

The Key-Note of a Choice Sonnet

A Sermon

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Delivered by

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At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

‘My soul doth magnify the Lord.’ [Luke 1:46](#).

MARY HAD RECEIVED a wonderful intimation from heaven of which she herself scarcely understood the full length and breadth. Her faith had apprehended a great promise, which as yet her mind hardly comprehended. Her prayer, ‘Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word,’ showed her joyful submission and childlike confidence, and this made her blessed with the blessedness of patient hope. Under divine guidance she made a speedy journey into the hill country to see her cousin Elisabeth, and from her she received a confirmation of the wonderful tidings which the angel had brought to her. Elisabeth herself had been favored from above, for the Lord had looked upon her, and taken away from her the reproach of barrenness. Amongst other choice words, Elisabeth said to her, ‘Blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.’ When Mary had thus been comforted by her friend, and her spirit had been elevated, and her confidence confirmed, she began to sing unto the Lord most sweetly, saying, ‘My soul doth magnify the Lord.’ Now, if it is a good time with any of you if in communion with some older believer your confidence has been strengthened, make sure that the Lord has a return for it. When your own heart is lifted up, then lift up the name of the Lord. Exalt him when he exalts you. You will perhaps tell me that the Virgin had very especial reason for magnifying the Lord, and I answer, Assuredly she had. ‘Blessed is she among women,’ and we are not backward to own the eminent honor which was put upon her. Blessed indeed she was, and highly favored. But yet, is there any true believer who has not also received special favor of the Lord? Sitting down quietly in our chamber, can we not each one say that the Lord has favored him or her with some special token of divine love? I think there is something about each believer’s case which renders it special. We are none of us exactly like our brethren, for the manifestations of divine grace are very various; and there are some bright lines about your case, brother, which will be seen nowhere else, and some peculiar manifestations about your happiness, my sister, of which no one else can tell. I might not be straining words if I were to say to many a sister in Christ here, ‘Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.’ And I might say the same to many a brother here: ‘Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among men. The Lord hath done great things for thee, and let thy spirit be glad.’ True, there is one point in which we cannot be compared to Mary literally.

She was to be the mother of the human nature of our Lord; but there is a parallel case in each one of us in which a higher mystery's a more spiritual mystery' gives us a like privilege, for, behold, the Holy Ghost dwells in each believer. He lives within us as within a temple, and reigns within us as in a palace. If we be partakers of the Holy Ghost, what more can we desire by way of favor from God, and what greater honor can be bestowed upon us? It was by her that the Word became incarnate, but so also is it by us, for we can make God's Word stand out visibly in our lives. It is ours to turn into actual, palpable existence among the sons of men the glorious Spirit of grace and truth which we find in the Word of God. Truly did our Lord speak when he said to his disciples, 'These are my mother, and sister, and brother.' We bear as close a relationship to Christ as did the Virgin mother, and we in some sense take the same position spiritually which she took up corporeally in reference to him. May he be formed in us the hope of glory, and may it be ours to tend his infant cause in the world, and watch over it as a nurse does over a child, and spend our life and strength in endeavoring to bring that infant cause to maturity, even though a sword should pass through our own heart while we cherish the babe.

But now, having introduced to you her *magnificat*, we will dwell upon these words, 'My soul doth magnify the Lord,' and I do earnestly hope that many of us can adopt the language without being guilty of falsehood: we can as truly say as Mary did, 'My soul doth magnify the Lord.' If there are any of you present to-night who cannot say it, get to your chambers, fall upon your knees, and cry to the Lord to help you to do so; for as long as a man cannot magnify God he is not fit for heaven, where the praises of God are the eternal occupation of all the blessed spirits. If you cannot magnify God, it probably is because you are magnifying yourself. May the Lord cut self down and make nothing of you, and then you will make everything of him. When you sink in your own estimation, then will God rise in your esteem. May God the Holy Ghost make it so.

