

A Singular Title and a Special Favor

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that true faith looks solely to God as the personal source of mercy and strength, especially in times of trial, enabling believers to triumph over adversity with confidence.

Scripture: Psalm 59:10, Hebrews 11:1, Psalm 59:9

Topics: "Faith", "Divine Mercy", "Trials and Suffering"

Description

In this devotional sermon, C.H. Spurgeon explores Psalm 59:10 to reveal how David's faith in 'The God of my mercy' exemplifies a personal and confident trust in God's deliverance amid trials. Spurgeon encourages believers to cultivate a living faith that perceives God as the ultimate refuge and to appropriate His mercy personally. He highlights the refining and strengthening power of adversity and calls Christians to live with unwavering conviction and reliance on God's promises.

Transcript

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

"The God of my mercy shall prevent me." Psalm 59:10.

A LIFE without trouble would be very uninteresting. Our opportunities for greatness would be narrowed down if trials were gone. I watched a glorious sunset, marveling at the beauty of the evening skies all ablaze and adoring Him who gave them their matchless coloring. On the next evening I resorted to the same spot, hoping to be, again, enraptured with the gorgeous pomp of the ending day, but there were no clouds and, therefore, no glories. True, the canopy of sapphire was there, but no magnificent array of clouds to form golden masses with edges of burning crimson, or islands of loveliest hue set in a sea of emerald. There were no great conflagrations of splendor or flaming peaks of mountains of fire. The sun was as bright as before, but for lack of dark clouds on which to pour out his luster, his magnificence was unrevealed.

A man who should live and die without trials would be like a setting sun without clouds—he would have scant opportunity for the display of those virtues with which the Divine Grace of God had endowed him. In the case of David we have much cause for thankfulness that he did not lead a life of unbroken tranquility. It is well for us that his was not a flowery path of continuous prosperity. Over him the waves and billows dashed full often—both within and without he was assailed daily, so that he became the epitome of all the temptations and the aspirations, the Graces and the weaknesses, the joys and the sorrows of our

humanity—and therefore his life was so wondrously instructive. David owed much to the Philistines, to the tracks of the wild goats, to the cave of Dallam and to persecuting Saul!

His tried life and a thousand trying circumstances trained him for a grand life and made him, for us, a mirror in which we see ourselves reflected in all our varying moods and passions. None of us can know what we are till we are tried, nor will the good within us increase to any degree of bitterness unless it is exercised. The arm unused loses muscular force—put it to stern labor and it gathers strength. Soldiers are made by war and mariners by storms. The scholar may think it difficult to be severely examined, but he becomes the wiser by the searching test. Our trials and troubles, while they test and develop us, also, by Divine Grace, strengthen and improve us—and we always have great cause to bless God for them when Grace sanctifies them to our highest good.

Had not David been a man of many afflictions he would never have penned such a verse as our text, a confident utterance of unstaggering faith, full of meaning, rich with consolation—the very cream of assured hope in God. There are three things in the text—the first is David's looking to his God, for God is the theme of the verse. Secondly, David's appropriating Divine mercy—"the God of my mercy." And then, thirdly, David's confidence in merciful help from God—"The God of my mercy will prevent me."

I. First, then, let us think for awhile of David's LOOKING TO HIS GOD. "The God of my mercy," he says. Note that this Psalm was composed by him upon the occasion of his being shut up in the house of Michal, Saul's daughter, and surrounded by his adversaries. The messengers of the bloodthirsty king watched the house all night long, to kill him, and when they had not effected their purpose, Saul demanded that he should be brought, on his bed, into his presence, that he might slay him. It was not easy for a man, when his enemies were watching the house, to escape out of their hands. David, however, does not appear to have been at all disturbed, but with perfect confidence in God, he expected that a way of escape would be made for him.

