

More and More

A Sermon

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“But I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more.”—[Psalm 71:14](#).

WHEN sin conquered the realm of manhood, it slew all the minstrels except those of the race of Hope. For humanity, amid all its sorrows and sins, hope sings on. To believers in Jesus there remains a royal race of bards, for we have a hope of glory, a lively hope, a hope eternal and divine. Because our hope abides, our praise continues—“I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee.” Because our hopes grow brighter, and are every day nearer and nearer to their fulfillment, therefore the volume of our praise increases. “I will hope continually, and yet praise thee *more and more*.” A dying hope would bring forth declining songs; as the expectations grew more dim, so would the music become more faint; but a hope immortal and eternal, flaming forth each day with intenser brightness, brings forth a song of praise which, as it shall always continue to arise, so shall it always gather new force. See well, my brethren, to your faith, and your faith and hope, for otherwise God will be robbed of his praise. It will be in proportion as you hope for the good things which he has promised to your faith, that you will render to him the praise which is his royal revenue, acceptable to him by Jesus Christ, and abundantly due from you.

David had not been slack in praise: indeed, he was a sweet singer in Israel, a very choir-master unto the Lord yet he vowed to praise him more and more. Those who do much already, are usually the people who can do more. He was old. Would he praise God more when he was infirm than he had done when he was young and vigorous? If he could not excel with loudness of voice, yet would he with eagerness of heart; and what his praise might lack in sound, it should gain in solemn earnestness. He was in trouble too, yet he would not allow the heyday of his prosperity to surpass in its notes of loving adoration the dark hour of his adversity. For him on no account could there be any going back. He had adored the Lord when he was but a youth and kept his father's flock. Harp in hand, beneath the spreading tree, he had worshipped the Lord his Shepherd, whose rod and staff were his comfort and delight. When an exile he had made the rocky fastnesses of Adullam and Engedi resound with the name of Jehovah. In after time, when he had become king in Israel, his psalms had been multiplied, and his harpstrings were daily accustomed to the praises of the God of his salvation. How could that zealous songster make an advance in praise? See him yonder dancing before the ark of the Lord with all his might: what more of joy and zeal can be manifest? Yet he says: “I will yet praise thee more and more.” His troubles had been

multiplied of late, and his infirmities too, yet for all that, no murmuring escapes him, but he resolved that his praise should rise higher and higher till he continued it in better lands for ever and ever.

Beloved, it is an intense joy to me to address you this morning after so long and sad an absence, and I pray that the Holy Spirit may make my word stimulating to you all. Our subject is that of our praising God *more and more*. I do not intend to exhort you to praise God; but shall take it for granted that you are doing so, though I fear it will be a great mistake in the case of many. We must, however, take that fact for granted in those to whom we address ourselves upon our particular topic; for those who do not praise God at all cannot be exhorted to praise him more and more. To those I direct my speech who now love to praise God; these would I charge to resolve with the psalmist: "I will yet praise thee more and more."

I. Our first business shall be, to URGE OURSELVES TO THIS RESOLUTION. Why should we praise God more and more? Here I am embarrassed with the multitude of arguments which beset me. So many crowd around me that I cannot number them in order, but must seize them somewhat at random.

It is humbling to remember that we may very well praise God more than we have done, for *we have praised him very little as yet*. What we have done, as believers, in glorifying God Mls far, far short of his due. Personally, upon consideration, we shall each own this. Bethink thee, my dear brother, or sister, what the Lord has done for thee. Some years ago thou wast in thy sin, and death, and ruin; he called thee by his grace. Thou wast under the burden and curse of sin; he delivered thee. Didst thou not expect in the first joy of pardon to have done more for him, to have loved him more, to have served him better? What are the returns which thou hast made for the boons which thou hast received? Are they at all fitting or adequate? I look at a field loaded with precious grain and ripening for the harvest: I hear that the husbandman has expended so much in rent, so much upon the ploughing, so much upon enriching the soil, so much for seed, so much more for needful weeding. There is the harvest, and it yields a profit: he is contented. But I see another field: it is my own heart; and, my brother, thine is the same. What has the Husbandman done for it? He has reclaimed it from the wild waste, by a power no less than omnipotent. He has hedged it, ploughed it, and cut down the thorns. He has watered it as no other field was ever watered, for the bloody sweat of Christ has bedewed it, to remove the primeval curse. God's own Son has given his whole self that this barren waste may become a garden. What has been done it were hard to sum: what more could have been done none can say. Yet what is the harvest? Is it adequate to the labor expended? Is the tillage remunerative? I am afraid if we cover our faces, or if a blush shall serve us instead of a veil, it will be the most fit reply to the question. Here and there a withered ear is a poor recompense for the tillage of infinite love. Let us, therefore, be shamed into a firm resolve, and say with resolute spirit: "By the good help of infinite

