

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

"WHERE ARE THE NINE?" OR, PRAISE NEGLECTED.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 26TH, 1886,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 7TH, 1886.

"And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole."—Luke xvii. 15—19.

You have often heard the leprosy described: it was a very horrible disease, I should think the worst that flesh is heir to. We ought to be much more grateful than we are that this fell disease is scarcely known in our favoured country. You have also heard what an instructive symbol it is in human flesh of what sin is in the human soul, how it pollutes, how it destroys. I need not go into that sad subject. But here was a sight for the Saviour—ten men that were lepers! A mass of sorrow indeed! What sights our Lord still sees every day in this sin-defiled world! Not ten men that are sinners, nor even ten millions merely, are to be found all the world over, but on this earth there are a thousand millions of men diseased in soul. It is a miracle of condescension that the Son of God should set foot in such a leprosy-house as this.

Yet observe the triumphant grace of our Lord Jesus to the ten men that were lepers. It would make a man's fortune, it would crown a man with lifelong fame, to heal one leper: but our Lord healed ten lepers at once. So full a fountain of grace is he, so freely doth he dispense his favour, that the ten are bidden to go and show themselves to the priests because they are healed, and on the way to the priests they find it is so. None of us can imagine the joy they felt when they perceived that they were healed. Oh, it must have been a sort of new birth to them to find their flesh made fresh as that of a little child! It would not have been wonderful if the whole ten had hurried back, and fallen at Jesus' feet, and lifted up their voices in a tenfold psalm. The sad thing about it is that nine of them, though they were healed, went on their way to the priests in the coolest possible manner: we never hear of their return, they drop out of the story altogether. They have obtained a blessing, they go their way, and there is an end of them.

Nos. 1,935-6-7.

Only one of them, a Samaritan, returned to express his thanks. Misery has strange bedfellows; and so the nine lepers of the seed of Israel consorted with an outcast Samaritan: and he, strange to tell it, was the only one, who, seized by a sudden impulse of gratitude, made his way to his Benefactor, fell down at his feet, and began to glorify God.

If you search the world around, among all choice spices you shall scarcely meet with the frankincense of gratitude. It ought to be as common as the dew-drops that hang upon the hedges in the morning; but, alas, the world is dry of thankfulness to God! Gratitude to Christ was scarce enough in his own day. I had almost said it was ten to one that nobody would praise him; but I must correct myself a little: it was nine to one. One day in seven is for the Lord's worship; but not one man in ten is devoted to his praise. Our subject is *thankfulness to the Lord Jesus Christ*.

I. I begin with the point that I have already touched upon, namely, THE SINGULARITY OF THANKFULNESS.

Here note: *there are more who receive benefits than ever give praise for them*. Nine persons healed, one person glorifying God; nine persons healed of *leprosy*, mark you, and only one person kneeling down at Jesus' feet, and thanking him for it! If for this surpassing benefit, which might have made the dumb to sing, men only thank the Lord in the proportion of one to nine, what shall I say of what we call God's common mercies—only common because he is so liberal with them, for each of them is inestimably valuable? Life, health, eyesight, hearing, domestic love, the continuance of friends—I cannot attempt a catalogue of benefits that we receive every day; and yet is there one man in nine that praises God for these? A cold "Thank God!" is all that is given. Others of us do praise him for these benefits, but what poor praises! Dr. Watts's hymn is sadly true,

"Hosannas languish on our tongues,
And our devotion dies."

We do not praise the Lord fitly, proportionately, intensely. We receive a continent of mercies, and only return an island of praise. He gives us blessings new every morning, and fresh every evening, great is his faithfulness; and yet we let the years roll round, and seldom observe a day of praise. Sad is it to see God all goodness, and man all ingratitude! The tribe who receive benefits may say, "My name is legion"; but those who praise God are so few that a child may write them.

