

Gratitude for Deliverance from the Grave

(No. 2237)

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 3, 1892,

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

"I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. The Lord has chastened me sorely: but He has not given me over unto death." [Psalm 118:17,18](#).

In connection with the dedication of the Jubilee House, which commemorated the fifth year of a life often threatened by grievous sickness.

"This sermon begins a new volume—in fact, it commences Volume 38 of The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit. I have, myself, selected it and prepared it for the press because it is most suitable as my own personal testimony at the present moment. The subject is even more my own, this day, than it was seven and a half years ago, for I have been in deeper waters and nearer to the mouth of the grave. With my whole soul I praise delivering Grace. To the Lord God, the God of Israel, I consecrate myself anew! For the Covenant of Grace, for the revelation of the Infallible Truth in the Bible, for the Atonement by blood and the immutable love of the ever blessed Three-in-One, I am a witness and more and more would I abide faithful to the Gospel of the Grace of God! I see, each day, more reasons for faith and fewer excuses for doubt. Those who will, may ship their anchors and be drifted about the current of the age, but I will sing, 'My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise!'"

"The whole passage, [Psalm 118:13-18](#), is inscribed upon a marble slab on the Jubilee House at the back of the Tabernacle and I am told that many went to read it while I lay in the greatest peril through sore sickness—and were comforted thereby. When the Lord permits me to return, I must raise yet another memorial to His praise." [This quote is at the end of the sermon with this request from Brother Spurgeon, on page one—"Will the reader kindly note the remarks at the end of this sermon, before he reads the discourse."—EOD]

HOW very differently we view things at different times and in differing states of mind! Faith takes a bright and cheerful view of matters and speaks very confidently, "I shall not die, but live." When we are slack as to our trust in God and give way to misgivings and doubts and fears, we sing in the minor key and say, "I shall die. I shall never live through this trouble. I shall one day fall by the hand of the enemy; and that day is hastening on. Hope is failing me. Bad times are at the door. I shall not live through this crisis." Thus our tongues show the condition of our inner man. We talk according to our frames and feelings and would make others think that things are as we see them with our jaundiced eyes!

Is it not a pity that we give a tongue to our unbelief? Would it not be better to be dumb when we are doubtful? Muzzle that dog of unbelief! Dog, did I call him? He is a wolf—or

should I call him a hound of Hell? His voice is that of Apollyon—it is full of blasphemy against God! Unbelieving utterances will do no good to yourself and will do harm to those who listen to your babblings. It would be wise to say, "If I should speak thus, I should offend against the generation of your children. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me." Let us be dumb with silence when we cannot speak to the Glory of God!

But, oh, it is a blessed thing, when faith is reigning and powerful in our spirit, to let it have ample opportunity to proclaim the honors of His name! To give his heart a tongue is wise in man when his heart, itself, is wise. The more talk we get from the mouth of faith, the better—her lips drop sweet-smelling myrrh! A silent faith, if there is such a thing, robs others of benedictions and, at the same time, it does worse, for it robs God of His Glory. When we have a joyous

faith in full operation, let us be communicative and let us openly and boldly say, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord." I would follow my own advice and crave a patient hearing from you.

You know, perhaps, that this text was inscribed by Martin Luther upon his study wall, where he could always see it when at home. Many Reformers had been done to death—Huss, and others who preceded him, had been burnt at the stake. Luther was cheered by the firm conviction that he was perfectly safe until his work was done. In this full assurance he went bravely to meet his enemies at the Diet of Worms and, indeed, went courageously whenever duty called him. He felt that God had raised him up to declare the glorious doctrine of Justification by Faith and all the other Truths of God he believed to be the Gospel of God and, therefore, no wood could burn him and no sword could kill him till that work was done. Thus he bravely wrote out his belief and set it where many eyes would see it, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord."

