

Gracious Renewal

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon passionately teaches that true spiritual renewal and perseverance come only through God's renewing of a right spirit within us, as human effort alone is insufficient.

Scripture: Psalm 51:10, Job 39:19-25, Hosea 7:9, Lamentations 5:21, John 15:5

Topics: "Spiritual Renewal", "Perseverance in Faith"

Description

In 'Gracious Renewal,' C.H. Spurgeon calls believers to a heartfelt and humble plea for God's renewing power to restore a right spirit within them. He explains the vital necessity of spiritual renewal for perseverance, the human inability to renew oneself, and the importance of continual dependence on the Holy Spirit. Through vivid biblical illustrations and pastoral encouragement, Spurgeon urges Christians to regularly renew their covenant with God, especially after trials, sin, or blessings. This devotional sermon challenges listeners to seek God's mercy and grace for a vibrant, enduring faith.

Transcript

"Renew a right spirit within me." Psalm 51:10.

WE had a joyful meeting last Wednesday evening. As a Church we all met together as a loving family, and it was a sight of the most encouraging kind to see a great host, like the host of God, of Brothers and Sisters, all dwelling together in unity. That solemnly joyful sight suggested to my heart the propriety of addressing you today upon the subject of the renewal of your consecration to Christ. I thought that the season, the annual season when we all meet together, would be but a fit and proper opportunity for our giving ourselves over again to Him whose we are, and whom we serve. In an honored sanctuary in the neighborhood, it is the custom at the early part of the year to have a solemn form of covenant read at communion, when the Church members all give their verbal assent with a solemn "Amen." There must be something very solemn, and at the same time something very delightful, in the uttered consent of a multitude of persons to the will and law of Christ. Days of annual celebration should be days of solemn dedication. Dear Friends, there are other occasions when you might very rightly, I think, renew your Covenant with God. After recovery from sickness, when, like Hezekiah, you have had a new term of years added to your life, and have risen from the bed of languishing to tread the greensward, and breathe the fresh air. Then should you sing— "My life which You have made Your care, Lord, I devote to You."

After any extraordinary deliverance, when your troubles have a pause, when your joys bud forth anew, when after a season of deep depression of spirit you can once again lift up your brow, and bathe it in the

light of God—then, again, should you visit the foot of the Cross of Christ—and by the blood that is sprinkled there renew your consecration to your Lord.

Especially will it be incumbent upon you to do this after any sin, after any such sin, I mean, as may have grieved the Holy Spirit, or brought dishonor upon the cause of God. Then, like David, repair to your chamber, and, with bitter tears of penitence, look to the hyssop, and the blood which can make you whiter than snow—and again offer yourself unto the Lord Most High as a teacher of sinners—or a singer of His praise. I think, Brothers and Sisters, we should not only let our troubles confirm our dedication to God, but our prosperity should do the same.

If we should ever meet with occasions which deserve to be called, in Oliver Cromwell's words, "crowning mercies," then, surely, if He has crowned us, we ought also to crown our God. If He has been pleased to give you a wreath of loving kindnesses and of tender mercies, then bring forth anew all the jewels of the Divine regalia that have been stored in the jewel closet of your heart. And let your God sit upon the throne of your love, arrayed in royal apparel. If we would get good out of our prosperity, we should not need so much adversity.

If we would gather from a kiss all the good it might confer upon us, we should not so often smart under the rod. If we will not gather wisdom from vines and fig trees, we must be taught it with briars and thorns. Our folly makes rods for its own back. Do any of you come here today with hearts leaping for joy? Have you received a valued favor which you little expected? Has the Lord put your feet in a large room? Oh, can you sing of mercies multiplied? Then this is the day to put your hand upon the horns of the altar and say, "Bind me here, my God. Bind me here with cords, even forever."

I may also suggest that there are certain seasons in life when this fresh espousal is very comely—in arriving at manhood, at the birth of children, at the death of friends, in passing the anniversaries of our birth, in advancing from strength to gray hairs—we may read anew the memorials of our love. Inasmuch as we need the fulfillment of new promises from God, let us give fresh promises to God, or, rather, let us offer renewed prayers that the old ones may not be dishonored.

