

"A Kind of First Fruits"

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"Of His own will He brought us forth by the Word of Truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of His creatures." [James 1:18](#).

MARTIN LUTHER, the great defender of the faith, who passionately loved the Doctrine of Justification by Faith, once grew so thoroughly out of temper with the opponents who quoted the Apostle James against him, that he almost threatened to tear his Epistle out of the canon, because he supposed that James fell afoul of Paul upon the matter of justi-fication by faith alone. It is, however, very clear to us that James, like the other Apostles, never doubted that every good thing that can be found among mankind is a gift of pure Grace, the gift of God. Hear how he puts it in the verse preceding our text, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above"—nothing from human nature, nothing from mere free agency. Good and perfect gifts are flowers too rich and rare to spring up of themselves upon the dunghill of human nature. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of Lights." James knew how to—

"Give all the Glory to Him

To whom all the Glory belongs."

There was no gainsaying upon this matter with the Apostle—he put the crown upon the right head and ascribed the honor to Him alone who is worthy to receive it.

Waiting upon God this evening in the same spirit, and desiring to honor and magnify Him, I ask you to consider the words of the text. They speak only to the saint—and a division must therefore be made in the congregation at once, for I fear we are not all saved—not all the children of the Divine God, not all resting upon the Rock of Ages. Let conscience speak, let each man judge himself, and let us now stand a divided company—as I fear we shall one day stand, some on the right hand and some on the left of the Judge.

It is to the children of God, the Believers, the saved ones, that such a pedigree belongs and such a destiny opens up. Their privilege of birth claims our first notice. And then the practical consequences flowing from that privilege must engage our attention.

I. THE PRIVILEGE MENTIONED IS THAT WE HAVE BEEN REGENERATED, THAT WE ARE NEW CREATURES THROUGH THE WORD OF GOD.

"Of his own will He brought us forth." Regeneration and all consequent blessings come to us entirely through the absolute but gracious will of God. He is not bound to give. He may, if He wills, withhold. We have no claim upon God, except the claim of justice—and

what would that involve but that He should punish us for our sin? We are felons against the Majesty of Heaven. We have forfeited all the rights we ever had under the Divine Government. The right to punishment is the only right we can now claim upon the footing of justice. Henceforth we are simply in the hands of God awaiting His sentence. He may, if He wills, save the entire human race. If it pleases Him, He may save none. If so He wills, He may make this man a monument of mercy and leave his neighbor to reap the due reward of his works. This is what God has a right to do and He claims His sovereign prerogative! Are not His own words heard through Scripture like peals of thunder, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion; so then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy"? There are some who, in their blindness, grow wrathful at this Doctrine, as if it were ungracious to mention a fact which it is impossible to disguise—they will almost froth at the mouth when the subject is broached. Well, let them do so—it still stands firm as a rock and fast

as the eternal hills! Jehovah gives no account of His matters. He does as He wills among the armies of Heaven and among the inhabitants of this lower earth. So—

"Mortals, be dumb! What creature dares

Dispute His awful will?

Ask no account of His affairs,

But tremble and be still!"

Brothers and Sisters, you and I, to whom this sovereignty has looked forth through the lattice of Grace, can gladly appreciate it. We bless that wonderful, discriminating love which fixed upon us while others were let to go their downward course and perish. The only motive God had to stir up His mercy, was His own will. To us, therefore, it is precious. Before we ever prayed, before we ever sought His face, His own will, acting spontaneously, brought to us the bounty of His loving kindness. Now most men who are generous need to have their generosity excited. They will need to be waited upon. Appeals must be laid before them. They must sometimes be pressed—an example must lead them on. But "of His own will" God did to us all that has been done, without any incentive or prompting, moved only by Himself because He delights in mercy—because His name and His Nature are Love—because evermore, like the sun, it is natural to Him to distribute the beams of His eternal Grace! "Of His own will He brought us forth." Come, my Brothers and Sisters, let us magnify the Lord who loved us when we were dead in trespasses and sins! Let us extol the freeness of that mercy, the goings-forth of which were of old, from everlasting, while we remember that we deserved it not—that we set ourselves against it, that when we did know it, we despised it! That when it was presented to us, we defied it, resisted it, stood out against it many a long year! Oh, when we think of this, I say, let us bow humbly before the Throne of the Infinite Majesty and bless Him whose mercy endures forever and whose loving kindness, like Himself, owes nothing to any incentive beyond itself, but is causeless,

not communicated, existing full and free in the mind of God Himself! Because He willed and according to the dictate of His own good pleasure, did He have compassion upon us!

