

The Best Strengthening Medicine

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that through faith, believers are empowered to overcome their inherent weakness and be strengthened for both holy obedience and patient suffering in service to God.

Scripture: Hebrews 11:34, Hebrews 11, John 15:5, Matthew 22:37, James 1:6, Romans 5:8, Psalm 23, 1 John 5:14

Topics: "Faith and Strength", "Overcoming Sin"

Description

In 'The Best Strengthening Medicine,' C.H. Spurgeon explores how faith is the vital source of strength for believers facing both active service and patient suffering. He encourages Christians to rely not on their own abilities but on God's power to obey, overcome sin, and fulfill their duties. Through vivid illustrations and biblical examples, Spurgeon reveals that faith transforms weakness into heroic strength. This devotional sermon offers practical encouragement for anyone seeking to grow in holiness and perseverance.

Transcript

"Out of weakness were made strong." Hebrews 11:34.

THOSE who out of weakness were made strong are written among the heroes of faith and are, by no means, the least of them. Believers "quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong." Who shall tell which of the three grand deeds of faith is the greatest? Many of us may never have to brave the fiery stake, nor to bow our necks upon the block, to die as Paul did, but if we have Divine Grace enough to be out of weakness, made strong, we shall not be left out of the roll of the nobles of faith—and God's name shall not fail to be glorified in our persons.

Brothers and Sisters, as Believers in the Lord Jesus, we are called to two things, namely, to do and to suffer for His name's sake. Certain saints are summoned to active marching duty and others are ordered to keep watch on the walls. There are warriors on the field of conflict and sentries in the box of patience.

Both in doing and in suffering, if we are earnest and observant, we soon discover our own weakness. "Weakness" is all we possess. "Weakness" meets us everywhere. If we have to work for the Lord, we are soon compelled to cry, "Who is sufficient for these things?" And if we are called to suffer for Him, our weakness, in the case of most of us, is even greater—many who can labor without weariness cannot suffer without impatience. Men are seldom equally skilled in the use of the two hands of doing and bearing. Patience is a Grace which is rarer and harder to come at than activity and zeal. It is one of the

choicest fruits of the Spirit and is seldom found on newly-planted trees. The fact soon comes home to us that we are weak where we most of all desire to be strong.

Our longing is to be able both to do and to suffer for our Lord—and to do this, we must have strength from above— and that strength can only come to us through faith. I have read you this glorious 11th of Hebrews which describes the mighty men of faith, the men of renown. They accomplished all their feats by a power which was not in them by nature. They were not naturally strong either to do or to suffer. If they had been, they would not have required faith in God! But being men of like passions with ourselves, they needed to trust in the Lord and they did so. They were quite as weak as the weakest of us, but by their faith they laid hold on heavenly strength until they could do all things. There was nothing in the range of possibility, or, I might say, nothing within the lines of impossibility, which they could not have performed! They achieved everything that was necessary in the form of service and they bore up gloriously under the most fearful pressure of suffering, simply and only by faith in God, who became their Helper.

You and I may be very weak at this time, but we can be made strong out of just such weakness. We need not wish to have any strength of our own, for by faith we can reach to any degree of power in the Lord! We can have all imaginable strength for the grandest achievements desirable, if we have faith in God. Upon this simple but most practical matter I am going to speak to you at this time. We all wish to be strong. Medicines, lotions, foods, baths and all sorts of inventions are advertised as means of increasing strength. We are all, in heavenly things, so weak that the idea of being made strong should be very attractive to us.

Let us learn, then, how others "out of weakness were made strong." And let us follow on to enjoy their privilege by copying their conduct. Let me ask you to note, first, faith makes men strong for holy doing. And, secondly, faith makes men strong for patient suffering. We shall go over the ground which I marked out in my introduction.

I. To begin with—**FAITH MAKES MEN STRONG FOR HOLY DOING.** Here, indeed, all our strength must come to us by faith in the thrice-holy God.

The first duty of a Christian man is to obey God. Obedience is hard work to proud flesh and blood. Indeed, these ingrained rebels will never obey through our own efforts. By nature we love our own will and way and it goes against the grain for us to bring ourselves into such complete subjection as the Law of the Lord requires. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." Who among us has done this? Who among us can do this unless a power outside of himself shall come to his aid? Only faith takes hold of the Divine strength and only by that strength can we obey! Hence faith is the essential point of holiness. Ah, my dear Friend, if you start on the voyage of life, by Divine Grace, with the resolve that you will follow the track marked down on the chart by the Lord, your God, you will find that you have chosen a course to which the Lord's hands, alone, can keep you true!

