

SPURGEON'S LAST MANIFESTO

'THE GREATEST FIGHT IN THE WORLD'

A version in easier English

by Geoffrey Stonier

INTRODUCTION

May all the prayers which have already been offered up be answered abundantly and speedily! May more of such pleading follow that in which we have united! The most memorable part of past Conferences has been the holy partnership in believing prayer; and I trust we are not falling off in that regard, but are growing yet more fervent and eager in intercession. On his knees, the believer is invincible.

I was greatly concerned about this Address for many months before it came off. Assuredly, it is to me the child of many prayers. I should like to be able to speak well on so worthy an occasion, when the best of speech may be well-enlisted; but I desire to be, as our brother's prayer put it, absolutely in the Lord's hands in this matter, as well as in every other. I would be willing to speak with stammering tongue if God's purpose could be answered more fully; and I would even gladly lose all power of speech if, by being famished of human words, you might feed all the better on that spiritual meat which is to be found alone in him, who is the incarnate Word of God.

I may say to you, as speakers, that I am persuaded we should prepare ourselves with all diligence, and try to do our very best in our great Master's service. I think I have read that when a handful of lion-like Greeks held the pass against the Persians, a spy, who came to see what they were doing, went back and told the great king that they were poor creatures for they were busy in combing their hair. The tyrant saw things in a true light when he learned that a people who could adjust their hair before battle set a great value on their heads, and would not bow them to a coward's death. If we are very careful to use our best language when proclaiming eternal truths, we may leave our opponents to infer that we are yet more careful of the doctrines themselves. We must not be untidy soldiers when a great fight is before us, for that would look like despondency. We advance into the battle against false doctrine and worldliness and sin without a fear as to the ultimate issue. And therefore our talk should not be that of crude passion, but of well-considered principle. It is not ours to be slovenly since we desire to be triumphant. Do your work well at this time that all may see that you are not going to be driven from it. The Persian said this when, on another occasion, he saw a handful of warriors advancing — 'That little handful of men! Surely, they cannot mean to fight!' But one who stood by said, 'Yes, they do, for they have polished their shields and brightened their armour.' Men mean business, depend on it, when they are not hurried into disorder. It was the way with the Greeks, when they had a bloody day before them, to show the stern joy of warriors by being well dressed. I think, brothers, that when we have great work to do for Christ, and mean to do it, we will not go to the pulpit or the platform to say the first thing that comes to our lips. If we speak for Jesus, we ought to speak at our best, though, even then, men are not killed by the glitter of shields nor by the smoothness of a warrior's hair; but a higher power is needed to cut through coats of mail. To the God of armies I look up. May He defend the right! But with no careless step do I advance to the front; neither does any doubt possess me. We are feeble, but the Lord our God is mighty, and the battle is the Lord's rather than ours. (2 Chronicles 20:15)

Only one fear is upon me to a certain extent. I am anxious that my deep sense of responsibility may not lessen my efficiency. A man may feel that he ought to do so well that, for that very reason, he may not do as well as he might. An overpowering feeling of responsibility may breed paralysis. I once recommended a young clerk to a bank,

and his friends very properly strictly charged him to be very careful with his figures. This advice he heard times out of mind. He became so extremely careful that he grew nervous; and, whereas he had been accurate before, his anxiety caused him to make mistake after mistake till he left his situation. It is possible to be so anxious as to how and what you should speak that your manner grows constrained, and you forget those very points which you meant to make the most prominent.

Brothers, I am telling some of my private thoughts to you because we are alike in our calling; and having the same experiences, it does us good to know that it is so. We who lead have the same weaknesses and troubles as you who follow. We must prepare, but we must also trust in him without whom nothing begins, continues, or ends properly.

I take this comfort, that even if I should not speak adequately on my theme, the topic itself will speak to you. There is something even in starting an appropriate subject. If a man speaks well on a subject which has no practical importance, it is not right that he should have spoken. As one of the ancients said, 'It is idle to speak much to the point on a matter which itself is not to the point.' Carve a cherry-stone with the utmost skill, and, at best, it is only a cherry-stone; while a diamond, if badly cut, is still a precious stone. If the matter is of great weight, even if the preacher cannot speak adequately on his theme, yet to call attention to it is no vain thing. The subjects we shall consider at this time ought to be considered, and considered right now. I have chosen present and pressing truths; and if you will think them out for yourselves, you will not waste the time occupied by this address. With what inward fervour do I pray that we may all profit by this hour of meditation!

