

Night—and Jesus Not There!

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that even in the darkest times when Jesus seems absent, believers must trust in His sovereign love and faithfulness, knowing He will come to comfort and save them.

Scripture: John 6:17, Hebrews 12:6, Isaiah 54:7-8, Psalm 23:4, 2 Timothy 2:13

Topics: "Faith in Trials", "Presence of Christ", "Divine Comfort"

Description

In this devotional sermon, C.H. Spurgeon explores the painful experience of Jesus' apparent absence during dark and stormy times, using the disciples' struggle on the sea as a vivid illustration. He encourages believers to trust in Christ's sovereign love and faithfulness, reminding them that even when Jesus seems distant, He is always near and will come to comfort His people. Spurgeon offers practical hope and spiritual insight for those enduring trials and spiritual dryness.

Transcript

"And it was now dark, and Jesus had not come to them." John 6:17.

CHRIST'S disciples, when they joined Him, had some very happy times with Him—and they had just had a very grand day in feeding the multitude. I wish I had been there to help in the feeding of 5,000 men. Everyone who had a share in that service was highly honored and those who were not there might well regret their absence on such an eventful day! But notice fair days have foul eventides and the Christ manifested during the day may become a Christ hidden during the night. Close on the heels of the intense excitement of great success comes the relapse into darkness of spirit and absence of joy. The very same men who had been rejoicing with unspeakable joy in the Divine power of their Master, are now left to endure that which is a very sad experience for anyone to have—everything dark—and Jesus not there!

I am going to talk about the condition of the men described in our text. "It was now dark, and Jesus had not come to them." And, first, I shall speak about the affliction of His absence. Secondly, about some considerations which may cheer us under it And then, thirdly, I shall take a very different and far more terrible view of this condition and apply it to quite another class of persons.

I. First, then, "It was now dark, and Jesus had not come to them." This suggests to us THE AFFLICTION OF HIS ABSENCE.

It was a great affliction for these disciples to have Christ away from them at all. Whenever He was away, they were as sheep without a shepherd and as soldiers without a leader, but for Him to be away when they were at sea—when they were at sea in the dark—when they were at sea in a storm—all this made it much worse for them, for, although we always need Jesus, yet we more peculiarly recognize the value of His Presence when we can derive no comfort from anything else.

Christ's absence was, in itself, an affliction to His disciples and, in proportion as we love Him, we shall acknowledge it to be an affliction to have Him absent from us. Those who never knew the sweetness of the society of Christ do not feel any sorrow that He is absent from them. A person who had never tasted pure water, but has always had to drink some foul draught, would not sigh for the cooling spring because he had never known its sweetness. There is no poverty in the world so dire as the poverty of those who have been rich—and there are none who can know the value of the Savior, in His absence, but those who have enjoyed His preciousness by dwelling in His Presence! If your love to Jesus Christ is chilled, you will not miss Him much. Prince Emmanuel went away from Mansoul and when He was gone, the townspeople did not miss Him. But had they been enjoying continual fellowship with Him and He had departed from them only for a little while, they would have begun to sigh and cry in the bitterness of their souls—and would not have been content till they had Him back again—and would have been ready to die if He did not come back to them at once! To those who intensely love Him, it is, in itself, an affliction to be without the Savior! And it is an affliction in proportion as they love Him.

These men were put to many inconveniences by Christ's absence. To be without the Savior made the darkness seem all the darker. Had He been there, they might have sung—if the lines had then been written—

"Mid darkest shades, if He appears, My dawning is begun!"

