

The Blessings Of Following On

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that true spiritual growth comes from persistently pursuing a deeper knowledge of the Lord, assured by God's promise that such perseverance leads to fuller understanding and blessing.

Scripture: Hosea 6:3, Philippians 3:10, Hebrews 12:1-2, Psalm 42:1, Revelation 3:20

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Perseverance", "Knowledge of God"

Description

In 'The Blessings Of Following On,' C.H. Spurgeon exhorts believers to pursue a continual, eager knowledge of God, emphasizing that true spiritual growth requires perseverance and receptivity to God's work. He addresses common doubts about perseverance and spiritual maturity, encouraging Christians to trust God's promises and remain steadfast. This devotional sermon offers both comfort and challenge to those seeking a deeper walk with the Lord.

Transcript

"Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord. His going forth is prepared as the morning, and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth." Hosea 6:3.

I MUST first remove the moldy piece from the text, and that is the word, "if," which has no sort of business here whatever. You notice that the translators put it in italics, to intimate to us that it was no Word of God, but one of their own words which they thought necessary to complete the sense. We might read—and we should, to be far nearer the sense—"Then shall we know when we follow on to know the Lord." Or, perhaps, better still, "We shall know: we shall follow on to know the Lord," for there is no trace of question in the matter, and no indication of an, "if." We will cut out man's, "if," and then take the text as it should have been—"Then shall we know when we follow on to know the Lord. His going forth is prepared as the morning."

I continually hear it said concerning those who have been converted, or profess to have been converted of late, "We hope they will hold on." I wish people would speak what they mean and not veil their speech, for the plain English of that expression frequently is, "We do not believe that they will hold on." "We hope they will," means, "We do not expect it." One thing is quite certain, however—those who are truly converted to God can be safely left in God's hands. If they have, indeed, believed in Jesus Christ—in Jesus only, with all their hearts—their salvation is as sure as if they were already within the gates of Paradise! The Redeemer will not suffer any soul to perish trusting in Him—

"His honor is engaged to save
The meanest of His sheep,
All that His heavenly Father gave,
His hands securely keep.
Nor death, nor Hell, shall ever remove
His favorites from His breast,
In the dear bosom of His love
They must forever rest."

Question whether it is a work of Grace if you will, though I would much rather the questioning spirit were laid aside. But if it is the Lord's work, it will stand, for neither time nor eternity, nor life nor death, shall ever cast down that which Divine Omnipotence builds up! Jehovah puts not His hands to a work which shall ultimately crumble into nothingness! My dear young Friends, if you have believed in Jesus and are tormented by these quibblers, with their pretended hopes as to your holding on, I beseech you, be in earnest to disappoint the fears of your friends and the expectations of your foes, by living near to God, by asking for persevering Grace, by watching carefully every step you take and by guarding jealously, by the aid of the blessed Spirit, your own hearts in private, lest by any means the enemy get an advantage over you.

Let it be the great object of your ambition that you may hold on and hold out to the end—and so prove that the Lord has, indeed, looked upon you with an eye of love. There is a sweet verse in one of our hymns which I commend to you who are beginners in the Divine Life—

"We have no fear that You should lose
One whom eternal love could choose;
But we would never that Grace abuse,
Let us not fall, let us not fall."

The first part of the text meets all doubts about perseverance in Divine Grace and the second comforts souls distressed for another reason. While some young Christians are troubled about whether they shall hold on, others are very much exercised because of the slenderness of their knowledge. They compare themselves with older Christians and they say, "How

can I be a child of God when I know so little?" They even contrast themselves with their teachers and because they, as they might naturally expect, are somewhat behind them, they conclude that surely they cannot have been taught of God at all!

I beseech these friends to remember that the green blade has not the ripeness of the full ear, nor can it expect to have as yet—that the child has not the experience nor the strength of the man, nor can he expect to have as yet—that the early morning has not the warmth of noon, nor can we expect it should have. It has its own peculiar beauties, though it has not yet the full glory of meridian splendor. There is a

growth in the Divine Life. You do not know what you shall know, you are not what you shall be, you have not yet what you shall have, you do not enjoy what you shall enjoy. But these are among the things to come which are yours.