It was no idle boast, but a calm and true conclusion from his faith in God and fellowship with Him. May you and I, when we are tried, be able, through faith in God, to meet trouble with the same brave thoughts and speeches! We cannot show our courage unless we have difficulties and troubles. A man cannot become a veteran soldier if he never goes to battle. No man can get his sea legs if he lives always on land. Rejoice, therefore, in your tribulations, because they give you opportunities of exhibiting a believing confidence and, thereby, glorifying the name of the Most High. But take heed that you have faith, true faith in God—do not become a puppet of impressions—much less a slave of the judgments of others. To have David's faith, you must be as David. No man may take up a confidence of his own making—it must be a real work of the Spirit and growth of Grace within—grasping with living tendrils the promise of the living God.

I will read the passage from the Psalms over, again, and we will consider it, with God's help. "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. The Lord has chastened me sorely: but He has not given me over to death."

First, here is the Believer's view of his afflictions. "The Lord has chastened me sorely." Secondly, here is the Believer's comfort under those afflictions. "He has given me over to death. I shall not die, but live." And, thirdly, here is the Believer's conduct after his afflictions and after his deliverance from them—"I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord."

I. At the outset, here is THE BELIEVER'S VIEW OF HIS AFFLICTIONS. "The Lord has chastened me sorely." On the surface of the words we see the good man's clear observation that his afflictions come from God. It is true he perceived the secondary hand, for he says, "You have thrust sorely at me that I might fall." There was one at work who aimed to make him fall. His afflictions were the work of a cruel enemy. Yes, but that enemy's assaults were being overruled by the Lord and were made to work for his good, so David, in the present verse, corrects himself by saying, "The Lord has chastened me sorely. My enemy struck at me and he might make me fall, but, in very truth, my gracious God was using him to chasten me that I might not fall. The enemy was moved by malice, but God was working by him in love to my soul. The second agent sought my ruin, but the Great First Cause worked my education and establishment."

It is well to have Grace enough to see that tribulation comes from God—He fills the bitter cup as well as the sweet goblet! Troubles do not spring out of the dust, neither does affliction grow up from the ground like hemlock from the furrows of the field, but the Lord, Himself, kindles the fiery furnace and sits as a Refiner at the door. Let us not dwell too much upon the part played by the devil, as though he were a coordinate power with God. He is a fallen creature and his very existence depends upon the will and permission of the Most High! His power is borrowed and can only be used as the Infinite Omnipotence of God permits. His wickedness is his own, but his existence is not self-derived. Blame the devil and blame all of his servants as much as you will, but still believe in the mysterious and consoling Truth of God that, in the truest sense, the Lord sends trials upon His saints.

"Explain this statement," you say. Oh, no—I am not called upon to explain it, but to believe it! A great many things, when they are said to be explained by modern thinkers, are merely explained away—and I have not yet begun to learn that wretched art. Remember how Peter told the Jews that He whom God, by His determinate counsel and foreknowledge decreed to die, even His Son, Jesus Christ, was, nevertheless, taken by them with wicked hands when they had crucified and slain Him? The death of Christ was predetermined in the counsel of God and yet it was, nonetheless, an atrocious crime on the part of ungodly men! The Omnipotence and Providence of God are to be believed, but man's responsibility is not, therefore, to be questioned. Our afflictions may come distinctly from man, as the result of persecution

or malice, and yet they may come with even greater certainty from the Lord and may be the necessary outcome of His special love to us.

For this reason we may wisely moderate our anger against second causes. If you strike a dog with a stick, he will bite the stick. If he were more intelligent, he would snap at the person using the stick and, if that intelligence were governed by the spirit of obedience, he would yield to the blow and learn a lesson from it. Thus, when Shimei reviled David and Abishai, the son of Zeruah, said unto the king, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over, I pray you, and take off his head," David meekly replied, "So let him curse, because the Lord has said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Why have you done so?" A sight of God's hand in a trial is the end of rebellion against it in the case of every good man! He says, "It is the Lord: let Him do what seems good to Him."

We may lie at His feet and cry, "Show me why You contend with me," but, if the reason does not appear, we must bow in reverent submission and say with one of old, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because You did it." Job saw the Lord in his many tribulations and, therefore, praised Him, saying, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Surely there is nothing better for a man of God than to perceive that his smarts and sorrows come from his Father's hand, for then he will say, "The will of the Lord be done." This is the great point in the Believer's view of his afflictions—"He makes sore and binds up: He wounds and His hands make whole."