grace, I, at any rate, having been so great a laggard, will quicken my pace; I will yet praise thee more and more.”

Another argument which presses upon my mind is this: that wherein we have praised God up till now, *we have not found the service to be a weariness to ourselves, but it has ever been to us both a profit and a delight*. I would not speak falsely even for God, but I bear my testimony that the happiest moments I have ever spent have been occupied with the worship of God. I have never been so near heaven as when adoring before the eternal throne. I think every Christian will bear like witness. Among all the joys of earth, and I shall not depreciate them, there is no joy comparable to that of praise. The innocent mirth of the fireside, the chaste happinesses of household love, even these are not to be mentioned side by side with the joy of worship, the rapture of drawing near to the Most High. Earth, at her best, yields but water, but this divine occupation is as the wine of Cana’s marriage feast. The purest and most exhilarating joy is the delight of glorifying God, and so anticipating the time when we shall enjoy him for ever. Now, brethren, if God’s praise has been no wilderness to you, return to it with zest and ardor, and say: “I will yet praise thee more and more.” If any suppose that you grow weary with the service of the Lord, tell them that his praise is such freedom, such recreation, such felicity, that you desire never to cease from it. As for me, if men call God’s service slavery, I desire to be such a bonds slave for ever, and would fain be branded with my Master’s name indelibly. I would have my ear bored to the door-post of my Lord’s house, and go no more out. My soul joyfully sings—

“Let thy grace, Lord, like a fetter,
Bind my wandering heart to thee.”

This to me shall be ambition—to be more and more subservient to the divine honor. This shall be gain—to be nothing for Christ’s sake. This my all in all—to praise thee, my Lord, as long as I have any being.

A third reason readily suggests itself. We ought surely to praise God more to-day than at any other previous day, because *we have received more mercies*. Even of temporal favors we have been large partakers. Begin with these, and then rise higher. Some of you, dear brethren and sisters, may well be reminded of the great temporal mercies which have been lavished upon you. You are to-day in a similar state with Jacob when he said: “with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands.” When you first left your father’s house to follow a toilsome occupation, you had a scant enough purse, and but poor prospects; but where are you now as to temporal circumstances and position? How highly God has favored some of you! Joseph has risen from the dungeon to the throne, David has gone up from the sheepfolds to a palace. Look back to what you were, and give the Lord his due. He lifts up the poor from the dust, and sets them among princes. You were unknown and insignificant, and now his mercy has placed you in prominence and esteem. Is this nothing? Do you despise the bounty of heaven? Will you not praise the Lord more and more for this?

Surely, you should do so, and must do so, or else feel the withering curse which blasts ingratitude wherever it dwells. Perhaps divine providence has not dealt with you exactly in that way but with equal goodness and wisdom has revealed itself to you in another form. You have continued in the same sphere in which you commenced life, but you have been enabled to pursue your work, have been preserved in health and strength, have been supplied with food and raiment and what is best, have been blessed with a contented heart and a gleaming eye. My dear friend, are you not thankful? Will you not praise your heavenly Father more and more? We ought not to over estimate temporal mercies so as to become worldly; but I am afraid there is a greater likelihood of our under estimating them, and becoming ungrateful. We must beware of so under estimating them as to lessen our sense of the debt in which they involve us before God. We speak sometimes of *great mercies*. Come now, I will ask you a question: Can you count your great mercies? I cannot count mine. Perhaps you think the numeration easy! I find it endless. I was thinking the other day, and I will venture to confess it publicly, what a great mercy it was to be able to turn over in bed. Some of you smile, perhaps. Yet I do not exaggerate when I say, I could almost clap my hands for joy when I found myself able to turn in bed without pain. This day, it is to me a very great mercy to be able to stand upright before you. We carelessly imagine that there are but a score or two of great mercies, such as having our children about us, or enjoying health and so on; but in trying times we see that innumerable minor matters are also great gifts of divine love, and entail great misery when withdrawn. Sing ye, then, as ye draw water at the nether springs, and as the brimming vessels overflow, praise ye the Lord yet more and more.

