

The Sluggard's Reproof

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon passionately warns against spiritual laziness, urging believers to labor diligently in their faith despite hardships, for only through perseverance and active commitment can one truly partake in the eternal harvest.

Scripture: Proverbs 20:4, 2 Thessalonians 3:10, Hebrews 12:1, Ephesians 6:11, Luke 10:42, Matthew 7:13, Romans 3:28

Topics: "Spiritual Diligence", "Christian Perseverance", "Faith and Works"

Description

In "The Sluggard's Reproof," C.H. Spurgeon addresses the pervasive problem of spiritual laziness, challenging believers to confront their excuses and commit wholeheartedly to the Christian life. Drawing on vivid biblical imagery and practical illustrations, Spurgeon emphasizes that the Christian journey requires active labor, perseverance, and reliance on God's grace. This sermon calls listeners to reject complacency and embrace the demanding yet rewarding path of faithful discipleship.

Transcript

"The sluggard will not plow because of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest and have nothing." Proverbs 20:4.

LAZINESS is the crying sin of Eastern nations. I believe that the peculiar genius of the Anglo-Saxon character prevents our being, as a nation, guilty of that sin. Perhaps we have many other vices more rife in our midst than that, but, in the East, almost every man is a lazy man. If you tell a Turk in Constantinople that his street is filthy—and it certainly is, for there the offal lies and is never swept away—he says, sitting with his legs crossed, and smoking his pipe, "The Lord wills it." If you tell him there is a fire at the bottom of the street, he does not agitate himself, but he says, "God wills it." If you were to tell him that he was sitting on a heap of gunpowder and that he had better take heed lest a spark should blow him up, probably he would never move, or take his pipe out of his mouth, except to say, "God wills it." Some of the most extraordinary instances of idleness are told us of those people by travelers in the East to this day. The further you go East, the less activity there is—the further you go West in the world, the more restless does the human mind become and, consequently, I suppose, the more active.

Yet, while the fact of the superabundance of idleness in the East is a great explanation of the reason why Solomon speaks so much against it in the Proverbs—and seeing that this Book was meant to be read, not only in the East, but everywhere else—I fear that there must also be some laziness in the West and, as this Book was meant to be read in England, I should imagine there must be a few sluggards in England!

And this happens to be not a matter of imagination with me at all, for I know there are many such. You can brush against them at the corners of our streets. There are to be found many such who are slothful in business, who certainly are not worth their salt, who do not earn a livelihood for themselves even with regard to the things of this life. There are still far too many to whom the familiar lines of Dr. Watts may be applied—

"'Tis the voice of the sluggard; I heard him complain, 'You have waked me too soon, I must slumber again.'"

It sometimes happens, too, that these idle people are religious people, or profess to be so, though I have no faith in that man's religion who is lazy. He always reminds me of a certain monk who went to a monastery determined to give himself up entirely to contemplation and meditation. When he reached the place, he saw all the monks at work, tilling the ground, plowing, or trimming the vines around the monastery, so he very solemnly observed as he entered, "Labor not for the meat that perishes." The brothers smiled and continued in their labors. He thought it his duty to reprove them a second time by saying, "Martha is cumbered with much serving, but I have chosen the good part, which shall not be taken from me." However, it was taken from him, for the bell did not ring for him at the usual time for meals and our brother, after waiting some few hours in his cell in prayer, beginning to feel certain calls within, came out and, accosting the prior of the monastery, enquired, "Do not the brethren eat?" "Do you eat?" he asked. "I thought you were a spiritual man, for you said to the brethren, "Labor not for the meat that perishes." "Oh, yes," he replied, "I know I said that, but I thought the brethren ate." "Yes," answered the prior, "so they do, but we have a rule in our monastery that none eat but those who work. There is such a rule to be found in Scripture, too," he reminded the monk, "Paul himself has said it, "If any man will not work, neither will he eat." I think the master of that monastery acted and spoke wisely. A

man must work in this life. He was sent to this world that he might be diligent in his calling, in the position in life in which God has been pleased to place him.

