

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

PARTNERSHIP WITH CHRIST.

A Sermon

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DELIVERED BY

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“God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.”—1 Corinthians i. 9.

PAUL is here arguing for the safety, the perseverance, and the ultimate perfection, of the saints to whom he is writing. He thanks God for what he has done for them, and is assured that he will do yet more,—that he will certainly confirm them unto the end, that they may be blameless in the day of Jesus Christ; and the apostle bases his argument upon this truth: “God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” And, brethren, this is good argument,—to reason as to the future from the present and the past.

What God has done is a prophecy of what he will do, for God is unchangeable. He never takes up a purpose for a while, and then drops it; but he carries it out to the end. He never speaks a word, and then reverses it. “Hath he said, and shall he not do it?” He never performs an action which is intended to produce a certain result without following it up until the result aimed at is fully accomplished. If you and I were dealing with a changeable God, it would be indeed ill for us; but he has said, “I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” Thus, from the immutability of God, we argue that, if he has begun to bless us, he will continue to bless us; and if he has commenced a work of grace in our souls, he will certainly carry it on till it is absolutely complete.

We argue thus, partly from our own experience, because everything that is gracious within us has been God's work hitherto. What have you and I done towards our own salvation? Put together all that we may even think we have done, and what does it come to? “Without me,” said Christ to his disciples, “ye can do nothing;” and, truly, without him we *have* done nothing; therefore, all that has been done in us is to be ascribed to his working in us to will and to do of his good pleasure. When the Lord has begun any work of grace in us, do we not find that he has

carried it on? Has he forsaken us yet? Has he turned from his purpose hitherto? In the day of trouble, has he deserted us? When he has sent us upon a warfare, has he left us to fall through our own weakness? It has not been so hitherto; and we may sing, "His mercy endureth for ever." He has been a faithful God until now, and it is therefore right for us to conclude that he will still be the same.

"Determined to save, he watch'd o'er my path
When, Satan's blind slave, I sported with death:
And can he have taught me to trust in his name,
And thus far have brought me to put me to shame?"

If he had meant to put us to shame, he has had ten thousand opportunities of doing so; but until now we have found the promise good: "Whosoever believeth in him shall not be ashamed."

And, dear friends, if you will think this matter over, the argument will seem to be still more clear. The Lord called us when we were quite undeserving of his grace. I am sure that I can remember nothing, before my conversion, that could be used as a reason why I should have been called by the grace of God any more than other lads of my own age. True, I did not go into any gross sin; but then I had so much light, and so much tenderness of conscience, and I lived in such a godly atmosphere in my home, that every sin I did commit was worse than the sins of those who never had such advantages; and I have often looked upon myself as having been, under certain aspects, the very chief of sinners; and every child of God, when he is in his right mind, will look upon himself in the same way.

"What was there in you that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?
'Twas even so, Father, you ever must sing,
'Because it seem'd good in thy sight.'"

Let us think of his great love wherewith he loved us even when we were dead in trespasses and sins, and say, "If his love freely flowed to us when we were in that sad state, what is to hinder its continuing to flow to us? If the Lord loved us from no cause within ourselves, why should he not continue to love us?" And if it be said that we are now in an altered condition,—and blessed be God it is so!—that very alteration is an argument that he will still love us: "for if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." He that brought us out of our horrible state and condition by nature, without any reason in us for doing it, but simply because of his own sweet love, how could he cast us away? We are, at our worst, but what we were then, even if it were possible for us to be still dead; and should not he that began the work still carry it on, since he began with us on the footing and ground of grace alone?

