

Sad Fasts Changed To Glad Feasts

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that God transforms sorrowful fasts into joyful feasts by calling His people to a transformed character, promising renewed conditions, and ordaining the transfiguration of sacred ordinances.

Scripture: Zechariah 8:19, Psalm 137:1, Zechariah 7:9, Zechariah 7:10, Zechariah 7:17, Zechariah 8:2, Zechariah 8:4, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Transformation", "God's Promises", "Spiritual Renewal"

Description

In this sermon, C.H. Spurgeon expounds on Zechariah 8:19, revealing how God transforms the sorrowful fasts of His people into joyful feasts through spiritual renewal. He emphasizes the necessity of a transformed character marked by truth, peace, and righteousness, the promise of restored conditions, and the joyful change of religious observances. Spurgeon encourages believers to embrace God's mercy and experience the blessings of His presence in their lives.

Transcript

"Thus says the Lord of Hosts; The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace." Zechariah 8:19.

MY time for discourse upon this subject will be limited, as we shall gather around the Communion Table immediately afterwards. So in the former part of my sermon I shall give you an outline of what might be said upon the text if we had time to examine it fully. It will be just a crayon sketch without much light and shade. You will be able to think over the subject at your leisure and fill up the picture for yourselves!

We have, in the chapters we have read, a blessed message of peace to God's people in the day of their trouble. In the land of their captivity the Jews were in great perplexity. Their sad lament is on record—"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yes, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof." But their trouble led many of them to seek the Lord and He was found of them. Welcome is such misery which leads to such mercy! In the seventh chapter we are told that when they sent unto the house of God, to pray before the Lord and to say, "Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years? Then came the Word of the Lord." Jehovah has put their tears into His bottle and, in answer to their sighing, sent them a message of hope! That message has in it much that is very practical. It is a letter full of mercy, but it is directed to certain characters. God does not send indiscriminate mercy. If men go on in their sin, He sends them words of

judgement. But when they turn from their wickedness and are renewed, by His Grace, in the spirit of their minds, then it is that words of comfort are spoken to them.

Reviewing the whole message which Zechariah was commissioned to deliver and which is summed up in our text, there are three things which stand out in clear prominence. The first is that God calls for transformation of character in the people He is going to bless. The second is that He promises translation of condition to those whose characters are thus changed and beautiful. And, lastly, He ordains transfiguration of ordinances as the result of the new character and condition. The whole subject is exceedingly suggestive and well worthy of careful study when you reach your homes.

We must not lose sight of the fact that, primarily, this message is for Israel according to the flesh and contains a prophesy of their latter-day glory. God has not cast off His people whom He did foreknow and there are majestic words here which still await their fulfillment when the set time shall have come. The Lord "will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem" and make the place of His feet glorious in that day. But as "no prophesy of Scripture is of any private interpretation," so the message to the Jews also bears a message for us! Let us seek to learn its lesson well.

I. My text reminds me—and the chapter before us emphasizes the fact—that when God means to bless His people, HE CALLS FOR TRANSFORMATION OF CHARACTER. The promise of the abiding Presence of the Lord God Almighty is always preceded by the call to separation and holiness. "The words which the Lord had cried by the former Prophets" made it very clear that only with the righteous nation would God dwell—and Zechariah delivers a similar message.

Very remarkable will be the transformation of character which God shall work. According to the text, love of the Truth of God is to be one of the main effects of the change. These people certainly did not set much value on the truth be-fore—they were in love with every lie, with every false God and with every false prophet. But God would have them taste

of His Covenant blessings and be set free from every false way. It is the only truth that can set men free, yet many there are, even today, who delight to be in bondage to error! How is it with you? Do you love the Truth of God, or can you put up with that which is not true, if it is only pleasant? Say, dear Heart, are you anxious after Truth—Truth in your head, Truth in your heart, Truth on your tongue, Truth in your life? If you are false and love falsehood, you are taken with a sore disease—and unless you are healed of the plague, you can never enter Heaven! You must be transformed and made true—and only the Spirit of Truth can effect the mighty change.

