

The Head and the Body

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"The head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." [Ephesians 4:15,16](#).

IF I had to preach fully and accurately upon all that is taught in this text, I would certainly need to deliver a course of sermons, say five or six at least! There is such a wonderful depth of meaning in these Inspired Words that I might keep on expounding them and all the while be as one who takes water out of the sea—always wondering that there is so much more left than I can possibly draw from it. One writer says that the sense of this passage is as "compacted" as the joints of which it speaks, and that remark is a very true one, for here we have thought compressed as by hydraulic pressure! There is any quantity of it packed into the smallest possible space.

Our translation of the words here used by the Apostle is not, in every point, absolutely accurate. I wonder whether one could be made that would be so? We would need a paraphrase rather than an exact rendering of the original, for such is the fullness of meaning that no one translation into our poor tongue could really convey all that the Holy Spirit intended to teach by the Greek words. They seem to totter and tremble beneath the burden of the massive thought they are meant to carry. I am, therefore, only going to preach a plain, simple sermon upon the passage as it appears in our Authorized Version, which, though it is not strictly and literally correct in this case, is, at any rate, quite according to the analogy of the faith—and can be abundantly supported by other passages of Scripture of similar import.

Turning to the text, we find that the Apostle was very anxious that the saints at Ephesus should be knit together, like the different parts of one body. Unity is not an easy thing to attain. Have you found it so in your own family? In many large families and even in small ones, there are sometimes most unfortunate jars and disagreements—and it is a happy household, indeed, that is wholly joined together as one body. Look at the world in general, in its various corporations, societies and associations, and see what disunion and discord are manifested everywhere! Half the newspapers are occupied with reports of the squabbles in the different vestries, or in the big vestry that meets in the House of Commons—or the other one that assembles in the House of Lords. I suppose we would scarcely be men if we always agreed on all points. Certainly, there is plenty of division among us. We seem to remember the Tower of Babel and the dispersion, for our tongues are still confounded and

we misunderstand one another! And what is more criminal, we often misrepresent one another and we are all too apt to forget our Lord's Words, "It must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!"

Paul was most anxious to have the Ephesian Church thoroughly knit together. And the chapter from which our text is taken is all about unity and how to maintain it. With his manacled hands, the prisoner of the Lord writes to beseech them to be truly one—to walk worthy of the vocation by which they were all called by the one Spirit of God. He entreats them, with all lowliness, meekness and long-suffering, to bear and to forbear with one another in love. He most touch-ingly and tenderly pleads his own imprisonment as an argument with them to endeavor "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." "By the remembrance of my bonds," he seems to say, "put yourselves into the blessed bonds of brotherly love." And then he adds, "There is one body and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling; one

Lord, one faith, one baptism." Both in the inward creed and the outward confession of it they were all one—they were not divided on these points—so he begged them to be divided in nothing, especially as he was able to assure them that they had one God and Father, above all, through all and in all—and one Christ, the Savior of all!

When he reminded them that He who ascended up on high is the same Jesus who descended first into the lower parts of the earth, I think he intended to remind them of the continuity of the work of Christ—that it was the same Christ who both descended and ascended. There was no change in the Worker, for the one work was worked by the one Person, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Why, then, should we split up, divide and hold a hundred opinions as if Christ were divided? Paul tells us that when He ascended on high, He gave all sorts of officers that were necessary for His Church— Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists and so on—all for this purpose—"for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." It is this that the Apostle aimed at—that the saints should be one in Christ Jesus and then, remembering that one very frequent cause of division is the instability of many minds, he urged them to "be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine."

But that they might know what they believed and not be driven away from it with every puff of wind. That they might not be misled and deceived by the sleight of men, by cleverness, by magicians who spirit the Truth of God away— as so many religious tricksters are continually doing nowadays, establishing lies and overthrowing the Truth by their magical deception—Paul seems to allude to the casting of dice when he speaks of "the sleight of men." And I am afraid that there are many people whose religion comes to them according to what they call, "luck." They happened to be born on a certain street and their parents attended a

particular place of worship, so they believed what was taught there. But if the dice had fallen in some other way, they might have been Muslims, or Mormons, or Roman Catholics, or God knows what, for they have not any solid reasons for believing what they are supposed to believe! They hold it, as it were, by a kind of chance and they are quite ready to let it go if "chance" should so arrange.

