

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE KEYNOTE OF THE YEAR.

A Sermon

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DELIVERED BY

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“Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.”—
Psalm ciii. 1.

BEFORE our friend who leads us in singing begins, we sometimes hear his tuning-fork. He is getting the keynote into his ear. When he comes forward, he often sounds out that keynote before he begins to sing. This is what David does in this wonderful psalm. He sounds the tuning-fork with this clear note—“Bless the Lord, O my soul.” It is well for all to be ready to sing harmoniously: it is a pity when those who gather to worship do not know what they are at. I wish I could always have you spiritually in tune, and keep in tune myself. Alas! I fear we are often half a note too flat. The words before us are the keynote of this psalm, and all the music is set to it, and closes with it. Notice that the psalm begins, “Bless the Lord, O my soul,” and it ends in the same way, “Bless the Lord, O my soul,” as if to show us that praise is the Alpha and the Omega of a Christian life. Praise is the life of life. So we begin; so we continue; so shall we end, world without end. This psalm has just as many verses in the original as there are letters in the Hebrew alphabet. It is an alphabetical psalm as to number, and so I may say that the A of it is “Bless the Lord, O my soul,” and the Z of it is “Bless the Lord, O my soul.” Oh, that our infancy would bless the Lord, and our childhood and our youth bless the Lord, and our manhood and our old age bless the Lord! From the cradle to the tomb one line of sapphire, one streak of sparkling crystal should run through the entire mass of life—and that should be praise unto God.

“I would begin the music here,
And so my soul should rise;
Oh, for some heavenly notes to bear
My passions to the skies!”

Oh, to have heaven's employment and heaven's enjoyment here below by never-ceasing praise! We need never make a pause in that of which we shall never make an end.

As I said in the exposition, there is no prayer in this psalm: it is all praise right through. There are times in a Christian's life when he feels as if praise employed the whole of his faculties, and his own wants and faults and all about himself sank into insignificance. Usually we mix prayer and praise, and they make up a delightful incense of mingled fragrance; but sometimes, when on Tabor's top we stand transfigured with the light of God's goodness, all we can do is to praise his name. All that is within us is blessing him, and there is no faculty left with which to pray him to bless us. This is an anticipation of the occupation and enjoyment of heaven, where for ever and for ever we shall bless and praise and magnify the Thrice-holy God.

At this time I pray that, while I talk about this verse, I may be carrying it out; and may you be each one carrying it out, too, if, indeed, the Lord has blessed you! Let us preach and hear with harps in our hands, and songs in our hearts. If I am to lead your thoughts, I will lead them to the place of adoration. If you are his blessed people, be his blessing people. If he has blessed you for many a day, bless him this day.

I. I call your attention, then, first, to THE BLESSED OCCUPATION. "*Bless the Lord, O my soul.*" A truly wonderful word this! How can we bless the Lord? For God to bless me I can understand and enjoy; but that it ever should be mentioned in Scripture that I can bless God is one of those incomprehensible things, which are certainly true, but are not to be explained. For man to bless God is a sort of incarnation—God in human flesh. God blessing me—that is divine: but myself blessing him, there is something of the human, but also somewhat of the divine. The divine blesses the human, or the human could not bless the divine. God is with us, or we could not be thus with God: our blessing him can only be the echo of his blessing us. The more you turn it over, the more you will wonder at it. If it had said, "*Praise the Lord, O my soul,*" that would have been reasonable; but "*Bless the Lord, O my soul,*" rises out of the region of reason into a still higher and more spiritual atmosphere. These are heavenly words—"Bless the Lord, O my soul."

But how can we bless God? We cannot add to his happiness, or increase his greatness, or enlarge his goodness. "*O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not unto thee!*" What can our poor drops contribute to the ocean? What can our nothingness bring to his all-sufficiency? What can our darkness contribute to his light? And yet, if the Bible says so, it must be so, for it never speaks in vain. Idle words are in the speech of man, not in the writings of Jehovah. If the Scripture teaches us to say, "*Bless the Lord, O my soul,*" then it is a correct word. We may wonder at it, but we may not dispute over it.

How, then, can we bless God?