If Christ is in the boat with us, I do not know that it matters much whether the sun is shining or not, for, if the sun shall shine, we shall see HIM, and delight to see Him by the light of the sun. But if it is dark, we will see Christ by His own light and rejoice to see, in that brighter light, what we might not have recognized had the sunlight still shone upon us! You all know what it is to be in the dark and you know that material darkness is not comfortable. I remember being in a third-class railway carriage with a large number of other people travelling a long journey at night. Somebody struck a match and lit a candle. That became the most cheerful part of the carriage and our eyes could not help turning in that direction, for we did not like the darkness. Nobody does. There is also a kind of mental darkness in which you are disturbed, perplexed, worried, troubled—not, perhaps, about anything tangible—you could not write down your troubles. It may even be that you really don't have any, but you feel troubled and dismayed. Other people say that you are nervous and they blame you and say, "You ought not to give way in this manner." That is what they think. But when a person gets into your present condition, that is the unkindest thing that anyone can possibly say—and the least likely to do any good to the poor troubled soul! I do not mind a trouble which I can see and understand. Manfully would I shoulder it in my Master's strength. But when the spirit, itself, is in the dark, one imagines a thousand evil things! Even good things, themselves, seem to be evil and what should be to your encouragement becomes often a source of discouragement! Have any of you ever been in that condition? If you have, and if Jesus has not come to you, then, I am sure that you have felt it very difficult and you have greatly needed His Presence.

There are a great many of you who appear to have a large stock of faith, but it is only because you are in very good health and your business is prospering. If you happened to get a disordered liver, or your

business should fail, I would not be surprised if nine parts out of ten of your wonderful faith would evaporate! I have noticed that certain brethren who talk about being perfect are generally persons of robust constitution with a very comfortable income and not much to do except to go about to conferences and conventions—and talk about themselves. But the tried people of God do not often ride upon those high horses. They have to cry out very frequently! They have many anxieties and cares which, although they cast them upon the Lord, make them realize that they are not yet pure spirits, but are still in the body. Let a man have a bad headache for about half an hour and let him see whether he does not feel himself to be mortal and to still have something sinful about him!

Another part of the affliction of the disciples when "it was now dark, and Jesus had not come to them," was that their toil became very wearisome. They were rowing and they had rowed their boat several furlongs from the shore and it was wearisome work in Christ's absence. When He was with them and favored them with a cheering glance, and spoke comforting messages to them, I can well imagine how merrily that boat went along—how they tugged the oar as the Venetian gondolier tugs his to the sound of song, and how the vessel would glide over the waves! But now they had to toil by themselves and there was no sweet word from Jesus, no gracious promise from His lips, no loving glance from His dark eyes which were to them "like the fish pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Beth-Rabbim." Now that their Lord was absent, it was all tugging and straining till muscle and sinew were weary. It is just so with our Christian service—if Christ is with us, it is glorious work to teach in the Sunday school or to preach in the congregation! And going from house to house is light work to the visitor, for he is conscious of the Presence of his Master. But if the Lord's Presence is withdrawn, you feel that you must do these things from a sense of duty. You will do them and you will nerve yourself up to persevere with the task, but it is hard, trying work.

Not only did the darkness seem to get darker and the toil become more wearisome, but the way grew rougher, for we are told that "the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew." When our Lord Jesus Christ is with us, rough roads grow smooth, but when He is absent, smooth roads grow rough. It is marvelous how a man who lives in the light of Christ's Countenance makes light of losses and crosses. He takes them as a matter of course, or, better still, he accepts them as gifts from God and believes that they will be overruled for good—and so he keeps on singing as he passes over the rough road. But if Jesus Christ is absent, a comparatively easy lot appears to be a heavy one and where we should have seen a thousand mercies, we only have an eye to observe our discomforts. It is trying traveling when the waves are rough and it is dark—and Jesus is not there.

Worst of all, when Jesus is away, all perils become more terrible. Many a boat has perished on the Galilean Lake, beneath those waters which sometimes gleam so placidly as though they tempted the boat to float upon their surface. And many a man has found a watery grave in that land-locked sea when it has worked tempestuously beneath the gusts from

the surrounding hills. If Jesus had been with His disciples on that stormy night. If He had been awake to speak to and cheer them, they would have rejoiced to see the boat go up and down, from the trough of the wave to the billow's crown, like some great sea bird in its play! They would have felt a sort of hilarity of spirit at being in such a brisk gale when the Lord High Admiral of all the seas was in command of their boat! But now that He was away from them, they feared that the vessel would go down. They thought they would never survive that storm, they would drift onto a rock and not one of them would again reach the shore! The perils are, indeed, great when it is dark and Jesus is not there!