The Apostle beseeches us to guard against this evil and to hold fast the faith, to be established in it and to know why we believe it, so that, "speaking the truth in love," we may grow up in all things into Christ, who is the one and only Head of the Church and to whom every living member is vitally joined. Every man who is indeed, saved, is a part of Christ's mystical body and he is to develop in harmony with the growth of the entire body until he and every other one joined with him in the living structure shall attain to the stature of a perfect man—the whole Church with its Head, Christ Jesus, becoming God's mystic, "perfect man" to be glorified forever and ever!

You see, dear Friends, that even when I am only trying to introduce this great subject to you, I am overwhelmed with the vastness of it! There is a mint of meaning. There are masses of un-coined bullion in the heavenly treasury to which the Apostle brings us! It is impossible for me to set forth all the spiritual wealth which is revealed here, but I shall endeavor to point out four things which are brought to our notice in the text. First, our union to Christ the Head. Secondly, our individuality—"every joint"—"every part." Thirdly, our relationship to each other—"joined together"—"that which every joint supplies." And, lastly, our compact unity in the one Church of Jesus Christ "makes increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

I. First, then, Beloved, I have to speak to you concerning OUR UNION TO CHRIST. We cannot do better than begin with this great Truth of God—that Christ is the Head of His Church.

Hence, we learn, first, that union with Christ is essential to the life of His Church. Men sometimes lose a foot, or a leg, or an arm, or an eye, or an ear. It is very remarkable how a man may continue to exist after he has lost several of his limbs, but he cannot live if his head is taken away. Cut that off and the decapitated body is dead in an instant! So, Brothers and Sisters, the Church of God lives because Christ lives and its life is entirely derived from Him. If there were no Christ, there would be no Church. And if there is, anywhere, a body of professors without vital union to Christ, they are not a church! They may have the name of a church, but they are assuredly dead! The Spirit of God flows through Christ into the whole of His true Church, permeating every part of His wonderful mystical body. But the Spirit of God is first on the Head and in the Head—and then from Him the gracious unction of the Holy One descends to the entire body. Ask yourselves, dear Friends, whether you are joined to Christ. Do you belong to that Church which is really one in Christ—the true

Catholic and Apostolic Church? By Catholic, of course, I mean universal—the one and only Church of the living

God! All who are in Christ belong to His Church, but those who are out of Christ are outside the pale of His Church and if there is a church that is not in Him, it is not Christ's Church at all! So you see that union with Christ is essential to the life of His Church.

Next, union with Christ is essential to the growth of His Church. Christ's Church must grow. We, as a Church, must seek continually to increase. A living Church is not like the building in which it meets—the material structure may never be enlarged—but if the Church is a living one, it keeps on growing. The true Church of Christ in the world is always advancing and multiplying. As the Apostle says, in our text, it "makes increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." But, Beloved, there is no edification except that which comes from Christ! He is the Church's true Teacher. He is the great Master Builder and it is by Him that the whole spiritual building is fitly joined together. We try to preach those Truths of God which are the nutriment of men's souls, but they do not nourish them because they come from us—they only nourish them as they come from Christ! If you want to grow in Divine Grace, you must get from Christ all that is necessary for your growth. Do not think that Christ begins the great work and then leaves you to finish it. Oh, no! He makes us alive and He keeps us alive. He strengthens and develops the life that He has given—all its force and power must come from Him. Need I remind you of this? Yes, for I find it necessary to remind myself and, therefore, I judge that I must also stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance. Not a step heavenward, not in the least likeness to God, not to the smallest degree of holiness can you proceed apart from Jesus Christ your Head! Never forget this fact, simple though it is.

