

Beware of Unbelief

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon warns that unbelief, especially in the face of God's merciful promises, is a grievous sin that provokes divine judgment and must be overcome by faith in God's power and faithfulness.

Scripture: 2 Kings 7:2, Isaiah 43:19, Haggai 1:2

Topics: "Unbelief", "Faith", "God's Mercy"

Description

In 'Beware of Unbelief,' C.H. Spurgeon exhorts believers to recognize the danger and sinfulness of doubting God's promises, especially when He shows mercy in desperate circumstances. Using the example of Samaria's famine and Elisha's intercession, Spurgeon illustrates how unbelief provokes God's judgment and how faith in His power and timing is essential. This sermon challenges Christians to trust God fully and to expect His blessings without hesitation.

Transcript

"Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof" ■ 2 Kings 7:2.

THE PEOPLE OF SAMARIA had cast off their allegiance to Jehovah, and worshipped other gods, and therefore, according to his solemn threatening, the Lord visited them with sore judgments. They were so blockaded by Syrian armies, that food failed them altogether, and in their hunger they devoured human flesh, and the most abominable offal. They could not open the city gates, for they knew that the adversary, if he once entered, would sack and ransack the city, and put them all to the sword, and therefore they remained cooped up within the city walls to perish. In their dire extremity the Lord had mercy upon them and remembered that they were the children of Israel, the seed of Abraham, his friend, and therefore he would not utterly destroy them, but gave them space for repentance. He turned an eye of pity upon the famished thousands and promised them relief from the sore famine which had wasted them. How rich in mercy is the Lord our God! Sin must be multiplied exceedingly ere his long suffering ceases; he is unwilling to execute the sentence of his wrath. Judgment is his strange work. He is ever ready with his mercy, he waiteth to be gracious, yea, he is always beforehand with us in his grace, but he is very slow footed in punishment; he pauses by the way and deliberates, and before he deals a blow he often expostulates with himself and cries, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim?" Verily he is a God merciful and

gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy.

Perhaps one reason why the Lord was pleased in Samaria's extremity to visit it so graciously was the presence of Elisha there. There was at least one man in the city who had power with God in prayer, and perhaps a band of the sons of the prophets was with him, so that there were in the apostate city some few holy men, "faithful among the faithless found," and these acted as a handful of salt and preserved the city. Solomon tells us in the Proverbs that one wise man preserved a city, and this was a case in which one godly man did so. The Lord had respect unto his servant, and, for the sake of the man of God, Samaria was saved. Well was Elisha styled the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof, for he was a better defense than ten thousand cavalry. Ye cannot measure the beneficial influence of godly men, they are universal benefactors. We hear men speak of the sweet influences of the Pleiades, and the other stars which smile from above upon this earth below, but we too much forget the influence of the stars below upon the heavens above. Power proceeds upward as well as downward, even as the angels ascended as well as descended upon the ladder which Jacob saw. A good man's prayers move the arm which moves the world.

The Lord met the need of Samaria by a most merciful promise, all the more full of grace because it bore upon its front the assurance of speedy fulfillment. The prophet was commissioned to declare, "Tomorrow, about this time, shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel." They had only four-and-twenty hours to wait; yet once more must the sun go down and rise, and then there should be no more pinching hunger or cruel famine throughout Samaria. The timing of the supply was most kind, he gives twice who gives quickly, and so the speedy promise was doubly precious. The plentifulness of the promise made it the more gracious, for so cheap would the wheat and barley become that they should be sold at a figure far less than that which had been paid for doves' dung, whatever that may have been, and less than the price of such unwholesome meat as might be gathered from an ass's head, which had been sold for fourscore pieces of silver.

The best food, even fine flour, was to be openly vended at a low rate at their very doors. They would not need to send to Egypt or fetch corn from afar, but it was to be brought to their gates, and sold at a price which would enable all to purchase. It was very great goodness on the Lord's part to meet the famine-stricken multitude with such a right royal word of cheer. But observe how God's prophet is answered—not as one would have thought, with words of thanksgiving and tears of gratitude, but with the reverse. They did not fall down and on their knees exclaim, "O God, how good thou art!" They did not lift up a single word of praise, as surely they should have done: the only response was a supercilious sneering, contemptuous, unbelieving utterance—"If the Lord should make windows in heaven might such a thing be." O base ingratitude! Ungenerous return for such great mercy!