I have known persons who have religiously set apart a certain day in the month, or year, when they would look anew over their obligations, survey their state before God, and determine to be the Lord's forever. Let us commend their zeal, if we do not imitate their precision. Well, Beloved, I suggest—and I am sure such a joyous act as this will never be out of season—I suggest that this morning, if God shall enable us, we renew our vows unto Him.

These were the thoughts which possessed my heart. But there was another which overrode them all, and prevented my following out my desire. You see, my text deals not with renewing our vows before God, nor with our proclaiming anew in the courts of the Lord's house our surrender to Him—no, it goes deeper than all this—"Renew a right spirit within me." Surely, if the Lord will do this, then our consecration will be renewed. If the fountain is filled, then the streams must flow. If the sun is made to shine, then the plants must bud. If the sap within the tree flows vigorously, then the fruit without will be plentiful.

Perhaps we have done well to lay the axe at the root of the tree by going to the very soul and core of this matter. We have our hand upon the lever now—it is a dead weight when a man tries to renew his own vows—but now we have the lever under it. If we cry to God in prayer, "Renew a right spirit within me," we shall accomplish our end none the less certainly, even though we do not so much preach upon the subject of consecration, as upon the power of God the Holy Spirit to renew our spirit and bring us afresh to

Himself.

Come then, Beloved. I want, not so much to preach, as to lead you now to the footstool of Divine mercy in humble, earnest entreaty—that the Lord may renew within you a constant spirit and invigorate the life of your piety. For this there are several reasons, which we will give at once.

I. And, first, a cogent motive of desiring the renewal of our graces is to be found in THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY FOR IT, IF WE WOULD PERSEVERE. That we need renewal is very clearly seen when we reflect that all created things need it. Nothing that God has made is self-existent. Self-existence belongs exclusively to the, "I AM THAT I AM." Even the tall archangel, who stands nearest the eternal Throne, can only claim a borrowed existence which is immortal only in the immortality of God.

The very mountains crumble, rocks dissolve, and marble wears away. Those old rivers that have even been adored by idolaters for their antiquity, still need to be refreshed with the melted snows from the mountain's brow. It is rumored of our mother earth herself, that her soil is losing its former fruitfulness. Certain it is that the most fertile fields yield no perpetual harvests unless the labor of man fertilizes the soil. All things on earth need, perpetually, to be renewed.

"You renew the face of the year," said the Psalmist, for in winter earth sleeps like a wearied giant, as if gray with the decay of age, the snow covers its slumbering head. In winter the world shows none of her youthful verdure. All her beauty lies buried beneath the sod. Are not all things hushed and quiet in winter's bedchamber of life? But spring comes leaping on. The song of birds arouses the slumbering earth and she awakes refreshed.

But were it not for the renewing of delicious spring, would not earth become everywhere as intolerable as at her frozen poles? Nor here, alone, is refreshing needed, for doubtless the upper spheres require fresh fuel for their ardent flames. The orb of day shines in radiance lent him by the great Father of Lights, albeit that he is, in Milton's noble phrase, "of this great world both eye and soul." That eye must soon grow dim with age, and that soul must lose its overflowing life, if the all-filling God refuses His ever-flowing aid.

No created thing stands by itself. It is only an infernal conceit that anything can be without the great Creator's perpetual Presence. And will you lend your soul to this blasphemy of Hell? If your piety can live without God, it is not of Divine creating. It lives not but in your imagination. It is but a dream—for if God has begotten it, it would wait upon Him as the flowers wait for the dew.

Moreover, this Truth of God is especially applicable to those creatures of God which are endowed with life. Those without life need preserving—but the truth is not so clearly seen in their case as in living objects. But life, if God would sustain it, must often, no, constantly, receive renewal. What animal can live without the refreshment of sleep and food? Job's war horse, whose neck is clothed with thunder, must humble himself to his stall and to his provender.

