

The Beginning, Increase and End of the Divine Life

by C.H. Spurgeon

The beginning of good things may be small, but their latter end shall greatly increase, and God's strength is available to the weakest saint.

Duration: 44:30

Scripture: Psalm 23:2, Psalm 119:105, Proverbs 27:17, Matthew 7:7, Luke 22:19, Hebrews 10:25, 2 Peter 1:4

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Faith Development"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the principle that although the beginnings of good things may be small, they will greatly increase over time. The preacher aims to provide practical applications of this principle. Firstly, to reassure those who are new in their faith, secondly, to strengthen their faith, and thirdly, to motivate them to be diligent in their spiritual journey. The preacher uses various metaphors, such as stars emerging in the night sky and a small stream growing into a mighty river, to illustrate the progression of good things. The sermon encourages believers to have confidence in their spiritual growth and to not be discouraged by comparing themselves to others.

Transcript

The Prince of Preachers Charles Haddon Spurgeon has been called England's greatest contribution to the spread of the gospel in the 19th century. One of his contemporaries said that the chief secret of Spurgeon's attractiveness was the fact that in every sermon, no matter what the text or the occasion, he explained the way of salvation in simple terms. Spurgeon's messages remain one of the great treasure houses of Christian literature, still bringing the light of the gospel and the comfort of the scriptures to hungry souls long after the preacher has passed into glory.

This is Charles Kelch inviting you to listen to a message from the Prince of Preachers. C. H. Spurgeon preached this message on April 29, 1860, in the Exeter Hall. It is entitled, The Beginning, Increase, and End of the Divine Life.

The text is found in Job chapter 8 and verse 7. Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase. This was the reasoning of Bildad the Shuhite. He wished to prove that Job could not possibly be an upright man.

For if he were so, he here affirms that his prosperity would increase continually, or that if he fell into any trouble, God would awake for him and make the habitation of his righteousness prosperous. And though his family were all now destroyed and his wealth scattered to the winds, yet if he were an upright man, God would surely appear for him, and his latter end would greatly increase. Now, the utterances of Bildad and of the other two men who came to comfort Job, but who made his wounds tingle, are not to be accepted as being inspired.

They spake as men, as mere men. They reasoned no doubt in their own esteem, logically enough, but the Spirit of God was not with them in their speech. Therefore, with regard to any sentiment which we find uttered by these men, we must use our own judgment.

And if it be not in consonance with the rest of Holy Scripture, it will be our bounden duty to reject it as being but the word of man. Of a wise and ancient man it is true, but still of a man only. With regard to the passage which I have selected as a text, it is true, altogether apart from its being said by Bildad or being found in the Bible at all.

It is true, as indeed the facts of the book of Job prove. For Job did greatly increase in his latter end. His beginning was small.

He was brought down to poverty, to the potsherd and to the dunghill. He had many graves, but no children. He had had many losses.

He had now nothing left to lose. And yet God did awake for him. His righteousness came out from the darkness which had eclipsed it.

He shone in sevenfold prosperity, so that the words of Bildad were prophetic, though he knew it not. God put into his mouth language which did come true after all. Indeed, we have here a great principle, a principle against which none can ever contend.

The beginning of the godly and the upright man may be but very small, but his latter end shall greatly increase. Evil things may seem to begin well, but they end badly. There is the flash and the glare, but afterwards the darkness and the black ash.

They promise fairly, their sun rises in the zenith and then speedily sets never to rise again. Evil things begin as mountains. They end as molehills.

You sail upon their ocean at first. And as you sail onward it becomes a river, and afterwards into a dry bed, if not into burning sands. Behold Satan in the garden of Eden.

Sin begins with the promise, Ye shall be as gods. How grand is its beginning! Where ends it? Shivering beneath the trees of the garden, complaining of nakedness, sin comes to its end. Or see it in Satan himself.

He stretches out his right hand to snatch the diadem of heaven. He would be Lord Paramount. He cannot bear to serve.

He longs to reign. O glittering vision that enchants the eye of an archangelic spirit! But where ends it? The vision is all gone and is succeeded by the blackness of darkness forever, and the chains reserved in fire for those that kept not their first estate. So will it be with you too, my friend, if you have chosen the path of

evil.

Today your mirth is as the crackling of thorns under a pot. It blazes, it crackles with excessive joy. Tomorrow thou shalt find nothing there but a handful of ashes and darkness and cold.

