

Discipline in Christ's Army

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon exhorts believers to embrace the strict discipline of Christ's army, steadfastly defending the Gospel and living holy lives as faithful soldiers in spiritual warfare.

Scripture: Joshua 1:11, 2 Timothy 4:7, Ephesians 6:11, 1 Corinthians 10:13, James 4:4, John 15:19, Hebrews 12:1, 1 Peter 2:9

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Christian Discipleship", "Faithfulness"

Description

In this powerful sermon, C.H. Spurgeon calls Christians to embrace the rigorous discipline required of soldiers in Christ's army. He emphasizes the spiritual warfare believers face and the importance of steadfast faithfulness, defending the Gospel, and avoiding compromise with the world. Spurgeon challenges listeners to count the cost of discipleship and to stand firm in their commitment to Christ, promising the reward of a 'well done' from the Great Commander. This message is especially suited for those seeking to deepen their understanding of Christian commitment and perseverance.

Transcript

"Pass through the host, and command the people." Joshua 1:11.

[When the "Army Discipline and Regulation Bill" was before the House of Commons, Mr. Spurgeon delivered this discourse upon it. Shortly afterwards, he published a summary of the sermon in The Sword and the Trowel, with a prefatory note in which he said, "We hope to print the whole discourse for the use of soldiers." With this view, he had commenced to revise it, but had not completed it, and it is now published for the first time. Workers among soldiers will find the sermon specially suitable for them.]

BELIEVERS are called to be good soldiers of Jesus Christ. As many of us as believe in Him and have obtained eternal life through Him, are now enlisted beneath His banner to fight the battles of holiness against sin and of truth against error. We war not, however, with flesh and blood, but with spiritual enemies. We slay lust and lying, drunkenness and blasphemy—and we wage a never-ending warfare against everything which is dishonest, unkind, selfish, or ungodly. He who died upon the Cross out of love to the undeserving has taught us how to endure hardness for His sake as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Our ambition is to fight a good fight and keep the faith. And by the power of the Holy Spirit we hope to do so and to receive from our Great Commander's mouth the blessed commendation, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Being soldiers, we come under discipline, and it is well for all who are about to enlist to know what the discipline is, for our glorious Captain, the Lord Jesus Christ, says to all who wish to join this army, "Count the cost." We, too, would say to all who propose to be soldiers of the Cross and followers of the Lamb—"Count the cost." Do not join the ranks blindly and then change your mind and desert. Enlist with your eyes open and stay in the service till you are veterans. There's nothing like knowing what you are doing—and choosing Christ's service deliberately. It is to that end that I shall speak upon the discipline of Christ's army, for perhaps some who are in the army of Christ in name, but not in truth, may find out their mistake and endeavor, by sincere repentance, to make sure work of the matter so that they may not be deceived. It will be an awful thing to be found out to be a hypocrite and to be drummed out of the Lord's army at the last.

I have here a copy of the "Army Discipline and Regulation Bill" sent to me by a member of the House of Commons, with this written in the corner of it, "May not the Christian soldier derive some profit from this?" I feel sure he may. May the Holy Spirit enable us to do so!

This Bill contains a list of offenses for which a soldier on active service is liable to death—and those offenses are excellent figures of certain spiritual offenses which must not be committed by the soldiers of Christ! If they fall into them, and continue in them, it will prove that they are already under sentence of death and are not Christ's servants at all. If any complain that the discipline of our Lord Jesus is strict, it will be of benefit to them to see how severe is the discipline of every army. Nothing can make Christ's service sweet except love to Him—His service appears hardest to those who have hard hearts—and just as men grow right and true, they find the Lord's yoke to be easy and His burden light. Judging Christianity from the outside, it will always seem to unregenerate men a very strict Puritanical system. But judging it from the inside, when the heart is renewed and the soul is charmed with the blessed Person of their Divine Redeemer, we love our Lord's service and find intense delight in it. We consent to His Law, that it is good, and we long with all our hearts to keep His statutes even to the end. We are glad to know what offenses are, that we may pray to be kept from them for we would not willingly offend so good a Lord.

In this Bill, we read that "A Person subject to Military Law, when on Active Service, is punishable with Death, if he commits any of the following offences"—

(1) . "Shamefully abandons or delivers up any garrison, place, post, or guard, or uses any means to compel or induce any governor, commanding officer, or other person, to shamefully abandon or deliver up any garrison, place, post, or guard, which was the duty of such governor, officer, or person to defend."