But ought we not to praise God more and more when we think of our spiritual mercies! What favors have we received of this higher sort! Ten years ago you were bound to praise God for the covenant mercies you had even then enjoyed; but now, how many more have been bestowed upon you; how many cheerings amid darkness; how many answers to prayer; how many directions in dilemma; how many delights of fellowship; how many helps in service; how many successes in conflict; how many revelations of infinite love! To adoption there has been added all the blessings of heirship; to justification, all the security of acceptance; to conversion, all the energies of indwelling. And, remember, as there was no silver cup in Benjamin's sack the Joseph put it there, so there was no spiritual good in you till the Lord of mercy gave it. Therefore, praise ye the Lord. Louder and louder yet be the song. Praise him on the high-sounding cymbals. Since we cannot hope to measure his mercies, let us immeasurably praise our God. "I will yet praise thee more and more."

Let us now go on a little farther. We have been *proving through a series of years the faithfulness, immutability, and veracity of our God*—proving these attributes by our sinning against God, and their bearing the strain of our misbehaviour—proving them by the innumerable benefits which the Lord has bestowed upon us. Shall all this experience end in no

result? Shall there be no advance in gratitude where there is such an increase of obligation? God is so good that every moment of his love demands a life of praise.

It should never be forgotten that *every Christian as he grows in grace should have a loftier idea of God*. Our highest conception of God falls infinitely short of his glory, but an advanced Christian enjoys a far clearer view of what God is than he had at the first. Now, the greatness of God is ever a claim for praise. "Great is the Lord, and"—what follows?—"greatly to be praised." If, then, God is greater to me than he was, let my praise be greater. If I think of him now more tenderly as my Father—if I have a clearer view of him in the terror of his justice—if I have a clearer view of the splendors of his wisdom by which he devised the atonement—if I have larger thoughts of his eternal, immutable love—let every advance in knowledge constrain me to say: "I will yet praise thee more and more." I heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee: therefore while I abhor myself in dust and ashes, my praise shall rise yet more loftily; up to thy throne shall my song ascend. I did but see as it were the skirts of thy garment, but thou hast hidden me in the cleft of the rock Christ Jesus, and made thy glory pass before me, and now will I praise thee even as the seraphs do, and vie with those before the throne in magnifying thy name. We learn but little in Christ's school, if the practical result of it all be not to make us cry: "I will yet praise thee more and more."

Still culling here and there a thought out of thousands, I would remind you that it is a good reason for praising God more that *we are getting nearer to the place where we hope to praise him, world without end, after a perfect sort*. Never have we made these walls ring more joyously than when we have united in singing of our Father's house on high, and the tents pitched—

"A day's march nearer home."

Heaven is indeed the only home of our souls, and we shall never feel that we have come to our rest till we have reached its mansions. One reason why we shall be able to rest in heaven, is because we shall there be able perpetually to achieve the object of our creation. Am I nearer heaven? then I will be doing more of the work which I shall do in heaven. I shall soon use the harp: let me be carefully tuning it: let me rehearse the hymns which I shall sing before the throne; for if the words in heaven shall be sweeter and more rich than any that poets can put together here, yet the essential song of heaven shall be the same as that which we present to Jehovah here below.

"they praise the Lamb in hymns above,
And we in hymns below."

The essence of their praise is gratitude that he should bleed: it is the essence of our praise too. They bless Immanuel's name for undeserved favors bestowed upon unworthy ones, and we do the same. My aged brethren, I congratulate you, for you are almost home; be yet more full of praise than ever. Quicken your footsteps as the glory land shines more brightly.