I. Touching these words, I notice that, first, our text suggests to us AN OCCUPATION FOR ALL GRACIOUS PEOPLE: 'My soul doth magnify the Lord.' Here is an occupation for all of us who know the Lord, and have been born into his family.

Observe, it is an occupation which *may be followed by all sorts of people*. This humble woman speaks of her low estate, and yet she could magnify the Lord. All believers, of every rank and condition, can attend to this work. There are some things that you cannot do, but this one thing every gracious heart can do, and should delight to do, namely, to magnify the Lord.

This is an occupation which *can be followed in all places*. You need not go up to the meeting-house to magnify the Lord, you can do it at home: you need not step out of your own quiet little room, for you may sit still, and all alone you may magnify the Lord. You may be tossed about upon the sea in a storm, but you may trust his name, and be calm, and

so magnify him. Or, you may be no traveler, and never go a hundred yards out of the village in which you were born, but you may magnify the Lord just as well for all that.

‘Where’er we seek him he is found,
And every place is hallowed ground’;

and in every place this hallowed occupation may be carried out, and we may always say ‘at least the place will not prevent our saying, ‘My soul doth magnify the Lord.’

This is not an occupation which requires a crowded congregation, *it can be fitly performed in solitude*. I suppose that this sonnet of the Virgin was sung with only one to hear it, her cousin Elisabeth. There is a quorum for God’s praise even where there is only one; but, where there are two that agree to praise God, then is the praise exceeding sweet. Ah, my dear sisters, you will never stand up to speak to thousands, and many of my brethren now present would be very timid if they had to praise the Lord before a score. Never mind about that. Praise does not require even two or three, but in the quiet of the night, or in the loneliness of the wood far away from the haunts of men, your soul may pursue this blessed task, and daily, hourly, constantly sing ‘My soul doth magnify the Lord.’

This is an occupation also, dear friends, which *requires no money*. Mary was a poor maiden. She had no gold or silver, and yet did she sweetly say, ‘My soul doth magnify the Lord.’ It is an honorable thing to be entrusted with this world’s treasure to lay it out for Jesus. The church has its temporal needs, and happy is that man who is privileged to supply them: but this kind of work can be followed by the child who has no money, and by the workwoman who scarcely knows how to find herself in bread. It may be followed by the poor man reduced to the workhouse; and by the poor woman who lies in the infirmary breathing out her life. ‘My soul doth magnify the Lord,’ is as fit for paupers as for peers. Oh! these are golden notes, and those that use them have golden mouths, as golden as Chrysostom of old, even though they have to say, ‘Silver and gold have I none.’

And this is an occupation, dear friends, which I commend to all here present, because *it does not require great talent*. A simpleton may sing ‘My soul doth magnify the Lord.’ We have each one a soul, and when that soul has been renewed by grace it can follow this blessed pursuit of magnifying the Lord. Perhaps you have not the abilities of Mary, for she was, doubtless, a woman of considerable culture, like Hannah who preceded her, whose song she partly borrowed. Hannah seems to me to be one of the most gifted women of the Old Testament, and to be worthy of more notice than is generally given to her. But if you could not write a hymn, if you could not compose a verse, if you have no ability that way, ay, and if you cannot sing and there are some of us that have such cracked voices that we never shall, and there are one or two brethren here who have such bad ears for time that I generally hear them a note behind everybody else, as I did to-night well, never mind about that, our souls can magnify the Lord. It is an occupation that does not depend upon the voice, or upon any kind of talent whatever. Those who sing worst to the ear of man may, perhaps,

sing best to the ear of God; and those who have the least apparent ability may, from the warmth of their heart and the ardor of their devotion, really have the greatest capacity in God's judgment for magnifying his name.

'My soul doth magnify the Lord.' I would invite all my brothers and sisters here to take this for their occupation as long as they live, and never to cease from it. Nay, even should death for a moment suspend it, let them so praise God that it shall be no new work for them to begin again and praise him for ever in heaven.