The wild asses of the wilderness, whose bands the Lord has loosed, have the range of the mountains for their pasture. The unicorn abides not by the crib, neither will he harrow the valleys for the farmer—yet he grows weary and lies down to rest. Behemoth, whose bones are as bars of iron, eats grass as an ox, and leviathan, which makes the deep to boil like a pot, whose eyes are like the eyelids of the morning, receives the breath in his nostrils each hour from his Maker.

Even the trees, those motionless things, which wear not themselves with care, nor shorten their fires with labor—these must drink of the rain of Heaven, and suck from the hidden treasures of the soil. The cedars of Lebanon, which God has planted, only live because day by day they are full of sap fresh drawn from the earth. You and I, having life, cannot expect that it should be sustained without renewal from God. Our natural life needs constantly its bread and water. The strongest man that ever lived must soon yield to the weakness of death, unless he were reinvigorated by nourishment.

Sampson himself must have a cleft opened in the rock that he may drink, for though he has slain the Philistines, yet will he perish unless his thirst is quenched. Assuredly it must be so in spiritual life, or else all the analogies of nature must be reversed. You must drink again of the Living Water. You must feed anew upon the Living Bread. What mean those texts in Scripture that speak of waiting upon the Lord, and renewing our strength? What can be the meaning of, "renewing our strength like the eagle's"? And what could be David's meaning when, in his matchless pastoral, he sings, "You restore my soul," if we do not need full often the times of refreshing from the Presence of the Lord?

But I need not travel so far to fetch my arguments in your own inner consciousness. My Brothers and Sisters, you are aware that your piety requires constant renovation. What downward tendencies the thoughtful must perceive in themselves. We could travel downhill to Hell how easily, but upwards to Heaven with what difficulty! Downward, without a hand to help. But upward, no hand less than the Omnipotent must speed our course. Do you not find, Christians, that as we men must eat, so we must pray? Is there not a vacuum in your heart and a pang within it, if you have neglected supplication?

Do you not discover that as men must breathe, so you must exercise faith in Christ, for if your faith is suspended for a moment, there is a suffocation of all your hope, your joy, your love? No—of your very life! Have you not found that, as it is necessary to repair the waste of the body by the frequent meal, so you must repair the waste of the soul by feeding upon the Book of God, or by listening to the preached Word, or by the soul-fattening table of the ordinances? I will not give a farthing for your experience—it cannot be the experience of a child of God—unless you discover a hungering and a thirsting in your inner man.

And what are these but proofs that renewal is wanted—signs by which your new nature sets forth to you a secret necessity which moves it to these outward longings? Oh, how dull our love becomes if we go for a little time without a sight of Christ! How our faith flickers if we are for a little season absent from the Cross! How depressed are our graces when means are neglected! What poor starvelings some saints are who live without the diligent use of the Word of God and secret prayer! You know you want renewal! You feel you do. Need I say more?

Moreover, if you do not perceive this very apparent Truth of God, let me remind you that you may be made to see it, and that terribly, by some surprising sin. Just as this prayer was forced out of David by his adultery with Bathsheba, and his bloody murder of Uriah, so you—yes, you, my Brothers and Sisters, saints before the Lord—yes, you, Preacher—you may be made to know it, by being suddenly overtaken in a fault, to your own shame forever. "Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."

There are north winds in the hand of the Almighty which He has not yet permitted to come forth upon men. But when the whirlwind shall be loosed, woe, woe to the tree that has not sucked up fresh sap and grasped the rock with many intertwined roots. There are tempests yet to come forth from the secret treasures of God. If they come, woe, woe to the mariners that have not yet strengthened their mast, nor cast their anchor, nor sought the haven.

Without perpetual restoration, I say, we are not ready for the perpetual assaults of Hell, or the stern afflictions of Heaven, nor even for the strife within us. If you suffer the good to grow weaker, the evil will surely gather strength and struggle desperately for the mastery over you. And so may you have a sad downfall, a painful desolation—and a lamentable disgrace may follow from your neglect of the renewing of your spirit before God.