And think yet further, dear friends, at that time we were not simply undeserving, but we were also unwilling. There is in the natural heart of man an unwillingness to yield unconditionally to God and Christ; the ways of free grace are not palatable to human pride. Even when we were religiously inclined, our religion consisted of our own prayers, our own repentance, or our own faith. You know how

long we ran from one way to another, but it was always the same kind of way; we were to do something by which we were to get right with God, or to feel something, or to know something; everything was of self and for self. But the grace of God at last weaned us from this folly, and took us off the breasts of self-righteousness, which had always been empty. Then we were prepared to go to God, and as one whom his mother comforteth, so did he comfort us. We found in our Father God and in his well-beloved Son all that we wanted, even wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. Well, my brothers, if God brought us to himself when we were stray sheep without any willingness to return, how much more will he continue to keep us now that, at any rate, the will is present with us, though often how to perform that which is good we find not! He that loved the undeserving, he that loved the unwilling, will not forsake us now. "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord."

Imagine for a moment,—it is only another form of the same argument,—imagine what could be the motive of God for bringing us where we are, if he meant after all to leave us. What shameful cruelty it would be for some prince or millionaire to take a poor man from his poverty, and change his dress, and alter his mode of living, and put him among the princes, and make him have luxurious tastes and elevated desires, and then afterwards send him back to the slum whence he came to the palace, and bid him live just as he formerly did in all his dirt and misery! Would not that be cruelty of the most refined kind? Surely, such treatment would cause the iron to enter into the man's soul, for he would say, "Why was I not left where I was? Why was I taught wants that I never had before? Why was I instructed in the use of luxuries which had never fallen to my lot before, and which therefore I never missed? It would have been better for me never to have seen this pretended benefactor than that he should bring me here again, and, after lifting me up so high, leave me to fall back to where I was before." It cannot be that my Lord has made me sick of this world, and yet will not give me another. It cannot be that he has torn away the righteousness which was some sort of comfort to me, rent it off like filthy rags, and made me stand naked to my own shame, if he does not intend to clothe me with the righteousness of Christ. He cannot have taught me to trust in his name, and made me to rejoice in him, and given me sips of sweetness that have made me understand something of what heaven must be, if he does not intend to bring me, at the end, to see his face. I cannot—I will not—believe that he has done all that he has done, and yet that he will not complete the work. No, "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." Because he has done that, he means to keep us there; he will preserve us even unto the end.

I fancy I hear someone say, "I do not quite see how that can be; to some extent, our salvation must depend upon ourselves." Well, my brother, if you think so, I will not quarrel with you; if you can get any sweetness out of that thought, it is such a dry old bone that I will willingly leave you to it. As for me, I should never be happy

again if I thought that my eternal salvation hung upon myself, for that poor nail would soon come out of the wall; but I can hang my soul for time and for eternity on this truth, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." I will not quarrel with you about this matter, for that which pleases you does not please me; so you may have your bone all to yourself, and much good may it do you! I am prepared to hang all my hopes upon the finished work of Jesus Christ my Lord.

"But," asks one, "may you then do as you like?" Brother, I wish I *might* do as I like; for if I could live as I liked, I would live entirely free from sin; I would live like Christ himself. "Well," says one, "I do not understand it." The Lord teach you, then! I cannot; but if he ever brings you right away from all the bondage of the law, and the slavery of dependence upon yourself, to rest entirely upon his fixed, unchanging grace, it will be a new era in your life. You will rise from being a slave to be a son; and from being under the lash of the bondsman, you will come to look up into your Father's face with joy unutterable, blessing and praising and magnifying his name as long as you live.

But that is not the subject upon which I wish specially to speak at this time; I want to talk about the great blessing which is the basis of our argument. What is it that God has done for his people? "By whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." Why did not the apostle simply say, "called unto the fellowship of his Son," or, at most, "of his Son Jesus"? We should have known who was meant, should we not? Ah! but this enhances the glory of it; to make us see how great he is unto whose fellowship we have come, and consequently how grand an exaltation it is which God has given to us, even us, the apostle says that we have been called by God "unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord."

Among many things which the text teaches us,—and I do not pretend to exhaust its meaning, but merely to give a hint or two concerning it,—it means, first, that believers are *called by God into the society of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord*; and, secondly, *called into partnership with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord*.