Further, union to Christ our Head is also essential to our perfection. Will a time ever come when a saint will be perfect in himself, apart from Christ? Never, for we are only perfect in Christ Jesus, or, as the Apostle puts it, "You are complete in Him." Shall I ever get to be so holy that I can stand before God without my Mediator? Shall I ever have a spiritual beauty of my own which shall render the imputed righteousness of Christ unnecessary for me? Never! For even in our highest estate in Heaven, we shall still need to have our vital union with Christ perpetually maintained. He is the Head of the Church triumphant as well as of the Church militant! He will forever be the Head of the Church made perfect as surely as He is the Head of His poor, weak, feeble, but ever-growing Church on earth!

Remember one more point, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, and that is that union to Christ the Head is essential to every member of His Church—not only is it essential to the body as a whole, but to every member of that body in detail. It is no use for my little finger to have unity with my hand and my arm if that arm is not united to my body, and my body is not united to my head. So each Believer must be personally joined to Christ. Whether he is only comparable to a little finger, or is like the strong bone of the leg, he must

equally be joined to the Head—the smallest member of the mystical body of Christ cannot live apart from the Head, nor can the largest member. All alike, both great and small, comely and uncomely, manifest or concealed, must draw their life from Christ the Head! You must do so, my Brother or my Sister in Jesus, and so must I—let us always keep this great Truth of God in memory—a church that is only united in itself, but not united to Christ, is no living church at all.

You may attain to the unity of the frost-bound earth in which men and women are frozen together with the cold proprieties of aristocracy, but it is not the unity of life! Or you may get the union of mere worldly enthusiasm in which men are fused together like molten metal, but the fire, if it is not of God, though it creates a certain sort of unity, creates not that living union which God designs and effects. The one all-important question for each of us is, Do I love the Lord Jesus Christ? If so, there is between my soul and my Savior a living, loving, lasting union. And if we all love Him, then Christ loves all of us, and we are living in Christ and Christ is living in us—and this is that marvelous miracle of union between the Divine and the human which, when men see it, are astonished! They cannot see the union itself, but they can behold its effects, as our Lord said, "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love, one to another." This was Christ's prayer for us, for in that great intercessory supplication of His, He pleaded, first, for His immediate followers and then He added, "Neither pray I for these, alone, but for them, also, who shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one; as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they, also, may be one in Us; that the world may believe that You have sent Me."

That is the first point in the text, and a very essential one, our union to Christ the Head.

II. From that I want to lead you, Beloved, as best I can, to the consideration of the second point, which is OUR INDIVIDUALITY.

The Apostle speaks of "every joint" and "every part." We are many as well as one and it is a great Grace of God when men and women merge their individuality in the community of which they form a part. Remember, dear Friends, that you, by yourselves, are not the Church and you must not always keep on saying, "we," if you are not doing anything at all in connection with it! You are yourself and you must look upon yourself as a distinct individual—your first care, in the sight of God—must be concerning yourself. The body is made up of many bones, sinews, muscles, veins, arteries and so on, and each one has its special place and function. And each of you has a particular position and office in the corporate body which is called by the name of the Church.

Think of your individuality and think of it thus. See that you are really united to the body. It does not matter how beautiful a member may be if it is not in the body, for it is not where it ought to be—and it is not where it will be of any service. There is an eye which has just been taken from a dead body. It lies on the operating table—what will you give for it?

It is worth nothing and it must be put out of sight, for it is of no use. There is a finely-formed ankle, but it is useless apart from the rest of the body. How beautiful that leg is! Yes, but as it is not joined to a body, you must bury it out of sight. Now mark particularly what I am going to say and if any of you are wicked enough to misrepresent my words, on you will be the responsibility. This is what I say—Nobody can possibly have spiritual life unless he is joined to the Church. "Oh," somebody says, "Mr. Spurgeon said that people had no spiritual life unless they were members of his church." He did not say anything of the kind and he never thought anything of the sort! "But he means that they must be members of the Baptist Church." He does not mean anything of the sort! "Oh, but he means that they must be members of some visible church!" Well, we would have to talk a little while about that matter, but I did not say that and I did not mean it!