The benefit we have thus received is described in the next words, "Of His own will He brought us forth. "That is to say, we have, by Divine power, been born-again! Our first birth was to us our sensitive creation. Our second birth, our regeneration, is our second creation. We were made once and God made us. These bodies are the wonderful fabrics of His skill and these souls are the emanations of His power. Father of Spirits, You are, O God, and we are Your offspring, and Yours alone! But our being made again is as great a work of God and quite as solely a work of God, quite as entirely the handiwork of God, as our first creation! Of His own will He gave us a new life and made us new creatures. Beloved, are we conscious tonight that we are new creatures? Some, perhaps, have doubts about it sometimes, but a man cannot be a new creature and not be conscious of some sort of change. And there will be times, with the most doubtful of the saints, when they are certain and assured that they are no longer what they were, but have passed from death unto life! Search your own hearts, dear Friends. Let the prayer that was offered just now to the great Searcher of Hearts, and Trier of the reins of the children of men, come from your lips and your hearts, "Search us, O God, and try us!" Verily, verily, I say unto you, if you have not something more than what Nature gave you, you will perish! If you are not something higher than the best morality, the most exact discipline and the most consistent moral behavior can make you, you will never enter into the Kingdom of Heaven!

"You must be born-again." This declaration stands like a sentry at the gate of Heaven, thrusting the bayonet in the way to show that, however amiable, moral, upright and excellent those may be who seek to enter there, they must be born-again. "You must be born-again." You dignitaries of the Church, you senators of the nation, you who wear imperial crowns and you who don your coronets, you must be born-again! You who have been brought up and dandled upon the knees of piety. You who have not openly offended against the Law. You who have been in your houses a joy and in the world a delight, you must be born-again! It matters not who you are—if you are born of woman, how can that be clean which comes of the unclean? You must be passed out of the flesh into the spirit—and this must be the work of God, Himself, or it is worth nothing! It must be a supernatural change, above and beyond all the struggling and the striving of the creature. It must be the display of the eternal power of the Holy Spirit, or where God, is you cannot go. Happy should you be, my Brothers and Sisters, who trust that you have a share in this unutterably precious privilege! "Of His own will He brought us forth." You are twice born. You are God's children with an emphasis which belongs not to other men. You, though you were dead, are now alive! Though you were carnal, you have been spiritualized! Though you were

far off, you have been brought near—and this all due to the Sovereign will of God alone! Bless Him, bless Him, and humble your hearts before Him!

The instrumentality through which this singular change has been worked in us is clearly stated, "Of His own will He brought us forth by the Word of Truth." Men are not usually saved without the immediate agency of the Gospel. Some have said that the Spirit of God always works through the Truth of God and that the Truth is sure to work conviction. The Truth, however, is preached—and faithfully preached—to tens of thousands to whom it conveys not a blessing at all, but is the savor of death unto death! Others have said that the Spirit of God regenerates men apart from the Word of God but this is not told us in Scripture and is not, therefore, to be received. But always the Word and the Spirit are put together. Scripture does not talk of the Word of God as a dead letter. It says, "The Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword." On the other hand, Scripture does not speak of the Holy Spirit as though the Word would work apart from Him, but the two are put together, and "what God has joined together, let no man put asunder." My dear Brothers and Sisters, you who have been begotten again unto a lively hope, was it not through the hearing of the Word, or the reading of it, or the remembrance of some hallowed text which you had almost forgotten? You know it was! Good McCheyne used to say, "Depend on it, it is God's Word that saves souls, and not our comment upon God's Word." And so I believe it is. It is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes!