He could not hope that Saul would relent, nor could he expect his friends to come to the rescue. Neither did he rely upon his own cunning for the means of escape, but calmly prayed, "Deliver me from my enemies, O my God; defend me from those that rise up against me." He rested quietly, feeling sure that God had his enemies in derision, and could as readily break the line of watchers as a man can drive off a pack of prowling dogs, to whom, indeed, he compares his foes.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, this looking above, this having our eyes upon the Lord, is a practice which should be habitual with all Believers, and needs to be learned by us all. David looked to God on this occasion because he had, before this, habitually waited upon Him. His faith had realized the existence of God and his soul had felt the power of that realized truth.

This is a thing unknown to the unconverted—and unfelt to any high degree by large numbers of those who profess to know the Lord. That there is a God is a doctrine which we all receive, but that God really exists is not grasped by us as it should be. Other existences are more real to us, whereas God's being should be the most real of all. We look upon His existence as a mystery, a light and airy thing, proper to be believed, but not a matter of everyday fact which can influence our lives to any great extent. This unreal view of God arises from a secret deep-seated unbelief. We dare not say that God is a fiction, but we act as if He were. The faith which David had, and which I trust we have, in our measure, makes God a fact to the mind and heart—intensely and superlatively real! An eye anointed with faith looks upon men and women as if they were shadows, for they are soon to dissolve and cease to be. But it views the Lord as the only real

substantial existence—and all that concerns Him as being alone, sure, and vitally important.

God is unseen, but none the less present and energetic in our lives. He is unheard by the ear but none the less perceived by the heart. He is certainly at work accomplishing His purposes, although our coarse and earth-bound senses cannot discover Him. Faith has a far greater perceptive power than the senses, it is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." While carnal men say, "seeing is believing," we assure them that to us, "believing is seeing." We turn their saying upside down—our faith is eye and ear—and taste and touch to us! It is so mighty in us that we do not only know that there is a God, but we regard Him as the great motive force of the universe and daily calculate upon His mighty aid.

Therefore it is the Christian's habit to fall back upon God in all time of faintness, to cry to God in all time of danger—he does not pray because he thinks it a pious, though useless, exercise, but because he believes it to be an effectual transaction—the potent pleading of a child with its Parent, rewarded with loving grants of blessing. The Believer does not look up to Heaven because it is a natural instinct to hope for better days and to cheer one's self with a pious fiction about Providence! He looks up to Heaven because God is actually there, truly observant, tenderly sympathetic and ready with a mighty arm to come to the rescue of His people! So, then, because it is our desire to wait upon the Lord, we go to Him in troublous days as a matter of course.

We do not make him an occasional resort to be used only when we cannot help it, but we dwell in Him and, morning by morning pour out our hearts before Him. And so, when adversity comes, we fly to God as naturally as the dove to its dovecote, or the coney to the rock, or the weary child to its mother's bosom. The nautilus, when disturbed, folds up its sails and sinks into the depths. And even so, in every hour of storm we descend into the depths of Divine Love. Blessed is that man whose spirit looks to God, alone, at all times! Let us, each one, ask his own heart—is this my case? And if we can answer aright, let us sing with Madame Guyon—

"Ah then! To His embrace repair, My Soul, you are no stranger there! There Love Divine shall be your guard, And peace and safety your reward."

On this special occasion David was driven more closely to his God by the peculiar trouble with which surrounded him. To no other helper could he look, he was shut up to his God. Michel, Saul's daughter, proved faithful to him, but he could not have been sure that she would dare to incur her father's displeasure for his sake. Outside the house there might be friendly hearts, but they were far away—and the watchful followers of the tyrant shut up every avenue. But lo, there was a broad highway upwards to the Throne of the Most High! And the believing prayers of David traversed the shining road and brought him assurances of deliverance. To whom could he look but unto God? Every other door was closed, save that door which is opened in Heaven. See, then, how the bow of trouble shot him like an arrow towards God! It is a blessed thing when the waves of affliction wash us upon the rock of confidence in God, alone—when darkness below gives us an eye to the light above.