Another sign must follow—love of peace. The text also says, "Therefore love peace." In some men it is a plain proof of conversion when they desire peace. Some are naturally very hot-tempered and soon boil over. These are the men of great force of character, or else of great shallowness—it is the small pot which is soon hot. Some are malicious. They can take enmity quietly and keep it in the refrigerator of their cold hearts for years! Such love is not peace—they are at war with all who have, in any degree, disappointed or displeased them. When the Grace of God takes away an angry, passionate, malicious disposition, it achieves a great wonder. But then Grace, itself, is a great wonder—and unless this change is worked in you who need it, you shall not see God, for you cannot enter Heaven to go into a passion there. Depend upon it, unless you lose your bad temper, you will never be among the ranks of the glorified! It must be conquered and removed if you are to join the happy hosts on high. "They are without fault before the Throne of God"—and so must you be if you are to be numbered among that company.

Moreover, those whom God blesses have undergone a transformation as to their conduct with each other. Righteous dealing is another effect of the change. Notice the ninth verse of the seventh chapter—"Thus speaks the Lord of Hosts, saying, Execute true judgment." This is, at all times, a necessary admonition, but never more necessary than now, when so many never dream of justice and goodness—in business and in private life many seem to have no care for righteousness. If the thing will pay, they will rob right and left—they will only be honest because there is an old saw that says, "Honesty is the best policy." But he that is honest out of policy is the most dishonest man in the world! May God grant us Grace to do what is right at all costs! Christians, when the Grace of God reigns in their souls, would rather be the poorest of the poor than get rich by a single act contrary to uprightness. O beloved members of this Church, be upright in all your transactions, clear and straight in your dealings—for how shall you call yourselves the children of the righteous God if you make gain by unholy transactions?

Another point of transformation lies in the exercise of compassion. This comes out in that same ninth verse of the seventh chapter—"Show mercy and compassions, every man, to his brother." A great mark of a changed heart is when we become tender, full of pity and kind. Some men have very little of the milk of human kindness about them. You may lay a case before them and they will wonder why you should come to them. And when you see how little they do, you wonder why you ever came to them! Many there are whose hearts are locked up in an iron safe and we cannot find the key! They have hidden the key—there is no getting at their hearts. One such said to a minister who preached a sermon, after which there was to be a collection, "You should preach to our hearts and then you would get some money." The minister replied, "Yes, I think that is very likely, for that is where you keep your money." The answer was a very good one. That is just where a great many persons carry their treasure—but when the Grace of God comes and renews the miser's heart—he begins to be generous! He has pity on the poor and compassion for the fallen—he loves to bless those who are round about Him, and make them happy. It is a mark of wonderful transformation in the character of some men, when their heart begins to go a little outside their own ribs and they can feel for the sorrow of other men!

Notice, next, in the 10th verse of that same seventh chapter, that another mark of God's people is consideration for others—"Oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor." How can he be a child of the all-bountiful Father who would make men work for wages that scarcely keep body and soul together? How can he be a son of the God of Love who will defraud the poor woman whose fingers must go stitch, stitch, stitch, half through the night, before she can even get enough to give her relief from her hunger? God's children will have nothing to do with this kind of thing! Those who take delight in oppressing the poor and who make their gain thereby, will be, themselves, pinched in eternal poverty—they are little likely to enter the golden gates of Paradise! There is many a child of God who has lived here in the depths of poverty—and when he gets to Heaven, away from all the struggle and bitterness, is he to see the man who was his oppressor here below, coming into Glory to sit side by side with him? I think not!

