

The Broken Fence

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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"I went by the field of the lazy man, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered its surface, and the stone wall was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked on it and received instruction." [Proverbs 24:30-32](#).

THIS lazy man did no hurt to his fellow men—he was not a thief, nor a ruffian, nor a meddler in anybody else's business. He did not trouble himself about other men's concerns, for he did not even attend to his own—it required too much exertion. He was not grossly vicious. He had not energy enough to care for that. He was one who liked to take things easily. He always let well enough alone and, for the that matter, he let ill alone, too, as the nettles and the thistles in his garden plainly proved! What was the use of disturbing himself? It would be all the same a hundred years hence and so he took things just as they came. He was not a bad man, so some said of him, and yet, perhaps it will be found at last that there is no worse man in the world than the man who is not good, for in some respects he is not good enough to be bad! He has not enough force of character about him to serve either God or Baal. He simply serves himself, worshipping his own ease and adoring his own comfort. Yet he always meant to be right. Dear me, he was not going to sleep much longer, he would only have forty winks more and then he would be at his work—and show you what he could do! One of these days he meant to be thoroughly in earnest and make up for lost time. The time never actually came for him to begin, but it was always coming. He always meant to repent, but he went on in his sin. He meant to believe, but he died an unbeliever. He meant to be a Christian, but he lived without Christ. He halted between two opinions because he could not trouble himself to make up his mind! And so he perished of delay.

This picture of the slothful man and his garden and field overgrown with nettles and weeds represents many a man who has professed to be a Christian, but who has become slothful in the things of God. Spiritual life has withered in him. He has backslidden. He has come down from the condition of healthy spiritual energy into one of listlessness and indifference to the things of God. And while things have gone wrong within his heart and all sorts of mischiefs have come into him and grown up and seeded themselves in him, mischief is also taking place externally in his daily conduct. The stone wall which guarded his character is broken down and he lies open to all evil. Upon this point we will now meditate. "The stone wall was broken down."

Come, then, let us take a walk with Solomon and stand with him and consider and learn instruction while we look at this broken-down fence. When we have examined it, let us consider the consequences of broken-down walls. And then, in the last place, let us try to wake up this sluggard that his wall may yet be repaired. If this slothful person should be one of ourselves, may God's Infinite Mercy awaken us before this ruined wall has let in a herd of prowling vices! First, let us take—

I. A LOOK AT THIS BROKEN FENCE.

You will see that in the beginning it was a very good fence, for it was a stone wall. Fields are often surrounded with wooden fences which soon decay, or with hedges which may very easily have gaps made in them. But this was a stone wall. Such walls are very usual in the East and are also common in some of our own counties where stone is plentiful. It was a substantial protection to begin with and well shut in the pretty little estate which had fallen into such bad hands. The man had a field for agricultural purposes and another strip of land for a vineyard or a garden. It was fertile soil, for it produced thorns and nettles in abundance—and where these flourish, better things can be produced—yet the idler took no care of his property, but allowed the wall to get into bad repair and in many places to be quite broken down.

Let me mention some of the stone walls that men permit to be broken down when they backslide. In many cases sound principles were instilled in youth, but these are forgotten. What a blessing is Christian education! Our parents, both by persuasion and example, taught many of us the things that are pure and honest and of good repute. We saw in their lives how to live. They also opened the Word of God before us and they taught us the ways of right both toward God and toward men. They prayed for us and they prayed with us till the things of God were placed round about us, and shut us in as with a stone wall! We have never been able to get rid of our early impressions. Even in times of wandering, before we savingly knew the Lord, these things had a healthy power over us—we were checked when we would have done evil—we were assisted when we were struggling towards Christ. It is very sad when people permit these first principles to be shaken and to be removed like stones which fall from a boundary wall! Young persons begin at first to talk lightly of the old-fashioned ways of their parents. By-and-by it is not merely the old-fashionedness of the ways, but the ways, themselves, that they despise! They seek other company and from that other company they learn nothing but evil. They seek pleasure in places which it horrifies their parents to think of. This leads to worse—and if they do not bring their fathers' gray hairs with sorrow to the grave, it is no virtue of theirs. I have known young men who really were Christians, sadly backslide through being induced to modify, conceal, or alter those holy principles in which they were trained from their mother's knee. It is a great calamity when professedly converted men become unfixed, unstable and carried about with every wind of Doctrine. It shows great faultiness of mind and unsoundness of heart when we can