Once more, here, and though this reason may not seem so forcible as the last, the wise man will understand it, and see that there is yet mighty power therein, "That unconscious backsliding from God, which is, perhaps, even more dangerous, though not so disgraceful as open sin. That unconscious apostasy from God, I say, will certainly be upon you, unless you have seasons of renewal. Does not Hosea speak of Ephraim as having gray hairs here and there upon him, but he knew it not?

Oh, Beloved, I do proclaim—I speak not in any severity against God's saints—but I do believe that this is the sin in the Church of God at the present moment—that the most of us have gray hairs here and there and know it not. We walk so carelessly before God. we do not make such heart-work of religion as we should. Indifference, I find, to be my own temptation. I do not know that I am assaulted with certain other sins which prevail over other men, but this indifference I find to be harder to meet than even a temptation to lust or covetousness.

I do believe that the Church, to a great extent, is just now where Bunyan's Pilgrim was when he went through the Enchanted Ground and the air was heavy, and the Pilgrim had much ado to keep himself from sleeping. The Church has rest nowadays. These are times of quietness. And therefore we are in danger of being given to slumber. Perhaps it is a "ruthless legend that the holidays of Capua ruined the veterans of Hannibal," but if it is a legend in his case, it is a fact in ours.

The peace and quietness of the Church in these calm times bring on an idleness, a dullness, an indifference, a lethargy as deadly and as damnable as outrageous sin itself. And unless the Holy Spirit arouses us and constrains us to come back again to the simple earnestness of our first love, we shall slip and slide and discover not how low we have fallen till out of the depths we have to cry in agony, "Renew a right spirit within me."

Now, Brothers and Sisters, for these reasons, I do persuade you, and therein I do persuade myself—let us take with us words. Let us turn unto the Lord. Let us beg Him to heal our backslidings, and to receive us graciously. Let us entreat Him to be as the dew unto our souls that we may grow as the lily and cast out our roots as Lebanon. In the words of Jeremy in the Lamentations let us pray, "Turn You us unto You, O Lord, and we shall be turned. Renew our days as of old."

If the crown is fallen from our head because we have sinned, let us seek the Lord with deep humiliation of soul. If the joy of our heart has ceased, if our dance is turned into mourning, let us return unto Him from whom we have erred, and renew our marriage covenant. "Thus says the Lord, I remember you, the kindness of your youth, and the love of your espousals." My Brothers and Sisters, if thus He remembers us, let us remember Him, and offer this supplication, "Renew a right spirit within me." This brings me now to a second method of reasoning with you.

II. Secondly, let us pray the brief but very forcible prayer of the text because of our OWN POWERLESSNESS TO RENEW OUR OWN SPIRITS. It is a doctrine acknowledged by all orthodox Christians, and confessed in some form or other by all Believers, that without the Spirit of God we are unable to do anything aright. Nevertheless, I question if any of us have given our full consent to the

doctrine of human inability in its fullest bearings. "Without Me you can do nothing," is a text upon which our life is the sermon—but until its very close it is probable we shall not fully fathom the depth of our own weakness.

Brethren, when a ship is in sailing order and in good condition, she still cannot speed on her journey of herself! Even though the sails are spread, there is no hope of her making port unless the wind shall blow. If that is so, how much more is it true that if that ship leaks, if the worm has begun to eat her timbers, or if by grazing upon a rock she has done serious damage to her bottom, it is impossible that she should repair her own damage! If her sails are tattered, how shall she mend them? If her masts are strained, if any injury whatever is done to her tackling, how shall she be able to recover herself?

Brethren, you can see the analogy. If the child of God, even when in a healthy state, needs to cry for the Divine Spirit, how much more when he has fallen under spiritual decays, or has grievously backslidden, does he need the Divine hand of the Mighty Carpenter to set him right! As for ungodly men, the analogy might be pushed still farther if that were in the subject of this morning. If the ship built and manned cannot sail without the wind, how much less could the trees of the forest hew themselves, convey themselves to the shipwright's yard, fashion themselves into timbers, keel, beam, and mast—and then arrange themselves into a ship and launch themselves upon the sea!