Once more, where there is a work of Grace, it leads men to brotherliness of character. "And let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart," says the Lord in the 10th verse of this seventh chapter. And the same thing is repeated in the 17th verse of the eighth chapter. I would be sure that some women were converted if they left off imagining evil against others in their hearts. For there are some women—and there are some men, too, I am sorry to say—who cannot think of anybody without thinking evil of them. There are such dreadful persons about and, sometimes, we come across them to our dismay. They paint the very saints of God black and there is no getting away from their slander—no, let a man live

the life of Enoch, yet would some of these people report evil against him! Slander is no sign of a saint—it is the brand of one who is under the dominion of the devil! "For all these are things that I hate, says the Lord." God save us from them all!

Thus I have given you a brief outline of the transformation of Grace. They are great changes because God works them. When men come to Him and yield themselves up to His Divine Power, He takes away the heart of stone and gives them a heart of flesh. He turns their nature to the very reverse of what it was before—then they follow after the Truth of God and peace—then they love righteousness and learn kindness through His good Spirit.

II. The second point to which I would draw your attention, with reference to the methods of God with His people, is that HE PROMISES TRANSMUTATIONS OF CONDITION to those men in whom are found the transformation of character. I have already read the eighth chapter to you—let us go through it, again, and pick out just a note or two of the joy and gladness which are here written in full score.

First, jealousy is turned into communing love. God represents Himself, in the second verse, as being very jealous about His people because He loved them so much. He was jealous for them with great fury. The people set up false gods in His own city, even in His own Temple, and God was angry with them and would not dwell with them. But when they repented and He had cleansed them by His mercy, He says, "I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem." What a change! God waits not until, by long obedience, His people win Him back. He does not say that He will return when they merit His Presence. No, the word comes to us full of surprise and power, "I am returned." Instantly, on the repentance, God comes back! A jealous God fights against me. I fly to Christ. He is content. He comes and dwells with me, no longer full of fury, but full of tenderness and love! If any of you have had God fighting against you, in holy jealousy chasing out your sin, happy will you be if you yield yourselves to Christ at once! If you do, God will come quickly and make your hearts to be His abode. May many get that transformation at this good hour!

Next, desolation is turned into population. On account of sin, Jerusalem became desolate. "I scattered them with a whirlwind," says the Lord, "among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate." Zion sat like a widow. Nobody came up to her solemn feasts. But God returned to her and He says, in the fourth verse, "There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof." So that when God comes to bless His people, where there was nobody, there seems to be everybody! When Churches and congregations sin, God often admonishes them and brings them low. But when they return to their God, the old saints are seen there, again, and there are new-born Believers in plenty. God can soon change the estate of His people. It is the same with individual souls who have gone away from God, but afterwards repent and return to Him. Then the desolation of heart is forgotten in the joy of the multitude of sweet and holy thoughts and interests that crowd the heart and life! Old experiences revive and new life and joy are born where God comes near to us in Grace and power! What a wonderful change this is! May we all taste its bliss!

Another change of condition follows—scattering is turned into gathering. God goes on to say that as He scattered His people, so He will bring them together again from the east and from the west. This, as I have already said, has a first reference to the scattered Israel, but how true it also is of us! When the Lord leaves us, we are scattered like sheep without a shepherd in a cloudy and dark day. But when we turn to

Him, His Word is sure. "I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness." May we know, in our new experience, the truth of that promise, "For a small moment have I forsaken you; but with great mercies will I gather you," and may it be to us according to His Word!

The next change is, that poverty is turned into plenty. Whereas they become poor and were half-starved with famine, God tells them that the city shall be prosperous—"The vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase,

and the heavens shall give their dew." God often changes men's circumstances when He changes their hearts. When He has been beating and bruising, if men will but yield to Him, He turns to them in love and plenty. May the Lord do this with any of us who have grieved Him and brought His rod upon us! There is no truer Word in the Book of God than this, "Seek you first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." With the Covenant blessings of Grace, God often bestows the common blessings of this life, even as it is written in the chapter before us, "I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things."