Dear friends, albeit that this magnifying of the Lord is an occupation to be taken up by all Christians, do not let us think little of it. To magnify the Lord seems to me *the grandest thing we mortals do*, for, as I have already said, it is the occupation of heaven. When the saints of the Most High pass into their glorified state they have nothing else to do but to magnify the Lord. The word signifies, to put it in a Saxon form instead of a Latin one, to 'greaten God.' We cannot make him really greater, but we can show forth his greatness. We can make him appear greater. We can make others have greater thoughts of him, and that we do when we are praising him. We can ourselves try to have greater and yet greater thoughts of him 'make him to our apprehension a greater God than we once knew him to be; and this, I say, is no mean occupation, because it is followed in heaven by all redeemed and perfected spirits. Even here, it is the end of everything. Praying is the end of preaching, for preaching and hearing are nothing in themselves except men be brought to Christ and led to prayer. But then praying is not the end: praising is the end of praying. Prayer is the stalk of the wheat, but praise is the ear of the wheat: it is the harvest itself. When God is praised, we have come to the ultimatum. This is the thing for which all other things are designed. We are to be saved for this end, 'To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved.' We are not saved for our own sakes. How often does the Scripture tell us this in sense, and sometimes in words, 'Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you; be ashamed and be confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.' The glory of God is to my mind the highest conceivable end 'it certainly is the chief end of my being. So, my dear brother, if you cannot go out to preach' if after looking over all your condition you feel that your sickness and other circumstances may excuse you from active service, and even if you are compelled to keep your bed, do not suppose that you are useless as to the highest end of your being. You may still serve it by lying upon the couch of pain and magnifying the Lord by patience. Have you ever looked at those lovely lilies which adorn our gardens with their golden petals and their milk-white leaves? How they praise God! And yet they never sing. You do not even hear a rustle, but they stand still and praise God by existing 'by just, as it were, enjoying the sun and the dew, and showing what God can do. A genuine Christian shut up under pain and sickness may glorify God by being his beloved child, by receiving the love of God, by showing in his common-place daily character, which is only noticeable from its holiness, what the grace

of God can do. Oh may this be the occupation of us all since it is so noble a pursuit! 'My soul doth magnify the Lord.' Come, what are you doing to-night? Have you been during this day murmuring and complaining and grumbling? End that, and begin praising. Some of you are farmers, and I have no doubt you have grumbled because of the weather. I do not wonder, but I hope that you will not do it any more, but rather believe that God knows better about skies and clods and clouds and crops than you do. If we had the management of the weather, I have no doubt we think we should do it very splendidly, but I question whether we should not ruin all creation. Our great Lord and Master knows how to manage everything. Let us cease from all criticism of what he does, and say, 'My soul does not grumble. My soul does not complain; I have taken up a better business than that. 'My soul doth magnify the Lord.' That is her one engagement from which she will never cease.'

II. Secondly, if you look at the text from another point of view, it provides for us A REMEDY FOR SELF-CONGRATULATION.

If any one of us had been favored, as the Virgin was, with the promise that we should become the *parent of the Savior*, do you not think that we should have felt exceedingly lifted up? It was natural that she should be proud, but it was gracious on her part that she was humble. Instead of magnifying herself she magnified the Lord. It was a great thing, and somebody must be magnified for it. Nature would have said, 'Mary, magnify thyself'; but grace said, 'Mary, magnify the Lord.' If the Lord has been very gracious to any one of us, our only way to escape from vain-glorious pride, which will be exceedingly wicked if we indulge in it, is by giving vent to our feelings in quite another direction. Do you notice how she sets off the greatness of God by her own insignificance? 'He that is mighty hath done to me great things.' 'To me,' she says. 'They are great things, and he is mighty, but they are to me. He hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden.' Over against the greatness of God's goodness to you be sure to set in contrast your own meanness and unworthiness. Has the Lord redeemed you, called you, justified you, sanctified you, set you in his church, and given you a name and a place among his people? When you are inclined to run up the topgallants, and to hang out all the flags, and to glory in your flesh, recollect who you are and what you are, and the hole of the pit whence you were drawn, and the rock out of which you were hewn, and say, 'Why me, Lord? Why me?' Begin to magnify the name of the Lord, and that will be a death-blow to the temptation to pride.