Mark well the Lord's answer to the unbeliever's scorn. There is nothing which he will so little endure as unbelief, and unbelief in the face of unusual mercy becomes doubly provoking. In the name of the Lord the prophet at once responded—"Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not eat thereof." The Lord has a speedy answer to the unbelief which dares defy him: if men call God liar, they shall ere long have sufficient proof in their own persons that his threatenings do not lie.

We shall try this morning to gather from the text the lesson which it was intended to teach us. May God bless us in so doing, helping us by his Holy Spirit.

First, let us observe the conduct of unbelief; secondly, the divine answer to it; and, thirdly, the appointed punishment of it.

I. First let us notice repentingly, for we have been guilty of this sin ourselves, THE CONDUCT OF UNBELIEF. You will observe that unbelief dares to question the truthfulness of the promise itself. The prophet had said, "To-morrow, about this time, shall two measures of barley be sold for a shekel, and a measure of fine flour for a shekel;" and directly in the teeth of this "Thus saith Jehovah" comes the contemptuous denial of the lord on whose hand the king leaned. Unbelief does not hesitate to say that what God declares will not be fulfilled, although it frequently veils its speech, and usually imagines some sort of argument upon which to base its denials. Sophistry comes to the aid of incredulity and endeavors to buttress its bowing walls. If you had asked the sneering nobleman why he spoke so Distrustingly, he would have replied, "Why, the promise is far too great to be fulfilled. It is out of all character and reason. How can there be flour enough in this city in twenty-four hours to be sold at a measure for a shekel? Why, you could not get a measure of fine four for ten thousand shekels; it cannot be had for love or money, and there is not a measure of barley left in all the country around Samaria, for the Syrians have plundered every homestead and granary. Do you not see that the thing this prophet talks about is utterly impossible? His talk is preposterous. We might have believed him if his prediction had been a tenth as large, but he has overdone it, and no attention ought to be paid to his maunderings. Has not your unbelief, my brethren, sometimes made out a case for mistrust from the greatness of the promised good? When first the Lord was drawing you with cords of love, was not the very greatness of his mercy one of the severest trials of your faith? When you found that he would blot out your sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud your iniquities, did not your heart say, "How can it be?" Well do I remember with what power and sweetness the words of Isaiah once came to my soul to remove this doubt■"My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways." We forget this glorious declaration, and we fall to measuring God's capability of blessing by our capacity of believing, and because the favor is wonderful we think it improbable. Is not this ill reasoning? Can anything be great with God? Can any marvel be too miraculous for the Lord? The matter is hard in itself, but is it hard for omnipotence? It is a massive blessing, but can it be too large for the infinitely gracious hand to bestow? Surely the Holy One of Israel is not such an one as thyself, wherefore then dost thou limit him as if he could give no more than thou canst give. May divine love deliver our souls from this net of unbelief, which so easily entangles us. Low thoughts of the divine power greatly dishonor God, and deprive us of much comfort. Is he not a great God, and is it not like him to do great things for his people? His resources are infinite, and therefore he is able to verify his promises, however great they may be. He did not promise in ignorance or in haste, his word is not a thing of yesterday, therefore he will not fail to keep his promise to the letter.

Perhaps had you enquired of this lord he would have said to you, "Oh, but it will be such a new thing. I have lived in Samaria, and I have not seen flour exposed for sale at any price for months. The householders have hoarded it up, as if each ounce of it were a jewel. Each man has taken care to secure what he had for his own family; and now there is none left anywhere, even in private stores, and yet you talk of selling wheat and barley at the gate of Samaria! Blessed would the eyes be which should see such a thing for many a day! I never expect to see it, and a thousand prophets should not induce me to indulge such a dream. We shall perish by famine or by the sword of the Syrians, for this promise will not be kept." Fly brethren, has not our unbelief sometimes fed upon the novelty of the promised blessing? It seemed a new thing to you sinners that the Lord should in a moment pass by your sins, and make you righteous in the righteousness of Christ: yet the new thing has come to pass. When we hear of a more than ordinarily

