

The Dejected Lover

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that even in seasons of spiritual dryness and absence of felt communion, the believer's steadfast love and earnest seeking of Christ sustains and restores fellowship with Him.

Scripture: Song of Solomon 3:1-4, John 21:17, Revelation 3:16

Topics: "Communion with Christ", "Spiritual Longing", "Faith and Unbelief"

Description

In "The Dejected Lover," C.H. Spurgeon explores the deep spiritual experience of longing for Christ during times of dryness and absence of felt communion. He encourages believers to recognize that love for Christ can persist even when His presence feels distant and warns against relying on self-effort or mere external means. Spurgeon calls for humble, earnest seeking and faith in God's grace as the path to restored fellowship with Jesus. This devotional sermon offers comfort and practical guidance for those struggling in their spiritual walk.

Transcript

"By night on my bed I sought Him whom my soul loves: I sought Him, but I found Him not. I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets and in the broad ways I will seek Him whom my soul loves: I sought Him but I found Him not. The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw you Him whom my soul loves? It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found Him whom my soul loves: I held Him, and would not let Him go, until I had brought Him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me." Song of Solomon 3:1-4.

[The original title of this sermon is, THE DISCONSOLATE LOVER.]

How exquisitely pleasant is communion with our Lord Jesus Christ! And how supremely favored are those who enjoy it! Holy Scripture exhausts every earthly figure to delineate its sacred charms, its ineffable delights! Yes, Inspiration, itself, exhausts its metaphors without compassing its mystery, because it is impossible for human language to express the sweetness of His Grace, or the solace of our acquaintance with Him. In just so much as it is sweet to know that fellowship, so is it sad not to know or to experience it. But alas, how frequently is this communion unfelt and unproved!

I. THE BRIDEGROOM WAS MISSED.

In addressing this large assembly, I can but think a considerable number of the Lord's people are in the condition of the spouse. You do not at present enjoy access to Christ, or sweet communion with Him. It may do you good to consider the things that remain to you, though this fellowship is suspended, for let it be remembered that it is not upon communion with Christ our life depends. Our salvation stands in the knowledge of Him, not in communion with Him. We are made safe by what He has done, not by what we feel. Not our enjoyments, but His sufferings we must lay as the solid foundation of our hope!

There remains to us, dear Friends (for I confess to be sometimes in the same state)—though there are no privileged token of our love to Christ, nor any palpable enjoyment of His love to us—there remains at this hour the positive conviction and the open confession that we do love Him. Four times, I think, does this benighted spouse cry, "Him whom my soul loves." She cannot see Him, but she cherishes a tender affection for Him. She does not enjoy His Presence just now, but her heart cleaves to Him and appreciates His excellence. What though she may have been idle and slothful, or though her spirit may be heavy and hazy, one thing she knows—she does love her Lord—about that there can be no mistake! Publicly in the streets, in the hearing of the watchmen, before the ministers and messengers of the Gospel, she does not blush to say, "Him whom my soul loves." So it was with Peter. When he had much to regret, much to reprove himself for, he could say, "Lord, You know all things, You know that I love You." In like manner can you not vouch for your sincerity when there is reason enough to challenge your propriety? You feel guilty of a carelessness or a cowardice that might reflect on your gratitude, but you cannot admit a wantonness or a willfulness that could extinguish your love! My faithless heart, you would gladly tell Him, has merited Your rebuke, but Your infinite discernment can bear witness to the kindling of my desires. Do not believe my actions, but believe my inmost soul! Judge me not by the utterances of my recant lips, rather look upon the throbbing of my penitent heart. You, O Jesus Christ, are He whom my soul loves!

Though the spouse does not just now enjoy communion with Christ, she knows its sweetness and she feels uneasy until she partakes of it again. As the needle cannot stop until it points to the pole, so she trembles until her soul rests in personal communion with Jesus! Next best to present fellowship is to hunger and thirst after it. And you note, too, in this case and all the cases of every true Believer in Jesus, not only is love constant and desire after Christ earnest, but there remains sufficient strength to resolutely seek for Him. You may not as yet have your desire accomplished, yet your heart is buoyed up with hope and you are saying, "I must seek Him." You are not like the traveler across the desert who at last

loses all heart, gives up all effort and perishes on the sand for lack of water. No, you feel an inward impulse stronger than any outward discouragements and, though faint, you are still pursuing! What if you have sought Him and not found Him? Yet will you seek Him again till you do find Him, for Divine Grace stimulates you and urges you forward. As the spark flies upwards towards the sun, so the newborn nature of the Christian seeks and soars after Christ. It is not simply unhappy without Him, but it is restless and resolute to discover Him! It would break through every law of Nature to establish this Law of Grace. The new nature seeks the source from which it came—it pines and pants to meet with Him and talk to Him in whom are all its life, strength and joy!

