunner of a general rot.

Then Truth is hushed, that Heresy may preach,

And all is trash that Reason cannot reach." The old motto of the city of Glasgow was, "Let Glasgow flourish by the preaching of the Word." Our country has flourished by the preaching of the Word. And, under God, she has been raised to eminence because of her Protestant Christianity. And when she departs from this, the reason for maintaining her greatness will have ceased. This makes us mourn.

Another cause of mourning is when we see the holiness of the visible Church beclouded. I trust I am not given to finding fault where there is not fault. But I cannot open my eyes without seeing things done in our Churches which thirty years ago were not so much as dreamed of. In the matter of amusements, professors have gone far in the way of laxity. What is worse, the Churches have now conceived the idea that it is their duty to amuse the people. Dissenters who used to protest against going to the theater now cause the theater to come to them. Ought not many schoolrooms to be licensed for stage plays? If someone were to see to the rigid carrying out of the Law, would they not be required to take out a license for theatricals?

I dare not touch upon what has been done at bazaars and fancy fairs. If these had been arranged by decent worldly people, could they have gone further? What folly has been left untried? What absurdity has not been too great for the consciences of those who profess to be the children of God—who are not of the world but called to walk with God in a separated life? The world regards the high pretensions of such men as hypocrisy. And truly I do not know another name for them. Think of those who enjoy communion with God playing the fool in costume! They talk of wrestling with the Lord in secret prayer but they juggle with

the world in unconcealed gambling.

Can this be right? Have right and wrong shifted places? Surely there is a sobriety of behavior which is consistent with a work of Divine Grace in the heart and there is a levity which betokens that the spirit of evil is supreme. Ah Sirs, there may have been a time when Christians were too, precise but it has not been in my day. There may have been such a dreadful thing as Puritanical rigidity but I have never seen it. We are quite free from that evil now, if it ever existed. We have gone from liberty to libertinism. We have passed beyond the dubious into the dangerous and none can prophesy where we shall stop. Where is the holiness of the Church of God today?

Ah, were she what she professed to be, she would be "fair as the moon, clear as the sun," and then "terrible as an army with banners." But now she is dim as smoking flax and rather the object of ridicule than of reverence. May not the measure of the influence of a Church be estimated by its holiness? If the great host of professing Christians were in domestic life and in business life sanctified by the Spirit, the Church would become a great power in the world. God's saints may well mourn with Jerusalem when they see spirituality and holiness at so low an ebb! Others may regard this as a matter of no consequence. But we view it as the breaking forth of a leprosy.

Moreover, we see in the Church that her sacred ardor is cooling. There is still fervor in certain Believers and fervor of the best kind, for the Divine Spirit has not utterly departed from us. We have around us Christian men and women who will do and dare anything for Jesus and bear witness for Him in the open street. Thank God for such! They are a standing protest against a lukewarm age. And we have still our gracious young men who will give their lives to bear the name of Christ among the heathen—amid the fevers of the Congo River. We have also an abundant seed of the faithful who labor day and night for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom. Still things are not in Israel as we could desire.

Very seldom are Believers nowadays charged with being fanatical, nor even with being too enthusiastic. And this is a sign that we are below the right heat. When the world calls us fanatics we are nearing that point of ardor which is our Lord's due. If we were indeed fanatical it would be an error. But when we are called so, since the world's judgment is erroneous, we may conclude that we are only so earnest that the cold world is inconvenienced by our warmth. Oh, for the passionate love of a Rutherford! Oh, to seek the souls of men with the vehement zeal of a Whitefield, with the persevering purpose of a Wesley!

Oh, to be carried away by the Divine passion of compassion! Oh, to be wholly consecrated to Him who is our King, our Lord, our All! His Glory should be the one object of our lives. There is cause to grieve over many Churches and individuals—that they are neither cold nor hot. Let us be personal and practical and see whether we have not cause to grieve over ourselves in that respect.