And what is this Word? What is it that usually brings men to be begotten unto a new life? The Word, the special quickening Word, is the preaching of the Doctrine of the Cross. Beloved, no man was ever begotten again by preaching to him the Law. The Law may smite him, and lay him low in his death and ruin, and break and bruise him, but the telling him of what he ought to be, and should be, and of what he has done amiss, and of the punishment that he will receive will never quicken him! It is telling him that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them"—this it is which brings the heart to God, to peace, to life, to safety! Leave out the Doctrine of the Cross and you have left out everything! Those men who take away the Atonement from the Gospel, murder the Gospel—they are like vampires that suck the blood out of the living man's veins, and lay him dead! That word, "blood," is one of the most solemn and most important in the whole of Scripture! "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin," is one of the most weighty of all the Truths of Revelation—and he that speaks that Doctrine stammeringly, or who holds it without confidence, had better go to his bed—but never to his pulpit, for he cannot win souls! Let him repent of his iniquity, but never pretend to be a minister of Christ! Oh, then, if you have been quickened by the Word, proclaim the Word! If the Gospel has brought you to salvation, proclaim that Gospel! Whisper into every sinner's ear the fact that Christ died for sinners. Make it known wherever your influence can reach that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ has everlasting life! Tell how Jesus stood as the Substitute for guilty men. How, when Vengeance poured out her vials, she emptied them

upon Christ instead of us! How, when the sword awoke against iniquity, it smote the Shepherd instead of the sheep! And how the Beloved Redeemer—

"Bore, that we might never bear, His Father's righteous ire."

Now, looking back, I recall the minds of Believers to holy gratitude and humble hope as they look back to what God has done, and bless His name that "of His own will He brought us forth by the Word of Truth."

II. And now we shall ask your earnest attention to THE PRACTICAL DUTY WHICH SPRINGS OUT OF THIS

PRIVILEGE.

It is a universal rule that to whom much is given, of him much will be required—a rule as much under the Gospel as under the Law—it is a part of the government of the great House of God. Now, we were begotten by the Word with an end and with a purpose, namely, "that we might be a kind of first fruits of His creatures."

I suppose it is meant that we should have a dignity above all the rest of His creatures. God intends to put us first. He puts His saints beyond all others as His peculiar treasure. I ventured to say, last Sabbath evening, that I believed the poorest and the meanest of the Lord's people were, in the estimation of God, infinitely more important than the greatest potentates living upon the face of the earth when they are unconverted. God looks upon the rest of mankind as though they were but the common pebbles of the brook, but these are the gems, the jewels, the regalia of His crown! In these He takes delight—they are His peculiar treasure. See, then, dear Brothers and Sisters, your privilege. You have been begot-

ten on purpose that you may be the choice ones of the earth—precious beyond conception, dear to the heart of God and lying very near to His bosom!

But the duty that comes out of this is the point to which I wish to call your attention. This morning I told you that the first fruits were gathered out of the harvest and presented to God. I think I shall have time to read a few verses from the 26th Chapter of the Book of Deuteronomy which will throw a great deal of light upon the fact of the first fruits and may help us in practically aiming to be such.

In [Deuteronomy 26:1-4](#), we read as follows—"And it shall be, when you are come in unto the land which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance, and possesses it, and dwell therein, that you shall take of the first of all the fruit of the earth which you shall bring of your land that the Lord your God gives you and shall put it in a basket, and shall go unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose to place His name there. And you shall go unto the priest that shall be in those days, and say unto him, I profess this day unto the Lord your God, that I am come unto the country which the Lord swore unto our fathers to give us. And the priest shall take the basket out of your hands and set it down before the altar of the Lord your God." Then there is an account of what the offerer shall say, which we will read, by and by, and then the account closes in the 11th verse, "And you shall rejoice in

every good thing which the Lord your God has given unto you, and unto your house, you, and the Levite, and the stranger that is among you."

Now, according to James, God has been pleased to save us, that we may bring ourselves as an offering unto God, just as the Israelites brought a basket full of the first ripe ears of corn to offer them unto the Lord in sacrifice.

Observe, that this was ordered of God. This giving of the first fruits was according to God's own ordinance. My Brothers and Sisters, I might if I liked, tonight, talk to you about the duty of giving a portion of your substance to God's cause, but I trust that you have learned that and that many of you practice it—as many of you as do not, neglect your own profit. The rich should give that they may be rich and the poor that they may become rich—for those who give shall usually find that God returns it into their bosoms abundantly. But I am not going to speak of that just now. When it was the birthday of Socrates, each one of his disciples brought him a present, but there was one so poor that he brought nothing, but he said to Socrates, "Oh, teacher, I give you myself as my offering." So you saints of God, I shall say nothing to you about your substance—it belongs to God. You are only stewards. I will say nothing about your time—that belongs to God, and not to you unless you redeem it, you that care for it. But rather I speak about yourselves—this is an ordinance of God, that every soul redeemed by blood should acknowledge that he is not his own, but that he is bought with a price. If you reject the giving up of yourselves to God, then you reject the purchase of the blood—but if you acknowledge that you are redeemed, you must also admit that you are not your own, but that you belong to Christ. Professors and members of this Church, may I solemnly put it to you, whether you are carrying out day by day the consecration of yourselves to Christ? Could you honestly say, "For to me to live is Christ"? Remember, if you cannot say that, there is something wrong within—you are acting dishonestly to Him whose servant you profess to be!

