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## A Sermon

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 18TH, 1860, BY THE

REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

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“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”—Philippians iv. 13.

THE former part of the sentence would be a piece of impudent daring without the latter part to interpret it. There have been some men who, puffed up with vanity, have in their hearts said, “I can do all things.” Their destruction has been sure, and near at hand. Nebuchadnezzar walks through the midst of the great city; he sees its stupendous tower threading the clouds; he marks the majestic and colossal size of every erection, and he says in his heart, “Behold this great Babylon which I have builded. ‘I can do all things.’” A few hours and he can do nothing except that in which the beast excels him; he eats grass like the oxen, until his hair has grown like eagles’ feathers, and his nails like birds’ claws. See, too, the Persian potentate; he leads a million of men against Grecia, he wields a power which he believes to be omnipotent; he lashes the sea, casts chains upon the wave, and bids it be his slave. Ah, foolish pantomime.—“I can do all things!” His hosts melt away, the bravery of Grecia is too much for him; he returns to his country in dishonour. Or, if you will take a modern instance of a man who was born to rule and govern, and found his way upwards from the lowest ranks to the highest point of empire, call to mind Napoleon. He stands like a rock in the midst of angry billows; the nations dash against him and break themselves; he himself puts out the sun of Austria, and bids the star of Prussia set; he dares to proclaim war against all the nations of the earth, and believes that he himself shall be a very Briarius with a hundred hands attacking at once a hundred antagonists. “I can do all things,” he might have written upon his banners. It was the very note which his eagles screamed amid the battle. He marches to Russia; he defies the elements; he marches across the snow and sees the palace of an ancient monarchy in flames. No doubt as he looks at the blazing Kremlin, he thinks, “I can do all things.” But thou shalt come back to thy country alone; thou shalt strew the frozen plains with men; thou shalt be utterly wasted and destroyed. Inasmuch as thou hast said, “*I propose and dispose too,*” lo! Jehovah disposes of thee, and puts thee from thy seat, seeing thou hast arrogated to thyself omnipotence among men. And what shall we say to our apostle, little in stature, stammering in speech, his personal presence weak, and his speech contemptible, when he comes forward and boasts, “I can do all things?” O impudent presumption! What canst thou do, Paul? The leader of a hated sect, all of them doomed by an imperial edict to death! Thou, thou, who darest to teach the absurd dogma that a crucified man is able to save souls, that he is actually king in heaven, and virtually king in earth! Thou sayest, “I can do all things.” What! has Gamaliel taught thee such an art of eloquence, that thou canst baffle all that oppose thee! What! have thy sufferings given thee so stern a courage that thou art not to be turned away from the opinions which thou hast so tenaciously held? Is it in thyself thou reliest? No, “I can do all things,” saith he, “through Christ which strengtheneth me.” Looking boldly around him, he turns the eye of his faith humbly towards his God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and dares to say, not impiously, nor arrogantly, yet with devout reverence and dauntless courage, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

My brethren, when Paul said these words, he meant them. Indeed, he had to a great measure already proved the strength, of which he now asserts the promise. Have you never thought how varied were the trials, and how innumerable the achievements of

the apostle Paul? Called by grace in a sudden and miraculous manner, immediately—not consulting with flesh and blood—he essays to preach the gospel he has newly received. Anon, he retires a little while, that he may more fully understand the Word of God; when from the desert of Arabia, where he has girded his loins and strengthened himself by meditation and personal mortification, he comes out, not taking counsel with the apostles, nor asking their guidance or their approbation; but at once, with singular courage, proclaiming the name of Jesus, and protesting that he himself also is an apostle of Christ. You will remember that after this, he undertook many difficult things; he withstood Peter to the face—no easy task with a man so bold and so excellent as Peter was; but Peter might be a time-server: Paul never. Paul rebukes Peter even to the face. And then mark his own achievements, as he describes them himself, “In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure;” “in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.” Ah! bravely spoken, beloved Paul. Thine was no empty boast. Thou hast indeed, in thy life, preached a sermon upon the text, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

And now, my dear friends, looking up to Christ which strengtheneth me, I shall endeavour to speak of my text under three heads. First, *the measure of it*; secondly, *the manner of it*; and thirdly, *the message of it*.

