

A Warning to Believers

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon warns believers to remain vigilant against subtle deceptions that can rob them of their eternal reward by diverting their faith from Christ alone.

Scripture: Colossians 2:18, Hebrews 12:1, Luke 13:24, John 13:10, Galatians 1:8, Matthew 7:15, John 3:16

Topics: "Christian Perseverance", "False Doctrine"

Description

In this powerful sermon, C.H. Spurgeon exhorts believers to run the Christian race with earnestness and vigilance. He warns against subtle and overt deceptions that can rob Christians of their eternal reward by diverting their faith from Christ alone. Spurgeon emphasizes the necessity of perseverance, simple faith, and discernment in the face of false teachings and worldly distractions. This sermon serves as a stirring call to steadfastness and spiritual vigilance.

Transcript

"Let no man beguile you of your reward." Colossians 2:18.

THERE is an allusion here to the prize which was offered to the runners in the Olympic games. And at the outset it is well for us to remark how very frequently the Apostle Paul conducts us by his metaphors to the racecourse. Over and over again he is telling us so to run that we may obtain, bidding us to strive and, at other times, to agonize, and speaks of wrestling and contending. Ought not this make us feel what an intense thing the Christian life is—not a thing of sleepiness or haphazard, not a thing to be left, now and then, to a little superficial consideration? It must be a matter which demands all our strength, so that when we are saved there is a living principle put within us which demands all our energies and gives us energy over and above any that we ever had before! Those who dream that carelessness will find its way to Heaven have made a great mistake. The way to Hell is neglect, but the way to Heaven is very different. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" A little matter of neglect brings you to ruin, but our Master's words are, "Strive to enter in at the straight gate, for many, I say unto you, shall seek"—merely seek—"to enter in, and shall not be able." Striving is needed more than seeking! Let us pray that God the Holy Spirit would always enable us to be in downright, awful earnest about the salvation of our souls. May we never count this a matter of secondary importance, but may we seek first and beyond everything else, the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. May we lay hold on eternal life—may we so run that we may obtain.

I would press this upon your memories because I observe—observe it in myself as well as in my fellow Christians, that we are often more earnest about the things of this life than we are about the things of the life to come. We are all impressed with the fact that in these days of competition, if a man would not be run over and crushed beneath the wheels of the Juggernaut of poverty, he must exert himself. No man now seems able to keep his head above water with the faint swimmer strokes which our forefathers used to give. We have to strive—and the bread that perishes has to be labored for. Shall it be that this poor world shall engross our earliest thoughts and our latest cares, and shall the world to come have only now and then a consideration? No! May we love our God with all our heart, and all our soul, and all our strength—and may we lay our body, soul and spirit upon the altar of Christ's service—for these are but our reasonable sacrifices to Him.

Now the Apostle, in the text before us, gives us a warning which comes to the same thing, however it is interpreted. But the passage is somewhat difficult of rendering and there have been several meanings given to it. Out of these there are three meanings which have been given of the text before us which are worthy of notice. "Let no man beguile you of your reward" The Apostle, in the first place, may mean here—

I. LET NO MAN BEGUILE ANY OF YOU who profess to be followers of Christ, of the great reward that will await the faithful at the last.

Now, my Brothers and Sisters, we have, many of us, commenced the Christian race, or we profess to have done so— but the number of the starters is far greater than the number of the winners! "They that run in a race, run all, but one receives the prize." "Many are called, but few are chosen." Many commence, apparently, in the Christian career, but after a while, though they did run well, something hinders them that they do not obey the Truths of God and they go out from us because they were not of us, or if they had been of us, doubtless they would have continued with us. Now we may expect, now that we have commenced to run, that some will come and try to turn us out of the racecourse openly—not

plausibly and with sophistry—but with an open and honest wickedness. Some will tell us plainly that there is no reward to run for, that our religion is all a mistake, that the pleasures of this world are the only things worth seeking, that there are delights of the flesh and the lusts thereof, and that we should do well to enjoy them. We all meet the Atheist with his sneer and with his ringing laugh. We shall meet with all kinds of persons who will, to our faces, tell us to turn back, for there is no Heaven, there is no Christ, or, if there is, it is not worth our while to take so much trouble to find Him. Take heed of these people! Meet them face to face with dauntless courage. Mind not their sneers. If they persecute you, only, reckon this to be an honor to you—for what is persecution but the tribute which wickedness pays to righteousness? And what is it, indeed, but the recognition of the Seed of the woman when the seed of the serpent would gladly bite His heel?