Next, the Believer perceives that his trials come on as a chastening. "The Lord has chastened me sorely." When a child is chastised, two things are clear—first, that there is something wrong in him, or that there is something deficient in him so that he needs to be corrected or instructed. And, secondly, it shows that his father has a tender care for his benefit and acts in loving wisdom towards him. This is certainly true if the father is an eminently kind and yet prudent parent. Children do not think that there can be any need for chastening them, but when years have matured their judgment, they will know better. "No chastening for the present seems to be joyous"—if it did seem joyous, it would not be chastening! The "need be" is not only that we have manifold trials, but that we are in heaviness through them. In the smart of the sorrow lies the blessing of the chastisement! God chastens us in the purest love because He sees that there is an absolute necessity for it—"for He does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men." Our fathers, according to the flesh, too often corrected us according to their own pleasure—and yet we gave them reverence. But the Father of our spirits corrects us only of necessity—a necessity to which He is too wise to close His eyes. Shall we not, therefore, pay greater reverence to Him and bow before Him and live? When Hezekiah was recovered of his sickness, he wrote, "O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit." I find not that men live by carnal pleasure, nor that the life of the spirit is ever found in the wine vat or in the oil press. But I do find that life and health often come to saints through briny tears, through the bruising of the flesh and the oppression of the spirit. So have I found it and I bear my willing witness that sickness

has brought me health, loss has conferred gain—and I doubt not that one day death will bring me fuller life!

Be wise then, dear child of God, and look upon your present affliction as a chastening. "What son is he whom the father chastens not?" "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." There is not a more profitable instrument in all God's house than the rod! No honey was sweeter than that which dropped from the end of Jonathan's rod, but that is nothing compared to the sweetness of the consolation which comes through Jehovah's rod! Our brightest joys are the birth of our bitterest griefs. When the woman has her travail pangs, joy comes to the house because a child is born—and sorrow is to us, also, full often, the moment of the birth of our Graces. A chastened spirit is a gracious spirit—and how shall we obtain it unless we are chastened? Like our Lord Jesus, we learn obedience by the things which we suffer! God had one Son without sin, but He never had a son without sorrow—and He never will while the world stands! Let us, therefore, bless God for all His dealings and, in a filial spirit, confess, "You, Lord, have chastened me."

Consider the Psalmist's view of his affliction a little more carefully. He noted that his trials were sore—he says, "The Lord has chastened me sorely." Perhaps we are willing to admit in general that our trouble is of the Lord, but there is a soreness in it which we do not ascribe to Him, but to the malice of the enemy, or some other second cause. The false tongue is so ingenious in slander that it has touched the most tender part of our character and has cut us to the quick. Are we to believe that this is also, in some sense, of the Lord? Assuredly we are! If it is not of the Lord, then it is a matter for despair. If this evil comes apart from Divine permission, where are we? How can a trial be met which is independent of Divine rule and outside of the sacred zone of Providential government? It is hopeful when we find that all our ills lie

within the fence of Omnipotent overruling! It is a comfort that we see a wall of fire round us—a circle so complete that even the devil, malicious as he is, cannot break through it to do more than the Lord allows!

The camels are gone, the sheep, the oxen, the servants—all are destroyed—all this is most trying, but it is still true—"The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." But, look, another messenger comes and cries, "There came a great wind from the wilderness and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead." Might not Job, then, have said, "This is a blow which I cannot bear; for it is evidently from the Prince of the power of the air"? No, but even after that, he said, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." When his wife said, "Curse God, and die," he still blessed God and held his integrity. He told her that she spoke as one of the foolish speaks and then he wisely added, "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." May we stand fast in patience as Job did, even when our troubles overflow!

