

Life's Need and Maintenance

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that spiritual life is entirely dependent on God's sustaining power, emphasizing that no one can keep their own soul alive without continual divine nourishment.

Scripture: Psalm 22:29, Psalm 22:27, Psalm 22:26, John 11:25, John 15:4-5, 2 Peter 1:4, Matthew 5:3

Topics: "Spiritual Dependence", "Divine Sustenance"

Description

In this devotional sermon, C.H. Spurgeon powerfully emphasizes the absolute dependence of the believer's spiritual life on God's sustaining grace. Drawing from Psalm 22:29 and other Scriptures, Spurgeon explains that no one can keep their own soul alive apart from continual divine nourishment. He uses vivid analogies from nature and practical examples to illustrate the necessity of the Holy Spirit's ongoing work in prayer, worship, and Christian living. This message encourages believers to daily rely on God's power for spiritual vitality and growth.

Transcript

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

"None can keep alive his own soul" Psalm 22:29.

WE must commence by noticing the connection so that we may arrive at the first meaning of the words. There is a day coming when the true God will be acknowledged as Lord and God by all mankind, for the 27th verse tells us—"All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before You." In that day the greatest of men will bow before Him. The verse from which we cull our text says, "All they that are fat upon earth shall eat and worship." The prosperous ones, those who have grown rich and great, shall receive good at the hands of the Savior and shall rejoice to adore Him as the Author of their fatness! Kings shall acknowledge Him as their King and lords accept him as their Lord.

Then shall not only the riches of life, but the poverty of death, also, render Him homage, for as men shall go down to the dust of the grave, in their feebleness and weakness they shall look up to Him for strength and solace, and shall find it sweet to worship Him in death. Men shall know that the keys of death are in His hands. "All they that go down to the dust shall bow before Him," and it shall be known all the world over that the issues of life are in the hands of Jesus Christ. They shall understand that He is appointed as Mediator to rule over all mortal things, for the government shall be upon His shoulders. He shall open and

no man shall shut, and shut and no man shall open, for it is His Sovereign prerogative to kill and to make alive. "None can keep alive his own soul."

I pass on from this meaning with the hopeful belief that this dispensation is not to end, as some suppose, without the conquest of the world to Christ. Surely "all kings shall bow before Him, all nations shall serve Him." The shame of the Cross shall be followed by honor and glory—"men shall be blessed in Him, all nations shall call Him blessed." The conviction grows with me every day, the more I read the Scriptures, that the disheartening views of some interpreters are not true, but that before the whole of prophecy shall be worked into history, the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.

Leaving this, we come to consider a more spiritual meaning which we believe to be as truly the sense of the passage as the other. You will notice, if you read the Psalm carefully, when you come to its close, that our Savior seems to delight Himself in being made food for the saved ones among the sons of men. In the 26th verse He says, "The meek shall eat and be satisfied." Here, He is thinking of the poor among men, to whom He has ever been the source of abounding comfort. To them His Gospel has been preached and thousands of them have found, in Him, food for their souls which has satisfied them, filled their months with praise and made their hearts live forever.

The poor from the highways and hedges feast to the full at His royal table! Yes, the blind, the cripple and the lame—the very beggars of the streets—are among His household guests! Christ is very mindful of the poor and needy. He redeems their soul from deceit and violence, and their blood is precious in His sight. Especially do the poor in spirit feed on Jesus. Over them He pronounced the first benediction of the Sermon on the Mount and of them He declares, "theirs is the kingdom of Heaven." What a feast do poor perishing spirits enjoy in Jesus when His flesh becomes to them meat, indeed, and His blood is drink, indeed!

Nor is this all the feeding upon Christ, for in the 29th verse we hear of it again. Not only the poor feed upon the Bread of Heaven, but the great, the rich and the strong live upon Him, too—"all they that are fat upon earth shall eat and worship." There is no other way of life for them, for, "none can keep alive his own soul." The saints, too, when they have grown in Grace. When they have satisfied their hunger and are fat and flourishing in the courts of the Lord's House, must still eat of the same heavenly food. The fat need Jesus as much as the lean, the strong as much as the feeble, for none

can do without Him—"none can keep alive his own soul." Thus the rich and the poor meet together and Jesus is the Food of them all. The empty and the full, alike, draw near to the Redeemer's fullness and receive Grace for Grace.