The Psalmist says in the verse preceding the text, "Because of his strength"—that is, the strength of the foe—"will I wait upon You, for God is my defense." Because the enemy is too strong for me, therefore will I turn to my God and invoke His Omnipotence as my defense. Are any of you, this morning, in trouble so deep that you know you must sink in

it, so far as material help is concerned? That is a glorious position to be in if your faith proves equal to the occasion and leads you to cast yourself upon God and swim to shore! It is nothing for a man to walk down

here upon the ground, but to walk aloft upon yonder slender thread, which the eye can scarcely see, is a feat of skill at which men gaze with admiration—and to walk on what the eye cannot see at all, or the foot feel, needs a yet higher art—such is the walk of

faith!

To lean upon God's invisible arm, which the carnal mind knows not, and accounts as little worth, is grand work! If you can walk where there is no visible pathway, you belong to the race of the immortals, a God-given faith proves your lineage to be Divine! Perhaps you have a task set before you which is much too heavy for you. Well, Brother, Sister, you have the honor of being placed where you can, to the fullest, display your trust in God! What you can do you must do, but what you cannot do and yet must do, you may confidently expect the Lord to enable you to perform! He will elevate your weakness into a platform for His power. To come to the end of yourself is to get to the beginning of your God. Blessed is that extremity which is God's opportunity! Such was David's case.

As soon as David had looked, alone, to his God, his trials grew small. In his own esteem they grew to be nothing, for he says, "You, O Lord, shall laugh at them, You shall have all the heathen in derision." And I think something of the laughter of God penetrated David's spirit—and in that house where he was enclosed as a prisoner—he smiled, in his heart, at the disappointment which awaited his foes. You may look at your troubles till your spirits sink within you. You may watch the adversaries of God till your soul within you is heavy, even, to despair. But if you then lift up your eye to Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will—across whose brow no cloud can ever pass, who speaks and it is done, who commands and it stands fast, who bears up the unpillared arch of Heaven and, unaided, wheels the ponderous orbs along their trackless courses—then difficulties vanish, impossibilities end and perils and dangers cease to

be!

To get away from man and nestle beneath the wings of God is to exchange doubt for certainty, and fear for confidence. Faith laughs at that which fear weeps over! It leaps over mountains at whose feet mere mortal strength lies down to die. Reliance upon God, dear Friends, is a virtue to which I would urge every Believer—may the Holy Spirit work it in you. We have fallen upon evil times—this is the age of little men and cowards—but where does our littleness lie? From where comes our cowardice? I believe that both are caused by our faith. If the Son of Man should come at this hour, would He find faith on the earth? If anyone could find it, He could, for He is the Author of it, and wherever there is any faith His eyes quickly discern it. But yet, if He were to come, would He find it?

Alas, it is sadly rare! Yet, my Brethren, faith is the bread on which heroes feed—the air which gives breath to great souls. Believe in God and all things are possible for you. Whenever there has been a revival of faith in the saints of God, they have been potent against all adverse forces. Why, even a wrong faith is mighty when thoroughly received. Have you not been astonished to hear of late that Mohammedanism has made great headway in the world, that in India, especially, Mahometan proselytes have been vastly more numerous than Christian converts? What has been the reason? Why, because you never saw or heard of a Mahometan teacher who did not believe every word of the Koran! The teachers of the book believe in the book and believe in their prophet, hence their success, false, though their faith is!

On the other hand, nowadays it is easy to find a Christian teacher who believes next to nothing of the very things that he is set to teach—and who, in his secret heart, does not reverence the doctrine which he

officially declares! The worm of unbelief, the cursed dry rot of infidelity and skepticism among professional teachers is eating out the heart and force of Christianity! He can never be strong for God who does not believe, yes, and believe with all his heart, soul and strength—in the very marrow of his being. Christianity can never be strong till her disciples have strong convictions, till those who believe in the revealed Truth of God believe in it as assuredly as they believe in their own existence! As it is on the large scale, so it is with each one of us—we can bear any burden when we believe in God—but we are crushed like moths when unbelief betrays us.