You will say, dear Friends, that I am describing a very sad condition of things. Well, it is no fancied one to me, at any rate, and I think it is no unusual thing for those whom Jesus loves to be put into such a condition. There are many saints of whom we read in the Word who were precious in the sight of the Lord, but, among them all, where do you find one who was not tried? "O man greatly beloved," was said to Daniel and, therefore, it might have been added, "O man greatly tried and passed through stern processes to prove whether you really are what you seem to be." Whatever God keeps away from His servants, I do not think He ever keeps away the rod from them! He had one Son without sin, but He never had one son without chastisement. If there are many of God's children who have not yet had any trials, I would not recommend them to pray for it—that would be very wrong. The Lord's children need not ask to be whipped, but I would advise them to reckon that somewhere between here and Heaven they will have to realize the truth of that saying of the Apostle, "If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chastens

not?"

There I leave this first point—the affliction of Christ's absence.

II. Now, secondly, I am going to mention SOME CONSIDERATIONS WHICH MAY CHEER US WHEN IN THIS

CONDITION.

The first consideration I would mention is this. Dear Friend, perhaps it may not really be as you think it is. You say that Christ is absent from you, but, possibly He is not. Perhaps you have not really lost His Presence. "Oh, but I am not as happy as I once was!" I do not know that Christ's company in the soul necessarily makes that soul consciously happy continually. I know that Jesus was very near to Peter when a look from Him made the sinful disciple go out and weep bitterly. I think that the Presence of Christ may sometimes tend to breed in us a certain holy sorrow which, though not so sweet, is yet as precious as holy joy itself. Perhaps, dear Friend, you are not just now in a right state of body or in a right mental condition to get joy and happiness from the Presence of Christ. At any rate, if He were not there, your spirit would have sunk much lower than it does now. Sad as you are, you would have been much sadder if it had not been for the sacred influence of His more than magnetic Presence which is really staying your soul. You might have fallen into despair, but you have not come to that condition yet and it is because His left hand is under your head so that, although you sink, you do not sink lower. You might have been utterly overwhelmed if it had not been for the Divine supports which have been given to keep you where you are!

I will tell you a secret from my own experience. I have had times in which I have blamed myself and grieved before God and if anyone had asked me, "What is your soul's condition?" I would have said, "Bad." Yet, in a month or two's time, I have longed to have that very condition over again, for I have said to myself, "I am happy now, but I wish I could grieve over sin as I did then. I think I have strong faith now, but I wish I had the same tender consciousness of the least touch and taint of sin that I had in what I regarded as my dark days." We are very bad judges of our own spiritual experiences. We often undervalue who God esteems and set great store by that which God does not prize. So it may be that Christ is really with you, dear Friend, although you are writing such bitter things against yourself and mourning His absence.

If He is, indeed, absent, there is one thing to comfort you, namely, that you have not driven Him away by your sins. That is to say if you are in the same condition as those disciples were in the vessel. Their Master had bid them go, and they had gone at His command. He had left them—they had not left Him, so

they had not to blame themselves because He was not there when the darkness came on.

If you are conscious that you have been living in some known sin, go and bitterly repent of it before God. If you have grieved the Spirit of God and driven Him away from you, listen to the voice which says, "Return, you backsliding children." But that is not the subject upon which I am now speaking. I am addressing these who think they have lost the Presence of Christ, these whose conscious joy has departed, who, nevertheless, are not aware that there has been anything in them which would separate them from their God. You, dear Friends, may derive comfort from this fact. Say, "Well, as the Lord has sent us to sea and left us, we are where He put us. And as this is His Sovereign appointment, even if it is the post of trial, so let it be. We will kiss the rod and even in the dark we will believe that all is well! And just as a child, when it is put to bed without a candle, must not cry, but must go to sleep, so we will not weep, but bow submissively to whatever our Lord ordains."

