

Girding on the Harness

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon warns new believers and Christian workers against pride and premature boasting, urging them to recognize their weakness and the lifelong spiritual battle ahead.

Scripture: 1 Kings 20:11, Philippians 2:13, Ephesians 6:11-17, Luke 18:9-14

Topics: "Christian Humility", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

In 'Girding on the Harness,' C.H. Spurgeon addresses new believers and Christian workers, cautioning them against the natural tendency to boast prematurely about their spiritual progress. He uses the metaphor of armor to illustrate the Christian life as a continuous battle requiring humility, perseverance, and reliance on God's grace. Spurgeon encourages his listeners to recognize their weaknesses and to approach their faith journey with sober realism and godly humility.

Transcript

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

"And the king of Israel answered and said, Tell him, Let not him that girds on his harness boast himself as he that takes it off" 1 Kings 20:11.

THESE two kings were about to proceed to war and they irritated one another by insulting messages. That was the custom of all combatants in the old heathen times. They seemed to delight in stinging each other and exciting each other's worst passions before they commenced the battle. Let it not be so among us. If we have to contend for the Truth of God let us endeavor to do it in the kindest spirit. And if we must smite, let it always be with the iron rod of Truth held in the hand of love, wounding none, nor exulting over them, but breaking in pieces their errors and their sins by the help of God. The blow will be none the weaker for being divested of anything like an evil spirit and an ungenerous temper. Speak the Truth firmly and contend earnestly for it, but never manifest a bitter spirit. Bring up the weightiest arguments you can find, but let them be accompanied with courtesy and kindness, for the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God—and it is ill for a Christian soldier to imitate the manners of the heathen.

However insultingly intended, the text we have quoted contained a great deal of common sense. It is, in fact, a proverb of the wise, and we intend to use it so. It is right to learn, even from the lips of the wicked—for they are seldom so foolish in worldly things as they are in spiritual. Professing Christians might learn much from the children of darkness if they would take the trouble to do so, for are they not in

their generation wiser than the children of light? Our text was the utterance of Ahab, who was one of the vilest kings of Israel! He greatly provoked the Lord to anger—still, what he said has wisdom in it—so let us try to profit by it.

Do you remember how the Israelites of old went down to the Philistines to sharpen every man his knife and his axe? It is good to make our enemy turn the grindstone on which we may sharpen the weapons which we intend to use against him! The expressions used by a godless man may be taken from his mouth—washed and carefully cleansed of the sand of sin—and what remains of golden grains may be turned to good account. Full many a pearl has been discovered in an oyster shell on the dark bottom of the sea—throw away the shell, but keep the pearl! On a dunghill, a diamond sometimes has been found—it is not to be rejected because of the place where it lay!

The text is peculiarly adapted to those who are commencing the battle of the Christian life. The young man who is newly converted is girding on his harness. He has newly made the profession of his faith and has come forward to be baptized and united with the Church. He is girding on his harness and soon he is going back to the warehouse where they will know that he professes to be a Christian. Or he will go home to a family whose other members have no respect for the things of God and he will have to bear witness among them. The young woman has to go back to her friends who have not the same love to Jesus that she has, to commence her lifelong testimony in their midst.

You are girding on the harness, then, dear young Friends, and the text is for you—"Let not him that girds on his harness boast himself as he that takes it off." It will do, also, for young men and women who are commencing life for themselves, lately married, beginning housekeeping and intending to do well—opening a new shop with such fair prospects—moving to a new farm with such bright hopes. It may be a word in season to such. Girding on the harness, you have not put it off yet and, therefore, do not boast! It will also do for my new students who have just come to college. May they be preserved from the tendency to boast, which is natural enough, but is as silly as it is natural!

Perhaps I address some young minister who is commencing his ministry, or some worker for Christ who has begun in the Sunday school, or taken a district for distributing tracts, or entered upon some other new labor. There are many other things which I need not mention here, but which each one of you can think of for yourself—and more especially if you happen to be in the condition intended. "Let not him that girds on his harness boast himself as he that takes it off."

