

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

PREPARATION FOR REVIVAL.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 30TH, 1864, BY

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”—Amos iii. 3.

THE *believer is agreed with God.* The war between the most holy God and his offending creatures is over in the case of bloodwashed sinners; not suspended by a truce, but ended for ever by a peace which passeth all understanding. The believer is fully agreed with God *concerning the divine law*: he confesses that “the law is holy, and just, and good:” he would not have it altered if he could. He rejoices in the way of God’s testimonies more than in all riches; yea, in his precepts doth he take delight, praying evermore, “O let me not wander from thy commandments.” He joyfully acknowledges that the Judge of all the earth rules mankind by a law in which there is no injustice, by statutes which subserve the best interests of the governed, while they secure the glory of the great Governor. The Christian “consents unto the law that it is good.” He is agreed with God, moreover, that a breach of the law should be visited with *penalty*: he would be unwilling that sin should go unpunished. He feels that the sanctions of law, however terrible, are absolutely necessary, and require to be severe. Above all, he is agreed with God in that great *atonement for sin* which God himself has ordained and provided in the person of Jesus Christ. Gazing upon the matchless sacrifice of Calvary, while the Lord is content, the believer is satisfied; where God finds satisfaction for his injured honour, the believer finds the noblest object of admiration and adoration. Thou lovest Golgotha, O thou Judge of the earth; and thy people are perfectly agreed with thee in this. Henceforth the Christian is at one with God in his *love of holiness*: he delights in the law of God after the inward man. Sin, which is abhorrent to the Most High, is obnoxious to the Christian in that measure in which he is enlightened and conformed unto the image of Christ. Great God, thou hast unsheathed thy sword, and bathed it in heaven, for the destruction of all evil, and thy redeemed are on thy side, abhorring that which is evil, and resolving to fight under thy command till the last sin shall be cut off. Thou hast uplifted thy banner because of the truth, and around thy standard the soldiers of the cross are rallying; for thy battle, O Most High, is the

battle of the Church; thy foes are our foes, and thy friends are the excellent of the earth, in whom is all our delight.

I trust that most of us who are here met in the name of Jesus, feel a deep, sincere, and constant agreement with God. We have been guilty of murmuring at his will; but yet our newborn nature evermore at its core and centre knoweth that the will of the Lord is wise and good; and we therefore bow our heads with reverent agreement, and say, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." "The will of the Lord be done." Our soul, when through infirmity she is tempted to rebellion, nevertheless struggles after the complete resignation of her wishes and desires to the will of the Most High. We do not covet the life of self-will, but we sigh after the spirit of self-denial; yea, of self-annihilation, that Christ may live in us, and that the old *Ego*, the carnal *I*, may be altogether slain. I would be as obedient to my God as are those firstborn sons of light, his messengers of flaming fire. As the mercury feels the mysterious changes of the air, and sensitively moves in accordance with the atmosphere, so would I being surrounded by my God, evermore perceive his wish and will, and move at once in obedience thereto. Our strength shall be perfect when we have no independent will, but move and act only as we are moved and acted on by our gracious God. I hope that at this hour we can truly say, that notwithstanding our many sins, we do love the Lord our God; and if we could have our will this morning, we would follow his commands without the slightest departure from the narrow path. We are in heart agreed with God.