A genuine Christian, I take it, makes the main and chief objective of his life the extension of his Master's Kingdom and the manifestation of the Redeemer's Glory. He can scarcely be thought to be a Christian, except in name, who lives from week to week with no more spirituality than that which enables him to go sometimes to the House of Prayer, but who, neither by his powers, nor his gifts, nor his time, nor by any other means, ever does service to the Lord, his God! I must be faithful with you, his servants you are to whom you obey! If you spend the whole of your energies, the whole of your strength in serving yourselves, then you are your own servants and not God's. If Christ is in you, you will seek to honor Christ! Away with your profession, away with your name to live if there is no care for Christ's honor! I believe that there are some professors who would as soon see the Church decline as prosper, who would just as soon hear of no conversions as of many, who never did go about to bring a soul to Christ, who never sought by any means to increase the number of the faithful! Woe unto such when He shall come, whose fan is in His hand and who shall

thoroughly purge His floor. Woe unto you, I say, in that day when He shall sit as a refiner and shall purify the sons of Levi, for that which is not living Christianity will rot and be cast into the sea in that day! That which is not solid, sterling service to Christ will be held to be wood, hay and stubble which the fire shall burn! I tremble while I thus speak, for those of us who do the most may yet be doing it unto ourselves—and even the preaching of the Cross may be to us a selfish service! Oh, it is to be feared that we may sometimes preach Christ rather for the display of our own ability than the display of Christ's beauty! And if so, we have brought no sacrifice to Him—we have rather prostituted the service of Christ to our own pride and so

have dishonored Him and brought sorrow upon ourselves! Come, then, you who claim that you are blood-bought! Come, I pray you, tonight, and confess your shortcomings and ask for Grace that, henceforth, if you live, you may live unto Christ! And bring yourselves, now, I pray you, as is your reasonable service, your spirits, souls and bodies, and present them to your God, for they are His unless you have deceived yourselves!

But, in the next place, the offering was a willing one on the part of the offerer Nobody ever went up to God's House, in the olden time, flogged there or dragged there! If the Israelite did not choose to bring the first fruits, it was his own decision, and his own alone. He incurred the penalty. He lost the blessing. But if he did bring it, God loved a cheerful giver—it was to be brought by him freely. So, Beloved, if I were speaking to you tonight about the giving of your substance, I would say, "Not by constraint, but willingly." If I were speaking to you concerning the offering of your time to serve God, I would say, "Not grudgingly, but being glad to be servants of the Most High." But I am speaking of yourselves, and I pray you bring yourselves cheerfully. 'Tis mine to exhort you, but, oh, where the heart is right, our exhortation will be thankfully received—but still the heart will be willing beforehand. Happy is he who preaches to a people whose pure minds have the good thing in them and who, therefore, only need to have them "stirred up by way of remembrance." Yet to any that have hitherto held back, I say, "I beseech you, Brothers and Sisters, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Do you notice the word the Apostle uses, "I beseech you"? Beseech! It is the beggar's word. "I beseech you," and I do. If I may have any love to you at all, or any care for your spiritual prosperity, I would express in this earnest beseeching of you that you would present yourselves to God!

Ah, we shall soon be gone, and on the dying bed may it never be your regret nor mine that we wasted opportunities of serving our Lord! I have stood by bedsides, and of good men, too, where there has been much of darkness and of gloom because they had to confess that they had not lived as they should have lived. O may your deathbed pillow never be stuffed with thorns because you have been unfaithful! My Hearer, are you doing all you can for Christ? Is there any service that you might undertake which you have hitherto slighted?