Among those who feel their need of Jesus, there are some of a mournful type of character who count themselves ready to perish. They dare not number themselves among the meek who shall eat and be satisfied, much less could they think of themselves as the fat upon earth who shall eat and worship. No, they stand back from the feast as utterly unworthy to draw near. They dare not believe themselves to be spiritually alive unto God. They reckon themselves among those that go down into the Pit. They bear the sentence of death in themselves and are prisoners under bondage through fear. Their sense of sin and personal unworthiness is so conspicuous—and so painful—that they are afraid to claim the privileges of the living in Zion.

They fear that their faith is expiring, their love is dying out, their hope is withered and their joy departed. They compare themselves to the smoking flax and think themselves to be even more offensive than the nauseous smell given forth by the smoking wick. To such comes the Word which precedes my text—"They that go down to the dust shall bow before Him." Christ shall be worshipped, even by them! Their last moments shall be cheered by His Presence. When, through depression of spirit, through the assaults of Satan and through inability to see the work of the Spirit in their souls, they shall be brought so low as to be down to the dust, they shall be lifted up from their misery and made to rejoice in the Lord, their Redeemer, who will say to them—"Shake yourself from the dust. Arise and sit down. Loose yourself from the bands of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion."

When souls are thus brought down, they begin to learn for themselves that, "none can keep alive his own soul." A poor broken-hearted spirit knows this, for he fears that the inner filth within his soul is at its last gasp, and he is afraid that his faith, love and all his graces will be as bones scattered at the grave's mouth. But then he learns what I trust we shall believe at this time without such a painful experience to teach it to us, namely, that none of us can keep our own soul alive, but that we must have food continually from above and visitations of the Lord to preserve our spirits. Our life is not in ourselves, but in our Lord!

Apart from Him we could not exist spiritually, even for a moment. We cannot keep our own soul alive as to Divine Grace. That is to be the subject of this morning's meditation and may the Holy Spirit render it profitable to us!

I. The first point of consideration out of which the rest will come is this—THE INNER LIFE MUST BE SUSTAINED BY GOD. We are absolutely dependent upon God for the preservation of our spiritual life. We, all of us, know that none of us can make his own soul live. You have destroyed yourself, but you can not make yourself live again. Spiritual life must always be the gift of God—it must come from without—it cannot arise from within. Between the ribs of death, life never takes its birth. How could it? Shall the ocean beget fire, or darkness create light? You shall go to the morgue as long as you please, but, unless the trumpet of the Resurrection shall sound there, the dry bones will remain in their corruption. The sinner is "dead in trespasses and sins" and he will never have even so much as a right desire towards God, nor a pulse of spiritual life, until Jesus Christ, who is "the Resurrection and the Life," shall quicken him.

Now, it is important for us to remember that we are as much dependent upon the Lord Jesus and the power of His Spirit for being kept alive as we were for being made alive in the first place. "None can keep alive his own soul." Do you remember when you first hung upon Christ for everything? That same dependence must be exercised every day of your life, for there is need of it. You remember your former nakedness, your poverty, your emptiness, your misery, your death, apart from Christ? Remember that the case is not one whit better if you could now be separated from sin. If now you have any Grace, or any holiness, or any love, you derive it entirely from Him and from moment to moment His Grace must be continued to you. For if connection between you and Christ should by any possibility be severed, you would cease to live spiritually. That is the Truth of God we want to bring forward.