Do you not feel this desire after Jesus, though you are complaining of dullness, deadness and worldliness? Is there not some such indescribable yearning in your breast for a communion which you well understand, but do not now enjoy? I know not how you lost the fellowship, my Brother, which you so grievously miss. There are many ways in which this may come about. You and I often lose the sweetness of communion with Christ, I doubt not, through unbelief. We think so lightly of unbelief, as though it were an infirmity and not a sin, whereas of all evils, it is the chief! What can be more displeasing to the tender

heart of Jesus than ungenerous thoughts concerning Him? When last you were repining and reflecting that He had forgotten you, you quickly lost that hallowed calm and that sweet confidence which you knew before. Could you wonder at it? How could He walk with you while you were casting into His ear a foul suspicion against His truthfulness and His love? Faith is the hand which holds the Savior and will not let Him go! Unbelief opens the door and bids Him go. How shall He tarry when we will not believe in Him? Do you tell Him to His face that He is not true and trustworthy, yet expect to lean your head upon His bosom? How can you expect this? Perhaps, my dear Brothers and Sisters, you have been too busy with the world, and yet I know some with their hands full of business, and their heads full of enterprise, who have constant communion with Christ! But perhaps you have let the world steal in upon your heart. All the water in the sea, as I have often told you, does not frighten the mariner, but that little drop of water in the hold, which betokens a leak in the ship, gives him great distress! You might have an empire to govern and yet never lose fellowship with Jesus, but with nothing more than your little family to manage, you may lose Him if you let the cravings and the covetousness of the world, its fashions or its ambitions, get inside your heart! Keep that chamber clear for Christ. Let your heart be the marriage bed and keep it chaste for Him who is your Husband and your Lord! Or possibly, dear Brothers and Sisters, you have been negligent in the use of private prayer—and what can shut the windows through which Jesus looks as soon as laxness or slackness in supplication? Unless you are much upon your knees, you cannot expect to have your head much upon His bosom! The appointed place of audience is the Mercy Seat. If you refuse to resort there, how can you look for Christ to grant you another audience chamber? Is it reasonable that He should alter His fixed institutions to suit your foolish negligence? Go then, dear Brothers and Sisters, if you would renew your fellowship, go again to your closet and there pray unto the Lord your God, and make your supplication unto Him!

In many other ways the Christian may lose his fellowship with Christ Especially by the indulgence of some known sin, by harboring resentment or cherishing a bitter spirit against a Brother, by shutting the eye to some Gospel Truth, by dissembling convictions in deference to the company you keep or the society in which you move, by not coming out from the world, or mingling too much with the ungodly. It may suffice to refer to these evils without enlarging upon them. When you miss the fellowship, there is little comfort in accounting for the way you lost it! Your heart is rather craving its restoration. "Tell me how I may find Him whom my soul loves, for I desire to renew my fellowship with Him."

Come then, Beloved, with hearts humbled on account of past sin, and yet encouraged with the assurance that He who received us at the first is willing to receive us still—let us go to Him anew. We were all over foul and vile then. If we are the same, now, we will return unto Him—if it is in a bad a plight, yet let it be with as good a plea! Come to Jesus, as once you did come to Him, though, perhaps, you have known the Master lo, these many years! The same words will suit your case—

"Just as I am without one plea, But that Your blood was shed for me, And that You bid me come to Thee, Oh, Lamb of God, I come."

While our text conducts us onward to the successful restoration of communion, it glances also at— II. UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPTS TO FIND THE BELOVED ONE.