The current does not run that way. Before long you will find that the wind is dead against you and the course to be followed is hard to keep. What will you do, then, if you have not faith? When duty is contrary to your temperament, what will you do without faith? When it involves loss of money, or ease, or honor—what will you do, then, if you have no faith? If you believe that God is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, you will persevere, but no other way. Suppose the right course should expose you to ridicule, cause you to be spoken of as a fanatic, or mocked at as a hypocrite, or despised as a fool—what can you do without faith? If you trust the living God, you will do the right thing and bear the loss or the shame. But if your faith fails you, self-love will create such respect for your own good name, such fear of

ridicule, such unwillingness to be singular, that you will slide from your integrity and choose a smooth and pleasing road.

Though you may think it a very ordinary thing to obey God in all things, you will find that a man had need to set his face like a flint in order to keep the right road—and the only way in which he will be able to hold on his way will be by having faith in God! Let him say, "God commands and, therefore, I must do it," and he will be strong! Let him feel, "God commands and, therefore, He will bear me through," and he will be strong! Let him say, "God commands and He will recompense me," and he will be strong! We are not saved by obedience, for obedience is the result of salvation! We are saved by faith, because faith leads us to obey! Faith is weakness clinging to strength and becoming strong through so doing. Faith in God made the cripple at the Temple gate stand, walk, leap and praise God—and even so does faith make our sin-crippled manhood obey the will of the Lord with exultation.

Taking another view, we would remark that faith makes us strong to fulfill the relationships of life. We are not alone by ourselves and we can neither live nor die apart, for God has linked us with others. We either curse or bless those around us. If we have faith in God, we shall bless our children, as Isaac and Jacob blessed their sons. Faith leaves a legacy of benediction to its heirs. If you have faith in God, you may bless your brothers while you live, as Joseph did—faith has housed many a family which otherwise had starved. If you have faith in God, you can lead others out of the bondage of sin and through the wilderness world, as Moses led the children of Israel, for faith is a great guide. But you can do nothing aright for others without faith in God for yourself and them.

Do I address a wife who has a godless husband? Have faith in God about him! Do not try to deal with your husband otherwise than by faith in God. If you attempt his conversion apart from heavenly power, you might as well try to take leviathan with a hook! Dear Father, have you children who are unruly, irreligious, defiant? Do the young men refuse to be advised? Are your girls light and trifling? Go to God in prayer and faith! He that knows the care of a household knows how easily a parent can do serious mischief with his children by his very efforts to do them good. One parent is too indulgent, another is too severe. Take the children to God, take them to God, I pray you! It is here that your strength lies. Strength to do right at the head of a household must come by Divine gift—and that gift will only be placed in the open hands of faith! If we believe for our whole house, the promise will be fulfilled to us and to our house, for it is made to faith. May faith enable us, each one, like David, to bless our household!

Do I speak to a young apprentice here who fears God and who lives in an ungodly family? Do you feel bewildered as to how to behave yourself? Orders are given you which cause you great searching of heart. You have to question in your inmost soul whether you can conscientiously do as your employer requires. I beseech you, have faith in God that He will direct you and also have faith to follow that direction when you receive it! It is a very perilous spot, that beginning of life, when the youth first leaves the home of piety and finds himself where the fear of God is not in the place. If, as a decided Believer, he takes his stand—and if he is firm and steadfast for his God—he will make a man and his later years

will be bright and useful. But if he begins to give way a little and if he tries to trim his sail to the wind, he will never attain to a holy character!

We read of the children of Ephraim that, being armed, and carrying bows, they turned back in the day of battle and, therefore, they were never to be relied on in the time of war. He who is not firm at starting is cutting out for himself a poor pattern of life. That which begins with shamefacedness, equivocation,

hesitation and compromise will ripen into apostasy. Such a wretched faith has no influence on the man's self and it will have no influence upon others! Father, mother, husband, wife, sister, brother, servant, master—whatever your relation, I beseech you, if you feel weak in the discharge of your duty, exercise faith in God about it—and out of weakness you shall be made strong!