Further, if Jesus Christ is not in the boat with His disciples, although it is dark, they have this thought to comfort them—that He still loves them. He is not there, but He loves them, so His heart is with them. They seem to be alone, but their names are written on His heart just as they used to be. Yes, Beloved, our condition before God does not depend upon our conscious enjoyment. Do you believe that we are children of God today because we are happy, and that we may be children of the devil tomorrow because we may then be desponding? Oh, no!—

"If ever it should come to pass That sheep of Christ should fall away, My fickle, feeble soul, alas, Would fall a thousand times a day!" But the mercy is that even though we believe not, He is faithful! We change, but He changes not! And when His servants are in a storm or under a cloud, the love of Jesus Christ for them is just the same as when they rejoiced in the full sunlight of conscious enjoyment of His Presence.

Recollect, also, that although you cannot see Jesus and He is not with you, He knows where you are. You cannot see Him, but He can see you. "What a terrible blast came down from the hills just now!" The Lord knows all about it and how it made the ship rock and reel, and stagger like a drunken man. "That wave seemed to come right over us and to wet us to the skin." Yes, but Christ knew every drop that was in it and just where each drop would fall. "But see how every timber in the vessel starts—it must surely go to pieces soon." But Christ knows all about the starting of the timbers and the straining of the masts. He is not ignorant of the condition of any of His children. And if He has put them in a position of trial, He Himself watches over them with tender and sympathetic eyes and knows exactly their perils and their needs.

And, more than that, our blessed Lord not only knows where we are and all about our circumstances—and loves us and feels for us—but He can come to us. "How can He come to us? We are many furlongs out at sea." Yes, but He can come to you. "But there is no other boat near and if there were, how could it live in such a storm as this? Would you have us believe that He will come riding upon the wings of the wind or walking upon the waves? It cannot be!" Yet it was, you know, for Jesus did come to them. And if you say, in the time of your distress, that the Lord Jesus cannot come to you, I must tell you that you know not what you are saying! His people never can be in a place where He cannot get to them!

And what is more—let this comfort you—He will come to you for He did come to His disciples. He came walking on the water and so reached them—and He will come to you, also. Though He may tarry a little while, for the trial of your faith, He will come to you before long. If you believe in Christ even when it is dark with you, the clear shining will come to you before long—

"When your eye of faith is dim, Still trust in Jesus, sink or swim"—

and in due time Christ must come to you. He cannot finally forsake one of His people and when He comes, He will say, "For a small moment have I forsaken you, but with great mercies will I gather you. In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says the Lord your Redeemer." So be of good cheer, for Jesus Christ will come to you even when it is all dark around you!

And here is another word of cheer for you, namely that when He does come, it will be in a way that will give you a higher sense of His Glory than you ever had before. You have seen Him on the land, but you have never yet seen Him on the water! Well, you could not see Him walking on the water unless you were on the water, yourself—and you could not see Jesus Christ calming the storm unless there was a storm to be quieted! And if the wind did not blow, you could not tell whether He could control it. Trial is absolutely necessary in order to reveal to us some of the attributes of our gracious God! We cannot, ordinarily, see the stars in the daytime, but if we go down a mine or a well, we can. And often in the deep mines or wells of trouble, as we go down, down, down, we see the brightness of our Lord Jesus Christ as we never saw it before! You know that there is a certain kind of ink with which you may write but no one will perceive that there is any writing on the paper until it is held near a fire—the heat of the fire makes the writing legible. There are

many precious promises that are written with this invisible ink and, until you hold them to the fire of affliction or trial, you will never read them and understand them. You must be brought into this trial! You must be in the dark, or Jesus will not come to you with such a splendid display of His marvelous power and love as He gave to His disciples on that stormy sea! But, look—over the tops of those rolling billows He comes—the Man, the Christ, the God—swift to help and deliver you in your hour of greatest peril! Oh, it is worthwhile to miss His Presence for a while—and to be in darkness for a time—if we may afterwards see Him in a still nobler Character and understand more of His mighty power to save!