Mary had a *specialty*: no one else should be the mother of our Lord: but so have we. Electing love has pitched on us. Many have been passed by, but the Lord has loved us with a special love; yet we cannot rejoice in it so as to glory in ourselves, for this election is according to his sovereign will, and not of ourselves. It is all of grace and free favor, and not according to merit. Hence my soul doth magnify the Lord for everlasting love and special redemption. Whence is this to me? What am I, and what is my father's house, that thou, O Lord, shouldst choose me?

Mary knew also that she was *to be famous*. 'All generations shall call me blessed.' But do notice how she balances her fame with another fame. She says, 'Holy is his name, and his mercy is on them that fear him.' She magnifies the name of the Lord. If he has given her a measure of honor, she lays it at his feet. Mind you do the same. Be not so vain as to be lifted up with a little success. We have all passed through this test of character, and in the fining-pot how few of us have borne the fire without loss! Perhaps you have preached a sermon and God has blessed it; the congregation is increased, and crowds are gathering; the probability is that the devil whispers, 'You are a capital preacher. Well done! You put your point admirably: God is blessing you. There must be something admirable in your character and abilities.' Away, away, thou fiend of the pit! This is ruinous pride! But suppose, dear brother, that the fiend will not go away while he finds you musing upon your success, what are you to do? Try him with this 'My soul doth magnify the Lord.' Praise the name of the Lord that ever he should make use of such a poor, unsuitable instrument as yourself. Give him all the honor and all the glory, if honor and glory there be, and see if the arch-enemy does not take to flight, for God's praises are abhorrent to the devil.

In whatever capacity you are serving the Lord, if he puts any honor upon you, mind you give it all back to him. Sedulously and carefully endeavor to do this, for robbery here will be fatal; he will not give his glory to another. If we begin to pilfer even a little of the praise, we shall find that our Master will reckon us to be unfaithful stewards, and give us a discharge. If we glory in our strength, we may have to go out and shake ourselves like Samson when his hair was lost, because the Lord has taken our strength away from us. A heart that is lifted up with self-esteem will soon be cast down in the mire. Mary knew that God's favors are given to us, not that we may congratulate ourselves, but that we may worship him; and she acted accordingly. If grace be come to thee, my brother, it is a wanton waste of it to pride thyself upon it. Like the manna in the Israelite's house when kept till the morning, it will breed worms and stink: no worm ever brought swifter decay than pride. Bear the shield of thine honor as an armor-bearer for thy Lord, Know that thou hast nothing but what belongs to him. Use all for him, and glorify him for all, and in all; and so wilt thou do well. I recommend the text, then, as a cure for pride: 'My soul doth magnify the Lord.'

III. Thirdly, and I will be brief on each point, the text is A FRUITFUL UTTERANCE FOR HOLY FEELINGS. 'My soul doth magnify the Lord,' is evidently the overflow of a full soul.

There must have been great mixture of feeling in the heart of this holy woman; but these few words furnished expression for every variety of her emotions. Those feelings were of an opposite character, and yet they all spoke by this one sentence. It is clear that she was filled with *wonder*. Her thoughtful spirit asked, how can so great a thing be true to me? Shall the Son of the Highest be born of Mary, the village maiden? Oh, miracle of condescension! With the amazement there was mingled, not the unbelief which too often comes of wonder,

but an *expectation* of the promised marvel. She believed that the things which were spoken to her would be performed by the Lord, and she looked that God should keep his word to her. How sweetly those two feelings, wonder and expectation, are blended, hidden away and yet expressed, in these few words, 'My soul doth magnify the Lord'! It is as though she had said, 'I cannot understand the favor promised me. How glorious in his grace is the Lord my God! But I expect the blessing: I am sure of it, for the Lord is true! So I praise him concerning it.' The sentence is tinged with two fair colors, the vermilion of wonder and the azure of hope, and they meet harmoniously upon the same ground. The words are wonderful on that account.