I begin, therefore, the handling of my text with this double remark—let not the fears of some that you will not hold on disturb you, rather let them excite you to lean more fully upon Christ. And let not your own consciousness of ignorance depress you—let that, also, lead you nearer to the Savior, who alone teaches us to profit. In our text there are three points. The first is, our business—"Follow on to know." The second is, God's promise—"Then shall you know." And the third is, the modes by which this promise is fulfilled—"His going forth is prepared as the morning, and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth."

I. First, then, here is OUR BUSINESS. It is to follow on to know the Lord. And that implies, first, that we begin with knowing the Lord. You cannot follow on with that which you have not commenced. There is a religiousness which contains in it no knowledge of God whatever. Beware of it! The religion which consists only in the knowledge of outward rites and ceremonies, or the knowledge of orthodoxies, the knowledge of doctrinal distinctions, the knowledge of religious language and brogues and experiences or the knowledge of popular hymns—that religion is vain. There must be a knowledge of God!

And, mark you, if you know God, you will think very little of yourself. He who knows not God thinks man a noble being—he who has seen God thinks man to be dust and ashes. He who knows not God's holiness thinks himself to be a good creature, but when he sees a thrice-holy God he says, "I abhor myself." He who knows not God thinks man to be a wonderful being, able to accomplish whatever he wills. But in the sight of God, human strength is burned up and man becomes lighter than vanity. Do you know God? O my dear Hearer, do you know God in the majesty of His Justice as condemning your sin and you for sin?

Do you know God in the splendor of His Love, as giving Jesus Christ to die for sinners, blending that Love with Justice—for Love gave Jesus and Justice slew Him? Do you know God in the fullness of His power to save, renewing the heart, changing the mind, subduing the will? Do you know Him, even, in this which is, comparatively, a slender branch of knowledge? If you do, you have begun to know Him and you have begun to know yourself, too, for he knows not himself who does not know something of God. Oh, to know the Father as my Father who has kissed me and put the best robe upon me! Oh, to know the Son as my Brother, in whose garments I am accepted and stand comely in the sight of God! Oh, to know the Spirit as the Quickener and the Divine Indweller and Illuminator, by whose light, alone, we see, and in whose life we live!

To know the Lord—that is true religion! And I say again, any religion, whatever it is—Churchianity or Nonconformity, or whatever you like—if it does not lead you to know God, it is of no use whatever. The knowledge of God is the basis of all saving experience. "The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom." "Acquaint yourself, now, with Him and be at peace." This is the one great business of human life—to know the Lord. And next, our business is to advance in this knowledge. We must shut out of our minds all ideas that we fully know the Lord, for the text says, "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know." Now a man will never follow on if he judges that he has reached the end! If he comes to the conclusion, "I know the Lord. I know all about Him. I know all that is knowable"—that man will not follow on and, therefore, I am afraid that he will never know the Lord at all.

I trembled for a very beloved Brother the other day when I heard that he had declared that he could not sing "Nearer my God, to You," for he was already as near to God as it was possible to be. Brothers and Sisters, my soul feels a horror creeping over it when such expressions are used! And more so when they fall from those I love. I know nothing about such talk as that—it seems to me to be sheer vanity! I think I know the Lord—no, I know that I know Him. I have been favored with His Presence and have enjoyed a very clear sense of my acceptance in the Beloved, but to suppose that I know

all that is to be known, or that I possess, in myself, all the holiness that a creature can attain this side of the grave, is as far from me as the east is from the west!

I growingly feel my unworthiness—I sink lower and lower in my own judgement. I was nothing and now I am less than nothing. I do not know the Lord as I hope to know Him. I would have you remember that the Apostle Paul said that he desired to know Christ. If you look at the Epistle to the Philippians, which contains that wish, you will find that it was written by Paul at least 20 years after he had been converted! He had enjoyed 20 years of walking very near to God and of very marvelous Revelations—20 years of very successful working for God, such as, perhaps, were never accorded to any other man—and yet he still aspires, "That I may know Him." What? Paul, do you not know Him? "Oh, yes," he would reply, "I know Him so sweetly, so blessedly, but I would wish to know Him better still. The more I know Him, the more I find there is yet to be known. He is such a deep of Love! He is such a mountain of Mercy that as I dive deeper, a further deep opens up to me! And as I climb higher, a loftier peak towers above me."