Yet even this were less a miracle than for an unconverted man to regenerate himself. But we must return to our point, that the Christian, when his heart is out of order, has no power to put himself right again without the blessed Spirit. The disease of the living must be cured by the same Voice which removes the sleep of the dead. He who said, "Lazarus come forth!" is needed to say, "Take up your bed and walk!" Indeed, if you will think for a moment, you will find the work of renewal to be a stern work. It is called in Scripture—conversion.

Now, in conversion the same power is exercised that was put forth in raising Jesus Christ from the dead. What power, then, must be required in the renewal of a soul! Besides, to renew a soul is to go directly opposite to nature. What power is necessary to make water leap uphill, to suspend the waterfall in midair, to compel a flame to blaze in the midst of the depths of the sea? Yet such a power as this is absolutely needed to reverse the efforts of the flesh, and to make our old carnal corruptions, which had begun to get the mastery, resign it once more.

The strong man armed keeps the house till a stronger than he binds him. And sin, when it once prevails in a Believer, would continue to prevail unless the Mighty One who first broke our chains shall come to set us free. Do you not know, Beloved, that in the renewal of our spirits every Divine Grace is needed that was nestled for our first conversion? We needed repentance in order to our first salvation—we certainly need it now, that we may be renewed. We wanted faith that we might come to Christ at first—only the like Grace can bring us to Jesus now.

We wanted a word from the Most High, a word from the lips of the Loving One, to end our fears then—we shall soon discover, when under a sense of present sin, that we need it now. No man can be renewed, I say, without as real and true an exercise of the Holy Spirit's energy as he felt at first, because the work is as great. The same Graces are needed, and flesh and blood are as much in the way now as ever they were. Let your powerlessness, O Christian, be an argument to make you pray earnestly to your God.

Remember, David, when he felt himself powerless, did not fold his arms or close his lips, but he hastened to the Mercy Seat with, "Renew a right spirit within me." Let not the doctrine that you, unaided can do

nothing, make you sleep. Rather let it be a goad in your side to drive you with an awful earnestness to the great Fountain from which all streams must flow to satisfy your wants and plead it, plead it as though you pleaded for your very life—as though you pleaded for your only son—"Lord, renew a right spirit within me."

Nor pray this falsely. Prove that you mean it by going forth to use the means. Continue much in prayer. Live much upon the Word of God. Attend constantly a soul-satisfying Ministry. Kill the lusts that have driven your Lord from you. Be careful to watch over the future uprisings of sin—otherwise your prayers cannot be sincere. The man who prays to God to do a thing must use the means through which God works. He is a hypocrite who asks the Lord to visit him, and then nails up his door, or asks for life, and then refuses to eat.

The Lord has his own appointed ways, and sitting by the wayside you will be ready when He passes by. Oh, continue, then, in all those blessed ordinances which will foster and nourish your dying Graces. And strengthen the things which remain which are ready to die. Knowing that all the power must be from Him, cease not to cry, "Renew a right spirit within me."

III. But we change our note and come to a third point. I would the Holy Spirit might honor the word this morning, and I should look upon it as no mean privilege if I might stir up any of you, my beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, truly today to come afresh to the Fountain filled with Blood, and to renew again your entire surrender and resignation of yourselves to your Lord. The argument I use shall be found in THE BLESSED RESULTS WHICH ARE SURE TO FOLLOW, if the Lord shall renew your spirit.

Think what joy you will experience! There are some things, Beloved, that perhaps may need to be renewed, but they would bring no joy. The physician may require you to receive a new bottle of medicine. It may be possible that an operation once performed may have lost its potency. Painful though it is, it may be required to be performed again. But that of which I speak has no pain to the child of God. It is in itself so sweet that it ought to tempt you to perform it.