Now take two other mental states. The first would be her *believing*. She was not like Zacharias, who needed to be struck dumb because he doubted the word of the Lord. Mary had faith, and yet, at the same time she must have been *awe-stricken* by the revelation. That she should give birth to the Son of the Highest must have utterly abashed and overwhelmed her. Now both these states of mind are here—faith and awe. Faith says, 'I know that the angel's message is true, and therefore my soul doth magnify the Lord.' Awe says, 'What a solemn thing it is that God should come to dwell in my breast! My soul doth magnify the Lord.' Thus in these words confidence and reverence have met together, assurance and adoration have kissed each other. Here is faith with its familiarity, and devotion with its godly fear.

Here, also, you very clearly perceive two other holy emotions. Her *humility* is apparent, and in the text it seems to ask the question, 'How can this happen to me? How can it be that such a poor woman, affianced to a humble carpenter, should be the mother of my Lord?' Humility sheds its perfume here, like a violet hidden away. She seems to say, 'Not unto me, not unto me be the glory! My soul doth magnify the Lord.' But that humility is not of the cringing and crouching kind which draws back from God, for it is clearly mixed with *love*. 'I rejoice in my gracious Lord,' she seems to say, 'I bless him: I love him: I praise him. My soul doth magnify the Lord. I am not worthy of his promised visitation, but it will be mine, and infinite condescension will do this thing unto me. Therefore do I love my God, and I draw near to him. My soul doth magnify the Lord.'

Brothers and sisters, you will often find the language of my text the most expressive of utterances for all that is good in your minds. Many sweet passions, like little birds, may fold their wings, and dwell together in this one well-compacted nest, 'My soul doth magnify the Lord,' Holy emotions may fly hither in swarms, and make the text like a hive of bees, stored with honey. As I turn and think it over, it sheds abroad its own spirit within me, as spices breathe out their own perfume, and I cry, 'My soul doth magnify him.'

I think I perceive in these words a singular mixture of *admiration* and *calm thought*: a wonder in which there is no surprise. The blessed Virgin is evidently, as I have said before, wonder-struck that such a thing should come to her, and yet there is about that wonder no startling of amazement, but a marvelling which is the result of previous careful thought. She

had considered the prophecies and promises, and saw them about to be fulfilled in her seed. She sang in the fifty-fourth and fifty-fifth verses, 'He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; as he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.' She had turned over the subject in her mind, and she came to the conclusion, 'He has said he will do this. It is as he spake.' So, oftentimes, when you get a mercy given to you, you will be surprised at it at first, but afterwards you will say, 'This is even as the Lord promised to me. He doeth no new thing to his servant. It is only my forgetfulness that has made me to be astonished. Did he not promise that he would help me' that he would deliver me' that he would give me all that I needed? And inasmuch as he has done it in this surprising way, my soul doth magnify him twice over for the wonderful mercy, and for the faithfulness of his covenant love which kept the ancient promise which he made to be yea and amen in Christ Jesus.' Again, I say, I commend the text as an expression of your feelings. How sweet are the words, 'My soul doth magnify the Lord!' They are full, many-sided, and natural, and yet most spiritual.

IV. Fourthly, I think my text may be used as A REASON FOR HOPEFULNESS.

It would be well to be wrapped up in this spirit with regard to everything. The mood which bids us sing 'My soul doth magnify the Lord' is full of a hope which will be useful in a thousand ways. For instance, concerning *our own providential condition*, let us magnify the Lord. Surrounded with difficulties, let us walk on with confidence, because our great God is equal to every emergency, and can both level the mountains and fill up the valleys. Burdened with labors and stripped by necessities, let us maintain an unchanging cheerfulness, because we magnify the might and the bounty of the eternal Jehovah, whose name is God All-sufficient. When danger is magnified by fear, let God be magnified by faith. When the troubles of our heart are enlarged, let our expectations from the Lord be enlarged also.