But there is something more remarkable than this: *the number of those who pray is greater than the number of those who praise*. For these ten men that were lepers all prayed. Poor and feeble as their voices had become through disease, yet they lifted them up in prayer, and united in crying: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" They all joined in the Litany, "Lord, have mercy upon us! Christ, have mercy upon us!" But when they came to the *Te Deum*, magnifying and praising God, only one of them took up the note. One would have thought that all who prayed would praise, but it is not so. Cases have been where a whole ship's crew in time of storm has prayed, and yet none of that crew have sung the praise of God when the storm has become a calm. Multitudes of our fellow-citizens pray when they are

sick, and near to dying; but when they grow better, their praises grow sick unto death. The angel of mercy, listening at their door, has heard no canticle of love, no song of thankfulness. Alas, it is too sadly true that more pray than praise!

I put it in another shape to you who are God's people—*most of us pray more than we praise*. You pray little enough, I fear; but praise, where is that? At our family altars we always pray, but seldom praise. In our closets we constantly pray, but do we *frequently* praise? Prayer is not so heavenly an exercise as praise; prayer is for time, but praise is for eternity. Praise therefore deserves the first and highest place; does it not? Let us commence the employment which occupies the celestials. Prayer is for a beggar; but methinks he is a poor beggar who does not also give praise when he receives an alms. Praise ought to follow naturally upon the heels of prayer, even when it does not, by divine grace, go before it. If you are afflicted, if you lose money, if you fall into poverty, if your child is ill, if chastisement visits you in any form, you begin to pray, and I do not blame you for it; but should it be all praying and no praising? Should our life have so much salt, and so little sweet in it? Should we get for ourselves so often a draught from the rock of blessing, and so seldom pour out a drink-offering unto the Lord Most High? Come, let us chide ourselves as we acknowledge that we offer so much more prayer than praise!

On the same head, let me remark that *more obey ritual than ever praise Christ*. When Jesus said, "Go shew yourselves to the priests," off they went, all ten of them; not one stopped behind. Yet only one came back to behold a personal Saviour, and to praise his name. So to-day—you will go to church, you will go to chapel, you will read a book, you will perform an outward religious action: but oh, how little praising God, how little lying at his feet, and feeling that we could sing our souls away for gratitude to him who hath done such great things for us! External religious exercises are easy enough, and common enough; but the internal matter, the drawing out of the heart in thankful love, how scarce a thing it is! Nine obey ritual where only one praises the Lord.

Once more, to come yet closer home, *there are more that believe than there are that praise*: for these ten men did believe, but only one praised the Lord Jesus. Their faith was about the leprosy; and according to their faith, so it was unto them. This faith, though it only concerned their leprosy, was yet a very wonderful faith. It was remarkable that they should believe the Lord Jesus though he did not even say, "Be healed," nor speak a word to them to that effect, but simply said, "Go shew yourselves to the priests." With parched skins, and death burning its way into their hearts, they went bravely off in confidence that Jesus must mean to bless them. It was admirable faith; and yet none of the nine who thus believed ever came back to praise Christ for the mercy received. I am afraid that there is much of faith, better faith than theirs, which concerns spiritual things, which has yet to flower into practical gratitude. Perhaps it blooms late in the year, like the chrysanthemum; but certainly it has not flowered in spring-time, like the primrose and the daffodil. It is a faith which bears few blossoms of praise. I chide myself sometimes that I have wrestled with God in

prayer, like Elias upon Carmel, but I have not magnified the name of the Lord, like Mary of Nazareth. We do not laud our Lord in proportion to the benefits received. God's treasury would overflow if the revenue of thanks were more honestly paid. There would be no need to plead for missions, and stir up God's people to self-denial, if there were praise at all proportionate even to our faith. We believe for heaven and eternity, and yet do not magnify the Lord as we should for earth and time. It is real faith, I trust—it is not for me to judge it, but it is faulty in result. Faith was only real in these lepers so far as their leprosy was concerned; they did not believe in our Lord's divinity, or believe for eternal life. So also among ourselves, there are men who get benefits from Christ, who even hope that they are saved, but they do not praise him. Their lives are spent in examining their own skins to see whether their leprosy is gone. Their religious life reveals itself in a constant searching of themselves to see if they are really healed. This is a poor way of spending one's energies. This man knew that he was healed, he had full assurance upon that point; and the next impulse of his spirit was to hie him back to where *he* stood who had been his glorious Physician, to fall at *his* feet, and praise *him* with a loud voice, glorifying God. Oh, that all my timorous, doubting hearers may do the same!