Happily, the themes are such that I can express them even in this address. As a smith can teach his apprentice while making a horseshoe — yes, in the making of a horseshoe — so can we make our own sermons examples of the doctrine they contain. In this case, we can practise while we preach, if the Lord is with us. A lecturer in cookery instructs his pupils by following his own recipes. He prepares a dish in front of his audience, and while he describes the food and its preparation, he tastes it himself, and his friends are enlightened also. He will succeed in his dainty dishes even if he is not an eloquent speaker. The one who feeds his hearers is surer of success than he who only plays well on his instrument and leaves with his audience no memory except that of pleasant sound. If the subjects we bring before our people are in themselves good, they will make up for our lack of skill in setting them forth. So long as the guests get their spiritual meat, the server at the table is happy to be forgotten.

My topics have to do with our life-work, with the crusade against error and sin in which we are engaged. I hope that everyone here wears the red Cross on his heart, and is pledged to do and dare for Christ and for his Cross, and never to be satisfied till Christ's foes are defeated and Christ himself is satisfied. Our fathers used to speak of 'The Cause of God and the Truth'; and it is for this that we bear arms, the few against the many, the feeble against the mighty. Oh, to be found good soldiers of Jesus Christ! (2 Timothy 2:3)

Three things are of utmost importance just now, and, indeed, they always have stood, and always will stand, in the front rank for practical purposes. The first is our **armoury**, which is the inspired Word; the second is our **army**, the Church of the living God,

called out by himself, which we must lead under our Lord's command; and the third is our **strength**, by which we wear the armour and wield the sword. The Holy Spirit is our power to be and to do; to suffer and to serve; to grow and to fight; to wrestle and to overcome. Our third theme is of greatest importance; and though we place it last, we rank it first.

1. Our Armoury

We begin, then, with OUR ARMOURY. That armoury is to me, at any rate — and I hope it is to each one of you — THE BIBLE. To us, Holy Scripture 'is like the tower of David, built for an armoury, on which hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men.' (Song of Solomon 4:4) If we need weapons, we must come here for them, and here alone. Whether we seek the sword of offence or the shield of defence, we must find it within the volume of inspiration. If others have any other storehouse, I confess at once that I have none. I have nothing else to preach when I have gone through this book.

Indeed, I can have no wish to preach at all if I may not continue to expound the subjects which I find in these pages. What else is worth preaching? Brothers, the truth of God is the only treasure for which we seek, and the Scripture is the only field in which to dig for it.

We need nothing more than God has seen fit to reveal. Certain erring spirits are never at home till they are abroad; they crave for a something which I think they will never find, either in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth, so long as they are in their present frame of mind. They will never rest, for they will have nothing to do with an infallible revelation; and so they are doomed to wander throughout time and eternity and find no continuing city. (Hebrews 13:14) For the moment, they glory as if they were satisfied with their last new toy; but in a few months it is all sport to them to break in pieces all the notions which they formerly prepared with care and paraded with delight. They go up a hill only to come down again. Indeed, they say that the pursuit of truth is better than truth itself. (2 Timothy 3:7) They like fishing better than the fish; which may very well be true, since their fish are very small and very full of bones. These men are as great at destroying their own theories as certain destitute people are at tearing up their clothes. They begin again *de novo* [from scratch], times without number; their house is always having its foundation dug out. They should be good at beginnings, for they have always been beginning since we have known them. They are as the rolling thing before the whirlwind (Isaiah 17:13), or **'like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.'** (Isaiah 57:20) Although their cloud is not that cloud which signified the divine presence, yet it is always moving before them, and their tents are scarcely pitched before it is time for the stakes to be pulled up again. These men are not even seeking certainty; their heaven lies in shunning all fixed truth and following every will-o'-the-wisp of speculation. They are ever learning, but they never come to the knowledge of the truth.

As for us, we cast anchor in the haven of the Word of God. Here is our peace, our strength, our life, our motive, our hope, our happiness. God's Word is our ultimatum. We have it here. Our understanding cries, 'I have found it'; our conscience asserts that

here is the truth; and our heart finds here a support to which all her affections can cling; and hence we rest content.

If the revelation of God were not enough for our faith, what could we add to it? Who can answer this question? What could anyone propose to add to the sacred Word? A moment's thought would lead us to scout with derision the most attractive words of men if it were proposed to add them to the Word of God. The fabric would not be of a piece. Would you add rags to royal apparel? Would you pile up the filth of the streets in a king's treasury? Would you add the pebbles of the seashore to the diamonds of Golconda?

Anything more than the Word of God sets before us, for us to believe and to preach as the life of men, seems utterly absurd to us; yet we confront an entire generation who are always wanting to discover a new motive power, and a new gospel for their churches. The coverlet of their bed does not seem to be long enough, and they desire to borrow a yard or two of linsey-woolsey [the clothing of the very poor] from the Unitarian, the Agnostic, or even the Atheist. Well; if there is any spiritual force or heavenward power to be found beyond that reported in this Book, I think we can do without it. Indeed, it would be such a sham that we are better off without it. The Scriptures in their own sphere are like God in the universe - All-sufficient. In them is revealed all the light and power the mind of man can need in spiritual things. We hear of other motive power beyond what lies in the Scriptures, but we believe such a force to be a pretentious nothing.