The text reminds us that *this agreement gives us power to walk with God*. May we be enabled to claim this privilege which divine grace has bestowed on us: power to walk with God in daily, habitual, friendly, intimate, joyous *communion*. Believer, you can walk with God this very day. He is as near to thee as he was to Abraham beneath the oak at Mamre, or Moses at the back of the desert. He is as willing to show thee his love as he was to reveal himself to Daniel on the banks of Ulai, or to Ezekiel by the streams of Chebar. Thou hast no greater distance this day between thee and thy God, than Jacob had when he laid hold upon the angel and prevailed. He is *thy* father, as truly as he was the father of the people whom he covered by day with a cloud, and cheered by night with a pillar of fire; and though no Shekinah lights up a golden mercy-seat, yet the throne of grace is quite as glorious and even more accessible than in the days of old. He shall hide thee in his pavilion, as he did his servant David; yea, in the secret of the tabernacle shall be thy hiding-place. Enoch's privilege was not peculiar to him; it is *thy* birthright: claim it. Noah's high honour of walking with God was not reserved for him alone; it belongs to thee also, shut in as thou art in the ark of the covenant, and saved from the deluge of divine wrath. It should be the Christian's delight to be always with his God; walking with him in unbroken fellowship. Enoch did not take a turn or two with God, as Matthew Henry observes, but he walked with him four hundred years. O that we might cease to be with our God as wayfaring men who tarry but for a night: may we *dwell* in God, and may he dwell in us. Walking implies *action*; and our actions should always be in the Lord. The Christian, whatsoever he eateth, or drinketh, or doeth, should

do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father by him. Walking has in it the thought of *progress*; but all our progress should be with God. As we are rooted and grounded in Christ, so we must ask to grow up in him; ever abiding in our highest moments with God, and never imagining or conceiving any progress which shall remove us from humble confidence in him. Beloved brother in the Lord, it may be that thy heart is agreed with God, and yet thou hast lost for a time thy walking with him; be not at ease in thy soul till thou hast regained it. Search thine own heart by the light of the Word and of the Holy Spirit; and when thou knowest thyself to be agreed with God, through Him who is our peace, hesitate not to draw near with holy confidence to thy Father and thy God, notwithstanding all thy past wanderings; for he welcomes thee to walk with him, seeing that thou art agreed.

At this season we, as a Church, have had our hearts set upon a revival of religion in our midst. Many of us will be greatly and grievously disappointed if such a revival shall not take place. We have felt moved to cry for it; I think I may say we have been almost unanimously thus moved. Already there are signs that God is visiting us in a very remarkable manner, but our souls are set upon a greater work than we have ever seen. Now, dear friends, *we need* as the first and most essential thing in this matter, *that God should walk with us*. In vain we shall struggle after revival unless we have his presence. If, then, we desire to have his presence with us, we must see to it that we are perfectly agreed with him both in the *design* of the work, and in the *method* of it; and I desire this morning to stir up your pure minds to heart-searching and vigilant self-examination, that every false way may be purged from us, since God will not walk with us as a Church, unless we be agreed with him.

The first remark, then, of this morning, is simply this,—*we desire in this matter to walk together with God*; but, in the second place, *if we would have him with us we must be agreed with him*; and therefore, thirdly, *we desire to purge ourselves of everything which would mar our perfect agreement with God, and so prevent his coming to our aid*. I do ask the prayers of God's people that he may enable me to speak to profit this morning, for if ever I felt my own unfitness to edify the saints, I do so just now: I will even confess that if I could have had my own choice, I should have left it to some one else to address you this morning. My harp is out of tune, and the strings are all loosened, but the chief musician understands his instruments, and knows how to get music out of us, and in answer to prayer he will doubtless sustain us and give you a blessing.

I. Let us, first, AVOW OUR DESIRE THAT IN OUR PRESENT EFFORTS WE MAY WALK WITH GOD; otherwise *our strivings after revival will be very wearisome*.