The same God-magnifying spirit should attend *our glances into futurity*, if we indulge in any, and we are all too apt to do so. Ah! we would like to know, some of us, what is going to happen to us. Fain would we steal a glance behind the screen, and each one see

'What gloomy lines are writ for me,

Or what dark scenes arise'

There is a desire in most persons' minds to draw away the curtain which God has so wisely placed over the future. This is very wrong of us, and yet it is as common as it is blamable. We all turn prophets every now and then, and when we do we prophesy evil, and therefore it would be well if we could catch the spirit of Mary with regard to our forecasts of the future, and say, 'My soul doth magnify the Lord.' Why do we set our blear-eyed anxieties to watch the signs of heaven? If we must pry, and guess, and speculate, why not employ our brighter powers, and let blue-eyed hope scan the ensigns of the sky? When we meddle with the future how dare we foretell that which would dishonor the Lord? If we must needs write bitter things against ourselves, yet we ought not to write untruthful things

against *him*. When we do forecast the future at all, let us do it in the spirit wherewith we sing, 'My soul doth magnify the Lord.' Let us be certain that we shall find him to be a great God in the future, greatly good, wondrously gracious, magnifying his mercy. We shall have troubles, but our soul doth magnify the Lord, for she foresees that we shall ride out all storms with Jesus at the helm, and come safe into port. Our anxious eye foresees necessities, but our soul doth magnify the Lord, for she sees him with a golden key opening the treasures of David, and supplying all her wants. Our troubled car can hear the wolf, but our soul doth magnify the Lord, for she sings, 'The Lord is my Shepherd, and he will preserve me.' In this spirit you may look forward to the swellings of Jordan, magnifying the living God while you yourself lie down to die. If you faint and begin to say, 'Ah! I shall never be able to die triumphantly,' you are minimizing, and not magnifying, the Lord. You are making him little, and not great. Try and say, 'How marvellously will he show his grace to me, a dying worm! Oh, how wondrous he will be in the eyes of angels that will crowd the banks to' hear a poor trembling soul like me go singing through the stream! My God will be great in that day; then will he lay bare his arm, and therefore will I fear no evil, for he will be with me; his rod and his staff will comfort me.' Think great things of God. Greaten God. Magnify his name whenever you look forward to the future. Chase from your mind any imagination or foreboding which would detract from the greatness or the goodness of your God.

Judge in the same manner with regard to *the salvation of your fellow-men*. Never say, 'It is of no use inducing such a man to attend the means of grace. He is a blaspheming wretch. All that he would do if he heard a sermon would be to make sport of it for the next week. I have no faith in taking such a man to hear a ministry which he would be sure to ridicule.' Such unbelieving talk is making little of God. Is it not so? Is it not dishonoring God to think that his gospel cannot reach the most depraved hearts? Why, if I knew that a man had seven thousand devils in him, I believe the gospel could drive them all out. Get the sinners under the sound of the word, and the worse they are, oftentimes, the more does God love to display the greatness of his grace in casting down the power of their sin. Believe great things of God. I can honestly say this that since God saved me I never doubted his power to save anybody. All things are possible now that he has brought *me* to his feet, and kept me these years as his loving child. I must think great things of God who has done such great things for so great a sinner as I am. Greaten God, my brethren; greaten God. Believe great things of him. Believe that China can be made into a province of the celestial kingdom. Believe that India will cast her riches at Jesus' feet. Believe that the round world will yet be a pearl on Christ's finger-ring. Do not go in for the dispiriting, despairing, unmanly, un-Christly ideas of those who say, 'The world is not to be converted. It is a poor wreck that will go to pieces, and we are to fish off here and there one from the water-logged hulk.' Brethren, never believe that we are to stand by and see the eternal defeat of God. Deem not that our God is unable to win upon the old lines, and must needs shift the plan of the campaign. It shall never be said