This is a grievous offense in the Church of God and I am sorry to say that it has often been committed. We are put in trust with the Gospel of Jesus Christ—that is the citadel which we are to defend at all hazards—so what a sad thing it is when professed Christ's ministers give up Truth of God after Truth in order to please the public! "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon," that professed servants of Christ have betrayed the Gospel itself to the enemy! O you who follow the banner of Jesus, never do this! Defend it with your lives! Die in the defense of it, as the martyrs did, and never be ashamed of it in any company. You may not be an officer and, therefore, you cannot give up a garrison or castle to the enemy—but you have your own post to guard—take care that you guard it! Never give up the Bible—no, not a leaf of it! Never give up prayer—stand sentry there and let no man laugh you out of it! Whatever post the Lord Jesus commits to you, take care that you hold it till He comes, or till you, yourself, are called Home to the heavenly headquarters. Hold fast, as with a grip of steel, every Doctrine which the Lord has taught you whether others approve of it or not! Hold fast, also, and endeavor, by the aid of God's

Spirit, to put into practice every precept of the Lord. Value the practical part of Christianity as well as the doctrinal—and prize them both beyond gold. Be not of the mind of those who say of Christ's rules, "These are of little consequence." No! Your Master's command cannot be a trifle! And the spirit which thinks little of anything which Jesus commands is an evil spirit! We must pray against it and strive against it. Make it a matter of conscience to follow Jesus at all hazards wherever He goes. Stand up for the Scriptures and the true Gospel—and "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." Do not give up a hair of the head of the Truth of God, nor let her enemies take away so much as a lace of her shoes.

I believe in the invincibility of truth. Only give truth time and God, being with her, she must prevail. I believe also in the invincibility of the Church which is built upon the Rock, Christ Jesus, and against which the gates of Hell shall never prevail. I am quite willing to be in a minority upon a great many questions. I would not believe any more than I do even if everybody else believed it—and I would not be any the less confident of its truthfulness if it was accepted by only a hundredth or a thousandth part of those who now believe it! Get hold of a Truth of God, my dear Brother or Sister, and you have laid hold of that in which God dwells! Know your Bible thoroughly and believe what the Bible reveals. And then, if there are arrayed against Biblical Truth—all the powers of Christendom, all the kings and princes and prelates and priests joined together—you may rest assured that they will only be as so much chaff driven before the wind! If they believe error, and advocate error, all their pomp and power will be but as the wind, the earthquake and the fire in which God was not! But in your calm, quiet adherence to the Truth of God—with a tenacity that would brave even martyrdom rather than renounce what God has revealed to you in His Word and by his Spirit, there is a power that must win in the long run—so hold to it and be not afraid!

(2) . "Shamefully casts away his arms, ammunition, or tools in the presence of the enemy."

This is a terrible crime, indeed, in a Christian soldier. "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which has great recompense of reward." Never let go your shield of faith! Under ridicule and persecution, buckle it to your arm. Grip firmly that blessed sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God! Let no man take from you a single text of it! Speak up for the blessed Truth of God and stand to your gun—this will gall the enemy and protect yourself. Rally to the colors and wrap them around your heart when they seem to be in peril—I mean, the blood-red colors of the Cross of Christ!

Dear young Brothers and Sisters who love the Lord, I know you have a hard fight of it when you get among your friends who are so mean as to ridicule you. But never say, "Die"—never give up your faith, never yield to their sins, nor give them countenance by so much as joining in their laughter! Do not be misled by false teachers, but obey the Word of God and follow that alone. Read it for yourselves and what you see there lay hold upon, and let it be your religion. I have often said to myself—

"Shouldall the forms that men devise Assault my faith with treacherous art, I'd call them vanity and lies, And bind the Gospel to my heart."

Let us, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, still hold without wavering to our confidence in the Gospel as God's great battle-axe and weapon of war! Let us be fully persuaded that this is the chosen instrument by which the Lord will glorify Himself and subdue the nations of the earth. We may take it for granted that God's Providential dispensations will always tend in that direction and that the ponderous wheels full of eyes are always revolving in such a way as to work out the eternal purposes of Grace in the salvation of those whom Christ has redeemed. But, for all that, the power which God mostly blesses is the energy of the Holy Spirit exerted through the preaching of the Gospel of Christ—not by kings and princes, or learned

doctors or eloquent men—but through the Gospel as preached by humble and earnest Believers, illustrated by gracious and holy lives, and supported by fervent and unceasing prayers! So, Beloved, have faith in the Gospel! Do not put your confidence in anything that is not authorized by the New Testament. Do not be so foolish as to use any means which are not in accordance with God's Word. And do not enter into any alliance with the world under the delusion that you will, by so doing, help the Gospel! Be satisfied that God is in the still small voice and, as He is there, give good heed to the message that He utters—and gad not about to seek any other ground of confidence, but be content with, "Thus says the Lord."