It is very possible that when your Lord comes back to you, His return will be to you the end of a great many troubles, toils and difficulties. I do not understand how it was, but when our Lord came walking on the water and entered the little vessel, "immediately the ship was at the land where they went." There was some sudden lift, or darting forward of the vessel and immediately it was at the shore! Have you ever noticed how when you have had a time of great spiritual darkness and, perhaps, of great labor and trial, and you have worried yourself because you could not see the Lord's hand in it all and could not trace the Lord's love overruling it, Jesus Christ has at last come to you and there has been an immediate end to your spiritual trouble—and what has been possibly more remarkable, there has been an end to all the rest of your trials? Perhaps, for months afterwards, you have not had any spiritual darkness, or stormy winds or contrary waves! There was a great calm after all your trials, just as, when the children of Israel had been so oppressed in Egypt and were about to be delivered from the hand of Pharaoh, the Lord said, "Against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue."

I have had those seasons of wonderful calm when not a dog has moved his tongue against me, although I have had all the dogs of Hell at my heels a little while before! There have been no troubles from above, around, or beneath—not a devil has dared to tempt me and nothing external has afflicted me—all seemed to come exactly as I would have it and all in a moment! Perhaps it would not be safe for us to get to land so quickly without having first been in the dark a little while. We cannot bear sudden prosperity. Great success is one of the worst perils of mankind. Many a man has been elevated until his brain has grown dizzy and he has fallen to his destruction. He who is to be made to stand securely on a high place has need to be put through sharp affliction. More men are destroyed by prosperity and success than by

affliction and apparent failure.

These are some of the considerations which may cheer those of God's people who, for a time, walk in darkness and see no Light of God. May God bless these words to any mourning saint who may hear or read them!

III. But now, in concluding my discourse, I am going to make a very different use of the text. There are some of you—I am glad to see you here and I pray the Lord to bless the message which I am about to give you—there are some of you who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ and who are not trusting in Him. Your condition may be described in those amazing words of the Apostle Paul, (to me they are very amazing), "without Christ." That is one of the saddest things that can be said of anybody—"without Christ." Possibly you say that you do not see any sadness in your present condition. You enjoy yourself very much. You are young, in good health, the world is bright and life seems to be one continual dance to you. It is true that Jesus has not come to you, but you do not need Him and you think that you can do very well without Him. But one of these days it will be very dark all around you—and it is a very terrible thing for a man when it is dark and Jesus does not come to him!

I have seen such people. I saw some of them during the recent financial panic—they were men of considerable business and they were making money, but everything around them seemed to be shaking. Many firms were failing and presently the news came that there was a failure in a certain house which would involve them in its ruin. All was gone in a moment and there was nothing to be done but to call their creditors together and tell them the truth. In such a time as that, a man who has a large family depending upon him and who occupied a high position in society may have to come down to almost absolute poverty. I do not know what some men whom I saw then, did, for they had not any Christ to go and talk to—they had not the Well-Beloved into whose ear they could whisper the sad tale of their troubles. I know that some of them were glad to get anybody to listen to what they had to say, and it was a sorry story. Well now, some of you have been prospering in worldly matters. God has blessed you with temporal goods, but reverses may come to you and what will you do, then, without Christ?

But there is something worse than that! It may be that your worldly business may continue to prosper, but there may come to you a mental trouble. It does come to you sometimes, does it not? You have been out to a very merry party, but when you come home you feel dreadfully flat. Do you not occasionally get into that state? Perhaps I am addressing someone who used to be very interested in the theater. He has been again, lately, but somehow or other the plays are not so interesting as they used to be, or else he has changed his attitude towards them. The fact is that the man has not the tastes and desires that he once had. If he goes where he used to go, he does not any longer find the mirth and merriment that he used to find there—the laughter seems to him to be folly and madness—he cannot enjoy it. Well now, if you have lost your taste for this world, it is a sorry thing for you if you have not acquired a taste for another and a better world! If your old friend has gone from you, it is a sad thing if the new best Friend does not come to you! I pity those of you who once thought yourselves so very good and whose self-righteousness is all gone, but who have nothing better in the place of it—it is very dark and Jesus has not come to you. I pity you who were once so self-contained and dogmatic, but who now begin to tremble and to be afraid because Jesus does not come to you it is night with you—mental night—and it is night in your circumstances, yet Jesus has not come to you. What I would bid you do is just look through the thick darkness, for on the crest of the wave, the crucified Savior is standing! And if you will but look to Him with the eye of faith, He will come into your vessel and deliver you. He will sanctify your trouble, clear away the affliction from your mind and give you peace and rest!