that God could not save the world by the preaching of the gospel, and by the work of the Holy Spirit, and therefore must needs bring in the advent of the Lord to do it. I believe in the coming of the Lord, but, blessed be his name, I believe also that the battle which he has begun in the Spirit he will fight out in the old style, and finish with a victory in the very manner in which he opened the conflict. It pleases him by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe, and it will please him to continue to do so till the whole round earth shall ring with hallelujahs of praise to the grace of God, who by the feeblest of his creatures shall have defeated sin, and death, and hell. Do not get into a desponding state of mind, and rush into half-insane theories of prophecy in order to excuse your unbelief and idleness. Never throw down your weapons, and pretend that the victory is to be won by doting and dreaming: we are to fight to the end with the same weapons, and in the same name. We will drive the devil out of the world yet, by the grace of God, by the old, efficient weapons of the Word of God and the Spirit of God. Greaten God, and magnify his name, by believing in the success of the gospel of his dear Son.

As to *the nearer future*, never believe any human prophecy that does not glorify God. Expect great things of God, and if you hear any prediction that is not to the glory of God, conclude that it is a blunder. 'Oh!' said one to me, 'this country will go back to Romanism: the gospel light will be quenched in England.' Ah, dear me! Some brethren are mightily fond of this prognostication. But, my dear friend, there is one thing that always comforts me, namely, that God is not dead: and he is not going to be defeated by the pope of Rome, or fifty popes of Rome. He will win the victory yet. Always have courage, for it is God's cause, and it is in God's hands, and, being in God's hands, it is safe enough. See what you do: 'because you cannot trust God's hand you trust your own! You thrust out your sacrilegious arm to interfere with God's peculiar work. What are you at? You are about to defile God's ark. Recollect the story of Uzzah. Pluck your hand back, and leave the ark alone. The Lord will help you to do such work as he gives you to do, but he has not made you Lord of empires, nor director of providence. Leave to his sovereign sway the purposes of his eternal grace, and depend upon it he will bring the world to Jesus' feet. Christ himself shall come: be you looking for him every day, but be constant in his service, working for him every hour. Believe, too, that he shall reign amongst his ancients gloriously, and where amidst Judea's glades Christ has been dishonored and the false prophet has ruled, there too shall he reign, and Jew and Gentile shall worship and adore his ever-blessed name. I say again, magnify the Lord with all your souls. Greaten God. Expect great things in the future, and with the cheery note of confidence go forward to battle for him whose is the victory for ever and ever.

V. Once more, and I have done. Our text should be used as a GUIDE IN OUR THEOLOGY. We will finish with that. Here is a very useful test for young disciples who are beginning to study God's word. 'My soul doth magnify the Lord.' If you will carry this with you it will often save you from error, and guide you into truth. There is certain teaching which

makes a great deal of man: it talks much of man's free-will, ability, capacity, and natural dignity. It evidently makes man the center and end of all things, and God is placed in a position of service to his creature. As for the Fall: father Adam slipped and broke his little finger, or something of the kind, but this theology sees no great ruin as the result of the fall. As for salvation: it is a slight cure for a small ill, and by no means the infinite grace which we consider it to be. Dear brethren, let those have this theology who like it, but do not you touch it even with a pair of tongs. It is of no use to man, for it mistakes his position, and only ministers to his pride. Man's place is not on the throne, but at the foot of the cross. Listen to another theology, in which the sinner is laid low, his sinfulness is exposed, his corruption is unfolded, Christ's redemption is magnified, free grace is extolled, and the Holy Ghost is adored. That is the theology for you, believe it: that is the theology of the Scriptures, accept it. I do not think that you will often be led wrong if this be your mode of judgment: that which glorifies God is true, and that which does not glorify God is false.