However, I do not intend to treat now of this phase of the subject. I am about to direct your attention to spiritual things. I am no legalist—I know that the works of the Law of God can save no man, for, "by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified." I know that the work of salvation is by Grace, alone, and that all our good works are not our own, but are worked in us by Divine Grace, yet, at the same time, I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that, although Scripture continually denies that salvation is by works, it always speaks of the work of Grace in the heart of man and of the experience of the Believer as being a hard work! For, do we not continually hear the Christian described as a pilgrim, as one who is on a long and a weary journey? He is described, not as a gentleman who is carried on other men's backs, or who is borne along in a vehicle, but as a pilgrim who has to toil along the road—and he is told not to be weary and faint in his mind. He is warned that the road will be very rough and very long and that he will have to run with endurance the race that is set before him. The very use of such a figure as that does not look as if religion were a lazy thing!

Then, again, we find religion described as a battle. The Christian is continually exhorted to take unto himself the whole armor of God and to fight the good fight of faith. He is told to resist even unto blood, striving against sin. That does not look as if it were a very easy thing to be a Christian—as if Christianity were a kind of thing to be kept in a band-box. It looks as if there were something to be done, some foe to fight, some great task to be accomplished. When I also find another figure used, which is, perhaps, yet more forcible, because it combines the idea of pressing forward with that of fighting—when I find the figure

of agonizing used—"Agonize to enter in at the strait gate." Press, push, labor, strive, toil—I cannot imagine that to be a Christian is to be an idler or a sluggard! No, my Brothers and Sisters, though salvation is not by our works, yet, as sure as ever the Lord puts Divine Life into us, we shall begin to labor for the meat that endures to eternal life, we shall strive to enter in at the strait gate, we shall run perseveringly the race that is set before us and we shall endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ!

Now it is just this point in religion that many men do not like. They prefer an easy religion—flowery meads, flowing streams and sunny glades—all those things they like, but they do not like the climbing of mountains, or the swimming of rivers, or going through fires, or fighting, struggling and wrestling. They go along the pilgrim's way till they come to some slough and then they are offended. When it was all clean walking, they did not mind, but when they tumble into the bog, and begin to dirty themselves, they straightway creep out on that side of the slough that is nearest to their own house and—like Mr. Pliable in "The Pilgrim's Progress," of whom you have often heard—they go back to their house in the City of Destruction. They went on the right road for a little while, but they found that religion was not as easy a thing as they expected and, therefore, they turned back.

Now, it is of these people I am going to talk. "The sluggard will not plow because of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest and have nothing." When I have spoken about him, I shall talk a little to those of you who are plowing in God's field, exhorting you not to make excuses, not to be dilatory in your Master's service—but to plow all the harder the colder it is—because the day is coming when a joyful harvest shall reward all your pains!

I. First, I am going to speak of THIS SLUGGARD.

Plowing is hard work and the sluggard does not like it. If he does go up and down the field once or twice, he makes a short turn of it and leaves a wide headland. And, moreover, he leans on the handle of his plow and, therefore, the plow does not go in very deep—not so deep as it would if he were to do as the active plowman does—hold the handles up in order that the plow may go deeply into the soil. But he goes nodding along, half-dragged by his horses and glad to do nothing. He would be very pleased, indeed, if his feet would go without being moved and if the clods would but move one another and lift his feet up for him, so that he might not have the trouble of carrying himself after his plow! But the lazy man knows that he will be laughed at if he says plowing is hard work, so he does not like to say that. "I must get a better excuse," he thinks, so he says, "It is so cold! It is so cold! I would not mind going out to plow, but I am frozen almost to death. I shall get frostbite—I have not clothes enough to keep me warm! Oh, how the snow comes down! The ponds are all frozen, the ground is so hard—the plow will get broken—it is so cold!"

Lazy fellow! Why don't you say that plowing is hard work? That is the English of it! But no, he must have a more genteel excuse that he may not be so likely to be laughed at. Suppose it were not cold? Do you know what he would say? "Oh, it is so hot! I cannot plow! The perspiration runs down my cheeks. You wouldn't have me plowing in this hot

weather, would you?" Supposing it were neither hot nor cold? Why, then he would say, "I believe that it's going to rain!" And if it didn't rain, he would say the ground was too dry—for he holds a bad excuse is better than none and, therefore, he will keep on making excuses to the end of the chapter! He will do anything rather than go and do the work he does not like—that is, plowing.