Dear Hearer, if you think you can never be better than you are, I do not think you ever will be. Self-contentment is the end of progress! When you have attained, why, what remains for you but to rest and be thankful, and do a little pious boasting? I do not believe you if you say you have got to the ultimatum. As long as you are this side of Heaven there will be room for progress and something yet beyond you after which you will labor. "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know." You will still have to press forward and the exhortation will still sound in your ears—

"Forget the steps already trod, And onward urge your way."

Not as though you had already attained, either were already perfect, this one thing you do, forgetting the things that are behind, press forward, still looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith. Our business, then, is to begin with the knowledge of God, to press forward in the knowledge of God, and not to flatter ourselves into the idea that we have no more to learn.

Another thought. Our business is to continue in what we know. There are some persons who are everything by turns and nothing long. They say that they have begun to know the Lord in the right way, but very soon you find them following another route. A tree which is often transplanted is not likely to bring forth much fruit. The vessel which changes its course because its captain is full of caprice, is not likely to make headway to any desired haven. Brethren, in whatever you have attained, mind the same thing—rush not after novelties, as certain vagrant bands in this city are always doing. If you have begun in the Spirit, do not hope to be made perfect in the flesh! If all that you have already known concerning your Lord has come to you by faith, do not expect the rest of it to come by feeling.

Some Christians seem to live by jerks. They live as bankrupt sinners, dependent upon the mercy of God—and then they get encouraged, and set up to live as saints rolling in riches of realized sanctification. But before long they are insolvent again, and no wonder, for this sort of paper money generally leads to a collapse. Keep to the one point—"I am nothing. Christ is everything. I am sin. He is my righteousness. I

am death. He is my life. I look to Him for everything. I trust not in excitement or feeling, or attainments, or graces, or works—I rely on Jesus only." Brothers and Sisters, that is the right path to follow. Follow on! Turn not to the right hand or to the left. Your hope of knowing more of Divine things must lie in your persevering in this course.

But take care that you persevere eagerly. I find the Hebrew here is strong enough to bear to be translated, "Then shall you know if you eagerly follow on to know the Lord." The knowledge of God is not to be attained, certainly no great proficiency in it is to be attained, without an intense desire. Even to obtain human knowledge, a man separates himself and engages in much study which is "a weariness of the flesh." If we would know God it will not be by trifling over His Word, nor by neglecting the assembling of ourselves together, nor by slighting the Mercy Seat, or neglecting private meditation. There must be a keen scent and an eager pursuit, as when the hound pursues the stag, for we cannot know much of God so as to feel His going forth as the morning and His refreshing as the dew, except our heart thirsts after God as the hart thirsts for the water brooks.

Let me urge you, newly-converted ones, to be very diligent in searching the Word of God! Be much in attendance upon the means of Grace, but, especially, be much with God privately, holding personal communion alone with God. You may learn something of a person by reading his books. You may get a better idea of him by hearing him speak. But if you want to know him best, you must live with him. Even so you may know much of God from His Word and much from

the speech of His servants. But if you want to really know Him, you must abide with Him in habitual communion. I urge this upon you—then shall you know Him, when, in this manner, you follow on to know the Lord.

Once more. Our business is to be receptive. If we are to know the Lord we must follow on to know the Lord by being willing to learn. Notice that the text says, "He shall come unto us as the rain." Now, the earth drinks in the rain. That portion of the soil which repels the rain—the rock, which turns it off from its surface—cannot be blessed thereby. It is a great blessing to have a soul capable of receiving Divine Truth. Alas, there are some who have heard the Gospel so long that they have almost become Grace-resistant! I have seen a new tent, when a shower has come on, let in the wet in a hundred places. But, after a while, when the canvas has been well swollen with the rain, it has become waterproof and not a drop has come through.