I. AS FOR THE MEASURE OF IT. It is exceeding broad; for it says, “I can do all things.” We cannot, of course, mention “all things,” this morning; for the subject is illimitable in its extent. “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

But let me notice that Paul here meant that he could *endure all trials*. It matters not what suffering his persecutors might put upon him; he felt that he was quite able through divine grace to bear it; and no doubt though Paul had seen the inside of almost every Roman prison, yet he had never been known to quake in any one of them; though he understood well the devices which Nero had invented to put torment upon Christians; though he had heard doubtless in his cell of those who were smeared with pitch and set on fire in Nero’s gardens to light his festivities; though he had heard of Nero’s racks and chains and hot pincers, yet he felt persuaded that rack and pincers, and boiling pitch, would not be strong enough to break his faith. “I can endure *all* things,” he says, “for Christ’s sake.” He daily expected that he might be led out to die, and the daily expectation of death is more bitter than death itself; for what is death? It is but a pang, and it is over. But the daily expectation of it is fearful. If a man fears death, he feels a thousand deaths in fearing one. But Paul could say, “I die daily;” and yet he was still steadfast and immovable in the hourly expectation of a painful departure. He was ready to be offered up, and made a sacrifice for his Master’s cause. Every child of God by faith may say, “I can suffer all things.” What though to-day we be afraid of a little pain? Though perhaps the slightest shooting pang alarms us, yet I do not doubt, if days of martyrdom should return, the martyr-spirit would return with martyrs’ trials; and if once more Smithfield’s fires needed victims, there would be victims found innumerable—holocausts of martyrs would be offered up before the shrine of truth. Let us be of good courage under any temptation or suffering we may be called to bear for Christ’s sake; for we can suffer it all through Christ who strengtheneth us.

Then Paul meant also that he could *perform all duties*. Was he called to preach? He was sufficient for it, through the strength of Christ; was he called to rule and govern in the churches—to be, as it were, a travelling over-looker and bishop of the flock? He felt that he was well qualified for any duty which might be laid upon him, because of the strength which Christ would surely give. And you, too, my dear brother, if you are called this day to some duty which is new to you, be not behind the apostle, but say, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” I have seen the good man disappointed in his best hopes, because he hath not won the battle in the first charge, laying down his arms and saying, “I feel that I can do no good in this world; I have tried, but defeat awaits me; perhaps it were better that I should be still and do no more.” I have seen the same man too for a while lie down and faint, because, said he, “I have sown much, but I have reaped little; I have strewed the seed by handfuls, but I have gathered only here and there an ear of precious grain.” O be not a craven: play the man. Christ

puts his hand upon thy loins to day, and he saith, "Up and be doing;" and do thou reply, "Yea, Lord, I *will* be doing, for I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." I am persuaded there is no work to which a Christian can be called for which he will not be found well qualified. If his master should appoint him to a throne, he would rule well; or should he bid him play the menial part he would make the best of servants: in all places and in all duties the Christian is always strong enough, if the Lord his God be with him. Without Christ he can do nothing, but with Christ he can do all things.