Farther on in the chapter, we are told of another change—ill-will is turned into good-will. Before the Lord graciously visited them, no man loved his neighbor. So we read in the 10th verse. But when God's Grace came and changed their character, then one city went to another and said, "Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of Hosts: I will go also," and they went up to the House of the Lord, together. Oh, where the Grace of God comes, it makes men friends! Enemies they may have been before, but then they go and seek one another out and they say, "Come, old Friend, let us end all this. Give me your hand and let bygones be bygones." There is nothing like love and unity among the people until the Grace of God comes and conquers the natural ill-will which otherwise would have had dominion! May such a transmutation take place between any here who may be at variance—and may all bitterness and hatred, if such things exist—be put away!

Did you not notice, also, in the reading of this chapter, how these people had been a curse and how, by the Presence of God, the curse is turned into a blessing? "And it shall come to pass, that as you were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and you shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong." When a Believer dishonors God, one of the worst results of it is that he becomes a snare to the people round about him. The very heathen look upon him as a curse. Inconsistent professors are the greatest stumbling blocks to the spread of the cause of Christ! But when their character is changed by the abounding Grace of God, they become like overflowing springs, sending streams of blessing far and wide!

Moreover, in the day of blessing, their reproach is turned into honor. The nation had been despised. Nobody would honor a Jew, but when they honored God, then God would honor them and 10 men would take hold of the garments of a man that was a Jew, saying, "We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you." A man of God would, then, become more precious than the gold of Ophir! Well, my Friends, when we return to God, God very soon has ways of making us honorable, so that we are of value among men! He makes use of us and men begin to perceive that we are not to be despised if God is with us and His blessing rests upon us.

Thus have I hurried over these two points because I want to dwell a little longer on the text, itself. It was necessary, however, to introduce it in this way.

III. Now we come to this fact which always accompanies God's Presence. HE ORDAINS TRANSFIGURATIONS

OF ORDINANCES. Four fasts, which had been kept by the Jews, were to be turned into feasts when the character of the men who observed them had changed and God had dealt graciously with them. Before this, their feasts had been farces— occasions of self-glorification and all manner of pride. Now, these days were to be festivals of gladness and times of drawing near to God, rejoicing in His good gift. In like manner, when a man becomes a Believer in Christ and is renewed, this principle operates—many a fast is turned into a feast—and many a sorrow and sadness into joy and gladness!

When the Communion Table shall be uncovered, you will see before you, in the emblems of the death of our Lord, what might have been the memory of a fast. The Lord of Life and Glory was nailed to the accursed tree. He died by the act of guilty men. We, by our sins, crucified the Son of God! We might have expected that, in remembrance of His death, we should have been called to a long, sad, rigorous fast. Do not many men think so even today? See how they observe Good Friday, a sad, sad day to many—yet our Lord has never enjoined our keeping such a day, or bid us to look back upon His death under such a melancholy aspect! Instead of that, having passed out from under the Old Covenant into the New, and resting in our risen Lord, who once was slain, we commemorate His death by a most joyous festival!

It came after the Passover, which was a feast of the Jews. But unlike that feast, which was kept by unleavened bread, this feast is brimful of joy and gladness! It is composed of bread and of wine, without a trace of bitter herbs, or anything that suggests sorrow and grief. The bread and the cup most fitly set forth the death of our Lord and Savior—and the mode of that death—even by the shedding of His blood. But as they stand before us, now, they evoke no tears! They suggest no sighs! The memorial of Christ's death is a festival, not a funeral! And we are to come to the table with gladsome

hearts, yes, and go away from it with praises, for, "after supper they sang a hymn." At both ends it was Psalm singing. The great Hallel of the Jews commenced it and another Psalm, full of joy and gladness, out of the hallelujahs of the Palms, finished it. Oh, what has God worked! We crucified the Christ of God, but in that Crucifixion we have found our Ransom! With wicked hands He was slain by us, but His blessed Sacrifice has put all our sin away forever! Our hymn rightly asks—

"'It is finished.' Shall we raise Songs of sorrow, or of praise? Mourn to see the Savior die,

Or proclaim His victory?"