trifle with those grave and solemn Truths of God which have been sanctified by a mother's tears and by a father's earnest life! "I am Your servant," said David, "and the son of Your handmaid." He felt it to be a high honor and, at the same time, a sacred bond which bound him to God, that he was the son of one who could be called God's handmaid. Take care, you who have had Christian training, that you do not trifle with it! "My son, keep your father's commandments and forsake not the law of your mother: bind them continually upon your heart and tie them about your neck."

Protection to character is also found in the fact that solid Doctrines have been learned. This is a fine stone wall. Many among us have been taught the Gospel of the Grace of God and have learned it well, so that we are able to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. Happy are they who have a religion that is grounded upon a clear knowledge of eternal Truths of God! A religion which is all excitement and has little instruction in it, may serve for transient use, but for permanent life purposes there must be a knowledge of those great Doctrines which are fundamental to the Gospel system. I tremble when I hear of a man's giving up, one by one, the vital principles of the Gospel and boasting of his liberality! I hear him say, "These are my views, but others have a right to their views also." That is a very proper expression in reference to mere, "views," but we may not thus speak of Truth, itself, as revealed by God that is one and unalterable, and all are bound to receive it! It is not your view of the Truth, for that is a dim thing, but the very Truth of God, itself, which will save you if your faith embraces it. I will readily yield my way of stating a Doctrine, but not the Doctrine, itself! One man may put it in this way, and another man, another way, but the Truth, itself, must never be given up. The spirit of the Broad School robs us of everything like certainty. I should like to ask some great men of that order whether they believe that anything is taught in the Scriptures which it would be worthwhile for a person to die for—and whether the martyrs were not great fools for laying down their lives for mere opinions which might be right or might be wrong? This Broad Churchism is a breaking down of stone walls and it will let in the devil and all his crew and do infinite harm to the Church of God if it is not stopped! A loose state of belief does great damage to any man's mind.

We are not bigots, but we should be none the worse if we so lived that men called us so. I met a man the other day who was accused of bigotry and I said, "Give me your hand, old fellow. I like to meet with bigots now and then, for the fine old creatures are getting scarce! And the stuff they are made of is so good that if there were more of it, we might see a few men among us again and fewer mollusks." Lately we have seen few men with backbones—the most have been of the jelly-fish order. I have lived in times in which I should have said, "Be liberal and shake off all narrowness," but now I am obliged to alter my tone and cry, "Be steadfast in the Truth of God!" The faith once delivered to the saints is now all the more attractive to me because it is called narrow, for I am weary of that breadth which comes of broken hedges! There are fixed points of the Truth of God, and definite certainties of

creed—and woe to you if you allow these stone walls to crumble down! I fear that the slothful are a numerous band and that ages to come may have to deplore the laxity which has been applauded by this negligent generation!

Another fence which is too often neglected is that of godly habits which had been formed. The sluggard allows this wall to be broken down. I will mention some valuable guards of life and character. One is the habit of secret prayer. Private prayer should be regularly offered, at least in the morning and in the evening. We cannot do without set seasons for drawing near to God. To look into the face of man without having first seen the face of God is very dangerous—to go out into the world without locking up the heart and giving God the key is to leave it open to all sorts of spiritual vagrants! At night, again, to go to your rest as the swine roll into their sty, without thanking God for the mercies of the day, is shameful! The evening sacrifice should be devoutly offered as surely as we have enjoyed the evening fireside. We should thus put ourselves under the wings of the Preserver of Men. It may be said, "We can pray at all times." I know we can, but I fear that those who do not pray at stated hours seldom pray at all! Those who pray in season are the most likely persons to pray at all seasons. Spiritual life does not care for a cast-iron regulation, but since life casts itself into some mold or other, I would have you careful of its external habit, as well as its internal power. Never allow great gaps in the wall of your habitual private prayer!