I have said enough, I think, upon the scantiness of thanksgiving. Let us go over those points again. More receive benefits than praise God for them; more pray than praise; more obey ritual than praise God with the heart; and more believe, and receive benefits through faith, than rightly praise the Giver of those benefits.

II. I have a great deal to say, and little time to say it in; therefore, briefly let us note THE CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE THANKFULNESS. This man's simple act may show the character of praise. It does not take the same shape in everybody. Love to Christ, like living flowers, wears many forms; only artificial flowers are all alike. Living praise is marked by *individuality*. This man was one of ten when he was a leper; he was all alone when he returned to praise God. You can sin in company, you can go to hell in company; but when you obtain salvation, you will come to Jesus all alone; and when you are saved, though you will delight to praise God with others if they will join with you, yet if they will not do so, you will delight to sing a solo of gratitude. This man quits the company of the other nine, and comes to Jesus. If Christ has saved you, and your heart is right, you will say, "I *must* praise him; I *must* love him." You will not be kept back by the chilly state of nine out of ten of your old companions, nor by the worldliness of your family, nor by the coldness of the church. Your personal love to Jesus will make you speak even if heaven, and earth, and sea are all wrapt in silence.

You have a heart burning with adoring love, and you feel as if it were the only heart under heaven that had love to Christ in it; and therefore you must feed the heavenly flame. You must indulge its desires, you must express its longings; the fire is in your bones, and must have vent. Since there is an individuality about true praise, come, brothers in Christ, let us praise God each one in his own way!

“ Oh, may the sweet, the blissful theme,
 Fill every heart and tongue,
 Till strangers love thy charming name,
 And join the sacred song ! ”

The next characteristic of this man's thankfulness was *promptness*. He was back to Christ almost immediately ; for I cannot suppose the Saviour lingered at the village-gate for hours that day. He was too busy to be long on one spot : the Master went about doing good. The man was back soon ; and when you are saved, the quicker you can express your gratitude the better. Second thoughts are best, they say ; but this is not the case when the heart is full of love to Christ. Carry out your first thoughts ; do not stop for the second, unless indeed your heart is so on flame with heavenly devotion that second ones consume the first. Go at once, and praise the Saviour. What grand designs some of you have formed of future service for God ! What small results have followed ! Ah, it is better to lay one brick to-day than to propose to build a palace next year ! Magnify your Lord in the present for present salvation. Why should his mercies lie in quarantine ? Why should your praises be like aloes, which take a century to flower ? Why should praise be kept waiting at the door even for a night ? The manna came fresh in the morning ; so let your praises rise betimes. He praises twice who praises at once ; but he who does not praise at once praises never.

The next quality of this man's praise was *spirituality*. We perceive this in the fact that he paused on his way to the priests. It was his duty to go to the priests : he had received a command to do so ; but there is a proportion in all things, and some duties are greater than others. He thought to himself : I was ordered to go to the priests ; but I am healed, and this new circumstance affects the order of my duties : the first thing I ought to do is to go back, and bear witness to the people, glorifying God in the midst of them all, and falling down at Christ's feet. It is well to observe the holy law of proportion. Carnal minds take the ritualistic duty first ; that which is external outweighs with them that which is spiritual. But love soon perceives that the substance is more precious than the shadow, and that to bow at the feet of the great High Priest must be a greater duty than to go before the lesser priests. So the healed leper went first to Jesus. In him the spiritual overrode the ceremonial. He felt that his main duty was in person to adore the divine person who had delivered him from his fell disease. Let us go first to Jesus. Let us in spirit bow before HIM. Ah, yes ! Come to our services, join in our regular worship : but if you love the Lord, you will want something besides this : you will pine to get to Jesus himself, and tell him how you love him. You will long to do something for him by yourself, by which you can show forth the gratitude of your heart to the Christ of God.