There is grave cause for mourning in Zion because the services of God's house are neglected. In certain large places of worship which once were crowded to the door, I hear that there are more pews than people. Where the Gospel is gone from the pulpit, listeners soon go from the pews. Nothing is more like a sham than the apparent religious provision for this great metropolis. For we have Churches and Chapels in such abundance that to build more would seem to be altogether needless. And yet, when we make enquiry we find the congregations to be, in some instances, so ludicrously small that if the building did not exist it would be no more missed than a drop in the sea.

"I do not know where to send my converts with the hope that they will hear the Gospel," said a soul-winner to me the other day, concerning a certain London district. I cannot conceal from myself the gloomy fact

that the habit of going to a place of worship is being altogether lost in this city. There are streets upon streets where only one or two persons are in the habit of attending the House of God. A man becomes even notable because he goes on the Sabbath to a place of worship. I was amused with one who attended this Tabernacle one Thursday night—he became so much interested in the service that he came on several Thursdays.

But when a friend said to him, "Will you not come on Sunday?" he replied, "Oh, no. I have not got so far as that. I don't feel that I could become a Sunday Chapel goer." We, from our point of view, think better of the weekday hearer than of one who only attends on the Lord's Day. But his point of view was very different. No one would blame him for going where he pleased during the week but to observe the Sabbath would be a decided step which he was not prepared to take. That would involve losing a name for irreligion among his associates. This straw shows which way the wind blows. Alas, time was when it was thought to be a duty to observe the Sabbath. But it is now a day for lying late in bed, loafing about in shirt-sleeves, or mending rabbit hutches and pigeon houses!

Do not think that I am exaggerating. I am speaking in sober seriousness the sad truth which has been reported to me by city missionaries, district visitors and working men who live among it. In many of our villages and country towns there is a healthy habit of Church-going and Chapel-going, though even there it is not so general as it used to be. But in London the general habit is the reverse. This is lamentable. How has it come about? I fear that it is very much the case because if and when the people did go to many places of worship they could not understand what they hear. And what is worse, if they did understand it, it would not be of much use to them.

The criticisms of modern thought are of no value to the working man. If the old Gospel is brought to the front in all its simplicity and preached with fervor, we may hope to see the people back again to hear it. But the task of calling them back is not an easy one. Along with the prevalence of a questioning theology comes this religious indifference. Under the prevailing form of doctrine our city is becoming more heathen than Christian. Between the childishness of superstitious sacramentalism and the willful wickedness of doubt, the masses are sliding into an utter disregard of holy things. Reverence is dying out. And as surely as it dies we shall see a fierce attempt at anarchy.

The evil over which I now mourn is not only prevalent among the outlying masses but it taints Christians themselves. Look at your hall-Sunday professors—content with only one service and weary of that! How is it with many Christian people as to meetings for prayer? Prayer Meetings are the very soul of Church work and they bring down the blessing upon all our spiritual agencies. Yet they are despised by our high-fliers. In many Chapels two services in the week have proved too great an effort for the constitution of the ministers and too much of a tax upon the time of their hearers who are occupied with the far superior avocations of card games or lawn tennis!

They could not come out two nights in a week—who would propose such a thing? So a compromise has been invented for the relief of the distressed and they have set up a kind of service which is half lecture and half Prayer Meeting so as to get the pious business all over at once. And a very little affair is that one service. This is not only bad in itself but it is a sign of something worse. Men who can pray to edification are in some directions becoming rare. One pastor told me the other day that out of a considerable congregation he found it hard to make up a Prayer Meeting at all because he had so few praying men. It is a dreadful impeachment against the Churches, but faithfulness compels me to state it— before things grow worse.

You can get a crowd to a concert but hardly a dozen to prayer! I know what I say. Because of all this, the ways of Zion languish—those ways which once were best trod, namely the ways of prayer and praise, are hardly considered by the masses. Surely the Lord will visit the Churches for this. By His Grace there are grand exceptions, for which God be thanked. But still is it so—that the purely devotional service is at a discount. To hear a clever man they will come—but not to wait upon God. If there had been a magic lantern, or a penny reading, or a recitation with comic songs, the pious people would have strained a point to be there. But to pray is much too dull work for novel-reading, theater-haunting professors.

These remarks will seem strange to good old-fashioned Believers. But when they hear them and know them to be true, I am sure it will cause them to take their places as mourners with Zion.