You are close to the gate of pearl; sing on, dear brother, though infirmities increase, and let the song grow sweeter and louder until it melts into the infinite harmonies.

Shall I need to give another reason why we should praise God more and more? If I must, I would throw this one into the scale, that surely at this present juncture we ought to be more earnest in the praise of God, because *God's enemies are very earnest in laboring to dishonor him*. These are times when scoffers are boundlessly impudent. Did it not make your blood chill when you heard revolutionists in unhappy Paris talk of having “demolished God”? It struck me as almost a sadder thing when I read the proposition of one of their philosophers who would have them become religious again, that they should bring God back again for ten years at least—an audacious recommendation as blasphemously impertinent as the insolence which had proclaimed the triumph of atheism. But we need not look across the Channel; perhaps they speak more honestly on that side than we do here; for among ourselves we have abounding infidelity, which pretends to reverence Scripture while it denies its plainest teachings; and we have what is quite as bad, a superstition which thrusts Christ aside for the human priest, and makes the sacraments everything, and simple trust in the great atonement to be as nothing. Now, my brethren, those who hold these views are not sleepers, nor do they relax their efforts. *We* may be very quiet and lukewarm about religion (alas! that we should be); but these persons are earnest propagators of their faith, or no faith—they compass sea and land to make one proselyte. As we think of these busy servants of Satan, we ought to chide ourselves and say: “Shall Baal be diligently served, and Jehovah have such a sleepy advocate? Be stirred, my soul! Awake, my spirit! Arouse thee at once, and praise thy God more and more!”

But, indeed, while I give you these few arguments out of many that come to my mind, the thought cheers my spirit that with those of you who know and love God, there is little need for me to mention reasons, for your own souls are hungering and thirsting to praise him. If you are debarred for a little time from the public service of God, you pant for the assemblies of God's house, and envy the swallows that build their nests beneath the eaves. If you are unable to accomplish service which you were accustomed to perform for Christ's church, the hours drag very wearily along. As the Master found it his meat and his drink to do the will of him that sent him, so when you are unable to do that will, you are like a person deprived of his meat and drink, and an insatiable hunger grows upon you. O Christian brother, do you not pant to praise God? I am sure you feel now: “O that I could praise him better!” You are perhaps in a position in which you have work to do for him, and your heart is saying, “How I wish I could do this work more thoroughly to his praise!” Or possibly you are in such a condition of life that it is little you can do, and you often wish if God would make a change for you, not that it should be one more full of comfort, but one in which you could be more serviceable. Above all, I know you wish you were rid of sin, and everything

which hinders your praising God more and more. Well, then, I need not argue, for your own heart pleads the holy cause.

Suffer me to conclude this head with a fact that illustrates the point. I know one, who has been long privileged to lift his voice in the choir of the great King. In that delightful labor none more happy than he. The longer he was engaged in the work the more he loved it. Now, it came to pass that on a certain day, this songster found himself shut out of the choir; he would have entered to take his part, but he was not permitted. Perhaps the King was angry; perhaps the songster had sung carelessly; perhaps he had acted unworthily in some other matter; or possibly his master knew that his song would grow more sweet if he were silenced for awhile. How it was I know not, but this I know, that it caused great searching of heart. Often this chorister begged to be restored, but he was as often repulsed, and somewhat roughly too. I think it was more than three months that this unhappy songster was kept in enforced silence, with fire in his bones and no vent for it. The royal music went on without him; there was no lack of song, and in this he rejoiced, but he longed to take his place again. I cannot tell you how eagerly he longed. At last the happy hour arrived, the king gave his permit, he might sing again. The songster was full of gratitude, and I heard him say—you shall hear him say it: “My Lord, since I am again restored, I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more.”

II. Now let us turn to another point. Let us in the Spirit’s strength DRIVE AWAY THAT WHICH HINDERS US FROM PRAISING GOD MORE AND MORE.