I know of nothing more saddening than to attend a prayer-meeting where the devotion is forced, and the fervour laborious; where brethren puff and strain like engines with a load behind them too heavy for them to drag. It is painful to detect an evident design to get up an excitement, and wind up the people to the proper pitch; when the

addresses are adapted to foster hotheadedness, and the prayers to beget superstition. God's true saints cannot but feel that to gain the graces of the Spirit by fleshly vehemence is sad work. They retire from such a meeting, and they say, "How different is this from occasions when God's Spirit has been really at work with us!" Then, like a ship with her sails filled with a fair wind, floating majestically along without tugging and straining, the Church, borne onward with the breath of the divine Spirit, with a full tide of heaven's grace, speeds on her glorious way. "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence," was the request of Moses; and I think we may rather deprecate than desire a revival if God's presence be not in it. Lord, let us stay as we are, crying and groaning to see better days, rather than permit us to be puffed up with the notion of revival without thine own power in it; let us have no special prayer-meetings merely for the sake of them; but let us, O let us receive special blessings as the result of prayer: if thou dost not intend to help us now let us weep in secret, but let us not rejoice in a mere name if the substance be lacking. During a course of meetings by which we desire to excite the hearts of believers to a deeper interest in spiritual things; if there be not a gracious power in them, you will soon perceive a dulness, a flagging, a heaviness, a weariness stealing over the assembly; the numbers will decline, the prayers will become less fervent, and the whole thing will degenerate into a hollow sham or a mournful monotony. To come up from the wilderness is hard climbing unless we lean on our beloved. O thou who art our beloved and adorable Lord, lest our souls grow weary in well-doing, and faint for heaviness, be pleased to let us enjoy communion with thyself.

Not only is there a weariness in our own attempts, but *they always end in disappointment, unless God walketh with us.* Ye may pray, and pray, and pray, but there shall be no conversions, no sense of quickening, until the Spirit's working be distinctly recognized. The minister shall be just as much a preacher of the mere letter as ever he was; the Church officers shall be as formal and official as ever they were; the Church members shall be as inconsistent and as indifferent as they were wont to be; the congregation shall be as uninterested and as unmoved as they were in the worst times, except the Spirit of God work with us. In this thing we may quote the words of the psalmist, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep." O friends, it is well to have a holy industry and a devout perseverance; it is well to strain every nerve, and put forth every effort; but all this must end in the most sorry, heart-sickening failure, unless the Lord rend the heavens and come down. I am telling you what you all do know, and what I trust you feel, but it is what we are constantly forgetting; for many are they that go a warfare at their own charges, and so become both bankrupt and defeated; and many be they who would build God's house simply by stress of human effort, but they fail, because God is not there to give them success.

Yet more; supposing that in this our attempt at revival, we should not be favoured with the presence of God; then *prayer will be greatly*

dishonoured. I take it, that when a Church draws near to God in special prayer, asking any mercy, if she does not receive that mercy on account of some disagreement with God, then her belief in prayer is, for the future, greatly weakened; and this is a most serious evil, for it loosens the girdle of the loins of God's saints. Anything which makes men doubt the efficacy of prayer, is an injury to their spirituality; and thus upon the largest scale God's Church will suffer loss if her prayers shall remain unanswered. We *must* go on; it would be ruin to forbear or to turn our backs. As a Church, we must now conquer or die. How can I again stir you up to supplication, if on this occasion your prayers should be in vain? I shall come into this pulpit with but a faint heart to speak of my Master's faithfulness if he does not give you evidences of it. Ah! my brethren, when you are lifting up your voices in intercession, I cannot expect to mark your earnestness nor to behold your faith, unless that faith shall be confirmed just now by a shower of divine mercy. To the world at large the non-hearing of prayer would be a ready argument, either against the existence of God, or else against the reality of his promise. I hope such a thing as this will not occur. "Aha! aha!" saith the enemy, "see what has come of it all! The people cried, but they cried in vain. They met in large numbers; they approached the mercy-seat with tears and groans, but no result has come of it; there have been no more conversions than before, and God's strength has not been put forth." Would you desire that such a calamity as this should occur? The true soldiers of the cross in our Israel would almost as soon lay down their necks, as that God's honour should thus be attainted in the presence of his foes.