I go a step farther. I believe that there is a great guardian power about family prayer and I feel greatly distressed because I know that very many Christian families neglect it. Romanism, at one time, could do nothing in England because it could offer nothing but the shadow of what Christians had already in substance. "Do you hear that bell tinkling in the morning! What is that for? To go to church to pray!" "Indeed," said the Puritan, "I have no need to go there to pray. I have had my children together and we have read a passage of Scripture, prayed, sang the praises of God—we have a church in our house." Ah, there goes that bell again in the evening. What is that for? Why, it is the vesper bell! The good man answered that he had no need to trudge a mile or two for that, for his holy vespers had been said and sung around his own table, of which the big Bible was the chief ornament! They told him that there could be no service without a priest, but he replied that every godly man should be a priest in his own house. Thus have the saints defied the overtures of priestcraft and kept the faith from generation to generation! Household devotion and the pulpit are, under God, the stone walls of Protestantism! And my prayer is that these may not be broken down.

Another fence to protect piety is found in weeknightservices. I notice that when people forsake weeknight meetings the power of their religion evaporates. I do not speak of those lawfully detained to watch the sick and attend to farm-work and other business, or as domestic servants and the like—there are exceptions to all rules—but I mean those who could attend if they had a mind to do so. When people say, "It is quite enough for me to be wearied with the sermons of the Sunday. I do not want to go out to Prayer Meetings, lectures and

so forth"—then it is clear that they have no appetite for the Word of God—and surely this is a bad sign. If you have a bit of wall built to protect the Sunday, and then six times the distance left without a fence, I believe that Satan's cattle will get in and do no end of mischief!

Take care, also, of the stone wall of Bible reading, and of speaking often, one to another, concerning the things of God. Associate with the godly and commune with God and you will thus, by the blessing of God's Spirit, keep up a good fence against temptations, which otherwise will get into the fields of your soul and devour all goodly fruits!

Many have found much protection for the field of daily life in the stone wall of a public profession of faith. I am speaking to you who are real Believers and I know that you have often found it a great safeguard to be known and recognized as a follower of Jesus! I have never regretted—and I never shall regret—the day on which I walked to the little river Lark, in Cambridgeshire, and was there buried with Christ in Baptism! In this I acted contrary to the opinions of all my friends whom I respected and esteemed—but as I had read the Greek Testament for myself, I felt bound to be immersed upon the profession of my faith, and so I was. By that act I said to the world, "I am dead to you, and buried to you in Christ, and I hope henceforth to live in newness of life." That day, by God's Grace, I imitated the tactics of the general who meant to fight the enemy till he conquered and, therefore, he burned his boats that there might be no way of retreat! I believe that a solemn confession of Christ before men is as a thorn hedge to keep one within bounds and to keep off those who hope to draw you aside. Of course, it is nothing but a hedge—and it is of no use to fence in a field of weeds—but when wheat is growing, a hedge is of great consequence. You who imagine that you can be the Lord's and yet lie open like a common, are under a great error! You ought to be distinguished from the world and obey the Voice which says, "Come you out from among them, be you separate." The promise of salvation is to the man who with his heart believes and with his mouth confesses. Say right boldly, "Let others do as they will! As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." By this act you come out into the King's highway and put yourself under the protection of the Lord of Pilgrims—and He will take care of you. Oftentimes, when otherwise you might have hesitated, you will say, "The vows of the Lord are upon me—how can I draw back?" I pray you, then, set up the stone wall and keep it up! And if it has at any corner been tumbled over, set it up again and let it be seen by your conduct and conversation that you are a follower of Jesus Christ—and are not ashamed to have it known!

Keep to your religious principles like men and do not turn aside for the sake of gain or respectability! Do not let wealth break down your wall, for I have known some make a great gap to let their carriage go through and to let in wealthy worldlings for the sake of their society. Those who forsake their principles to please men will in the end be lightly esteemed, but he who is faithful shall have the honor which comes from God. Look well to this hedge of steadfast adherence to the faith and you shall find a great blessing in it.