There is a high and blessed duty and privilege—I will call it both—which is to every Christian the necessity of his life, and that is to pray. Can you pray, my Brother? If you know how to pray, you can move Heaven and earth! Can you pray, my Brother? Then you can set almighty forces in operation! You can suffer no need, for everlasting supplies await the hands of prayer—"Ask, and it shall be given you." You cannot miss your way, for you shall be guided in answer to prayer. You shall hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk you in it." "O Sir," you say, "I cannot pray prevailingly." Then you are not like Jacob, good at wrestling. You cannot take hold upon the angel and win the victory. Do you feel in prayer as if the sinew of your strength were shrunk and your knee out of joint? Well, then, let me bring the text before you. Out of this weakness in prayer you can only be made strong by faith. Believe in God and you will prevail with God. Believe in His promise and plead it. Believe in His Spirit and pray by His help. Believe in Jesus, who makes intercession, for through Him you may come boldly to the Throne of Grace!

Faith alone can repair feeble knees. "According to your faith be it unto you." To pray without faith is formality—no, it is vanity! To be weak in prayer is a disease which will bring on many other maladies. Seek faith to become Masters of the Art of Prayer. I would rather be Master of the Art of Prayer than M.A. of both universities! He who knows how to pray has his hands on a leverage which moves the universe. But there is no praying without believing. If you believe not, you may be heard—it is more than I can promise you. But if you believe, you shall be heard, for God refuses no believing prayer! To refuse to keep His own promise when it is pleaded would be to falsify His Word and change His Character—and neither of these things can ever be!

Have you strong confidence—"He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all things?" Jesus said, "If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" Believe in prayer and you will pray believingly! Some do not think that there is much in prayer. Poor souls! May the Lord teach them better! O my Brothers and Sisters, believe up to the hilt in prayer and you will find it to be the most remunerative work on earth! He that trades with God in prayer enters upon a business whereof the merchandise is better than silver or gold! Prayer makes us "rich towards God," and this is the best of riches—but it must be believing prayer. "Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering." Have you a poor, faint heart in this sacred exercise? Be assured that only by faith, out of this weakness, can you be made strong.

It may be that certain of my hearers feel that they cannot attain to the matters I have mentioned, for they are as yet battling to reach the position of servants and pleaders. Faith is the great force which is needed by those whose principal work is to overcome sin. When God began with many of us, He found us very low down beneath the flood of evil. It may be that an awful temper broke over us in surging waves. We have to rise superior to it. Possibly He found us plunged in the great deeps of an evil habit. Was it drunkenness? Was it gambling? What was it? It had to be left beneath—we were called to rise out of it. Some are permitted to sink a long way down in sin—and when God begins with them, they have a desperate ascent even to reach common morality—what must the conflict be before they attain to spirituality and holiness? It is hard for those to rise to the surface who have been plunged in the deeps. If a man has been sunk down in black waters full of filth, a thousand fathoms deep, and if he has been long

imprisoned in dark caves where no light has come, what a wondrous power would that be which should raise him to the sunlight!

The Spirit of God comes to many when they are in much the same condition. And what a work it is to bring them up from the horrible midnight and to give strength to rise out of the inky waters! I have seen many a soul wearying to ascend—receiving a little light and a little more light and a little more light—but yet far from being clear of the dark waters of iniquity! Dear Struggler, you will never overcome sin except by faith in Jesus Christ. Trust Him! Trust in the pre-

cious blood—that is the great sin-killer! Trust His pierced hands to pierce the hands of your lusts. Trust His wounded side to cut through the heart of your evil desires. Your hope lies there—where Jesus died, where Jesus rose again, where Jesus has gone into Glory. You may resolve to overcome a sin and, perhaps, any one sin you may conquer for a time. But sin itself, as a force, in all its armies, is never to be overcome, save through the blood of the Lamb! You will never be able to cut down this huge upas tree except with the axe of Christ's atoning Sacrifice. Take that and every blow will tell, but no other instrument will avail! God strengthening you, you shall, out of weakness, be made strong to overcome sin, though it is backed by the world, the flesh and the devil. Entrenched in your nature, though your sins may be, you will drive out these Canaanites and free your heart from their dominion!