Another very great and grave cause for mourning to all true Christians is the multitude of sinners that remain unsaved. O my dear Hearers, did you ever realize what it is for a soul to be unsaved? If, on your way home you were to stumble over a corpse, you would stoop down and look and ascertain that the person was really dead and then what a turn it would give you to find yourself so near the dead! You would not forget it for weeks. Yet men are dead in trespasses and sins and we believe that it is so—but it does not affect us in any special manner. Lord, arouse us! If we had passed a prison yard and had seen a man in chains and heard the clanking of his fetters, the iron would have entered into our souls and we should have felt sad for the prisoner.

And yet around us in this congregation there are men and women bound fast with the chains of sin and we are not distressed for them. We do not realize their bondage. We do not dispute the fact, neither do we feel its sadness. Look at the many round about us who are living in open evil, going after their lusts, plunging deeper and deeper into what must be their destruction. Look at the many that are blind, though they have eyes. That hear not, though they have ears. That feel not, though they are rational beings! How can we bear it? How can we bear it that there should be any among us who do not know God, who love not the Lord Jesus Christ, who are yet in their sins?

If an ungodly man could realize his own condition he would not dare to sit still. And if we had compassionate hearts and could clearly see the fact that our own children, our own dearest relatives or our nearest neighbors were condemned because of sin and drawing every moment nearer to a terrible judgment, would we not bestir ourselves—give God no rest—but cry day and night to Him until the perishing ones are saved? An unsaved soul is a sight that might well transform us into Jeremies and cause us to weep perpetual showers of pitying grief until the arm of mercy should interpose to work salvation.

The dark thought for a true heart is that while souls are lost, even now the evil does not end here. But they are passing away into that hopeless state in the next world which our Lord speaks of as the place where the worm dies not and the fire is not quenched. They are going from this place, where mercy is proclaimed, to that dread tribunal where the voice of judgment cries, "Depart, you cursed." They are hastening away to appear before the Great White Throne, unsaved, unrenewed, unforgiven! O God, have mercy upon our fellow men, we pray You. But, first, give us Divine Grace to have mercy upon them!

He who can see a soul lost and yet is not distressed, how dwells the love of God in him? We ought to be filled with sorrow when men perish willfully under the Gospel. When our adversaries tell us that our dreadful belief with regard to the hopeless future of a lost soul ought to break our hearts, we admit the truth of what they say. We admit it to the fullest extent. But we reply that if they conceive that we are not as

tender as we ought to be, while believing that terrible Truth which seems to us to be plainly taught in the Scriptures, to what a depth of callousness should we not descend if they could make us doubt what we now believe?

If they could persuade us of their comfortable fictions. If they could induce us to accept their "larger hope" should we not cease from that slender degree of pity which their charity may confess we now possess? Brethren, we are as compassionate as they are—though that is not saying much. At least we dare to incur unpopularity and the sarcastic censures of the wise and prudent in order that we may give honest warning of the terrible woe which men are bringing upon themselves. They talk as if we were to blame for the Hell we proclaim! Will they give us an equal share of honor for the Heaven we preach? We create neither the one nor the other.

But they might at least cause their imputations to face both ways. My Brethren, the terrors of the world to come, to those who willfully reject the Savior, ought to affect us far more than they do—none are more ready to acknowledge this than we are. Let us lay to heart the sins of our age, the ruin of our fellow men. They love not God. They trust not His dear Son. They are mad after sin. They are enemies to holiness—this is a heavy burden to a godly heart. They are dying in their sins and coming under everlasting punishment. And these things should make us mourners in Zion. I am not too bold when I say that they do cause us great heaviness of heart.

I do not think that any man who really thinks about the condition of the Church and then turns to the condition of the world in reference to the Church can walk up and down our streets exhibiting a perpetual gaiety of spirit. Other Truths of God operate upon us to make us glad, but this drags us down. There must be times when we get alone and pour out our hearts like water before the Lord and cry, "O Lord, how long before You will put forth Your saving power? How long before Your arm shall be made bare and the work of Divine Grace shall be carried on to the rescue of the fallen

millions?"