There is yet another stone wall which I will mention, namely, firmness of character. Our holy faith teaches a man to be decided in the cause of Christ and to be resolute in getting rid of evil habits. "If your eye offends you"—wear a shade? No—"pluck it out." "If your arm offends you"—hang it in a sling? No—cut it off and cast it from you." True religion is very thorough in what it recommends. It says to us, "touch not the unclean thing." But many persons are so idle in the ways of God that they have no mind of their own—evil companions tempt them, and they cannot say, "No." They need a stone wall made up of noes! Here are the stones, "no, no, No." Dare to be different! Resolve to keep close to Christ! Make a stern determination to permit nothing in your life, however gainful or pleasurable, if it would dishonor the name of Jesus! Be dogmatically true, obstinately holy, immovably honest, desperately kind, fixedly upright! If God's Grace sets up this hedge around you, even Satan will feel that he cannot get in and will complain to God, "have You not set a hedge about him?" I have kept you long enough looking over the wall! Let me invite you in and, for a few minutes, let us— II. CONSIDER THE CONSEQUENCES OF A BROKEN-DOWN FENCE.

To make short work of it, first, the boundary is gone. Those lines of separation which were kept up by the good principles which were instilled in him by religious habits, by a bold profession and by a firm resolve, have vanished. And now the question is, "Is he a Christian, or is he not?" The fence is so far gone that he does not know which is his Lord's property and which remains an open common. In fact, he does not know whether he is still included in the Royal domain, or left to be mere waste of the world's manor! This is for lack of keeping up the fences. If that man had lived near to God, if he had walked in his integrity, if the Spirit of God had richly rested on him in all holy living and waiting upon God, he would have known where the boundary was and he would have seen whether his land lay in the parish of All-Saints, or in the region called No-Man's-Land, or in the district where Satan is the lord of the manor! I heard of a dear old saint the other day who, when she was near to death, was attacked by Satan and, waving her finger at the enemy in her gentle way, she routed him by saying, "Chosen! Chosen! Chosen!" She knew that she was chosen and she remembered the text, "The Lord that has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you." When the wall stands in its integrity all around the field, we can resist the devil by bidding him leave the Lord's property alone! "Begone! Look somewhere else. I belong to Christ, not to you." To do this you must mend the hedges well, so that there shall be a clear boundary line—and then you can say, "Trespassers, beware!" Do not yield an inch to the enemy, but make the wall all the higher, the more he seeks to enter. O that this adversary may never find a gap to enter by!

Next, when the wall has fallen, the protection is gone. When a man's heart has its wall broken, all his thoughts will go astray and wander upon the mountains of vanity. Like sheep, thoughts need careful folding, or they will be off in no time. "I hate vain thoughts," said

David, but slothful men are sure to have plenty of them, for there is no keeping your thoughts out of vanity unless you stop every gap and shut every gate. Holy thoughts, comfortable meditations, devout longings and gracious communing will be off and gone if we sluggishly allow the stone wall to get out of repair.

Nor is this all, for as good things go out, so bad things come in. When the wall is gone, every passer-by sees, as it were, an invitation to enter! You have set before him an open door and in he comes. Are there fruits? He plucks them, of course. He walks about as if it were a public place and he pries everywhere. Is there any secret corner of your heart which you would keep for Jesus? Satan or the world will walk in—and do you wonder? Every passing goat, or roaming ox, or stray ass visits the growing crops and spoils more than he eats! And who can blame the creature when the gaps are so wide? All manner of evil lusts, desires and imaginations prey upon an unfenced soul. It is of no use for you to say, "Lead us not into temptation." God will hear your prayer and He will not lead you there, but you are leading yourself into it, you are tempting the devil to tempt you! If you leave yourself open to evil influences, the Spirit of God will be grieved

and He may leave you to reap the result of your folly. What do you think, Friend? Had you not better attend to your fences at once?