Moreover, every attempt at revival of religion which proves a failure,—and fail it must without the presence of God,—*leaves the Church in a worse condition than it was before*; because, if it should prove a failure, from the want of any stir at all; then God's people fall back into their former lethargy, with an excuse for continuing in it; or if a false stir be made, a reaction follows of a most injurious character. I suppose the worst time in the Christian Church is generally that which follows the excitement of a revival; and if that revival has had no reality in it, the mischief which is done is awful and incalculable. If no excitement shall come at all, the mischief is still as great; God's people, being disappointed, have little heart to listen to further exhortations to future zealous action, become contented with their Laodicean lukewarmness, and it becomes impossible to bestir them again. If a revival should apparently have success and yet God be not in it, perhaps this is even worse. The wild-fire and madness of some revivals have been a perfect disgrace to the common sense of the age, let alone the spirituality of the Church. I know, and speak not without book, when I declare that some churches have been seriously deteriorated and permanently injured by large admissions of excited but unconverted persons; so that the only thing a fresh pastor could do was to begin afresh, and purge the church book throughout, sweeping off scores of carnal persons; the beginning anew being almost hopeless, because, after the paroxysm of passion about religion has passed, there follows a season in which religion is treated with indifference, if not with disdain. I had rather see a Church asleep, than see it awake into the fever of fanaticism: better that she

should lie still than do mischief. O dear friends, we have felt in our souls, not that we *may* have revival, but that we *must* have it; and when we think of the incalculable damage that shall be done to us all if the Lord does not visit us, I am sure we must again draw near to the angel and wrestle afresh, with this determination, that we will not let him go unless he bless us.

We may be confirmed in our anxious desire to have the Lord walking with us in this thing, when we consider *the blessings which are sure to flow from his presence*. Ah! what holy quickening shall come upon every one of us. The preacher will not have to lament that he has so little power in prayer; both alone and in your presence he shall be strengthened to intercede as an angel of God. You shall not have to mourn that the service lacks its former sweetness. You will feel the blessedness you knew when first you saw the Lord. You will not have to mourn that you are cold and dead, that your songs languish, and that your prayers expire; instead thereof, every action shall be fraught with vigour, every thought shall glow with earnestness, every word shall be clothed with divine power. Let God arise; and doubts and fears shall betake themselves to their hiding-places, as the bats conceal themselves at the rising of the dawn. Let the Lord visit you; and difficulties which frown like Alps, will sink to plains. Let him arise; and all your enemies shall flee before you, as the smoke before the wind; the heavens shall drop with showers of mercy; and even your sins and all the guilt thereof, shall shake as Sinai shook at the presence of the God of Israel. A Church with God's presence in it is holy, happy, united, earnest, laborious, successful; fair as the moon before the Lord, and clear as the sun in the eyes of men, she is terrible as an army with banners to her enemies.

If God shall be pleased to be with his Church, then direct good shall visit our congregation. We used to say at Park Street, that there were not many seat-holders unconverted. The like is to a great extent true here. The immense increase of our Church gives us the hope that the day will come when there will not be a single seat unoccupied by a believer: but it is not the case yet. I suppose the Church is about half the congregation now. There are some, however, that from the very first have listened; but so far as salvation is concerned, they have listened in vain: they have been moved to tears, they have made good resolutions; but after ten or eleven years of ministry, they are just where they were, except that they have accumulated fresh guilt. Some desire to be Christians, but they harbour some darling lust. We know some who *used* to feel under the Word, but do not feel now. The voice which once was like a trumpet, now lulls them to sleep. Some have made a compromise; and one day they will serve God and another day they will serve their sins; like the Samaritans who feared the Lord and served other gods. Now let our cries be heard for the Master's presence, and we shall soon see these brought in; hearts of stone shall be turned to flesh; the iron of the Word shall break the northern iron and steel; Jehovah Jesus shall ride victoriously through those gates which have been barred against him, and there shall be shouting in heaven because the Lord hath gotten him the victory.