Here is a train come off the lines, or is otherwise unable to proceed, and a break-down gang arrives. Engines are brought to move the great load. At first, there seems to be no stir; engine power is not enough. Listen! A small boy has it. He cries, 'Father, if they have not got enough power, I will lend them my rocking-horse to help them.' We have had the offer of a considerable number of rocking-horses of late. They have not accomplished much that I can see, but they promised much. I fear their effect has been for evil rather than good; they have moved the people to derision, and have driven them out of the places of worship which once they were glad to crowd. The new toys have been exhibited, and the people, after seeing them for a little, have moved on to other toy shops. These fine new nothings have done no good, and they never will do any good while the world remains. The Word of God is quite sufficient to interest and bless the souls of men for all time; but novelties soon fail. 'Surely', cries one, 'we must add in our own thoughts.' My brother, think by all means; but the thoughts of God are better than yours. You may shed fine thoughts, as trees in autumn cast their leaves; but there is One who knows more about your thoughts than you do, and he thinks little of them. Is it not written, **The Lord knows the thoughts of man, that they are futile?** (Psalm 94:11) To liken our thoughts to the great thoughts of God, would be a gross absurdity. Would you bring your candle to find the sun? Your nothingness to replenish the eternal all? It is better to be silent before the Lord than to dream of supplementing what he has spoken. The Word of the Lord is to the thoughts of men like a garden to a wilderness. Keep within the covers of the sacred book and you are in the land which flows with milk and honey. Why seek to add to it the desert sands?

Try not to cast out anything from this perfect volume. If you find the truth there, there let it stand, and make it yours to preach according to the analogy and proportion of

your faith. That which is worthy of God's revealing is worthy of our preaching; and that is all too little for me to claim for it.

Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.' (Luke 4:4)

Every word of God is pure; he is a shield to those who put their trust in him.
(Proverbs 30:5)

Let every revealed truth be brought out in its own season. Do not go anywhere else for a subject. With such infinity before you, there is no need for you to do so; with such glorious truths to preach, it would be wilful wickedness if you did so.

The adaptation of all this provision for our warfare we have already tested. The weapons of our armoury are the very best; for we have tested them and found them so. Some of you younger brothers have only tested the Scripture a little as yet; but others of us, who are now getting grey, assure you that we have tried the Word, as silver is tried in a furnace of earth; and it has stood every test, even to seventy times seven. The sacred Word has endured more criticism than the best accepted forms of philosophy or science, and it has survived every ordeal. As a living theologian has said, 'After its present assailants are all dead, their funeral sermons will be preached from this Book: not one verse omitted - from the first page of Genesis to the last page of Revelation.' Some of us have lived for many years in daily conflict, constantly putting to the proof the Word of God; and we can honestly give you this assurance, that it is equal to every emergency. After using this sword of two edges on coats of mail and bucklers of brass, we find no notch at its edge. It is neither broken nor blunted in the fray. It would cleave the devil himself from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot; and yet it would show no sign of failure whatever. Today, it is still the self-same mighty Word of God that it was in the hands of our Lord Jesus. How it strengthens us when we remember the many conquests of souls which we have achieved through the sword of the Spirit! Have any of you known or heard of such a thing as conversion brought about by any other doctrine than what is in the Word? I should like to have a catalogue of conversions through modern theology. I would subscribe for a copy of such a work. I will not say what I might do with it after I had read it; but I would, at least, increase its sale by one copy just to see what progressive divinity pretends to have done. Imagine, conversions through the doctrines of universal restitution! Conversions through the doctrines of doubtful inspiration! Conversions to the love of God, and to faith in his Christ, by hearing that the death of the Saviour was only the consummation of a grand example, and was not a substitutionary sacrifice! Conversions by a gospel out of which all the gospel has been drained! They say, 'Wonders will never cease'; but such wonders will never begin. Let them report of changes of heart, and give us an opportunity to test them; and then, perhaps, we may consider whether it is worth our while to leave that Word which we have tried on hundreds, and, some of us here, on many thousands, and have always found effective for salvation. We know why they sneer at conversions. These are grapes which such foxes cannot reach, and therefore they are sour. As we believe in the new birth, and expect to see it come about in thousands, we will adhere to that Word of truth by which the Holy Spirit works regeneration. In a word, in our warfare, we will keep to the old weapon of the sword of the Spirit until we can find a better. 'There is none like that. Give it to me', is, at present, our verdict.