I. First then, beloved, all who truly believe are CALLED INTO THE SOCIETY OF JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

We enjoy that society *when we draw near to God in prayer*; and, indeed, whenever we draw near to God at all. We dare not come to God without Jesus Christ; that dear name should begin and end all our prayers. He is the one Mediator between God and men; he is our great High Priest and Intercessor. "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." "I am the door,"—the way of access to God. He is the mercy-seat, the propitiatory, where God meets with us, and hears our prayers, so that we always pray in the society of Christ. There is no true praying without it.

And, next, *we always praise God in the society of Jesus Christ*. There is no hymn, or psalm, or spiritual song that could be accepted of God unless our Lord Jesus Christ was with us when it was sung. Prayers

and praises alike must ascend to God through the merit of his atoning sacrifice.

More than this, we have been called into the society of Christ in this high sense, that we are always regarded by God as being with Christ and in Christ. *We stand before God in Christ.* I—I, alone, dare not stand before God. Nay, my brother, a sinner cannot stand there, he would be swept away; but Christ stands before God, and we stand there in Christ, and so we are "accepted in the Beloved." That is a beautiful picture which the poet puts into words when he prays that God will look through Christ's wounds, as through a window,—

"Him, and then the sinner see:
Look through Jesu's wounds on me."

We are accepted before God, not as we are in ourselves, but as we are in Christ; in Christ's life made to live,—in Christ's righteousness beautified,—in Christ's blood cleansed,—in Christ's perfection made perfect, for "ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power." Is it not beautiful that we should thus be so associated with Christ that God thinks of us always in connection with his Son? God does not simply look at you and me, but at Christ covering you, and me, and all his people, and so his chosen ones are thought of as being in him, their covenant and federal Head. They are so completely in him that he, as it were, robes them before God. This is being brought into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, standing before God in Christ.

But there is more than that in this expression. We are brought, beloved, not only to have Christ with us in our approaches to God, and to stand before God in Christ, but also to be *in Christ by virtue of a living union with him.* The Spirit of God quickens our spirit, and gives us life; but, more than that, Christ says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." The life of the believer is not in himself, but in his Lord: "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." "I live," says the apostle Paul; "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me;" and, writing to the Colossians, he says, "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Just as this finger of mine lives because of its union with the head, and with the heart, and with the rest of my being where the life is to be found, so do you and I live because we have been joined unto Christ. If there were no life in the stem, there would be no life in the branch. If the branch be severed from the vine, it has no life in itself; and you and I, dear friends, are living branches because Christ lives, and we live in him, and his life flows into us. Is not this a very wonderful thing? Do you see that man, who once was in the habit of going in and out of the tavern? His speech, in those evil days, was foul, filthy, abominable; his poor wife was bruised and battered by his cruelty, his children were starved and shoeless; he is now with us in this house of prayer, and he is a member of Christ's mystical body. If I were to ask him to stand up, and tell us about the great change that has been wrought in him, we should all rejoice to hear him testify that the Lord has forgiven him, washed him, cleansed him, and renewed his heart.

Did that man, in his unregenerate state, ever think that the life of Christ would be in him quickening his mortal body, and changing his whole nature? Such a thought never occurred to him. Is he not a wonder of grace? Why, I do verily believe that, if the devil were to be converted, and become a holy angel again, it would not be more wonderful than the conversion of some who are now present. The Lord has done strange things, marvellous things for them, whereof our hearts are glad as we think of what he has done. With his mighty arm, he reaches even to the ends of the earth those who have gone far in sin, and he brings them to his heart, and to his house, and to his throne, and into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Oh, the wonders of God's grace! Let us bless and praise him now and for ever.