And then there is another evil, for the land itself will go away. "No," you say, "how can that be?" If a stone wall is broken down around a farm in England, a man does not thereby lose his land, but in many parts of Palestine the land is all ups and downs on the sides of the hills—and every bit of ground is terraced and kept up by walls. When the walls fall, the soil slips over, terrace upon terrace, and the vines and trees go down with it! Then the rain comes and washes the soil away and nothing is left but barren crags which would starve a lark! In the same manner, a man may so neglect himself, so neglect the things of God and become so careless and indifferent about Doctrine, and about holy living, that his power to do good ceases and his mind, his heart, and his energy seem to be gone. The Prophet said, "Ephraim is a silly dove, without heart." There are flocks of such silly doves. The man who trifles with religion, sports with his own soul and will soon degenerate into so much of a trifler that he will be averse to solemn thought and incapable of real usefulness! I charge you, dear Friends, to be sternly true to yourselves and to your God! Stand to your principles in this evil and wicked day! Now, when everything seems to be turned into marsh, mire and mud—and religious thought appears to be silently sliding and slipping along, descending like a stream of slime into the Dead Sea of Unbelief—get solid walls built around your life, around your faith and around your character! Stand fast and having done all, still stand! May God the Holy Spirit cause you to be rooted and grounded, built up and established, fixed and confirmed, never "casting away your confidence, which has great recompense of reward." Lastly, I want, if I can, to— ' III. WAKE UP THE SLUGGARD.

I would like to throw a handful of gravel up to his window. It is time to get up, for the sun has drunk up all the dew. He craves "a little more sleep." My dear Fellow, if you take a little more sleep, you will never wake at all till you lift up your eyes in another world! Wake at once! Leap from your bed before you are smothered in it. Wake up! Do you not see where you are? You have let things alone till your heart is covered with sins like weeds. You have neglected God and Christ till you have grown worldly, sinful, careless, indifferent, ungodly! I mean some of you who were once named with the sacred name! You have become like worldlings and are almost as far from being what you ought to be, as others who make no profession at all! Look at yourselves and see what has come of your neglected walls. Then look at some of your fellow Christians and mark how diligent they are. Look at many among them who are poor and illiterate—and yet they are doing far more than you for the Lord Jesus! In spite of your talents and opportunities, you are an unprofitable servant, letting all things run to waste! Is it not time that you bestirred yourself? Look again at others who, like yourself, went to sleep, meaning to wake in a little while. What has become of them? Alas, for there are those who have fallen into gross sin, dishonored their character and who have been put away from the Church of God—yet they only went a little further than you have done! Your state of heart is much the same as theirs and if you should be tempted, as they have been, you will probably make shipwreck as they have done! Oh, see to it, you that slumber, for an idle professor is ready for anything. A slothful professor's heart is tinder for the devil's tinderbox! Does your heart thus invite the sparks of temptation?

Remember, lastly, the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Shall He come and find you sleeping? Remember the judgment. What will you say to excuse yourself for opportunities lost, time wasted and talents wrapped up in a napkin when the Lord shall come?

As for you, my unconverted Friend, if you go dreaming through this world without any sort of trouble, and never look to the state of your heart at all, you will be a lost man beyond all question! The slothful can have no hope, for "if the righteous scarcely are saved," who strive to serve their Lord—where will those appear who sleep on in defiance of the calls of God? Salvation is wholly and alone of Grace, as you well know—but Grace never works in men's minds towards slumbering and indifference—it tends towards energy, activity, fervor, importunity, self-sacrifice! God grant us the indwelling of His Holy Spirit, that all things may be set in order, sins cut up by the roots within the heart and the whole man protected by sanctifying Grace from the wasters which lurk around, hoping to enter where the wall is low. O Lord, remember us in mercy, fence us about by Your power, and keep us from the sloth which would expose us to evil, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 119:1-20.