Certain hearers seem to be so saturated with the rain of the Word that they are Gospelproof! The heavenly moisture does not penetrate them. They hear, but hear in vain—insensible as steel. Open your breasts to Christ whenever He comes! Let the gates of your heart be set wide open, that He may enter. Let him not knock, and knock, and knock again in vain! When Jesus of Nazareth passes by, let Him see that there is an open door to your house, so that if, today, He must abide in your house, He may come in and welcome. The Lord opens the door of our hearts like that of Lydia, "whose heart the Lord opened." Prejudice often shuts out the Word—some people do not know the Lord, or much about Him, because they do not want to know. Certain points of God's Truth would disturb what they call their, "settled views," and therefore they wear blinkers for fear of seeing too much.

Happy is that man who wants to find Truth wherever it may be and is glad to discover and amend his errors, because his heart is set upon being right before the Lord! He longs to follow the Lord fully, as Caleb did of old. Here, then, Beloved, is our business. May Grace be given to us to attend to it—to know the Lord

to begin with, to exclude all idea that there is nothing further to know, to continue in what is known, to persevere eagerly in the endeavor to know more—and to daily be receptive of Divine influences.

II. Now, secondly, we have GOD'S PROMISE—"Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord." You shall know, young Friend! God says that you shall know! What will you know? Why, you will know, when you follow on to know the Lord, more about the past. Take the text in its connection. You observe that it details the experience—the very perplexing experience—of a quickened soul. "He has torn and He will heal; He has smitten and He will heal us up; after two days He will revive us," and so on.

Now, you do not know, perhaps, at this time, what your present experience means. You thought that as soon as you believed in Jesus you would have perfect peace and joy—and that your delight would never depart from you. You have heard others sing, "Oh, happy days," and you have sung it yourself. But just now you do not feel at all as happy as you hoped to be. On the contrary, you feel very miserable because you have found out that the devil is not dead—and that your sins are not dead—and that outside in the world, people do not look upon you with any greater love because you are a Christian. In fact, on the contrary, they oppose you! Some of your dearest relatives even scoff at you for loving the name of Jesus! And you are a good deal staggered by their opposition.

Besides, you do not enjoy prayer as you did at first and the Bible, itself, scarcely seems to glitter before your eyes as in your first love. And even the sermons, which seemed to be so very sweet, appear somehow to have become sharp and cutting to you. Well, you will understand all this by-and-by. When we are very little, our mothers carry us in their arms. But when we get a little bigger they set us on our own feet. It is natural that the child that has to walk alone should, when weary, regret that the time is over when it lay so closely in its mother's bosom. Yet it is good for the babe to try its own feet—good for it to tumble down and know its own weakness—or else it might always be helpless. Many things in the beginning of Christian life are very pleasant and delightful, but trials come in due time to exercise our graces that we may be no longer children.

We do not understand this at the time and to the raw recruit I would say, do not wish to understand it now! You shall understand it when you follow on to know the Lord. Leave your experience to God. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and hang on to that—and when you cannot comprehend your own feelings, and your religion all seems to be in a tangle, never mind—hold on to the Cross and sing—

"I, the chief of sinners, am, But Jesus died for me."

Stand to that! Rest in the precious blood once shed for many for the remission of sins and, by-and-by, you shall know all about the winding experiences through which you are now going. Then shall you know, when you follow on to know the Lord.

Beloved, the text means not only that we shall know about the past, but as we follow on to know the Lord we shall know in the present the sweet things of the Gospel and the enjoyments which are stored up for the Lord's people. "Eye has not seen, neither has ear heard, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him; but He has revealed them unto us by His Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God." You will not know the choice things which God has prepared for His people except as, by degrees, the Spirit of God reveals them to you. Press on to know more of God!

I know it sometimes puzzles you to hear us talk of election. You cannot quite understand the Doctrine of Eternal Love which had no beginning and never shall have an end—of Immutable Love which neither

shifts nor changes, of vital union to Christ—Justification through Imputed Righteousness, and the like. Very well, we will not trouble you with high sounding terms and theological phrases. But as you follow on to know the Lord you will know the deep things of God. Continue to follow on to know more about Christ. Stick to the one desire—to know more about Him—and you will find your way through difficulties.