My young Brother, with all the strength of your youth, or you, yonder, with all the wisdom of your experience—are you sure that you have laid out every talent? Is there any rusty talent wrapped in a napkin? Is there not yet something that you might do for your Master? May God grant us what I cannot bestow—the Grace to be wholly sanctified! I am afraid that few of us are so and yet we might be—might be without giving up our business, might be without leaving our daily calling—for there is such a thing, as you full well know, as eating and drinking to the Glory of God! You can buy and sell, you can sweep a street crossing, you can do anything if the heart is but right, so as to glorify God in it! The household servant, the nursery girl, the laborer in the docks, the carpenter, the bricklayer, the tradesman, the merchant, the senator, the clerk—each of these is necessary to the commonwealth—and if they are diligent and fear God in all they do, they may be as acceptable as the minister of Christ whose whole time is devoted to what are thought to be more sacred works! Only do, I beseech you, do bring yourselves cheerfully, willingly, without pressing or persuasion! Bring yourselves unto Christ in every way that your loving heart can devise and make yourselves a living sacrifice!

You noticed, perhaps, when I was reading the Chapter in Deuteronomy, that the man brought ears of corn in a basket, and he brought them freely. But he did not, himself offer them to God. Did you note those words, "And the priest shall take the basket out of your hand"? Not the man's hand that brought them could offer them but the priest's hands should offer them—"The priest shall take the basket out of your hand, and set it down before the altar of the Lord your God." Our offering of ourselves to God, then, is Divinely ordered and should be willingly performed, but it must be mediatorial presented. We cannot offer ourselves to God directly—we must come through Jesus Christ. Nothing that you and I can do or can be, in itself, is acceptable to the Most High! Christ must wash the sins of our best charities in His precious blood—and He must perfume our most industrious works with His own merit—or else they are not such as the pure and holy God can receive! I do like to think that I can bring myself by holy self-consecration to the Lord Jesus Christ, and can say to Him, "Here I am, a poor unworthy one, defiled with sin. I want to serve God. I do desire to give Him all my powers, my goods, my hours—but Lord, everything I have is so defiled, and I myself am so polluted! Put out that dear hand of Yours that was once outstretched to bleed for sin. Take me into Your hands and then take me up to Your Father's Throne and say, "Father, I have brought You a poor sinner's heart. He freely offers to give it, for I have fairly won it, and I present it to you. It is all Yours, it is all Mine. Father, help that poor heart, as long as it beats, to live for You. Help it with Your Grace to move hands, and tongue, and feet, and every power that is within it for your Glory and for Yours alone." Come then, Brothers and Sisters, on this, the first Sabbath of the year [1868]—bring your hearts, bring yourselves to the High Priest, our blessed Lord Jesus—and let us pray Him to take us as we are and offer us before the Eternal Throne, that we may be "accepted in the Beloved."

After that, it appears that the worshipper made a confession of what he owed to God. I have no time to read the rest of that 26th Chapter, but it suffices to say that the pious Jew, standing there with his ears of corn, confessed that his father was a Syrian, that he went down into Egypt, that there God multiplied him. That Israel was brought out of the wilderness and made, through Divine Love, to possess the promised land. "Now, therefore," he says, in effect, "of Your own do I give unto You." Now, if you and I give ourselves to God anew tonight, let us remember all the ways whereby the Lord has led us. Why, some of us were but boys and girls when we first loved Christ! When we were singing just now that hymn—

"O happy day, that fixed my choice On You, my Savor and my God"—

I could not help thinking what a blessing and a privilege it has been to have had one's choice fixed on Jesus so many years ago! Why, it is some 18 years ago since Jesus won my heart and I am not yet old! That is much the biggest half of my life and I bless Him for it. Would I have had it postponed? Would to God I had known my Lord before I was fifteen, and loved Him while still younger—while still a child! But what has been our experience since then? Very checkered, many ups and downs, a world of ingratitude and forgetfulness on our part, but a Heaven of faithfulness and loving kindness on His part! We can sing of His love tonight, His immutability, His long-suffering, His forgiving Grace—and every note in that song seems to say to us, "Then bring yourselves and offer yourselves afresh." By every sin forgiven, by every Grace received, by every prayer answered, by every trial from which you have been delivered, by every conflict in which you have obtained the victory, by every act of mercy vouchsafed to you, I beseech you, bring yourselves as living sacrifices unto God! Oh, if you have never got to the dignity of being sacrificed for Christ, strive after it! An ordinary Christianity is not worth the picking up, but the true Christianity that wraps a man up and envelopes him as the bush was enveloped in the fire and was not consumed—that will make you happy—that will make the eyes to flash and the soul to beat high with a more than earth-born joy! I tell you solemnly, I believe that half the professors do not know what true religion means. They have never got to it. They have got to the skimmed milk, the scum and the froth, but they have not got down into the depths! The more you give up self, the more you dare and do for Christ, the more fully Jesus sits on the throne of your heart and the more Divinely blessed will this life become to you! But the farther you keep from Christ and the more content you are with a half-hearted religion, the more will you find it to be a weariness, a mere burden to be borne, a custom to be endured—not a banquet to be enjoyed, nor a thing Divine to be loved and to be grasped with all your mind and heart!