How often we have seen the Word effective for consolation! It is, as one brother expressed it in prayer, a difficult thing to deal with broken hearts. What a fool I have felt myself to be when trying to bring out a prisoner from Giant Despair's Castle! How hard it is to persuade despondency to hope! How hard I have tried to hunt my game by every art known to me; but, when almost in my grasp, the creature has burrowed down another hole! I had dug him out of twenty already, and then have to begin over again. The convicted sinner uses all kinds of arguments to prove that he cannot be saved. The inventions of despair are as many as the devices of self-confidence. There is no letting light into the dark cellar of doubt except through the window of the Word of God. Within the Scripture, there is balm for every wound, and an ointment for every sore. Oh, the wondrous power in the Scripture to create a soul of hope within the ribs of despair, and bring eternal light into the darkness which has made a long midnight in the innermost soul! Often have we tried the Word of the Lord as 'the cup of consolation' (Jeremiah 16:7), and it has never failed to cheer the despondent. We know what we say, for we have witnessed the blessed facts. The Scriptures of truth, applied by the Holy Spirit, have brought peace and joy to those who sat in darkness and in the valley of the shadow of death. (Psalm 107:10, 13-14)

We have also observed the excellence of the Word in the building up of believers, and in the production of righteousness, holiness, and usefulness. We are always being told, in these days, of the 'ethical' side of the gospel. I pity those to whom this is a novelty. Have they not discovered this before? We have always been dealing with the ethical side of the gospel; indeed, we find it ethical all over. There is no true doctrine which has not been fruitful in good works. Payson wisely said, 'If there is one fact, one doctrine, or promise in the Bible, which has produced no practical effect on your temper or conduct, be assured that you do not truly believe it.' All Scriptural teaching has its practical purpose, and its practical result; and what we have to say, not as a matter of discovery, but as a matter of plain common sense, is this, that if we have had fewer fruits than we could wish with the tree, we suspect that there will be no fruit at all when the tree has gone, and the roots are dug up. The very root of holiness lies in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; and if this is removed with a view to greater fruitfulness, the most astounding folly will have been committed. We have seen a fine morality, a stern integrity, a delicate purity, and, what is more, a devout holiness, produced by the doctrines of grace. We see consecration in life, we see calm resignation in the hour of suffering, we see joyful confidence in the article of death, and these, not in a few instances, but as the general outcome of intelligent faith in the teachings of Scripture. We have even wondered at the sacred result of the old gospel. Though we are accustomed oftentimes to see it, it never loses its charm. We have seen poor men and women yielding themselves to Christ, and living for him, in a way that has made our hearts bow in adoration of the God of grace. We have said, 'This must be a true gospel which can produce such lives as these.' If we have not talked so much about ethics as some have done, we remember an old saying of the country folk: 'Go to such a place to hear about good works, but go to another place to see them.' Much talk, little work! Great cry is the token of little wool. Some have preached good works till there has scarcely been left a decent person in the parish; while others have preached free grace and dying love in such a way that sinners have become saints, and saints have been as boughs loaded down with fruit to the praise and glory of God. Having seen the harvest that springs from our seed, we are not going to change it at the dictates of this whimsical age.

Especially, we have seen and tested the effectiveness of the Word of God when we have been beside the sick bed. I was, only a few days ago, by the side of one of our elders, who appeared to be dying; and it was like heaven below to talk with him. I never saw so much joy at a wedding as I saw in that quiet chamber. He hoped soon to be with Jesus; and he was joyful at the prospect. He said, 'I have no doubt, no cloud, no trouble, no need; no, I have not even a wish. The doctrine you have taught has served me to live by, and now it serves me to die by. I am resting on the precious blood of Christ, and it is a firm foundation.' And he added, 'How silly all those letters against the gospel now appear to me! I have read some of them, and I have noted the attacks on the old faith, but they seem quite absurd to me, now that I lie on the verge of eternity. What could the new doctrine do for me now?' I came down from my interview greatly strengthened and gladdened by the good man's testimony; and all the more was I personally comforted because it was the Word which I myself had constantly preached which had been such a blessing to my friend. If God had so owned it from so poor an instrument, I felt that the Word itself must be very good indeed. I am never so happy amid all the shouts of youthful merriment as on the day when I hear the dying testimony of one who is resting on the eternal gospel of the grace of God. The ultimate issue, as seen on a dying-bed, is a true test, as it is an inevitable one. Preach what will enable men to face death without fear and you will preach nothing but the old gospel.

Brothers, we will array ourselves in what God has supplied for us in the armoury of inspired Scripture, because every weapon in it has been tried and tested in many ways; and never has any part of our array failed us.