It is folly to imagine, as we have sometimes done, that we could bear anything except that which we are called upon to endure. We are like the young man who says he needs a job. What can you do? He can do anything! That man you never hire because you know that he can do nothing. So it is with us. If we say, "I could bear anything but this," we prove our universal impatience! If we had the choice of our crosses, the one we would choose would turn out to be more inconvenient than that which God appoints for us, but we will have it that our present cross is unsuitable and specially galling. I would say to any who are of that mind, "If your burden does not fit your shoulder, bear it till it does." Time will reconcile you to the yoke if Grace abides with you. It is not for us to choose our affliction—that remains with Him who chooses our inheritance for us! Read well this Word of God, "The Lord has hastened me sorely" and see the Lord's hand in the soreness of your trial! Even while the wound is raw and the smart is fresh—be conscious that the Lord is near!

Yet there is in the verse a, "but," for the Psalmist perceives that his trial is limited—"but He has not given me over to death." Certain of the buts in Scripture are among the choicest jewels we have! Before us is a, "but," which shows that, however deep affliction may be, there is a bottom to the abyss. By God's Grace there is a limit to the force, the sharpness, the duration and the number of our trials—

"If God appoints the number ten, They never can be eleven."

Whenever the Lord mixes a potion for His people, He weighs each ingredient, measures the bitters, grain by grain, and allows not even a particle in excess to mingle in the draft! Like a careful dispenser, He will not pour out a drop too little or too much—

"To His Church, His joy and treasure, Every trial works for good— They are dealt in weight and measure, Yet how little understood— Not in anger,

But from His dear Covenant love." Our Father's anger with our sin will never blaze into wrath against us, though in mercy He will smite our sins. Remember, then, this gracious boundary. "The Lord has chastened me sorely: but He has not given me over unto death." We have never yet experienced a trouble which might not have been worse. One affliction kills another—the wind never blows east and west at the same time. When the Lord smites you with His left hand, He sustains you with His right hand. As tribulations abound, so do consolations abound through Christ Jesus. The whole band of troubles never comes forth at once. Everything painful is graded and proportioned to the man and his strength—and the objective for which it is sent. With the trial, the Lord makes the way of escape that we may be able to bear it. Faith can see an end and limit where Nature's dim eyes see endless confusion. Where the carnal sense—

"Sees every day new straits attend,

And wonders where the scene will end," Faith looks over the intervening space and comforts herself with that which is yet to come. Faith sings pleasant songs when she foots it over weary roads—

"The road may be rough, but it cannot be long,
So let's smooth it with hope and cheer it with song."

The Lord keep your faith alive, my Brothers and Sisters, and then whatever trials surge around you, you will sit on the Rock of Ages, above the waves, and joyfully sing praises unto your Divine Deliverer! Oh, how sweet to say, as I do now, "The Lord has chastened me sorely: but He has not given me over unto death!"

II. This brings me, secondly, to consider THE BELIEVER'S COMFORT UNDER HIS AFFLICTIONS. The Believer's comfort under his afflictions is this—"I shall not die, but live."

Occasionally this comes in the form of a presentiment. I do not think that I am superstitious. I fancy that I am pretty clear of that vice, yet I have had presentiments concerning things to come or not to come. And, moreover, I have met with so many Christians who, in the time of trouble, have received amazing warnings, or sweet assurances of coming deliverance, that I am bound to believe that the Lord does, sometimes, whisper to the heart of His children and assure them in trial that they shall not be crushed—and in sickness that they shall not die.

How do you understand the story of John Wycliffe, at Lutterworth, in any other way than this? He had been speaking against the monks and various abuses of the church. He was the first man known to history that preached the Gospel in England during the Popish ages—we know him as the Morning Star of the Reformation! He was a man so great that, if he had possessed a printing press, we might never have needed a Luther—for he had an even clearer light than that great Reformer! He lacked the means of spreading his doctrine which the art of printing supplied. He did much—he prepared everything for Luther's hands—and Luther was but the proclaimer of Wycliffe's doctrine! Wycliffe was ill—very ill—and the friars came round him like crows round a dying sheep. They professed to be full of tender pity, but they were right glad that their enemy was going to die! So they said to him, "Will you not repent? Before we can give you *viati-cum*—the last oiling before you die—would it not be well to retract the hard things which you have said against the zealous friars and His Holiness of Rome? We are eager to forget the past and give you the last sacrament in peace."