This is also true of the Christian's inward *struggles with his corruptions*. Paul I know once said, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death." But Paul did not stay there; his music was not all in a minor key; right quickly he mounts the higher chords, and sings, "But thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." I may be addressing some Christians who have naturally a very violent temper, and you say you cannot curb it. "You can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us." I may be speaking to another who has felt a peculiar weakness of disposition, a proneness to be timid, and yielding. My brother, you shall not disown your Lord, for through Christ that strengtheneth thee, the dove can play the eagle, and thou who art timid as a lamb can be mighty and courageous as a lion. There is no weakness or evil propensity which the Christian cannot overcome. Do not come to me and say, "I have striven to overcome my natural slothfulness, but I have not been able to do it." I do avow, brother, that if Christ hath strengthened you, you can do it. I don't believe there exists anywhere under heaven a more lazy man than myself naturally; I would scarce stir if I had my will; but if there be a man under heaven who works more than I do, I wish him well through his labours. I have to struggle with my sloth, but through Christ who strengtheneth me, I overcome it. Do not say thou hast a physical incapacity for strong effort; my brother, thou hast not; thou canst do all things through Christ who strengtheneth thee. A brave heart can master even a sluggish liver. Often do I find brethren who say, "I hope I am not too timid or too rash in my temper, or that I am not idle; but I find myself inconstant, I cannot persevere in anything." My dear brother, thou canst. You can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth you. Do not sit down and excuse yourself by saying, "Another man can do this, but I cannot; the fact is, I was made with this fault, it was in the mould originally, and it cannot be got rid of; I must make the best I can of it." You can get rid of it, brother; there is not a Hittite or a Jebusite in all Canaan that you cannot drive out. You can do nothing of yourself, but Christ being with you, you can make their high walls fall flat even as the walls of Jericho. You can go upon the tottering walls and slay the sons of Anak, and although they be strong men, who like the giants had six toes on each foot and six fingers on each hand, you shall be more than a match for them all. There is no corruption, no evil propensity, no failing that you cannot overcome, through Christ which strengtheneth you. And there is no temptation to sin from without which you cannot also overcome through Christ which strengtheneth you. Sitting one day this week with a poor aged woman who was sick, she remarked that oftentimes she was tempted by Satan; and sometimes she said, "I am a little afraid, but I do not let other people know, lest they should think that Christ's disciples are not a match for Satan. Why, sir," said she, "he is a chained enemy, is he not? He cannot come one link nearer to me than Christ lets him; or when he roars never so loudly I am not afraid with any great fear of him, for I know it is only roaring—he cannot devour the people of God." Now, whenever Satan comes to you with a temptation, or when your companions, or your business, or your circumstances suggest a sin, you are not timidly to say, "I must yield to this; I am not strong enough to stand against this temptation." You are not in yourself, understand that; I do not deny your own personal weakness; but through Christ, that strengtheneth you, you are strong enough for all the temptations that may possibly come upon you. You may play the Joseph against lust; you need not play the David; you may stand steadfast against sin—you need not to be overtaken like Noah—you need not be thrown down to your shame, like Lot. You *may* be kept by God, and you *shall* be. Only lay hold on that Divine strength, and if the world, the flesh, and the devil, should beleaguer and besiege you day after day, you shall stand not only a siege as long as the siege of old Troy, but seventy years of siege shall you be able to stand, and at last to drive your enemies away in confusion, and make yourselves rich upon their spoils. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Though I despair of explaining the measure of my text, so as to classify even the tenth part of all things, let me make one further attempt. I have no doubt the apostle specially meant that he found himself able to serve God in every state. "I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need." Some Christians are called to sudden changes, and I have marked many of them who have been ruined by their changes. I have seen the poor man exceedingly spiritual-minded; I have seen him full of faith with regard to Divine Providence, and living a happy life upon the bounty of his God, though he had but little. I have seen that man acquire wealth, and I have marked that he was more penurious; that he was, in fact, more straitened than he was before; he had less trust in God, less liberality of soul. While he was a poor man he was a prince in a peasant's garb; when he became rich, he was poor in a bad sense—mean in heart with means in hand. But this need not be. Christ strengthening him, a Christian is ready for all places. If my Master were to call me this day from addressing this assembly to sweep a street-crossing, I know not that I should feel very contented with my lot for awhile; but I do not doubt that I could do it through Christ that strengtheneth me. And you, who may have to follow some very humble occupation, you have had grace enough to follow it, and to be happy in it, and to honour Christ in it. I tell you, if you were called to be a king, you might seek the strength of Christ, and say in this position too, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." You ought to have no choice as to what you shall be. The day when you gave yourself up to Christ, you gave yourself up wholly to him, to be his soldier, and soldiers must not be choosers; if they are called to lie in the trenches, if they are bidden to advance under a galling fire, they must do it. And so must you, feeling that whether he bid you do one thing or another, in all states and in all circles, you can do what God will have you do, for through him you can do all things.