True thankfulness also manifests itself in *intensity*. Intensity is perceptible in this case : he turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God. He could have praised, could he not, in a quieter way ? Yes, but when you are just cured of leprosy, and your once feeble voice is restored to you, you cannot whisper out your praises. Brethren, you know it would be impossible to be coolly proper when you are newly

saved! This man with a loud voice glorified God; and you, too, feel forced to cry—

“Fain would I sound it out so loud
That earth and heaven should hear.”

Some of our converts are very wild at times, they grow extravagant. Do not blame them. Why not indulge them? It will not hurt *you*. We are all of us so very proper and orderly that we can afford to have an extravagant one among us now and then. Oh, that God would send more of that sort to wake the church up, that we, also, might all begin to praise God with heart and voice, with soul and substance, with might and main! Hallelujah! My own heart feels the glow.

In true thankfulness, next, there is *humility*. This man fell down at Jesus' feet: he did not feel perfectly in his place until he was lying there. “I am nobody, Lord,” he seemed to say, and therefore he fell on his face. But the place for his prostration was “at his feet.” I would rather be nobody at Christ's feet than everybody anywhere else! There is no place so honourable as down at the feet of Jesus. Ah, to lie there always, and just love him wholly, and let self die out! Oh, to have Christ standing over you as the one figure overshadowing your life henceforth and for ever! True thankfulness lies low before the Lord.

Added to this there was *worship*. He fell down at Jesus' feet, glorifying God, and giving thanks unto him. Let us worship our Saviour. Let others think as they like about Jesus, but we will put our finger into the print of the nails, and say, “My Lord and my God!” If there be a God, he is God in Christ Jesus to us. We shall never cease to adore him who has proved his Godhead by delivering us from the leprosy of sin. All worship be to his supreme majesty!

One thing more about this man I want to notice as to his thankfulness, and that is, *his silence as to censuring others*. When the Saviour said, “Where are the nine?” I notice that *this man did not reply*. The Master said, “Where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.” But the adoring stranger did not stand up, and say, “O Lord, they are all gone off to the priests: I am astonished at them that they did not return to praise thee!” O brothers, we have enough to do to mind our own business, when we feel the grace of God in our own hearts! If I can only get through my service of praise, I shall have no mind to accuse any of you who are ungrateful. The Master says: “Where are the nine?” but the poor healed man at his feet has no word to say against those cruel nine, he is too much occupied with his personal adoration.

III. I have not half done, and yet you cannot possibly stay beyond the appointed hour of closing: therefore I must compress my third division as closely as I possibly can—let us consider THE BLESSEDNESS OF THANKFULNESS. This man was more blessed by far than the nine. They were healed, but they were not blessed as he was. There is a great blessedness in thankfulness.

First, *because it is right*. Should not Christ be praised? This man did what he could: and there is always an ease of conscience, and a rest of spirit, when you feel that you are doing all you can in a right cause, even though you fall far short of your own desire. At this moment, my brethren, magnify the Lord.

“Meet and right it is to sing,
 In every time and place,
 Glory to our heavenly King,
 The God of truth and grace.
 Join we then with sweet accord,
 All in one thanksgiving join!
 Holy, holy, holy Lord,
 Eternal praise be thine.”

Next, there is this blessing in thankfulness, that *it is a manifestation of personal love*. I love the doctrines of grace, I love the church of God, I love the Sabbath, I love the ordinances; but I love Jesus most. My heart never rests until I can glorify God personally, and give thanks unto the Christ personally. The indulgence of personal love to Christ is one of the sweetest things out of heaven; and you cannot indulge that personal love so well as by personal thankfulness both of heart and mouth, and act and deed.

There is another blessedness about thankfulness: *it has clear views*. The thankful eye sees far and deep. The man healed of leprosy, before he went on glorifying God, gave thanks to Jesus. If he had thanked Jesus and stopped there, I should have said that his eyes were not well open; but when he saw God in Christ, and therefore glorified God for what Christ had done, he showed a deep insight into spiritual truth. He had begun to discover the mysteries of the divine and human person of the blessed Lord. We learn much by prayer. Did not Luther say, “To have prayed well is to have studied well”? I venture to add a rider to what Luther has so ably said: To have praised well is to have studied better. Praise is a great instructor. Prayer and praise are the oars by which a man may row his boat into the deep waters of the knowledge of Christ.