I believe that every Christian ought to be joined to some visible Church—that is his plain duty according to the Scriptures. God's people are not dogs, otherwise they might go about one by one. They are sheep and, therefore, they should be in flocks. If I meet a man all by himself, snapping at everybody—I may be called uncharitable, but, I should hardly think that he was a sheep—I would be afraid that he was a dog. But when I see a man who consorts with his fellow men, feeds with them, takes delight in their company and with them draws near to the Great Shepherd of Souls, I say to myself, "I think he must be one of the sheep, for that is the way in which that animal always acts." So, Beloved, you should go in flocks or companies—that is to say, you should be joined to some Christian Church.

But I was speaking just now of the Church. There is a Church which is the Church of Christ. I see it not, but it is visible to Him who bought it with His precious blood. The members of that Church are scattered up and down throughout all the world. Some are in this Church, some are in other churches, but Christ is causing that Church to grow up for Himself from the girlhood state, in which she now is, till she shall come to the measure of the perfect stature of what God designs her to be when she is ready to become "the bride, the Lamb's wife." This Church, chosen before all worlds, redeemed upon the Cross, quickened, fashioned and called out by degrees by the Holy Spirit and united to Christ, is the one of which you and I must be members, or else we shall be lost forever! See to it, then, dear Friends, that you are vitally joined to Christ's Church and specially that you are united to Him who is the Head of it.

Next, we must be careful to find and keep our true position in that body. I call your attention to a point which may not seem to be as important as it really is. A body owes its beauty, comfort, healthfulness, happiness—perhaps its very life—to the position of the different members of which it is composed. Any book on anatomy will teach you that this is the case. There is no other place where our eyes could be but just where God has fixed them. Try whether you can find another position where your eyes could be so fitted for their work as where they now are. Our feet, with which we walk, are the best members to walk with

and they are put in the proper place for that purpose. Suppose they were attached to our shoulders and we had to walk with them? I do not know how we would manage it. And if our hands were where our feet now are, it would be exceedingly awkward and difficult for us to use them. We would, indeed, be monstrosities rather than men if any part of us should be shifted from its present position! When men write romances about mythical beings, they describe hideous creatures whose heads are under their arms, or like the fabled Cyclops, with one eye in the middle of his forehead—but Christ's Church is not a monstrosity! Mind that you do not act as though you thought that she was.

Try, dear Friends, to be in the body of Christ what you were meant to be. I have known some men who were very eager to preach. They have had wonderful gifts of dispersion, but no power to gather or hold a congregation together.

They have fomented a quarrel within a month and split up the church into fragments in order to purge it from some fancied evil—and they have purged it till there is nobody left in it! They think that it is the wickedness of men which makes hearers unwilling to listen to them, whereas it is only their own folly. They, who might have been useful as ears, listening to somebody else, are altogether useless as a tongue! Do not get out of your position, Brother, if you are already in it. But if not, get into your right place as soon as you can and do there what the Lord would have you do. Some persons have a very great gift of finding fault with other people, but I do not know any place that God has arranged in the body for that particular faculty! It is a kind of disease or, rather, an evil spirit which needs to be cast out! If you who are thus afflicted would try to do something, yourselves, you would perhaps discover that while it is exceedingly easy to complain of others, it is more difficult to do your own work in such a way that people cannot justly find fault with you! Do, dear Friends, seek to have every joint and every part in their right place. Let every ligament and tendon of the body be just where it should be. If we were to put the doors of our houses where the windows now are—and to put the roof where the foundation stones are, we should have very strange houses—and you will not find a true Church of Christ unless every part of it is in its right place according to God's order and arrangement.

A third thing about our individuality is that every part of the body should be careful of its own health. If I happen to be only like a little finger in the body of the Church, it is a great pity that I should be ill, for the whole body will be affected. If my little finger is full of some evil complaint, it may cause great inconvenience to my whole system. Did you ever have a splinter in your hand and yet the rest of your body did not know that anything was the matter? Instead of that being the case, your finger has been of greater consequence to you than all the other parts of your body when it has once begun to smart and to be full of pain—and to swell and fester! Now, you little members, you can do any quantity of mischief if you like. It is possible for a Christian to have so little Grace, and so much sin, that he may cause pain to the entire Church of God. for people will point to the most obscure of you if

you do wrong! They will say, "That is one of the people that go to the Tabernacle and no doubt they are all alike."