We can attempt any labor and make any sacrifice when we have confidence in the Lord. But if we doubt whether we are His children and whether His Gospel is, indeed, the victorious Gospel of the olden times, our strength evaporates and we are like Samson when his hair was lost. We must possess strong faith in God, or we shall be unstable as water. O Brothers and Sisters, we need in this Church men and women who habitually live as seeing Him who is invisible. We need

those who will never rely upon mere opinion—either their own or that of others! We need Brothers and Sisters who ascribe to the Word of God sovereign authority and accept it as infallibly true, knowing it to be Divine!

If we have among us men of principle because men of experience, men of forceful lives because those lives have struck their roots into eternal verities—if we have men and women who take trials, difficulties, everything, in fact, to the one only God and trust only upon Him—we shall have heroes among us again! They will be pillars in the Church which cannot be moved! They will be bulwarks for our Israel against which the assaults of the enemy shall never avail! God make each one of us such! I long, in my own soul, to get right away from everything but the Lord, and to do His will and preach His Truth as in His sight only. Policy? Let it be abhorred! The pleasing of men? Let it be scouted! The attempt to gratify the tendencies of the age? Let it be loathed! All aiming at our own personal interests, may God deliver us from it!

But for the Truth as it is in Jesus may we live, and if need be, die! For God's honor may we feel that we could sacrifice everything! And in His strength may we be sure that the battle is not doubtful, but the triumph must come to God and to the right. "My soul, wait you upon God." That is our first point—would God we had learned its lesson!

II. The second part of the text is to notice DAVID'S APPROPRIATION OF THE DIVINE MERCY. "The God of my mercy." This is quite a unique expression—it occurs only in this Psalm. God is the God of mercy and is frequently called so. He is also styled, "The God of all Grace," but you will find none but David calling Him, "The God of my mercy." Notice that the pith of the title lies in the appropriating word, "my." Luther used to say that the very soul of divinity lay in the possessive pronouns. Another Divine said that all the stir there ever has been in the world has been caused by meum and tuum, mine and yours. "It is mine," says one man. "It is mine," cries another man, and then comes a conflict. "It is mine," says one king. "No," says another, "it is not yours," and then fierce war begins. Nothing influences a man so much as that which he calls his own. "The God of my mercy."

Now it is clear that David appropriated to himself a portion of Divine mercy as being peculiarly his and we shall never advance in the Divine life unless we do the same, for the mercy which is common to all men, of what use is it to any man? But the mercy which any one man by faith grasps for himself, this is the mercy which will bless him and which he will prize above all things. When Gideon's men went out to fight they had not a whole row of pitchers between them, but every man held a pitcher in his own hand, and a

trumpet, too, and so the Midianites were routed. Solomon represents his armed men as having, each man, his sword upon his thigh, because of fear in the night. A thousand swords hung up in the armory of David had been of little value—they only availed when each man had his own sword ready to his hand.

In heavenly things it is always so—we may pray in the plural—but we must believe in the singular. Notice how the Lord's prayer runs—"Our Father which are in Heaven," but if we would repeat the Apostles' Creed, we must not say "we believe in God the Father," but, "I believe." Believing must be in the first person singular! Praying should have a width and compass about it to embrace all the saints, but believing must be by each one for himself—"The God of my mercy." What do you know about this, my dear Hearers? Is a portion of the Divine mercy really yours, so that another cannot seize it? Is there a lot in which you must stand in the end of the days, even as by faith you stand in it now, and call it all your own?