Here let us remark that this is not at all inconsistent with the undying nature of the spiritual life. When we were born-again there was imparted to us a new and higher nature called the spirit. This is a fruit of the Spirit of God and it can never die. It is an "incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever." When it is imparted to the soul it makes us partakers of the Divine Nature. And it keeps us, so that the Evil One touches us not so as utterly to destroy us. Yet this fact is quite consistent with the assertion that we cannot keep our own soul alive, for it is because the Lord keeps us alive. The newborn nature is safe because the

Lord protects it—it survives the deadly influences of the world because the Lord continues to quicken it.

Our new nature is united to the Person of Christ and we live because He lives. We are not kept alive by independent power, but by perpetual renewal from the Lord. This is true of every man living. "None can keep alive his own soul"—no, not one. You young people think, perhaps, that old Christians get on better than you do. You imagine that their experience preserves them, but, indeed, they cannot keep their own souls alive anymore than you can! You tried and tempted ones sometimes look with envy upon those who dwell at ease, as though their spirituality was self-supporting! But no, they cannot keep their own souls alive anymore than you can! You know your own difficulties, but you do not know those of others. Rest assured, however, that to all men there are these difficulties and that no man can keep his own soul alive.

This is the Truth of God at all times—at no one moment can we keep ourselves alive. While sitting in this House of Prayer you may dream that assuredly you can keep yourself here, but it is not so. You might sin the foulest of sins in your heart while sitting here! And you might grieve the Holy Spirit and cloud your life for years while worshipping among the people of God. You are not able to keep your own soul alive in your happiest and holiest moments! From your knees you might rise to blaspheme and from the Communion Table you might go to the seat of the scorner if you were left to yourself—

"All our strength at once would fail us, If deserted, Lord, by You. Nothing, then, could use us, Certain our defeat would be And those who hate us Their desires would see."

I seldom find myself so much in danger as when I have been in close communion with God. After the most ecstatic devotion, one is hardly prepared for the coarse temptations of this wicked world. When we come down, like Moses from the mountain, if we encounter open sin we are apt to grow indignant and break all the commandments in the vehemence of our wrath. The sudden change from the highest and holiest contemplations to the trifles and vexations of earth subjects the soul to so severe a trial that the poet did well say—

"We should suspect some danger near When we perceive too much delight." Even when our delight is of a spiritual kind we need to be on our guard after having been filled with it—for then Satan avails himself of the opportunity. We are never safe unless the Lord keeps us.

If we could take you, my Brothers and Sisters, and place you in the society of saints. Give you to keep perpetual Sundays, make every meal a sacrament and set you nothing to say or do but what should be directly calculated to promote the glory of God, yet even then you could not keep your own soul alive! Adam in perfection could not keep himself in Paradise! How can his imperfect children be so proud as to rely upon their own steadfastness? Among angels there were those who kept not their first estate. How shall man, then, hope to stand unless he is held up? Why is this? How do we know that our text is true?

We gather arguments from the analogies of Nature. We do not find that we can keep our own bodies alive. We need Divine preservation, or disease and death will deftly make us their prey. We are not self-contained as to this mortal existence, any one of us, no, not for five minutes can we live upon ourselves. Take away the atmospheric air and who could keep himself alive? The heaving lungs need their portion of air and if they cannot be satisfied, man soon becomes a corpse! Deprive us of food—leave us for a week without meat or drink—and see if we can keep our natural body alive. Take away from us the means of warmth in the time when God's cold rules the year and death would soon ensue.

Now, if the physical life is not to be sustained by itself, much less can the higher and spiritual life! It must have food. It must have the Spirit to sustain it. The Scriptures present to us this figure of the body which dies if severed from the vital organs, and of the branch which is dried up if cut off from the stem. Toplady versifies the thought and sings—

"Quickened by You, and kept alive, I flourish and bear fruit. My life, I from Your sap derive, My vigor from your root. "I can do nothing without You!

My strength is wholly Yours. Withered and barren should I be If severed from the Vine."