(3) . "Treacherously holds correspondence with or gives intelligence to the enemy, or treacherously or through cowardice sends a flag of truce to the enemy."

This is another thing that Christian soldiers must never do. Their orders are clear—"Come out from among them and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." This battle of ours against sin admits of no truce whatever—no terms of compromise—no going a certain way with sinners in the hope of inducing them to come a little way with us! No, there must be nothing of the kind. Let the word, "compromise," with regard to evil never even cross your thoughts! Our Lord and Master made no compromises. He told us that it would be better to pluck out our right eye and cut off our right hand rather than that they should cause us to offend. Give your heart so fully up to Jesus, my Beloved Brothers and Sisters, that you are altogether separated from this world! Let the world know where you are, what you are and take care that you know where it is and what it is! Be not, I pray you, conformed to this world! And, on the other hand, never hide your religion. Do not ask for a truce with the enemy, for that would be treachery to your Lord. Remember that solemn warning, "Whoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." That is no saying of mine—it is one of the faithful and true declarations of this Inspired Book!

I must not stay to say more about this matter, though it is a most suggestive point.

(4) . "Assists the enemy with arms, ammunition, or supplies, or knowingly harbors or protects an enemy not being a prisoner "

Now, every professor who leads an inconsistent life furnishes Christ's enemies with "arms, ammunition, or supplies," for they say, "Ah, that is one of your Christians!" They fire that as a most deadly shot against us. They point to the ways of inconsistent professors and they turn to us and say, "That is what you Christians are!" If they take one bad sovereign, they never think of saying that all the sovereigns in circulation are counterfeit—yet they might as well say that as declare that because here and there a professor is a hypocrite or inconsistent, therefore, we are all so! That is not true, yet it gives the enemy encouragement and supplies him with ammunition when any of you who profess to be Christ's, walk as you ought not to walk!

And then, dear Friends, if we conceal any sin within our bosoms, this is knowingly harboring an enemy. If you who are supposed to be Christian people drink too much in secret—and there are some, not only men, but women, who make a profession of Christianity, who sin in this way. And we must speak very plainly when this evil becomes as common as it is—you are knowingly harboring an enemy! If, in your trade, you follow unrighteous customs—and there are plenty of tradesmen who do that—and if you adopt their schemes though you profess to be a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, you are knowingly harboring His enemy—and you are not worthy to be called a good soldier of Jesus Christ!

The enemy will get in if he can, but we must do all we can and also cry to God to keep him out. You know that on a cold winter's day, a man shuts the door, lights a fire, draws the curtains and insulates the door,

yet even then the cold gets in. So is it with sin—you may watch and guard against it as much as you like but, still, the cold will get in—but it is a very different kind of cold from that which would come in if you were to open the windows and doors and let it in. That is what some do concerning sin. They keep no watch, no guard against it. They tempt the devil to tempt them—and those who do this and thus knowingly harbor the enemy are no true soldiers of Jesus Christ.

(5) . "Having been made a prisoner of war, voluntarily serves with or voluntarily aids the enemy. " Now young men, especially—you who are members of this Church or some other Church—there are times when you

get into a great fix. There are all round you persons who are opposed to true religion—and they begin by inviting you to do this, and that, and the other, and then they try to compel you to do as they wish. They make you, as it were, a prisoner of war, and they say, "You shall do such-and-such and such-and-such or we will make you do it." Or possibly they suppose that if they use enough ridicule, or enough taunts and jeers, they will get the mastery over you. Now is your time to play the man! You are taken, as it were, a prisoner of war, but do not forfeit your honor by voluntarily serving with or aiding the enemy! They want a song from you, do they? Well then, sing them one of the songs about Jesus and they will soon want you to stop! But do not yield to their desire by singing the song of the worldling, even if you know one. If you are Christ's true soldier, you will be most faithful in the hour of the greatest trial. But you will need to cry to the Strong for strength and ask God to give you sufficient Grace for every time of need.