I. Let us think a little upon this ancient saying and remember, first, that THERE IS, IN THOSE WHO NEWLY PUT ON THEIR ARMOR, A GREAT TENDENCY TO BOAST. This is not at all remarkable, because, first, it is the nature of all men, more or less, to boast. Human nature is both poor and proud. It is so poor that it is naked and miserable. And yet it is so proud that it claims to be rich, increased in goods and to have need of nothing. If men carried their heads where they should, they would not be among the stars, but down in the dust—yet the less goodness poor mortals have, the more pride they usually manifest. The Pharisee who has been making a meal of a widow's house opens his mouth, while yet he is gorged with his robbery, and cries, "God, I thank You that I am not as other men!" And Herod, who has been murdering a holy Apostle and ought to be repenting of his great wickedness, assumes to be a god, and listens with delight to the flatteries of his foolish subjects. The poorer, generally the prouder—and those who have the least to boast of are those who brag the most.

Now, this propensity in human nature to boast is sure to come out if we get a little preferment. We are about to be Church members! Is not that something? Is it not a grand matter to be numbered with the people of God? Are we not somebody, now? We shall come to the Communion Table and be regarded as children of God—is not that delightful? We have sat up in the gallery and often envied the communicants when we have seen them gathered at the Table, but now we shall sit among them and the devil whispers, "Ah, now you are somebody." We have commenced to teach in the Sunday school and we feel pleased to think we are to be teachers of the young—is it not a noble work? Nobody will be able to say, now, that we are mere babes in Grace! Why, we are getting to be quite defenders of the faith and bold servants of Christ—surely we may be allowed a little self-respect!

If we have begun to preach and have been praised by many of our hearers, it is probable that we scarcely know whether we are in the body or out of it! We think we are already Whitfields and Apostles in embryo! What preachers we are going to be and what wonders we shall certainly accomplish! Satan has patted us with his black paw and told us that we have done amazingly well and deserve great credit—and we fully believe him! It is well known that even in natural things Jack in the office is apt to be proud. And the same thing will occur even to good young men when they are put a little forward. They can scarcely be trusted to open the door of the Lord's house, or to sweep a crossing in the streets of the New Jerusalem, and straightway they become important!

It is much easier to be puffed up than to be built up, much easier to grow in self-conceit than in vital godliness. A little advancement turns many brains. Baruch was employed by the Prophet to write the roll and straightway he had high ideas of what Baruch must be. And he needed the message, "Do you seek great things for yourself? Seek them not." We are always up in the air unless God, in His infinite mercy, chains us down to the rock and keeps us there, for pride is like the eagle and delights to soar on high.

Those who gird on the harness are the more apt to be proud because they often mistake their intentions for accomplishments. Sitting down, they meditate upon what they hope to be—everything that is devout, humble, faithful, bold, tender, disinterested, pure and holy. And after they have made a fair concoction of what ought to be done and what they trust will be done, a gentle steam arises from the dim tillation of their thoughts and intoxicates their brain and they dream that what they purpose to be they already are! "Dear me, what a good fellow I am!" says the man who dreams that he is all that he hopes to be! He has put on his harness and he hardly knows whether it fits him—but he has already killed hosts of enemies! He can see them lying heaps upon heaps and there he is, all stained with blood, fighting on, conquering and to conquer—though as yet he has not even flashed his sword! He knows he shall be victorious to the end and he already hears it said, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

But, young Friend, there is a difference, and more than a slight one, between intentions and accomplishments! We do not always perform what we think we shall, nor do we always reach where we hope to arrive. Failures are as numerous as successes and even the most successful have failures to mourn over. Good intentions are not so rare that you may begin to crow about them. There is a road which is paved with them, but I would not have you travel it. It sometimes happens to the young beginner that he mistakes the formation of his ideal for the attainment of it. He has sketched on paper the figure that is to be worked out of the block of marble. There it is! Will not that make a beautiful statue? Already he congratulates himself that it stands before him on its pedestal!

But it is a very different thing—the forming the idea in one's mind and the realizing of it. Some of us would gladly preach the Gospel as simply, as earnestly and with as seraphic a zeal as Bunyan, Baxter, or

Brooks. Yes, it is a good ideal

and it is wise to have a grand model before you, but that is not all. He who aims high will shoot higher than he whose mark is low. But you have not struck that mark yet, young Man. You are far short of your mark and, therefore, do not begin to glory as though you had attained the goal. You want to be a McCheyne. Very well, be a McCheyne if God makes you one, but do not boast of what you are going to be.