Then, dear friends, there is this wonderful thing also, that we are so called into the society of Christ that, if we live as we ought to live, *the Lord Jesus Christ is the most familiar acquaintance we have in all the world.* The most loving husband often has to go out to business during the day, and he can only get back to his spouse in the evening; but the Bridegroom of our souls is with us all day long. Whether we are at home or out in the world, he is still with us. You have a dear friend somewhere, and you love to be in his company; but you cannot always be with him, so you have sometimes the sorrow of parting with him; but your best Friend is never far away from you, day or night. "When I wake," says David, "I am still with thee." Perhaps, one of these days, we may have to go out to the utmost ends of the earth, but our Friend will be with us in the vessel as we cross the sea, he will be with us when we land on the distant shore, he will be with us everywhere and at all times. He is the "Friend that sticketh closer than a brother," whose company need never be lost. He never gets tired of his beloved ones; his delights are with the sons of men. If we would but walk by faith, and carefully observe his laws, we should find him abiding with us, and we should be abiding with him. Spoke I not truly when I said that, to his people, he is the most familiar Friend that they have? He dwells in them, and they dwell in him. "I in them, and thou in me," said Christ to his Father;—a wonderful union; and our union with Christ ought to be, in its enjoyment, as perpetual as Christ's union with the Father, for he speaks of it in the same terms: "I in them, and thou in me." Yes, beloved, we are indeed brought into fellowship with Jesus Christ our Lord, seeing that we are permitted to have him for our constant Companion and Friend.

And now, we are so called into the society of Christ that, if we are living as we ought to live, where we go, Christ goes. *We are to represent Christ among men.* Most of them do not know much about Christ; but what they do know of him, they will very largely learn from us. I am grieved to say that Christ has had a bad name sometimes because of the conduct of those who have professed to be his friends: "Ah!" men say, "so this is your Christianity, is it?" But the man who really is in the society of Christ lives in such a way that men take knowledge of him that he has been with Jesus, and has learnt of him. We are Christ's representatives in the world, and he trusts his honour and his cause in our hands. We are so much in his

society that we compromise his dignity if we do wrong; but we adorn his doctrine in all things if, by his grace, we are enabled to do what is right. May you and I know to the full what it is to be in the society of Christ, and walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called!

II. Now I want to turn to my second point, which is this: WE ARE CALLED INTO PARTNERSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

I do not know when I have felt so utterly unable to tell out my own thoughts as now that I have reached this part of my subject. If I could only make you enjoy a hundredth part of what I have enjoyed in looking into this subject, I should be perfectly satisfied; but I am afraid that I cannot. However, I will just tell you as well as I can how thoroughly and how perfectly every true Christian is brought into partnership with Christ.

For, first, *the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has given to every true believer all that he possesses.* That is a splendid partnership when he, who is Lord of all, unto whom the Father has committed all power in heaven and on earth, has been pleased to give over to his poor partners full right and title to all that he has. If we are heirs of God, we are joint-heirs with Jesus Christ; Christ is heir to nothing to which his people are not also heirs.

He has given us his life. That is a wonderful partnership of which he says, "Because I live, ye shall live also." He actually laid down his life for us: "Who loved me, and gave himself for me." His very self, his life, he brought into the partnership; it was the biggest asset in the whole concern, the costliest thing that could be contributed to this wonderful joint-stock company,—Christ & Co. We without Christ would be poor worthless things; but Christ is ours, and Christ is all, so we have all. Oh, what a wonderful partnership is this in which he gave us his life!

He has also given us his Father. Hear his message to his disciples after his resurrection: "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." Christ has not a Father if I have not one; Christ has not a God if I have not one; for he says, "My Father, and your Father; my God, and your God." Oh, but what a wonderful Father Christ has! The Only-begotten, who has always kept his Father's commandments perfectly, who is eternally and essentially one with him,—what a Father he has! That Father is the Father of all the saints. What a God Christ has! Who can imagine the wealth of the Godhead? But all that Godhead's fulness and glory belong to every soul that is in Christ. God has given himself to Christ, that all fulness might dwell in him: "and of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." So, he has given us his life, and he has given us his Father.

Notice, next, he has given us his kingdom. This makes me almost stagger as I say it, yet here are his own words to his disciples: "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me" If Christ is King, you are kings. If he reigns, you must reign, too. When men crown the king, they also crown the queen; and if she is crowned, she is queen. And when Christ is King, his Church is queen, and she shall reign with him for ever and ever. Oh, that the

great marriage-day were come, and that the bride had made herself ready to glory and rejoice with her adorable Bridegroom!