It is very unjust to say that we are all like the worst person we have among us. If we have one especially godly and gracious member, the world never says, "They are all like he." No, no! They say, "Ah, he is quite an exception! If they were all like he, then we would go there, too." But they take as their standard and test the most sickly and unhealthy in the whole flock. Therefore, I pray you, dear members of this Church, ask God to make each one of you healthy in spiritual things. Do not think you are of no importance. Never belittle yourself by saying, "It does not matter whether I pray, or whether I live near to God." It does matter, Brothers and Sisters, for it may give some of us the greatest pain if we see you behaving unworthily or living inconsistently with your profession. Therefore let your individuality lead you to see, first, that you are in the Church. Next, that you are in your right position in the Church. And then, that you are a healthy member of the Church, which is Christ's body.

And, once more, be careful of your growth for the sake of the whole body. "Oh," you say, "I do not know that I need to grow I have believed in Christ and I am saved—that is enough for me." But, my dear Friend, you must grow because the whole Church of Christ is to grow! Suppose that, when I was a lad, one of the bones of my arm had persisted in not growing. If all the rest of my body had been properly developed—what would happen if that particular bone did not grow? Why, I would have a short arm! Suppose that one of the bones of your leg had said to itself, "I am in the body and that is enough for me! I do not mean to grow any more." You would have had to go hopping through the world with one short leg all your life—and that would have been a very uncomfortable thing for you—you would probably have had great pain as well as inconvenience. So, if one Christian in the Church does not grow, he will give trouble to others, for the next Brother to him is growing and it makes matters very awkward when some advance and others do not. I would like to have a Church composed of effective soldiers—but I suppose that I shall never have that. Usually we have a certain number of lame folk among us.

We cannot leave them behind, yet they cannot fight in our ranks. We cannot do as Gideon did with his followers— send the faint-hearted ones home. No, they will stay with us and their inefficiency cuts off a certain number of those who would be good for fighting, for they are so ill that they need somebody to wait upon them and, perhaps, a third of the Church has to be employed in driving the ambulances and attending to the invalids. Then, when the battle begins to get hot and we need all our regiments to the front, there is a certain number of soldiers who cannot stand fire—they turn their backs and so bring shame upon the Church. I wish it were not so, yet it often is because all are not of one heart and one soul—there is not the living unity that there ought to be, for then all would grow at the same rate and the body, growing harmoniously, would be strong and beautiful—and in the day

of conflict it would be able to vanquish the foe. Look, then, to this matter, each one of you. Laggards, come on! You that have been slothful, quicken your pace! You that have been sick and weary, may God restore and refresh you, so that the whole body may be healthy and vigorous. So much, then, about our union to Christ and our individuality.

III. Now for a few words about OUR RELATIONSHIP TO EACH OTHER.

The Apostle says a good deal here about joints—"That which every joint supplies." That expression conveys the idea of relationship and teaches us that we are, in our desire and spirit, to be fitted to work with others. This bone is so wisely constructed at this end that it fits into the next one and thus both work together. Our joints are very amazing things. This wrist joint is, perhaps, the most wonderful piece of mechanism in the world! The bones fit into each other so beautifully and work together so harmoniously. I know some Brothers who would make splendid men if all the rest of the people were dead, for they are very loving and amiable to themselves. They would be just the sort of folk to become hermits—shut them up in a cave with a bucket of water and a loaf of bread—and all their virtues would shine out! They have taken the motto which our Scotch friends link with the thistle and which I might freely translate—"Nobody shall touch me without catching it." Whoever comes near them, they are always upon their guard. They are sure that person means them no good, so they repel his advances at once.