Happy David, to be able to make this appropriation! Happy Christian, if God's Grace has taught you to do the same! I think he meant, too, that there was a portion of mercy which he had already received, which was, therefore, altogether his own. The "God of my mercy"—he meant the God of the mercy he had already experienced. Look at this for a minute. Well may it bring the tears into your eyes to think of it. The mercy which nursed you in your infancy, when you were upon the knee of kindness. The mercy which watched over you in your youth and kept you when you were apt to stray. The mercy which restrained you from many a deadly sin. The mercy which guided you into that road where happy and holy teachings were waiting for you. The mercy which influenced you for the right. The mercy, above all, which decided you for Christ and cleansed you in His blood! The mercy which has followed you to this day and still follows you. Oh, bless the Lord that it has all come from Himself and think of Him as the God of your mercy!

Too little do we prize our mercies till they are removed from us. I have heard of a person who at 50 years of age was murmuring that he had suffered two long years of sickness. But someone reminded him that he had enjoyed 48 years of perfect health in which he had never spent a single hour in bed through illness. Then he said to himself, "I will bless God, who might have given me 48 years of sickness and only two of health—that He has been pleased to reverse that allotment. My mercies have been very great—far larger is the number of His favors than the time of my sufferings."

Bless, then, the Lord this moment, Beloved, and take Him to yourselves under that sweet name, "The God of my mercy." And, remember, that all the mercy you have had is little compared with the mercy you have yet to receive. There is a portion of mercy laid up and labeled for you.

As the rich father thinks, "This will I give to my eldest son, and that to the second, and that to the third," and so he puts by a portion for each of his children, so has God mapped out and allotted for each one of us some choice and special mercy fitted for our peculiar case—which no one can receive but ourselves—but which we must and shall obtain. Is not our hymn delightfully suggestive where it sings—

"And a new song is in my mouth,

To long-loved music set

Glory to You for all the Grace

I have not tasted yet.

I have a heritage of joy

That yet I must not see—

The hand that bled to make it mine,

Is keeping it for me."

Blessed be God for His reserves of mercy, for the blessing yet to be revealed—which is as sure as if we had it—is kept in a better hand than ours! It is preserved by Him who bought it, till the time appointed shall arrive. "The God of my mercy," that is, of the mercy I have had, and also of that which is treasured up for me in the Covenant purpose and decree, among the sure mercies of David.

But I think David made a larger grasp than this, for when he said, "The God of my mercy," he felt as if all the mercy in the heart of God belonged to him! Let me utter a great saying, worth your treasuring up—if any one saint should have all the needs of all the saints in the world put upon him. And if his necessities should be so great that nothing would supply them but the whole of the infinite mercy which fills the heart of God, that child of God should have all the mercy which the Lord Himself can dispense. Great as your necessities may be, my dear Brethren, all the mercy that is in God belongs to you and is engaged to meet your case! Let me put it in another light. If there were no other person in the world but you, and God loved you infinitely and alone, would He not be able to do as much for you as if all His Omnipotence was devoted to your good, and if all the thoughts of His Divine Grace centered upon you and you were the focus of all His wise and loving purposes?

"Oh, yes," you say, "I should be favored, indeed." You are just as favored as that! For the multiplicity of the objects of Divine Love necessitates no diminution to anyone. God can love a million and love each one as intensely as if there were but one to be favored! Our little minds are distracted with many objects. We cannot concentrate upon many—we are, therefore, straitened. But the full concentrated love of the eternal God is set upon each one of His dear children. God is entirely yours—not half of God! The Savior is yours—not a part of the Savior! God is All and that All belongs to you in Jesus Christ! Is there not comfort here? "The God of my mercy."

One other word about it, and it is this—when God is called "the God of my mercy," we may understand it as being the Guarantor of mercy to me. If we say such a person is the guardian of a child, that child is then particularly under his care. If God is the God of my mercy, then He stands in a particular relationship to my mercy and binds Himself to secure it to me. The constable of the Tower of London stands in relationship to it and is concerned for its preservation. Now the Lord is not only the Keeper and Guarantor of my mercy, but the God of it, and therefore He is peculiarly interested in my mercy and will see that it comes to me—and is by no means allowed to fail. He is more than the Trustee of it, the Security for it, the Guarantee of it, the Giver of it, the Source of it, the Security of it—He is the God of my mercy!