Wider blessings will follow. A Church is never blessed alone. If

any one Church shall stand in the vigour of piety, other Churches shall take example therefrom, and make an advance towards a better state. Here we have around us many Churches, hills which God has blessed; but they, like ourselves, have a tendency to slumber. Let God pour out his Spirit *here*, and the shower will not be confined to these fields, but will drop upon other pastures, and they shall rejoice on every side. Our testimony for God rings through this land; from one end of it to the other. Our ministry is not hidden under a bushel nor confined to a few. Tens of thousands listen every week to our word; and if the Lord shall be pleased to bless it, then shall it be as ointment poured forth, to load the moral atmosphere with a savour of Christ crucified. One nation cannot feel the power of God without communicating some of its blessing to another. The Atlantic cannot divide: no tongue or language can separate us. If God bless France or Switzerland, the influence shall be felt upon the Continent; if he should bless our island, all the whole earth must feel the power thereof. Therefore do we feel encouraged mightily to pray. O, my brethren, the world grows old; man's faith is getting weary of long waiting; the false prophets begin again to appear, and cry lo here, and lo there; but the Lord *must come*; of this are we confident: in such an hour as we think not, he may appear. How would we have him find us at his coming? Would we have him find his servants sleeping? his stewards wasting his goods? his vinedressers with neglected vines? his soldiers with swords rusted into their scabbards? No, we would have him find us watching, standing upon the watchtower, feeding his sheep, tending his lambs, succouring the needy, comforting the weary, helping the oppressed. Gird up your loins then, I pray you, as men that watch for their Lord. If my words could have the power in them which I feel they lack, I would stir you up, dear brethren and sisters, to seek unto the mighty God of Jacob, that when the Son of Man cometh, if he find no faith upon the earth elsewhere, at least he may find it in *you*: if zeal shall be extinct in every other place, at least may he find one live coal yet glowing in your bosom. For this we want his presence, for without it we can do nothing.

II. This brings me, in the second place, to observe, that IF WE WOULD HAVE THE PRESENCE OF GOD, IT IS NECESSARY THAT WE SHOULD BE AGREED WITH HIM.

We must be agreed with God *as to the end of our Christian existence*. God hath formed us for himself, that we may show forth his praise. The main end of a Christian man is, that having been bought with precious blood, he may live unto Christ, and not unto himself. O brethren! I am afraid we are not agreed with God in this. I must say it, painful though it be, there are many professors, and there are some in this Church, who at least appear to believe that the main end of their Christian existence is to get to heaven, to get as much money as they can on earth, and to leave as much as they can to their children when they die; I say, "to get to heaven," for they selfishly include *that* as one of the designs of divine grace; but I question, if it were not for their happiness to go to heaven, whether they would care much about going, if it were only for God's glory; for their way of living upon earth is always thus: "What shall I eat? what shall I drink?"

wherewithal shall I be clothed?" Religion never calls out their thoughtfulness. They can judge, and weigh, and plot, and plan to get money, but they have no plans as to how they can serve God. The cause of God is scarcely in their thoughts. They will pinch and screw to see how little they can contribute in any way to the maintenance of the cause of truth, or to the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom; they will so far condescend to consider religion, as to think how they can profess it in the most economical manner, but nothing more. You will not hear me speak so foolishly and madly, as if I thought that it were not just and laudable in a man to seek to make money to supply the wants of his family, or even to provide for them on his own decease; such a thing is just and right: but whenever this gets to be the main thought; and I am persuaded it is the leading thought of too many professors, such men forget whose they are, and whom they serve; they are living to themselves; they have forgotten who it is that has said, "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as with silver and gold." Oh! I pray God that I may feel *that I am God's man*, that I have not a hair on my head which is not consecrated, nor a drop of my blood which is not dedicated to his cause; and I pray, brethren and sisters, that you may feel the same; that selfishness may clean die out of you; that you may be able to say without any straining of the truth, "I have nothing to care for, nor to live for in this world, but that I may glorify God, and spread forth the savour of my Saviour's name." We cannot expect the Master's blessing till we are agreed about this. This is God's will: is it our will to-day? I know I have around me many faithful hearts, who will say, "My desire is, that whether I live or die, *Christ* may be glorified in me:" if we be all of that mind, God will walk with us; but every one who is of another mind, and of a divided heart, is a hindrance and an injury to us in our progress. It would be no loss to lose such persons, but a spiritual benefit to the entire cause, if this dead lumber were cast out. When the body gets a piece of rotten bone into it, it never rests, till, with pain, it casts out the dead thing: and so with the Church; the Church may be increased by dead members, but when she begins to get vigorous and full of life, her first effort is with much pain, perhaps with much marring of her present beauty, to cause the dead substance to come forth; and if this should be the case, though we shall pity those who are cast forth, yet for our own health's sake, we may thank God and take courage.