successful Christian work, many brethren who have not been favored with such prosperity cannot believe it to be true. Had they seen two or three people converted and added to the church in a year, they would have said, "This is the finger of God," but if they hear of forty or a hundred, or even a thousand converted during a gracious revival they are very sceptical. The conversion of thousands under one sermon they admit may have taken place in Old Testament times, but that is a long time ago; we cannot expect to see such things now. Thus they reason in their hearts, and insinuate that the Lord's arm has waxed short. Oh, brethren, if God has given us a promise which has not yet been fulfilled, and if there never has before occurred anything like it, this is no excuse for our disbelieving the divine word. Has he not promised, "Behold I will do a new thing"? (Isaiah 43:19). Did he not say to his people Israel, "I have showed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, and thou didst not know them." Is not everything new when for the first time the Lord reveals it? Moses might have doubted God's promise to smite Egypt with plagues, for these plagues were novelties. He might have doubted the Lord's power to lead his people through the Red Sea, for when had a sea been divided for a nation to pass through it dryshod? He might have doubted God's power to feed the hosts in the wilderness, for when had bread been rained down from heaven, and when had water leaped from a rock? The Lord, who works great wonders, shews us mercies "new every morning." He is not tied down to a monotony of procedure, his blessings are as varied as his creations, he delights to surprise us with fresh manifestations of love; and thus it is clear that the novelty of the blessing is no excuse whatever for our unbelief.

I dare say the scoffing nobleman would have said "It is the suddenness of the thing which renders the promise so incredible. To-morrow! What! abundance of food to-morrow! Nay, that is too much. Say that in three months we may be supplied and we may believe it, but to-morrow is going too far. How could wheat and barley be brought in such plenty to Samaria in the time, even upon swift horses and dromedaries? Suppose the Syrians were to leave us to-morrow, yet the country has been devoured by them, and you must import wheat from some distant land. It is not at all likely that this could be done on a sudden. Do not strain our faith too much, give us a month or two at any rate." My brethren, now-a-days I find that this point of suddenness often staggers unbelieving minds. "What! the church revived on a sudden! How can it be? True doctrines may perhaps be spread in England by slow degrees, after generations have come and gone, but to expect the gospel to spread through the country in a few months is perfectly absurd." Some, perhaps, among my present hearers dare not hope that this south of London can be immediately stirred, as I believe it will be, and they dare not expect conversions at once, such as I venture to look for. Some dread everything sudden, and feel sure that if any gracious gift come suddenly it will prove to be like Jonah's gourd, which came up in a night and perished in a night. They give the world the express trains, and condemn grace to travel in the luggage van. Why do they dream that the Lord is slow? Why do they limit the rapidity of his actions? He created the world in six days, could he not recreate it in the like space? He destroyed the race in the days of Noah in forty days, can he not do his saving work with equal speed? Is it not written, "He rode upon a cherub and did fly; yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind"? O unbelief, how darest thou say, "in a year" when God says "to-morrow"? If he says "tomorrow" it will be to-morrow to the tick of the clock. "To-morrow, about this time," said the prophet, and so it was. Let us not be as those spoken of by the prophet Haggai, who said, "The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built." Let us lay aside this postponing of expectancy, and believe that God can do wonders to-day, even to-day. Ah, sinner, yolk cannot believe that God can save you in a minute, but he can; in less time than it takes the clock to tick he can cause you to pass from death to life, and cast all your transgressions behind his back. At this very moment, if thou wilt look to Jesus Christ, the work of grace shall be accomplished. The publican who confessed his sin had not to tarry long for his justification, but received it ere he went down to his house.

This cavilling peer would also have justified his unbelief by saying, "Where can you find the means for accomplishing this promise? So much corn and barley are to be sold, you say, but where is it to come from? There are no corn factors here, and if there were their stocks would have run out long ago. No great underground store-rooms remain to be discovered, I am sure of that for I have ordered a minute search in every place where food could be hidden away." "No," he said, "There will be no cheap food, for there are no means by which it can be had." Has not our unbelief too often run on that tack? We too often want to see how the Lord will perform his word. We begin calculating, like the disciples, that two hundred pennyworth of bread will not be enough for the multitude, and as for a few loaves and fishes, we cannot believe that they will be of any avail among so many. Of course, if we have to engineer according to the laws of mechanics, we must calculate our forces and demand means proportionate to the results to be produced; but why apply the slender line of mechanics to the omnipotent God? Nay, I think we do worse, for we hardly carry out our calculations correctly in reference to the Lord's working; if we did we should calculate that■given omnipotence, difficulties exist no longer, and impossibilities have disappeared. If the Lord be indeed almighty, then how dare we question as to ways and means? Ways and means are his business and none of ours, and with him no such question can ever arise.