What is it, my Brothers and Sisters? Is it not the renewal of a brotherly covenant, just as when Jonathan and David went into the woods and renewed their covenant? I do not believe it was a sorrowful hour to Jonathan. I can imagine that David shed tears when he parted from his beloved friend, tears of deep affection, perhaps, but oh, with what joy did they clasp each other in the woods! With what true love did they make a covenant when Jonathan loved David as his own soul.

The prince stripped himself of the robe that was upon him and gave it to David. And he even gave his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle. And surely you will not object to renew your embrace of your David today! Can it be a hard matter to you, once more, to go without the camp bearing His reproach, to clasp the Man, once again who is better to you than all the treasures of Egypt? Besides, there is a sweeter figure. The Covenant we have with Christ is a marriage Covenant.

I believe in Sweden it is common when a happy pair have been wedded for five-and-twenty years to have what they call, "A silver wedding." And if they should be spared to old age, until their children's children are round about them, on the fiftieth year, they have, "A golden wedding." Who would not wish to have a repetition of the happy day! Let us celebrate today, dear Friends, a silver wedding with the Christ whom we married years ago. And oh, we will wait awhile longer and anticipate our golden wedding, in the year of jubilee, when we shall see Him as He is and be like He is.

What? Will you not give Him the kiss that is the token of continued affection? Do you refuse to give Him fresh pledges of your love, which is the fruit of His everlasting love to you? Why, the thing is so joyous that I cannot refrain from crying, "Let the marriage bells be rung again! Bring forth the wedding dainties once more, and let us sit at the table of the marriage festival!" Jesus, we do embrace You! We are Yours, it is happiness, it is Heaven, it is bliss superlative to renew our vows to You and to receive fresh tokens of Your regard to us.

Do you remember, Beloved, that in our early days, besides having an abundance of joy, how full of heavenly light our Graces were, and how real everything appeared to our faith at the first? Now if we can have our spirit renewed, and made it as it was at first, why, then we shall have back the same satisfactory reality in our emotions. I speak for one. I know that when my eyes first looked to Christ, He was a very real Christ to me. And when my burden of sin rolled from off my back, it was a real pardon, and a real release from sin to me. And when that day I said for the first time, "Jesus Christ is mine," it was a real possession of Christ to me.

When I went up to the sanctuary then in that early dawn of youthful piety, every song was really a Psalm, and when there was a prayer, oh, how I followed every word! It was prayer, indeed! And so was it, too, in silent quietude, when I drew near to God. Oh it was no mockery, no routine, no matter of mere duty. It was a real talking with my Father who is in Heaven. And oh, how I loved my Savior Christ then! I can talk about loving Him now, and methinks if He said to me as He did to Simon Peter—"Do you love me?" I would dare to answer, "You know all things, You know that I love

You."

But still, my consciousness of loving Christ is not always as vivid, now, as it once was. Why, then I was quite sure I loved Him, I know I could have burned for Him, or suffered anything for His dear sake. Was it not so with you? Well, Beloved, if we will come now, and put our hand within His hands afresh, which will be the effect of His renewing our spirit, then we shall have back again all the fullness and reality that distinguished our early, new-born piety. Oh, how blessed this will be!

Moreover, at that time how active all our Graces were! Do you not remember? Why, you had no doubts then, your faith was so strong. You had no lukewarmness then, your zeal was so burning. You remember, some of you, when first the Lord met with you? Perhaps it was in this house, or in the Surrey Music Hall. You would stand in the crowd till you were almost ready to drop, but there were no sleepy eyes, no dull, lethargic spirits. Oh, how you used to drink in the Word of God! It was marrow and fatness to you when you fed upon it.

If anybody would have bribed you to stay away from a Prayer Meeting or from a weeknight lecture, they might have offered the world, but it would have been a bribe too low. But now, too often, if there is a little discomfort in getting in the gate, if you happen not to get the very seat you want, or if you happen to be seated uncomfortably, or in a cramped position—you cannot worship as once you did. I know it may be the fault of the minister—perhaps he does not preach as he did in your younger days—when you were first converted. That is possible, I suppose. Still, I think it is more likely that you have lost the ears you once had, or that your ears are become dull of hearing.

