

The Best War Cry

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon emphasizes that the true strength and victory of God's people come from the abiding presence of the Triune God among them, which acts as their ultimate safeguard and source of power.

Scripture: Numbers 23:21, Psalm 121:3-4, John 14:16-17, John 14:27, 1 Corinthians 3:16, Revelation 3:16, Psalm 23:2, 2 Corinthians 1:22

Topics: "God's Presence", "Divine Guidance"

Description

In 'The Best War Cry,' C.H. Spurgeon passionately explores the vital importance of God's abiding presence within His Church. He illustrates how the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—dwells among believers, providing them with guidance, strength, and protection against spiritual adversaries. Spurgeon warns against spiritual lukewarmness and calls the Church to maintain zeal and faithfulness to preserve this divine presence. This devotional sermon encourages believers to trust in God's unchanging promises and to rejoice in His nearness as their ultimate safeguard.

Transcript

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

"The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them." Numbers 23:21.

IT was a singular spectacle to see the king of Moab and his lords climbing to the tops of the craggy rocks, accompanied by that strange being, the Eastern prophet Balaam. They are seeking to look upon Israel with the evil eye and flash down curses upon her tents in the plain beneath. You see them gazing down from the mountains upon the encampment in the wilderness below, even as vultures from aloft spy out their prey. They watch with keen and cruel eyes. Cunning and malice are in their countenances. How Balak longs to crush the nation which he fears! They are secretly endeavoring, by spell and enchantment, to bring evil upon the people whom Jehovah has chosen and led into the wilderness. You see them offering their seven bullocks and their seven rams upon the seven altars which they have set up upon Pisgah's rocks.

Balaam retires to wait until the impulse shall come upon him and he shall be able to prophesy. In all probability Moses knew nothing about this at the time and certainly the people below knew nothing of the foul conspiracy. There lay the tribes in the valley, unaware that mischief was brewing, and quite unable to meet the dark design even if they had been aware of it. What a mercy it was for them that they were

guarded by a Watcher—a Holy One whose eyes can never slumber. How true it is—"I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." The Lord's eyes are fixed upon Balaam the hireling, and Balak the son of Zippor—in vain do they weave the enchantment and work the divination—they shall be utterly ashamed and confounded.

They were baffled in their machinations and utterly defeated in their schemes, and that for one single reason—it is written, "JEHOVAH SHAMMAH—the Lord Is There. God's Presence in the midst of His people is as a wall of fire round about them and a Glory in their midst. The Lord is their light and their salvation, whom shall they fear? At this present time God has a people, a remnant according to the election of Grace, who still dwell like sheep in the midst of wolves. When, as a part of the Lord's Church, we look at our surroundings, we see much that might cause us alarm, for never, either day or night, is Satan quiet. Like a roaring lion, he goes about, seeking whom he may devour! He plots in secret his crafty devices—if it were possible he would deceive the very elect!

This Prince of Darkness has on earth many most diligent servants, compassing sea and land to make proselytes, laying out all their strength and using all their craft and cunning if, by any means, they may destroy the Kingdom of God and blot out the Truth of God from under Heaven. It is saddest of all to see certain men who know the Truth in some degree, as Balaam did, entering into league with the adversary against the true Israel. These combine their arts and use all possible means that the Gospel of the Grace of God, and the Church that holds it, may utterly be destroyed. If the Church is not destroyed, it will be no thanks to her enemies, for they would swallow her up quickly!

When we look upon the signs of the times, our heart grows heavy, for iniquity abounds, the love of many waxes cold, many false spirits have gone abroad in the earth and some whom we looked upon as helpers are proving themselves to be of another order. What then? Are we dismayed? By no means, for that same God who was in the midst of the Church in the wilderness is in the Church of these last days! Again shall her adversaries be defeated. Still will He defend her, for the Lord has built His Church upon a rock and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against her. The reason of her safety is this—

"God in the midst of her does dwell; Nothing shall her remove;

The Lord to her a Helper shall, And that right early, prove."

Our text declares the grand safeguard of the Church of God, ensuring her against every peril known and unknown, earthly or Satanic—"Jehovah his God is with him, and the shout of a King is among them." May the Holy Spirit help me while I try to speak, first, upon God's Presence with His people. Secondly, upon the results of that Presence. And thirdly, upon how, by the Grace of God, that Presence may be preserved continually among us.