Wycliffe begged an attendant to help him sit up and then he cried with all his strength, "I shall not die, but live, to declare the works of the Lord and to expose the wickedness of the friars." He did not die, either—Death, himself, could not have killed him, then, for he had work to do and the Lord made him immortal until it was done! How could Wycliffe know that he spoke truly? Certainly he was free from all foolhardy bragging, but there was upon his mind a foreshadowing of future work that he had to do—and he felt that he could not die until it was accomplished!

Now, do not be making up presentiments about all sorts of things because I have said that sometimes the Lord grants them to His saints. This would be a mischievous piece of absurdity! I remember a young woman who lived not far from here, who had a presentiment that she would die. I do not think that there was really much the matter with her, but she refused to eat and was likely to be starved. I went to see her and she told me that she had a presentiment that she would die and, therefore, she would not waste food by eating it. She spoke to me very solemnly about this presentiment and I replied, "I believe there may be such things." Yes—she was sure I was on her side! Then I went on to say, "I once had a presentiment that I was a donkey and it turned out true in my case. And now I have much the same presentiment about you!"

This surprised her and I asked her friends to bring her food. She said she would not eat it and then I told her that if she was resolved on suicide, I would mention it at Church Meeting that evening and put her out of the Church, since we could not have suicides in our membership. She could not bear to be put out of the Church and began to eat—and it turned out that my presentiment about her was correct—she had been foolish and she had the good sense to see that it was so. I felt bound to tell you this story, lest you should fancy that I would support you in sentimental nonsense. While there are so many stupid people in the world, we have no need to give cautions where the wise do not need them! Forecasts of good from the Lord may come to those who are sorely sick—and when they do, they help them to recover. We are of good courage when an inward confidence enables us to say, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the

Lord."

This, however, I only mention by the way. When a Believer is in trouble, he derives great comfort from his reliance upon the compassion of God. The Lord scourges His children, but He does not slay them. The Believer says, "My Father may make me smart with the blow of a cruel one, but He will do me no real harm, nor allow anyone else to injure me. He will not lay upon me more than is right, nor above what I am able to bear. He will stay His hand when He sees that I have no strength left. Moreover, I know that even when He brings me very low, still underneath me are the everlasting arms. If the Lord kills, it is only to make alive—if He wounds, it is that He may heal. I am sure of that."

O Believer, never let anything drive you away from this confidence, for it has sure truth for its foundation! The Lord is good and His mercy endures forever. It is not killing, but curing, that God means when He takes the sharp lancet in His hands. The nauseous medicine which makes the heart sick, works for the cure of a worse sickness. "His compassions fail not." He may often put His hand into the bitter box, but He has sweet cordials ready to take the taste away. For a small moment has He forsaken us, but with great mercies will He return to us. You have an effectual comfort if your faith can keep its hold upon the blessed fact of the Lord's fatherly compassion.

Next, faith comforts the tried child of God by assuring him of the forgiveness of his sin and his security from punishment. Please notice the very distant difference between chastisement and punishment. I do not say between the meaning of the words, but between the two things which I just now would indicate by those terms. Here is a boy who has committed a theft. He is brought before the magistrate that he may be punished. Punitive justice will be executed upon him by imprisonment or by a birch rod. Another boy has also stolen—stolen from his father—and he is brought before his father—not to be punished as a law-breaker, but to be chastised. There is a great difference between the punishment awarded by justice and the chastisement appointed by love! They may be alike in painfulness, but how different in meaning!

The father does not give his child what he would deserve if it were a punishment according to the law, but what he thinks will cure him of the wrong-doing by making him feel that his sin brings sorrow. The magistrate, although he desires the good of the offender, has mainly to consider the law in its bearings upon the whole mass of the population and, therefore, he punishes, as a matter of justice, that which wrongs the commonwealth. But the parent acts on other principles. "The Lord has chastened me sorely" and, in that He has added a fatherly part, "but He has not given me over unto death," which would have been my lot if He had dealt with me as a judge! My heart trembles at His sword and cries, "Enter not into judgment with Your servant, O Lord: for in Your sight shall no man living be justified."