But the Apostle does not warn you so much against those people who openly come to you in this way. He knows that you will be on the alert against them. He gives a special warning against some others who would beguile you—that is to say— who will try to turn you out of the right road, but who will not tell you that they mean to do so. They pretend that they are going to show you something better than what you have, to teach you something that you knew not before, some improvement upon what you have here learned. In Paul's day there were some who took off the attention of the Christian from the worship of God to the worship of angels. "Angels," they said, "these are holy beings. They keep watch over you—you should speak of them with great respect." And then, when they grew bolder, they said, "You should ask for their protection." And then after a little while they said, "You should worship them. You should make them

intermediate intercessors!" And so, step by step, they went on and established an old heresy which lasted for many years in the Christian Church—and which is not dead, even now—and thus the worship of angels crept in.

And now-a-days you will meet with men who will say, "That bread upon the Table—why, it represents the body of Jesus Christ to you when you come to the Lord's Supper. Therefore you ought to treat that bread with great respect." By-and-by they will get a little bolder, and then they say, "As it represents Christ, you may worship it, pay it respect as if it were Christ." By-and-by it will come to this, that you must have a napkin under your chin, lest you should drop a crumb. And they will say it would be very wicked if a drop of the sacred wine should cling to your moustache when you drink! And there will be the directions which are given in some of the papers coming out from the High Church party—absurdities which are only worthy of the nursery—about the way in which the holy bread is to be eaten and the holy wine is to be drunk—bringing in idolatry—sheer, clear idolatry, under the pretence of improving upon the too bare simplicity of the worship of Christ! Be careful of the very first step, I pray you.

Or, perhaps, it may come to you in another shape. One will say to you, "The place in which you worship—is it not very dear to you? That seat where you have been accustomed to sit and listen, is it not dear?" And your natural instincts will say, "Yes." Then it will go a little farther. "That place is holy—it ought never to be used for anything but worship." Then a little farther it will be, "Oh, that is the House of God," and you will come to believe that, contrary to the words which you know are given to you by the Holy Spirit, that God dwells not in temples made with hands—that is to say, in these buildings—and you will have, by degrees, a worship of places, and a worship of days, and a worship of bread, and a worship of wine! And then it will be said to you, "Your minister, has he not often cheered you? Well then, you should reverence him—call him, 'Reverend.'" Go a little farther and you will call him, "Father." Yet a little farther and he will be your confessor! Get a little farther and he will be your infallible Pope! It is all done step by step! The first step seems to be very harmless, indeed. Indeed, it is a kind of voluntary humility! You look as if you were humbling yourselves and were paying reverence to these things for God's sake—whereas the objective is to get you to pay reverence to them, instead of to God—and here the Apostle's words come in, "Let no man beguile you of your reward." They will often attack you in that insidious manner by setting up other objects of reverence besides those which spiritual men worship!

So, too, they will, by slow degrees, try to insinuate a different way of living from that which is the true life of the Christian. You who have believed in Jesus are saved. Your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. You are accustomed to go to Jesus Christ constantly to receive that washing of the feet of which He spoke to Peter when He said, "He that is washed needs not except to wash his feet, for he is clean every whit." You go to Him with, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." But there will be some who will come in and tell you that to live in that way by a simple faith in Jesus Christ is not, perhaps, the best way. Could you not get a little farther? Could you not lead the life of those recluses who mortify the flesh in such a way that at last they come to have no sins, but commence to be perfect in

themselves? Could you not begin, at least in some degree, to commit your soul's care to some priest, or to some friend? And instead of making every place holy and every day a holy day, would it not be well to fast on such-and-such days in the week, to scrupulously observe this rule and the other rule and walk by the general opinion of the ancient Church, or by the Anglicanum Directorium, or some one of those books which profess to show how they used to do it a thousand years ago? All this may have a great show of wisdom, antiquity and beauty—there may be a semblance of everything that is holy about it and names that should never be mentioned without reverence may be appended to it all—but listen to the Apostle as

he says, "Beware lest any man beguile you of your reward," for if they get you away from living upon Christ as a poor sinner from day to day by simple confidence in Him, they will beguile you of your reward!