I. First, let me speak a little upon GOD'S PRESENCE AMONG HIS PEOPLE. It is an extraordinary Presence, for God's ordinary and usual Presence is everywhere. Where shall we flee from His Presence? He is in the highest Heaven and in the lowest Hell! The hand of the Lord is upon the high hills and His power is in all deep places. This knowledge is too high and wonderful for us! God is everywhere, for in Him we live and move and have our being. Still there is a peculiar Presence, for God was among His people in the wilderness as He was not among the Moabites and the Edomites, their foes. And God is in His Church as He is not in the world. It is a peculiar promise of the Covenant that God will dwell with His people and walk among them.

By the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Lord is with us and in us at this hour. He says of His Church, "Here will I dwell, for I have desired it." This is much more than God's being about us—it includes the favor of God towards us, His consideration of us, His working with us. An active nearness to bless is the Presence of which we speak. Here we may say with great reverence that God is with His people in the entirety of His Nature. The Father is with us, for the Father, Himself, loves us. Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him. He is near to us, supplying our needs, guiding our steps, helping us in time and tutoring us for eternity. God is where His children are, hearing every groan of their sorrow, marking every tear of their distress. The Father is in the midst of His family, acting a father's part towards them. "Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations." He is never far from any into whose breasts He has put the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, "Abba, Father!" Come, you children of God, rejoice in this—your heavenly Father has come unto you and abides with you!

We also have the Presence of the Divine Son of God. Said He not to His Apostles, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"? Have we not this for our joy whenever we come together, that we meet in His name, and that He still says, "Peace be unto you," and manifests Himself unto us as He does not unto the world? Many of you know most delightfully what it is to have fellowship with God, for "truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ"—and this fellowship were not ours if we were not made near by His precious blood. Very near are we to the heart of Christ—He dwells with us—yes, He is one with us!

Peculiarly this presence relates to the Holy Spirit. It is He who represents the Lord Jesus who has gone from us. We have a double portion of Christ's Spirit because we see Him, now that He is taken up, even as Elisha had a double portion of Elijah's spirit, according to the Prophet's saying, "If you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so unto you." That is, a double portion of my spirit shall rest upon you. It was expedient that our Lord and Master should go, that the Spirit might be given! That Spirit, once poured out at Pentecost, has never been withdrawn! He is still in the midst of this dispensation, working, guiding, quickening, comforting, exercising all the blessed office of the Paraclete and, being for us and in us, God's Advocate, pleading for the Truth of God and for us.

Yes, dear Friends, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are in the midst of the true Church of God when that Church is in a right and healthy state. And if the Triune God is gone away from the Church, then her banners must trail in the dust, for her warriors have lost their strength. This is the Glory of the Church of God—to have the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit to be her never-failing benediction! What a glory to have Father, Son and Holy Spirit manifesting the Godhead in the midst of our assemblies and blessing each one of us! For God to dwell with us—what a condescending Presence this is! And will God, in very truth, dwell among men? If the Heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, will He abide among His people? He will! He will! Glory be to His name! "Know you not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit?" God dwells in us! Wonderful word!

Who can fathom the depth of this Grace? The mystery of the Incarnation is equaled by the mystery of the indwelling! That God, the Holy Spirit, should dwell in our bodies is as extraordinary as that God, the Son, should inhabit that body which was born of the blessed virgin! Strange, strange is this, that the Creator should dwell in His creatures, that the Infinite should tabernacle in finite beings! Yet so it is, for He has said, "Certainly I will be with you." What an awe this imparts to every true Church of God! You may go in and out of certain assemblies and you may say, "Here we have beauty! Here we have adornment, musical, ecclesiastical, architectural, oratorical and the like!"

But to my mind there is no worship like that which proceeds from a man when he feels the Lord is present! What a hush comes over the soul! Here is the place for the bated breath, the unsandalled foot and the prostrate spirit! Now are we on holy ground. When the Lord descends in the majesty of His infinite love to deal with the hearts of men, then it is with us as it was in Solomon's temple when the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the Glory that filled the place. Man is set aside, for God is there! In such a case the most fluent think it better to be silent, for there is, at times, more expressiveness in absolute silence than in the fittest words. "How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven." Why? Because Jacob had said, "Surely the Lord is in this place."