Of how many of us might it be said that with a lazy attitude and a listless wish, we have yawned after a gift for which we might have vehemently yearned. "By night on my bed I sought Him whom my soul loves." As it were on her bed of sloth and idleness, she dreamed of a happiness she was far from enjoying. But we shall never get the privilege of close

communion with Christ by merely wishing for it! What though now and then, with a hectic flush upon our cheeks, we exclaim, "Would to God I were like Christ! Oh that I lived nearer to Him! I am not satisfied with what I know—I desire to know more!" This is no symptom of health. Does the idler ever prosper? He who lies in bed and will not sow by reason of the cold, where is his harvest? What pearls come into the hands of the merchantman who says, "A little more sleep and a little more slumber"? And do you think the pearl of pearls, the pearl wherewith none other in the universe can compare, the highest privilege which the Eternal King ever bestowed on His own courtiers—do you think that this, the most distinguished favor He ever confers upon the darlings of His heart, this intimate fellowship with Jesus—do you think He will communicate that to you while you are tossing on your bed in indolence which is the bane of virtue and the nurse of folly? It was not because she sought Him by night that she did not find Him, for Jesus is often found by His people in the dark. When no rays of light, no gleams of comfort can steal over our senses, still if we seek Jesus with our whole heart, though to our own apprehension we grope about like blind men, we shall find Him, to the joy of our spirits! It was not the night that prevented her finding Him—it was the bed—her laziness, her lethargy and her sloth. Shake yourself from the dust and believe!—

"Avoid the idle life! Flee, flee from doing naught! For never was there idle brain But bred an idle thought."

No longer to the insidious temptation which is so apt to beset us all. The Lord deliver us from the lukewarmness of the Church of Laodicea, lest He should spew us out of His mouth! When she sought Him thus, she could not find Him. No marvel, you will think, for your own experience has taught you that such disappointment is the invariable rule.

With no better success did she seek Him when afterwards she went about in a self-sufficient spirit I may be wrong in my conjecture, but to me the words, "I will rise, now," sound a little like dependence upon her own exertions. "I will rise, now," has not half so grateful a ring about it, nor is it half so graceful, as, "Draw me, we will run after You." This confiding rather than that confidence seems to be the impression which becomes the saint when cold and crushed, he keenly feels how desolate he is. Arise, did I say, shake off dull sloth? Ah, then 'tis easier said than done! "Awake, my soul," is a poor invocation compared with, "Oh, Sun of Righteousness, arise!" Or, "Make haste, my Beloved," or "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." Beware, my Brothers and Sisters, of seeking after Christ in a legal spirit. Beware of going to Calvary as though you were going to Sinai. In coming to Christ, no merit of your own can recommend you—so in longing for Him to appear to you again, no strivings of your own can avail you. Let His rich Grace be your poor plea! Your best way of suing is to say—

"Oh, for this no strength have I, My strength is at Your feet to lie."

Once again, in trusting in the scrupulous using of the means, the bride seems to have thoroughly relied upon attaining her end. Lest I should seem too censorious of her conduct, allow me to say that my criticism of the text is bent on taking and applying the rebukes to ourselves. Do you not notice, however, how sure she seems of finding Him if she goes about the city in the streets and in the broadways and if she meets the watchmen and inquires of them? But it does not appear that the fitness of the places to seek, or the persons to enquire of, were of much use. She went down one street and another, as we may resort to the street of private prayer, a narrow and little-frequented way, and she said, "I shall find Him there." But after she had walked through it, she said, "He is not here. My chamber is not a palace as it used to be. No more is it the privy closet of the King of Kings, the audience chamber royal" So she saw a wider way, and she said, "I will walk down here," as we may go to the Prayer Meeting. "What blessed hours I have often enjoyed there," she said. "I shall find Him in that highway, I feel sure," but after

traversing all its length she said—

"I go where others go, but find not Jesus there." then she quotes, "I will go into the broad places where the preaching of the Gospel is to be heard. I will go with the throng where God speaks through His servants," but service after service, and sermon after sermon were like clouds without rain, and wells without water! Others were refreshed, but she, trusting in the means, came away without a blessing. So, Brothers and Sisters, you may traverse every street in the city, you may even come to that street paved with gold—the ordinance of the Lord's Supper—or you may go down Water Street, where in the ordinance of Baptism, the Lord often reveals His death and burial unto His people, but after having traversed both these streets you shall be compelled to say, "Though I love the means, they are a weariness to me when Jesus is not revealed to me in them."