The sentence of Justice has been fulfilled upon our Lord and our comfort is that now there is nothing punitive in all our troubles. "He has not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities"—nor will He do so, for He has already laid our sins upon Christ—and Christ has vindicated the Law by bearing its penalty so that nothing more in the way of penalty is demanded by the moral government of God. That which we receive from the rod of the Lord bears the blessed aspect of chastening from a father's hand—and this is a gladsome fact which makes even the sharpest smart to be profitable. "Surely the bitterness of death is past" when, in the case of the Believer, even death has ceased to be the penalty of sin and is changed into a sweet falling asleep upon the bosom of the Well-Beloved and to wake up in His likeness! Every other affliction is changed in the same fashion. Our wasps have become bees—their sting is not the prominent thought, but the honey which they lay up in store. "All things work together for good to them that love God," and chastisement is chief among those, "all things." What a well of comforting thought is here!

Furthermore, it is a great blessing to a child of God to feel a full assurance that he has eternal life in Christ Jesus. "The Lord has chastened me sorely: but He has not given me over unto death." Notice the words, "Given me over." It is the most awful thing out of Hell to be given over by God! I fear that there are some such persons. Does not the Psalmist refer

to such when he says, "They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish"? While God's own people are chastened every morning and plagued all day long, the ungodly prosper in the world and increase in riches! Of His chosen, the Lord says, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."

But those who are not the Lord's are left unchastened because the Lord has said of them, "Let them alone, they are given unto idols." They are allowed their transient mirth—let them make the most they can of it, for their end will be desolation. Unbroken prosperity and undisturbed health may be signs of being "given over unto death"—and they are in such cases where sin is committed without pangs of conscience, or apprehensions of judgment. Such freedom from fear may be maintained even in death—"There are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm." All goes quietly with them—"Like sheep they are laid in the grave." But, "in Hell they lift up their eyes, being in torments." To be given over unto death is often followed by callousness, presumption and bravado—but it is a dreadful doom—the direst sentence from the Throne of Judgment as to this life! But you, dear child of God, have this comfort, He has not given you over— He is thinking about

you! Men do not prune the vine they mean to uproot, nor thresh out the weeds which they mean to burn! He who is chastened is not given over to destruction.

Years ago, I was taken very ill, in Marseilles, while attempting to come home to England. As I lay in bed, it seemed as if the cruel mistral wind was driving through my bones and breaking them with agony. I ordered a fire to be kindled, but when I saw the man begin to light it with a bundle of little branches, I cried out to him, "Pray let me look at that." I found that he was using the dry pruning of the vine and my tears were in my eyes as I remembered the words—"Men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." Comfort followed, for I thought, "I am not feeling, like those dried-up shoots, but I am the bleeding vine which is sharply cut with the pruning knife. I feel the keen blade in every part of me." Then I could say, "The Lord has chastened me sorely: but He has not given me over." What joy lies in this, "He has not given me over!" As long as the father chastens his boy, he has hope for him. If he ceased to do so altogether, we might fear that he thought him too bad to be reclaimed. Be glad, then, dear child of God, that since the Lord chastens you sorely, He has not erased your name from His heart or His hands, nor yielded you up to your enemy's power!

Another meaning may be found in this text, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. The Lord has chastened me sorely: but He has not given me over unto death." We are comforted by reliance upon God's power for success in our lifework. The critics said—and I must quote this because this sermon is very much a personal one—the critics said, when the lad commenced his preaching, that it was a nine days' wonder and would soon come to an end. When the people joined the Church in great numbers, they

were "a parcel of boys and girls." Many of those "boys and girls" are here, tonight, faithful to God unto this hour! Then there came upon me a heavy, heavy stroke—a sore chastening, which those of us who were present would never forget if we live for a century! And we seemed to be made the reproach of all men, through an accident which we could not have foreseen or prevented.

But still, the testimony for God in this place, by the same voice, has not ceased, nor lost its power. Still the people throng to hear the Gospel after these 30 years and more! And still the Doctrines of Grace are to the front, notwithstanding the opposition! In the darkest hour of my ministry I might have declared, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord." If you have been set on fire by a Divine Truth of God, the world cannot put an extinguisher upon you. That candle which God has lighted, the devils of Hell cannot blow out! If you are commissioned of God to do a good work, give your whole heart to it—trust in the Lord and you will not fail! I bear my joyful witness to the power of God to work mightily by the most insignificant of instruments—

"The feeblest saint shall win the day Though death and Hell obstruct the way."