II. I have, at least, shown you that we are not without overflowing fountains of grief—but now, Beloved, having mourned unto you, it is time for me to change my tune. May the Lord cause the fountains of your pity to flow. But, at the same time, enable you to follow me while I say, in the second place that WE MAY YET REJOICE WITH JERUSALEM. Why may we do so amid such reasons for mourning?

We may rejoice with the chosen of the Lord when we remember, first of all, that God has not changed either in nature, or in love to His people, or in the purpose of His Grace. Before we were born He was able to achieve His purposes of love and He will accomplish the good pleasure of His will when we are no more praying and working here below. When His Church was faithful, His Divine decree was carried out. And if His Church is unfaithful He is still Omnipotent and can, therefore, work out His great designs. He has not changed His system of working. He intends, still, to bless the world through the Church—He means to use His saved ones for the saving of others.

I believe that He will fight this battle to a happy end upon the same lines as up to now and that in the end He shall have great glory notwithstanding all the infirmities and imperfections of His servants. An unchanging God is our security for ultimate victory. We fall back upon this Truth of God. Our Lord knows not the shadow of a change and His eternal purpose shall stand. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Let us exceedingly rejoice!

A further reason for joy is this—we may expect the Lord to appear. Take notice of the fifth verse of the chapter before us, for there we read, "He shall appear to your joy and they shall be ashamed." God will not desert His own cause. Allow no such thought to afflict you. We have felt the hiding of His power—we shall yet see the unveiling of it. We have had to mourn that He allows the enemy to behave himself exceedingly proud. But before long He will make them sing to

another tune. The Lord will awake like a mighty man that has been sleeping. And then when He plucks His right hand out of His bosom He will make short work of the insects that chirp against His Glory and Godhead.

Jehovah will win the victory, oppose who may. There never has yet been a dark night of patience which has not ended in a bright morning of faith. They that sat in darkness and in the valley of death have seen a great light—it has sprung up when the blackness was most intense. In the middle ages the darkness deepened into sevenfold night. But, as in a moment, God said, "Let there be light," and Luther and Calvin and Zwingli and other stars shone forth in the midnight sky and made the gloom to disappear right speedily. Our glorious God can do so at this present crisis. Oh, for a word from the Throne! Oh, for a "light be," from the Lord and Giver of light and this darkness which may be felt will be felt no more!

I am not discouraged, though I am greatly saddened. The battle is not ours but the Lord's. God knows no difficulty. Omnipotence has servants everywhere and power to create as many more agents of its purpose as there are sands on the seashore. Sitting by the chimney side tonight, a young Luther is preparing, as he looks in the fire, to burn the bells of the philosophic hierarchy of today. In the workhouse, among the poor children, there is a Moses who shall confront our Pharaoh and deliver Israel's tribes. The coming man who shall startle the world with his brave witness to the everlasting Gospel is at school. Never have a doubt about it—God will appear—

"Lord, when iniquities abound,
And blasphemy grows bold,
When faith is hardly to be found,
And love is waxing cold,
Is not Your chariot hastening on?
Have You not given this sign?
May we not trust and live upon
A promise so Divine?"

When the Lord shall put on strength then shall His Church be aroused. I read you in the chapter—"Before she travailed, she brought forth. Before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child." The Lord can soon bring upon His Church her fruitful birth pangs and make the barren woman to keep house. I hope to see, before I die, a revived Church holding truthful doctrine, agonizing over lost souls and blessed with hosts of converts. Glory be to the name of the Lord where all is as a desert, He can make a garden. Aaron's dry rod shall bud and blossom again. His fold shall be filled and there shall be a great sound as of the bleating of countless sheep. Since God is almighty in the spiritual realm as well as in the material

world, nothing is too great for us to expect.

He that raised up our Lord Jesus from the dead can arouse a dying Church. And He that cut Rahab and wounded the dragon can break the power of infidel criticism. Once more He will shake not only earth but also Heaven. Therefore let us rest in the Lord and sing with joyful confidence since no good thing will He withhold from His Church and no evil thing will He long permit to do her damage.