After the worshipper had presented his ears of corn, he went his way. And we are told in Deuteronomy that he was to have gladness of heart and a blessing upon all. The consecration of the first fruits was a blessing on the whole, for it was a rule with God that if the first fruits were holy, the lump should be also holy. Now, if you, then, would have a blessing

from God, begin, my fellow Christians, with a thorough consecration. "Oh," you say, "my boys did not turn out as I wished!" How did you turn out yourself? "Ah," you say, "there are my girls growing up, and I do not believe they will ever be converted!" How near do you live to God yourself? "There are my servants—I was in hopes that I should see some of them joined to the Christian Church and walking in the faith." How about your own example? As sure as there are laws and rules of Nature, you will find that by living near to God, yourself, you will become a channel of blessing to others. "God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us; that Your way may be known upon earth, Your saving health among all nations." The blessing comes to His people, first, and then afterwards it comes to all nations. Did you forget that promise, "I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon," and so on. And then, "They that dwell under His shadow shall return"? When you get consecrated yourselves, those who are overshadowed by your influence shall be blessed by the Divine Grace which comes to you! True revivals must begin at home. If you want to kill weeds, take the hoe into your own garden. If you want to make sweet flowers grow, dig up your own beds. So, then, if you want to have the oil of Grace communicated to the whole household, strive, as the father, the mother, the elder brother, or the sister, or the servant, or whoever you may be, to get the Divine

Grace abundantly into your own soul, that afterwards it may come to the rest! O Brothers and Sisters, bring yourselves, like the basket of ears of corn, to the Lord, now, and there shall be a blessing in your going out and in your coming in! And if the blessing comes not in the shape that you would prefer, yet for all that, all things shall work together for your good. If your house is not so with God as you could desire, yet shall you feel that He has made with you an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure!

All this while I have been speaking to the children of God—but to others of you I cannot thus speak. It would be sheer hypocrisy for me to say to you, "Come and bring yourselves to God." Ah, no! You can make no offering to Him. Your heart is not right with Him and, therefore, you could not be accepted. But I will tell you what you can do by His Grace. Though you have nothing to bring Him, you have something to ask from Him. If your heart is not such that you can bring it, and say, "Take it, Lord, take and seal it," yet there is the heart of Christ ready for you to take, and the love of Christ ready for you to receive! You cannot be a giver, so be a receiver! You say, "How can I receive?" I notice the poor hungry creatures on these wintry days, when they stand round the soup kitchens, bringing their pitchers with them—they do not bring their pitchers full! They bring an empty pitcher, each one of them, and they get it filled. Now, all that Christ wants of you is your empty pitcher—that poor, empty, needy heart of yours! If you would receive from Him, here is His command, "Believe and you shall live." To believe is to trust, to confide, to lean upon, to depend. Depend upon Christ, trust in Christ and He will save you, for no one ever yet did

lean on Christ and find Him fail! Oh, may you be led to a simple confidence in the dying, but now risen Savior—and then, after that—give God your whole heart and live to Him who died for you!

The Lord command His blessing for Jesus' sake! Amen!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM43.

Verses 1, 2. Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation: O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man. For You are the God of my strength. In the previous Psalm, David had called the Lord the God of his life. Now he calls Him the God of his strength. We generally sing ourselves up. We may begin in a very low key, as David did, but if we can praise God in the dark, we shall soon praise God in the light!

2-4. Why do You cast me off? Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? O send out Your Light and Your Truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto Your holy hill, and to Your tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy. "My exceeding joy"—exceeding all the other joys I have—exceeding all the joys of the happiest men I have ever known!

4. Yes, upon the harp will I praise You, O God, my God. It was not enough for David to say, "O God." He cries, "O God, my God." You cannot praise another man's God. Possession is not only nine points of the law, but it is all the points of the Gospel!

5. Why are you cast down, O my Soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God. May the Lord comfort His mourning people by such words as these!