You wish to reach a higher life. Young Man. Young Woman, you desire to be as nearly perfect as may be possible. So be it! God help you and accomplish in you all the good pleasure of His will. But do not vainly dream that the life which you admire in others will readily be reproduced in yourself. Excellence comes of effort. They who labored, watched, prayed and trusted in the Lord, are they who never would have become what they were had they not. Be assured there is no royal road for you—you, too, must wrestle hard before victory will be won. Let the ideal be before your mind, but remember it is but an ideal—Divine Grace will be needed to work in you, "to will and to do of the Lord's good pleasure." To will is present with you even now, but perhaps before long you will have to say, "How to perform that which I would I find not."

Boasting in putting on the harness sometime arises from the notion that we shall avoid the faults of others. We ought to do so and we think we shall. We hear of a person who fell through becoming proud and we feel sure that we shall keep humble, because we know the evil of pride. We hear of another man who was led astray by love of intoxicating drink, or another who fell a victim to his passions, or another who gave way to an evil temper and so lost all his moral influence. Now, having seen what others did, we feel that we are quite prepared to avoid the rocks on which they struck—and so we already congratulate ourselves as if we had done so! If we were wise we would learn another lesson and humbly say, "He fell yesterday and I may fall today."

When I read of any minister turning aside to sin, I feel a horror of great darkness come over my soul lest I should do the same. And many a time do I breathe the prayer to God that I may die and be gathered at once into Heaven, sooner than be permitted to fall into any of those sins to which there is such a tendency in our corrupt nature. Instead of saying that I shall keep clear of grave sins, because another man will be my beacon, I ought rather to say, "That same current which drifted him upon the rock will drift me there, also, unless the infinite mercy of God and the eternal power of the Holy Spirit keep me from falling into the same catastrophe." "Will you, also, go away?" is the plaintive question of our Lord, which every apostasy suggests to those who know themselves.

We also forget, when we start in the battle of life, that there is a great deal in novelty and that novelty wears off. Believe me, you who have just begun, when you have been five and 20 years serving God, you will learn that you have need of patience! And when you have been 50 years in it you will find that running in the race is not merely making a start and a spurt, but it is plodding on and on through domestic troubles, through business cares, through the temptations of the flesh, through the machinations of Satan, fighting against the world and contending against every passion of your nature! For all this we must make perpetual drafts upon Divine strength or we shall lose the day.

If the days of martyrdom were to come and the Papists would be kind enough to cut off our heads, I think I could go to Tower Hill and die without the slightest trepidation. But I tremble to think how I should behave if they were to roast me alive on a slow fire. To be a long while dying, with pains in the extremity of the body, hour after hour—that must be an awful test of faith! Now, if true religion consisted in a few days' resistance of temptation, that might readily enough be done. But to continue in your pilgrimage over hill and dale till

you reach the Celestial City needs a resolute man, no, needs his God—for without Divine help he cannot possibly hold out.

Putting on your harness, you feel how pleasant it is to have new Christian friends to encourage you, and warmhearted Brethren to help you over your first difficulties and troubles. But after a while these Christian friends will have others to attend to—they cannot always carry you like lambs in their bosoms! You will have to run alone and journey along the road like the rest of the flock. You may live to think that the service which seemed so interesting and delightful is not quite so fascinating as you thought! The work which is now surrounded with a halo of romance will sober down to stern reality—and then you will feel—if you boasted in putting on your harness, that you boasted a little too soon!

So much upon the first head. The fault we wish to cure is a very common one—those who gird on the harness are very apt to boast.

II. Now for the second point, namely—THOSE WHO PUT ON THE HARNESS HAVE GOOD REASON TO

REFRAIN FROM BOASTING. They have good reason not to boast if they remember what the very harness, or armor,

itself, is meant for. What do you need armor for? Because you are weak! Because you are in danger. When, then, you put on that helmet with nodding plume, think to yourself, "It is because this head may be struck with a deadly blow, that I put on this helmet of salvation." When, through Divine Grace, you buckle on your breastplate of righteousness, think to yourself, "This poor heart of mine would soon be wounded with mortal sin if it were not for God's infinite love in providing me this plate of impenetrable metal."