Ay, the path of evil is downhill from its sunny summits to its dark ravines, from the pretended loftiness which it assumes when it professes to be a cherub to that lowliness in which it finds itself to be a fiend. Evil goeth downward. It hath its great things first, and then its terrible things last.

Not so, however, with good. With good the beginning is even small, but its latter end doth greatly increase. The path of the just is as the shining light, which sheds a few flickering rays at first, which exercises a combat with the darkness.

But it shineth more and more unto the perfect day. As the coming forth of stars at eventide, when first one, and then another, and yet another struggles through the darkness, till at last the whole starry host are marshaled on the heavenly plains, so is it with good. It beginneth with grains of sand.

It goeth on to hills, and anon it swelleth up to mountains. It beginneth with the rippling rill, the little cascade that leapeth from its secret birthplace, and down the mountain it dasheth. It swelleth to a joyous stream, wherein the fish do leap.

Anon it becomes a river, which bears upon its surface the navigation of nations, and then it rolls at last an ocean that belts the globe. Good things progress. They are like Jacob's ladder.

They ascend round by round. We begin as men. We end as angels.

We climb until the promise of Satan is fulfilled in a sense in which he never understood it. We become as gods and are made partakers of the divine, being reconciled unto God, and then having God's grace infused into us. The principle then upon which I have to speak this morning is this, that though the beginnings of good things are small, yet their latter end shall greatly increase.

Instead, however, of dealing with this as a mere doctrine, I propose to use it practically. Assume the fact, and then make a practical use of it. Three ends shall I hope to serve.

First, to quiet the fears of those who are but beginners in grace. Secondly, to confirm their faith. And thirdly, to quicken their diligence.

May I ask the prayers of God's people here that I may be strengthened in this preaching? I cannot tell how it is. The cold, clammy sweat comes over me now I'm about to address you, and I feel almost quivering with weakness. Nevertheless, this is a subject which may strengthen me as well as you, and therefore let us go to it at once.

First, then, for the quieting of your fears. Thou sayest, my hearer, I am but a beginner in grace, and therefore I am vexed with anxiety and full of timorousness. Yes, and it shall be my business, if God the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, shall enable me to give thee some few sweet words, which, like wafers made with honey, thou mayest roll under thy tongue and find them satisfactory and pleasant, even as that manna which came down from heaven and fed the Israelites in the wilderness.

Perhaps thy first fear, if I put it into words, is this. My beginning is so small that I cannot tell when it did begin, and therefore methinks I cannot have been converted, but am still in the gall of bitterness. O

beloved, how many thousands like thyself have been exercised with doubts upon this point! They were not converted in an instant.

They were not stricken down as in the revivals. They were not nerved with terrible alarms, such as John Bunyan describes in his *Grace Abounding*. But they were called of God, as was Lydia, by a still small voice.

Their hearts were gradually and happily opened to receive the truth. It was not as if a tornado or a hurricane rushed through their spirits, but a soft zephyr blew, and they lived and came to God. And you doubt, do you, because from this very reason you cannot tell when you were first converted? Be encouraged.

It is not needful for you to know when you were regenerated. It is but necessary for you to know that you are so. If thou can set no date to the beginning of thy faith, yet if thou dost believe now, thou art saved.

If in thy diary there stands no red-letter day in which thy sins were pardoned and thy soul accepted, yet if thy trust be in Jesus only, this very day thou art pardoned and thou art accepted, despite thy ignorance of the time when. God's promises bear no date. Our notes are dated because there is a time when they run due, and we are apt to forget them.

God's promises bear none, and His gifts sometimes do not bear any. If thou art saved, though the date be erased, yet do thou rejoice and triumph evermore in the Lord thy God. True, there are some of us who can remember the precise spot where we first found the Savior.

The day will never be forgotten when these eyes looked to the cross of Christ and found their tears all wiped away. But thousands in the fold of Jesus know not when they were brought in. Be it enough for them to know that they are there.

Let them feed upon the pasture. Let them lie down beside the still waters. For whether they came by night or by day, they did not come at a forbidden hour.

Whether they came in youth or in old age, it matters not. All times are acceptable with God. And whosoever cometh, come he when he may, he will in no wise cast out.