What a difference there is between our preaching at one time and our preaching at another! How often do I bless God in the evening for that which I groaned over in the morning, when my spirit has been bowed, my tongue tied, and I could not preach as I would! It is a grand thing for the minister to be humbled in the sight of his hearers, when you discern that it is not the man in whom the power is vested, but it is his God whose might you cannot resist! My fear often is that your smiles may provoke His frowns and He may withhold His blessing from me because you attribute to some genius of mine an influence which His Spirit, alone, could exert. When I was only a lad, a stripling fresh from the country, you said when there were conversions, "How God helps him!" I am jealous of you, now, lest you should not say the same thing! God will take away His blessing when you refrain from offering Him the praise! If you once ascribe what is done in any degree whatever to the creature, or to any power that he has, you will excite the jealousy of his Lord! Remember the lessons that the spouse was taught. Means and ordinances are just what God likes to make them. Even Divine institutions are beggarly elements when He forsakes them. They can be nothing better than matters of duty and they may be very far from being matters of privilege. When He wills it, He can make His ministers do exploits. The least of all His servants shall be mighty as David was when He slew the giant, Goliath, with only the sling and stone. We are nothing of ourselves. The hand that moves the instrument is everything. If you would come to Christ, or seek after Christ, looking too much to the means, you will have to return again with the mournful cry, "I sought Him, but I found Him not." Such, then, are the unsuccessful efforts to regain communion with Christ.

III. WE FIND THE SUCCESSFUL HERE SET SIDE BY SIDE WITH THE UNSUCCESSFUL.

We shall now hold her up as an example which you will do well to imitate. With what constancy she sought this communion! She began at the dead of night, as indeed it is never too late to seek renewed fellowship. Yet she sought on. The streets were lonely and it was a strange place for a woman to be at such a strange time, but she was too earnest in seeking to be abashed by such circumstances. The watchmen met her, and they were astonished, as well they might, how she came to be there at that hour. But she sought on—she would never rest until she had found Him. Believer, if you would have fellowship with Christ, you must be in continual quest after it! Your soul must get a craving for the one thing, and that such a craving as nothing but that one thing can satisfy. I would my own soul were like Anacreon's harp, only in a better sense. You know he said, though he wished to sing of Cadmus, his harp would sing of love, alone. Oh, that we might sing of the love of Jesus and of His love, alone! Then it would not be long before our fellowship with Him would be renewed!

And as she sought Jesus continually, she neglected no means that seemed, to her, right and promising. Though I have warned you against trusting in what are called the means of Grace, I had not the slightest

intention of undervaluing, much less of disclaiming them. We cannot rationally expect the Lord to reveal Himself other than in the way of His own appointment. He may sometimes do so and He likes to surprise us with His Grace, but we have no right to expect it. Abraham's servant followed closely his master's injunctions. And when he blessed the Lord God of his master, Abraham, who had not left his master destitute of His mercy and His truth, he testified, "I being in the way, the Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren." It is in the way appointed that God does most commonly deign to meet with us! I do not expect that those of you who every time there is half a shower of rain, stay at home, will be very well fed, nor those of you who neglect the Monday Prayer Meeting on any trivial excuse! There are a goodly number of you who do so—you cannot expect that you will grow in Grace if you forsake the assembling of yourselves together. Those of you who when the brethren join together in earnest prayer, cannot be present, must not marvel, if, like Thomas, you are not there when Jesus appears. You have good cause to be full of doubts and fears when your fellow disciples are full of joy and love. Use the means! Use all the means, I entreat you. Who knows how great and rich a blessing, obedience in even the least of the Lord's commands may bring to our souls! It is a blessed thing to walk tenderly and scrupulously observe the statutes of the Lord—to be afraid of leaving anything undone which is commanded, or of doing anything that is forbidden—lest in the omission or the commission we should by some means or other vex a jealous God and provoke Him to keep back from us much that we might have enjoyed through the means of His own appointment!

But the chief beauty of the whole story is that the spouse did not stop with the means of Grace. She had applied to the watchmen on the walls, but better still for her, the watchmen had found her. The expression is remarkable, because it is expressive of much that we have often proven. You know, sometimes, what it is to be found by the watchmen on the walls. You come here with a trouble of which nobody knows anything and the watchman discovers you. In the description of your case he finds you. It often happens that the very thing you were talking of by the way, the watchman relates to you. You perceive that you cannot hide. How strange it seems to you! Is not this a token of the Father's love that He guides the watchman to discover you in your midnight wanderings where you are unknown to any but your God, and

thought you would be unrecognized by anyone? Yes, but even then you know, I hope, how to pass by the watchman. She asked, "Saw you Him, whom my soul loves?" Why did they not answer? Perhaps because they were blind and never did see themselves. Alas, that some watchmen on the walls have need to watch for their own souls rather than for the souls of others! Still, not the best of the watchmen there could console her with a smile of Jesus' face. We can tell you what we have felt and proved of His love. We can, sometimes, when the Lord helps us, tell you how His people are ravished with His smiles, but a smile of His face, it is for Himself to give—and none but Himself can bestow it! It were not possible for Him to send that secondhand. You must go directly to Him. Yet see what honor God puts upon His servants, because she says it was but a little after she passed them—you must go beyond the minister a little, but a little! The Lord helps His servants to bring you to the verge of fellowship. We know it is all of the Lord, unto Him be all the glory! Still, He chooses, in the use of means, to make it but a little between the earnest, spiritual exercise of outward means and the supply of the inward spiritual Grace! "It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found Him whom my soul loves."