One of the deadliest things is *dreaminess*, sleepiness. A Christian readily falls into this state. I notice it even in the public congregation. Very often the whole service is gone through mechanically. That same dreaminess falls upon many professors and abides with them, and instead of praising God more and more, it is as much as ever they can do to keep up the old strain—and barely that. Let us shake ourselves from all such sleep. Surely if there were any service in which a man should be altogether and wholly awake, it is in praising and magnifying God. A sleepy seraph before the throne of Jehovah, or a cherub nodding during sacred song, it were ridiculous to imagine. And shall such an insult to the majesty of heaven be seen on earth? No! Let us say to all that is within us, “Awake! awake!”

The next hindrance would be *divided objects*. We cannot, however we may resolve, praise God more and more, if, as we grow older, we allow this world to take up our thoughts. If I say, “I will praise God more and more,” and yet I am striking out right and left with projects of amassing wealth, or I am plunging myself into greater business cares unnecessarily, my actions belie my resolutions. Not that we would check enterprise. There are periods in life when a man may be enabled to praise God more and more by extending the bounds of his business; but there are persons whom I have known who have praised God right well in a certain condition, but they have not been content to let well alone, and they have been for aggrandising themselves, and they have had to give up their Sabbath-school class, or the

village station, or attendance at the visiting committee, or some other form of Christian service, because their money-getting demanded all their strength. Beloved, you shall find it small gain if you gain in this world, but lose in praising God. As we grow older, it is wise to concentrate more and more our energies upon the one thing, the only thing worth living for—the praise of God.

Another great obstacle to praising God more is, *self-content*; and this, again, is a condition into which we may very easily fall. Our belief is, only we must not avow it when we may be overheard, we are all very fine fellows indeed. We may confess when we are praying, and at other times, that we are miserable sinners—and I daresay we have some belief that it is so—but for all that, there is within our minds the conviction that we are very respectable people, and are doing exceedingly well upon the whole; and comparing ourselves with other Christians, it is much to our credit that we are praising God as well as we are. Now, I have put this very roughly, but is it not what the heart has said to us at times? Oh, loathsome thought! that a sinner should grow content with himself. Self-satisfaction is the end of progress. Dear friend, why compare yourself with the dwarfs around you? If you must compare yourself with your fellow men, look at the giants of other days; but, better still, relinquish the evil habit altogether; for Paul tells us it is not wise to compare ourselves among ourselves. Look to our Lord and Master, who towers so high above us in peerless excellence. No, no, we dare not flatter ourselves, but with humble self-condemnation we resolve to praise the Lord more and more.

To *rest on the past* is another danger as to this matter. We did so much for God when we were young. I occasionally meet with drones in the Christian hive, whose boast is that they made a great deal of honey years ago. I see men lying upon their oars to-day, but they startle me with a description of the impetus they gave to the boat years ago. You should have seen them when they were master-rowers, in those former times. What a pity that these brethren cannot be aroused to do their first works; it would be a gain to the church, but it would be an equal benefit to themselves. Suppose God should say, “Rest on the past. I gave you great mercies twenty years ago; live on them.” Suppose the eternal and ever beloved Spirit should say, “I wrought a work in you thirty years ago; I withdraw myself, and I will do no more.” Where were you then? Yet, my dear brother, if you still have to draw afresh upon the eternal fountains, do, I beseech you, praise the ever-blessed source of all.

May God help us then to shake off all those things which would prevent our praising him! Possibly there is some afflicted one here, in so low a state, so far pressed by poverty or bodily pain, that he is saying: “I cannot praise God more and more: I am ready to despair.” Dear brother, may God give you full resignation to his will, and the greater your troubles the sweeter will be your song. I met in an old divine a short but sweet story, which touched my heart. A poor widow and her little child were sitting together in great want, both feeling the pinch of hunger, and the child looked up into the mother’s face, and said: “Mother, God

won't starve us, will he?" "No, my child," said the mother; "I do not think he will." "But, mother," said the child, "if he does, we will still praise him as long as we live, won't we, mother?" "May those who are grey headed be able to say what the child said, and to carry it out. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." We have received good at the hands of the Lord; shall we not also receive evil? "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." "I will yet praise thee more and more."

III. Very briefly LET US APPLY OURSELVES TO THE PRACTICAL CARRYING OUT OF THIS RESOLUTION. I have given you arguments for it, and tried to move away impediments. Now for a little help in the performance of it. How shall I begin to praise God more and more?