As in a maze, if you follow the clue, you will get to the center of it. Christ is the clue to all Gospel mysteries—follow that silken clue stained with scarlet and you will arrive at all those precious Truths of God one by one and have the present enjoyment of them as God shall see that you are able to bear them. He deals with us in much prudence and according as our strength is, so does He reveal these choice things to us. "You cannot bear them now," said Christ concerning certain Truths which He would gladly have taught to His disciples. So you beginners cannot bear the higher doctrines, now, and if we were to preach them to you we should stagger you, but you will bear them soon. No, you will love them soon and, whereas they may seem bugbears to you tonight, the day shall come when you shall bless God that ever He revealed them in Scripture and you will be prepared to die in defense of them!

Beloved Christian Friends, those of you who have gone to greater lengths than others in Divine knowledge may well take this promise to yourselves as to the future—"Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord." We know something of our Lord's love and faithfulness, and truth and power to save. We know the Covenant of Grace and we have seen something of its lengths and breadths and depths and heights. But we are conscious that we have no more fully understood the boundless Love and Grace than the child who takes up a handful of water from the sea has held the Atlantic in his palm! But we shall know, we shall know! We shall know more and more and more, and especially we shall know more as we get nearer to Heaven.

That land Beulah teaches very much. Saints grow speedily wise in that region where the angels bring bundles of spices from the other side of the river—and stray notes from the harps of angels are borne on favoring breezes to the blessed ears of God's beloved ones who are waiting to be called away. We shall know. All that has been revealed to the saints shall be revealed to us when we follow on to know the Lord. Their rapturous enjoyments when they have been overcome with Divine Love—we shall drink of those wines on the lees, well refined. Their confident assurance when they were as certain of their interest in Divine Love as of their own existence—we shall climb to that and stand upon our high places, too. "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord."

Oh, Brothers and Sisters, can you guess what yet is to be revealed to you? Could you have imagined at the outset of the Christian life that you would, or could have had such confidence and rest and peace as you have now? I ask those of you who have had many trials and have been rooted and established in the faith—could you have thought it possible that you would have had such a grip and hold on Christ as you now have? Perhaps you were, for many years, under a misty, cloudy ministry—and yourselves in a sort of semi-darkness, "not light, but darkness visible"—but the Lord has brought you out to see all things finished in Christ and to understand the Covenant of Grace! Oh, what brightness is before you now!

But—but the day comes, even before you get to Heaven, when the light of this day shall be as dimness compared with what you shall behold! For the light of one day shall then be as the light of several days, if you press forward in this knowledge as God shall help you. There are ascending rungs in the Ladder of Grace and stages each one above the other in the Divine climbing. The mount of the Lord is very high—he who stands, even, at the base is saved—but there are

higher platforms and we ascend first to one and then to another! And from the elevations, gradually rising, the scene widens and the air grows clearer. Oh, to be higher, higher, higher and so near to light, nearer to perfection, nearer to God! Press on, O Climber, and you shall find that you shall know more and more of the Lord as you press towards Him!

III. The third and last point is THE FULFILMENT OF THIS PROMISE. I will not be very long over the two figures lest I should weary you, but they are both very suggestive. "His going forth is prepared as the morning." That is to say, press on to know the Lord and you shall know the Lord more fully in the light and heat which He brings to men. The going forth of the morning is peculiarly bright because it stands in contrast with the night. There are countries in which the night suddenly gives place to the morning. Here we have long intervals of twilight, but in those lands, after the eye has been in darkness all night, the sun suddenly seems to leap above the horizon and there is light.

Now, it has been so with you, already, who know the Lord, and it shall be more and more so with you. The contrast between your sorrow and your joy shall be very striking. As your tribulations abound, so, also, shall your consolations abound. Your broken bones shall rejoice! The place of your weeping, the valley of Achor, shall be the door of your hope! Now be joyous about this. Follow on to know the Lord and there shall be light for you—light out of darkness—your midnight shall blaze into day. The Lord will come as the morning as to His freshness, for every morning is a new morning. No second-hand morning has ever dawned upon the earth, yet. The dawn is always fresh with the sweet breath of the zephyrs and bright with the sparkling dews which hang like new jewels in the ears of nature.