Moreover, for evermore we shall keep to the Word of God because we have experienced its power within ourselves. It is not so long ago that you will have forgotten how, like a hammer, the Word of God broke your flinty heart, and brought down your stubborn will. (Jeremiah 23:29) By the Word of the Lord, you were brought to the Cross and comforted by the atonement. That Word breathed a new life into you; and when, for the first time, you knew yourself to be a child of God, you felt the ennobling power of the gospel received by faith. The Holy Spirit brought us salvation through the Holy Scriptures. You trace your conversion, I am sure, to the Word of the Lord; for this alone is 'perfect, converting the soul.' (Psalm 19:7) Whoever may have been the man who spoke it, or whatever may have been the book in which you read it, it was not man's Word, nor man's thought on God's Word, but the Word itself, which made you know salvation in the Lord Jesus. It was neither human reasoning, nor the force of eloquence, nor the power of moral suasion, but the omnipotence of the Spirit, applying the Word itself, that gave you rest and peace and joy through believing. We are ourselves trophies of the power of the sword of the Spirit. He leads us in triumph in every place, the willing captives of his grace. Let no one marvel that we keep close to it.

How many times since conversion has Holy Scripture been everything to you! You have your fainting fits, I suppose. Have you not been restored by the precious cordial of the promise of the Faithful One? A passage of Scripture laid home to the heart speedily quickens the feeble heart into mighty action. Men speak of waters that revive the spirits, and tonics that brace the constitution, but the Word of God has been more than this to us, times beyond number. Amid temptations sharp and strong, and trials fierce and bitter, the Word of the Lord has preserved us. Amid discouragements which

damped our hopes, and disappointments which wounded our hearts, we have felt ourselves strong to do and bear because the assurances of help which we find in our Bibles have brought us a secret, unconquerable energy.

Brothers, we have had experience of the elevation which the Word of God can give us - lifting us up towards God and heaven. If you study books contrary to the inspired volume, are you not conscious of slipping downwards? I have known some to whom such reading has been as a poisonous vapour surrounding them with the death-damp. Yes; and I may add, that to forego your Bible reading for the perusal even of good books would soon bring a conscious decline of the soul. Have you not found that even gracious books may be to you as a plain to look down upon, rather than a summit to which to aspire? You have come up to their level long ago, and get no higher by reading them. It is idle to spend precious time on them. Was it ever so with you and the Book of God? Did you ever rise above its simplest teaching and feel that it tended to draw you downward? Never! In proportion as your mind becomes saturated with Holy Scripture, you are conscious of being right up and carried aloft as on eagles' wings. You seldom come down from a solitary Bible reading without feeling that you have drawn nearer to God — I say a solitary one, for when reading with others, the danger is that stale comments may be flies in the pot of ointment. The prayerful study of the Word is not only a means of instruction, but an act of devotion in which the transforming power of grace is often exercised, changing us into the image of him of whom the Word is a mirror. Is there anything, after all, like the Word of God, when the open book finds open hearts? When I read the lives of such men as Baxter, Brainerd, McCheyne, and many others, why, I feel like one who has bathed himself in some cool brook after having taken a journey through a black country, leaving him dusty and depressed; and this comes of the fact that such men embodied Scripture in their lives and illustrated it in their experience. The washing of water by the Word is what they had, and what we need. We must get it where they found it. To see the effects of the truth of God in the lives of holy men is a confirmation of faith and stimulating to holy aspiration. Other influences do not help us to such a sublime ideal of consecration. If you read the Babylonian books of the present day, you will catch their spirit, and it is a foreign one, drawing you aside from the Lord your God. You may also receive great harm from theologians in whom there is much pretence to the Jerusalem dialect, but their speech is half of Ashdod. These will confuse your mind and defile your faith. It may chance that a book which is on the whole excellent, which has a little taint about it, may do you more mischief than a thoroughly bad one. Be careful; for works of this kind come from the press like clouds of locusts. Scarcely can you find in these days a book that is quite free from the modern leaven, and the least particle of it ferments till it produces the wildest error. In reading books of the new order, though no evident falsehood may appear, you are conscious of a twist being given you, and of a sinking in the tone of your spirit. Therefore, be on your guard. But with your Bible you may always feel at ease; there, every breath from every quarter brings life and health. If you keep close to the inspired book, you can suffer no harm. Rather, you are at the fountain-head of all moral and spiritual good. This is fit food for men of God; this is the bread which nourishes the highest life.

After preaching the gospel for forty years, and after printing the sermons I have preached for more than thirty-six years (reaching now the number of 2,200 in weekly succession), I am fairly entitled to speak about the fullness and richness of the Bible as a preacher's book. Brothers, it is inexhaustible. No question concerning freshness

will arise if we keep closely to the text of the sacred volume. There should be no difficulty finding themes totally different from those we have handled before; the variety is as infinite as the fullness. A long life will only suffice us to skirt the shores of this great continent of light. In the forty years of my own ministry, I have only touched the hem of the garment of divine truth; but what virtue has flowed from it! The Word is like its Author: infinite, immeasurable, and without end. If you were ordained to be a preacher throughout eternity, you would have before you a theme equal to everlasting demands. Brothers, shall we each have a pulpit somewhere amidst the spheres? Shall we have a parish of a million miles? Shall we have voices so strong that they reach attentive constellations? Shall we be witnesses for the Lord of grace to millions of worlds which will be wonder-struck when they hear of the incarnate God? Shall we be surrounded by pure intelligences enquiring and searching into the mystery of God manifest in the flesh? Will the unfallen worlds desire to be instructed in the glorious gospel of the blessed God? And will each one of us have his own tale to tell of our experience of infinite love? I think so, since the Lord has saved us **to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.** (Ephesians 3:10) If such be the case, our Bibles will suffice for ages to come for new themes every morning, and for fresh songs and discourses world without end.