Sometimes you will meet with an undoubted teaching of God's word which you do not understand. You know that the doctrine is taught in the word, but you cannot make it coincide with some other truth, and you cannot quite see, perhaps, how it glorifies God. Then, dear brother, dear sister, glorify God by believing it. To believe a doctrine which you see to be true by mere reason is nothing very wonderful. There is no very great glory to God in believing what is as clear as the sun in the heavens; but to believe a truth when it staggers you'oh, gracious faith! oh, blessed faith! You will perhaps remember an illustration taken from Mr. Gough, where the little boy says, 'If mother says it is so, it is so if it is not so.' That is the kind of believing for a child towards its mother, and that is the sort of believing we ought to exercise towards God. I do not see the fact, and I cannot quite apprehend it, but God says it is so, and I believe *him*. If all the philosophers in the world should contradict the Scriptures, so much the worse for the philosophers; their contradiction makes no difference to our faith. Half a grain of God's word weighs more with us than a thousand tons of words or thoughts of all the modern theologians, philosophers, and scientists that exist on the face of the earth; for God knows more about his own works than they do. They do but think, but the Lord knows. With regard to truths which philosophers ought not to meddle with, because they have not specially turned their thoughts that way, they are not more qualified to judge than the poorest man in the church of God, nay, nor one-half so much. Inasmuch as the most learned unregenerate men are dead in sin, what do they know about the living things of the children of God? Instead of setting them to judge we will sooner trust our boys and girls that are just converted, for they do know something of divine things, but carnal philosophers know nothing of them. Do not be staggered, brothers and sisters, but honor God, glorify God, and magnify him by believing great things and unsearchable'past your finding out'which you know to be true because he declares them to be so. Let the *ipse*

dixit of God stand to you in the place of all reason, being indeed the highest and purest reason, for God, the Infallible, speaks what must be true.

So, then, I come back to where I started. Let us go forth and practically try to magnify the name of the Lord. Go home and speak well of his name: gather your children together and tell them what a good and great God he has been. Some of you who have a swarm of youngsters could not do better than spend half an hour in telling them of his goodness to you in all your times of trouble. Leave to your children the heirloom of gratitude. Tell them how good the Lord was to their father, and how good he will be to his children: tell your servants, tell your work-people, tell anybody with whom you come in contact what a blessed God the Lord is. For my part, I never can speak well enough of his adorable name. He is the best of masters, his service is delight; he is the best of fathers, his commands are pleasure. Was there ever such a god as our God, our enemies themselves being judges?

Magnify his name by the brightness of your countenances. Rejoice and be glad in him. When you are in sorrow and must needs fast, yet appear not unto men to fast, but anoint your faces and still wear a smile. Let not the world think that the servants of a king go mourning all their days. Make the world feel what a great God you serve, and what a blessed Savior Christ is, and thus evermore let your soul magnify the Lord. God grant you grace to do so, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON'Psalm 34.

HYMNS FROM 'Our Own Hymn Book'174, 775.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

Dear Friends,'Your continued prayers are sought for the special services at the tabernacle, that by their success any injury occurring through the pastor's enforced absence may be remedied. It would be an affliction indeed if our life-work should suffer through painful sickness, which in itself is a heavy cross to bear. By your prayers this will be averted, and the trial will be turned into a blessing.

Right thankful am I to report rapid, and I trust real, progress in my own case. Living in an unbroken series of summer days, where no cold mists are dreamed of, it is no great marvel that rheumatic pains fly away, and depression of spirit departs. The healing Lord has breathed a restoring influence over land, and sea, and sky, and I am feeling it to my great joy. Hoping soon to be among my own people, and to issue sermons newly preached, I am, to my many hearty friends, their grateful servant.

C.H. Spurgeon

Menton, Jan. 8, 1880.