Yonder lamp burns well, but its future shining is dependent upon a fresh supply of oil. The ship in rapid motion borrows force from the continuance of the wind, but the sails hang idle if the gale ceases. The river is full to the bank, but if the clouds should never again pour out their floods it would become a dry trail. All things depend on others and the whole upon the Great Supreme! Nothing is self-sustained! Unless God, Himself, sustains it, no being exists. Even immortal souls are only so because He has set His seal upon them and declared that they shall inherit eternal life, or in consequence of sin shall sink into everlasting punishment. Hence we are sure that "none can keep alive his own soul."

But we need not rely upon analogy, we can put the matter to the test. Could any Believer among us keep any one of His graces alive? You, perhaps, are a sufferer and, up to now you have been enabled to be patient. But suppose the Lord Jesus should withdraw His Presence from you and your pains should return again? Ah, where will your patience be? Or, I will suppose you are a worker and you have done great things for the Lord. Like Samson you have been exceedingly strong. But let the Lord be once withdrawn and leave you to attempt His work alone and you will soon discover that you are as weak as other men and will utterly fail!

Holy joy, for instance, take that as a specimen. Did you rejoice in the Lord, this morning, when you awoke? It is very sweet to wake up and hear the birds singing within your heart. But you cannot maintain that joy, no, not even for an hour, do what you will. "All my fresh springs are in You," my God, and if I am to joy and rejoice, You must anoint me continually with the oil of gladness! Have you not, sometimes, thought in the morning, "I feel so peaceful and calm, so resigned to the Divine will. I think I shall be able to keep up this placid spirit all day long." Perhaps you have done so and, if so, I know you have praised God for it. But if you have become perturbed, you have learned, again, that to will is present with you, but how to perform that which you would, you find not.

Well, if for any one fruit of the Spirit we are dependent upon the Lord, how much more will this be true as to the essential life from which each of these Graces springs? This Truth of God is equally illustrated by our need of help in every act of the Divine life. Dear Friends, have you ever tried what it is to perform any spiritual act apart from the Divine power? What a dull, dead affair it becomes! What a mechanical thing prayer is without the Spirit of God! It is a parrot's noise and nothing more! It is a weariness, a slavish drudgery. How sweet it is to pray when the Spirit gives us feeling, unction, access with boldness, pleading power, faith, expectancy and full fellowship! But if the Spirit of God is absent from us in prayer, our infirmities prevail against us, and our supplication loses all prevalence.

Did you ever resolve to praise God and come into the congregation where the sweetest Psalms were being sent to Heaven? Could you praise God till the Holy Spirit came like a Divine Wind and loosened the fragrance of the flowers of your soul? You know you could not! You used the sacred Words of the sweet singers of Israel, but hosannas languished on your tongue and your devotion died. I know that it is

dreadful work to be bound to preach when one is not conscious of the aid of the Spirit of God! It is like pouring water out of bottomless buckets, or feeding hungry souls out of empty baskets! A true sermon such as God will bless, no man can preach of himself! He might as well try to sound the archangel's trumpet. We must have You, O blessed Spirit, or we fail! O God, we must have Your power, or every action that we perform is but the movement of a robot and not the acceptable act of a living, spiritual man!

Have you ever, dear Friends, had to know that you cannot keep alive your own soul by your own blundering and failures when you have resolved to be very wise and correct? Did you ever get into a self-sufficient state and say, "Now, I shall never fall into that temptation, again, for I am the burnt child that dreads the fire"? And yet into that very sin you have fallen! Have you not said, "Well, I understand that business. There is no need to wait upon God for direction in so simple a matter, for I am well up in every particular relating to it and I can manage the affair very well"? And have you not acted as foolishly in the whole concern as the Israelites did in the affair of the Gibeonites, when they were deceived by the old shoes and clothes and the moldy bread, and asked no counsel of the Lord? I tell you, our strength, whenever we have any, is our greatest weakness! And our fancied wisdom is our real folly.

When we are weak we are strong! When, in a sense of entire dependence upon God, we dare not trust ourselves, we are both wise and safe! Go, young man, even you who are a zealous Christian—go without your morning prayer, into the house of business—and see what will befall you! Venture, my Sister, down into your little family without having

called upon God for guidance and see what you will do! Go with a strong resolve that you will never be guilty of the weakness which dishonored you a few days ago—and depend upon the strength of your own will and the firmness of your own purpose—and see if you do not, before long, discover to your shame how great your weakness is! No, try none of these experiments, but listen to the Word which tells you, "None can keep alive his own soul."