I should not wonder, too, if the nobleman's unbelief arose partly from the realisation of the scene which would be presented if the promise were indeed fulfilled. Had he been told that there would be a great deliverance wrought for Jerusalem when it was besieged I dare say he would have believed it; but for Samaria■! What here? Here on this spot? In these streets which have so long heard the wailing of weeping women and the groans of famished men! Plenty of corn and barley in four-and-twenty hours! He could not realize that. It is easy to believe that God will keep his promise in Australia, it is not always so easy to believe that he will do it here. That the Lord will be very gracious to my afflicted brother over there I do firmly believe, but do I always believe that he will be gracious to me? You have been in many troubles, and you have been helped through them, and you believe that God would help you a second time through those same troubles if they were to return; but this particular one that you are now in, there is something so peculiar about it that you cannot quite realize that you will be supported under it. We have generally got a large quantity of faith when we do not want it, but when faith comes to be needed how much of it evaporates. The time to believe in the promise of God is when the famine is sore in the city: but, alas for the nobleman, he could not realize the blessing, he could not suppose it to be possible.

But now, putting the whole of these causes for distrust together, is there any force in any or all of them as a reason for doubting God? If God has said it he will certainly do it. Why, then, do we doubt him?

Now observe, secondly, that unbelief often shows itself by shutting up the Lord to one mode of action. This man thinks that perhaps there might be food in Samaria if God would make lattices up in heaven, or, as some read it, open sluices in heaven, out of which you would see the barley and flour pouring down. That would be the only way as far as he can see by which God could feed the people. Perhaps he recollected the manna in the wilderness, and how it seemed to drop from the clouds of heaven. Well, God might do it in that way; he goes the length of half admitting that perhaps he might do it in that way. That is how unbelief does: we say, "Yes, God may deliver me in my time of trouble, if such-and-such a friend's heart be touched." God is shut up to touching that friend's heart, according to our notion. The sinner thinks that he might be saved if he could get to hear Mr. So-and-so, or if such-and-such an impression could be felt within, but according to his notion the Lord is shut up to converting him under one minister and bringing him to Jesus in one particular way. That is many a man's notion of revival■"If you could get Mr. Eloquent to come and hold a course of services in our town he would wake us up, but I do not see any other way."

Do you not call that unbelief? God calls it so. Why, brethren, if the Lord wished to feed Samaria, he could have done it by multiplying the food that was there, just as he multiplied the widow's oil; or he could have continued the quantity of food undiminished, just as he did the barley cake and the little oil of the widow of Zarepta. God has a thousand ways of accomplishing his purposes. He might have turned every stone in Samaria into a loaf, and made the dust of its streets into flour, if so he willed. If he sent food in the wilderness without harvests, and water in the wilderness without wind and without rain, he can do as he wills and perform his own work in his own way. Do not let us think of limiting the Holy One of Israel to any special mode of action. When we hear of men being led to break out into new ways of going to work, do not let us feel, "This must be wrong;" rather let us hope that it is very probably right, for we need to escape from these horrid ruts, and wretched conventionalisms, which are rather hindrances than helps. Some very stereotyped brethren judge it to be a crime for an evangelist to sing the gospel; and as to that American organ, ■dreadful! One of these days another set of conservative souls will hardly endure a service without such things, for the horror of one age is the idol of the next. Every man in his own order, and God using them all; and if there happens to be some peculiarity, some idiosyncrasy, so much the better. God does not make his servants by the score as men run iron into moulds; he has a separate work for each man, and let each man do his own work in his own way, and may God bless him.

Once again, notice that unbelief does not after all believe that even if God were to work in her way the thing would have been done. Did you notice a little note of interrogation in the text, "Behold, if the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be?" Now, look through your spectacles, and you will see at the end of the word "be" a note of question. He meant to say that if God did make windows in heaven even then he could not feed the starving multitudes in Samaria. If the men, who say, if God severe to do so-and-so we might see a great blessing, Severe pressed home, it would be discovered that they do not believe that it would be done even then. Unbelief is such a presumptuous denier of the veracity of God, that it does not give him credit for being able to keep his promise in any shape or way, nay, not even by the most extraordinary deeds. May the Spirit of God drive such unbelief as this out of our hearts. It may be there at this very moment, and we may be unconscious of it. Let us search and look and drive this traitor out, for if anything can harm ourselves and the church and the world, it is disbelief in the fidelity of God.