We regard the lowliest assemblies of the most illiterate people with solemn reverence if God is there—we regard the largest assemblies of the wealthiest and most renowned with utter indifference if God is not there. This is the one necessity of the Church—the Lord God must be in the midst of her or she is nothing! If God is there, peace will be within her walls and prosperity within her palaces—but if the Lord is not there, woe unto the men that speak in His name, for they shall cry in bitterness, "Who has believed our report?" Woe unto the waiting people, for they shall go away empty! Woe unto the sinners in a forsaken Zion, for no salvation comes to them! The Presence of God makes the Church to be a joyful, happy, solemn place! This brings glory to His name and peace to His people. But without it, all faces are pale, all hearts are heavy.

Brothers and Sisters, this Presence of God is clearly discerned by the gracious, though others may not know it. Yet I think even the ungracious, in a measure, perceive it—coming into the assembly they are struck with a secret something—they know not what. And if they do not immediately join in the worship of the present God, yet a deep impression is made upon them beyond any that could be caused by the sound of human speech, or by the grandeur of outward show. They feel awed and retire abashed. Certainly the devil knows where God is—none better than he. He hates the camp of which Jehovah is the leader against it. He doubles his enmity, multiplies his plots and exercises all his power. He knows where his kingdom finds its bravest assailants and he, therefore, attacks their headquarters, even as Balaam and Balak did of old.

Let us look at Balaam for a moment. May we never run in the way of Balaam for a reward, but let us stand in his way for a moment that he may be our beacon. This man had sold himself for gold and, though he knew God and spoke under Inspiration, yet he knew Him not in his heart, but was willing to curse God's people for money. He was thwarted in his design because God was there. It is worth our while to see what kind of a God Jehovah is in Balaam's estimation. He describes our God in verse 19—"God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: has He said, and shall He not do it? Or has He spoken and shall He not make it good?" Balaam perceived that the God who was in the midst of His people is not a changeable god, not a false god, not one who promises and forgets, or promises and eats his words, or promises what he cannot and will not perform.

The God of Israel is faithful and true, immutable, unchanging! Every one of His promises shall be fulfilled! None of His Words shall fall to the ground. "Has He said, and shall He not do it? Has He spoken and shall it not come to pass?" What a joy it is to have such a God as this among us—a promise-making and a promise-keeping God—a God at work for His people as He has declared He would be! We have a God comforting and cheering His people—and fulfilling in their experience that which His Word has led them to expect. This God is our God forever and ever! He shall be our Guide even unto death! My dear Friends, we sometimes hear men talk of the failure of the Church. We are afraid that some churches do fail. Wherever failure occurs, the bottom of it is the absence of the Lord of Hosts, for He cannot fail.

I heard one, speaking of the district in which he lives, say, "We are a religious people. Almost all the people attend a place of worship, but," he added, "I am bound to add that of spiritual life we have few traces. One Church has given up its Prayer Meetings; another feels that its entertainments are more important than its worship and another is notorious for worldliness." This is a testimony as terrible as it is common! The worst thing that can be said of any Christian community is this—"You have a name to live and are dead." "You are neither cold nor hot." Our Lord Jesus says, "I would you were cold or hot. So, then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue you out of My mouth."

A Church without life and zeal makes Christ sick! He cannot bear it. He can put up with downright godlessness sooner than with a profession of religion out of which the life and the power are gone, since it has cooled down into lukewarmness. This, then, we should pray for continually—the Presence of God in the midst of His people—

"Great Shepherd of Your Israel

Who did, between the cherubs dwell, And led the tribes, Your chosen sheep, Safe through the desert and the deep, Your Church is in the desert now! Shine from on high, and guide us through. Turn us to You, Your love restore We shall be saved, and sigh no more."

II. To whet your desire for this, let me pass on to the second head of my subject, which is briefly to describe THE RESULTS OF THIS DIVINE PRESENCE. Some of these results are mentioned in the context. One of the first is leading—"God brought them out of Egypt" (v. 22). The best critics give us another rendering—"God is bringing them out of Egypt." When God is in the midst of His people, He is leading them, so that we may cheerfully sing that song, "He leads me, He leads me," and go on with David to say, "He leads me beside the still waters." We need no other Leader in the Church when we have God, for His eyes and arms will guide His people.