Now I have made you smile. I wish I could make you cry because there will be more to cry about than to smile at in this matter when I come to show you that this is spiritually the case with many. There are men

and women who would like to go to Heaven without having any trouble. They want to enjoy the harvest, but they do not like the labor of plowing. They have not the common honesty to say, "I do not like religion." What do you suppose they say? Why, they make another excuse! Sometimes it is this, "Well, I am as anxious as anybody to be a Christian, but, you know, these are such hard times." Hard times? The times are always hard to such people as you are! "But in these times," they say, "there is no warmth in Christians—they are all so cold-hearted. Why, I go up to the Chapel and nobody speaks to me! There is not one-half the religion that there used to be and what there is, is not half as good as it once was. The article is depreciated. Now, if I lived over in Ireland, then I would plow! If I lived over where there is the Revival, you know I would be a saint! Or if I had lived in the Apostle Paul's days and heard such a preacher as that, or if I could have talked to those early Christians, I would not object to be a Christian! But these are such cold-hearted times—so many hypocrites and so few Christians—I don't think I shall trouble about religion at all."

Ah, that is a pretty excuse, for you know that what you are saying is a lie! In the first place, you know that there is life in Christ's Church even now and that there are still (if you would but look) a few good, loving, warm-hearted Christians to be found. You know that there are still faithful preachers left. The faithful have not failed from among men and although hypocrites are plentiful, there are still many sincere souls. And what if there were not? What business is that of yours? Are you content to be lost because the Church is not what it ought to be? Just look at the matter in that light. Because there are a great many hypocrites, you have made up your mind to go to Hell? Is that the English of it? Because there are such multitudes going there, you think you will go, too, and keep them company? Is that what you mean?

"No," you say, "not that!" That is it, Mr. Sluggard, though you don't like to say so. It is a bad excuse you have made. It won't hold water and you know it won't! You know very well that when your conscience speaks, it tells you that this excuse is a bad one. It is one that will not satisfy you when you are lying on your dying bed and, above all, it is one that will vanish in the Day of Judgment, just as the mists vanish before the rising sun! What business can it be of yours what the Church is or what the Church isn't? If you will not think about the things of God in these times, neither would you in the best of times—and if the present agency is not blessed to you, neither would you be converted though one rose from the dead!

"But," says Mr. Sluggard, "if that is not a good excuse, I will give another. It is all very well for you, Mr. Minister, to talk about being religious, but you don't know where I live. You don't know my business and the sort of shop mates I work with. You know very well it is a hard matter for me to hold my own as it is, with merely going to a place of worship, but if I were really to throw all my heart into it, I would have them all down upon me. I tell you, Sir, my business is such that I could not carry it on, and yet be a Christian." Then, Mr. Sluggard, if it is a business that you cannot carry on without going to Hell with it—give it up, Sir! "Ah, but then, Sir, we must live!" Yes, Sir, but then we must die! Will you please remember that, for that seems to me to be a great deal more of a necessity. Sometimes, when people say to me, "Why, you know we must live," I do not see any necessity for that. Some of them would be almost as well dead as alive. "But we must live." I am not sure of that. I am sure of another thing—you must die. Oh, that you would think rather of dying than of living! Besides, it is all nonsense about your business being one that you cannot carry on and be a Christian. I tell you, Sir, there is no business that is a legitimate one, which a man cannot carry on and adorn his Master in it! Or, if there is such a business, come out of it as you would out of the burning city of Sodom!

"But then I am in such an ungodly household, Sir! I am so laughed at." Yes, Sir, but if somebody were to leave you a thousand pounds on condition that you wore a red ribbon round your arm—you know you

would be laughed at if you did! Or suppose the condition was that you were to wear a fool's-cap for a week and you would have a thousand pounds a year for life, afterwards—would you not wear it? Ah, I should not like to trust you. I believe you would put it on and when people laughed, you would say, "You may laugh, but I am well rewarded for it." Yet here your soul is at stake— and a little laughter, you say, drives you back? I do not believe you, Sir! I do not think you are such a fool as that, to be

laughed into Hell—for you cannot be laughed out again by all their laughter! I believe your second excuse is as bad as your first one! I shatter it into a thousand pieces! The fact is, Sir, you don't like religion—and that is the truth! You don't want to give up your sins! You are willing to continue to be what you are—a sinner dead in trespasses and sins. That is the plain, simple English of it and all the excuses you can make will not alter it!