II. Now let us pass on to the second head, THE DIVINE ANSWER. Here stands God's servant Elisha, who has spoken in God's name, and there stands the great nobleman, who I have no doubt very much despises the poor prophet, and he answers him with a sarcasm, thought to be witty, I dare say; many laughed at it and thought it quite extinguished the good man. But notice the conduct of the Lord's servant. He does not argue with the man, not at all. We have had a great deal too much of arguing with unbelievers. Whenever a rotten book comes out some ministers take care to read it all through, and then they go and tell their people all about it under the presence of answering it, and the people forget their answers, and only recollect the poison which the ministers unwisely disseminate. There would not be a tenth part of the infidelity that there now is if the ministers would let it alone. It is like a pool of filth, it is all the worse for being stirred, let it alone. It has not enough vitality to live of itself, it is only our opposition that makes it vital at all. So Elisha had no argument for him, nor need we be very careful to answer those who deny the truth of God. They shall answer for it to their God, not to us.

And there was no adoption of the unbeliever's means. God did not say by his servant Elisha, "Well, to oblige you I will go out of my way, and make windows in heaven, if you think it the best way of provisioning the city." Not at all. When there are objections taken to modes of usefulness which God evidently blesses it is not for us to alter them because the popular voice is against them, or some very wise people have

condemned them. I think that is a reason for going on with them, and when the world suggests that holy work ought to be done in this way or in that, the very best thing is to let those who like the proposed plans try them themselves. God does not shape his course to please the wisdom of men, and if the Lord means to save souls in this part of London he will do it in his own way, and unbelief may say what it likes, he will not abate one jot or tittle of his own purpose, but bless the people as seemeth good in his sight.

III. Thirdly, our text teaches us THE APPOINTED PUNISHMENT OF UNBELIEF. It is allotted to unbelief that it shall see with its eyes what it cannot enjoy. This is always fulfilled, although in different ways. The unbeliever says he will not believe what he cannot see: God's answer is, that he shall not enjoy what he does see. There was the flour, there was the barley; the man could see these, but he could not enjoy them. Unbelievers do not really enjoy the things of this life. The mass of them find that wealth does not yield them satisfaction, their outward riches cannot conceal their inner poverty. To many men it is given to have all that heart can wish, and yet not to have what their heart does wish. They have everything except contentment. If you will not accept in faith the spiritual gifts which God promises, then the temporal gifts which the world promises shall tantalize you; you shall eat and not be satisfied, you shall have, but not have enough; you shall spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not. If you will not have things unseen, things seen shall become a mere shadow to you. This is one punishment of unbelief.

Another is this: oftentimes men in connection with spiritual things, being unbelievers, have their minds convinced but their hearts are not converted. They see enough of the work of God to make them know that the Lord he is God and that Christ is a Savior, that faith brings pardon, that the Holy Spirit renews the heart; they know all these things and yet they never taste of them. They are as orthodox as orthodox can be as to their creed, but there is nothing in their heart. The living water flows by their lips, but, as they stoop to drink, it flees away as in the fable of Tantalus of old.

Often also they see God's work in others but never feel it in themselves. Their wife has found peace, but they have not; their dear child has been converted, but they are not: the brother has seen his sister rejoicing in the Lord, but he knows no such joy; the sister has seen her sister lay hold of Christ, but she has never done so herself. This makes missing the blessing so much the more unhappy a circumstance, for to be starving when everybody else is fed is dreadful. I would not have been in that nobleman's place for all the world, to see the people all satisfied and himself not able to partake thereof, and yet it is so with some of you.

Do you know that this will lead to an eternal tantalisation? for unbelievers in hell, according to Christ's own description, will look up and see Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, but they themselves will be cast out. Surely it must be one of the hells of hell to see heaven and to have a great gulf fixed between you and it.

You shall have good things if you believe your God, but if you will not believe in him neither shall you receive them. The punishment is natural, and fair, and appropriate. If certain persons believe that gold is to be found in a mine and others do not, is it not right that if there be gold there those who believed in it and sought after it should have it? Should he who ridiculed the idea come in for his share too? Nobody would think so. It is the very least thing that can be expected of us to believe God, for he cannot lie, and if we refuse credence to the word of God it cannot be thought to be a hard measure that the blessing should not be given to us. If ye will not believe ye shall not be established. O unbeliever, it will be your lot to know that God speaks the truth, but never to know that truth in your own soul; to know that he is gracious, to know that he is ready to forgive, to know that he lifts sinners up to his own throne through the blood of the

Lamb, and yet never to be forgiven, never to be saved, never to be glorified. I am afraid there are some in this house of prayer who are going hard on towards such a doom. I do not mean strangers who have dropped in here once, but I mean those who have sat here many years, and yet have never believed. In this next month you will see God's grace working in the south of London, but it will not come near you: you are an unbeliever, and you have been so for many years; there is no reason to expect you will ever be altered, the probabilities are you will remain just as you are. The rain will fall around you, but never upon you; the barn floor will be civet, but your fleece will be dry. God grant it be not so, but it is to be feared it will.