What condescension is this! He is the God of Heaven! Is not that His grand title? Yes, but He is, "the God of my mercy," as surely as He is the God of Heaven and earth. He is the Most High God, possessor of Heaven and earth, the God of angels and, "God over all, blessed forever." He is all this, but He is also, with equal truth, "the God of my mercy." There is a command which says, "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain," and if He would not have us take it in vain, we may rest assured He will not make it vain, Himself! And if He calls Himself, as He does here, "the God of my mercy," He cannot allow it to be an empty title—He will surely make it good. What is an offense in the creature will not be performed by the Creator. He will not make vain any one of those august titles which He has been pleased to take to Himself. Your mercy is sure, O Christian, for God is the God of your mercy.

Now I want you all to pause a moment and ask whether you really have appropriated, by faith, the mercy of God and the God of mercy. Why did not that unhappy artiste fly the other day? Why did he fall to the ground a mangled mass? Because his wings were not his own or a part of himself! The smallest bat which ventures out in the evening twilight can fly because it has its own wings. The tiniest hummingbird which dives into a flower bell can fly because its wings belong to it. But this man had only a borrowed contrivance, a mechanical invention which he could not appropriate to his own being! Another might use it as well as he, if, indeed, it could be used at all! If you wish to fly, you must have wings of your own.

Many religious professors have a mechanical religion. They have the baptism of babyhood and the priestly efficacy of sacraments—a mere flying machine! It will not serve their turn—they must have faith and Grace of their own. They must have a personal faith in a personal God. Those who have such appropriating faith shall mount up with wings as eagles, but no others can. Wings which are not your own wings will be of no use to you, but ensure your destruction. If you are the most humble, weak and obscure of all God's children, if you have a real faith of your own, so that you can say, "My God, my Savior!" and can cry, "Abba, Father!" you shall mount aloft to His abode and make your nest forever by the Throne of Love! God grant us power to appropriate His precious things and call Him—"the God of my mercy."

III. The last and practical point is, we see in the text, thirdly, David CONFIDING IN GOD. "The God of my mercy shall prevent me." Prevent is an old English word and it has shifted from its original meaning, so that the uninstructed reader is apt to be misled by it. Its old meaning is "to go before," and that is, indeed, the root meaning of the word. Here it means to anticipate, to be before, to go before as a guide, to make an easy way, to be beforehand. "The God of my mercy will prevent me," or anticipate me by His mercy. Now, it so happens that the Hebrew word may be read in all three tenses. And some have said it should be understood, "The God of my mercy has prevented me." Others "does prevent me." And a third party, like our translators, read it, "shall prevent me." Whichever tense you choose is true, and the whole three put together may be viewed as the full meaning of the passage. "The Lord has prevented me."

Brethren, this is one of the grand doctrines of the Gospel, the doctrine of eternal love, spontaneous, self-generated, having no cause but itself. God loved us before we loved Him—He went before us with love. Before His people were born, God had elected and redeemed them, and prepared the Gospel by which, in due time, they are called. He is before us in all good things. Loving before our first parent had broken the Covenant of Works, the Covenant of Grace had been "ordered in all things and sure." In the eternal purpose the Lamb was slain from before the foundations of the world—the provision for Atonement was made before sin actually existed! Before there was any defilement, there was an arrangement for cleansing us from all iniquity!