Does it not strike you as being very foolish reasoning if you should say in your heart, I am not converted because I do not know when? Nay, with such reasoning as that, I could prove that old Rome was never built, because the precise date of her building is unknown. Nay, we might declare that the world was never made, for its exact age even the geologist cannot tell us. We might prove that Jesus Christ himself never died, for the precise date on which he expired on the tree is lost beyond recovery.

Nor doth it signify much to us. We know the world was made. We know that Christ did die.

And so you, if you are now reconciled to God, if now your trembling arms are cast around that cross, you too are saved, though the beginning was so small that you cannot tell when it was. Indeed, in living things, it is hard to put the finger upon the beginning. Here is a fruit.

Will you tell me when it began to be? Was it at the time when first the tree sent forth its fruit bud? Did this fruit begin when first the flower shed its exhalations of perfume upon the air? Indeed, you could not have seen it if you had looked. When was it? Was it when the full-ripe flower was blown away and its leaves

were scattered to the wind and a little embryo of fruit was left? It were hard to say it did not begin before that, and equally hard to say at what precise instant that fruit began to be formed. Ay, and so is it with divine grace.

The desires are so faint at the beginning. The convictions are but the etchings upon the plate, which afterwards must be engraven with a harder instrument. And they are such flimsy things, such transient impressions of divine truth, that were difficult to say what is transient and what permanent, what is really of the Spirit of God and what is not.

What hath saved the soul, or what only brought it to the verge of salvation? What made it really live, or what was really the calling together of the dry bones before the breath came and the bones began to live? Quit your fears, my hearers, upon this point, for if ye are saved, no matter when, ye shall never be unsaved. Another doubt also arises from this point. Ah, sir, saith the timid Christian, it is not merely the absence of all date to my conversion, but the extreme weakness of the grace I have.

Ah, says one, I sometimes think I have a little faith, but it is so mingled with unbelief, distrust, and incredulity that I can hardly think it is God's gift, the faith of God's elect. I hope sometimes I have a little love, but it is such a beginning, such a mere spark, that I cannot think it is the love which God the Holy Spirit breathes into the soul. My beginning is so exceeding small that I have to look and look and look again at times before I can discern it for myself.

If I have faith, it is but as a grain of mustard seed, and I fear it never will be that goodly tree in the midst of whose branches the birds of the air might rest. Courage, my brother, courage! However small the beginnings of grace, they are such beginnings that they shall have a glorious end. When God begins to build, if He lay but one single stone, He will finish the structure.

When Christ sits down to weave, though He cast the shuttle but once, and that time the thread was so filmy as scarcely to be discernible, He will nevertheless continue till the piece is finished and the whole is wrought. If thy faith be never so little, yet it is immortal, and that immortality may well compensate for its littleness. A spark of grace is a spark of Deity.

As soon may Deity be quenched as to quench grace, that grace within thy soul given thee of the Spirit shall continue to burn, and he who gave it shall fan it with his own soft breath, for he will not quench the smoking flax. He will bring it to a fire, and afterwards to a furnace, till thy faith shall attain to the full assurance of understanding. O, let not the littleness of God's beginnings stagger you! Who would think, if He stood at the source of the Thames, that it would ever be such a river as it is, making this city rich? So little is it that a child might stop it with his hand, and but a little handful of miry clay might dam its course.

But there it rolls a mighty river that man cannot stop. And so shall it be with thee. Thy faith is so little that it seems not to exist at all, and thy love so faint that it can scarcely be called love.

But thy latter end shall greatly increase, till thou shall become strong and do exploits. The babe shall become a giant, and he that stumbled at every straw shall move mountains and make the very hills to shake. Having thus spoken upon two fears which are the result of these small beginnings, let me now try to quiet another.

Ah, saith the air of heaven, I do hope that in me grace hath commenced its work. But my fear is that such frail faith as mine will never stand the test of years. I am, saith he, so weak that one temptation would be

too much for me.

How then can I hope to pass through yonder forest of spears held in the hands of valiant enemies? A drop makes me tremble. How shall I stem the roaring flood of life and death? Let but one arrow fly from hell, it penetrates my tender flesh. What then if Satan shall empty his quiver? I shall surely fall by the hand of the enemy.

My beginnings are so small that I am certain they will soon come to their end, and that end must be black despair. Be of good courage, brother. Have done with that fear once for all.