"No," says one, "but it is such a hard thing to be a Christian. Very often, when I hear the preacher saying what manner of persons we ought to be, I think, 'Ah, I had better not set out, for I shall never go all the way. When I hear of the trials, temptations and troubles of the child of God, I think I will not go.'" There you are again, Mr. Sluggard, you will not plow because of the cold! But do you not remember what has been so often impressed upon your mind—though we have many troubles and many trials, yet Grace is all-sufficient for us? Do you not know that, though the way is long, yet our shoes are iron and brass? And though the work is hard, yet Omnipotence has promised to give us strength all-sufficient? You only look at one side of the subject, and not at the other. Why not think for a moment on that Grace of God which guarantees to assist and to carry through all in whom it begins the good work? Sir, your excuse is an idle one! I tell you again that the naked truth is this—you love your sins—you love them better than Heaven, better than eternal life and that you are a lazy fellow! You do not like prayer, nor faith, nor repentance—and I warn you that your fate will be that of this sluggard who begged in harvest and had nothing!

Someone else says, "I have no time, I have not indeed." Time for what, Sir? What do you mean? "Why, I have no time to pray an hour in the morning!" Who said you had? "But I have no time to be attending to religion all the day long." Who asked you to do so, Sir? I suppose you find time for pleasure—perhaps you find time for what you call recreation and the like. There are many precious portions of time that you sweep away and never use. Where there's a will, there's a way, and if the Holy Spirit has made you love religion and the things of God, you will find time enough. That is a worse excuse than any other, for God has given you the time, and if you have not got it, you have lost it! Look for it, for you will be accountable for it at the Last Great Day. You have been hiding your talent in a napkin and now you say you cannot find it! You had it, Sir—where it is, is your business, not mine. Look for it and God help you to shake off your sloth! And may you in earnest be constrained by the Holy Spirit to be a Christian and to espouse the life of the pilgrim—and run with diligence the race that is set before you!

I have thus tried to describe the sluggard as the man who would not plow because of the cold—the man who would like to be a Christian, only he does not like the Cross—who would like to get to Heaven, only he does not like the road to there. He would be saved, but, oh, he cannot give up his sin, he cannot live in holiness. He would like to be crowned conqueror, but he does not like to fight the battle. He would like to reap a harvest, but he neither cares to plow nor to sow. Mr. Sluggard, I have three little sayings to repeat to you. Will you try to treasure them up? No pains, no gains. No sweat, no sweet. No mill, no meal. Will you just remember those three things? I will tell you again, lest you should forget them. No pains, no gains! No sweat, no sweet! No mill, no meal! So just get up, Sir, and may God grant that you may get up to some purpose! "Awake" you that sleep, and arise from the dead and Christ shall give you light." "Let us

not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober."

But, Mr. Sluggard, this life is the time of plowing and sowing. It is wintertime with us now—but wait a while and the springtime shall come, and after that the harvest! There are some of us who are longing for the time when we shall reap the golden harvest—the harvest given to us by Divine Grace, but yet a harvest for which we have sown the seed, as Hosea beautifully puts it—"Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy." We sow in righteousness, but the harvest is not given us as the effect of righteousness, it is given us by mercy! Reap in mercy! What a joyous day that will be when God's true sowers shall reap their harvests! The angels shall be with us! They shall cry harvest home with us and men and angels, hand in hand, shall enter the gates of Paradise, bringing their sheaves with them!

Where's our friend the sluggard? Oh, there he is! Is he cold now? No, but how different he looks! He looked to me quite a smart gentleman when he was sitting by the fire last winter, rubbing his hands and saying that he would not plow. What does he look like now? What is his disembodied spirit like? Alas, poor wretch, he is begging! The saints are shouting, but he is moaning. They are rejoicing, but he is sorrowing. They are taken into Heaven and housed in the Lord's garner, but he is a houseless wanderer, begging! Look at him! He has just gone up to the great golden gate and he has lifted that knocker of pearl—listen to the noise—and he cries, "Lord, Lord, I have eaten and I have drunk in Your Presence!" Just like you, Mr. Sluggard, you are all for eating and drinking—"and You have taught in our streets"—

very likely, Sir! You are just the man to be taught, but you never did anything that you were taught to do! Do you hear the terrible words of the loving Jesus, "I never knew you! Depart from Me, you worker of iniquity"? The golden gate does not open to him. He is still begging, but the answer comes, "Your time of sowing you neglected and now your time of reaping must be a time of beggary forever."