I answer, first, God blesses us by thinking well of us, and *we bless God by thinking well of him.* When the Lord says in his heart, "*This*

people shall be blessed," before ever he has stretched out his hand to give anything, we are blessed by his favourable regard for us. I beg you, in the same respect, to bless God by sweet, holy, adoring, loving, grateful thoughts of him. Think well of him who thinks so graciously of you. This, surely, is no task, no burden. Such thinking is the happiest exercise of the mental powers. To think of what God has done to me—why, it makes my heart begin to beat more quickly than usual! My God! The very word is music! My Lord! How pleasant the sound! How sweet it is to speak of our Father, who is in heaven! "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God!" To turn over thoughts of what God is, what he has done, what he has been, how he has dealt with us, how he has revealed himself unto us, how he has glorified his holy name—why, this is a heavenly pleasure! Some of the best moments of devotion I have ever been able to enjoy I have spent in entire silence, looking up. I sat still, and wondered that God should ever love me, and I found a dew gathering about my eyes. I thought of how he loved me, and what that love had wrought in me and for me; till, not venturing to speak, I have been content to be silent before the Lord in rapture inexpressible. It was not possible for me to see him, but yet I felt that he was specially near, and I looked up to him as my Father, my Friend, my All in all. My heart felt an inward glow under a sense of divine love, and I could not have been happier if I had possessed ten thousand worlds. Oh, this is blessing God, when your heart, not venturing to use words, has learned with every pulse to beat his praise, and with every throb to mean an inward love to him. Spend some time in that quiet, rapt devotion which gets beyond the use of words into a communion of gratitude and love. Words are weak when love has to load them with her treasures; and therefore she is content to spare them the burden. "Bless the Lord, O my soul." My soul shall do what my tongue cannot. Think deeply of what the Lord has done. Do not pass his mercies over superficially, but look into them. Pry into their very heart: look into the deep things of God. Do not cease to think of the covenant of electing love, of everlasting faithfulness, of redeeming blood, of pardoning grace, and all the ways in which eternal love has shown itself since that day when you first heard it speak in your ear, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." To think well of God is one of the chief ways in which we can bless him.

We also bless God when we wish him well. You can do a great deal in this way of wishing well, and desiring great things for the Lord's honour and glory. God's wishes are all practically carried out. We cannot carry out ours; but, at the same time, we ought to indulge them freely. He that taught us to pray, bade us begin, "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Our prayers are not sufficiently directed to the glory of the Lord. How seldom do we begin with praying for God's name and kingdom! We put that last which should always be first. We ought to pray far more than we do for the Lord Jesus Christ. Is it not written, "Prayer also shall be made for him continually; and daily shall he be praised"?

Do you continually pray for Jesus, and daily praise him? Pray for yourself certainly, "Give us this day our daily bread"; but this comes after, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done." Sit down and wish that all men knew God, that all men worshipped him; and let your wishes blaze up into prayers. Wish that all idols were abolished, and that Jehovah's name would be sung through every land by every tongue. Wish well for his name, his glory, his truth. Lay home to your hearts the burden of his church, and long for the success of its work. When you see his truth dishonoured, and his Word itself defamed and despised, be grieved; for this is a way of blessing *him*, when you abhor all that dishonours him. Wish well to his church, his cause, his truth, his people, and all that concerns his glory. Pray without ceasing, "Father, glorify thy Son." Turn your wishes into prayer; and, as the first stage of thinking well is a blessing of God by meditation, so this second stage of wishing well will be a blessing of God by supplication. "Bless the Lord, O my soul." Think well, wish well.