When you fit on those shoes with which your feet are to be shod. When you receive "the preparation of the Gospel of peace," think to yourself, "What a feeble creature I am! Even a poor thorn would cripple me for my pilgrimage if God had not provided me with these protecting sandals." As you take each piece of the armor, look at it and say to yourself, "I cannot be proud, for my needing this proves that I am a poor weak creature." It is always very foolish to be proud of our garments. If we had not sinned, we should have needed no clothes and therefore our garments are the symbols of our sin! And so it would be equally absurd to be elated because we wear a suit of armor.

Your armor, young Man, though it glistens, and in the sunlight looks like burnished silver, affords you no ground for boasting—for if sin had not made you weak you would have required no armor whatever! Again, it will be well to refrain from boasting, for your harness which you are putting on is meant for use. You are not dressing yourself out that you may be a thing of beauty, like a Life Guardsman in the park. Or to sit on horseback for show, like those heroes at the Horse Guards, for small country lads to look at and wonder how such sublime things could have been produced. You put on your armor because a conflict is expected! That bright breastplate of yours will be dented and bruised. That helmet will be battered by the saber of your foes.

Every part of your harness will be tested and tried. It is bright now, but it will be rusted tomorrow with your own tears and spattered with the mire through which you will have to march. You could see yourself in it now if you took it off and gazed upon it, but other sights await you before you have ended the campaign. Worse than garments rolled in blood and the smoke and dust of a martial conflict will be the trials and troubles and temptations through which you will have to pass before you have ended your lifelong fight!

How dare you boast, then? Surely you have something else to do than to glory in your harness, because that harness is meant for you to suffer and to labor in! Therefore get to your work and get away from your pride.

You must not boast, again, because if you look at your harness you will see that it has joints in it. You think your armor fits so well, do you? Ah, so thought that man who, nevertheless, died by an arrow which found its way into his heart between the joints of his array. In every man among us there is some weak point—something in our character by which we may be destroyed—unless the Grace of God shall protect us. Yes, it may be true you cannot be hurt in those parts which the armor covers, but just an inch to this side, or to that, lies a vulnerable place. We are always most in peril where we think ourselves most secure. The prayer we uttered just now in our song was one which ought to be always on our lips—

"Let us not fall! Let us not fall," for fall we shall, even into those faults from which we think ourselves free, unless the Sovereign Grace of God shall perpetually uphold us!

You ought not to boast of your harness, because there are suits of armor which are good for nothing. There is armor about in the world, and some of it the brightest that was ever seen, which is utterly worthless! I have known young men put on that harness and come strutting into our ranks—but soon the enemy's sword has cut through their sham armor-plates and they have perished from before the Lord. Oh, it is a grand thing to have on that coat of mail which is made by Heaven's own artificers—made of that metal of proof which laughs at spear and battle-ax! But self-confidence is a counterfeit. And carnal presumption and rash heedlessness are worthless imitations which will not turn the edge of the sword in the day of battle.

We should not boast when we put on our armor because, after all, armor and weapons are of little use except to strong men. The old coats of mail were so heavy that they needed a man of a strong constitution even to wear them, much less to fight in them! It was not the armor that was needed so much as the strong man who could sit upright under the weight! Think, too, of the sword, the great two-handed sword which the old warriors used. We have looked at one and said, "Is that the sword with which battles were won?" "Yes, Sir, but you need to see the arm which wielded it, or you see nothing. The young professor may put on that splendid harness—but is there vital godliness within his heart? Has he the

life of God? Has he power with God? Is the real work of the Holy Spirit within his soul? For, if not, however excellent the external armor may seem to be, there will be a dreadful failure for LACK of force within!

Lastly, we may not boast in our harness because if it is of the right sort and if it is well jointed, yet we have received it as a gift of charity. Most valiant warrior, not one single ring of your mail is your own! O Sir Knight with the red cross, no part of your array belongs to you by any rights but those of free gift! The infinite charity of God has given you all you have! How, then, can you boast? What if the Lord has preserved us for years? And what if we are enabled to feel that He will always preserve us? Yet this is nothing for us to glory in! We must give all the glory to His holy name to whom all the glory belongs. Therefore let not him that girds on his harness dare to glory in himself, but let him glory only in the Lord.