But it justly answers—

"Lamb of God! Your death has given

Pardon, peace and hope of Heaven—

'It is finished!' Let us raise

Songs of thankfulness and praise!" As the Lord's Supper leads the way in that direction, I may say that every other fast of the Christian has been transfigured in the same manner. The Sabbath is, to many people, a very dreary day, but, to many of us, it is a fast which has been turned into a feast! I am often amused when I read the accounts that are given by some people of an English Sabbath. In all soberness it is set forth what we Puritans do on this first day of the week. We wake up in the morning and say to

ourselves, "Another dreadfully miserable day has come around," and then we go off to our places of worship where we sit with frightfully long faces and listen to terribly dismal sermons! We do not sing, or even smile! We howl out some ugly Psalm and make ourselves as unhappy as ever we can be! When we come home, we draw down the blinds to keep the sun out. We never go into the garden to admire the flowers!

Well, you know the rest of the story. I think we are descendants of the people who killed the cat on Monday because it caught mice on Sunday—at least, so I have heard! But if I had not read all this, I would not have known it! Often, when I see in the paper some description of myself, I say, "Well, people somehow seem to know me better than I know myself—I never thought anything of the kind—it has never entered my head. Yet here is it in black and white!" O beloved Friends! Our idea of the Lord's-Day is altogether different from this hideous caricature of it! If I had to describe our Sabbaths, I would say that they are full of brightness, joy and delight! I Would tell of our singing with full hearts, of the happy prospect before us in that land—

"Where congregations never break up,

And Sabbaths have no end."

I am sure we would not be likely to go to that heavenly country if our Sabbaths here were as dreary as some say they are! Why, here in this house, we have had our merriest times! Of old, when the prodigal came back, "they began to be merry," and I have never heard that they have stopped! At any rate, I do not think that we have! We have rejoiced with the joy of harvest as we have heard of sinners saved and have known that we are saved, ourselves. I grant you that, before we knew the Lord, it did, sometimes, seem to our young minds rather a dull thing to read the Bible, hear sermons and to keep the Sabbaths. But now that we have come to Christ and He has saved us—now that we are His—the first day of the week, which was a fast, has become a feast, and we look with eager delight for the Sundays to come round, one after another! In fact, these Lord's-Days are the beds of flowers in our gardens. The week-days are only the gravel paths that yield us little but weariness as we walk along them. Happy Sabbath! We hail your coming with delight, and sing—

"Welcome sweet day of rest,

That saw the Lord arise!

Welcome to this reviving breast

And these rejoicing eyes!

The King Himself comes near

And feasts His saints today!

Here we may sit and see Him here,

And love, and praise, and pray!" So, you see, this is a second instance in which what might have been a fast is turned into a feast!

There is another thing that is, to some of us, a great feast, though formerly it was as full of weariness as a fast. It is the hearing of the Doctrines of Grace. I know some Brothers and Sisters who always sit very

uneasily when I begin to preach the Doctrines of Grace. I am sorry that it is so and I hope that they will grow wiser. Still, all of us did not always like to hear about God's electing love and absolute Sovereignty—about the special redemption of Christ for His people—and about the union to Christ being an everlasting union, never to be broken. There was a time when we did not join very heartily in the lines—

"Once in Christ, in Christ forever,

Nothing from His love can sever." But, oh, when your heart gets into full fellowship with God, if it is with you as it is with me, you will be glad to get on that string! Is there anything that gives us greater joy than to know our calling and election—and to make it sure—to know that the Father loved us as He loved Christ from before the foundation of the world and that He loves us with such a love that it can never end and can never change, but will continue when the sun burns black as a coal? It was because they heard these grand Doctrines that such crowds used to gather in the desert in France to hear the old Calvinistic preachers!