Notice, too, that Christ has given us his throne: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." It is the throne of God, and Christ occupies it with his Father; but not alone, for he shares it with all his people. What a wonderful partnership is this! Christ gives us his life, his Father, his kingdom, and his throne, as part and parcel of the joint-stock company he shares with us. This is one meaning of our being brought into fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ.

But there is something more which is quite as wonderful, namely, that, *inasmuch as Christ gave us his all, he took our all*. "Of course he did," you say. Ah! but what had we to bring into the partnership? All that we had to bring was rags, beggary, poverty, sin, curse, death, hell; that was all we could contribute to the joint-stock.

Yet Christ was willing to become a partner with us, for, first, he took our nature: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." He would not let his chosen ones be men without himself being a man, too; and if they were to be compassed with infirmities, he must be compassed with infirmities, too; and if they had to suffer hunger, cold, and nakedness, he would suffer them, too, so that he could say, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." This all came because he took upon himself our nature.

Then, more wonderful still, he took upon himself our sin. Though in him was no sin, yet the Lord made to meet upon him the iniquity of us all. He was the scape-goat upon whose head the sin of Israel was by imputation laid, and he carried our sin away into the wilderness where it could never be found again. He willingly bore all the consequences of our sin, and so, he became a partaker of our curse. It does seem wonderful that ever the Son of God should be in any sense cursed; yet so it was: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree;" and he did hang on the tree, and bleed and die for us.

Among other things, which Christ took on our behalf, it always astounds me that he endured even a sense of his Father's deserting him till he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" God must turn away his eyes from sinners, and if Christ occupies the place of sinners, the Father leaves him to die in the dark. Is not this a wonderful partnership, that Christ should take upon himself all that appertained to us, even to sorrow and broken-heartedness, and, at last, death itself? That blessed body, though it saw no corruption, yet was as truly dead as that of anyone else who ever died. Christ took everything that belonged to us into that wonderful partnership.

Now see the result of this union; *thus Christ meets all our needs*. For instance, I bring my sin; but against that he sets his atonement. I bring my bondage; but against that he sets his redemption. I bring him death; but he brings his

resurrection. I bring him my weakness, and he meets it with his strength. I bring him my wickedness, and he is made of God unto me righteousness. I bring him my evil nature, and he is made of God unto me sanctification. Whatever there is of ill that I have to contribute to the partnership, he covers it all with a splendour of goodness that blots it out, and makes my soul much richer than it was before. Oh, what a wonderful thing it is to be brought into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord!

Now, brothers and sisters, if it be thus with us, *we must make this fellowship real on our part*; we must yield to Christ all that we have if we are brought into this partnership with him. What little we have we must bring. He has already taken all the bad we have, and if we have any good thing he has given it to us, so let us bring it all to him. I have a something inside here, for which he has done much by his grace,—something which was black as night, but which he has washed and changed. Here it is, my Lord,—my heart. Thou sayest, “My son, give me thine heart.” I do deposit it with thee, with all the love, and all the ardour, and all the zeal that I have, and place it entirely at thy disposal. Seal thou my heart against all intruders, that it may be wholly for thyself. Will not you, also, my brothers and sisters, bring your hearts to him who loved you, and gave himself for you?

Well, what else have you? Have you a tongue? Then give your tongue to him, and speak for him as best you can. But perhaps you cannot say much; have you a purse? Then, give it to him; all the substance that you have, use as his steward, for his glory. Have you time? Spend some of that in caring for one of Christ's friends,—I mean, yourself; and in caring for others of his friends, your wife, your children, your neighbours, for he bids you do that for him. All the rest of your time is his; therefore waste none of it, but give it all to him. It is only a few farthings you can ever put into the treasury by the side of his great masses of gold bullion; but do put in what you have, and feel a pleasure in saying, “Yes, I have contributed something to the partnership, little as it is.” Have you any sort of ability? Have you prayers? Have you tears? Come, put them all in. Are you so poor, and so obscure, that this is all you have to bring? Then be much in prayer; for my Lord will accept your cries, and tears, and sighs, and groans, and they shall all go into the joint-stock account, for he is so condescending that, when he takes us into fellowship, he is willing to take our little share, and put it with his.