When we get such people as that into a Christian Church, it is very awkward for the rest of the members. It is as if we had bones in our body without any joints to them—they grate against each other and constantly wear each other away when they come into contact. Now, dear Friend, if you are in a Church, try to make yourself a bearable person as far as you can. Keep your own peculiarities, if they are worth retaining, yet do not display them so as to make yourself obnoxious! And do not let everybody, or even anybody, if you can help it, be obnoxious to you. Perhaps you have some bone joints outside of you—if so, then pray God to make those joints fit into the persons that happen to be near you. In this wondrously complex body of Christ, we need to be jointed all over so that we may, in our various relationships, be to others just what Christ would have us to be!

Next, notice that the Apostle says that there is something "which every joint supplies." So there is. Every joint supplies oil and if there were not any, it might be very awkward for the rest of the system. In the Church of Christ, which is His body, we need the joint oil of love. If you are traveling by railway, you will see, when an express train pulls up, that a man goes round and puts fresh grease into the box to keep the wheels from firing. What a wonderful machine our body is, for it puts the grease into its own box and keeps all the joints right without friction by supplying them with its own oil! There are some Brothers and Sisters, with whom I come in contact, who expect me to find all the joint oil for them, but even then they are often very trying. Yet I must not lose my temper, or be at all hard with

them! Well, I can supply the oil for my own joints, but you must put the oil into yours, or else we cannot work well together.

Perhaps someone says that there is no love in the Church. Quite right, Brother. You mean that there is none in you! Your bones have no joint oil. But if you had your own measure of holy, hearty love to your Brothers and Sisters, I believe that you would find that some oil would exude out of them, for there are none of the bones of Christ's body that are quite dry. There is some oil in them all, although you may not know how to get at it. And some bodies that are called strange are so reckoned because, perhaps, they are better than we are. But if we could get at them in the right way, we would find them to be full of love and we would rejoice that we knew them. Do let every joint, therefore, take care to supply its oil when it comes into contact with the next bone.

In this way, we would aid the compactness of the body. That is the expression in our text—"compact by that which every joint supplies." When all the bones work well together, they greatly assist the compactness of the body, for the muscles, tendons and so forth bind the whole together. The bones of the body are its strength and give it compactness—and so strengthen certain other parts of the system that are soft and would give way if left to themselves. So, in every Church, when there is bad doctrine preached, there are certain pieces of flesh that seem to give way under the heretical touch. Yes, but you who are like the sturdy, stiff old bones that do not give way, you must just stand firm and steadfast in the faith, whatever is preached! Stand fast by the Truth of God under all opposition, for so you will give compactness and stability to the entire Church! I pray that we may always have, in this Christian community, a number of godly men and matrons who know what they know, so that when the younger sort are a little perplexed, they may go to them and say, "Tell us, dear Brothers and Sisters, are we right or wrong on these matters?" And they will say, "We have tasted and handled the good old Doctrines of Grace and we are afraid that you will go quite off the right lines if you accept these new notions. Therefore, cleave to the Truth which you have received." That is the way that the Church is made strong, by all the joints ministering the oil which holds it together, or helps to the harmonious working of all—the bones being themselves confirmed while strengthening others.

Besides that, let every member offer his own services to the Church. Let each one be doing what he or she can. No one minister, no 20 ministers, no elders, if there were a hundred, no deacons, if there were a thousand, could ever fulfill all the ministries of the Church! God has given Apostles, Evangelists, pastors, teachers and so forth to bring the Bread of Life to us. That is the outward feeding of the flock, but, then, each living person must take the food into himself—the Church must edify itself. There must go on, within the Church, the proper processes of digestion and assimilation of the Truth of God, the reception of and yielding to the Spirit of God by which the Church is built up by itself, as well as by all the external influences which God has prepared for its strengthening and increase.