To conclude upon this point, let me remind you that you can do all things with respect to all worlds. You are here in this world, and can do all things in respect to this world. You can enlighten it; you can play the Jonah in the midst of this modern Nineveh; your own single voice may be the means of creating a spiritual revival. You can do all things for your fellow-men. You may be the means of uplifting the most degraded to the highest point of spiritual life; you can doubtless, by resisting temptation, by casting down high looks, by defying wrath, by enduring sufferings; you can walk through this world as a greater than Alexander, looking upon it all as being yours, for your Lord is the monarch of it. "You can do all things." Then may you look beyond this world into the world of spirits. You may see the dark gate of death; you may behold that iron gate, and hear it creaking on its awful hinges; but you may say, "I can pass through that; Jesus can meet me; he can strengthen me, and my soul shall stretch her wings in haste, fly fearless through death's iron gate, nor fear the terror as she passes through. I can go into the world of spirits, Christ being with me, and never fear. And then look beneath you. There is hell, with all its demons, your sworn enemy. They have leagued and banded together for your destruction. Walk through their ranks, and as they bite their iron bonds in agony and despair, say to them as you look in their face, "I can do all things;" and if loosed for a moment Diabolus should meet you in the field, and Apollyon should stride across the way, and say, "I swear by my infernal den that thou shalt come no further, here will I spill your soul,"—up at him! Strike him right and left, with this for thy battle-cry, "I can do all things," and in a little while he will spread his dragon wings and fly away. Then mount up to heaven. From the lowest deeps of hell ascend to heaven; bow your knee before the eternal throne; you have a message; you have desires to express and wants to be fulfilled, and as you bend your knee, say, "O God, in prayer I can prevail with thee; let me wonder to tell it; I can overcome heaven itself by humble, faithful prayer." So you see in all worlds—this world of flesh and blood, and the world of spirits, in heaven and earth and hell—everywhere the believer can say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

II. Thus have I discussed the first part of our subject—the measure; I shall now talk for awhile upon THE MANNER.

How is it that Christ doth strengthen his people? None of us can explain the mysterious operations of the Holy Spirit; we can only explain one effect by another. I do not pretend to be able to show how Christ communicates strength to his people by the mysterious inflowings of the Spirit's energy; let me rather show what the Spirit does, and how these acts of the Spirit which he works for Christ tend to strengthen the soul for "all things."

There is no doubt whatever that Jesus Christ makes his people strong by strengthening their faith. It is remarkable that very many poor timid and doubting Christians during the time of Mary's persecution were afraid when they were arrested that they should never bear the fire; but a singular circumstance is, that these generally behaved the most bravely, and played the man in the midst of the fire with the most notable constancy. It seems that God gives faith equal to the emergency, and weak faith can suddenly sprout, and swell, and grow, till it comes to be great faith under the pressure of a great trial. Oh! there is nothing that braces a man's nerves like the cold winter's blast; and so, doubtless, the very effect of persecution through the agency of the Spirit going with it, is to make the feeble strong.

Together with this faith it often happens that the Holy Spirit also gives a singular firmness of mind—I might almost call it a celestial obstinacy of spirit. Let me remind you of some of the sayings of the martyrs, which I have jotted down in my readings. When John Ardley was brought before Bishop Bonner, Bonner taunted him, saying, "You will not be able to bear the fire; that will convert you; the faggots will be sharp preachers to you." Said Ardley, "I am not afraid to try it; and I tell thee, Bishop, if I had as many lives as I have hairs on my head, I would give them all up sooner than I would give up Christ." That same wicked wretch held the hand of poor John Tomkins over a candle, finger by finger, saying to him, "I'll give thee a taste of the fire before thou shalt come there;" and as the finger cracked and spurted forth, Tomkins smiled, and even laughed in his tormentor's face, being ready to suffer as much in every member as his fingers then endured. Jerome tells the story of a poor Christian woman, who being on the rack, cried out to her tormentors as they straitened the rack and pulled her bones asunder, "Do your worst; for I would sooner die than lie." It was bravely said. Short, pithy words; but what a glorious utterance! what a comment! what a thrilling argument to prove our text! Verily, Christians *can* do all things through Christ who strengtheneth them.