The light is always as of newly minted gold and the air is as perfume fresh pressed from its spices. All the earth seems like a newly married bride in the early morning. Well, now, such shall you find true religion to be as you press forward—it will always be fresh for you—never flat and stale. I have wearied of a thousand things, but never of my Lord! Ask the saints whether they ever wearied of the sight of Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness who rises with healing beneath His wings! It is said of our Lord in "the Song" that His locks are black as a raven, that is to say, He is always young. Truly He wears the dew of His youth to our hearts. Never does our Lord grow old! Though He is so ancient that His locks are white as snow, yet He is still so new and fresh that the raven's plume has not more joy. You shall find it so as you press forward, joy shall be given to you—and that joy shall be forever new.

This blessing shall come irresistibly, for when the morning comes to the earth, none can stop it. Can any human hand seize the reins of the horses of the sun and restrain them from passing through the gates of the morning? Impossible! God bids the sun rise and rise he does! So with you Christians, abiding in the knowledge of God and pressing forward, the light must come to you. Nothing can prevent it! The sun rejoices to run his race and defies all competitors. And even so shall the Lord, your Redeemer, scorn all who would restrain Him and come to you in the fullness of His love.

The blessing shall come increasingly, too, for the morning awakes, at first, with a few gray streaks. Then follow the redder hues which stain the sky, as though night, in retreating, hung out the banners of defeat. And soon succeed the brighter tints and then the sun, himself, is seen above the mountain's height and all the earth is robed in splendor! So with your soul. At first there is a little light, then more, and more, and more till you come unto the perfect day and see Jehovah face to face and fear no ill! His coming forth shall be prepared as the morning. The text says, "is prepared as the morning." I find that the word may be read, "is decreed"—determined, fixed, appointed, prepared.

Christ's coming to gladden your soul, O you that know the Lord, is a fixed thing! It is not a perhaps, but is determined of God. You must have it! It is a decree as powerful as that fiat which said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And therefore the blessing must come to you. It should be no small joy to the believer in God through Jesus Christ that the mercies he is to enjoy are measured out, fixed and determined by an unalterable will which has been framed of old by Eternal Love and Infinite Wisdom! Follow on to know the Lord and if all the devils in Hell try to keep you in the dark, they cannot, the sun must rise for you! Follow on to know the Lord and if all apparent Providences should seem to keep you back, they cannot, for the secret and Omnipotent decrees which rule the Providences shall carry the point. His going forth is prepared as the morning—and that going forth shall be for your joy and delight.

The second figure of the text has less to do with the light of the knowledge of Christ, and more to do with the inward power which comes of that knowledge. "He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth." This is the inward power. Dwell upon those words, "unto us"—not only, "shall He come as the rain," but, "shall come unto us." I rejoice to feel the Gospel come home to me. It is very sweet to preach it, but when I get to hear it for myself, and it comes unto me, then I know its power to refresh my soul!

Now, the Lord Jesus Christ has a way of coming unto us which is as the rain when it waters the earth. The earth is dry and dusty, parched, barren. The rain does not ask the earth for anything, but it looks down from the heights and sees the gaping mouths of the parched fields and the clods crumbling as they lie baking in the cruel sun, and the rain says, "I will go and bless that field." And down it comes, drop after drop, in plenteous refreshment. Each drop finds its way, until the rain enters the crevices and descends into the bosom of Mother Earth and the field is refreshed, the hidden seeds start up to life, and the green blades take another shoot.

Now, follow on to know the Lord, Beloved, and you shall find the Lord Jesus Christ not only giving you more light and knowledge like the sun, but giving you more life within yourself, more sap of Divine Grace, more vigor within your own soul so that you shall become fruitful and shall grow to perfection! As you drink in the rain of Grace from Heaven, you shall yield back to Heaven the fruits of righteousness to the honor and glory of God. Observe that it is written, "He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and the former rain."

Now, these come in their season. The former rain came in Palestine at the end of autumn, when they had sown the corn. The latter rain came at the beginning of our spring, when corn in the east is getting nearly ripe. It is not so with us, of course, but it is so in Palestine. The latter rain came to plump out the ears. Now, God will give you Grace when you need it, Grace to help in time of need. A shower when you begin and another shower when you go on, and perhaps the heaviest shower just as you are ripening. Do not be frightened when you see a cloud of trouble. If we were to expect rain without clouds we should be very great fools! I sometimes think that to expect a shower of blessing without trial is almost as great a folly—

"You fearful saints, fresh courage take,

The clouds you so much dread Are big with mercy, and shall break In blessings on your head."