I have often met with persons awakened by Divine Grace to see the evil of a certain act and they have said, "I do not know how I shall ever break off the habit." Yet they have very easily escaped from it. I remember one who was very foul-mouthed and habitually used oaths. I hardly think that, for years, he had spoken without ill language and yet, from the moment he turned unto the Lord, he never used an oath—and he also noted that he never had a temptation to do so! I remark that the particular form of sin known as blasphemy is one of the first to die and to be buried out of sight. Other sins die hard, but this is shot through the head by true repentance and faith in Jesus! Some sins cling to a man like the fabled tunic of Hercules which could not be torn away, but burned into his flesh and bones whatever he might do. How long a well-beloved habit lingers at the door after the heart has given it a bill of divorce! As a dog, which is chased away from the house, returns again and again to its former master, so does an evil lust return even to the soul that loathes it. How weak we are in this matter! How slow to cut off right hands and pluck out right eyes! But yet it must be done and only faith can do it—by calling in the aid of the Almighty One. Trust in Christ to overcome, by His Spirit, that which He has put away by His death. In Him we shall find succor—and by faith out of weakness we shall be made strong!

I change the run of my discourse altogether by remarking that there is another thing that falls to the lot of Christian men, a matter of the very first importance, namely, to spread the Gospel. "Yes," says one, "I acknowledge that it is an urgent service to make known to others what the Lord has done for me, but, somehow, I cannot discharge my conscience by fully doing as I would. I tried the other day to say a good word and I am afraid that I made a failure of it. I stammered a good deal and I said little that I thought to say—and some things I said seemed to weaken what I did say. I resolved, the other day, that I would see a man whom I had known, and tell him that I was a changed character. But when I reached his house, I drifted into other talk and went the way in which he led me. I could not come to the point."

Many would make a similar confession if they made a clean breast of it. Many of the truest children of God are, at first, possessed by a dumb spirit and it needs the Lord Jesus to cast it out. But do you not think that we are too apt to attempt to spread the Gospel in our own strength—and need we wonder if we break down? If we were by faith to begin, humbly waiting upon the Lord for words, and taking hold upon Divine

strength, might we not accomplish far more than we now do? I have heard of one brought to Christ who was a very great sinner—of so stiff a neck that he never would be approached by anybody who aimed at his conversion. He hated the very mention of religion! He answered all appeals very coarsely. But one of his neighbors felt forced to go to him very early in the morning and to say to him, "I beg your pardon for intruding so early, but I lay awake all last night thinking about you; and I cannot rest till I tell you something."

He answered, "What were you thinking about me for? I don't need any of your thoughts." "Oh," said the other, "I felt so sorry to think that, if you were to die, you would die without hope, that I was obliged to come to you." The bearish man grumbled, "Mind your own business." "But," said the other, "it is my business. I think my heart will break unless I see you saved." All the answer was, "Go away with you. Don't come here with your cant!" The Brother went home weeping, but he was not the only one who felt his heart breaking. The bearish one went away from his forge and said to his wife, "I can always answer these religious fellows. I do not care for your parsons a bit. but that neighbor of ours has been in here and he says he shall break his heart unless I am converted—and that beats me." He was beaten. Out of a sort of kindly pity for his neighbor's weak-mindedness, with a mixture of an unacknowledged feeling on his own account, he went to hear the preaching of the Word of God and was brought to Jesus!

"But," says one, "I know if I were to try to speak to any of my neighbors, I should break down." Friend, I am not careful in that matter, nor need you be. If you are in real earnest, you might possibly do more by a break-down than by anything else. Only break the ice and begin—and you shall find my text to be true in your case, also, and out of weakness

you, too, shall be made strong! God does not need your strength—He has more than enough power of His own! He asks for your weakness—He has none of that, Himself, and He is longing, therefore, to take your weakness and use it as the instrument in His own mighty hands! Will you not yield your weakness to Him and receive His strength?

Permit me to speak to some aspiring spirit here, and say—Dear Friend, would you like to do something great for God? Have you heard the motto of our early missionaries—"Attempt great things for God"? Does that thought burn within your heart? Do you long to be of some use? "Oh, yes," says one, "I would attempt great things for God, but I am terribly weak." Make the attempt by faith in God, for it is written, "Out of weakness were made strong." If you feel incapable, throw yourself upon the infinite capacity of God! So long as you are willing to be used. So long as God has given you an anxiety and travail of spirit for the souls of others, you need not fear, but may, with faith, get to work in all your feebleness, for as your day your strength shall be! Has not the Lord said, "My Grace is sufficient for you: for My strength is made perfect in weakness"? And is not that Word of God true?