Now he goes up to yonder angel and he cries, "Bright spirit, introduce me to the courts of Heaven! It is true, I wasted my time on earth, but, oh, how bitterly do I repent it now! Oh, if I could but have back my wasted hours, what would I not do? If I could but hear the Gospel preached again, I would hear it with both my ears and I am sure I would receive it and be obedient to it." But the angel says, "I have no power to let you in. Besides, if I could, I would not. You had your day and it is gone—and now you have your night. You had your lamp, but you did not trim it. You took no care to have oil in your vessel for your lamp—and now your lamp is gone out and the Bridegroom's door is shut and you cannot enter." Now I see him and he is very sad, indeed—begging of a saint who has just come up, and saying to him, "Give me of your oil, for my lamp is gone out." But the other replies, "Not so, for there is not enough for me and for you. God has given me Grace for myself, but I have none to spare for anybody else."

I remember a mother's dream—a mother who once, after having exhorted her children and talked, prayed and wrestled with them, retired to rest. And she dreamt, at the Day of Judgment, she and her children arose from the family tomb. The trumpet was rending the air with its terrific blast and there she was—"saved!" But her children still unregenerate. She dreamt that they clasped her round the waist, clung to her garments and cried, "Mother, save us! Take us into Heaven with you!" But she dreamt that a spirit came—some bright angel—dashed them from her and wafted her aloft to Heaven, while they were left. And she remembered, too, in that dream, that she then had no care for them, no thought for them—her spirit was so swallowed up with the one thought that God was dealing justly with them—that they had had their day for sowing and that they had not sowed—and now must not expect a harvest. The Justice of God so filled her breast that she could not even weep for them when she was taken from them!

Ah, sluggard, you will be begging in another world! And though you will not think of your soul's concerns now, you will think of them then! There is a place where there is a dreadful prayer meeting every day and every hour in the day—a prayer meeting where all the attendants pray—not merely one, but all! And they pray, too, with sighs, and groans, and tears—and yet they are never heard. That prayer meeting is in Hell! There is a begging meeting there, indeed. Oh, that there were on earth half the prayer there will be there! Oh, that the tears shed in eternity had but been shed in time! Oh, that the agony that the lost ones now feel had but been felt beforehand! Oh, that they had repented before their life was ended! Oh, that their hearts had been made tender before the terrible fire of Judgment had melted them!

But notice that though the sluggard begs in harvest, he gets nothing. Now, in harvest time, when everything is plentiful, every man is generous. If a man sees a beggar in the streets in harvest time, he will refuse him nothing. He may go and glean in the field, for there is enough and to spare for all. It is a season of abundance! No man grudges his poor fellow man then. But here is the terrible point, in that last harvest, when the slothful man shall beg for bread, no man will give him anything. I see him standing at the gate of Heaven and he looks in. There they are feasting and he says, "Give me a crumb—a crumb is all I ask! Let me have what the dogs have that feed under their masters' table." But it is denied him. There he is, in the flames of Hell, and he cries, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue," but it is refused him. He begs in harvest and he has nothing! The begging becomes all the more terrible because its results are so disappointing. "And to think that others should have so much, yet I myself should have nothing—others be blessed, but myself cursed," he laments.

I do think that one of the stings of Hell will be for the sinner to see some of his own relatives and friends in Heaven and himself shut out. Think, my dear Hearer, what you will feel if you should see your wife in Paradise and yourself be eternally excluded! Mother, what if you should see those babies of yours, those precious infants who took an early flight to Heaven—what if you should see them above, but between you and them a great gulf fixed so that you can never reach them—you are shut out and they are glorified? Turn that thought over, I beseech you, and may God grant Grace to every one of you, that, by the love of Christ, you may be constrained to escape from Hell and fly to Heaven, for thus said the Lord unto you, "Escape, flee for your life, look not behind you, stay not in all the plain, but flee to the mountain of Christ Jesus—lest you be consumed."