There is another party who will seek to beguile you of your reward by bringing in speculative notions instead of the simple Truths of God's Word. There is a certain class of persons who think that a sermon is a good one when they cannot understand it and who are always impressed with a man whose words are long! And if his sentences are involved, they feel, poor souls, that because they do not know what he is talking about, there is no doubt that he is a very wise and learned man! And after a while, when he does propound something that they can catch at, though it may be quite contrary to what they have learned at their mother's knee or from their father's Bible, yet they are ready to be led off by it! There are many men, now-a-days, who seem to spend their time in nothing else but in spinning new theories and inventing new systems. They gut the Gospel, taking the very soul and heart out of it, and leave nothing but the mere skin and outward bones. The life and marrow of the Gospel is being taken away by their learning, by their philosophies, by their refinements, by their bringing everything down to the test of this wonderfully enlightened 19th Century, to which we are all, I suppose, bound to defer! But a voice comes to us, "Let no man beguile you of your reward." Stand fast to the old Truths of God—they will outlast all these philosophies! Stand fast to the old way of living—it will outlast all the inventions of men! Stand fast by Christ, for you need no other object of worship but Himself!

The Apostle gives us this warning, "Let no man beguile you of your reward," reminding us that these persons are very likely to beguile us. They will beguile us by their character. Have I not often heard young people say of such-and-such a preacher who preaches error, "But he is so good a man!" That is not the point. "Though we, or an angel from Heaven preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." If the life of the man should be blameless as the life of Christ, yet if he preaches to you other than the Gospel of Jesus Christ, take no heed of him! He wears but the sheep's clothing, and is a wolf, after all. Some will plead, "But such-and-such a man is so eloquent." Ah, Brothers and Sisters, may the day never come when your faith shall stand in the words of men! What is a ready orator, after all, that he should convince your hearts? Are there not ready orators caught any day for everything? Men speak, speak fluently, and speak well in the cause of evil! And there are some that can speak much more fluently and more eloquently for evil than any of our poor tongues are ever likely to do for the right! But words, words, words, flowers of rhetoric, oratory—are these the things that saved you? Are you so foolish that having begun in the spirit by being convicted of your sins, having begun by being led simply to Christ and putting your trust in Him—are you now to be led astray by these poetic utterances and flowery periods of men? God forbid! Let nothing of this kind beguile you!

Then there will be added to these remarks that the man is not only very good and very eloquent, but that he is very earnest—he seems very humble-minded. Yes, and of old they wore rough garments to deceive, and in the context of the text we find that those persons were noted for their voluntary humility and their worship of angels! Satan knows very well that if he comes in black, he will be discovered, but if he puts on the garb of an angel of light, then men will think he comes from God and so will be deceived. "By their fruits you shall know them." If they give you not the Gospel—if they exalt not Christ, if they bear not witness to salvation through the precious blood, if they do not lift up Jesus Christ as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness—have nothing to do with them, speak they as they may! "Let no man beguile you of your reward." Through it should happen to be your relative, one whom you love, one who may have many claims on your respect—let no man, let no man, however plausible may be his speech or eminent his character—beguile you of your reward!

Recollect, you professors, you lose the reward if you lose the road to the reward. He that runs may run very fast, but if he does not run the course, he wins not the prize. You may believe false Doctrine with great earnestness, but you will find it false, for all that! You may give yourself up indefatigably to the pursuit of the wrong religion, but it will ruin your souls! A notion is abroad that if you are but earnest and sincere, you will be all right. Permit me to remind you that

if you travel ever so earnestly to the north, you will never reach the south. And if you earnestly take prussic acid, you will die! And if you earnestly cut off a limb, you will be wounded. You must not only be earnest, but you must be right in it! Hence is it necessary to say, "Let no man beguile you of your reward." "I bear them witness," said the Apostle, "that they had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge, but went about to establish their own righteousness, and have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." Oh, may we not be beguiled, then, so as to miss the reward of Heaven at the last!

But I must pass on, especially as the light fails us this evening—I hope it is prognostic of a coming shower. Here is a second rendering which may be given to the text— II. LET NO MAN DOMINEER OVER YOU.

This rendering, or something analogous to it, is in the French translation. One of the great expositors in his commentary upon this passage refers it to the judges at the end of the course who sometimes would give the reward to the wrong person, and the person who had really run well might thus be deprived of his reward. Now, however close a man may be to Christ, the world, instead of honoring him for it, will, on the contrary, censure and condemn him—and hence the Apostle's exhortation is, "Let no man domineer over you."

And, my Brothers and Sisters, I would earnestly ask you to remember this, first, as to your course of action. If you conscientiously believe that you are right in what you are doing, care very little who is pleased or who is displeased. If you are persuaded in your own soul that what you believe and what you do are acceptable to God, whether they are acceptable to man or not is of very small consequence! You are not man's servant, you do not look to man for your reward and, therefore, you need not care what man's opinion may be in this matter. Be just and fear not! Tread in the footsteps of Christ, follow what may. Live not on the breath of men. Let not their applause make you feel great, for perhaps then their censure will make you faint. Let no man in this respect domineer over you, but let Christ be your Master, and look to His smile.