It is not easy to see the special subjects that are spoken of by David in each of the short portions of eight verses, yet I do not doubt that if each portion were carefully examined, we would see that there is some thread running through. We have not here simply a number

of pious sentences about the excellency of God's Word, but we have choice gems, each of them set in a golden ring of spiritual intent and purpose. I think the first eight verses, all of which begin with that letter Aleph, or A, set forth the excellence of abiding in holiness and walking continually in the way of the Lord. Not so much the restoring and comforting power of the Word, as the blessedness of that Word in leading us to conduct ourselves in consistency of character at all times.

Verse 1. Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the Law of the LORD. There is another blessing which comes before this. "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered." And we can never know the blessing of this 119th Psalm unless we have felt in our own souls that first blessing—the blessedness of forgiven sin! But when, through the forgiveness of sin, we are put upon Gospel ground and are saved—then, not according to the Law, but according to the Gospel—does this blessing come upon us. "Blessed are the undefiled in the way." The men who have kept their garments unspotted from the world—who from the time of their conversion even until now have been under the influence of the Divine Spirit, and so have been enabled to walk in holiness without once defiling their garments with any great and public sin—who walk in the Law of the Lord, not occasionally, but always—whose daily walk is in conformity with the Divine Mind—these are truly blessed!

2. Blessed are they that keep His testimonies and that seek Him with the whole heart. For he that has most of God, yet needs to seek more. We keep the testimonies—those we know, for we are taught of the Lord according to the promise, "All your children shall be taught of the Lord." Yet we still seek more. With our whole heart we are pressing on still to something higher and better! Even the undefiled in the way are so, comparatively—they are not absolutely undefiled, so as to be absolutely perfect in the sight of God—hence they feel their imperfection and they press after something better. They seek Him with the whole heart.

3, 4. They also do no iniquity, they walk in His ways. You have commanded us to keep Your precepts diligently. So that if we do, we are unprofitable servants. We have done no more than was our duty to do! When His Divine Grace has renewed us and has enabled us to walk in all sobriety, truthfulness and holiness, even then we have nothing to boast of! "You have commanded us to keep Your precepts diligently."

5. O that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes! "Oh, that I may never defile my garments!" And he who has not defiled his garments still prays the same prayer that he may be kept still and directed still. "Oh, that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes!"

6. Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your commandments. It gives a man boldness. Integrity of heart before God breeds sacred courage. He has nothing to be ashamed of and he is not ashamed when he has respect unto all God's commandments.

7. I will praise You with uprightness of heart when I shall have learned Your righteous judgments. Not, "I will praise myself." Not, "I will take credit, myself, for my clean walking," but, "When You have taught me and I learn Your ways, then all the praise shall be rendered unto You." This is the fruit of evangelical obedience! Legal obedience, even could it be rendered, would be sure to claim the servant's wage and take to itself the praise—but the obedience of a child of God leads to the laying of honor at Jehovah's feet.

8. I will keep Your statutes: O forsake me not utterly! Strong resolution, but a deep consciousness of weakness and unworthiness—

"I will, but oh '...how can I do it? Oh, for this, no strength have I— My strength is at Your feet to lie. Oh, forsake me not utterly."

Now, in the next eight verses it seems to me that the subject is somewhat different. We have seen the excellence of an undefiled way. Now we have before us one who wants to prove the power of the Word to keep him in that undefiled way, and so he begins with this question.

9. How shall a young man cleanse his way? His passions are strong, his experience little. His tempers are many—his friends cannot always be at his side. "How shall he cleanse his way?" It is very apt to become miry. The answer is—

9. By taking heed thereto according to Your Word. The Word of God will keep him in the clean path—will warn him of all the mire into which he would have fallen—and if he takes heed to his steps, he shall not trip.

10. With my whole heart have I sought You: O let me not wander from Your commandments. There is the young man's fear and it may be the old man's fear, too. "I have sought You sincerely and earnestly, but do not permit my weaker passions to get the mastery over me—do not suffer me in some unguarded hour to be carried captive by my lusts. Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments. It were better to die than to wander from Your way." The true convert dreads sin! He loathes the very thought of the most pleasurable folly. "Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments."

11. Your Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against You. There is the dread, you see—the dread of sinning—the dread of defiling his way. So he says that he has adopted this Divine remedy. A good division of this text, if anyone would preach from it, is the best thing, "Your Word," in the best place—"have I hid in my heart," for the best of purposes—"that I might not sin against You."