Be wise today, O Sinner—tomorrow may never come! Now, now, repent! Now cast your soul on Christ! Now give up your sins! Now may the Spirit help you to begin a new life and to be in earnest about salvation for, remember, though you laughed when I described the sluggard just now, it will be no laughing matter if you are found in his hot shoes at the Day of Judgment—if his rags shall be on you and his begging shall be your everlasting portion! God grant that you may have done with your idle excuses! May you truly look at the matter as in the light of the Day of Judgment and God grant you Grace so to act that from this time on you may be found among the most diligent, the most fervent and the most anxious of the followers of Christ! May you be found plowing every day with a plow drawn by a Superior Power, but a plow which shall enter into the world and leave some furrow of usefulness behind it, so that, in the day of harvest, you may have your portion and not, like the sluggard, beg and have nothing!

II. Well, now, having thus addressed the sluggard, I have a few minutes to spare in which to address THE PEOPLE OF GOD. And, knowing you to be by far the larger portion of those whom I address, I am sorry that I have so little time for you, but can only make just these few remarks.

My dear Brothers and Sisters, the Lord has, by His Sovereign Grace, set our hand to the plow. We once, like our poor fellow sinners, hated this plow and we never would have come to it unless Sovereign Grace had brought us. Now we have shaken off that old sloth of ours and we are in earnest about the matter of salvation. But do we not, at times, feel this old sluggishness creeping on us? When we are asked to do something for the cause of Christ, do we not make excuses? There is a Brother over yonder—he ought to join the Church, but he does not, and his excuse is a very stupid one! I will not tell you what it is. There is another Brother—never mind who it is—the man the cap fits, let him wear it till it is worn out—and may it be worn out soon! He ought to teach in the Sunday school, he lives quite conveniently, but he does not like the school. There is another Brother—he ought to be doing something or other, but he says that, really, his position is, just now, such that he does not see that he can. The fact is, it is cold, my Brothers, and you don't want to plow!

Now, remember, those are always coldest that do not plow, for those that plow get warm. I have always noticed that the people in a Church who quarrel are the idle ones. Those that do nothing always grumble. They say, "Ah, there is no love in the Church"—because YOU haven't any! "Ah," you say, "but they don't speak to one another." You mean you don't speak to them. "No," says one, "but they are not active." You mean you are not active, for that which you think they are, depend upon it, you are yourselves, for we mostly see ourselves in other people. The idea we get of others is close upon the heels of the idea we ought to have of ourselves, except when it is a good notion—and then the less we indulge the thought as being a picture of ourselves, the better!

But whenever this sluggishness creeps upon you, I want you to think of One whom you love, who will be an example to you. Now, who do you suppose it is to whom I am about to direct your eyes if you begin to be weary and faint in your minds? Ah, it is not to a deacon of the Church, or to a minister! It is not to some renowned preacher of the olden time— yes, it is—I have made a mistake there—it is to a renowned Preacher of the olden time—One whom you love! Whenever you feel faint and weary, will you think of One who plowed more than you ever can plow, and deeper furrows, too, and plowed more terrible plowing, on a harder rock and a more terrible soil than you have to plow upon? Whenever you are weary and faint in your minds, consider Him! "And who is that?" you ask. Why, you know, it is your Lord and Master, Jesus Christ! Whenever sloth creeps on you and you begin to lean on the plow handles—and the devil whispers, "Look back"—do not look back! Look UP and see Him—the Crucified One—and you will no longer be weary, I am sure.

Myconius, the friend of Luther, had made up his mind that he would not help Luther, but that he would stay in a monastery, quiet and alone. The first night he went there, he had a dream to this effect. He dreamed that the Crucified One appeared to him—with the nail prints still in His hands, and that He led him away to a fountain into which He plunged him—a fountain of blood! He beheld himself washed completely clean and, being very rejoiced for that, he was willing to sit down. But the Crucified One said, "Follow Me." He took him to the top of a hill and down beneath there was a wide-spreading harvest. He put a sickle into his hand and He said, "Go and reap." He looked round him and he replied, "But the fields are so vast, I cannot reap them." The finger of the Crucified One pointed to a spot where there was one reaper at work—and that one reaper seemed to be mowing whole acres at once! He seemed to be a very giant, taking enormous strides. It was Martin Luther. "Stand by his side," said the Crucified One, "and work." He did so and

they reaped all day. The sweat stood upon his brow and he rested for a moment. He was about to lie down when the Crucified One came to him and said, "For the love of souls, and for My sake, go on."