Earnestness says: "I shall undertake some fresh duty this afternoon." Stop, dear brother, just a minute. If you want to praise God, would not it be as well first to begin with yourself? The musician said: "I will praise God better;" but the pipes of his instrument were foul; he had better look to them first. If the strings have slipped from their proper tension, it will be well to correct them before beginning the tune. If we would praise God more, it is not to be done as boys rush into a bath—head first. No; prepare yourself; make your heart ready. Thou needest the Spirit's aid to make thy soul fit for praising God. It is not every fool's work. Go then to thy chamber, confess the sins of the past, and ask the Lord to give thee much more grace that thou mayst begin to praise him.

If we would praise God more and more, let us improve our private devotions. God is much praised by really devout prayer and adoration. Preachings are not fruits: they are sowings. True song is fruit. I mean this, that the green blade of the wheat may be the sermon, but the wheat-ear is the hymn you sing, the prayer in which you unite. The true result of life is praise to God. "The chief end of man," says the catechism, and I cannot put it better, "is to glorify God, and enjoy him for ever;" and wherein we glorify God in our private devotion, we are answering the true end of our being. If we desire to praise God more, we must ask grace that our private devotions may rise to a higher standard. I am more and more persuaded from my own experience, that in proportion to the strength of our private life with God will be the force of our character, and the power of our work for God amongst men. Let us look well to this.

Again, however, I hear the zealous young man or woman saying: "Well, I will attend to what you have said. I will see to private prayer and to heart work, but I mean to begin some work of usefulness." Quite right; but stay a little. I want to ask you this question: Are you sure that your own personal conduct in what you call your everyday life has as much of the praise of God in it as it might have? It is all a mistake to think that we must come here to praise God. You can praise God in your shops, and in your kitchens, and in your bedrooms. It is all a mistake to suppose that Sunday is the only day to praise God in. Praise him on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, every day, everywhere. All places are holy to holy people,

and all engagements holy to holy men, if they do them with holy motives, lifting up their hearts to God; and whether a man swings the blacksmith's hammer, or lays his hand upon the ploughtail, that is true worship which is done as unto the Lord and not unto men. I like the story of the servant-maid, who, when she was asked on joining the church, "Are you converted?" "I hope so, sir." "What makes you think you are really a child of God?" "Well, sir, there is a great change in me from what there used to be." "What is that change?" "I don't know, sir, but there is a change in all things; but there is one thing, *I always sweep under the mats now.*" Many a time she had hidden the dust under the mat. It was not so now; it is a very excellent reason for believing that there is a change of heart when work is conscientiously done. There is a set of mats in all our houses where we are accustomed to put the dirt away; and when a man gets in his business to sweep from under the mats—you merchants have your mats, you know, when you avoid the evils which custom tolerates but which God condemns, then you have marks of grace within. Oh, to have a conduct moulded by the example of Christ! If any man lived after a holy sort, though he never preached a sermon or even sung a hymn, he would have praised God; and the more conscientiously he acted, the more thoroughly would he have done so.

These inner matters being considered, let us go on to increase our actual and direct service of God. Let us do what we have been doing of Christian teaching, visiting, and so on; but in all let us do more, give more, and labor more. Who among us is working at his utmost, or giving at his utmost? Let us quicken our speed. Or suppose we are already doing so much that all the time we can possibly spare is fully occupied, let us do what we do better. In some Christian churches they do not want more societies, but they want more force put into them. You may trip over the sand of the sea-shore and scarcely leave an impression, but if you take heavy steps there is a deep foot-mark each time. May we in our service of God tread heavily, and leave deep foot-prints on the sands of time. Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily; throw yourselves into it; do it with thy might. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." Oh, to be enabled to serve God after this fashion—this would be to praise him more and more! Though I do not say that you can always tell how far a man praises God by the quantity of work that he does for God, yet it is not a bad gauge. It was an old aphorism of Hippocrates, the old physician, that you could judge of a man's heart by his arm; by which he meant that by his pulse he judged of his heart: and as a rule, though there may be exceptions, you shall tell whether a man's heart beats truly to God, by the work that he does for God. You who are doing much, do more; and you who are doing little, multiply that little, I pray you, in God's strength, and so praise him more and more.