It is true, as thou say'st, that temptation will be too much for thee. But what hast thou to do with it? Heaven is not to be won by thy might, but by the might of him who has promised heaven to thee. Thy crown of life is to be obtained not by thy arm, but by that arm which now holds it out and bids thee run towards it.

If thy perseverance rested upon thyself, thou couldst not persevere an hour. If spiritual life depended on itself, it would be like the shooting star which makes a shining trail for a moment and then is gone. But thanks be unto God.

It is written, Because I live, ye shall live also. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. The feeblest saint shall win the day, though death and hell obstruct the way, because that feeble saint is girded with Jehovah's strength.

If I had to fight in another man's strength, and I knew that he had gigantic force, I should not estimate the power of my own limbs and muscles, but of his limbs and muscles. So if I have to fight in the strength of God, I am not to reckon by what I can do, but by what he can do. Not what I am able, but what he is able to accomplish.

I am not to go forth bound and limited and cramped and bandaged by my own infirmity, but made free and valorous and unconquerable through that divine omnipotence, which first spake all things into existence, and now maintaineth all things by the word of his power. Stand up, poor brother, full of fears though you be, and for once glory in your infirmities, and boast in your master. I say it on thy behalf and on my own.

Ye principalities and powers of darkness, ye leaguered hosts of hell, ye enemies in human form or in form demonic, I challenge you all. More than a match for every one of you am I, if God be with me. Less than nothing were I if left alone.

But were I weaker than I am, I would defy you all, for God is my strength. Jehovah is become my strength and my song. He also has become my salvation.

Therefore will we tread down our enemies, and Moab shall become a straw that is trodden down for the dunghill. In God will we rejoice. Yea, in God will we greatly rejoice, and in him will we rejoice all the day.

Thus have I dealt with a third fear. Let me seek to quiet and pacify one other fear. Nay, but say you, I never can be saved, for when I look at other people, at God's own true children, I am ashamed to say it.

I am but a miserable copy of them. So far from attaining to the image of my master, I fear I am not even like my master's servants. Look at such an one, how he preaches the truth with power, what fluency he has in prayer, what service he undertakes.

But I, I am such a beginner in grace, that hosannas languish on my tongue, and my devotion dies. I live at a poor dying rate. I sometimes run, but oftener creep, and seldom or ever fly.

Where others are shaking mountains, I am stumbling over molehills. The saints seem to bestride this narrow world like some great colossus. But I walk under their huge legs and peep about, to find myself a poor dishonored slave.

I have no power, no strength, no might. Pause, brother, pause. Stop thy murmuring for a moment.

If some little star in the sky should declare it was not a star, because it did not shine as brightly as Sirius or Arcturus, how foolish would be its argument. If the moon should insist upon it that she was never made by God, because she could not shine as brightly as the sun, fie on her pale face that she cannot be content to be what her Lord hath made her. If the nettle would not bloom because it was not a pine, and if the hyssop on the wall refused to grow because it was not a cedar, oh, what dislocation would there be in the noble frame of this universe? If these murmurings that vex us vex the whole of God's creatures, then were this earth a howling wilderness indeed.

Now let me talk to thee for a moment, to calm thy fears. Hast thou, my brother, ever learned to distinguish between grace and gifts? For know that they are marvelously dissimilar. A man may be saved who has not a grain of gifts, but no man can be saved who hath no grace.

Yonder brother who prayed, yonder friend who preaches, yonder sister who spoke, all these perhaps acted so well because God had given them excellent gifts. It might not be that it was because of grace. When you are in the prayer meeting and hear a brother extremely fluent, remember that there are men quite as fluent about their daily business, and that fluency is not fervency, and that even the appearance of fervency is not absolutely an evidence that there is fervency in the soul.

If thou art so mean a thing that thou canst not spell a word in any book, or put six words together grammatically, if thou canst offer no prayer in public, if thou art so poor a scholar that every fool is wiser than thou art, yet if thou hast grace in thy heart, thou art saved, and that is the matter in point just now, whether thou art saved or not. Covet earnestly the best gifts, but still sit not down and murmur because thou hast them not, for one grain of grace outweighs a pound of gifts. One particle of grace is far more precious than all the gifts that a Byron ever had, or that Shakespeare ever possessed within his soul, vast and almost infinite, though the gifts of those men certainly were.

And yet another question would I put to you. My dear brother, have you ever learned to distinguish between grace that saves and the grace which develops itself afterwards? Remember, there are some graces that are absolutely necessary to the saving of the soul. There are some others that are only necessary to its comfort.