He snatched up the sickle, again, and on he worked! And at last he grew weary once more. Then the Crucified One came to him, again, and said, "For the love of souls, and for My sake, go on." And he went on. But once he dared to pause and say, "But, Master, the winter is coming and much of this good wheat will be spoiled." "No," said He, "reap on. It will all be gathered in before the winter comes—every sheaf. I will send more laborers into the harvest, only do your best." So now, I think, the Crucified One takes me to the brow of that hill, and yourselves with me, and shows us this great London, and says, "Look, this great field is ripe for the harvest, take your sickles and reap it." You say, "Lord, I cannot." "No," says He, "but for the love of souls, and for the sake of the Crucified One, go on and reap."

Ah, Brothers and Sisters, I beseech you, cease not from your labor! Be more diligent than you have ever been! Think more of Christ and that will nerve you to duty and remove all sense of weariness! And if this suffices not, remember, Brothers and Sisters, it may be hard plowing—it may be true that this is a frozen time, that the winter is very sharp upon Christ's Church—but let us plow on very hard, for the harvest will pay for all. Why, I can say that the harvest I have reaped already pays me for all my labors ten thousand times told! When I have grasped the hand of some poor woman who has been saved from sin through my ministry, I have felt it were worthwhile to die to snatch that one soul from Hell!

Ah, it is a blessed harvest that God gives us here, but what a harvest will that be when we shall see all the saved souls gathered above—when we shall see the face of Christ and lay our crowns at His feet! Then look, labor, hope! An hour with your God will make up for all you may endure here. Oh, may God the Holy Spirit fill you with energy, give you fresh strength and may you, all of you, begin to plow straighter, deeper, longer furrows than you ever made before! Never look back, never take your hand from the plow, for in due season you shall reap if you faint not. Keep at it and be not like the sluggard who would not plow because of the cold—who shall beg in harvest, and have nothing.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: TJTUS3.

Verse 1. Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work. You see, they were a rough, wild, rebellious people in Crete, and Christianity came to civilize, to sober, to sanctify, to save.

2. To speak evil of no man. Oh, how necessary is this exhortation even to this day!

2. To be no brawler, but gentle, showing all meekness, unto all men. Meekness and gentleness are two of the ornaments of our faith. I would that some professed Christians would understand that unholy contentiousness is not after the mind of Christ. It is not according to that gracious command, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart and you shall find rest unto your souls." No, the Christian must be willing to suffer wrongfully and to bear it in patience. He is never to be one who renders evil for evil, or railing for railing.

3. For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish. Well, then, if other people are foolish, we ought to bear with them.

4. Disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. That is what we were once—and if the Grace of God has made a change in us, we must not boast, we must not censure others, we must not set up as self-righteous judges of others. Oh, no, our action must be the very reverse of all that!

4-7. But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; that being justified by His Grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a very practical Epistle. See how closely Paul keeps to the Doctrines of Grace. He is never like Mr. Legality—he never teaches that we are to be saved by works, but, being saved by the Grace of God alone, and being made heirs according to the hope of eternal life, we are then, out of gratitude to God, to abound in everything that is good, holy, kind and after the mind of Christ.

8, 9. This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that you affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men. But avoid foolish ques-

tions. There are always plenty of thorns about, and there are certain professors who spend half their lives in fighting about nothing at all. There is no more in their contention than the difference between Tweedledum and Tweedledee, but they will divide a Church over it, they will go through the world as if they had found out a great secret—it really is not of any consequence whatever—but having made the discovery, they judge everybody by their new-found fad and so spread a spirit that is contrary to the Spirit of Christ.

9, 10. And genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain. A man that is an heretic—one who really turns aside from the Truth of God and sets up something contrary to the Word of God—what is to be done with him? "Burn him," says the church of Rome. "Fine him, put him in prison," say other churches. But the inspired Apostle says only this—

10. After the first and second admonition reject [him]. Just exclude him from the church, that is all. Leave him his utmost liberty to go where he likes, believe what he likes and do what he likes, but, at the same time, you as Christian people must disown him—that is all you ought to do—except to pray and labor for his restoration.

11-14. Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sins, being condemned of himself When I shall send Artemas unto you, or Tychicus, be diligent to come unto me to Nicopolis for I have determined to winter there. Bring Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently, that they need nothing. And let our people also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful. How the Apostle comes back to that point! Let all our people, our friends, our brethren, our kinsfolk, "let our people also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful."

15. All that are with me salute you. Greet them that love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen.

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