III. But now the third point. HE WHO GIRDS ON HIS HARNESS HAS SOMETHING ELSE TO DO BESIDES

BOASTING. Brave Sir, just knighted and belted for the fight, waste no time in braggart speech! I will tell you what else you have to do. You have, first, to see that you get all the pieces of your armor on. Look well

to it that you "take to yourselves the whole armor of God," for one single part of that panoply, neglected, may lay you open to fatal blows. Open not your mouth to boast, but open your eyes—and look well to your ways that you make sound work of it—for some begin with a false fire of carnal confidence which dies out, to their disgrace. See to it that you begin aright, and this will dampen the fires of your conceit.

Young Warrior, beginning with so much hope, I can recommend you to spend your time in gratitude. Bless God for making you what you are, for calling you out from a sinful world, for making you a soldier of the Cross. Boasting is excluded, for Grace reigns! If the Lord has called you to work for Him, I charge you to bless His name, for you are highly honored to unloose the laces of His shoes. The meanest work for Jesus is a grander thing than the dignity of an emperor! Bless the Lord for His condescension in permitting you to do anything for Him. You have no time for boasting! You need every moment for thanksgiving. You need every hour for prayer. If ever we ought to pray, it surely is when we are newly entered upon the Christian life. If ever a minister ought to pray, it is when he commences his ministry.

Brothers and Sisters, when ought we not to pray? Surely there is no period when prayer is out of place. We have need to cry to the strong for strength all through life—but if there should be a special season set apart for prayer it should be in entering upon a new course of life or undertaking a fresh duty. In buckling on the harness we should ask the great Captain to watch over us, that we may be kept faithful unto death. Squander not precious time in vainglory, but consecrate it to devotion. Remember, young Soldier, that you are bound to use your armor in learning obedience, looking to your Captain and Commander as the handmaid looks to her mistress.

You have enlisted beneath the standard—be careful that you march according to marching orders! Make sure that you stand fast when your Leader bids you stand. Walk without weariness when He bids you walk. And run without fainting when He bids you run. You are to take your cue from Jesus! He gives the word of command. It is yours by Grace to follow it. You have your hands full, I do assure you, to lead an obedient life. You will have no time to cry, "I have done well," for each moment calls upon you for fresh deeds of obedience and, therefore, bids you afresh to ask help from on high.

Dear Friends, you have no space for boasting, for your full attention will be needed to maintain watchfulness. You have just put on your harness. The devil will speedily discover that! He will pay his respects to you very soon! As soon as he sees a new soldier of the Cross enlisted, he takes a fresh arrow from his quiver, makes it sharp, dips it in gall and fits it to his string. "I will try this youngster," he says, and before long a fiery dart flies noiselessly through the air! He knows where to shoot it and if it does not wound the first time, he will learn by a little trial where your weak point is! And he will gall you and before he has done with you he will change your boasts into groans! It may be that even the people whom you seek to benefit will try you! The children whom you hope to convert will show that old Adam in them is too strong for you.

You will find, O young Minister, that the soil will wear out your plowshare. Where you meant to bless, you will receive coldness and even anger in return. Fighting for Christ is not all parade. The young recruit puts on the colors, the sergeant gives him his shilling and he feels himself a mighty man as he goes down the village! He will feel rather different when he is carried on the ambulance into the hospital, to lose a limb, or pine away to a skeleton. He will know what

fighting means and what battle means before long! I do not speak to dispirit anyone who is beginning warfare for Christ, but I do speak with this intent—that all vainglory may be put far from us!

Once more upon this point. The young warrior may not boast, for he will need all the faith he has—and all the strength of God, also, to keep him from despondency. There is a tendency in us, especially when we are commencing the Divine life, to swing either this way towards self-confidence, or that way towards despondency. A raw recruit thinks himself a fine fellow, but when he finds he is not, he despairs. He ought to have despaired of himself at first, but in due time he makes the mistake of despairing of his God. Think as little as ever you can of yourself— you will never err there—no man ever walks too humbly, or has too little self-conceit. But think as much as ever you can of your God— you will never think too well of Him—the grandest reliance a man ever had upon God was warranted by the truth. He that believes in the Lord to any extent shall never be ashamed or confounded, world without end.