It was the hold these Truths of Grace had upon the minds and hearts of men that explains how it was that, under the Gospel oaks in England, vast numbers used to come hear plain and often illiterate men, preach the Gospel! They preached a Gospel that had something in it—and the people soon discover the real article when it is set before them. There is much that goes for Gospel, now, and if you could have a mile of it, you would not get an inch of consolation out of it, for there is nothing in it! But when your soul is heavy and when your heart is sad, there is nothing like the old faith to put cheer and life into you. How often have I read Elisha Coles on Divine Sovereignty through and through when I have been ill! When the heart begins to sink, if one gets a grip of the Sovereignty of God and the way of His Grace whereby He saves the unworthy and gets unto Himself glory by His faithfulness to His promises—what had been a fast becomes, to the child of God, a feast of fat things and royal cheer of a godly sort!

You will all agree with me in the next point. Sometimes the day of affliction becomes as a fast which has been turned into a feast. It is a trying thing to lose one's health and to be near to death or to lose one's wealth and wonder how the children will be fed. Or to have heavy tidings of disaster come to you, day after day, in doleful succession. But if you can grasp the promise and know that, "All things work together for good to them that love God"—if you can see a Covenant God in all, then the fast turns into a feast—and you can say, "God is going to favor me again. He is only pruning the vine to make it bring forth better grapes. He is going to deal with me again after His own wise, loving and fatherly way of discipline." You then hear the Lord saying to you—

"Then trust Me and fear not: your life is secure. My wisdom is perfect, supreme is My power. In love I correct you, your soul to refine, To make you, at length, in My likeness to shine."

I have met with some saints who have been happier in their sickness and in their poverty than ever they were in health and in wealth! I remember how one, who had been long afflicted and had got well, but had lost some of the brightness of the Lord's Presence which he had enjoyed during his sickness, said, "Take me back to my bed! Let me be ill, again, for I was well when I was sick! I am afraid that I am getting sick, now that I am well." It is often worth while being afflicted in order to experience the great loving kindness of God which He bestows so abundantly on us in the hour of trouble and perplexity. Yes, God turns our fasts into feasts, and we are glad in the midst of our sorrow! We can praise and bless His name for all that He does.

Once more—the solemn Truth of God of the coming of the Lord is a feast to us, though at first it was a fast. With very great delight we believe that the Lord Jesus Christ will shortly come. He is even now in the act of coming. The passage that we read, "Surely, I come quickly," would be better translated, "Surely, I am coming quickly." He is on the road and will certainly appear, to the joy of His people and for the emancipation of the world! There are certain writers who say they know when He is coming—do not be plagued with them—they know no more about it than you do! "Of that day and hour knows no man, no, not the angels of Heaven, but My Father, only," said the Lord Jesus. Perhaps the Lord may come sooner than any of us expect—before this "diet of worship" shall break up He may be here! On the other hand, He may not come for a thousand years, or 20,000 years!

The times and the seasons are with Him and it is not for us to pry behind the curtain. Those of our number who are unsaved may well dread His coming, for He will come to destroy them that obey not the Gospel. "Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord comes, for it is near at hand; a day of darkness, and of gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness." That day will be terror, not light, to you. When He comes, He shall judge the earth in righteousness—and woe unto His adversaries, for, "He shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken into shivers." You have grave need to keep the fast of the Second Advent, for to you it is dies irae, day of wrath and day of vengeance, day of dread and day of woe!

But if you become a Believer and, by Grace, are transformed as I described in the earlier part of this discourse, then it shall be a feast to you! Then you will look for His appearing as the day of your hope and will gladly say, "Yes, let Him come! Come Lord, nor let Your chariots wait! Come, Lord! Your Church entreats You to tarry no longer! Come, You absent love, You dear unknown, You fairest of ten thousand! Come to Your Church and make her glad!" To us the thought of the glorious Advent of Christ is no fast—it is a blessed feast! Our songs never rise higher than when we get on this strain. With what fervor we lift up our voices and sing—

"Brothers, this Lord Jesus Shall return again, With His Father's glory With His angel train! For all wreaths of empire Meet upon His brow, And our hearts confess Him King of glory now!"