Thus far, Beloved Brothers and Sisters, have I led you. Now I want you to go a little further. Away beyond the Church, away in advance of the bread and wine spread out for our mutual repast, a little beyond all these. It is not these that will satisfy your craving. A feast of bread and wine would never gratify this longing of your spirit! You need Jesus! The minister cannot satisfy you—you need Jesus! You have got to

this point of desire—you need Christ and nothing but Christ! Go on then, dear Brothers and Sisters, and to attain your objective I can propose nothing better than the simple method I proposed to you just now. Go to Him as you did at first! Forget the past, except to remember with penitence your sin and to anticipate in the future, the Grace that welcomed you as a stranger. You know the love and mercy that are in His heart—unworthy as you are, cast yourself at His feet—and you may have the love of your espousals given back to you! You may once again cross the Jordan of doubt and fear, and enter into the Canaan of your blessed inheritance, enjoying rapt and rich fellowship with Him!

If you do see Him, be sure you lay hold of Him. He Himself loves to be embraced. Let your love lay hold of His love, for His love is laying hold of you! Hold Him fast. Dismiss all ungrateful thoughts, for they will fill your hands so that you cannot hold Him. Divest yourself of all cares for a while and now, with an empty hand, just lay hold of His righteousness and strength!

And when you get the Gift you long for, I charge you tell your brothers and sisters! Bring Him to your mother's house. There are some in your mother's house sorely sick with weary apprehensions and dreary misgivings—tell them that you have seen your Beloved! It will cheer their spirits. Tell them the same news that made good old Jacob's eyes overflow with tears of joy! Tell them Jesus is still alive! Tell them that Jesus yet sits upon the Throne of God! Tell them that He is still full of love to His chosen ones—and I think their desponding souls will straightaway revive and they, with you, will feast on Free Grace and dying love!

Well, dear Friends, I shall occupy no more time in talking to you, for we need to devote the rest of our time at the Communion Table, to calm and quiet musings. I have conducted you as far as I can. Surely there is no need to excite Christians to that which is sweet to them! Yet I beseech you let no sense of unworthiness keep you back, for you always were unworthy! As such Christ loved you at first. Neither let any consciousness of backsliding keep you back. "As a wife treacherously departs from her husband, so do you depart from Me," says the Lord by the mouth of His servant. And yet He says, "Return, return." I do not know of any figure more striking! None that involves more bitter reproach, yet for all that, He bids her come back! Though you are thus guilty, and have been unfaithful to your loving Husband, still He bids you come back, and assures you of a welcome! That hymn may suit the backsliders as well as the unconverted sinners—

"Let not conscience make you linger, Nor of fitness fondly dream."

Oh, how sad it makes my heart when I think of some of you to whom this is all an idle tale! All this discourse is arrant nonsense in the judgment of some of you. Our faith must seem to you strangely credulous. Our views must seem to you altogether visionary! Howbeit, there is a land that you have never seen, a life that you have never felt, a truth that has never dawned on your understanding. These things that are so real to us are strange to you—still, it is more strange and more strangely sad to me that you should be without God, without Christ, without hope in the world! We are pleased to greet you in this sanctuary, though we can well imagine that the sight and sound are foreign to you as would be the other side of a sea you have never crossed. You may be led to ask, "What is it? What does it mean? Is there another

and a better life? Are there other and brighter joys than we have ever tasted? Do these Christians have comforts that I know not of? Have they a love which I have not? I would I knew the same!"

Ah! thoughtless, heedless sinner! Be you a high caste or a low caste sinner, know this, that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, bled on the Cross and died for such as you are! Whoever believes in Him shall never

perish, but have everlasting life. Trust in Him and you are saved! This is the love which won our hearts. Oh, may it win yours! The things of which we have been speaking do but spring from that simple fact that He loved us and gave Himself for us. The way in which we learned the mystery of His love is as open to you as it was to us. This was the way. We put our trust in Him. We knew we were not worthy of Him, but we did trust Him. Through His Grace we did, without introduction or preparation, draw near to Him and cast ourselves on His mercy. May you do the same! Let there not be an hour's delay, for the days are flying—the years are flying. Your grave is very close—within a few days you may be carried there. Fly at once to Him who bids you trust Him! God help you to do this, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: 1 PETER 2.