And not only does he thus give a sort of sacred tenacity and obstinacy of spirit combined with faith; but often Christians anticipate the joys of heaven, just when their pangs are greatest. Look at old Ignatius. He is brought into the Roman circus, and after facing the taunts of the emperor and the jeers of the multitude, the lions are let loose upon him, and he thrusts his arm into a lion's mouth, poor aged man as he is, and when the bones were cracking, he said, "Now I begin to be a Christian." Begin to be a Christian: as if he had never come near to his Master till the time when he came to die. And there was Gordus, a martyr of Christ, who said when they were putting him to death, "I pray you do not spare any torments, for it will be a loss to me hereafter if you do; therefore inflict as many as you can." What but the singular joy of God poured down from heaven—what but some singular vials of intense bliss could have made these men almost sport with their anguish? It was remarked by early Christians in England, that when persecution broke out in Luther's days, John and Henry, two Augustine monks,—the first who were put to death for Christ in Germany—died singing. And Mr. Rogers, the first put to death in England for Christ, died singing too—as if the noble army of martyrs marched to battle with music in advance. Why, who would charge in battle with groans and cries? Do not they always sound the clarion as they rush to battle, "Sound the trumpet, and beat the drums, now the conquering hero comes," indeed—comes face to face with death, face to face with pain; and surely they who lead the van in the midst of such heroes should sing as they come to the fires. When good John Bradford, our London martyr, was told by his keeper, that he was to be burned on the morrow, he took off his cap and said, "I heartily thank my God;" and when John Noyes, another martyr, was just about to be burned, he took up a faggot, and kissed it, and said, "Blessed be God that he has thought me worthy of such high honour as this;" and it is said of Rowland Taylor, that when he came to the fire he actually, as I think Fox says in his *Monuments*, "fetched a frisk," by which he means, he began to dance when he came to the flames, at the prospect of the high honour of suffering for Christ.

But in order to enable his people to do all things, Christ also quickens the mental faculties. It is astonishing what power the Holy Spirit *can* bestow upon the mind of men. You will have remarked, I do not doubt, in the controversies which the ancient confessors of the faith have had with heretics and persecuting kings and bishops, the singular way in which poor illiterate persons have been able to refute their opponents. Jane Boucher, our glorious Baptist martyr, the maid of Kent, when she was brought before Cranmer and Ridley, was able to non plus them entirely; of course we believe part of her power lay in the goodness of the subject, for if there be a

possibility of proving infant baptism by any text in the Bible, I am sure I am not aware of the existence of it; Popish tradition might confirm the innovation, but the Bible knows no more of it than the baptism of bells and the consecration of horses. But, however, she answered them all with a singular power—far beyond what could have been expected of a countrywoman. It was a singular instance of God's providential judgment that Cranmer and Ridley, two bishops of the Church who condemned this Baptist to die, said when they signed the death-warrant, that burning was an easy death, and they had themselves to try it in after days; and that maid told them so. She said, "I am as true a servant of Christ as any of you; and if you put your poor sister to death, take care lest God should let loose the wolf of Rome on you, and you have to suffer for God too." How the faculties were quickened, to make each confessor seize every opportunity to avail himself of every mistake of his opponent, and lay hold of texts of Scripture, which were as swords to cut in pieces those who dared to oppose them, is really a matter for admiration.

Added to this, no doubt, also, much of the power to do all things lies in the fact, that the Spirit of God enables the Christian to overcome himself. He can lose all things, because he is already prepared to do it; he can suffer all things, because he does not value his body as the worldling does; he can be brave for Christ, because he has learned to fear God, and therefore has no reason to fear man. A healthy body can endure much more fatigue, and can work much more powerfully than a sick body. Now, Christ puts the man into a healthy state, and he is prepared for long injuries, for hard duties, and for stern privations. Put a certain number of men in a shipwreck; the weak and feeble shall die, those who are strong and healthy, who have not by voluptuousness become delicate, shall brave the cold and rigours of the elements, and shall live. So with the quickened yet feeble professor; he shall soon give way under trial; but the mature Christian, the strong temperate man, can endure fatigues, can perform wonders, can achieve prodigies, because his body is well disciplined, and he has not permitted its humours to overcome the powers of the soul.

But observe that our text does not say, "I can do all things through Christ, which *has* strengthened me;" it is not past, but present strength that we want. Some think that because they were converted fifty years ago they can do without daily supplies of grace. Now the manna that was eaten by the Israelites when they came out of Egypt must be renewed every day, or else they must starve. So it is not your old experiences, but your daily experiences; not your old drinkings at the well of life, but your daily refreshings from the presence of God that can make you strong to do all things.