I am always afraid of having human rules in a Church and equally fearful of being governed by human precedents. I am afraid of power being vested in one, or two, or 20 men—the power must be in the Lord, Himself. That Church which has God in the midst of it, rules itself, and goes right without any other guidance but that which comes of the Holy Spirit's working. Such a Church keeps together without aiming at uniformity and goes on to victory even though it makes no noise. That movement is right which is led by God—and that is sure to be all wrong which is led in the best possible way if God is absent. Organization is all very well, but I sometimes feel inclined to join with Zwingli in the battle when he said, "In the name of the Holy Trinity let all loose," for when everybody is free, if God is present, everybody is bound to do the right thing. When each man moves according to the Divine instinct in him, there will be little need of regulations—all is order where God rules! Just as the atoms of matter obey the present power of God, so do separate Believers obey the one great impelling influence.

Oh, if God is in the Church to lead it, it shall be rightly guided! Do not fall in love with this particular system, or that, my Brothers and Sisters—do not cry up this scheme of working or that! Get the Spirit of God and almost any shape that spiritual life takes will be a form of energy suitable for the particular emergency! God never leads His people wrongly! It is for them to follow the fiery, cloudy pillar. Though it leads them through the sea, they shall traverse it dry-shod! Though it leads them through a desert, they shall be fed! Though it brings them into a thirsty land, they shall drink to the full of water from the Rock! We must have the Lord with us to guide us into our promised rest.

The next blessing is strength. "He has, as it were, the strength of an unicorn" (v. 22). It is generally agreed that the creature here meant is an extinct species of urns or ox, most nearly represented by the buffalo of the present period. This gives us the sentence—"He has, as it were, the strength of a buffalo." When God is in a Church, what rugged strength, what massive force, what irresistible energy is sure to be there! And how untamable is the living force! You cannot yoke this buffalo to everybody's plow—it has its own free way of living and it acts after its own style. When the Lord is with a Church, her power is not in numbers, though very speedily she will increase. Her power is not wealth, though God will take care that the money comes when it is needed. Her power lies in God—and that power becomes irresistible, untamable, unconquerable! Force and energy are with the Lord.

I fear that what many bodies of Christian people need is this force. Examine yonder religious body—it is huge, but it lacks muscle—it is a fine-looking organization, but soul, sinew, backbone are lacking. Where God is, there is sure to be life-force. When the Spirit of God descended upon the first saints, they began to speak with wondrous power! And though they were persecuted, they were not subdued. No bit could be put into their mouths to hold them in, for they went everywhere preaching the Word of God! Of the true Israel it shall be said—"His strength is as the strength of the buffalo: it cannot be controlled or conquered."

The next result is safety. "Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel." The Presence of God quietly baffles all the attempts of the Evil One. I have noticed, dear Brothers and Sisters, in this Church where we have had God's Presence in a great measure, that all around us people have gone off to this opinion and to the other fancy, yet, our members, as a rule, have stood firm. Persons say to me, "Do you not sometimes answer the skepticisms of the day?" I answer, No. They do not come in my way. "Do not modern opinions trouble your

Church?" They have not done so. Why? Because God is there and spiritual life, in vigorous exercise, does not fall a victim to disease! A gracious atmosphere does not agree with modern doubt.

When people fall into that evil, they go where the thing is indulged, or at least where it is combated—where in some way or other they can develop their love of novelty and foster the notion of their own wisdom. Infidelity, Socinianism, and modern thought can make no headway where the Spirit is at work! Enchantment does not lie against Israel and divination does not touch Jacob. If a Church will keep to the Truth of God, keep to God, and do its own work, it can live like a lamb in the midst of wolves without being torn in pieces. Have God with you and not only the evil of doctrinal error but every other error shall be kept far from you. But still, there was, when Christ was in the Church, a Judas in the midst of it—and even in the Apostles' days there were some that went out from them because they were not of them, for if they had been of them, doubtless they would have continued with them—therefore we may not expect to be without false brethren.