Verses 1, 2. Therefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speaking. As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby. Have we not constantly declared that our faith, if true, is always practical? Here, again, we have the precepts of God's Word. Here we are told that there is much for us to lay aside, as if it were natural to us in every case, and must, therefore, be carefully laid aside. "Malice"—we are all inclined to return evil for evil—the Christian must not do so. "All guile"—everything like craft and cunning—this is unbecoming in a Christian. "Hypocrisy"—seeming to be what we are not—all sorts of mere seeming we must lay aside. "And envy"—how easy it is for us to envy one man his wealth, or another his health, or another his talents—but "all envy" the Christian must have done with! "And evil speaking"—it is painful to reflect how much of evil speaking there is among persons who we still hope are good people. They are very fond of repeating stories to the disadvantage of their fellow Christians. Now, whether you are the author of it or not, do not be the retailer of it, for we are here told to lay aside all evil speaking. But then the religion of Jesus Christ does not consist in negatives! It is not merely what we are to lay aside—there is something to be taken up. We are told that as we are born-again, we are to consider ourselves as newborn babes, and are to desire the unadulterated milk of God's Word, that we may grow thereby. It is not enough to be alive—we should desire to grow. To be saved is a great blessing—we ought not, however, to be contented with being barely saved—we should seek after the Graces of the Spirit and the excellent work of God within us.

3. If so you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Have you tasted this? Oh, search yourselves and see, and if you have, then prove it by the laying aside of the evil, and the thirsting after the good!

4, 5. To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious. You also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ The priesthood among Believers does not belong to here and there, one, but to the whole company of Believers. As many as love the Savior are priests and kings unto God—and they should regard their whole life as the exercise of this priesthood. When we assert that no place is holy above another, we do not thereby desecrate any place, but rather consecrate all places. We believe every day to be holy, every hour to be holy, every place and occupation to be holy to holy men, and we should so live as to evermore exercise this consecrated priesthood.

6-8. Therefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious: and he that believes on Him shall not be confounded. Unto you, therefore, who believe, He is precious: but unto them which are disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the Word, being disobedient whereunto also they were appointed. Of whom we can only say, with Augustine, "Oh, the depth," and leave that mystery to be explained to us hereafter.

9, 10. But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. How good it is to look back to the hole of the pit whence we were dug! What if today the Sovereign Grace of God has made us royal priests, yet let us remember that in past times we were not a people, "But are now the people of God." "Which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." Yes, I think no exercise will be more profitable by way of expressing our gratitude than the remembering what we used to be before the hand of God was laid upon us in love! For if all of us did not run to

an excess of riot in our outward lives, yet some of us did. And others who were kept from gross outward sins had, nevertheless, a very sink of corruption within our nature. We felt that when the Spirit of God convinced us of sin we could truly say—

"Depths of mercy, could there be, Mercy yet reserved for me?"

And having obtained mercy, we will never cease to bless the name of God!

11-14. Dearly Beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by Him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well Christians should be good citizens. Though in one respect they are not citizens of this world, yet as they find themselves in it, they should seek the good of those among whom they dwell and be patterns of order.

15-17. For so is the will of God, that with well-doing you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king. Even if they are beggars, they are men—honor them. There is God's image, though marred and defiled, in every man—and because he is a man, honor him—pity him. Look down upon him never with contempt, but always feel that there is an immortal spark, even within that mass of filth. If the man is cast into all manner of beggary and wickedness, "Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the King." The same verse that says, "Honor the King," however, says, "Honor all men," and while we, therefore, have due respect to rank, yet a man is a man for all that, and we must "Honor all men."

18-20. Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the forward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if when you are buffeted for your faults, you shall take it patiently? But if when you do well, and suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. I have known some that could not do that, however. If they were only spoken to very gently, they were immediately in a tiff. "But if, when you do well, you bear it patiently, this is acceptable with God." Here is something more than human nature can bear. Now Grace comes in to help. "This is acceptable with God."

21. For even hereunto were you called. Called, you see, to be buffeted when you don't deserve it.

21-23. Because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He

suffered, He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously. Herein is he a pattern of patience to all His people.

24-25. Who His own Self bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness. By whose stripes you were healed, for you were as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls

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