But, next, if we are partners with Christ, *we must share with him in all that he has*. Are you willing? “Oh, yes!” you say. Ah! but there is something which Christ carries which is ugly to some eyes, and heavy to some shoulders; I mean, his cross. And, you know, his cross goes with his crown; there is no dividing them. As we say in the old proverb, “No sweat, no sweet;” so, depend upon it, it is, “No cross, no crown.” You were laughed at, yesterday, were you not, for Christ's sake? Brother, did you stick to your partnership? Did you say, “Thank you; I am glad to receive a share of what the world gives my Lord, thankful that I am counted worthy to share with him even in that”? If you are reproached for Christ's sake, happy

are you ; in that way, you are proving the reality of your partnership. It must have been a glorious thing to the martyrs that they had the high privilege of dying for their Lord. He sustained and cheered them ; but the grand thought that made them patient in the midst of agony, and triumphant in the hour of cruel death, was that they could say, " Now we are partakers of his sufferings ; we are filling up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ for his body's sake, which is the Church." They were such thorough partners with Christ, that they took all that came ; and if we go in to be partners, we must *be* partners. We must take the rough as well as the smooth. If you marry a wife, it must be for better or worse ; and if you enter into fellowship with Christ, there can be no " worse " to those who are one with him, but if it seems to be worse, you must cleave to him all the more closely. There is no true fellowship with Christ if we are not willing to go with him wherever he goes, into any measure of shame, or scorn, or loss, or suffering, or even to death by martyrdom itself, for his dear sake.

I told you that, in this partnership, the Lord Jesus Christ supplies our needs ; when we put the want down, he puts the supply down. Now, I want you who have been called into this fellowship to do the same with Christ, for *we are to supply his need*. What does he want ? Well, he has gone away to heaven, he is not here in bodily presence, so Christ wants a voice with which to go and call in the other sheep that are not yet folded. Christ needs a voice in your house to speak to the children about their souls ; will you lend Christ your voice ? There is somebody,—a neighbour of yours,—who never goes to any place of worship, and Christ wants a voice to speak to that Sabbath-breaker. Will you lend Christ your voice ? Perhaps, in the pew with you, there is somebody who only needs just a word, and he or she would be decided for Christ. Will you lend—no, it is not a case of lending,—will you give Christ your voice ? Our tongues should be so consecrated to Christ that they are wholly his.

There is a story, which will be in the Magazine next month,* which you will read, I daresay, with pleasure. I was delighted with it when I read it. It was to the effect that some people's blunders seem to be more in the line of doing good than are other people's best efforts. A young girl, belonging to the Normal College in New York, went home and said, " Oh, father, young Mr. Spurgeon, Mr. Spurgeon's son, has been and addressed us to-day, and instead of trying to make us laugh, as most visitors do, or to give us the ' good advice ' that we have heard a hundred times, he gave us something new. He spoke about Jesus, and he invited us all to Christ, and did it so naturally, and simply, and affectionately, that all the girls seemed interested. Oh, how much good it did me, father ! I wish you had been there to hear him." Now, mark you, it was a great blunder on " Son Charlie's " part, because that Normal College is not only a non-sectarian institution, but many of the girls are daughters of Jews, and infidels ; and, according to the rules, he had no business to say anything about

* See *The Sword and the Trowel*, April, 1883, page 194.

religion at all, but he blundered by firing the gospel gun right into the middle of them. I rejoiced when I heard of it, and I wish that you and I would always make such blunders as that, so that, if people got us to speak to them, somehow or other, we will tell them of Jesus Christ because we cannot help it. What a man is full of, will come out of him; and if a man is full of Christ, he may make grand mistakes, but they will be to the glory of God. So I do not say, *lend* Christ your tongues, but *give* him your voices which belong to him.