In the volume of the Book it had been written that Christ would come and do the Father's will, by which will we are sanctified. Sin is a thing of time, but mercy is from everlasting! Transgression is but of yesterday, but mercy was ever of old. Before you and I sought the Lord, the Lord sought us. The first thought of reconciliation was not with man, but with his God. Some theologians dream that the sinner takes the first step, but I never met with a child of God who would say that he, himself, did so. They all, speaking from experience, declare, "we loved Him because He first loved us." The Grace of God is preventing Grace—unsought, undesired, unmerited—preceding all good impressions and emotions, and coming to us when we are yet ungodly and dead in trespasses and in sins.

Before we thirsted the Living Water gushed from the smitten Rock! Before we were hungry, the oxen and the fatlings were killed. Before we were wounded, the oil and wine were ready to be poured into the

gashes. Our Father knew that we should have need of these things and He prevented us with the blessings of goodness by laying them up in store for us from of old. O Lord, You have the first hand with Your people! They seek You early, but You are up before them! You have distanced them in the race of affection! You are Alpha, indeed! The Lord has prevented us, but the meaning of the passage is that He does still prevent us. Is He not daily doing so? You have many needs, but they are anticipated. Before you can feel the pinch of need, the mercy is given! God goes before you, day by day, and His paths drop fatness.

You have often been fretting about what is to happen in a month's time when you expect to be in distress. When the month has come there has been no distress because the supply has been provided. You have gone to the sepulcher, saying, "Who will roll away the stone for us?" But when you have come to the spot, the stone has already been removed. Your troubles have been ended before they began! So, also, has the Lord prevented your sins. How often, when you have sinned, has the pardon for the sin and the deliverance from its consequences come upon you then and there, and restored

you at once? While even yet more frequently the blessed God of your mercy has forestalled the temptation and prevented the sin altogether!

Look at David with his angry heart and his naked sword in his hand, attended by his furious followers—"I will go," he says, "and slay this fellow, Nabal, and leave not a man of his house by the morning light. How dare he say there are many servants that run away from their masters nowadays? I will let him know that if a man cannot be generous to David he shall at least be civil, or his head shall answer for it!" David marches in hot passion, but at the moment when David puts his foot outside his tent God leads forth from Nabal's house a wise and gentle woman to be an angel of mercy to him. Abigail meets him half-way and turns him back from his design by telling him that if he would restrain his wrath, in later days it would be no grief to him that he had not avenged himself.

Truly, David might say, "The God of my mercy has prevented me. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel which sent you this day to meet me." Even in the common acceptation of the word, "prevent," God has often so gone before us that He has prevented us from the commission of many sins into which, otherwise, we should have fallen to our sorrow and damage. Again, how often has He gone before our prayers? Before we have asked we have had! While we were yet calling, we have received! I have asked the Lord, sometimes, for blessings which have been on the road while I was asking—and I did not know it—but they have come almost before the words escaped my lips! Have you not known it so? "Before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear." The desire of the righteous is granted, oftentimes, as soon as it takes shape and before it is expressed. Brethren, it will always be so. God will prevent us.

A good captain, when he is marching an army through a country, takes care to make provision for every emergency. It is time for the soldiers to camp and they need tents. Bring up the baggage wagons! Here are the tents which you ask for! The men must have their rations. Here they are! Serve them! The meat needs cooking. See, there are the portable kitchens and the fuel! The army comes to a river, by-and-by, how will they pass it? Why, the engineers are ready and are very soon thrown across. It is wonderful how the well-skilled commander foresees every possible emergency and has everything ready just in the nick of time.

Much more is it so with our God. If any child of God is placed in a position where never a child of God was before, he shall get new light upon another part of God's Character and the world and the Church shall be

the wiser because of the man's peculiar difficulties. "The God of my mercy shall prevent me." March on, child of God, for God goes before you. Be assured of this, His angels fly around you and you may hear the rustling of their wings if you have but faith enough! Since the eternal God, Himself, leads the van, march where He clears the course and your path shall be one of happiness and peace. The Lord will prevent us if we seek more Grace and higher attainments. Let us go from strength to strength, for at each halting place our table shall be spread. Let us climb the hill, for Grace, sufficient for the day, awaits us at each stage of progress.