Faith, for instance, is absolutely necessary for salvation, but assurance is not. Love is indispensable, but that high degree of love which induces the martyr's spirit does not reign in the breast of everyone, even of those who are saved. The possession of grace in some degree is needful to salvation, but the possession of grace in the highest degree, though it be extremely desirable, is not absolutely necessary for an entrance into heaven.

Bethink thee then thus to thyself, if I be the meanest lamb in Jesus' fold, I would be happy to think that I am in the flock. If I be the smallest babe in Jesus' family, I will bless His name to think that I have a portion

among the sanctified. If I be the smallest jewel in the Savior's crown, I will glisten and shine as best I can to the praise of Him that bought me with His blood.

If I cannot make such swelling music in the orchestra of heaven as the peeling organ may, then will I be but as a bruised reed which may emit some faint melody. If I cannot be the beacon fire that scares a continent and throws its light across the deep, I will seek to be the glowworm that may at least let the weary traveler know something of its whereabouts. O Christians, ye that have but little beginnings, quiet your fears, for these little beginnings, if they be of God, will save your soul, and you may rejoice in this, yea, rejoice succeedingly.

I must ask your patience now while I turn to the second head, and I shall dwell upon that very briefly indeed. Upon this head I wish to say a word or two for the confirmation of your faith. I am sure you will give me your prayerful attention while I speak for the confirmation of my own faith as well as yours.

Well, brothers and sisters, the first confirmation I would offer you is this. Our beginnings are very, very small, but we have a joyous prospect in our text. Our latter end shall greatly increase.

We shall not always be so distrustful as we are now. Thank God! We look for days when our faith shall be unshaken and firm as mountains be. I shall not forever have to mourn before my God that I cannot love Him as I would.

I trust that He in my latter end will give me more of His Spirit, that I shall love Him with all my heart and soul and strength. We have entered into the gospel school. We are ignorant now, but we shall one day understand with all the saints what are the heights and depths and lengths and breadths, and know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.

We have hoped that as these hairs grow gray, we shall grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Time that plows its furrow in the brow, we hope will sow the seeds of wisdom there. Experience which shall furrow our back with many a sorrow and a wound shall nevertheless, we trust, work patience and hope that make it not ashamed, and holy fellowship with Christ and His sufferings, and nearer and sweeter fellowship than as yet we have come to know.

Think not, Mr. Ready-to-Halt, that thou shalt always need thy crutches. There may come days of leaping and of dancing, even for thee. Oh, Mistress Despondency, the dungeons of giant Despair's castle are not to be thy perpetual abode.

Thou too shalt stand upon the top of Mount Clear, and thou shalt see the celestial city and the land that is very far off. We are growing things. Methinks I hear the green blade say this morning, I shall not forever be trodden underfoot as if I were but grass.

I shall grow, I shall blossom, I shall grow ripe and mellow, and many a man shall sharpen his sickle for me. I hear the little sapling say, I shall not be forever shaken to and fro by winds. I shall grow into an old stalwart oak, gnarled though the roots may be, and twisted though my branches are.

I shall one day stand and outlaugh the tempest, while all its waves of wind break harmlessly over me. I shall be strong through him that strengtheneth me, for I feel a growth within me that can never stop till I have grown to be next to a god, a son of God, a partaker of the divine nature. Courage, then! Courage, I say, brothers and sisters! These weak days are not always to last.

We are not to be shorn lambs always, not always the weaklings of his cattle. We shall one day be as the firstlings of his bullocks, and we shall push our enemies to the ends of the earth, and tread upon them, and destroy them. But further, this cheering prospect upon earth is quite eclipsed by a more cheering prospect beyond the river Death.

Our latter end shall greatly increase. Faith shall give place to fruition. Hope shall be occupied with enjoyment.

Love itself shall be swallowed up in ecstasy. Mine eyes, ye shall not forever weep. There are sights of transport for you.

Tongue, thou shalt not forever have to mourn and be the instrument of confession. There are songs and hallelujahs for thee. Feet, ye shall not always be weary with this rough road.