But the true safety of the Church is not a creed, not an enactment for expelling those who violate the creed—only the Presence of God can protect His people against the cunning assaults of their foes. Upon these words, "there is no enchantment against Jacob, no divination against Israel," suffer a few sentences. There are still a few foolish people in the world who believe in witchcraft and spells, but you, Beloved, if you love the Lord, throw such nonsense to the winds! Do you not hear people talk about this being lucky and that unlucky? This notion is heathenish and unchristian! Never utter such nonsense! But even if there were such things as witchcraft and divination, if this house were full of devils and the air swarmed with invisible spirits of an evil sort, yet if we are the people of God, surely there is no enchantment against us. Divination cannot touch a child of God—the Evil One is chained!

Therefore be of good courage—if God is for us, who can be against us? Further than that, God gives to His people the next blessing, that is, of His so working among them as to make them a wonder and cause outsiders to raise enquiries about them. "According to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What has God worked?" Is not that a singular thing? Here is Balaam with his seven altars, seven bullocks and seven rams. And here is Balak. And they are all going to compass some dreadful evil against Israel! The prophet is a man of great skill in the occult arts—but what does God say? In effect, He says—"From this hour in which you try to curse them, I will bless them more than ever until I will make them say, and their enemies say, "What has God worked?"

Brethren, there is another question, "What has Israel worked?" I am glad that Israel's work is not my subject just now, because I should make a very wretched sermon out of it! We have better music in the words, "What has God worked?" Let me tell not what I have done, but what God has done! Not what human nature is, but what God's Nature is and what the Grace of God will work in the midst of His people. If God is within us, we shall be signs and wonders until those around us shall say, "What is this that God is doing?" Yes, in you, poor Jacob, wrestling, halting on your thigh, men shall see marvels and cry, "What has God worked?" Much more shall it be so with you, my brother, Israel, you who have prevailed and won the blessing—you are as a prince with God and you shall make men enquire, "What has God worked?"

When God is with His people, He will give them power of a destructive kind. Do not be frightened! Here is the text for it—"Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion"—that is, as a lion in the fullness of his vigor—"He shall not lie down until he eats of the prey and drinks the blood of the slain." God has put into His Church, when He is in it, a most wonderful, destructive power against spiritual wickedness! A healthy Church kills error, and tears evil in pieces! Not so very long ago our nation tolerated slavery in our colonies. Philanthropists endeavored to destroy slavery, but when was it utterly abolished? It was when Wilberforce roused the Church of God, and when the Church of God addressed herself to the conflict—then she tore the evil thing to pieces!

I have been amused with what Wilberforce said the day after they passed the Act of Emancipation. He merrily said to a friend when it was all done, "Is there not something else we can abolish?" That was said playfully, but it shows the spirit of the Church of God! She lives in conflict and victory—her mission is to destroy everything that is bad in the land! See the fierce devil of intemperance, how it devours men! Earnest friends have been laboring against it and they have done something for which we are grateful. But if ever intemperance is put down, it will be when the entire Church of God shall arouse herself to protest against it! When the strong lion rises up, the giant of drunkenness shall fall before him. "He shall not lie down until he eats of the prey and drinks the blood of the slain."

I predict for the world the best results from a fully awakened Church! If God is in her, there is no evil which she cannot overcome! This crowded London of ours sometimes appalls me—the iniquity which reigns and rages in the lower districts, the general indifference and the growing atheism of the people—these are something terrible, but let not the people of God be dismayed. If the Lord is in the midst of us, we shall do with this as our forefathers have done with other evils—we shall rise up in strength and not lie down till the evil is destroyed! For the destructions, mark you, of God's people, are not the destructions of men and women—they consist in the overthrow of sin—the tearing in pieces of systems of iniquity. This it is which God shall help His Church to do, He being in the midst of her.

Once more—the results of God's Presence are to be seen, not only in the context, but in other matters which we have personally experienced and hope to experience more fully. Note them. When God is in a

Church, there is a holy awe upon the hearts of His people. There is also a childlike trustfulness, hopefulness and consequent courage and joy. When the Lord is in the midst of His people, the ordinances of His house are exceedingly sweet. Baptism and the Lord's Supper become divinely painted pictures of our burial in Christ and of our life through Him. The preaching of the Word drops as dew and distils as the rain. The meetings for prayer are fresh and fervent—we desire to stay in them hour after hour—we feel it such a happy thing to be there! The very house in which we meet grows beautiful to us. We love the place where our Lord is accustomed to meet with us.