If we would have God with us we must be agreed *as to the real desirableness and necessity of the conversion of souls*. God thinks souls to be very precious, and his own words are, "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he should turn unto me and live." Are we agreed with God in that? Our God thinks souls to be so precious, that if a man could gain the whole world and lose his soul, he would be a loser. Are we agreed with him there? In the person of Christ, our God wept over Jerusalem; watered with tears that city which must be given up to the flames. Have we tears, too? have we compassion, too? When God thinks of sinners it is in this wise: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim?" Can we bemoan sinners in that way? Do we

stir our souls to an agony of grief because men will turn from God and will wilfully perish in their sin? If, on the contrary, you and I selfishly say, "We are safe, it does not matter to us whether others are brought to know Christ," *we are not agreed*, God will not work with us; and such of you as feel this indifferentism, this cursed lethargy, are our bane, our burden, our hindrance. God forgive you, and stir you up to feel that your heart will not rest unless poor sinners are plucked as brands from the burning. Are we agreed here?

If we would have the Lord with us, in the next place, we must be agreed *as to the means to be used in revival*. We are agreed that the *first* means is the preaching of Christ. We do not want any other doctrine than that we have received—Christ lifted up upon his cross, as the serpent was lifted up upon the pole. This is the remedy which *we*, in this house of prayer, believe in. Let others choose sweet music, or pictures, or vestments, or baptismal water, or confirmation, or human rites; we abhor them, and pour contempt upon them; as for us, our only hope lies in the doctrine of a substitute for sinners, the great fact of the atonement, the glorious truth that Christ Jesus came into the world to seek and to save sinners. I think we are agreed with God in this, that the preaching of Christ is the way by which believers shall be saved. God's great agency is the Holy Spirit. We are agreed, brethren, that we do not want sinners to be converted by our persuasion, we do not want them brought into the Church by excitement; we want the Spirit's work, and the Spirit's work alone. I would not bend my knee *once* in prayer, much less day by day, to win a mere excitement; we *have* done without it, and we shall do without it by the grace of God; but I would give mine eyes, if I might but know that the Holy Spirit himself would come forth, and show what divinity can do in turning hearts of stone to flesh. In this thing, I think, that we are agreed with God. But God's way of blessing the Church is by the instrumentality of *all* her members. The multitude must be fed, but it must not be by Christ's hand alone, "He gave the bread to the disciples, and the disciples, to the multitude." Are you all agreed here? I am afraid not. Many of you are engaged in works of usefulness, and I will make this my boast this day, that I had never thought that I should meet with a people so apostolic in their zeal as the most of you have been. I have marvelled, and my heart has rejoiced when I have seen what self-sacrifice some of the poorest among you have made for Christ; what zeal, what enthusiasm you have manifested in the spreading abroad of the Saviour's name. But still there are some of you who are doing nothing whatever, you have a name to live, but I fear that you are dead; you are very seldom at a prayer-meeting—even some Church members and persons whom I know are not kept at home by business, but by sheer indifference to the cause of God. Some of you are never provoked to zeal and to good works. That you come and listen to us, is something; and for what you do we are grateful; but for what you do not do, over this we mourn, because we fear that we are restrained in our efforts for the spread of the Saviour's kingdom, because as a Church we are not agreed in God's plan; and we *shall be* restrained until every man in the Church can say, "I will consecrate myself this day

unto the Lord of hosts; if there is anything to be done, be it to be a door-keeper in the house of God, here am I.