Christian tradesmen are sometimes taken prisoners of war in this sense. They get into financial difficulties and then it is suggested to them by Satan, "You must do such-and-such—you cannot help doing it. Of course you would rather not do it, but, under the circumstances, you cannot help yourself!" Do not do wrong, my Brother, whatever the circumstances may be! Become a bankrupt, lose all that you have and go to the workhouse rather than do the least wrong! It would be better to die in a ditch than to live and be rich with a guilty conscience! As you love your Lord, I beseech you, by that precious blood of His that has redeemed you from all iniquity, do not "crucify the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame," but stand fast! And having done all, still stand. God help any of you who are thus taken prisoners of war to avoid doing anything willingly against your Prince and thus aiding His enemy!

(6) . "Knowingly does, when on active service, any act calculated to imperil the success of Her Majesty's forces or any part thereof."

That is rather a strong clause because it takes a very wide sweep. But, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, we must not knowingly do anything calculated to imperil the success of our Master's cause. Will you try to think what a comprehensive clause this is? It may be that what you do will not actually imperil the success of Christ's cause. You may be too insignificant for your act to have any very great result, but still, if it is even calculated to have that effect, it is forbidden by the articles of war of Prince Emmanuel!

I will tell you of some things that I think are calculated to imperil the success of our Master's cause. There are some of you who have never been baptized and who are not members of any Christian Church. "Well," someone says, "I believe that I am a Christian and that I can go to Heaven without being baptized, or joining a Church, or even going to the Communion Table." Yes, I know that is what you think, but that course of conduct of yours is, in my opinion, calculated to imperil the success of Christ's cause! If it is right for you to act thus, then every other Christian has as much right to act thus as you have—and suppose that everybody were to do as you are doing—that would be an end to the visible Church of Christ and to

the maintenance of the visible ordinances of Christ—and this would be most perilous to the success of Christ's cause! Just think of that, I pray you, and if you are leaving undone that which you ought to do, or are doing anything which has a tendency to imperil the success of Christ's cause, repent of it and forsake it, lest it should turn out that, after all, you are not a loyal subject and soldier in the army of King Jesus!—

"Put on the Gospel armor, And watching unto prayer, Where duty calls, or danger, Be never wanting there."

(7) . "Misbehaves or induces others to misbehave before the enemy."

I do not quite know what "misbehavior" of a soldier may mean, but I know that a Christian should never misbehave, because he is always in the presence of the enemy. You must never say, "Oh, now, you know, I may do what I like for there is nobody looking." Is there not? Your great Captain is certainly looking—and it is frequently when men think they are least seen that they are the most observed! The world has an eagle's eye for a Christian's faults! It tries to see faults where there are none—and where there are small faults, it is sure to magnify them! For my part, I am very glad it is so, and I say, let the world watch us—it will help us to be the more exact in our conduct! If we are ashamed to be seen anywhere, it must be because we have good reason to be ashamed! Let us endeavor to live so that we need not be ashamed—

"Lord I desire to live as one

Who bears a blood-bought name.

As one who fears but grieving You

And knows no other shame.

As one by whom Your walk below

Should never be forgot—

As one who gladly would keep apart

From all You love not."

When I was pastor at Waterbeach there was a young man who joined the Church and who seemed to run well for a time. But the village feast came round and there was a good deal of drunkenness and all sorts of low merriment. The young man went into the dancehall, but he had not been there many minutes before someone came to him and said, "Don't you belong to Spurgeon?" He tried to deny it, but there were many others who knew it was true and, before long he was thrown out of a window. The world pitched him out as a hypocrite! And shortly afterwards, the Church also turned him out as a hypocrite, so that he was disowned by both the Church and the world. And I think that by the Grace of God, this led him to a hearty and true repentance. I was thankful that the worldlings kept such a watch over the members of my Church that they would not see them acting wrongly without making them suffer for it! And I hope they will serve you in the same way if any of you try to act as that young man did. You must be one thing or the other—either wholly for Christ or wholly for His enemies! If you are not prepared to be out-and-out for Jesus Christ, do not pretend to enlist in His army. If you want to "hold with the hare, and run with the hounds," we shall certainly not ask you to join our ranks. There must be nothing of this kind of spirit among

good soldiers of Jesus Christ. May God keep us free from

it!