God knows how to send a shower of rain when it is needed and to send Grace when it is needed—to give us the former rain and the latter rain in their season.

Notice, again, it is a repeated gift. He shall give the former rain and the latter rain. If you have had Grace once, the Lord has more for you. Did you have happy times when old Dr. So-and-So was your pastor? Well, the doctor is dead, but God is not! Were you very much delighted when you used to sit in such-and-such a Church, in years gone by, but have you moved into the country now? Yes, but God has not moved! He is in the country as well as in the town! You tell me you had such happy times when you were young. Yes, but God is neither younger nor older. Go to Him, for He is the same yesterday, today, and forever!

Do you suppose that because He gave you the former rain, He has emptied the bottles of Heaven? It is not so! The clouds, "those wandering cisterns of the sky," fill again and empty again, and fill again and empty again—and so is it with the mighty Grace of God! There is an exhaustless fullness in the Lord—however much you have had from Him you shall have more. Follow on to know the Lord and you shall have Grace upon Grace! The showers shall never cease to fall till you get to the land where you shall be as a tree planted by the rivers of water and shall drink in unfailing supplies from the river itself.

One word more, only, and it is this—all this fulfillment of the promise that you shall know comes only to you through the Lord Himself. If we are to know, it must be by His going forth and because He shall come unto us. There is no knowing in any other way. Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, I know that your desire is like mine—to know more of the Lord by that deep, vital, practical knowledge which makes the soul like the God it knows! Never let us forget that our only way of knowing the Lord is through His coming to us! We may read the Bible—I trust we shall—but there is such a thing as resting in Bible reading and if we do so we shall fall short.

Our Lord denounced that in His day when He said, "You search the Scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me. And you will not come to Me that you might have life." As much as if He had said, "Your searching the Scriptures is well enough, but coming to Me is the main business." It is not the letter-god, but the Living God that we need. It is not the Book of God so much as the God of the Book that we must know! We must seek Christ Jesus, the personal Christ, really existent to ourselves! And falling at His feet, confessing our sins, looking up to His wounds, trusting and confiding in Him, we shall be, indeed, blessed.

You cannot know the Lord in any other way than by His coming to you in the reality of His Incarnation as the very Christ of God. I wish I knew how to put the matter so that everyone here would recognize to the full my meaning. You know the moment people begin to think about religion they say, "Well, yes, we must keep the Sabbath. We must attend a place of worship. We must have family prayer." Thus they dwell upon the many things that they "must do," all of which things are right enough, but they are only the shell!

What the sinner has to say is not, "I will arise and go—to Church." No, no! "I will arise and go to my closet and pray." No, that is not the first thing. "I will arise and go and read a chapter of the Bible." No, that is not it, good as that is! But, "I will arise and go unto my Father." That is where you have to go—to a real God! "How can I go?" Well, not with those feet, but He is not far from any of you. In Him you live and move and have your being—you are also His offspring. Let your hearts think of Him now. Let your hearts mourn that you have broken His Law. Let your hearts listen to His gracious Words, for He says, "Return unto Me, and I will return unto you. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

No turn will do but a turning unto the Lord. No new birth, but a birth by His Spirit. If you do not know the Lord, remember that He has revealed Himself very clearly in the Person of His only-begotten Son who took our nature and died in the place of His people upon the Cross. Whoever looks to Jesus, the Man, believing Him to be the Son of God, sees all of God that He needs to see in the Person of the crucified Redeemer! Look to Him, however weak and feeble your eyes may be! Trust Him, trust Him fully, trust Him only, trust Him now! God enable you to do so by His ever-blessed Spirit, and you are saved.

You know the Lord, and as you go on to know more about Him, you shall find Him to be as the sun in his brightness, and as the rain in its sweetness and life. God bless you. May we all meet in Heaven, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hosea 6. HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—605, 670, 673.

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