"Cursed is he that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm. But blessed is he that trusts in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." I make confession, here, that whenever I have failed, I have always failed in things which I thought I could do very well, indeed. I had done them so often that I was sure I could manage them. And where I have never failed has been in great difficulties, when I was quite out of my depth and could do nothing of myself! By God's Grace I have thrown the whole matter upon Him and rested in Him alone—and all has been well. I feel it now to be a great pleasure to get out of my depth, where I cannot touch the bottom, where the human is altogether exhausted—for then everlasting love and faithfulness come in—and it is blessed swimming, buoyed up by the waves of eternal love and the Immutable Truth of

God!

IV. I close with the fourth point, which is this—THOSE WHO GIRD ON THE HARNESS CERTAINLY OUGHT NOT TO GLORY, FOR THOSE WHO ARE TAKING IT OFF FIND NOTHING TO BOAST OF. I love to look upon

my venerable Brothers and Sisters who have been in Christ these many years and have worn so well. But they may not take off their harness yet! For until we get across the river we are never out of gunshot of the enemy. I have heard say that horses fall more often at the bottom of a hill than anywhere else. And I am sure it is true with men. I have watched carefully and, though I sometimes hear of young men going aside (it is sad that we should hear of it), yet if there is any great blight upon Christian reputations, it almost always happens to a man of long experience. Very frequently to a man who is growing old. I do not know why.

Whether it is that those advanced people begin to trust to their experience or not, I cannot tell. But I have so marked it around me and I have so noticed it in the records of the Bible. The falls are mostly of middle-aged or elderly people. We have hardly in Scripture an instance of any young professor that turned aside. The reason is, I think, because when we are weak, then are we strong—and when we conceive ourselves to be strong, we become weak. He who has been a servant of God for 70 years and borne an unblemished character all along, may, in the very last year of his life commit a folly which will mar his memory.

Blessed be God, it will not destroy his soul, for the Lord will keep him from that—"that evil one touches him not." But even at the last the man may so injure himself that he may go with broken bones all the way to Heaven and be saved, "so as by fire." Troy kept off its invaders a long while, but, after all, it was taken. The 12 years in which the Greeks were kept at bay stood for nothing against the one night in which the hollow horse, filled with armed men, was dragged in. "He that endures to the end, the same shall be

saved," and if there were not a Covenant promise of final preservation, we might give up our spiritual fighting in despair! Though the Christian man never ungirds his harness in this life, still we may say that the Brother is taking it off when there is but a step between him and death in the course of nature.

Now, how do you find Christians of that kind when you have attended their dying beds, if you have had the privilege of doing so? Did you ever find a Christian stayed up with pillows in his bed boasting of what he had done? When Augustus, the Roman Emperor, was dying, he asked those who were around him whether he had acted his part well. They said, "Yes." Then he said, "Clap me as I go off the stage." Did you ever hear a Christian say that? I remember Addison, about whose Christianity little can be said, asked others to, "come and see how a Christian could die," but it was a very unchristian thing to do, for forgiven sinners should never make exhibitions of themselves in that fashion!

Certainly I never saw dying Christians boastful! They always depreciate themselves and appreciate their Master. One of them said he was tying all his good works and all his bad works into a bundle, for, he said, he had tried to sort them

and the good ones had so many spots on them that he hardly knew which was which! And so he tied them all up in one bundle and threw them all overboard—and he meant to swim to Glory on the plank of Free Grace! He did wisely—

"Nothing in my hands I bring, Simply to the Cross I cling."

That stanza has been the dying language of thousands of saints! They have cried, "None but Jesus!" And they have asked to have put upon their tombstones, "A sinner saved by Grace" or—

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm, On Christ's kind arms I fall He is my strength and righteousness, My Jesus, and my all."