Then work for Christ is easy, no, delightful! God's people never need urging, they are eager for the fray when the Lord is with them. Then, too, suffering for Christ becomes pleasant, yes, any kind of suffering is easily borne—

"I can do all things, or can bear All sufferings, if my Lord is there! Sweet pleasures mingle with the pains,
While His left hand my head sustains."

Then prayer grows abundant all over the Church, both in private and in public. Then life is made vigorous, the feeblest becomes as David, and David like the Angel of the Lord. Then love is fervent; unity is unbroken; the Truth of God is esteemed and the living of truth in the life is sought after by all the people of God! Then effort is successful; the Church enlarges the bounds of her tent, for she breaks forth on the right hand and on the left. Then her seed inherits the Gentiles and the desolate places are inhabited. Then God gives unto her the holy energy with which she vanquishes nations. When God is with her she becomes like a sheaf of fire in the midst of the stubble and consumes her adversaries round about. "Fair as the moon, clear as the sun and terrible as an army with banners," is a Church which has God in her midst!

But now notice one thing in my text, and with that I close this description. Where God is, we are told, "The shout of a king is among them." What is the shout of a king? When great commanders are known to have come into a camp, what a thrill of joy it causes among their trusty warriors! When the soldiers have been much dejected, it has been whispered in their tents—

"The king has come to marshal us, All in his armor dressed,"

and from that moment every man is cheered up. At the sight of the king, as he comes riding into the camp, the host raises a great shout. What does it mean? It is a shout of loyal love—they are glad to welcome their leader. So is it with us when we sing—"The King Himself comes near"—we are all as glad as glad can be! Those who cannot come out to see their prince, because they are lying on their sick beds in hospitals, clap their hands, while even the little children in their mothers' arms join in the general joy. "The king is come," they say, and his presence kindles their enthusiasm till they make the hills ring again!

You know how the stern Ironsides felt when Cromwell came along. Every man was a hero when he led the way. They were ready for any adventure, no matter how difficult, as long as their great chief was there. That enthusiasm which was inspired by Alexander, by Napoleon and by other great commanders, is the earthly image of the spiritual fervor felt by the Church when the Lord Jesus is in her midst! What next? When the king comes and they have received him with enthusiasm, he cries, "Now is the hour of battle" and at once a shout goes up from his warriors who are eager for the fight. When a clan of Highlanders was led to the battle by their chief, he had only to show them the enemy and with one tremendous shout they leaped upon them like lions!

It is so with the people of God. When God is with us, we are strong, resolute, determined. The charge of the servants of God is as the rush of a hurricane against a bowing wall and a tottering fence. In God is our confidence of victory. With

God present, no man's heart fails him; no doubt enters the host. "Be strong, and quit yourselves like men," is the word that is passed round, for our King's eyes make us brave and the Presence of His Majesty secures our triumph. My Brothers and Sisters, let us cry to God, entreating Him to be among us! This it is that you need in your Sunday schools, in your mission halls, in your street preaching, in your tract distributing—it is this that I need beyond everything when I have to speak to you in this vast house.

If I could hear the sound of my Master's feet behind me, I would speak though I were lying upon the borders of the grave! But if God is gone, I am bereft of power. What is the use of words without the Spirit? We might as well mutter to the whistling winds as preach to men without the Lord! O God, if You are with us, then the shout of a King is among us, but without You, we pine away!

III. Thirdly, let us look at a very important point and a very practical one, too—What can be done for THE SECURING AND PRESERVING OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD WITHIN THE CHURCH? This is a matter that would

require several sermons to discuss fully, but I notice that there is something, even, in the conformation of a Church to secure this. God is very tolerant and He bears with many mistakes in His servants and yet blesses them. But depend upon it, unless a Church is formed at the very outset upon Scriptural principles and in God's own way, sooner or later all the mistakes of her constitution will turn out to be sources of weakness! Christ loves to dwell in a house which is built according to His own plans and not according to the whims and fancies of men.

The Church ought not to set up as her authority the decrees of men, either living or dead—her Ruler is Christ! Associations formed otherwise than according to Scripture must fail in the long run. I wish Christians would believe this. Chillingworth said, "The Bible and only the Bible, is the religion of Protestants." That was not true. Certain Protestants have tacked many other things to the Bible—and they are suffering as the result of their folly—for they cannot keep their Church from becoming Popish. Of course they cannot! They have admitted a little leaven of Popery and it will leaven the whole lump. The dry rot in one part of the house will spread throughout the whole fabric, sooner or later. Let us be careful to build on the foundation of Christ—and then let every man take heed how he builds thereon, for even if the foundation is good, yet if he builds with hay and stubble, the fire will cause him grievous loss.