And now, should any think that he can keep his own soul alive, let me ask him to look at the enemies which surround him. A sheep in the midst of wolves is safe compared with the Christian in the midst of ungodly men! The world waylays us, the devil assaults us! Behind every bush there lurks a foe. A spark in mid ocean is not more beset, a worm is not more defenseless. If the sight of foes without are not enough to make us confess our danger, look at the foes within. There is enough within your soul, O Christian, though you are one of the best of saints, to destroy you in an hour unless the Grace of God guards you and keeps your passions in check—and prevents your stubborn will from asserting its own rebellious determinations.

Oh, what a powder keg the human heart is, even at its best! If some of us have not been blown up, it has been because Providence has kept away the sparks, rather than because of there being any lack of powder within. Oh, may God keep us, for if He leaves us, we need no devil to destroy us—we shall prove devils to ourselves—we shall need no tempters except the lusting after evil which now conceals itself so craftily within our own bosom! Certainly, dear Brothers and Sisters, we may be quite sure that "none can keep alive his own soul" when we remember that in the Gospel, provision is made for keeping our soul alive! The Holy Spirit is given that He may continually quicken and preserve us—and Jesus Christ, Himself, lives, that we may live, also.

To what purpose would be all the splendid provisions and the special safeguards of the Covenant of Grace for the preservation of the spiritual life, if that spiritual life could preserve itself? Why does the Lord

declare, "I, the Lord, do keep it," if it can keep itself? The granaries of Egypt, so full of corn, remind us that there is a famine in the land of Canaan! The treasures laid up in Christ Jesus assure us that we are in need of them! God's supplies are never superfluous, but are meant to meet real needs. Let us, then, all acknowledge that no man among us can keep alive his own soul.

II. This brings me, secondly and briefly, to notice that THIS TRUTH BRINGS GLORY TO CHRIST. "None can

keep alive his own soul." Weak-minded professors are prone to trust in man, but they have, here, an evident warning against such folly! How can they trust in a man who cannot keep alive his own soul? Shall I crouch at the feet of my fellow man and ask him to hear my confession and absolve me when I know that he cannot keep alive his own soul? Shall I look up to him and call him, "father in God," and expect to receive Divine Grace from the laying on of his hands, when I learn that he is a weak, sinful being like myself?

He cannot keep alive his own soul! What can he do for me? If he lives before God, he has to live upon the daily charity of the Most High—what can he have to give me? Oh, look not to your fellow virgins for the oil of Grace, for they have not enough for themselves! And whatever name a man may dare to take, whether it is priest, "Father," or Pope—look not to him—but look to JESUS in whom all fullness dwells! The Glory which accrues to Christ from our daily dependence is seen in His becoming to us our daily Bread. His flesh is meat, indeed, and His blood is drink, indeed! And we must feed upon these continually or die! Eating is not an operation to be performed only once, but throughout life, and so we have to go to Jesus again and again and find sustenance in Him as long as life lasts.

Beloved, we honored our Master when He first saved us—and through being daily dependent upon Him we are led to honor Him every day. If our hearts are right, we shall honor Him more and more every day, as we more and more perceive our indebtedness to Him. He is our daily Bread upon which we feed continually, and the Living Water of which we continually drink. He is the light which everlastingly shines upon us. He is, in fact, our All in All daily to us and all this prevents our forgetting Him. As at the first He saved us, so He still saves us! And as at the first we prized Him, we still prize Him. More than that, as our life is maintained, not only by Him, but by our abiding in union with Him, this leads us to abide in love towards Him. Union is the source of communion and love.