I would make one more application of my text, which is capable of being used in a thousand directions. "Out of weakness were made strong." This will be experienced in bearing witness for the Truth of God. Suppose that you are called to testify for the Truth of God in the midst of those who doubt, disbelieve, or even deride it? You look to those who agree with you and they are lukewarm. You turn to old associates and they do not share your concern. Friends tell you that you are making much ado about nothing, or that you are uncharitable, narrow-minded and bigoted. I need not repeat the accusations—they have been so often hurled at myself that I know them by heart! They say, "The man was born too late! He is behind the age! He fights for a worn-out creed! He is out of place in a world of progress!" What then? Is there anything galling to you in all this? Indeed there is, unless faith is strong—and then the bullets turn to

pellets and the stones are soft as sponges!

When they talk to you like that, do not begin bristling up and declaring that, after all, you are as wise and as strong as your opponents, though that may readily be the case, but accept all their remarks upon your folly and weakness and say to yourself, "Out of weakness were made strong." Hold to God's Word by faith and you will be strong! God will vindicate His own cause, but it may be His way to let error prevail for a while. Bide your time when the cause is an eternal one, for you can afford to do so. If we had been in Egypt at the time when Pharaoh started out to follow the Israelites to the Red Sea. If we had been clothed with all power, we would have stopped Pharaoh's chariots and horses before they left Egypt—and thus we should have nipped his enterprise in the bud. We would have taken off the chariot wheels at once, so that they could not follow after the children of Israel. That is what we would have done, but Jehovah did something better! He allowed the Egyptians to pursue, overtake and threaten to divide the spoil—and He allowed them in their pride to go down after Israel into the depths of the sea!

Then, and not before, He overthrew them, so that Israel sang, "The horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea." This was a grand thing for the tribes in their later journeys through the wilderness. The timid Israelites would always have been afraid that Pharaoh would follow them and capture them, but when the forces of Egypt and all her chosen captains were drowned beneath the waves, all fear of them was gone forever! The victory was complete. Meanwhile, the tremendous blow made their future antagonists in Canaan to tremble. In the conflict with evil, we would overcome it early and put it to the rout at the first attack. But it may be that God will allow error to proceed further and let it seem to triumph, so that by its own presumption it may place itself where it may be the more effectually crushed, never again to afflict the Church.

It is for us, in our weakness, to go forward as the Lord leads us—and the day of the resounding timbrels and the twinkling feet will come in due time—and Jehovah will be magnified when even humble maidens "sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously." Be steadfast, unmovable! Never mind the craft, policy and number of the foe! God's time is best! He knows better than we do when to strike for victory. Out of weakness we shall be made strong if we fully rely upon the faith "once for all delivered to the saints."

I would entreat you, each one, to make an application of the text to yourself in every work of faith and labor of love in which you may be engaged.

II. Now, Beloved Friends, suffer me a few words upon the other cheering fact, namely, that **FAITH MAKES MEN STRONG FOR PATIENT SUFFERING**. The patience of hope is a very important part of Christian life and faith is the essence of it.

Many are called to suffer much in daily life. Ah me, what a world of misery there is in this great city, among even good and gracious people! A man might study London till he turned his brain. The poverty and the suffering of even godly people in London would be a subject too harrowing for those of you who have specially tender hearts. Let us not forget those members of Christ's mystical body that are in the fire—"His feet are like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace." Few, if any, are without sorrow, and many saints have a double portion of grief in their pilgrimage. Sitting here with your Brothers and Sisters in Christ, you look very cheerful, but I may be addressing those whose life is one protracted struggle for existence. Assuredly, you will not hold out without true faith—and much of it! You must endure, "as seeing Him who is invisible." You must joy in God, or you will not joy at all. Earthly comforts are not yours, but if

you grasp the spiritual and the eternal, you will not repine.

If in this life you only had hope, you would be, of all men, most miserable. But having that hope, you are among men most happy. The solitary place shall be glad for you and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. Commend me to firm faith for power to bear the daily cross! He that believes has everlasting life and the joys which come of it. Trust in your God, in His love to you, in His care of you and then you shall be as the lilies, which toil not, and spin not, and yet are clothed—or as the ravens which have no store and yet are fed. Behold, by faith, the Heaven prepared for you and know for sure that you will soon be there among the angels! And you will defy cold, hunger, nakedness, shame and everything else. Your faith, out of weakness, shall make you strong.