Then, next, *you can bless God by speaking well of him*. Perhaps you say very little about him. Chide yourself for your reticence. Perhaps you have even spoken against him, though you are his child. I mean that you have fallen into such a state of heart that you imagine that he deals hardly with you. Ah! this is the opposite of blessing him. Perhaps you have lost your husband or child, or in health or property you are a sufferer; and it may be that the devil says to you, "Curse God and die." Surely, you will not listen to this vile suggestion. No, no. A thousand times "No." Beloved, if you be his child, far be it from you to curse your Father; and yet, in a modified sense, you may do it by inward quarrelling with the will of the Lord in his providential acts towards you. God's people provoke his Holy Spirit when they murmur against him in their hearts. A murmuring spirit is the very reverse of blessing the Lord; especially when the murmurs take a loud voice—when they are not merely choked and concealed within the bosom, but when, every time you speak, you complain bitterly of how the Lord deals with you, and think that he acts in a very hard and trying way. Away with every rebellious thought. "Bless the Lord, O my soul." "He hath not dealt with us after our sins." "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" said Jeremiah in his Lamentations. Let us lament for sin, but let us not complain because of chastisement. Indeed, some of us have nothing to complain of. We have everything for which to praise him; and if we do not do so, we deserve to be banished to the Siberia of Despair. How can we complain? If we are not in hell, everything is mercy. If you, a pardoned sinner, had to spend the rest of your days on earth in a stone cell, with no food but bread and water, performing the labour of a convict; yet, so long as you know that you are pardoned, and delivered from going down to hell, you have a thousand reasons why you should bless the Lord, and you have no single reason to complain. So long as you can say, "His mercy endureth for ever," you have enough cause for unceasing praise. But when the Lord gives you all things to enjoy; when you have food to eat, and raiment to put on; when you come up to his house

in peace, and hear the gospel, and have it sweetly applied to your own heart, why, beloved, you ought to speak well of the Lord who deals so bountifully with you. Have you said anything to praise God to-day?

"I have had nobody to speak to," says one. Do you mean to say that you have not said anything to-day to the Lord's praise? What, my dear brethren and sisters, have you been quite silent all day? You are a rare sort of people: how quiet your houses must be! You have said something, I am sure. Do you not think that God ought to have a tithe of our words, at the very least, and that somehow or other, to somebody or other, we ought to speak well of his dear name every day?

"I have nothing to say," says one. Do not say it, then; but some of us have a great deal to say, and we dare not be silent about it. The wicked speak loudly enough against God. You cannot quiet them. Why should we be silent in any company? We have as much right to speak for God as they have to speak against him. If they ever complain of singing hymns in the street, they have little cause to find fault, for they sing in the street quite enough; and some of them at very unseemly hours. If they say that we obtrude our religion, some of them obtrude their blasphemies, and assuredly we may take as much liberty as they take. We shall not be muzzled like dogs either to please the world or its master. "Bless the Lord, O my soul." Speak well of his name, and let men know that thou hast a good God, who is gracious to thee in a wonderful manner.

Once more, be not satisfied with thinking well, and wishing well, and speaking well, but act well for God. "Bless the Lord, O my soul," and as he blesses thee with real gifts, with gifts unspeakably precious, *bless his name by acts and deeds of holy service and consecration.* Sometimes indulge thyself with the delight of breaking an alabaster box, very precious, and pouring its fragrance on thy Lord Jesus. Fetch out something rare and costly from thy store, and give to his cause, and bless his name. Every now and then think to thyself, I must do something fresh for Jesus. Let thy heart say—

"Oh, what shall I do my Saviour to praise?"

Invent for thyself some little thing which may give pleasure to the Well-beloved Lord, that he may not say to thee, "Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices." "Bless the Lord, O my soul," and do it with hand, and purse, and substance, and sacrifice. If thou dost truly bless him, thou wilt not be content with singing hymns, such as—

"Fly abroad, thou mighty gospel,"

but thou wilt long to put a feather or two into the wing of the gospel to make it fly abroad. Thou wilt not only say, "All hail the power of Jesu's name," but thou wilt be wanting to make that name known to others. Thou wilt endeavour to spread abroad his praise by work in the Sabbath-school, or at the village-station, or on the tract-district, or at the Dorcas-meeting. Bless the Lord not in word only, but in

deed and in truth, even as he blesses thee. "Bless the Lord, O my soul."

I cannot enlarge farther. I have given you hints, bare hints, but they may show you how you may bless the Lord after the manner in which he blesses you, though the measure be far below what he doeth. As the whole heavens may be reflected in a drop of water, so may infinite love be mirrored in our affections.

II. And now, secondly, let us consider THE COMMENDABLE MANNER mentioned. Half the virtue of a thing lies in the way in which it is done. Indeed, there is usually a good deal more in the manner of an action than in the action itself. One person would relieve a poor man in such a way as to break his heart; and another will give him nothing, and yet cheer him up. You can praise a man till he loathes you, and censure him till he loves you. Now, in the service of God, it is not only what you bring, but in what spirit you bring it. The Lord loves *adverbs* as much as *adjectives*. *How* is as important as *What*. So here it is, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and *all that is within me*, bless his holy name."