The wife remains a happy wife by loving fellowship with her husband. When the betrothed one is married to her beloved, the wedding day is not the end of it all. The putting on of the ring is the beginning, not the end. And so, when we believe in Jesus, we are saved, but we must not idly feel, "it is all done, now." No, it is only just begun! Now is the life of dependence, the life of faith, the life of obedience, the life of love, the life of union commenced and it is to be continued forever! This makes us love, honor and adore our Lord Jesus, since we only live by being one with Him. We have, also, to

remember that our life is daily supported by virtue of what the living Redeemer is still doing for us, as well as by receiving the fruit of His death and of our spiritual union with Him.

He ever lives to make intercession for us and, therefore, He is "able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him." The life of the ascended Redeemer is intimately bound up with our life—"Because I live, you shall live, also." How this honors Christ, for we are thus led to realize a living Savior, and to love Him as a living, breathing, acting Person. It is a pity when men only think of a dead Savior, or of a baby Savior carried in the Virgin's arms, as the Church of Rome does. It is our joy to have a

LIVING Christ, for while He lives, we cannot die! And while He pleads, we cannot be condemned! Thus we are led to remember Him as a living Savior and to give Him honor He is due.

But oh, my Brothers and Sisters, what must be the fullness of Christ when all the Grace which the saints have must come out of Him and, not merely all they have had, but all they obtain every day comes from Him? If there is any virtue. If there is any praise. If there is anything heavenly. If there is anything Divine—all this of His fullness have we received and Grace for Grace! What must be that power which protects and preserves millions of saints from temptation and keeps them amid perils as many as the sands of the sea? What must be that patience which watches over the frail children of God in all their weaknesses and wanderings, in all their sufferings, in all their infirmities? What must be His Grace which covers all their sins and what His strength which supports them under all their trials? What must the Fountainhead be, when the streams which flow to any one of us are so deep that we cannot fathom them, so broad that we cannot measure them?

Yet millions of happy spirits are, each one, receiving as much as any one of us may be, and still there is a fullness abiding in Christ the same as before, for it has pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell! Not a saint lives a moment apart from Him, for, "None can keep alive his own soul." The cries of babes in Grace and the shouts of strong men who divide the spoil all come from the life which He lends and the strength which He gives! Between the gates of Hell and the gates of Heaven in all those pilgrims whose faces are towards the royal city—all the life is Christ's life and all the strength is Christ's strength—and He is in them, working in them to will and to do of His own good pleasure! Blessed be the name of the Lord Jesus who thus supplies all His people! Does not this display the exceeding riches of His Grace?

III. Thirdly and practically, THIS SUBJECT SUGGESTS THE PATH OF WISDOM FOR OURSELVES.
"None

can keep alive his own soul." Then, my dear Brothers and Sisters, what manner of persons ought we to be? Let me have your earnest thoughts on this point for a minute. Do not let anyone among us look back to a certain day and say, "On that occasion I was regenerated and converted, and that is enough." I fear that some of you get into a very bad condition by saying, "If I can prove that I was converted on such-and-such a day, that will do."

This is altogether unjustifiable talk! Conversion is a turning onto the right road—the next thing is to walk in it. The daily going on in that road is as essential as the beginning if you would reach the desired end. To strike the first blow is not all the battle—to him that overcomes the crown is promised! To start in the race is nothing. Many have done that who have failed! But to hold out till you reach the winning post is the great point of the matter. Perseverance is as necessary to a man's salvation as conversion. Remember this, you not only need Grace to begin with, but Grace with which to live in Christ Jesus.

Learn, also, that we should diligently use all those means whereby the Lord communicates fresh support to our life. A man does not say, "Well, I was born on such-and-such a day, that is enough for me." No, the good man needs his daily meals to maintain his existence. Being alive, his next consideration is to stay alive and, therefore, he does not neglect eating nor any operation which is essential to life. So you, dear Friends, must labor for the meat which endures to eternal life—you must feed on the Bread of Heaven. Study the Scriptures daily—I hope you do not neglect that. Be much in private prayer—your life cannot be healthy if the Mercy Seat is neglected. Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together, as is the

manner of some. Be eager to hear the Word of God and endeavor both to understand and practice it.