We should praise God much more if we threw more of his praise into our common conversation—if we spoke more of him when we are by the way or when we sit in the house. We should praise him more and more if we fulfilled our consecration, and obeyed the precept,

“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” We should do well if we added to our godly service more singing. The world sings: the million have their songs; and I must say the taste of the populace is a very remarkable taste just now as to its favourite songs. They are, many of them, so absurd and meaningless as to be unworthy of an idiot. I should insult an idiot if I could suppose that such songs as people sing nowadays would really be agreeable to him. Yet these things will be heard from men, and places will be thronged to listen to hear the stuff. Now, why should we, with the grand psalms we have of David, with the noble hymns of Cowper, of Milton, of Watts—why should not we sing as well as they? Let us sing the songs of Zion they are as cheerful as the songs of Sodom any day. Let us drown the howling nonsense of Gomorrha with the melodies of the New Jerusalem.

But to conclude, I would that every Christian here would labor to be impressed with the importance of the subject which I have tried to bring before you. And when I say every Christian, I may correct myself and say, every person here present. “I will yet praise thee more and more.” Why some of you present have never praised God at all! Suppose you were to die to-day, and soon you must: where should you go? To heaven? Where would heaven be to you? There can be no heaven for you. They praise God in the only heaven I have ever heard of. The element of heaven is gratitude, praise, adoration you do not know anything of this, and therefore it would not be possible for God to make a heaven for you. God can do all things except make a sinful spirit happy, or violate truth and justice. Thou must either praise God or be wretched. O my hearer, there is a choice for thee: thou must either worship the God that made thee, or else thou must be wretched. It is not that he kindles a fire for thee, nor that he casts upon it the brimstone of his wrath, though that be true; but thy wretchedness will begin within thyself, for to be unable to praise is to be full of hell. To praise God is heaven. When completely immersed in adoration, we are completely filled with felicity; but to be totally devoid of gratitude is to be totally devoid of happiness. O that a change might come over you who have never blessed the Lord, and may it happen this morning! May the work of regeneration take place now! There is power in the Holy Spirit to change thy heart of stone in a moment into a heart of flesh, so that instead of being cold and lifeless, it shall palpitate with gratitude. Seest thou not Christ on the cross dying for sinners? Canst thou look on that disinterested love, and not feel some gratitude for such love as is there exhibited? Oh, if thou canst look to Jesus and trust him, thou shalt feel a flash of life come into thy soul, and with it shall come praise, and then shalt thou find it possible to begin the happy life, and it shall be certain to thee that as thou shalt praise God more and more, so shall that happy life be expanded, be perfected in bliss.

But Christians, the last word shall be to you. Are you praising God more and more? If you are not, I am afraid of one thing, and that is, that you are probably praising him less and less. It is a certain truth that if we do not go forward in the Christian life, we go backward.

You cannot stand still; there is a drift one way or the other. Now he that praises God less than he did, and goes on to praise him less to-morrow, and less the next day, and so on—what will he get to? and what is he? Evidently he is one of those that draw back unto perdition, and there are no persons upon whom a more dreadful sentence is pronounced, often spoken of by Paul, and most terribly by Peter and Jude. Those “Trees twice dead, plucked up by the roots;” the “Wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.” It would have been infinitely better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, after a fashion, to have turned aside! Better never to have put their hand to the plough, than having done so, after a sort, to turn back from it.

But, beloved, I am persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though I thus speak. I pray that God will lead you on from strength to strength, for that is the path of the just. May you grow in grace, for life is proven by growth. May you march like pilgrims towards heaven, singing, all the way. The lark may serve us as a final picture, and an example of what we all should be. We should be mounting: our prayer should be, “Nearer, my God, to thee.” We should be mounting: our motto might well be, “Higher! higher! higher!” As we mount, we should sing, and our song should grow louder, clearer, more full of heaven. Upward, brother I sing as thou soarest. Upward, sing till thou art dissolved in glory. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 71.