There are celestial leapings for you. Oh, my poor heart! Often cowed and broken, often disappointed and trodden down, there waited for thee the palm branch and the robe of victory and the immortal crown. My spirit leaps across the flood and antedates the hour when I shall come into possession of these joys which could not belong to my childhood here, but which await me in my manhood up there, when the spirit shall be perfected and made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Courage, Christian! The way may be rough, but it cannot be long, and the end will make amends for all the toil that you can endure when on the road. Oh, quicken thy footsteps! Sit not down in despair. Thy latter end shall greatly increase, though thy beginnings be but small.

Perhaps someone may say, How is it that we are so sure that our latter end will increase? I give you just these reasons. We are quite sure of it because there is a vitality in our piety. The sculptor may have oftentimes cut in marble some exquisite statue of a babe.

That has come to its full size. It will never grow any greater. When I see a wise man in the world, I look at him as being just such an infant.

He will never grow any greater. He has come to his full. He is but chiseled out by human power.

There is no vitality in him. The Christian here on earth is a babe, but not a babe in stone. A babe instinct with life.

It is a happy thought sometimes to have of oneself as sitting down here, compressed, small, insignificant. And one day death shall come and say, Rise to thy proper altitude, and we shall begin to grow and expand, and bursting all our ceremonies and every limit of humanity, we shall become greater than the angels are. I think it is Milton who pictures the spirits in pandemonium as condensing themselves so that multitudes of them could sit in a little space, and then at their own volition, mounting up till they attained a prodigious height.

So is it now. We are little spirits, but we shall grow and increase, and we know this because there is life in us, eternal life. Now the life of twenty years develops itself into something vastly superior to what it was in childhood.

And what will the eternal life be when that vitality within us shall make the littleness of our beginning seem as nothing at all, when our latter end shall have greatly increased? Besides this, we feel that we must

come to something better because God is with us. We are quite certain that what we are cannot be the end of God's design. When I see a block of marble half chiseled, with just perhaps a hand peeping out from the rock, no man can make me believe that that is what the artist means it should be.

And I know I am not what God would have me to be because I feel yearnings and longings within myself to be infinitely better, infinitely holier and purer than I am now. And so is it with you. You are not what God means you to be.

You have only just begun to be what He wants you to be. He will go on with His chisel of affliction, using wisdom and the graving tool together, till by and by it shall appear what you shall be. For you shall be like Him, and you shall see Him as He is.

Oh, what comfort this is for our faith, that from the fact of our vitality and the fact that God is at work with us, it is clear and true and certain that our latter end shall be increased. I do not think that any man yet has ever got an idea of what a man is to be. We are only the chalk crayon, rough drawings of men.

Yet when we come to be filled up in eternity, we shall be marvelous pictures, and our latter end indeed shall be greatly increased. And now one other thought, and I will turn to the last point. Christian, remember, for the encouragement of thy poor soul, that what thou art now is not the measure of thy safety.

Thy safety depends not upon what thou art, but upon what Christ is. If the rock of our salvation were within us, indeed the house would soon be overturned. But we live by what Christ is.

What Adam had and forfeited for all, that Jesus is, who cannot fail or fall. Till He can falter, my spirit need not tremble. Till Jesus sins, till Jesus dies, till Jesus is overcome, till He is powerless with His God, till He ceases to be divine, the soul that trusts Him must be secure.

Look not within thee for consolation, but look above, where Jesus pleads before the throne the efficacy of His once-offered blood. And if thou wilt look to thine own states and then judge thine eternal standing by thine own feelings or willings or doings, thou wilt be an undone and miserable wretch. Measure thyself by Jesus doing, by Jesus standing, by Jesus' acceptance, by the love of His heart, by the power of His arm, by the divinity of His nature, by the constancy of His faithfulness, by the acceptance of His blood, by the prevalence of His plea.

And so measuring, thy faith need never, never fear. For should the earth's old pillars shake, and all the walls of nature break, our steadfast souls need fear no more than solid rocks when billows roar. Now for our last point, namely for the quickening of our diligence.

It was never intended that the promises of God should make men idle, and when we tell them that their small beginnings shall doubtless come to glorious endings, we tell them this for their encouragement. Not that they may sit still and do nothing, but that they may gird up the loins of their mind, confident of their success, to do all that lieth in them, God helping them. Men and brethren, there are many of you here who, like myself, have to mourn over little beginnings.

Let me say to you, be very diligent in the use of those means which God has appointed for your spiritual growth. First, take heed to yourself that you obey the commandments which relate to the ordinances of Christ. Neglect not baptism.