But next, God will only dwell with a Church which is full of life. The living God will not inhabit a dead church! Hence the necessity of having really regenerated people as members of the Church. We cannot secure this in every case with all our watching—tares will grow among the wheat. But if the admission of unregenerate men is usual and there are no restrictions, then the Lord will be grieved and leave us. God dwells not in temples made with hands—He has nothing to do with bricks and mortar—He dwells in living souls! Remember that text—"God is not the God of the dead, but of the living," and it bears this sense among others, that He is not the God of a church made up of unconverted people. Oh, that we may all live unto God, and may that life be past all question.

That being supposed, we next notice that to have God among us we must be full of faith. Unbelief gives forth such a noxious vapor that Jesus, Himself, could not stay where it was. His strength was paralyzed—"He could not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief." Faith creates an

atmosphere in which the Spirit of God can work! Meanwhile, the Spirit of God, Himself, creates that faith, so that it is all of His own working from first to last! Brothers and Sisters, do you believe your God? Do you believe up to the hilt? Alas, too many only believe a little! But do you believe His every Word? Do you believe His grandest promises? Is He a real God to you, making His Words into facts, every day of your lives? If so, then the Lord is among us as in the Holy Place!

Faith builds a pavilion in which her King delights to sit enthroned. With that, must come prayer. Prayer is the breath of faith. I do not believe God will ever be long with a Church that does not pray—and I feel certain that when meetings for prayer, when family prayer, when private prayer, when any form of prayer comes to be at a discount—the Lord will leave the people to learn their weakness! Lack of prayer cuts the sinews of the Church for practical working. She is lame, feeble, impotent, if prayer is gone. If anything is the matter with the lungs, we fear consumption—Prayer Meetings are the lungs of the Church and anything the matter there means consumption to the Church, or at best a gradual decline, attended with general debility.

Oh, my Brothers, if we want to have God with us, pass the watchword round, "Let us pray!" Let us pray after the fashion of the widow who was importunate and would not be repulsed! Remember, it is written, "Men ought always to pray and not to faint." Where prayer is fervent, God is present. Supposing there is this faith and prayer, we shall also

need holiness of life. You know what Balaam did when he found he could not curse the people? Satanic was his advice. He bade the king of Moab seduce the men of Israel by the women of Moab that were fair to look upon—these were to fascinate them by their beauty and then to invite them to their idolatrous rites—which rites were orgies of lust. He hoped that the lewdness of the people would grieve the Lord and cause Him to leave them and then Moab could smite them.

He sadly succeeded. If it had not been for Phinehas, who, in holy wrath, drove his javelin right through a man and woman in the very act of sin, sparing none in the vehemence of his zeal, Israel had been quite undone. So in a Church. The devil will work hard to lead one into licentiousness, another into drunkenness, a third into dishonesty and others into worldliness. If he can only get the goodly Babylonian garment and the wedge of gold buried in an Achan's tent, then Israel will be chased before her adversaries! God cannot dwell in an unclean Church!

A holy God abhors the very garments spotted by the flesh. Be you holy as Christ is holy! Do not take up with this German silver electrottype holiness, which is so much boasted of nowadays. Do not be deluded into self-righteousness, but seek after real holiness—and if you find it, you will never boast about it—your life will speak, but your lips will never dare to say, "See how holy I am." Real holiness dwells with humility and makes men aspire after that which yet lies beyond them. Be holy, upright, just, straight, true, pure, chaste, devout. God send us this behavior and then we shall keep Him among us as long as we live!

Lastly, when we have reached that, let us have practical consecration. God will not dwell in a house which does not belong to Him. No, the first thing with any one of us is to answer this question—Do you give yourself up to Christ— body, soul and spirit—to live for Him and to die for Him? Will you give Him all that you have of talent and ability, and substance, time and life, itself? Where there is a Church made up of consecrated people, there God will remain and there He will make a Heaven below! And there the shout of a King shall be heard! And there His strength shall be revealed! And there His glory shall be seen, even as it is beheld on high! The Lord send us this, for Jesus' sake. Amen and Amen!

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