Remember, also, that in a very short time all of you will die. Will you picture yourself lying upon the bed of sickness? I cannot describe the room, for I have not seen it, but I can well imagine you propped up with pillows, for you can scarcely get your breath. And the physician has told your wife that in a few hours it will be all over. And you have been very gently told—at least, you have spelt it out for yourself—that they have given you up and that the sweat that they are wiping from your brow is really the death-sweat. It is very dark. There, bid "good-bye" to your wife and children, for you must leave them. Look out of the window and see what you can of the surroundings of the old homestead, for you are going to leave it and you have no home to dwell in forever. It is very dark. Money cannot help you now. The honors you have gained cannot help you now. And the fondness of affection, which would help you if it could, cannot help you now. It is very dark, but, worst of all, Jesus has not come to you—

"Jesus can make a dying bed Feel soft as downy pillows"—

but if He does not come to you then, man, what will you do? What will you do? What will you do? To die in the dark is terrible! To live in the dark is more than I would choose, but what must it be to die in the dark and not to have Jesus with you? May God deliver you! But if you will not have Christ as your Savior in life, how can you expect to have Him in death? Fly to Him now, lest tomorrow you should see the picture which I have sketched, executed to the very life—and you the subject of it!

But if it is dreadful to die without the Savior, what will it be to wake up in the unseen world without Him? And, at the last, what will it be when the great trumpet sounds, to have no Savior to welcome you, but, instead thereof, to see Him far away, seated upon that Great White Throne as your Judge? What will it be to have no Jesus coming to help you when the earth is rocking and reeling and the Heavens are on fire, and the books are opened, and the Judge is dividing, to the right and to the left, the sheep and the goats? And, all the while, He has not darted one glance of love at you, or opened His lips to say one friendly word to you? Think what will be your despair when, at last, it comes your turn to hear the terrible words, "Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."—

"You sinners, seek His Grace,

Whose wrath you cannot bear!

Fly to the shelter of His Cross

And find salvation there."

Look to Him and live! God help you to look now! And then, when it is dark, Jesus will come to you—no, better still, He will live with you forever and ever!

God bless you all, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: JOHN 6:14-40.

Verses 14, 15. Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that Prophet who should come into the world. When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take Him by force, to make Him a king, He departed again into a mountain, Himself alone. Our Lord Jesus had just worked the miracle of feeding the five thousand men with five loaves and two small fishes, so He was very popular at that time. The people even wanted to come and take Him by force and make Him a king, but He escaped from them, for He knew the value of that popularity! What was it but a puff of wind?

Probably many of the very people who tried then to crown Him were among the crowds in Jerusalem who cried, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" And, nowadays there may be a great deal of anxiety to hear the Gospel, yet very little result may follow from it. A crowded House of Prayer is certainly a very hopeful sight, yet it may end in disappointment to those who are looking for souls to be won for the Savior.

16-26. And when evening was now come, His disciples went down unto the sea, and entered into a boat, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus had not come to them. And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew. So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near unto the boat and they were afraid. But He said unto them, It is I; be not afraid. Then they willingly received Him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land where they went. The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other boat there, save that one which His disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with His disciples into the boat, but that His disciples were gone away alone, (howbeit there came other boats from Tiberius near unto the place where they did eat bread, after the Lord had given thanks). When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither His disciples, they also took boats, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus. And when they had found Him on the other side of the sea, they said unto Him, Rabbi, when did You come here? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, You seek Me not because you saw the miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves, and were filled. How faithful and truthful the Master was! There was in Him nothing of the political concealment of His knowledge and the endeavor to please everybody which we see in so many! He speaks the truth whether it offends or pleases His hearers—and so should His servants. "You seek Me," He said, "not because you saw the miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves, and were filled."