So not only with regard to your course of action, but also with reference to your confidence, let no man domineer over you. If you put your trust in Jesus Christ, there are some who will say it is presumption. Let them say it is presumption! "Wisdom is justified of all her children," and so shall faith be. If you take the promise of God and rest upon it, there will be some who will say that you are hare-brained fanatics. Let them say it! They that trust in Him shall never be confounded. The result will honor your faith. You have but to wait a little while and, perhaps, they that now censure you will have to hold up their hands in astonishment and say with you, "What has God worked?" Your confidence in Christ, especially my dear young Friend, I trust does not depend upon the smile of your relatives. If it did, then their frown might crush it. Walk with your Savior in the lowly walk of holy confidence, and let not your faith rest in man, but in the smile of God!

Let no man domineer over you, again, by judging your motives. Men will always give as bad a reason as they can for a good man's actions. It seems to be innate in human nature never to give man credit for being right if you can help it, and often tender minds have been greatly wounded when they have been

misrepresented and their actions have been imputed to sinister and selfish motives—when they have really desired to serve Christ. But do not let your heart be broken about that. You will appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ—do not care about the petty judgment seats of men! Go on with your Master's work dauntlessly and fearlessly. Let them say, as David's brothers said of him, "Because of your pride and the naughtiness of your heart have you come to see the battle." You go and get Goliath's head and bring it back—and that shall be the best answer to these sneering ones. When they see that God is with you and that He has given you the triumph, you shall have honor, even in the eyes of those who now ridicule you! I think sometimes the Christian should have very much the same bravado against the judgment of men as David had when Michal, the daughter of Saul, came out and said, "How glorious was the King of Israel, today, who uncovered himself today in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants." And he said, "It was before the Lord, and I will yet be more vile than thus." Let your eyes be to God and forget the eyes of men! Live so that whether they know what you do, or do not know, you will not care, for your conduct will bear the blaze of the great Judgment Day and, therefore, the criticisms of earth do not affect you! Let no man domineer over you.

So may I put it in another light—let no man sway your conscience so as to lead you. I am always anxious, my dear Hearers, that whatever respect I may ever win from you—and I trust I may have your esteem and your affection—yet

that you will never believe a Doctrine simply because I utter it! Unless I can confirm it from the Word of God, away with it! If it is not according to the teaching of the Lord and Master, I beseech you follow me not. Follow me only as far as I follow Christ! And so with every other man. Let it be God's Truth, God's Word, the Holy Spirit's witness to that Word in your soul that you are seeking after! And rest, I pray you, never short of that, for if you do, your faith will stand merely in the wisdom of men—and when the man who helped you to believe is gone, perhaps your faith may be gone, too—when you most need its comforting power! No, let no man domineer over you, but press forward in the Christian race, looking unto Jesus, and looking unto Jesus only!

But now a third meaning belongs to the text. A happy circumstance it is, this dark night, that the preacher does not need to use his manuscript, for if he did, his sermon would certainly come to an end right now. But here is this point, "Let no man beguile you of your reward." It may mean this—

III. LET NO MAN ROB YOU OF THE PRESENT REWARD WHICH YOU HAVE IN BEING A CHRISTIAN.

Let no man deprive you of the present comfort which your faith should bring to you. Let me, just for a few minutes, have your attention while I speak upon this. Dear Brothers and Sisters, you and I, if we are believers in Christ, are this day completely pardoned. There is no sin in God's book against us. We are wholly and completely justified! The righteousness of Jesus Christ covers us from head to foot and we stand before God as if we had never sinned! Now let no man rob you of this reward. Do not be tempted by anything that is said to doubt the completeness of a believer in Christ. Hold this, and as you hold it, enjoy it! Do not let the man whom you have most to fear, beguile you. Even though conscience should upbraid you and you should have many grave reasons for doubt, as you imagine, yet if you believe in Jesus, stand to it—"There is, therefore, now no condemnation to me, for I am in Christ Jesus! He that believes in Him is not condemned! I have believed and I am not condemned. Neither will He permit condemnation to be thundered against me, for Christ has borne my sin for me and I am clear in Him." Let no man beguile you of the reward of feeling that you are complete in Christ!