Let us rise into spiritual manhood, for the blessings peculiar to that state are waiting for us! Let us endeavor to do more for Jesus than we have ever done! Let us put forth greater effort, for God's Spirit will go before us to prepare the way! There is a sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees at the very time when we begin to bestir ourselves. When we preach, Jesus is with us, according to His promise. If we lift our hands in holy service, a hand unseen but Omnipotent is lifted at the same instant! Strike, then, feeble ones, for God strikes, too! Advance, for God is with you, and will give you the victory! We shall arrive at old age before long and, perhaps, with old age will come decrepitude or sickness—but the God of mercy will go before us to prepare the land Beulah in which we shall rest till He shall call us across the stream.

As to death, when that shall come, I know, Beloved, that the Lord will prevent you, for Jesus has gone before for the very purpose of preparing a place for you. When we expect friends, we set open the gate, that when they come they may know that they are welcome. Christ has set Heaven's gate open for us and none can shut it. He awaits the coming of His people and when they enter Heaven they shall not be unexpected guests, but shall find, each one, his mansion furnished and ready for him. Our Forerunner is where we soon shall be! We shall cause no bustle of preparation when we arrive, but we shall be welcomed home as our children are when, on a set day, they return to us. The God of my mercy will, through the trackless ether, precede me, and into the Glory He will beckon me! And up to His Throne He will conduct me.

So let us close with these three practical reflections. If He prevents us with mercy, let us not hesitate to come to Him. Loiter not, O Soul, if you would have the mercy of God! Is God so quick? Will you be slow? Does He go first and will you not follow? If any man or woman, or child in this place, this morning, desires salvation and eternal life, let him not hesitate to believe in Jesus, for the God of mercy has gone before him. Come, and welcome! All things are ready, come to the Gospel supper! The next reflection is, is God so quick in mercy? Let us, who are His people, be very quick in service. Do not let us wait to have suggested to us by others what we should do. That is true love to Christ which does not need reminding, forcing, or editing.

When a man says to himself, "God has given me these unasked mercies, what shall I render to Him? I will not turn to the Law and say, 'This is what I ought to do,' neither will I require some good and earnest Brother to stir me up to an unwilling duty, but I am eager to serve God—what can I do? What will He permit me to bring?" Some saints have thought of one offering, and some of another—and the Lord has been pleased with each one. Imitate the readiness of love which shone in the woman who had but one costly possession in the world, an alabaster box of very precious ointment. Nobody expected or advised her to take it and pour its contents upon the head of Jesus. Indeed, there were those who reckoned such a gift an idle waste!

But her own love bade her do it and so she consulted not with flesh and blood—she brought it out and broke it— and filled the house with perfume, while she poured the sacred nard upon the head of Him she loved so well. Does no special act of consecration occur to you? Have you not some sacrifice to present? Can you not think of some design which shall be a memorial of your gratitude? Say in your heart, "My God, since You do prevent me, I cannot hope to keep pace with Your mercy, but at any rate I will not lag further behind You than I must. When I have done all I can for You, how little it is, but that little shall be done."

George Herbert once described a good man as resolved, "to build a hospital, or mend common ways," and in his day these were acts of charity which piety delighted in. Other good deeds are more fitting for these days. Houses for worship are needed in many a populous district. Orphan children need to be fed. He who can buy no sweet cane with money, can bring time and zeal and effort—and these are precious. What then, my Brothers and Sisters, will you do?

And now finally, Believer, cast yourself into your Lord's arms! Have done with fretting! Have done with anxiety and doubt! If you came in here this morning burdened, go out happy as the birds of the air! Mount like the lark to your God and sing as you mount! Shower down your song among the groveling sons of men while your eyes are upon your Father's home and your wings of faith bear you heavenward! God bless you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 62. HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—63, 690, 46.

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