The tendency of advancing years on Christians is to take away self-confidence and to make them more confident in God. Those who have had real experience of the things of God do not talk about perfection in the flesh—they confess their past failures and mourn over them. They do not even say that if they had their lives to live over again they would do better—they are afraid they might do worse. And if they have done well in any point, and they know it, they will not deny it, but they say, "Ah, only Divine Grace kept me from making a terrible mistake there, but the Lord appeared for me and helped me." If these aged ones are communicative when throwing off their harness, they will tell you many wonderful stories of how the Lord came to their rescue when their steps had almost gone and their feet had well near slipped.

And, young people! It will do you good to hear them tell how, when their strength was spent, the eternal might of God sustained them! How, when they had no merits, the love, blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ made them rejoice and triumph before God! And when they were fainting and ready to die, a touch from their dear Lord and Master's hand made them stand upon their feet full of strength and expectant of victory! If you could watch the saints as they doff their harness, piece by piece, and go down into the Jordan! If you could see them as they come up out of the river and begin to ascend the celestial hills on the other side, you would hear them sing but you could not detect a single note of self-glory in all their song! When you are privileged to stand upon yonder streets of shining gold and hear the hymns of the blood-washed ones, their one note will be, "Worthy is the Lamb! Worthy is the Lamb!" Though the Lamb says, "They shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy," they do not count themselves so! Their reply to their Lord will be, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive honor, and glory, and majesty, and

power, and dominion, and might!"

Dear Friends who are girding on your harness, the gist of all I have said is this—confide in God, but distrust yourselves! Have done with every glorying, except glorying in the Lord! In pastoral observation I have seen, and wish to mention it here, many timid, trembling and even mourning Christians. And I could have wished that they had more faith and more joy. But yet I have seen them walk very carefully, humbly and tremblingly—and they have never brought any disgrace upon the Church or grieved my heart. But, on the other hand, I have seen others who were very sure and very loud. They have been very zealous and pushed themselves to the front and won a great deal of esteem.

They have not only never been any better than they should be, but, by-and-by, have needed to be rebuked and censured—and, perhaps, ultimately severed from among us—for their glorying was in themselves. There is nothing like full assurance for excellence, and there is nothing like presumption for worthlessness! Never mistake the one for the other! You cannot trust God too much, nor trust yourself too little. I read a book one day called, "Self-made Men," and in its own sphere it was excellent—but spiritually I should not like to see a self-made man. I should think he would be an awful specimen of humanity! At any rate, a self-made Christian is one of a sort that very soon the devil takes, as I have seen children take a bran doll and shake it all out. Satan likes to shake out self-made Christians till there is nothing left of them. But God-made men—these are they that do exploits! And God-made Christians who fall back upon the eternal strength at all times and confide there—these are the men to hold on their way and wax stronger and stronger!

My subject has little bearing upon unconverted persons, except this—that as you see Christian people are not to trust themselves—it is clear that unconverted people cannot be saved by any trust in themselves, or by anything that they can do. "The just shall live by faith." And for you who are not just, but are still sinners, the only way of salvation is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, that you may believe in Him, and you shall be saved! If there is any unconverted old man here, he is not taking off his harness, for he never was a soldier of Christ! But I would like to say to him—however old

you may be, the mercy of God is still toward you and, if you believe in Jesus, at whatever age you may be, you shall be saved!

Last night [Wednesday evening, August 5, 1874] I was preaching at a certain place and before I preached, one of God's children, a Wesleyan, said to me, "I shall always love you, dear Sir." And I said, "Why?" "You remember preaching," said he, "in the fields up in King Edward's Road, Hackney?" "Yes, I cannot forget it." "Well," said he, "my father was 70 years of age at that time and he had never felt the power of religion. But that sermon was the means, in God's hand, of his conversion, and he became a zealous, earnest Believer during the rest of his life." "Well, my Brother," I said, "I am glad I happened to come down here tonight, for that is 19 years ago, and I had never heard that God had brought a soul to Jesus by that sermon."

I would to God, tonight, that some poor soul on the borders of the grave, who, apart from Divine Grace, lies at the very mouth of Hell, may even now make a desperate plunge into the arms of Jesus! Fall into the bosom of Jesus and He will not cast you away, for He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him! God grant you may come, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 27. HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—683, 668.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/ch-spurgeon/girding-on-the-harness/>

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