Now, in closing, I want to apply my subject to the special circumstances under which we are found to-day, at the commencement of the special services for the south of London. Dear friends, I do earnestly trust that all of you resident in this region who love the Lord will unite your best energies to make this movement a success. I mean chiefly by prayer for the blessing, by giving your attendance at such meetings as are called for Christian conference, by endeavoring to take your friends, your children, and your neighbors, if they are unconverted, to the place, and by doing everything you can to win souls, as the Holy Ghost shall enable you. It may be just possible that some of you are standing aloof. Now, I cannot condemn any brother for doing that if his reasons are such as satisfy his conscience, for there is no movement, however excellent, but what from some point or other it is open to criticism, and if a brother's criticism be conscientious and honest, it is not for me to judge him for a moment. But I should like to put this question to some—Do you not think that at the bottom of almost all objections raised against this work there is unbelief? It is an unusual thing, and there is excitement—why not? Somebody says he does not see any remarkable talent in the two brethren—what of that? I am sure the brethren do not pretend to any talent whatever, for more unassuming men I never saw in my life, and that is one reason why God blesses them so much. For one reason and another good people hold off, but does it not all amount to unbelief? Our friends in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Newcastle, bear indisputable testimony to the fact that souls were saved in large numbers, and that the churches were edified, and the tone of religious feeling improved. We cannot doubt the testimony of faithful, well-instructed brethren, and I think if we hold back it will resolve itself into this, that we do not believe in God's working just now upon a large scale by simple instrumentality. For my part, I would like to put it to myself thus, could I justify myself in standing back when I come to my dying bed? Here are two men who have for months consecrated themselves to the preaching of the gospel with no object in the world but the winning of souls for Christ. Baser calumny than to assert that they have a selfish motive never fell from the lip of Satan himself. They have no design nor object to gain but the sole glory of God. They seek conversions, conversions to Christ only; and brethren, if there were a thousand faults in them, who am I or who are you to judge them, and to say we will not help them in such a work and with such motives? Brother, do you mean God's glory? So do I. Do you mean the salvation of souls? So do I. Brother, do you preach salvation by the precious blood? So do I. Brother, do you believe in regeneration by the power of the Holy Ghost? So do I. Do you tell sinners to believe and live? That is exactly what I am telling them; and if we are agreed in this, for my part I cannot conceive any excuse for any man's holding back unless he has so much work of his own to do that he has no time to spare, in which case let him at least bid them God speed. If we do not help now we may live to regret it. For some reason or other the crowds are willing to hear the gospel, and there seems to be a unity among Christians about the thing. However it comes about, let us accept it from God, and use it. There is a tide which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune as well in heavenly things as in secular, and let us take this tide, however God may have sent it to us, and use it to our best: for if not, if unbelief hold us back, it may happen to us even as to Moses, who, for his unbelief, never entered into the promised land: he saw it, but never entered it; and we may see, and see with gladness, God blessing the church, but we may have no part of the

blessing in our own church. Do we wish to see the clusters of grapes that come from an Eschol into which we cannot enter. It may even happen to us as it happened to this that God may see fit to take us out of the way. I have marked it, do not think me superstitious, when any truly good man has stood in God's way God has made very short work with him, he has taken him home, or he has laid him aside by sickness. If you will not help, and will hinder, you will be put aside, and perhaps your own usefulness will be cut short. Or it may happen, worst of all, that if we refuse help when the time of blessing had come we shall remain among our fellow Christians, but for many years we shall be wretched and unprofitable. A blessing was coming and you did not seem to want it, so the Lord sent it somewhere else, and you will be a doubting, miserable, carping, critical, faultfinding Christian as long as you live, never eating the dainties, but always pointing out errors in the cookery; never delighting in the joy of your Lord nor making your harps to ring for joy over converts, but always playing the part of the elder brother who was angry and would not go in, though it was his own brother that had come home and his own father who had killed the fatted calf. God save us from this, and cause us from this very day to shake off unbelief and to go forward rejoicing in the Lord!

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON ■ 2 Kings 7.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" ■ 191, 46 (VERS. II.), 483; and Mr. Sankey's "Ring the Bells of Heaven."

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