12. Blessed are You, O LORD: teach me Your statutes. As if he said, "Teach me your statutes that I may be blessed, too. You are a happy God. Teach me Your way that I may be happy, too. Blessed are the undefiled. Teach me to be so, that as You are blessed, so I may be."

13. 14. With my lips have I declared all the judgments of Your mouth. I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches. A man's walking will be right when

his delight is of this kind, for where the heart goes, the life will go. To some people religion is a task. It will never have much power over them. But when it becomes a delight, then will their walk be affected by it. A well-known and renowned infidel of the last generation, travelling in Wales, said to a little girl whom he saw reading her Bible, "Well, my Dear," he said, "I see you are getting through your task." "Task, Sir?" she said, "What do you mean? I am reading the Bible." He said, "I thought your mother had set you a chapter to read." "Oh, no, Sir. If my mother wanted to punish me, she would not make me read the Bible. It is the most delightful book in all the world and it is a great joy to me when I can get a little time alone to read my Bible." It touched his heart. As he confessed afterwards, he was delighted to find something like genuine religion. And where you find delight in religion, there it is genuine! True, genuine religion is like some of the German waters. They come up all fresh and sparkling. I like to see the sparkling in it—a little sparking religion—a little flash of joy and of delight. But very much that we get now-a-days is flat, stale, dull, unprofitable. They keep it corked, but badly corked, usually, and when we see it, there is nothing in it that we should desire it! It is a poor article. God give us delight in Himself, for that is true religion!—

"I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies As much as in all riches."

15. I will meditate in Your precepts, and have respect unto Your ways. An excellent way of keeping the life clean is to keep the thoughts clean. Our boys are brought to prison by reading the abominable trash that is poured forth for juveniles—and many and many a crime has been the result of the fiction of the present day! It is often not only light reading, but filthy reading, too. If we would read God's Word more, and meditate in it better, our hearts would be kept sweet and so would our lives!

16. I will delight myself in Your statutes: I will not forget Your Word. God grant that we never may.

17. Deal bountifully with Your servant, that I may live, and keep Your Word. Does it need much Grace, then, to keep a child of God alive—even to keep him alive? Yes, it does! Little Grace will be of no use to us. We must have great Grace, for our needs are great. Sometimes our troubles are great. At other times our temptations are great. We are always in great necessity and You, Lord, must have a large bank, and you must give it liberally to us, or else we, poor, penniless beggars, must utterly die of need. Merely to live, then, needs the bounty of God. "Deal bountifully with Your servant, that I may live and keep Your Word"—for there is no living in truth, except as we keep the Word of God. Those who live in the neglect of God's Word are not living at all, but they are dead while they live! God deliver us from such life.

18. Open You my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Your Law. They are there, but I cannot see them unless You open my eyes. It is not that Your Word is dark, but that my eyes are dim. Yes, by nature they are blinded altogether. Oh, You who are the great Physician of the blind, open my eyes!

19. I am a stranger in the earth: hide not Your commandments from me. Do you see the drift of that? He says, "I am a stranger here. Then, Lord, if You do not become and continue to be my Acquaintance, I am altogether alone." It is true of the Christian that he cannot find anything here that can satisfy his soul. He must, therefore, have the Lord, or else he is in a very sorry case. Oh, Beloved, the more you find yourselves strangers in this world, the more are you becoming like your God! The Psalmist says elsewhere, "For I am a stranger with You." Not, "to You," but, "with You, like You," for God is a stranger in this world. Men do not recognize Him or delight themselves in Him. "So, since, Lord, I have no other friend, and can find no other satisfying portion, hide not Your commandments from me. On the contrary, let me see more of You, because I have nothing else."

20. My soul breaks for the longing that it has unto Your judgments at all times. We cannot always say that, for we sometimes wish that our hearts would break. Sometimes we sing—

"My heart rejoice or ache— Resolve this doubt for me. And if it is not broken, break And heal it if it be."