Certain saintly ones are called to bear great physical pain and I commend to them, from practical experience, the power of faith in God under acute agony. This is the sweetest support in the presence of a threatened operation. How grim those surgeon's lancets seem! Ah me, I knew a patient once—I still know her—who, when the lancets had been used upon her, caused the doctor's case of instruments to be filled up with roses! God alone can help you to fill up with roses that grim memory of danger and suffering! Oh, how sweet to feel that if God has sent diseases to your house, He has made them a chariot in which benedictions have been brought to you! Go not to wine for comfort in the hour of depression! Above all things, dread the intoxicating cup in all its forms! You need not even appeal to friends for consolation. What do they know about your inward sorrow? There are seas of suffering which the sufferer must navigate alone. No other sail is within sight. Scan the horizon and nothing is to be seen but wave after wave. Now is the hour for faith in the great Lord who holds even lonely seas in the hollow of His hands. He knows your poor body and He permits it to be frail and permits your heart to be trembling because He will glorify Himself in His tenderness to your weakness, wherein He will make you strong! JEHOVAH-ROPHI is His name—"The Lord That Heals You." Give yourself up to Him and you shall yet sing of His loving kindness and tender mercies!

But there are other forms of suffering than these of daily life and of bodily pain. Possibly I speak to some who are suffering the evils of persecution. No cruel tyrant can burn Believers now, nor even cast them into prison, for Christ's sake, but there are enough ways for the seed of the serpent to show its enmity to the seed of the woman. "Trials of cruel mockings" are still common. There are many ways in which the devil's whip can reach the back of the child of God. Persecution is still abundant and many a man's foes are of his own household. I will rehearse no stories of Christian women with jeering husbands, nor of godly youths who endure scoffing and far worse, but many a house is still a place of martyrdom. Gracious Sufferers, may the Lord keep you from anger and unkindness! By faith, alone, can you bear persecution and turn it to account for the good of others.

Do not attempt to escape by yielding what is right and true, but ask the Lord to help you to stand fast for Him. If it is true that the Lord still has His martyrs, let it be seen that they are as brave as ever. Not now do they gather in the great amphitheater, where sits the emperor in state, with all the proud citizens of Rome in the nearer gallery, tier on tier, and the multitude up yonder gazing with their cruel eyes into the vast arena below. Not now do I see them lift up the great iron door and let loose the monsters that come forth roaring, hungry for their prey. Not now do I see, standing in the middle, a man and his wife and children, all unarmed. Not now do I hear the shouts of the mob, as they exult that Christians are given to the lions. This is all over. Christ, in His suffering members, has conquered Caesar and pagan Rome, for out of weakness Believers were made strong.

A softer spirit has come over the human mind, but there is as much enmity against God as ever, and now it finds a less public arena and a meaner mode of torture. Today the tried one suffers alone and misses the encouragement of Christian eyes. At times he has to feel that it were better for him to fight with beasts at Ephesus than to bear the taunts, threats

and slanders of ungodly kinsfolk. My Sister, my Brother, have faith in God in your hidden sorrow! Cry to Him in the secret of your soul and you will bear your load, yes, you will bear it calmly, and you will win those who hate you! Of your secret martyrdom, angels will be spectators and Christ will suffer in you—therefore, fear not. Out of weakness you shall be made strong by faith.

We have among us those who are not exposed to persecution, but have to stand against assaults of unbelief. That which Believers in past ages have accepted as the Truth of God is not believed in many places, nowadays, and so it comes to pass that one brings to us a bit of skeptical science which he has picked up from Huxley or Tyndall. Another comes with a criticism that he has found in some of the modern divines who are the devil's instruments for spreading infidelity. And a third appears with a vile blasphemy from one of the coarser assailants of religion—and each one demands an immediate answer to his quibble, or his difficulty. Do they really expect that we are to answer, on the spur of the moment, every objection that they are pleased to raise? I confess that I do not believe that one human brain is capable of answering every objection that another human brain could raise against the most obvious truth in the world. Do not try to answer quibblers, but if you do, mind that faith is your weapon! If you take the wooden sword of your own reasoning, you may easily be beaten. Believe for yourself, because God has said it, and speak as the Lord guides you. Fix it in your mind, "This is God's Book. This is His Infallible Revelation and I believe it against every argument that can possibly be urged against it. Let God be true, but every man a liar." This will be sure defensive ground, but if you get off that rock, you will soon find yourself sinking or staggering! For an offensive weapon, take "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God"—and if this does not serve your turn, nothing will. Have a thorough, entire and childlike faith in the Revelation of the Most High and you will be made strong in those mental conflicts for which, in yourself, you are so weak.