True, there is nothing saving in it, nothing meritorious. But baptism is a means of grace. There have been many who have found, like the eunuch, that when they have been baptized, they have gone on their way rejoicing, rejoicing as the effect of grace given when they have obeyed their master.

Be careful, too, not to neglect that most blessed supper of our Lord Jesus Christ. Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is, but let him be known to you in the breaking of bread and in pouring forth of wine. Do this often in remembrance of him.

Ah, I'm speaking to some here today who love Jesus, but who have neglected his last dying injunction, this do in remembrance of me. And you have not grown in grace and are still little in Israel as you used to be. Do you wonder at it? You have neglected God's appointed means.

Oh, says one, but I am a spiritual man. I do not need these carnal ordinances. There is no man so carnal as he who calls God's ordinances carnal.

And no man more spiritual than he who finds spiritual things best brought home to him by what others have ventured to call beggarly elements. We do not know ourselves if we think we can dispense with these divine signs. Christ knew what was best for us.

He has said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be baptized. He would not have appended the last command if it were not important. He has bidden us also, as oft as we drink the cup, to do it in remembrance of him.

He would not have commanded us that if it were not for our benefit and for his glory. But further, if thou wouldst get out of the littleness of thy beginnings, wait much upon the means of grace. Read much the word of God alone.

Seek out one who understandeth it well, a man whom God hath taught in it, and listen thou with reverence to the word as it is preached. Frequent sermons, but prayers most. Praying is the end of preaching.

Make use of every means that lieth before thee. Be not like the fool who calls the books of the old fathers dead men's brains. What God spake to seers of old, what he spake to mighty men who preached, is not to be thus despised.

Read thou as thou canst, and learn as thou canst. Take care, too, that thou art not content with skimming over a page of Scripture, but seek to get the very marrow out of it. Be not as the butterfly which flits from flower to flower but rests nowhere.

Be thou as the bee which enters the flower bell and sucks the honey and bears it off upon its heavily laden thigh. Rest not until thou hast fed on the word, and thus shall thy little beginnings come to great endings. Be much also in prayer.

God's plants grow fastest in the warm atmosphere of the closet. The closet is a forcing place for spiritual vegetation. He who would be well fed and grow strong must exercise himself upon his knees.

Of all training practice for spiritual battles, knee practice is the most healthy and strengthening. Note that if thou forgettest anything else besides. And lastly, if thy beginning be but small, make the best use of the beginning that thou hast.

Hast thou but one talent? Put it out at interest and make two of it. Hast thou two? Seek to have them multiplied into four. Art thou a babe? If thou canst not walk nor lift nor carry, thou canst cry.

Take care to cry right lustily. Art thou a child? Thou canst not climb. Thou canst not as yet teach.

But thou canst run. Take care to run in the ways of heavenly obedience. Art thou a young man? Thou canst not as yet give the reverent advice of hoary age, but be strong and overcome the wicked one.

Art thou an old man? Thou canst not now fight the battles of thy youth, nor lead the van in heroic deeds. But thou canst abide with the stuff and guard those old doctrines, which, like the heavy baggage of the army, must not be lost, lest the battle itself should go from us. Every man to his place and to his post.

And so, by using what we have, we shall gain more. Rivers increase by their onward flow. Flames by burning.

Sunlight increases by the sun shining. Lights by kindling other lights. And so do thou.

Do thou grow rich by enriching others, rich by spending. Lengthen out thyself by cutting off the ends that thou canst spare from all thou hast, for it is the way to grow. By giving up that which was an excrescence, thou shalt get that which shall be a real growth.

O, use thyself, and God shall make use of thee. Come out, and God shall lead thee forth. Be a man, and God shall make thee more than an angel.

Be an angel, and God shall make thee something more. He will make thee better, holier, happier, greater. O, do this, and so shall thy latter end be joyous.

Thy peace shall be like a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea. Thus I have spoken this for the comfort of God's people. Would that I could hope that all I have said belong to all of you, that ah, if it does not, may God convert you, may the new life be given to you.

O, remember, if you are longing for it, the way of salvation is freely open to you. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. God bless us now and ever, for Jesus' sake.

Amen. This message, The Beginning, Increase, and End of the Divine Life, was preached by Charles Haddon Spurgeon on April 29, 1860. This is Charles Kelsch inviting you to join me again for another message from the Prince of Preachers.

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