27. Labor not for the meat which perishes, but for that meat which endures unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you, for Him has God the Father sealed. He rebuked their excessive ardor in seeking meat for their bodies and urged them rather to seek food for their souls. But did you ever notice what an extraordinary piece of advice our Savior gave to these people? It is one of His paradoxes. He bade them not to labor for the very thing which they could not get without laboring, and to labor for that which they never could get by laboring. "Labor not for the meat which perishes"—yet how else can we have it? "But for that meat which endures unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you." It is a free gift and not the reward of labor, yet Christ told them to labor for it! Did He not mean just this—"Let not your greatest efforts be expended upon the things of time and sense, but let them go out after eternal and spiritual blessings"?

28. Then said they unto Him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? 'What is the noblest work that we can do? What is that work which will please God most?"

29. Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent. The grandest work that any man can do is to believe on the Savior whom God has sent. There are some who despise faith, but Christ was not of that number. He honored it exceedingly when He said, in effect, "This is the Godlike work, the work which is nearest to God's heart, 'that you believe on Him whom He has sent.'" Dear Friend, are you struggling after that which is high and noble? Would you do the best day's work that was ever done in any mortal life? Then run not to this or that invention of your own, but be content to believe on Him whom God has sent! This is the first, the highest, the noblest work—the work which gives to God the greatest pleasure!

30. They said therefore unto Him, What sign show You then, that we may see, and believe You? What do You work? What strange questions for them to ask when He had amazed them with His wonderful works!

31. Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from Heaven to eat They talked about "bread" again—how they persist in coming back to that! You know the questions that men of the world are

always asking, "What shall we eat, what shall we drink, and with what shall we be clothed?" This is the world's wretched trinity!

32. Then Jesus said to them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from Heaven; but My Father gives you the true bread from Heaven. Moses did not give Israel the manna, God gave it. And it did not come from Heaven, that is, from the celestial sphere, in the sense in which Christ, the true Bread, came from Heaven.

33. For the Bread of God is He which comes down from Heaven, and gives life unto the world. The Bread of God is Jesus Christ, Himself! The man who would feed so as to satisfy his spiritual nature, and live thereby, must feed upon Jesus Christ, Himself.

34. Then said they unto Him, Lord, give us this bread. They did not understand the meaning of their own prayer. Sometimes, in our services, when people are very quickly convicted of sin and fall to praying all of a sudden, a wise conductor ought to enquire carefully whether it is not a mistaken prayer. I do not doubt that many of the cries and many of the professions made in enquiry-rooms are mistaken ones, after all, and that we put down as the results of our work much of which we shall have cause to be ashamed when it comes to the time of testing.

35. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that comes to Me shall never hunger and he that believes in Me shall never thirst. Hear this, poor starving people! The needs of your soul can all be met by Jesus Christ! If you have Him, the hunger of your spirit shall be appeased and the thirst of your heart shall be quenched.

36. But I said unto you that you have seen Me, and believe not. How the Savior brings the truth home to these people and He might do the same to some of you. You pray, "Give us this bread" and He replies, "I have given it to you, yet you have not eaten it. You have seen Me, you have heard Me, you know Me and yet you do not believe on Me." If Christ were to appear in this building at this moment, might He not say to many of you, "You have heard of Me from your childhood and you know all you need to know about Me, yet you have not believed in Me"? Would God it were not so with so many of you!

37-40. All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me and him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from Heaven not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me. And this is the Father's will which has sent Me, that of all which He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it again at the last day. And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son, and believes on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. This is the glorious Gospel of the blessed God—that everyone who looks to Christ with eyes of faith has everlasting life, and though his body may die, yet even for that there is everlasting life, for Christ will raise him up again at the last day. Oh, that you would all believe on Jesus Christ and so find that eternal life!

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