That mode of blessing God to which we are called is very spiritual—a matter of soul and spirit. I am not to bless God with my voice only, nor merely with the help of a fine organ, or a trained choir; but I am to do it after a far more difficult manner. "Bless the Lord, O my soul." Soul music is the soul of music. The music of the soul is that which pleases the ear of God: the great Spirit is delighted with that which comes from our spirit. Why! you do not think that even the music of the best orchestra, majestic though it be, affords pleasure to God, in the sense in which sweet sounds are pleasing to us. As for all human melody, it must seem so imperfect to the All-glorious One, that it is no more to him than the grating of an old saw to Mozart or Beethoven. His idea of music is framed on a far higher and nobler platform of taste than ever can be reached by mortal man. The songs of cherubim and seraphim infinitely exceed all that we can ever raise, so far as mere sound is concerned; and mere sound is as nothing to God. He could set the winds to music, tune the roaring of the sea, and harmonize the crash of tempests. If he needed music, he would not ask of human lips and mouths. A heart that loves him makes music to him. A heart that praises him has within itself all the harmonies that he delights in. The sigh of love is to him a lyric, the sob of repentance is melody, the inward cries of his own children are an oratorio, and their heart-songs are true hallelujahs. "Bless the Lord, O my soul." The unheard of man is often best heard of God. Speechless praise: the heart's deep meaning—this is what he loves. Spiritual worship! Spiritual worship! Spiritual worship! And how often this is neglected! You can go to a very fine church, where there is a very grand service, and there *may be* spiritual service there; but, alas! it is more than probable that there will be no trace of it. You may go to a Quaker's room, where there are four bare whitewashed walls, and a window with a holland blind drawn down, and there *may be* spiritual worship there; and, on the other hand, there may be stolid indifference, and a formalism as fatal as the gorgeous ceremonial. It is neither the outward sumptuousness nor the plainness that will

ensure spirituality; and yet this is the life of all worship. Only the conscious presence of the Spirit of God will enable us to worship with the soul; and that is the main thing; yes, the only important thing. I do not greatly care whether a man wears a plain coat or a gown in worship. I shall not make a fool of *myself* by putting on a gown, I assure you; but I do not think that even if I did it would make much difference, so long as the heart was right in the sight of God. If one man feels that he can worship God best in one way, and another feels that he can worship him best in another way, it is not for his brother to judge him—let each have his own way: only let each see to it that he worships God, who is a Spirit, in spirit and in truth. This is the vital point—the heart must be in every word; the spirit must go with every note. Everything which does not arise from a devout exercise of the mental powers, and even with the full occupation of the spiritual faculties, falls short of that to which we exhort you at this time. The right note is, “Bless the Lord, O my soul.” It is spiritual worship: it is worship—not from the teeth outwards, but from the heart that lies deep within the man.

When we bless God, *the sacred exercise should be intense.* “*All that is within me, bless his holy name.*” We ought not to worship God in a half-hearted sort of way; as if it were now our duty to bless God, but we felt it to be a weary business, and we would get it through as quickly as we could, and have done with it; and the sooner the better. No, no; “*All that is within me, bless his holy name.*” Come, my heart, wake up, and summon all the powers which wait upon thee! Mechanical worship is easy, but worthless. Come, rouse yourself, my brother! Rouse thyself, O my own soul! “*All that is within me, bless his holy name.*” What we need is a universal suffrage of praise from every member of our manhood’s commonwealth. Every faculty within our nature is to praise God—our memory, our hope, our fear, our desire, our imagination; all our capacities, and all our graces. There is no one part of a man’s constitution, which is really a part of his manhood, which should not praise God. Ay, even the sense of humour should be sanctified to the service of the Most High! Whatever faculty God has given thee, O my soul, it has its place in the choir! Summon it to praise. If Nebuchadnezzar praised his idol god with flute, harp, sackbut, dulcimer, psaltery, and all kinds of music, mind that thou praise thy God with every faculty that thou hast within thee, so that there be no part or power of thy nature which is not used in Jehovah’s praise. All that in me is, be stirred up his holy name to magnify and bless.