Once more, though we may die, we are sustained by the expectation of immortality. When we gather up our feet in the last bed, we may utter this text in a full and sweet sense, "I shall not die, but live." When Wycliffe died as to his body, the real Wycliffe did not die. Some of his books were carried to Bohemia—and John Huss learned the Gospel from them and began to preach. They burned John Huss and Jerome of Prague, but Huss foretold, as he died, that another would arise after him whom they should not be able to put down! And in due time he more than lived, again, in Luther! Is Luther dead? Is Calvin dead today? That last man the moderns have tried to bury in a dunghill of misrepresentation, but he lives—and will live—and the Truths of God that he taught will survive all the calumniators that have sought to poison

it!

Die? Often the death of a man is a kind of new birth to him—when he, himself, is gone physically—he spiritually survives and from the grave there shoots up a tree of life whose leaves heal nations! O worker for God, death cannot touch your sacred mission! Be content to die if the Truth shall live better because you die! Be content to die because death may be to you, enlargement of your influence! Good men die as dies seed corn which thereby abides not alone. When saints are apparently laid in the earth, they quit the earth and rise and mount to Heaven's gate and enter into immortality! No, when the sepulcher receives this mortal frame, we shall not die, but live! Then shall we come to our true stature and beauty, put on our royal robes, our glorious Sabbath dress!

III. So I finish with just two or three words on THE BELIEVER'S CONDUCT AFTER TROUBLE AND DELIVERANCE. "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord."

Here is declaration. If we had no troubles, we would all have less to declare. A person who has no experience of tribulation, what great deliverance has he to speak of? Such persons despise the afflicted and suspect the character of the choicest of men for lack of power to understand them. What does the man know about the sea who has only walked on the beach? Get with an old sailor who has been, a dozen times, around the world, and often wrecked, and he will interest you. So the much-tried Christian has great wonders to declare—and these are chiefly the works of the Lord for, "they that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep." Tried Christians see how God sustains in trouble and how He delivers out of it—and they declare His works openly—they cannot help doing so. They are so interested in what God has done that they grow enthusiastic about it— and if they held their peace, the stones would cry out!

If you read the chapter further down, you will find that they not only give forth a declaration, but they offer adoration. They are so charmed with what God has done for them that they laud and magnify the name of the Lord, saying, "I will praise You: for You have heard me, and have become my salvation." The saints of God, when they are rescued from their sorrows, are sure to sing, "My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God, my Savior."

This done, they make a further dedication of themselves to their delivering God. As the Psalm puts it, "God is the Lord, which has showed us light." It was very dark! It was very, very dark! We could not see our hand, much less the hand of God! We were frozen with fear. We thought we were, as dead men, laid out for burial, when suddenly the Lord's face shown in upon us and all darkness was gone! And we leaped into joyful security, crying, "God is the Lord, which has showed us light." We were convinced that it was none other than the true God who had removed the midnight gloom. Doubts, infidelities, agnosticism—they were impossible! We said, "God is the Lord, which has showed us light." In the fourth watch of the night, in the prison where the cold stone shut us in, where the darkness had never known a candle, there a light shone round about us and an angel smote us on the side and bade us put on our sandals, and gird ourselves, and follow him. We obeyed the word, and our chains fell off; and when we came to the iron gate which had always been our horror, it opened of its own accord, and we went out into the streets of the city, and we scarcely felt that it could be true, but thought we saw a vision. But when we had considered the thing, and found it was even ourselves, and ourselves set in a large place at perfect liberty, then we said, "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar."

God has showed us light and we will live to Him forever and forever. Oh, you tried Believers, who have, nevertheless, not been given over unto death, who can say, tonight, "I shall not die, but live," present yourselves anew unto your delivering Lord as living sacrifices through Jesus Christ your Lord! Amen.

Port/on Of Scripture Read Before Sermon—Psalm 18.