Last of all, to come still more closely home, the approach of death is, to most men, a dreadful fast. Not the Moham-madan Ramadan can be more full of piteous grief than some men when they are obliged to think of death. If some of you were put into a room, tomorrow, and were compelled to stay there all day and think of your death, it would certainly be a very gloomy time to you. You will die, however—perhaps suddenly, perhaps by slow degrees. There will come a time when people will walk very gently round your bed—when they will wipe the death sweat from your brow—when they will lean over you to see whether you still breathe, or whether you have gone. Out of the 6,000 persons here, tonight, there are some, certainly, who will never see New Year's Day. Usually there is someone who does not even see another Lord's-Day! Almost every week we get an intimation that a hearer of the previous week has died before the next Sabbath.

Who among us will first be gone? Dare you think of it? O Beloved, when once you have peace with God and you know that you are going to behold His face, whom, though you have not seen, yet you love, then you can think of death without trembling! I think that there is nothing more delightful to the man who has full assurance of faith, than to be familiar with the grave, the resurrection morning, the white robe, the harp of gold, the palm and the endless song. The thought of death is more a feast to us than a fast, for, as Watts sings—

"Jesus can make a dying bed Feel soft as downy pillows are, While on His breast I lean my head, And breathe my life out sweetly there." "Well, I shall soon be Home," says one old saint. And she spoke of it as she used to speak, when a girl, of the holidays and of her going away from school! "I shall soon behold the King in His beauty," says another. He speaks of it as he might have spoken, when a young man, of his wedding day! Children of God cannot only read Young's Night Thoughts without feeling any chill of solemnities written there, but they can write in their diaries notes of expectation at the thought of being with Christ—and almost notes of regret that they have not passed away to Glory, but are lingering here in the land of shadows. "What?" said one, who had been long lying senseless, when he came back, again, to consciousness, "And am I still here? I had half hoped to have been in my heavenly Father's home and palace above long before this and I am still here." Truly, Beloved, the fast is turned into a feast when we reach this experience! We will not hesitate to say, "Come, Lord, take us to Yourself." Oh for a sight of the King in His beauty!—

"Father, I long, I faint to see The place of Your abode!

I'd leave Your earthly courts and flee Up to Your seat, my God."

I knew right well a beloved Brother in Christ with whom I was very familiar, who stood up, one Sabbath morning, and announced just that verse. I thought of him when I repeated it and I wondered whether it was quite as true to me as it was to him. He gave it out, and said—

"Father, I long, I faint to see

The place of Your abode!

I'd leave Your earthly courts and flee

Up to Your seat, my God!"

Then he stopped, there was a silence and, at last, one of the congregation ventured upstairs into the pulpit and found that the preacher was dead. His prayer was heard! He was gone to the place of God's abode. Oh, happy they who die thus! The Lord grant that we may never pray against a sudden death! We may almost pray for it when once our soul is right with God. I can join John Newton and, instead of dreading the change, say—

"Rather, my spirit would rejoice,

And long, and wish, to hear Your voice!

Glad when it bids me earth resign,

Secure of Heaven, if You are mine." But is Christ yours? Has the fast been changed into a feast for you by faith in the crucified Savior? God help you to answer that question with a glad, hearty, "Yes!" Then may He make all your life "joy and gladness," changing your fearful fasts into "cheerful feasts," until, at last, all of us who believe in Christ and who love His appearing, shall sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb! Amen.

Portions of Scripture Read before Sermon—Zechariah 7 and 8.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/ch-spurgeon/sad-fasts-changed-to-glad-feasts/>

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