What a difference there is between a man unconcerned, and a man really awakened! In your own case, I can believe you to be bright and intelligent; but your portrait—I will say nothing about it. When the photographer fits that iron rest at the back of your head, and keeps you waiting ten minutes, while he gets his plates ready, why, your soul goes out of town, and nothing remains but that heavy look! When the work of art is finished, it is you, and yet it is not you. You were driven out by the touch of that iron. Another time, perhaps, your portrait is taken instantaneously, while you are in an animated attitude, while your whole soul is there; and your friends say,

“Ay, that is your very self!” I want you to bless the Lord with your soul at home as in that last portrait. I saw a book to-day, wherein the writer says in the preface, “We have given a portrait of our mother, but there was a kind of sacred twinkle about her eyes which no photograph could reproduce.” Now, it is my heart’s desire that you do praise God with that sacred twinkle, with that feature or faculty which is most characteristic of you. Let your eyes praise him. Let your brow praise him. Let every part of your manhood be aroused, and so aroused as to be in fine form. I would have your soul rise to high-water mark. Give me a man on fire when God is to be praised. Let “all that is within me, bless his holy name.” God is not to be half praised. A whole God, and a holy God, should have the whole of our powers engaged in blessing his holy name. Our blessing of God must be intense; so intense that all our powers, faculties, and forces are unanimous in it.

The text seems to remind me that *we ought to do this repeatedly*, because in my text the word “bless” occurs twice. “Bless the Lord, O my soul: bless his holy name.” And in the next verse there is “bless the Lord” again. He is a triune God: render him triune praise. Bless him; bless him; bless him: be always blessing him. How you have looked at that dear child at times, you loving mother! You have pressed him to your bosom, and you have said, “Bless him, and bless him, and bless him again.” Shall our children enjoy such affectionate repetitions, and will we not bless God, and bless him, and bless him, and bless him again? “Oh,” say you, “it is a very little thing to do!” I know it is little in itself; but take care that you do not rob him of it. If your gratitude can only render a small return, this must not be a reason for withholding it. Thank him; praise him; bless him. Begin your days with blessing him. Begin your meals with blessing him. Go not to your beds without blessing him. Wake not in the morning without blessing him. Even at dead of night, if you lie sleepless, still bless him. Oh, what happy lives we should live if we were always blessing him! Let us resolve to institute a new era, and from this hour commence the age of praise.

I will praise him in life; I will praise him in death;
And praise him as long as he lendeth me breath.

May this be the holy resolution of every blood-bought one in this assembly! We are all needed for this work. Who among us would like to be excused so honourable a service?

Thus have I shown you the blessed occupation, and the commendable manner of it. May the Holy Spirit help us to love praise, and live praise, till we perfect praise!

III. But I ask your attention earnestly for a minute to a third point, and that is THE SACRED OBJECT of this blessing. The text is, in the original, “*Bless Jehovah*, O my soul.” In the reading of the psalms, as a rule, I frequently put the word “Jehovah” before you instead of “the Lord”; for you know that wherever we get “THE LORD” in capital letters, it is Jehovah in the original; and why should we not know that the sacred name is used by the inspired writer? I am afraid that a great many so-called Christians do not

worship Jehovah at all. The god of the present period is a new god, newly sprung up. The Old Testament is looked upon by some as if it were a worn-out book, and the God of Israel is regarded as a deity of the olden time, and not the only living and true God. "Ah!" they say, "he is a very imperfect revelation"; and then they go on to reverence their own effeminate version of the Godhead. For my own part I know nothing of a new god. I adore the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God that made the heavens and the earth. I worship the God that cut Rahab, and wounded the crocodile at the Red Sea, the God that led his people through the wilderness, the God that gave them the land of Canaan for a heritage. "This God is our God for ever and ever. He shall be our guide, even unto death." "Bless Jehovah, O my soul." Let who will worship Baal or Moloch; let who will turn to the gods of Greece or Rome; my soul, bless Jehovah, and adore his sacred name! The gods of evolution and agnosticism are none of mine. These invented deities, or demons, I leave to those who dote on them. Be it mine to lead the great congregation with such a psalm as this:—

"Before Jehovah's awful throne,
Ye nations bow with sacred joy;
Know that the Lord is God alone;
He can create, and he destroy."