The next blessedness about praise is that *it is acceptable to Christ*. The Lord Jesus was evidently pleased; he was grieved to think the other nine should not come back, but he was charmed with this one man that he did return. The question, “Where are the nine?” bears within it a commendation of the one. Whatever pleases Christ should be carefully cultivated by us. If praise be pleasant to him, let us continually magnify his name. Prayer is the straw of the wheat, but praise is the ear. Jesus loves to see the blade grow up, but he loves better to pluck the golden ears when the harvest of praise is ripe.

Next, notice, that the blessedness of thankfulness is that *it receives the largest blessing*, for the Saviour said to this man what he had not said to the others, “thy faith hath made thee whole.” If you would live the higher life, be much in praising God. Some of you are in the lowest state as yet, as this man was, for he was a Samaritan: but by praising God he rose to be a songster rather than a stranger. How often have I noticed how the greatest sinner becomes the greatest praiser! Those that were farthest off from Christ, and hope, and purity, when they become saved, feel that they owe the most, and therefore they love the best. May it be the ambition of every one of us, even if we be not originally among the vilest of the vile, yet to feel that we owe Jesus most; and therefore we will praise him most: thus shall we receive the richest blessedness from his hands!

I have done when I have said three things. Let us learn from all this to *put praise in a high place*. Let us hold praise-meetings. Let us think it as great a sin to neglect praise as to restrain prayer.

Next, *let us pay our praise to Christ himself*. Whether we go to the priests or not, let us go to *him*. Let us praise him personally and vehemently. Personal praise to a personal Saviour must be our life's object.

Lastly, if we work for Jesus, and we see converts, and they do not turn out as we expected, do not let us be cast down about it. *If others do not praise our Lord, let us be sorrowful, but let us not be disappointed*. The Saviour had to say, "Where are the nine?" Ten lepers were healed, but only one praised him. We have many converts who do not join the church; we have numbers of persons converted who do not come forward to baptism, or to the Lord's Supper. Numbers get a blessing, but do not feel love enough to own it. Those of us who are soul-winners are robbed of our wages by the cowardly spirits who hide their faith. I thank God of late we have had many avowing their conversion; but if the other nine would come, we should need nine Tabernacles. Alas for the many who have gone back after professing their faith! Where are the nine?

So you that hold cottage-meetings, you that go round with tracts, you are doing more good than you will ever hear of. You do not know where the nine are, but even if you should only bless one out of ten, you will have cause to thank God.

"Oh," says one, "I have had so little success; I have had only one soul saved!" That is more than you deserve. If I were to fish for a week, and only catch one fish, I should be sorry; but if that happened to be a sturgeon, a royal fish, I should feel that the quality made up for lack of quantity. When you win a soul it is a great prize. One soul brought to Christ—can you estimate its value? If one be saved, you should be grateful to your Lord, and persevere. Though you wish for more conversions yet, you will not despond so long as even a few are saved; and, above all, you will not be angry if some of them do not thank you personally, nor join in church-fellowship with you. Ingratitude is common towards soul-winners. How often a minister has brought sinners to Christ, and fed the flock in his early days! but when the old man grows feeble they want to get rid of him, and try a new broom which will sweep cleaner. "Poor old gentleman, he is quite out of date!" they say, and so they get rid of him, as gipsies turn an old horse out on the common to feed or starve, they care not which. If anybody expects gratitude, I would remind them of the benediction, "Blessed are they that expect nothing, for they will not be disappointed." Even our Master did not get praise from the nine: therefore do not wonder if you bless others, and others do not bless you. Oh, that some poor soul would come to Christ to-night, some leper to be healed of sin-sickness! If he does find healing, let him come out, and with a loud voice magnify the Lord who has dealt so graciously with him.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke xvii. 1—19.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—103 (Ver. III.), 566, 415.