I think it is more likely that your eyes have lost their quickness of sight, or that your hearts may be less tender and sensitive. Certainly your Graces are not in such active exercise as they were. Well now, if we come back to our Master, we shall have our youthful force and vigor renewed. To my mind it is always a

pleasant sight to see lambs skipping in the meadows, because it shows they have more strength than they well know what to do with—and so they do a great many things that are improper for sheep to do. What odd, fantastic gestures they have!

It is even so with young Christians. They will often do many rash things just because they have an excess of liveliness. They have such a full tide of love and zeal that they do not know how to put it into action. Young life demands exercise. O that some of you who are old in years, and others of you upon whose Graces there are signs of decay, could but recover some of this juvenile effervescence! Ah, and you can have it. In the answer to this prayer you will find it, "Renew a right spirit within me."

A subject like this grows upon me while speaking of it. I cannot doubt that you will find it equally enlarge upon you in thinking it over. But on no account let us forget the practical ends that ought to be kept in view. Dear Friends, your usefulness to others will be increased if the Lord should graciously visit you with times of refreshing. You want the re- newal of your own spirit in your Sunday school class, in the district where you distribute tracts, in the little room where you preach—or in your family, with your own children. You want to have more Divine Grace in your own hearts that you may have power with them. Well, you must get this by coming anew to your Lord.

Ah, and some of you came up here this morning complaining of the world and its trials. The world is very hard with you, and troubles are multiplied. How little weight the sorrows of this life will have in the scale, if balanced against the joy of your heart when the Lord renews your spirit. What did you care when you were first converted, whether you were rich or poor? It seemed no matter to you. Like Peter, you left the net, and the fishes, that you might get at your Lord. Like the woman at the well, you left the water pot that you might go and tell others that you had seen a Man who told you all things that ever you did.

Well, now, if your former piety comes back, if the zeal of your young days shall be restored to you, the world will be just as much a trifle to you, and you will tread it beneath your feet with just as much heroic contempt as you did when first you received the Gospel, not in word only, but in power. Since all these blessed results will follow, let me therefore beseech you—by your love to your own souls, by your care to grow in Divine Grace, by your anxiety to prosper in the Lord's way, and by your interest in the welfare of others—pray with me this prayer, "Renew a right spirit within me."

And You, O Lord, hear it in Heaven, Your dwelling place. Let Your eyes be open unto the supplication of Your servants, to hearken unto us in all that we call for unto You.

IV. One other argument only, where many might be given. Do not GOSPEL OBLIGATIONS irresistibly constrain us by the means of this, our prayer, to renew our Covenant with God?

Legal motives I would disdain to urge you with. But Gospel motives I may, and must. Did you do right in giving your soul to Christ at first? Was it a mistake? Was it the effect of a juvenile excitement, misled by some fanatical speech? No, you cannot say that. You believe it was the best thing you ever did in your life. You have often regretted you never did it before. There are a thousand things you repent of, but this one thing, that you gave yourself to God, is a subject of perpetual congratulations with you.

Very well, then, if it was well to do it then, do it now. If you would not make out yourself to have been a fool, and your faith to have been a lie. If you would not before the eyes of men and of angels declare that the whole thing is a farce—this day, even this day—let us go into Gilgal, and there let us renew the kingdom before the Lord. Oh, once again do what you did at the first—if it were a wise, if it were a good

thing.

Moreover, Brothers and Sisters, remember how often Jesus renewed His Covenant with His people. It was not enough to have spoken it in the ear of Adam, and whispered it to the heart of Eve. Enoch must testify of it. Abraham must understand it on the plains of Mamre, as Noah adores the time, when floating securely in the ark. There must be a renewed revelation to Isaac, and to Jacob, and to Moses, and to Joshua. Symbols of the renewed Covenant must be seen in the tabernacle, and in the temple. Each day, each week, each month, each year, each jubilee must give some fresh form of Christ setting His seal anew to the love which He bore to His people and His purpose to redeem His Church by blood.