But the text says, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, *bless his holy name.*" What is meant by blessing his name? The name of God is that by which he reveals himself, so that the God we have to worship is *the Jehovah of revelation*. Here, again, we fall foul of many. They worship the god of reason, the conception of the cultured mind, the god whom they have invented for themselves by their great wisdom. The god whom men find out for themselves is not the true God. I trow that this day it is true, as in Paul's day, "The world by wisdom knew not God." "Canst thou by searching find out God?" As well mightest thou search for the springs of the sea, as expect to find out God by science. I often hear people say, "They go from nature up to nature's God." It is a very long step—too far for human strength. Stand on the highest Alp, and you will perceive that you will never step into heaven from thence. It is far easier to go from nature's God to nature, and far safer to believe in him who stoops out of the heavens, and reveals himself to you.

However, let me say to all believers—"Bless his holy name," that is, bless the God who is revealed to us, and bless him as he is revealed to us. Do not look around you after another god. Begin with the God with whom the Bible begins. Read its first word—"In the beginning God." Begin with the God with whom the New Testament begins in the gospel of John—"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Keep you to revelation. There is God's name spelled out in capitals. Believe the inspired Word, for it will never mislead you. O friends, if I did not believe in the infallibility of Scripture—the absolute infallibility of it from cover to cover, I would never enter this pulpit again! If it is left to me to discriminate and to judge how much of this Book is true, and how much false, then I must myself become infallible, or

what guide have I? If my compass always points to the north, I know how to use it; but if it veers to other points of the compass, and I am to judge out of my own mind whether it is right or not, I am as well without the thing as with it. If my Bible is right always, it will lead me right; and as I believe it is so, I shall follow it, God helping me. I will not judge the Book; the Book judges me.

“This is the Judge that ends the strife,
Where wit and reason fail.”

God has revealed himself in divers ways and manners through his prophets and apostles, and as such let us bless him to-night. We rejoice in him who, in the person of the Lord Jesus, and in the Scriptures of truth, has graciously unveiled his face. “Bless his holy name.”

But then, notice that the psalm dwells especially upon one point. “Bless *his holy name.*” Now, a babe in grace can bless God for his goodness, but only a grown believer will bless God for his holiness. His holiness is an august attribute, an attribute which comprehends all the rest, for it means his wholeness, his perfection, his holiness. It is an attribute which looks darkly on sinful men. Apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, it seems to thunder and lighten against the sinner; but as for those of us who are reconciled to God by the death of his Son, it smiles upon them. These see holiness resplendent in the great Sacrifice of Calvary, for they perceive how God would not even pardon sin so as to violate his justice, but in his infinite holiness would sooner die himself upon the cross than that his law should not be vindicated. Saints conspicuously see God’s holiness? Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, we worship thee; we bless thee! Beloved, do you love a holy God? Do you bless a holy God? While you bless him for his mercy, do you equally bless him for his holiness? You bless him for his bounty, but do you feel that you could not thus bless him if you were not fully aware that he is perfectly righteous? “Bless his holy name.”

Ay, when that holiness burns like fire, and threatens to devour the guilty, let us still bless his holy name! When we see his holiness consuming the great Sacrifice, we bow before the Lord in deep dread of soul, but we still bless his holy name. An unholy God! It were absurd to think of such a being; but a Thrice-holy God—let us bless and praise him. When men or women can say, “We love, and bless, and praise a holy God,” there is something of holiness in them. God, the Holy Spirit, has begun to make you holy; since to appreciate holiness you must yourself be holy. No man can see the beauty of holiness until his eyes have been washed in the river of the water of life; and if God has made you pure, so that you can praise his holiness, he has given you to be a partaker of his holiness.

So I have put before you in a few words the truth that the one blessed object of your praise is—the God of Abraham, the God of the Old and New Testaments, who has revealed his name, the God of perfect holiness. “Bless Jehovah, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.”

IV. I have done when I add this fourth point. Let us remember

THE SUITABLE MONITOR. In the text *a suitable monitor* appears. A Christian man who wants somebody to look after him is a very imperfect Christian man; for he who has the love of God in his soul will look after himself. Who is it that says to David, "Bless the Lord, O my soul"? Why, *it is David talking to David*. The man speaks to himself. Beloved, may my voice be useful to you at this time; but the proof of it will be that henceforth your own voice will suffice, and you will often give yourself the exhortation—"Bless the Lord, O my soul."