III. But I come now to the third part of my discourse, which is THE MESSAGE OF THE TEXT. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

Three distinct forms of the message: first, a message of encouragement to those of you who are doing something for Christ, but who begin to feel painfully your own inability. Cease not from God's work, because you are unable to perform it of yourself. Let it teach you to cease from yourself, but not from your work. "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils," but cease not to serve your God; but the rather in Christ's strength do it with greater vigour than before. Remember Zerubbabel. A difficulty is in his path, like a great mountain; but he cries, "Who art thou, great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." If we did but believe ourselves great things, we should do great things. Our age is the age of littlenesses, because there is always a clamour to put down any gigantic idea. Every one praises the man who has taken up the idea and carried it out successfully; but at the first he has none to stand by him. All the achievements in the world, both political and religious, at any time, have been begun by men who thought themselves called to perform them, and believed it possible that they should be accomplished. A parliament of wise-aces would sit upon any new idea—sit upon it indeed—yes, until they had destroyed it utterly. They would sit as a coroner's inquest, and if it were not dead they would at least put it to death while they were deliberating thereon. The man who shall ever do anything is the man who says, "This is a right thing; I am called to do it; I *will* do it. Now, then, stand up all of you—my friends or my foes, whichever you will; it is all the same; I have God to help me, and it must and shall be done." Such are the men that write their records in the annals of posterity; such the men justly called great, and they are only great because they believed they could be great—believed that the exploits could be done. Applying this to spiritual things, only believe, young man, that God can make something of you; be resolved that you will do something somehow for Christ, and you will do it. But do not go drivelling through this world, saying, "I was born little;" of course you were, but were you meant to be little, and with the

feebleness of a child all your days do little or nothing? Think so, and you will be little as long as you live, and you will die little, and never achieve anything great. Just send up a thought of aspiration, oh thou of little faith. Think of your dignity in Christ—not of the dignity of your manhood, but the dignity of your regenerated manhood, and say, “Can I do all things, and yet am I to shrink first at this, then at that, and then at the other?” Be as David, who, when Saul said, “Thou art not able to fight with this Goliath,” replied, “Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them;” and he put his stone into the sling and ran cheerfully and joyously, so Goliath fell; and he returned with the bloody dripping head. You know his brothers said at first, “Because of thy pride and the naughtiness of thy heart, to see the battle art thou come.” All our elder brethren say that to us if we begin anything. They always say it is the naughtiness of our heart and our pride. Well, we don’t answer them; we bring them Goliath’s head, and request them to say whether that is the effect of our pride and the naughtiness of our heart. We wish to know whether it would not be a blessed naughtiness that should have slain this naughty Philistine. So do you my dear brothers and sisters. If you are called to any work, go straight at it, writing this upon your escutcheon. “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me; and I will do what God has called me to do, whether I am blessed or whether I am left alone.”

A second lesson is this—Take heed, however, that you get Christ’s strength. You can do nothing without that. Spiritually in the things of Christ you are not able to accomplish even the meanest thing without him. Go not forth to thy work therefore till thou hast first prayed. That effort which is begun without prayer will end without praise. That battle which commences without holy reliance upon God, shall certainly end in a terrible rout. Many men might be Christian victors, if they had known how to use the all prevailing weapon of prayer; but forgetting this they have gone to the fight and they have been worsted right easily. O be sure Christian that you get Christ’s strength. Vain is eloquence, vain are gifts of genius, vain is ability, vain are wisdom and learning; all these things may be serviceable when consecrated by the power of God, but apart from the strength of Christ they shall all fail you. If you lean upon them they shall all deceive you. You shall be weak and contemptible, however rich or however great you may be in these things, if you lack the all-sufficient strength.