IV. Now I must close, for our time has gone, by only a few sentences concerning OUR
COMPACT UNITY AS A
CHURCH.

The Church of God should be one, but not piled into one heap. It should be one in Christ Jesus by a living union. May I ask each one of you whether it is so? Is the life of God in you, dear Brother, dear Sister? If it is and you feel that it is the same life which is in the other members, then you have a unity of the most indestructible kind—one which never can be broken! This union must be a growing union. We ought so to grow continually as to love each other better and bear with each other more and more. It is often my prayer for this Church, when I am anxiously thinking of the great work here, that nothing may ever arise to divide us in spirit and in love to each other. It is, to my mind, a standing miracle that all these years [Almost 30 years.—EO.] we have been bound together in the unity of the Spirit and in the bonds of peace. But, for the years that are yet to come, shall we quarrel with one another? Shall there be a root of bitterness to spring up and trouble us? I see no trace or sign of it at present, but before it does appear, I beg of you, by the years in which we have worked together, by the blessings we have been made to see, by the benefits which God has given to thousands of souls by this Church, let us not tear this garment of Christ, let us not do anything in any way by which our union may be marred. But let us be "compacted by that which every joint supplies."

I may be speaking to some friends who are a little out of temper with a Brother or Sister. Go and settle the difficulty at once. Resolve in your heart that you will settle it tonight if possible. If you have any disagreements, if there is any coldness at all between you, before you come to this Table, bury it all! Get closer to Christ and then get closer to one another—and may our blessed Lord, when He comes, find us all one in Him! We ask it for His dear name's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: 1 PETER 1:1-12.

Verses 1, 2. Peter, an Apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied. How sweetly the Apostle is obeying his Master's command, "When you are converted, strengthen your brethren." This is the same Peter who once began to sink beneath the waves, yet now he is helping others to stand! This is the very Peter who denied his Master, but he begins his Epistle by acknowledging himself to be "an Apostle of Jesus Christ." What wonders the Lord Jesus had worked for Peter by His Grace! It is no marvel, therefore, that he should say to others, "Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied."

3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ

from the dead. And, truly, this is a blessing beyond all comparison or imagination, that we have been begotten again by the Divine Father unto a "living" hope, for that is a better rendering than, "lively." Our first birth brought us into sin and sorrow, but our second birth brings us into purity and joy. We were born to die—now are we born never to die, "begotten again" unto a life that shall remain in us forevermore—a life which shall even penetrate these mortal bodies and make them immortal, "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

4, 5. To an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in Heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Joy, my Brothers and Sisters, in the glorious inheritance which is prepared for you—unstained, uncorrupted, perfectly pure and, therefore, to last forever because the elements which produce decay are not in it! It is without sin and, therefore, it shall be without end. What a mercy it is to be "kept by the power of God"! See, Heaven is kept for us and we are kept for Heaven! Heaven is prepared for us and we are prepared for Heaven! There is a double action of God's Grace thus working in us and working for us unto eternal bliss!

6. Wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations. Or "trials." Some people cannot comprehend how a man can greatly rejoice and yet be in heaviness at the same time. But there are many things, in a Christian's experience, that cannot be understood except by those who experience them! And even they find many a mystery which can only be expressed by a paradox. There are some who think that God's people should never be heavy in spirit, but the Apostle says, "Now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness." He does not say, "If need be, you are in manifold trials," but, "If need be, you are in heaviness through manifold trials," for the "need be" is as much for the depressed spirit as for the trials themselves.

7, 8. That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it is tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: whom having not seen, we love; in whom, though now you see Him not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. And does not the joy agree well with the Object of it? Paul said, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift." And Peter, speaking of the same Savior, says, "In whom, though now you see Him not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

9-11. Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the Prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Do you wonder if, sometimes, you find in the Bible a Truth which you cannot quite comprehend? You ought not to marvel, for even the Prophets, who prophesied of the

Grace which has come to us, did not always fully understand their own messages! I am sure that their Inspiration was verbal because the Inspired men frequently did not, themselves, know the meaning of what they were moved to write.

12. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you which the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven; which things the angels desire to look into. See the kind of preaching that we should all desire to hear and that all God's ministers should aim at? "Them that have preached the Gospel unto you which the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven." Nothing but a Gospel full of the energy of the Holy Spirit and set on fire by Him can effect the eternal purposes of God! And this is the kind of preaching that will live and that will also make men live! God send it to every Church and congregation throughout the world! Amen.