Again, it may be that I am speaking to sad ones who suffer under mental depression. Some of us are, by constitution, inclined to that condition. I have sometimes envied those good people who are never excited with joy and, consequently, seldom or never despond. "Along the cool, sequestered vale of life they hold the even tenor of their way." Happy people! At the same time, when I rise, as upon eagle's wings in joyous rapture, I feel right glad to be capable of the blissful excitement! Yet if you soar to the skies, you are very apt to drop below sea level. He that can fly, can faint. Elijah, after he had slain the prophets of Baal, was found fleeing into the wilderness from the face of Jezebel. If you are so constituted that you rise and fall. If you are a creature that can be excited and that can be depressed and, worse still, if you happen to have been born on a foggy day and to have swallowed so much of that fog that you have found it shading your spirit many a time since, then you can only be strong by faith!

If you are one of those plants which seldom bloom with bunches of bright flowers, but have your blossoms hidden and concealed, be not disquieted. If you are never mirthful and seldom able to call yourself joyful—the only cure for depression is faith! Settle this in your heart—"Whether I am up or down, the Lord Jesus Christ is the same. Whether I sing, or whether I sigh, the promise is true and the Promiser is faithful. Whether I stand on Tabor's summit, or am hidden in the vale of Baca, the Covenant stands fast and everlasting love abides." Be assured, beyond all questioning, that he that believes in the Lord Jesus is not condemned! Believe in Him, though you see no flashes of delight nor sparkles of joy. We are safe

because we are in the City of Refuge—not because we are, in ourselves, ill or well. If you will stand firm in Christ Jesus, even in your weakness you will be made strong!

It may be that certain of you are called to suffer in your minds, not because of any wrong thing in yourselves, but for the sake of others. Some years ago I preached a sermon to you from the text, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" and in a mournful degree I felt what I preached, as my own cry. I felt an agony of spirit, for I was under an awful sense of being forsaken of God. And yet I could not understand why I was surrounded by such thick darkness. I wished to clear myself if any sin remained upon me, but I could not discover any evil which I was tolerating. When I went back into the vestry, I learned the secret of my personal distress, for there was an elderly man, in a horror of great darkness, who said to me, "I have never before met with any person who has been where I am. I trust there is hope for me." I bade him sit down and I talked with him. I saw him afterwards and I hope I guided him from the verge of insanity into the open, healthy place of peace through believing in my Master.

I fear I should never have touched his case if I had not been in the miry clay myself. Then I understood why I must feel like one forsaken. The Lord was leading me where I would be taught to know my man and should be made willing to sit side by side with him in the dark prison house and lend him a hand to escape. Since then, in presenting myself to my Lord

for service, I have said to Him, "Make me useful to the doubting and the feeble-minded. I do not bargain for comfort, peace and joy, if I can be more helpful to Your poor, weary children without them. Place me where I can best answer Your purpose by being made to sympathize with Your troubled people. I only want to bring them to Heaven, to the praise of the Glory of Your Grace. And as for me, let me rejoice or suffer, as best suits their case." For this a man must have faith in God and he must be sure that his trials, endured through his office, will have great recompense of reward. If you are chosen to be a leader and a helper, or a mother in Israel, be satisfied to endure hardness with the full belief that it is all right and that God will not only bring you through, but will also bless somebody else by the means of your tribulations.

My time is ended, although I had much more to say. I can only pray the Lord to give you Divine Grace to believe in Him. If I should never again have the pleasure of speaking for my Lord upon the face of this earth, I should like to deliver, as my last confession of faith, this testimony—that nothing but faith can save this 19th Century—nothing but faith can save old England. Nothing but faith can save the present unbelieving church. Nothing but firm faith in the grand old Doctrines of Grace and in the ever-living and unchanging God can bring back to the Church a full tide of prosperity and make her to be the deliverer of the nations for Christ. Nothing but faith in the Lord Jesus can save you or me. The Lord give you, my Brothers and Sisters, to believe to the utmost degree, for His name's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hebrews 11.

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