Gather with God's people in their many spiritual meetings, when they join in prayer and praise, for these are healthful means of sustaining the inner life. If you neglect these, you cannot expect that Grace will be strong within you—you may even question if there is any life at all. Still, remember that even if a man should eat and drink, that would not keep him alive without the power of God! Many die with whom there is no lack either of air or food. You must, therefore, look beyond the outward means, to God, Himself, to preserve your soul. Let it be your daily prayer, "Oh Savior, by whom I began to live, daily enable me to look to You that I may draw continuous life from Your wounds and live because You live." Take these things home and practice them.

Keep, dear Friends, also, clear of everything which has a tendency to destroy life. A sane man does not willingly take poison. If he knew it, he would not touch the cup in which it had been contained. We are careful to avoid any adulteration in our food which might be injurious to life and health. We have our chemists busily at work to analyze liquids, lest inadvertently we should imbibe death in the water which we drink. Brethren, let us be equally careful as to our souls! Keep your chemist at work analyzing the things of this life. Let conscience and understanding fit up their laboratory and prove all things. Analyze the sermon of the eloquent preacher lest you drink in novelties of doctrine and falsehoods because he happens to put them prettily before you.

Analyze each book you read lest you should become tainted with error while you are interested with the style and manner, smartness and elegance of your author. Analyze the company you keep. Test and try everything lest you should be committing spiritual suicide, or carelessly squandering life away. Ask the Lord, the preserver of men, above all things, to keep you beneath the shadow of His wings that you may not be afraid of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction which wastes at noonday. Because His Truth has become your shield and buckler, you are safe. Watch your life carefully, but look to Jesus Christ from day to day for everything.

Do not become self-satisfied so as to say, "Now I am rich and increased in goods." If ever a child of God imitates the rich man in the parable and says, "Soul, take your ease, you have much goods laid up for many years," he is a fool as much as the rich man was! I have known some become very exalted in spiritual things. The conflict is almost over with them—temptation has no power, they are masters of the situation—and their condition is of the most elevated kind. Well, ballooning is very pleasant to those who like it, but I think he is safest who keeps on the ground! I fear that spiritual ballooning has been very mischievous to a great many and has altogether turned their heads. Their high conceit is falsehood.

After all, my Friend, to tell you the truth very plainly—you are no better than other people, though you think you are and in one point I am sure you miserably fail—humility. When we hear you declare what a fine fellow you are, we suspect that you wear borrowed plumes and are not what you seem. A peacock is a beautiful bird, what can be more brilliant? But I am not enraptured with his voice, nor are you! And so there may be fine feathers about certain people, perhaps a little too fine, but while they are showing themselves off, we know that there is a weak point about them and we pray that it may not cause dishonor to the cause of Christ. It is not our part to be hunting about for the failings of our fellow Christians, yet boasting has a tendency to make us examine the boaster!

The practical thing is to believe that when we are proud, ourselves, there is something wrong with us. Whenever we stand before the mirror and think what fine fellows we are, we had better go, at once, to the

Great Physician and beseech Him to give us medicine for our vanity! Mr. Peacock, you are certainly very handsome, but you should hear yourself croak! Professor, there are fine points about you, but there are sorry ones, too! Be humble and so be wise. Brother, if you get an inch above the ground you are just that inch too high! If you have anything apart from Christ—if you can live five minutes on past experience—if you think that you can live on yesterday's Grace you are mistaken!

You put the manna away so very carefully. You stored it up in the cupboard with such self-content. Go to it tomorrow morning, instead of joining the rest of your Brethren in gathering the fresh manna which will fall all around the camp. Go to the cupboard where you stored up yesterday's manna! Ah, as soon as you open the door you close it again! Why did you shut that door so quickly? Well, we need not look inside the cupboard—the smell is enough! It has happened as Moses foretold it—it has bred worms and it stinks as he said it would. Cover it up as quickly as you can. Dig a deep hole and throw it all in and bury it! That is the only thing to do with such rottenness. Day by day go to Christ and you will get your sweet manna. But begin to live on past or present attainments and they will breed worms and stink as sure as you are a man. Do not try it, for, "none can keep alive his own soul."