Oh, that the days of refreshing were come! Then shall the Church have many converts, proving her power and increasing her influence. Thousands shall turn to Jesus at the expected Pentecost. Then shall she nourish them well and feed them with knowledge and understanding. I fear that if in certain Churches there were to be many converts they would not know what to do with them. But when the Holy Spirit comes into her midst, then the Church shall be a nursing mother. We read of "the breasts of her consolations" (see verse eleven). How abundantly she supplies loving, living nutriment to her newborn children when God blesses her! Yes, the Lord being present, the ministry becomes a means of spiritual sustenance, comfort and growth to those who are as little children in Divine Grace. And, indeed, all the members of the Church become assiduous in their care of those who have lately come to Christ.

I pray that it may be so among us. We have added to us, during the last two months, first seventy and then ninety fresh members for which I thank God. It is a little Church in itself. But unless you all look after them and try to help them on, we shall be embarrassed by such large additions to our number. Oh, that this Church may carefully see to all the children that the Lord gives her. And if so, we shall indeed have the fullest reason for rejoicing with her! Then shall we sing, "The Lord has increased the people and multiplied the joy."

At such times there is an abundant degree of peace and joy in all believing hearts. "For thus says the Lord, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream." It is a sad, sad thing when a

Church is not hearty in its love and unanimous in its action. We have heard of Churches of which the Apostle Paul would have said, "I have heard that there are divisions among you." And when it is so, the power to do good is not present. God will appear for His Church and end her sore dissensions and set the hearts of His people together. And when it is so, then shall there be a great rejoicing and we will take our part in it.

Nor is this all—God will raise up men fitted to do His work. Read the twenty-first verse—"I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, says the Lord." When the Holy Spirit visits a Church, He is sure to bestow special gifts and give special calls. As the Holy Spirit said, "Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them," so will He say in our Churches, to our great delight. When God sent Pastor Harms to Hermansberg, it was a mere pasture land and there were few there that knew the Lord. But under his zealous preaching the whole village was turned into a missionary society.

Oh, that we could do anything like it! Farmers and laborers, men and women became missionaries for Christ to Africa. And a large proportion of the population went abroad either to preach the Gospel or to form little colonies to work with the missionary and support him. They sold house and land and everything and thus made Hermansberg the starting place of a great evangelizing enterprise. My beloved Brethren, I hardly dare be so ambitious as to hope that you will ever reach such consecration! See how it was among the Moravians—every man becoming a member of their Church became himself a teacher of the Word! Every man, woman and child among them sought to bring souls to Christ.

Would God that the power of the Lord would come in that way upon all our Churches! And we may expect it, if it is the true Gospel which we preach—if it is the Gospel which we love—if it is in the power of the Gospel that we live. So must it be. The Lord will yet be taking many out of the midst of His people to be priests and Levites. What is to become of India, Africa and China, if we go on at the rate at which we have been crawling forward for these many years? Good as all mission work has been, yet what a drop in the bucket it is compared with what remains to be done! Oh, that the Lord would come and quicken His poor dead Church with a more Divine life!

When she is quickened from the crown of her head to the sole of her foot, then the nations of the earth shall know that God is in the midst of His people, even the infinite Jehovah whose name is salvation. May the Lord Jesus take His servants as Samson took the foxes and fasten firebrands to them and send them among the standing corn till the whole earth is on a blaze with the flame that came down from Heaven! How great, then, will be our joy!

Brethren, the Providence of God is with us. All its terrors, as well as all its bounties, work for the advance of the Lord's kingdom. The wheels full of eyes all look this way. Brethren, the Promise of God is with us. Our Lord Jesus must reign till all His enemies are put beneath His feet. Brothers and Sisters, prayer is with us still—the Mercy Seat, the Comforter and the Advocate. If we know how to use the mighty engine of All-prayer we may yet shake the gates of Hell. Brethren, the Holy Spirit is with us still. He came down at Pentecost and He has never gone back again—He abides in His Church forever and works mightily. We have but to call upon Him to carry on His sacred mission and we shall see greater things than these.