We are resolved, then, since we have this arsenal supplied for us by the Lord, and since we need no other, to use the Word of God only, and to use it with greater energy. We are resolved — and I hope that there is no dissenter among us - to know our Bibles better. Do we know the sacred volume half so well as we should know it? Have we laboured after as complete a knowledge of the Word of God as many a critic has obtained of his favourite classic? Is it not possible that we still meet with passages of Scripture which are new to us? Should not it be so? Is there any part of what the Lord has written which you have never read? I was struck with my brother Archibald Brown's observation, that he thought that unless he read the Scriptures through from end to end there might be inspired teachings which had never been known to him, and so he resolved to read the books in their order; and, having done so once, he continued in the habit. Have we, any of us, omitted to do this? Let us begin at once. I love to see how readily certain of our brothers turn up an appropriate passage, and then quote its fellow, and crown it all with a third. They seem to know exactly the passage which strikes the nail on the head. They have their Bibles, not only in their hearts, but at their finger tips. This is a most valuable attainment for a minister. A good quoter of texts is a good theologian. Certain others, whom I esteem for other things, are yet weak on this point, and seldom quote a text of Scripture correctly. Indeed, their alterations jar on the ear of the Bible reader. It is sadly common among ministers to add a word or subtract a word from the passage, or in some way debase the language of the sacred writings. How often have I heard brothers speak on making 'your calling and salvation sure'! (a misquotation of 2 Peter 1:10) Possibly they do not enjoy so much as we do the Calvinistic word **election**, and therefore allow it to disappear. Others quote half a text, and so miss the meaning. Indeed, in some cases they contradict it. Our respect for the great Author of Scripture should forbid all mauling of his words. No alteration of Scripture can possibly be an improvement. Believers in verbal inspiration should be studiously careful to be verbally correct. The gentlemen who see errors in Scripture may think themselves competent to amend the language of the Lord of hosts; but we who believe God, and accept the very words he uses, may not make so presumptuous an attempt. Let us quote the words as they stand in the best possible translation, and

it will be better still if we know the original and can tell if our version fails to give the sense. How much mischief can arise out of an accidental alteration of the Word! Blessed are those who are in accord with the divine teaching, and receive its true meaning as the Holy Spirit teaches them! Oh, that we might know the Spirit of Holy Scripture thoroughly, drinking it in till we are saturated with it! This is the blessing which we resolve to obtain.

By God's grace, we intend to believe the Word of God more intensely. There is believing, and believing. You believe in all your brothers here assembled, but in some of them you have a conscious practical confidence, since in your hour of trouble they have come to your rescue and proved themselves brothers born for adversity. You confide in them with absolute certainty because you have personally tried and tested them. Your faith was faith before; but now it is a higher, firmer, and more assured confidence. Believe in the inspired volume up to the hilt. Believe it right through; believe it thoroughly; believe it with the whole strength of your being. Let the truths of Scripture become the chief factors in your life, the chief operative forces of your action. Let the great transactions of the gospel story be to you as real and practical facts as any fact which meets you in the domestic circle, or in the outside world. Let them be as vividly true to you as your own ever-present body, with all its aches and pains, its appetites and joys. If we can get out of the realm of fiction and fancy, and into the world of fact, we shall strike a vein of power that will yield us countless treasure of strength. Thus, to become **mighty in the Scriptures** (Acts 18:24) will be to become **'mighty through God** (2 Corinthians 10:4).

We should resolve also that we will quote more of Holy Scripture. Sermons should be full of the Bible; sweetened, strengthened, sanctified with Bible essence. The kind of sermons that people need to hear are outgrowths of Scripture. If they do not love to hear them, there is all the more reason why they should be preached to them. The gospel has the singular faculty of creating a taste for itself. Bible hearers, when they hear indeed, come to be Bible lovers. The mere stringing of texts together is a poor way of making sermons; though some have tried it, and I do not doubt that God has blessed them, since they did their best. It is far better to string texts together, than to pour out one's own poor thoughts in a watered-down flood. There will at least be something to be thought of and remembered if the Holy Word is quoted; and in the other case there may be nothing whatever. Texts of Scripture need not, however, be strung together; they may be fitly brought in to give edge and point to a discourse. They will be the force of the sermon. Our own words are mere paper pellets compared with the rifle shot of the Word. The Scripture is the conclusion of the whole matter. There is no arguing after we find that **it is written**. To a large extent, in the hearts and consciences of our hearers, debate is over when the Lord has spoken. **Thus says the Lord** is the end of discussion for Christian minds; and even the ungodly cannot resist Scripture without resisting the Spirit who wrote it. To speak convincingly we will speak scripturally.