IV. Last of all, THIS SUBJECT INDICATES A WAY OF USEFULNESS for everyone here present who is a child of God. I think the great business of the Christian's life is to serve God and he can do that, mainly, by aiming at the conversion of sinners! It is a grand thing to be blessed of God to turn sinners from the error of their ways. But listen, Brothers and Sisters, there is equally good work to be done by helping struggling saints. The old Roman said he thought it as much an honor to preserve a Roman citizen as to slay an enemy of his country—and he was right. There is as much acceptance before God in the work of instrumentally preserving souls, alive, as in being made the means of making souls to live in the first place.

The upholding of Believers is as necessary an exercise for Christian workers as the ingathering of unbelievers. I want you to think about this. If there is a person nearly drowned, a man will leap into the water to bring him out. And he gets great credit for it and deserves it. And so when a man saves a soul from death by earnest ministry, let him be glad and thank God. But if a man is starving and ready to die, and you give him bread. Or if he is not reduced to that point, but would have been so had you not interfered, you have done as good an action in preserving life as the other friend who snatched life from between the jaws of death! You must never think little of the work which instructs the ignorant Christian, which clears the stumbling blocks out of the way of the perplexed Believer, which comforts the feeble-minded and supports the weak. These necessary works must be done, while soul-saving must not be left undone!

Perhaps some of you never will be the means of the conversion of many. Then try to be the means of comfort to as many as you can. To be the means, in the hand of the Holy Spirit, of nurturing the life which God has given, is a worthy service and very acceptable with God. I would urge the members of this Church to watch over one another. Be pastors to each other! Be very careful over the many young people that have come among us and, if you see any backslide—in a gentle and affectionate manner endeavor to bring them back. Do you know any despondent ones? Lay yourselves out to comfort them! Do you see faults in any? Do not tell them of them hastily, but labor, as God shall help you, to teach them a better way. As the Lord often preserves you by the help of others, so in return seek to be, in God's hands, the means by which He shall keep your Brethren from going astray, from sinking in despair, or from falling into error.

I hold it out to you as a good and blessed work to do—will you try to accomplish it? Now, if you say, "Yes," and I think every Christian, here, says, "Yes," then I am going to speak to you concerning the collection, Brothers and Sisters. This is Hospital Sunday and we must contribute our full share! Do you see any connection between this subject and the collection? I think I do. Here are these poor sick folks who will die unless they are carefully looked to, unless medicine and a physician's skill are provided for them. I know you are ready, enough, to look after sick souls—the point to which I have brought you is one which involves such readiness.

Well, now, he who would look after a sick soul will be sure to care for a sick body! I hope you are not of the same class as the priest in the fable who was entreated by a beggar to give him a crown. "By no means," said the reverend father, "why should I give you a crown?" "Will you give me a shilling, Holy Father?" No, he would not give him a shilling, nor even a penny. "Then," said he, "Holy Father, will you, of your charity, give me a farthing?" No, he would not do anything of the sort. At last the beggar said, "Would not, Your Reverence, be kind enough to give me your blessing?" "Oh yes, my Son, you shall have it at once! Kneel down and receive it." But the man did not kneel down to receive it, for he reasoned that if it had been worth a farthing the "holy father" would not have given it to him. And so he went his way.

Men have enough practical sense to always judge that if professed Christians do not care for their bodily needs, there cannot be much sincerity in their zeal for men's souls. If a man will give me spiritual bread in the form of a tract, but would not give me a piece of bread for my body, how can I think much of him? Let practical help to the poor go with the spiritual help which you render to them! If you would help to keep a Brother's soul alive in the higher sense, be not backward to do it in the more ordinary way. You have an opportunity of proving your sincerity and gratifying your charity, for the boxes will go round at once!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 22. HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—103 (VER. III), 407. 668.

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