Further, you who have believed in Jesus Christ are safe in Christ. Because He lives, you shall live also. Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord? He has said, "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hands." Now there are some who will tell you that you are not safe and that it is dangerous for you to believe that you are. Let no man beguile you of this reward! You are saved. If you are believing on Him, He will keep you, and you may sing, "Now unto Him who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before His Presence with exceedingly great joy, unto Him be glory." Hold to that blessed Truth of God that you are in Jesus—safe in Jesus Christ!

There is a third blessed Truth, that not only are you pardoned and safe in Christ, but you are accepted at this moment in the Beloved. Your acceptance with God does not rest upon anything in you. You are accepted because you are in Christ, accepted for Christ's sake. Now sometimes you will get robbed of this reward if you listen to the voice which says, "Why, there is still sin in you! Your prayers are imperfect! Your actions are stained." Yes, but let no men beguile you of this conviction that, sinner as you are, you are still accepted in Christ Jesus!

The Lord grant that you may feel this within and let no man beguile you of your reward as long as you live! May you live and die in the enjoyment of it, Beloved, for Christ's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: EPHESIANS 4; 6:1-15.

EPHESIANS 4.

Verses 1, 2. I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called. With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love. It is a loving call. Walk lovingly. It is the condescension of God that called you. Be, therefore, lowly. It is God in tenderness who has loved you. Be, therefore, meek, "forbearing one another in love."

3-6. Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. Therefore, strive for unity. Woe unto those who divide Believers—who rob them of love to one another—who set up another Gospel which is not another, or in any way detract from the unity of the body of Christ.

7. But unto everyone of us is given Grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. It does not mean that God gives stingingly, but that He gives according to our capacity to receive. We are not all made with the same measure of capacity because we are not all intended to fill the same office—and God gives everyone of us as much Grace as we are prepared to receive. The Lord enlarge our hearts that we may hold more of His Grace, "according to the measure of the gift of Christ."

8-10. Therefore He said, When he ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things. Now what were the gifts He gave? He rode up to Heaven in triumph. And in Roman triumphs they scattered gold and silver among the people to show the greatness of the trophies which the warriors had brought home. So Christ, when He ascended up on high, scattered gifts among the sons of men. And what were these? Why they were men, for men are God's possession—the Man, Christ Jesus, first, and then those whom He uses for Himself afterwards.

11-13. And he gave some, Apostles, and some, Prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. We have not come to that yet. Therefore we need instruction. We need edifying or building up, and so the Lord gives to His Church according to His own mind and will, evangelists, pastors and the like. Sometimes there are pastors whom God never sent—and a man may take upon himself the voice of an evangelist who was never called—and consequently they are not gifts of God to the churches and is a waste of their strength. But if we have those whom God gives, we shall find a priceless gift in the bestowal of such men upon the Church of God!

14-16. That we henceforth are no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive, but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. You see then, Brothers and Sisters, where we are. We are each one put into his place to do something for the entire body. No limb of the body lives to itself. It is only healthy when it ministers to the health of the whole body. We are nothing, except as we are joined to the rest of God's people, and especially joined to Him who is our glorious Head.

17-19. This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind. Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. This, the member of the body of Christ will never do! The Head is holy, so will the members be by that Holy Spirit who sanctifies us!

20. But you have not so learned Christ. What a beautiful expression this is! It does not say, "Learned the Doctrine of Christ," or, "the precept of Christ," though that were a grand Truth, but we learn Christ, Himself! Our school book is Christ! The copy by which we write is Christ! The image to which we desire to be conformed is Christ! "You have not so learned Christ."

21, 22. If so be that you have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: That you put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts—You have done with it. You put it off as a beggar puts off his rags when he has fresh garments given him!

23-25. And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that you put on the man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Therefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another. You know the eye will not deceive the head. There is no part of the body that will deceive the rest. If the foot perceives that there is a trap, it tells the body and it does not lead it astray. If the nostril perceives an evil smell, it tells the body, that it may escape from the noxious odor. The body is true to itself. So if we are members, one of another, lying must be abhorrent. Every thought of it in any shape must be detestable to us.

26. Be you angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath. Be angry sometimes. A man that is never angry, surely has no strong convictions in him, for he that is not angry at evil can scarcely be thought to rejoice in that which is good. But anger is a dog that is very apt to bite the wrong persons.