“There’s not a lamb among his flock,
I would disdain to feed;
There’s not a foe before whose face
I’d fear his cause to plead.”

Yet again, dear friends, are we agreed this day *as to our utter helplessness in this work?* I caught a good sentence the other day. Speaking with a Wesleyan minister, I said to him, “Your denomination during the past year did not increase: you have usually had a large increase to your numbers. You were never so rich as now; your ministers were never so well educated; you never had such good chapels as now, and yet you never had so little success. What are you doing?—knowing this to be the fact, what are you doing? How are the minds of your brethren exercised with regard to this?” He comforted me much by the reply. He said, “It has driven us to our knees: we thank God that we know our state and are not content with it. We have had a day of humiliation, and I hope,” he said, “some of us have gone low enough to be blessed.” There is a great truth in that last sentence, “low enough to be blessed.” I do fear me that some of us never do go low enough to be blessed. When a man says, “Oh! yes, we are getting on very well, we do not want any revival that I know of,” I fear me he is not low enough to be blessed; and when you and I pray to God with pride in us, with self-exaltation, with a confidence in our own zeal, or even in the prevalence of our own prayers of themselves, we have not come low enough to be blessed. An *humble* Church will be a *blessed* Church; a Church that is willing to confess its own errors and failures, and to lie at the foot of Christ’s cross, is in a position to be favoured of the Lord. I hope we are agreed, then, with God, as to our utter unworthiness and helplessness, so that we look to him alone.

I charge you all to be agreed with God in this thing, that if any good shall be done, any conversions shall occur, *all the glory must be given to him*. Revivals have often been spoiled, either by persons boasting that such-and-such a *minister* was the means of them, or else, as in the case of the North of Ireland, by boasting that the work was done *without* ministers. That revival, mark you, was stopped in its very midst and seriously damaged by being made a kind of curiosity, and a thing to be gazed at and to be wondered at by persons both at home and abroad. God does not care to work for the honour of men, either of ministers or of laymen, or of Churches either; and if we should say, “Ah! well, I should like to see the presence of God with us that we may have many conversions, and put it in the Magazine, and say, that is how things are done at the Tabernacle,” why we should not have a blessing that way. Crowns! crowns! crowns! but all for thy head Jesu! laurels and wreaths! but none for man, all for him whose own right hand and whose holy arm hath gotten him the victory. We must all be agreed on this point, and I hope we are.

III. And now to conclude. LET US PUT AWAY ALL THOSE THINGS WHICH OFFEND OUR GOD.

Before God appeared upon Mount Sinai, the children of Israel had to cleanse themselves for three days. Before Israel could take possession of the promised rest of Canaan, Joshua had to see to it that they were purified by the rite of circumcision. Whenever God would visit his people, he always demands of them some preparatory purging, that they may be fit to behold his presence; for two cannot walk together, unless that which would make them disagree be purged out. A few suggestions then, as to whether there is anything in us with which God cannot agree. Here I cannot preach to you indiscriminately, but put the task into the hand of each man to preach to himself. In the days of the great weeping, we read that every man wept apart and his wife apart, the son apart, and the daughter apart, all the families apart. So it must be here. Is there *pride* in me? Am I puffed up with my talent, my substance, my character, my success? Lord purge this out of me, or else thou canst not walk with me, for none shall ever say that God and the proud soul are friends: he giveth grace to the humble; as for the proud, he knoweth them afar off, and will not let them come near to him. Am I *slothful*? Do I waste hours which I might usefully employ? Have I the levity of the butterfly, which flits from flower to flower, but drinks no honey from any of them? or have I the industry of the bee, which, wherever it lights, would find some sweet store for the hive? Lord, thou knowest my soul, thou understandest me. Am I doing little where I might do much? Hast thou had but little reaping for much sowing? Have I hid my talent in a napkin? Have I spent that talent for myself, instead of spending it for thee? Slothful souls cannot walk with God. "My Father worketh," saith Jesus, "and I work;" and you who stand in the market-place idle, may stand there with the devil, but you cannot stand there with God. Let every brother who is guilty of this, purge away his sloth.