We are further resolved that we will preach nothing but the Word of God. The alienation of the masses from hearing the gospel is largely to be accounted for by the sad fact that it is not always the gospel that they hear if they go to places of worship; and all else falls short of what their souls need. Have you never heard of a king who made a series of great feasts, and invited many to come, week after week? He had a number of servants who were appointed to wait at his table; and these went out on the

appointed days, and spoke with the people. But, somehow, after a while the majority of the people did not come to the feasts. They came in decreasing number; and the great mass of the citizens turned their backs on the banquets. The king made enquiry, and he found that the food provided did not seem to satisfy those who came to look at the banquets; and so they came no more. He himself determined to examine the tables and the food placed on them. He saw much finery and many pieces of display which never came out of his storehouses. He looked at the food and he said, 'But how is this? These dishes, how did they come here? These are not what I provided. My oxen and fatlings were killed, yet we do not have here the meat of fed beasts, but hard meat from cattle lean and starved. Bones are here, but where is the fat and the marrow? The bread also is coarse, whereas mine is made of the finest wheat. The wine is mixed with water, and the water is not from a pure well.' One of those who stood by answered, 'O king, we thought that the people would be filled to quickly with marrow and fatness, and so we gave them bone and gristle to try their teeth on. We thought also that they would grow weary of the best white bread, and so we baked a little at our own homes, in which the bran and husks were allowed to remain. It is the opinion of the learned that our provision is more suitable for these times than what your majesty ordered so long ago. As for the wines on the residue, the taste of men does not run that way in this age; and so transparent a liquid as pure water is too light a draught for men who are used to drink of the river of Egypt, which tastes of mud from the Mountains of the Moon.' Then the king knew why the people had stopped coming to the feast.

Now, does the reason why going to the house of God has become so distasteful to a great many of the population lie in this direction? I believe it does. Have our Lord's servants been chopping up their own odds and ends and tainted bits, to make from them a potted meat for the millions; and do not the millions therefore turn away? Listen to the rest of my parable. 'Clear the tables!' cried the king in his indignation. 'Give the rubbish to the dogs. Bring in the sides of beef. Set out my royal food. Remove this nonsense from the hall, and that adulterated bread from the table, and cast out the water from the muddy river.' They did so; and if my parable is right, very soon there was a rumour throughout the streets that truly royal dainties were to be had. And the people thronged the palace, and the king's name became exceeding great throughout the land. Let us try that plan. Maybe, we shall soon rejoice to see our Master's banquet furnished with guests.

We are resolved, then, to use more fully than ever what God has provided for us in this Book, for we are sure of its inspiration. Let me say that yet again - WE ARE SURE OF ITS INSPIRATION. You will notice that attacks are frequently made against verbal inspiration. The form chosen is a mere pretext. Verbal inspiration is the verbal form of the assault, but the attack is really aimed at inspiration itself. You will not read far into the exercise before you find that the gentleman who started by contesting a theory of inspiration — which none of us ever held — winds up by showing his hand. And that hand wages war with inspiration itself. There is the true point. We care little for any theory of inspiration; in fact, we have none. To us, the plenary [full] verbal inspiration of Holy Scripture is a fact, and not a theory. It is a pity to theorise on a subject which is deeply mysterious, and makes a demand on faith rather than fancy. Believe in the inspiration of Scripture, and believe it in its most intense sense. You will not believe in a truer and fuller inspiration than what really exists. No one is likely to err in that direction, even if error is possible. If you adopt theories which pare off a portion here,

and deny authority to a passage there, you will at last have no inspiration left worthy of the name.