Does Christ do this, and will you blush to do it? Oh, do as Jesus did to you—as you would that "the Man" should do to you, do you also unto Him. And moreover, He has renewed His Covenant with you. Come, I want you to look back at your old diaries. You have not burned your pocketbooks, in which you set down in some mysterious marks that others could not read, some mementoes of your Tabors, your Mizars and the hills of the Hermonites. I want you to look back. Has not Christ renewed His Covenant with some of us many times?

My soul looks back and sees some joyous seasons, some days marked with the red Dominical letter among the days of my history, when He said to me afresh, "You are Mine. I have redeemed you by blood." It may be it was on a bed of sickness. Perhaps it was when you were walking in the streets. It may be it was in a season of holy retirement, or it may be in a moment when you were brought down to the earth. Oh, He has renewed His Covenant with us many and many a time with such sweet reassuring words that our soul, which was tired of this world, has been willing to stay her three-score years and ten, because her Husband had visited her.

You have stayed me with flagons. You have comforted me with apples. You have made me sick with love. Your left hand has been under my head, and Your right hand did embrace me. Therefore will I renew my vows unto You even as You did unto me!

Yet farther, dear Friends, and I shall not stay longer than this, though it is a very wide field. Let us be moved today to renew our Covenant with Christ, or rather to ask Him to renew our spirit, because every Covenant transaction binds us to it. You believe in the doctrine of election. We do not blush to preach it, and you love to hear it. What does election mean? It means that God has chosen you. Very well, if it is so, then you will acknowledge it anew today, by choosing His way and Word. You believe in a special and efficacious redemption, that you were redeemed from among men. Very well, then, you are not your own, you are bought with a price.

You believe in effectual calling. You know that you were called out. If it is so, recognize your distinction and sepa-rateness as a sacred people set apart by God. You believe that this distinction in you is perpetual, for you will persevere to the end—if you are to be God's forever, be His today. And are you not looking for a Heaven from which selfishness shall be banished? Are you not expecting a Heaven where Glory shall consist in being wholly absorbed in Christ? Well then, this day, by all that is coming, as well by all that is cast, let your soul be bound as with cords that cannot be snapped to the altar of your God.

Backsliders, you that have gone astray, pray this prayer today. He bids you pray it, and He will, therefore, answer it. The text in the margin reads "renew a constant spirit within me." You have been obstinate, wayward, unstable, fickle. Poor Backslider, He has put this prayer here for you—"Renew a constant spirit within me." My Brothers and Sisters, the Church has had to cast you out, but if still there is a desire in your

soul toward God, return! Return! Return! Your Father waits to meet you. The Church, your mother, longs for you. Your Brothers and Sisters desire to see your face again.

Say it, and we will say it with you, "Renew a right spirit within me," and it shall be done. And you, Christians, that have not backslidden, you, my Brothers and Sisters, whose heads are covered with the gray honors of long service, offer today this prayer, for you need to pray it as well as the youngest of us, "Renew a right spirit within me." Ask the Master who has kept you in your youth to preserve you till, in life's latest hour, YOU bow, "and bless in death a bond so dear."

You strong men and fathers, who are struggling with the world, battling day by day with business and its cares, forget not your God through being mindful of many things. Today, in this little pause in the noise and turmoil and strife of the world's bustle, come now and renew your vows. You young men and maidens, you little ones in God's Israel, whose portion it is to be the lambs carried in His bosom, you, also, say, "Renew You, O God, a right spirit within me."

Come, renew the dedication so lately made. You that are brought, like Samuels, to God's house, that you may wear the vestments of prophets before you wear the garments of manhood—give yourselves anew to the Lord. Let your youthful voices, so full of sweet music, unbroken as yet to the deeper bass which the world's care is sure to give them by-and-by, sing unto the Lord, and let this be your cry—"Lord, I am Your servant, and the son of Your handmaiden, You have loosed my bonds!"

May the Lord, the Holy Spirit, so dwell in us that each of us may renew our vows, through His renewing a right spirit within us. Amen.

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