Therefore, be you angry, and sin not. Anger is like fire. Let it always be put out at night. "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath," but if it lights during the day, keep it in the grate—keep it in its proper place, for if fire takes hold where it should not, the house may be destroyed and the man, himself, may perish in the fire. If you are angry, as you sometimes must be, "be angry and sin not. Let not the sun go down on your wrath." They say that the stings of some obnoxious creatures will not die until the sun goes down. Well, let the sting of anger die when the sun goes down. Rake out the fire when the sun is down. Do not keep it blazing all night long, ready for the morning. Let it go out, lest our anger become hatred and become malice.

27. Neither give place to the devil. He is standing at the door. If you give him a seat, he will come in and it is very easy to do so—to make an opportunity for the devil to come in. "Neither give place to the devil." Idle persons tempt the devil to depart by being busy—by being prayerful, and by being much with God. Give no place to the devil.

28. Let him that stole, steal no more: but rather let him labor—Honest industry is the cure for dishonesty.

28. Working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needs. What a splendid change from a thief, up to one that gives to him that needs! Now, between them, we should have put, "Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labor with his hands"—a thing which is good—"that he may be able to provide things honest for himself." A very good idea, too, but the like Christian thought is that he may labor, working with his hands that he may have, to give. I wonder how many, even of professing Christians, think of this—that the objective of labor should be that they may have to give? There are some who think the objective is that we may have, to keep—that we may have, to hoard—but I say Christ, by His Apostle, teaches us that we should labor that we may have, to give to him that needs.

29. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth. Putrid is the word—"no putrid communication"—no word, therefore, which tends to do harm to the purest mind—nothing which is unsavory. Therefore, also, nothing that is untrue—nothing that is slanderous—nothing that would injure my neighbor. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth." "You may as well say it as think it," says one. By no manner of means! If you think it, it will do you harm—if you say it, it will do hurt to others! You may have a bottle of poison and it is much better to keep the cork in, for if somebody should drink it, then they will die. No, "let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth."

30-31. But that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister Grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. Why does the Apostle say "clamor"? Why, because when people are angry they generally talk very loud, and I believe that if persons would correct their tone of voice and resolve, they will not speak above their usual tone! When they feel heated and provoked, it would greatly assist to check the abolition of passion. So the Apostle puts in, "Let all bitterness and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and loud talking—all clamor and evil speaking—be put away from you with all malice."

32. And be you kind, one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.

EPHESIANS 6.

Verse 1. Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Fitting by nature and pleasing in the sight of God.

2-4. Honor your father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise: that it may be well with you, and you may live long on the earth. And you fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. For the duties are like birds with two wings, or like a pair of scales—balance for each side. There is the child's duty, but there is the parent's duty, too.

5-9. Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ. Not with eye service, as men pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: Knowing that whatever good thing any man does, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he is bond or free. And, you masters, do the same things unto them. Mind that! We may hear a good deal about the duties of servants. Let us hear something about the duties of masters and mistresses. "You masters, do the same things unto them."

9. Forbearing threats: knowing that your Master also is in Heaven; neither is there respect of persons with Him. Very beautifully balanced is the whole system of Gospel morals. There is no undue advantage given by the fact of our being rendered equal in Christ, so that the servant is to be less obedient to the master, or the child to the parent—neither is there any undue power given to those who are in authority! But the Grace of God teaches all to do unto all as we would that they should do unto us.

10. Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord. You cannot do right if you are not strong. Unless you have the backbone of principle—unless you have spiritual muscle and sinew by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in you, you cannot continue to do that which is right. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord."

10, 11. And in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God. First, be strong, and then put on armor. It is no use putting armor on a weak man, or else it will be what James I said it was—a capital invention, he said, because he who wore it would come to no harm and certainly do no harm, for he could not stir in it. Now you must be strong, first, but then not trust in your strength, but put on the armor which is here described. And yet it would be useless to have the armor unless you are first strong. "Put on the whole armor of God."

11-13. That you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Therefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. To keep your ground, not to give way in any respect! And blessed is that man whose name is Stand-Fast, and whose practice is to hold fast—"having done all to stand."

14. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth. Nothing will so tighten up your garments and keep them right as a belt of sincerity and truthfulness. If we are not true, whatever else we are, we are but loosely arrayed. We shall come to mischief. "Having your loins girt about with truth."

14. And having on the breastplate of righteousness. A grand protection when God has given you to be holy, and when the principle which covers your heart and shields your members is righteousness!

15. And your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. Peace in your own heart, peace with God, peace with man. Peacefulness and peace. No shoes like these! A man that has a merry heart makes many a mile fly beneath him, but a heavy heart is a slow traveler. "Your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace."

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