(8). "Leaves his commanding officer to go in search of plunder "

Oh, dear! Have I not known some who professed to be soldiers in Christ's army who have done this? They thought there was something to be gained elsewhere, so they left Christ in "search of plunder." There was one who did this in Paul's day, of whom the Apostle wrote, "Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world." "Oh, but," says one, "would you not have me marry when there was money to be had, even though it was to a worldly man?" Or, "an ungodly woman?" You can do so if you want to leave Christ "to go in search of plunder." "Would you not have me take a job where I could get several hundreds of pounds a year even though I had to mix with ungodly men, and to do unrighteous things?" O you mean-spirited wretch, how little are you worthy to be numbered among those who are descended from the martyrs for the Truth of God! How little are you worthy to be among those who follow the Lamb wherever He goes! The Lord teaches those who are really His people that "godliness with contentment is great gain" and, therefore, for Christ's sake, they can afford to despise and lose all other so-called "gain"!

"But," says one, "I don't know where we should be if we were so scrupulous and exact as that." I can tell you where you would be—you would be walking in the light as God is in the light, and you would have fellowship with Him—and you would be no loser by acting thus, but you would be a gainer all round, for Christ has assured you that no one shall leave houses, or lands, or husband, or wife, or children for the Kingdom's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time and, in the world to come, life everlasting! If you cannot lose for Christ, you have already lost Christ, for He said, "Whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me, cannot be My disciple." He who loves the world better than Christ loves not Christ at all! God save us from being of that character!

Time would fail me if I mentioned all the offenses specified in this list, so I will pass on to number 15 in the Act—

(15). "By discharging firearms, drawing swords, beating drums, making signals, using words, or by any means whatever intentionally occasions false alarms in action, on the march, in the field, or elsewhere."

It is a very great sin on the part of Christian soldiers to make false alarms to discourage and dispirit their fellow soldiers. There are some professors who seem to delight to tell us of a new discovery in science which is supposed to destroy our faith. Science makes a wonderful discovery and straightaway we are expected to doubt what is plainly revealed in the Word of God! Considering that the so-called "science" is continually changing and that it seems to be the rule for scientific men to contradict all who have gone before them—and that if you take up a book upon almost any science, you will find that it largely consists of repudiations of all former theories—I think we can afford to wait until the scientific men

have made up their minds as to what science really is! In any event, we have no cause to be distressed concerning science, so let no Christian's heart fail him—and let him not raise any alarm in the camp of Christ!

Some raise these alarms by slandering their fellow Christians. I will say very few words about this matter, but they must be very strong ones. That man is grossly guilty who makes up a lie or who reports a lie against one who is his Brother or Sister in Christ. We are all faulty enough, but let us go with the mantle of

charity and cover up the faults of others and never expose them. Those who raise false alarms of this sort deserve to be tried by court martial and to receive some very exemplary punishment for such a grave offense!

(16). "Treacherously makes known the password to any person not entitled to receive it; or, without good and sufficient cause, gives a password different from what he received."

It is a great crime to give the wrong password to Christ's army. Our password is, "blood." It is an offensive word to many people, but we know that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. I pray God that every stone of this Tabernacle may tumble to its ruin and every timber be splintered to atoms before there should stand on this platform a man to preach who denies the substitutionary Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, or who even keeps it in the background, for this is our password! You shall know us among all professors by the emphasis which we lay upon Atonement by the blood of Jesus Christ! Of the redeemed in Glory we read, "These are they which came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." And the saints on earth join in John's Doxology, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." "The precious blood of Jesus" is our password in life, and the password with which we hope to enter through the gates of death into eternal Glory and blessedness—

"Dear dying Lamb, Your precious blood Shall never lose its power, Till all the ransomed Church of God Is saved to sin no more." Further on in this list, I notice another suggestive crime—

(18). "Being a sentinel, commits any of the following offenses; that is to say, sleeps or is drunk on his post; or leaves his post before he is regularly relieved."

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, "Let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober." And this is one of the duties of every Christian, for all Christ's soldiers are sentinels, watchmen on the walls of Zion! Then again, it is our duty not to leave our post till we are regularly relieved. Do you not think that some teachers leave the Sunday school before they are regularly relieved? I think they do. There are some who get tired of the work and leave it. I do not think you can truthfully say that you are regularly relieved of any work until you find a suitable successor—and I hope that some of us will never be regularly relieved until we close our eyes in death. Our prayer is that we may die in harness—

"Our body with our charge lay down, And cease at once to work and live."