Many of you, I trust, will be ready enough to give him your tongues; but does he not want anything else? Yes. Christ wants our personal service. He wants men and women who will be, among men, what he would be if he were here in bodily presence. He wants some of you to take little children like lambs to his fold, and teach them on the Sabbath-day; the Sunday-schools need you; nay, rather let me say that Christ needs you in the Sunday-school. He wants men and women to live in the midst of this great London, as he would have lived if he were multiplied ten thousand times, and dwelt among our fellow-citizens.

Sometimes, Jesus needs you to act as a foot-washer, to wash his feet. If you see a brother going wrong, backsliding, and getting his feet dirty, your Lord does not want you to go and call out so that everybody can hear you, "Here is a brother who has dirty feet." No, no; go and fetch a basin of water, and a towel, and wash the man all by himself, and set your fallen brother right again. Then Christ has some very poor members of his family, perhaps in the workhouse; and he wants you to go and relieve them. There are some who are sick; he wants you to visit them. There are some of his loved ones, it may be, who are cast down, and ready to sink in utter despair; he wants you to go and comfort them. Since it is a joint-stock concern in which you are a partner, look out for Christ's poor people, and say to yourself, "If I cannot give anything to him, I will give it to them, for they are a part of him; and he will accept it as given unto himself." God help you to do so,—you who love his dear name; and thus may we have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, to whom, with the ever-blessed Spirit, be glory for ever and ever! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

I CORINTHIANS I. 1—9.

Verse 1. *Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,*

Paul could never have sustained the great weight of responsibility and tribulation which fell upon him if he had not felt that he was "called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God." No man will ever be fit for the ministry of the Word unless he is called to it by God. This also will be your strength in every other station of life; if God has called you to your peculiar work and warfare, he will not send you at your own charges, but he will be at the back of you, and support you even to the end. I think it is for this reason that Paul so constantly dwells upon his own calling when he is about to write to the churches, that he may remind other believers that they have similar privileges in their spheres of labour.

2, 3. *Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both their's and our's: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*

A church should be made up of sanctified persons, those who have been set apart in Christ from before the foundation of the world, those who have been called by the Spirit of God to holiness of life. We sometimes sing,—

“With them number'd may we be
Now, and through eternity;—

but if we are not holy, if we are not truly sanctified, how can we expect to be numbered with the Church of Christ? Where there is no true holiness, there is no work of the Spirit of God. For all the holy ones Paul desires grace and peace, for they still need these blessings. The holiest of men still have spots about them, and they need that grace and peace should be given to them from day to day through Jesus Christ our Lord.

4. *I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ;*

It is something to be thankful for God's goodness to yourself, but it is a higher virtue to be thankful for God's goodness to others. How grateful we might be all day long if we had a quick eye to see the grace of God in our fellow-Christians, and if we blessed God for it whenever we saw it! There are some whose eye is much more quick to see imperfections than to see graces; it is a pity to have such a jaundiced eye as that; may we have a good, sound, clear, gracious eye, which will see all the good there is in our fellow-believers; and may we then ascribe it all to God, and bless and praise him for it!

5—8. *That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

It was very wise of Paul thus to praise these Corinthians where they could be praised, for he was about to upbraid them and reprove them for many things which were not pleasing to God. If you have the unpleasant duty of rebuking those who deserve it, always take care that you begin by saying all that you can, and all that you ought, in their favour; it will prepare the way for what you have to say to them afterwards. The Corinthians were a highly-gifted church; they probably had more knowledge and more of the gifts of utterance than any other church of their day; but, alas! they fell into greater sin than did their sister churches. Great gifts are not great graces; but great gifts require great graces to go with them, or else they become a temptation and a snare. Yet Paul felt quite sure that God would keep even these Corinthians with all their imperfections, and confirm them unto the end; and that which was true of them, is also true of all the Lord's people, God will preserve them to the very end.

9. *God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.*