Some of you go out preaching, or you teach a class in a Sunday-school. Keep on with that; but do not forget to look after one pupil of yours who needs your care very greatly. I mean, look to *yourself*; and every now and then say, "My soul, bless the Lord." What are you at? You have been grumbling of late. Wake up, and say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul." You have been dull and cold-hearted of late. Chide yourself, for this will not do.

If you have this monitor, you will have *one that is always at home*. You will not have to send across the road for a minister. Here is a spiritual chaplain who will be resident with you, and always ready with his personal advice. Will you not try to practise your ministry upon yourself, and begin at once to apply to yourself all that you would say to another whom you would excite to bless the Lord?

Ought you not to do it? Are you not *afraid of growing cold* in this holy service? "No," say you, "I am not." Then I am afraid that you are cold already. "No," say you, "I am full of life." Will you always be so? Man's security is the devil's opportunity. Whenever you say to yourself, "All is well with me," I fear for you. A foul fiend is watching for your halting, and he laughs as he sees how you delude yourself. You are not all you think you are. Bestir yourself, and praise the Lord.

Practise this praising of God when you are *stimulated by the example of others*. If you hear others praising God, say to yourself, "Bless the Lord, O my soul." Do not let any man praise God more than you do. When you see your brethren aglow with praising God, do not grovel in the dust, and moan, "Our souls can neither fly, nor go, to reach eternal joys"; but stretch your wing, and rise to hallelujahs. Rest not till a gracious example has stimulated you.

But if you happen to be where there is nobody to stimulate you, and where everybody goes the other way, then *praise God alone*. Say to yourself, "Bless the Lord, O my soul. I dwell amongst lions. But none the less for their roaring, bless the Lord, O my soul." That will stop the lions' mouths. What if you are in prison, like Paul and Silas; bless the Lord. Nothing shakes prison-walls, and breaks jailers' hearts, like the praises of the Lord. Here I am where everybody doubts the holy God. Bless the Lord, O my soul; and be all the firmer, and all the bolder. If everybody sneers at divine truth, bless the Lord, O my soul. Let all men know that there is one in the world who does not sneer at revelation. Let opposition be like a strong blast to make the furnace seven times hotter. "Bless the Lord, O my soul." What have I to do with whether other people bless God or not? I must praise him all the more if others are dumb before him. This, dear friends, is how it ought to be from me personally.

If I do not praise the Lord, the stone in the wall will cry out against me; and it will complain of you also if you be silent. You owe him more than many. If all forget, yet do you remember.

This is pleasant as well as profitable. Praise is not medicine, it is meat and drink. It is salutary, and it is also sweet. Is any other occupation comparable to blessing the Lord? Is there anything that you can do which surpasses the spending of your life in magnifying the Lord? If you practise it, it will be profitable to you. It will make you grow in grace; it will make your burden light; it will make your way to heaven seem short; it will make you fearlessly face the world. If you have God within your heart, and you are blessing his name, you will not mind your outward circumstances. Whether God gives or takes, you will continue to bless him. This will be useful to you in saving others. A praiseful heart is a soul-winning heart. If we bless God more, we shall bless our neighbours more. A happy Christian attracts others by his joy.

Lastly, *to bless God will prepare us for heaven.* Praise is the rehearsal of our eternal song. By grace we learn to sing, and in glory we continue to sing. What will some of you do when you get to heaven, if you go on grumbling all the way? Do not hope to get to heaven in that style. But now begin to bless the name of the Lord.

I have not spoken thus to all of you. Some of you cannot bless the Lord as yet. Will you try? Think how sad it is to be in a state of mind in which you cannot render acceptable praise. You must be born again before you can bless the Lord. May the Lord convince you of the necessity that he should bless you before you can bless him! May you receive his blessing in a moment by faith in the Lord Jesus! The Lord grant it, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm ciii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN-BOOK"—174, 146 (First Version).

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

BELOVED READERS,—My New Year's wish for you is this: *May the Lord bless you, and may you bless the Lord!* To this end may the sermons ever be helpful! Beginning the Thirty-sixth Volume, I feel grateful and hopeful. For the past and the future I would bless the Lord: for the one received by experience; for the other grasped by faith. May 1890 be the best year we have ever lived!

Yours, for Christ's sake,

Mentone, Dec. 27, 1889.

C. H. SPURGEON.