Or am I guilty of *worldliness*. This is the crying sin of many in the Christian Church. Do I put myself into association with men who cannot by any possibility profit me? Am I seen where my Master would not go? Do I love amusements which cannot afford me comfort when I reflect upon them; and which I would never indulge in, if I thought that Christ would come while I was at them? Am I worldly in spirit as to fashion? Am I as showy, as volatile, as frivolous as men and women of the world? If so, if I love the world, the love of the Father is not in me; consequently he cannot walk with me, for we are not agreed.

Again, am I *covetous*? Do I scrape and grind? Is my first thought, not how I can honour God, but how I can accumulate wealth? When I gain wealth, do I forget to make use of it as a steward? If so, then God is not agreed with me; I am a thief with his substance; I have set myself up for a master instead of being a servant, and God will not walk with me till I begin to feel that this is not my own, but his; and that I must use it in his fear.

Again, am I of an *angry* spirit? Am I harsh towards my brethren? Do I cherish envy towards those who are better than myself, or contempt towards those who are worse off? If so, God cannot walk with me, for he hates envy, and all contempt of the poor is abhorrent to him. Is

there any *lust* in me? Do I indulge the flesh? Am I fond of carnal indulgences by which my soul suffers? If so, God will not walk with me; for chambering, and wantonness, and gluttony, and drunkenness, separate between a believer and his God: these things are not convenient to a Christian. Before the great feast of unleavened bread, a Jewish parent would sweep out every piece of leaven from his house; and so anxious would he be, and so anxious is the Jew at the present day, that he takes a candle and sweeps out every cupboard, no matter though there may have been no food put in there at any time, he is afraid lest by accident a crumb may be somewhere concealed in the house; and so, from the garret to the cellar, he clears the whole house through, to purge out the old leaven. Let us do so. I cannot think you will do so as the effect of such poor words as mine; but if my *soul* could speak to you, and God blessed the utterance, you would. For my own part, I cry unto my Master, that if there be anything that can make me more fit to be the messenger of God to you and to the sons of men, however painful might be the preparatory process, he would graciously be pleased not to spare me of it. If by sickness, if by serious calamities, if by slander and rebuke, more honour can be brought to him, then hail! and welcome! all these things; they shall be my joy; and to receive them shall be delight. I pray you, utter the same desire: "Lord, make me fit to be the means of glorifying thee."

"The dearest idol I have known,
 Whate'er that idol be;
 Help me to tear it from its throne,
 And worship only thee."

What! do you demur? Do you want for ever to go on in the old dead-and-alive way in which the Churches are just now? Do you feel no sacred passion stirring your breast to anguish for the *present*, and to hope for the *future*? O ye cravens, who dread the battle, slink to your beds; but ye who have your Master's spirit in you, and would long to see brighter and better days, lift up your heads with confidence in him who will walk with us if we be agreed.

My text has a main bearing upon the unconverted: I think of preaching from it this evening to those who are not agreed with God, and who cannot walk with him. I pray that they may be reconciled unto God by the death of his Son; and the most likely means to accomplish this, will be by your earnest and fervent prayers. O Lord, hear and answer for Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Mr. Spurgeon's sermon on "Baptismal Regeneration" has now reached the 180th thousand; it is felt to be important that it should be still more widely circulated, and friends are urged to make an earnest effort to scatter it far and wide.]