Who wishes to be regularly relieved from Christ's service except it is by receiving his crown and entering into his

rest?—

"The land of triumph lies on high,

There are no fields of battle there!

Lord, I would conquer till I die

And finish all the glorious war.

Let every flying hour confess

I gain Your Gospel fresh renown!

And when my life and labors cease,

May I possess the promised crown!" Still further on, I notice that this is put down—

(23). "Disobeys any lawful command given by his superior officer in the execution of his office. " I know of only one superior Officer in Christ's army, and that is our blessed Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, the Captain of our salvation! He said to His disciples, "One is your Master; even Christ, and all you are brethren." And He also said to them, "A new commandment I give unto you, That you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love

one another." Mind that you do not disobey that command of your superior Officer—"Love one another." Be true brethren to one another. You know that when Jesus had washed His disciples' feet, He said to them, "If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you, also, ought to wash one another's feet." Imitate this action of your Captain by rendering any service that you can to those who are your Brothers and Sisters in Christ. Seek their good for edification and be not easily provoked, but abound in that charity which "thinks no evil; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

Keep every command of your Master. I put the question to the conscience of everyone of you who profess to be Christ's soldiers. Is there any one of His commands that you know of that you have not kept? I will not mention one even if I could do so, but I ask you whether there is one command of Christ which you know is His command, which you have not kept? You may think that the command is only a little one, but the spirit which thinks it is little is not a little evil, but a great evil! If you get a small stone in your boot, you know how it affects you in walking—and a little thing on the conscience, no matter how little it is, causes great trouble in a Christian's life. Blisters, very painful ones, will be upon the spiritual foot if there is either an omission or a commission that is knowingly indulged in contrary to the command of Christ. We are not saved by our works, but when we are saved, we are saved from sin, saved from disobedience, saved from unholiness, saved from selfishness— saved in order that we may live no longer unto ourselves but unto Him that loved us and gave Himself for us.

(25 & 26). The last two articles in the list are these— "Deserts or attempts to desert from Her Majesty's Service; persuades, endeavors to persuade, procures, or attempts to procure any person subject to military law to desert from Her Majesty's Service."

Brothers and Sisters, you and I, when we enlisted in Christ's army, entered it for life, did we not? I never believed in any system of salvation which comes to an end. There are some who believe that you may be saved today and lost tomorrow. Well, if they like that sort of salvation, they are welcome to it! I do not want it, nor would I have it as a gift. But the salvation that I received when I believed in Jesus Christ was everlasting salvation—that salvation of which the Apostle writes to the Hebrews, "that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." Many of us, like Paul, bear in our body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Does anyone ask, "Where are those marks?" Well, some of us have the watermark which has been buried with Christ by Baptism into death. That is the outside mark. And then in our hearts we have another mark which the Spirit put upon us in that day when we passed from death unto life by His regenerating power. If these marks are really on us and in us, we shall never desert from our Lord's service, but shall be faithful even unto death!

Possibly there is someone here who has turned back in the day of battle and become a deserter. Where are you, my Friend? I am glad to see you once more, for it is a long while since you were last here. You used to be a member of the Church and you made a great profession, but you know where you have been lately—you have been serving Satan. May God help you to desert from the devil's service and may you never go back to it again! If you ever were the servant of God, return, O Backslider, and return at once!—

"Return, O wanderer, to your home,

Your Father calls for thee!

No longer now an exile roam

In guilt and misery—

Return, return!"

He that has been a mere professor and has turned back, must be branded, "Deserter." No, not on his flesh, but on his conscience, seared as with a hot iron! Some desert because they have grown rich and can no longer associate with poor Christian people. Some desert because they have become poor and they say they have no clothes fit to come in, as if any sort of clothes were needed beyond such as might cover a man decently! Any clothes, if they are paid for, are fit to wear to this place of worship! But let those who say they are too poor to come, remember that it is in poverty and in sickness that a man most needs the Gospel and, therefore, the lower he gets in the world, the more closely he ought to cling to Christ! Yet, alas, there are some who desert because of poverty, and some because of wealth. O you deserters, may the Lord have mercy upon you and grant that you may not be real deserters, but may come back to the colors! Our Great Captain is ready to receive you and to forgive you, for He says, "Him that come to Me I will in no wise cast out." Yes, even though

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you are a deserter, if you do but come to Christ, He will receive you graciously, love you freely and His anger shall be turned away from you. God bless you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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