III. But now my time has nearly gone and so I must finish by asking, WHY SHOULD WE PERSONALLY BE OF

THE NUMBER THAT MOURN WITH THE CHURCH AND THAT REJOICE WITH HER? Perhaps some of you do not belong to that honorable company. I pray the Holy Spirit to make you of that host at once.

For first, there is our own sin and ruin to mourn over. I spoke just now of how we ought to feel for a lost soul. But how ought that lost soul to feel for itself? Poor Soul, if we ought to mourn for you, how much more should you mourn for yourself! If you should be lost, if I have been faithful to you, I shall be a loser. What if you go down to Hell—your mother's pleadings being in vain—she will not be robbed of her glory because you refuse the Savior! It is your soul, your own soul, your only soul that is in jeopardy. If a man is a bankrupt here he may start in business again. But if you make a bankruptcy of this mortal life no second commencement is possible.

In a campaign a lost battle is a great evil—yet the next fight may retrieve the disaster. But if the battle of life is lost, you will never again be able to enter the wishes and do better. I pray you, therefore, mourn over your own condition at once. Sitting in that pew, a sinner unforgiven, a rebel against God, with enmity in your heart against your best Friend— what a state you are in! The Lord have mercy upon you! The Lord make you at once a mourner in the Church of God that you may, before long, rejoice in her Savior!

Next, I may be speaking to someone who has been a backslider and is a backslider even now. Are you sighing—

"Where is the blessedness I knew When first I saw the Lord"?

Well may you say so. By your wretched wandering you have disgraced the name of Christ and you have dishonored the cause which you professed to love. You have made the enemy blaspheme and you cannot wonder that your rest is broken. If anybody ought to be a mourner, you should be. You should take front rank among those who lament for the Church of Christ seeing that you have done her so much damage that you will never be able to undo it even by a long life of usefulness.

Brethren, do you not think that we might all wisely become mourners when we think of our own want of zeal and want of care for the souls of others? The preacher would smite upon his breast. And he invites you to do the same. Who among us spends half the thought that he should spend upon the conversion of his fellow men? We all think of them a little. I hope the most of you are doing something for Jesus and His cause. Not many things are left undone which as a Church we can do. But the things that are done—are they always done in a right spirit? Are they always baptized in prayer? Are they worked out humbly, earnestly, and in entire dependence upon the Spirit of God? I am afraid that our faulty service towards other men must place us among the mourners in Zion if there were nothing else to do in it. We need not be ashamed to be among them, for if we sorrow with the Lord's Church, we shall also, one day, rejoice with her.

May we not add to this our own failures in the matter of holiness? It is easy enough to drag the whole Church up as I did just now and scourge her as she well deserves. But it is not so easy for each guilty person to flagellate himself. Yet this is what is needed. Ask—Have I been as holy as I should be? Has my house been ordered aright? Is there family prayer observed, not as a matter of form, but in life and power? Am I towards my children, towards my husband, towards my wife, towards my servants as I ought to be? Are we as upright and generous as we should be in our business and in our connection with common daily life?

O Brothers and Sisters, we may each of us become mourners with the Church of God if we examine ourselves with care! Let me add that we have all a great concern in this matter and we ought, therefore, to join with the Church in all her griefs. If the ministry of our pastors is not successful, we shall lose by its want of power. If the Gospel is not preached, our souls will not be fed. See to it that you do not encourage false doctrine or wink at the modern apostasy. Suppose the Gospel is not preached with saving power—then we shall have our children unconverted and they will not be our joy and crown. There cannot be a deficiency in the pulpit without its bringing mischief to our households.

We are members of one body and if any part of the body suffers every other part of the body will have to suffer, too. If worldliness abounds, as it does, we shall see our children becoming worldly. We shall see them sucked into the vortex of infidelity and frivolity which now seems to sweep down and carry into the abyss so many hopeful young men and women. None of us will be able to escape from the terrible damage which evil is working all around. When false doctrine breaks forth like floods, it will surge around all our houses. Let us, therefore cry mightily unto God—not for ourselves only, but for the one great universal Church and for this great city and for this wicked world.

O Lord our God, arise for Your cause and crown! Take hold on sword and buckler and plead Your own case, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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