Finally, the last message that I have is this: Paul says, in the name of all Christians, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” I say, not in Paul’s name only, but in the name of my Lord and Master Jesus Christ, How is it that some of you are doing nothing? If you could do nothing you might be excused for not attempting it; but if you put in the slightest pretence to my text, you must allow my right to put this question to you. You say, “I can do all things;” in the name of reason I ask why are you doing nothing? Look what multitudes of Christians there are in the world; do you believe if they were all what they profess to be, and all to work for Christ, there would long be the degrading poverty, the ignorance, the heathenism, which is to be found in this city? What cannot one individual accomplish? What could be done therefore by the tens of thousands of our churches? Ah professors! you will have much to answer for with regard to the souls of your fellow men. You are sent by God’s providence to be as lights in this world; but you are rather dark lanterns than lights. How often are you in company, and you never avail yourself of an opportunity of saying a word for Christ? How many times are you thrown in such a position that you have an excellent opportunity for rebuking sin, or for teaching holiness, and how seldom do you accomplish it? An old author named Stuckley, writing upon this subject, said, “There were some professed Christians who were not so good as Baalam’s ass; for Baalam’s ass once rebuked the mad prophet for his sin; but there were some Christians who never rebuked any one all their lives long. They let sin go on under their very eyes, and yet they did not point to it; they saw sinners dropping into hell, and they stretched not out their hands to pluck them as brands from the burning; they walked in the midst of the blind, but they would not lead them; they stood in the midst of the deaf, but they would not hear for them; they were where misery was rife, but their mercy would not work upon the misery; they were sent to be saviours of men, but by their negligence they became men’s destroyers. “Am I my brother’s keeper?” was the language of Cain. Cain hath many children even at this day. Ye are your brother’s keeper. If you have grace in your heart, you are called to do good to others. Take care lest your garments be stained and sprinkled

with the blood of your fellow men. Mind, Christians, mind, lest that village in which you have found a quiet retreat from the cares of business, should rise up in judgment against you, to condemn you, because, having means and opportunity, you use the village for rest, but never seek to do any good in it. Take care, masters and mistresses, lest your servant's souls be required of you at the last great day. "I worked for my master; he paid me my wages, but he had no respect to his greater Master, and never spoke to me, though he heard me swear, and saw me going on in my sins." Mind, I speak, sirs, to some of you. I would I could thrust a thorn into the seat where you are now sitting, and make you spring for a moment to the dignity of a thought of your responsibilities. Why, sirs, what has God made you for? What has he sent you here for? Did he make stars that should not shine, and suns that should give no light, and moons that should not cheer the darkness? Hath he made rivers that shall not be filled with water, and mountains that shall not stay the clouds? Hath he made even the forests which shall not give give a habitation to the birds; or hath he made the prairie which shall not feed the wild flocks? And hath he made thee for nothing? Why, man, the nettle in the corner of the churchyard hath its uses, and the spider on the wall serves her Maker; and thou, a man in the image of God, a blood-bought man, a man who is in the path and track to heaven, a man regenerated, twice created,—art thou made for nothing at all but to buy and to sell, to eat and to drink, to wake and to sleep, to laugh and to weep, to live to thyself? Small is that man who holds himself within his ribs; little is that man's soul who lives within himself; ay, so little that he shall never be fit to be a compeer with the angels, and never fit to stand before Jehovah's throne.

I am glad to see so large a proportion of men here. As I always have a very great preponderance of men—therefore, I suppose I am warranted in appealing to you,—are there not here those who might be speakers for God, who might be useful in his service? The Missionary Societies need you, young men. Will you deny yourselves for Christ? The ministry needs you—young men who have talents and ability. Christ needs you to preach his Word. Will you not give yourselves to him? Tradesmen! Merchants! Christ needs you, to alter the strain of business and reverse the maxims of the present day—to cast a healthier tone into our commerce. Will you hold yourselves back? The Sabbath-school needs you; a thousand agencies require you. Oh! if there is a man here to-day that is going home to his house, and when he gets there will say this afternoon—"Thank God I have nothing to do;" and if to-morrow when you come home from your business, you say, "Thank God I have no connexion with any church; I have nothing to do with the religious world; I leave that to other people; I never trouble myself about that,"—you need not trouble yourself about going to heaven; you need not trouble yourself about being where Christ is, at least until you can learn that more devoted lesson. "The love of Christ constraineth me; I must do something for him; Lord, show me what thou wouldst have me to do, and I will begin this very day, for I feel that through thee, Christ strengthening me, I can do all things."

God grant the sinner power to believe on Christ—power to repent—power to be saved; for Christ strengthening him, even the poor lost sinner, "can do all things,"—things impossible to fallen nature can he do, by the enabling of the Spirit and the power of Christ resting on him.