If this book is not infallible, where shall we find infallibility? We have given up the Pope, for he has blundered often and terribly; but we will not set up in his place a horde of little popelings fresh from college. Are these correctors of Scripture infallible? Is it so certain that our Bibles are not right, but that these critics must be so? The old silver is to be depreciated; but the German silver, which is put in its place, is to be taken at the value of gold. Striplings [untested youths] fresh from reading their last new novel correct the beliefs of their fathers who were men of weight and character. Doctrines which produced the godliest generation that ever lived on the face of the earth are shouted down as sheer folly. Nothing is so obnoxious to these creatures as what has the smell of Puritanism on it. Every little man's nose goes up sky-wise at the very sound of the word 'Puritan'; though if the Puritans were here again, they would not dare treat them so cavalierly. For when the Puritans did fight, they were soon known as Ironsides, and their leader could hardly be called a fool, even by those who stigmatised him as a 'tyrant'. Cromwell, and those who supported him, were not all weak-minded persons - surely not? Strange that today these are praised to the skies by the very ones who deride their true successors, believers in the same faith. But where can infallibility be found? **The deep says, 'It is not in me'; and the sea says, 'It is not with me** (Job 28:14); yet those who have no depth at all would have us imagine that it is in them; or else by continual change they hope to hit on it. Are we to believe that infallibility is with learned men? Now, Farmer Smith, when you have read your Bible, and have enjoyed its precious promises, tomorrow morning, you will have to go down the street to ask the scholarly man at the parsonage whether this portion of Scripture belongs to the inspired part of the Word, or whether it is of doubtful authority. It will be well for you to know whether it was written by one of the 'three Isaiahs', or whether by the second of the 'two Obadiahs.' All possibility of certainty is transferred from the spiritual man to a class of persons whose scholarship is pretentious, and who do not even pretend to spirituality. We shall gradually be so full of doubt, and so full of criticism, that only a few of the most profound will know what is Bible, and what is not, and they will dictate to all the rest of us. I have no more faith in their mercy than in their accuracy. They rob us of all that we hold most dear, and glory in the cruel deed. This same reign of terror we will not endure, for we still believe that God reveals himself rather to babes than to the wise and prudent (Matthew 11:25), and we are fully assured that our own old English version of the Scriptures is sufficient for plain men for all purposes of life, salvation, and godliness. We do not despise learning, but we will never say of culture or criticism, **These be thy gods, O Israel!** (Exodus 32:4, 8)

Do you not see why men lower the degree of inspiration in Holy Scripture, and desire to reduce it to the tiniest quantity? It is because the truth of God must be supplanted. If you ever go into a shop in the evening to buy certain goods which depend greatly on colour and texture, which are best judged in the daylight; if, after you have got into the shop, the tradesman proceeds to lower the lighting, or removes the lamp, and then commences to show you his goods, your suspicions would be aroused, and you would conclude that he is trying to palm off an inferior article. I more than suspect this is the little game of the inspiration-depreciators. Whenever a man begins to lower your view of inspiration, it is because he has a trick to play which is not easily performed in the light. He would hold a seance of evil spirits, and then cries, 'Let the lights be lowered.'

We, brothers, are willing to ascribe to the Word of God all the inspiration that we possibly can; and we say boldly that if our preaching is not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in it. We are willing to be tried and tested by it in every way, and we count those to be the noblest of our hearers who search the Scriptures daily to see whether these things be so (Acts 17:11); but to those who belittle inspiration we give no place of authority, no, not for an hour.

Do I hear someone say, 'But still you must submit to the conclusions of science'? No one is more ready than we are to accept the evident facts of science. But what do you mean by science? Is the thing called 'science' infallible? Is it not **science falsely so called**? (1 Timothy 6:20) The history of that human ignorance which calls itself 'philosophy' is absolutely identical with the history of fools, except where it diverges into madness. If another Erasmus were to arise and write the history of folly, he would have to add several more chapters for philosophy and science, and those chapters would be more telling than any others. I should not myself dare to say that philosophers and scientists are in general fools; but I would give them liberty to speak of one another; then at the close I would say, 'Gentlemen, you are less complimentary to each other than I would have been.' I would let the wise of each generation speak of the generation that went before it, or nowadays each half of a generation might deal with the previous half; for there is little of theory in science today that will survive twenty years, and only a little more which will see the first day of the twentieth century. We travel now at so rapid a rate that we rush by sets of scientific hypotheses as quickly as we pass telegraph poles when riding in an express train. All that we are certain of today is this, that what the learned were sure of a few years ago is now thrown into the limbo of discarded errors. I believe in science, but not in what is called 'science.' No proven fact in nature is opposed to revelation. The nice speculations of the pretentious we cannot reconcile with the Bible, and would not if we could. I feel like the man who said, 'I can understand to some extent how these great men have found out the weight of the stars, and their distances from one another, and even how, by using a spectroscope, they have discovered the materials they are made of; but', said he, 'I cannot guess how they found out their names.' Just so. The fanciful part of science, so dear to many, is what we do not accept. That is the important part of science to many - that part which is mere guesswork, for which the guessers fight tooth and nail. The mythology of science is as false as the mythology of the heathen; but this is the thing they make a god of. I say again, as far as its facts are concerned, science is never in conflict with the truths of Holy Scripture, but the hurried deductions drawn from those facts, and the theories classed as facts, are opposed to Scripture, and necessarily so, because falsehood can never agree with truth.

Two sorts of people have done great mischief, and yet they are neither of them worth consideration as judges in the matter, both being disqualified. It is essential that an umpire should know both sides of a question, and neither of these is thus instructed.

The first is the irreligious scientist. What does he know about religion? What can he know? He is out of court when the question is raised - 'Does science agree with religion?' Obviously, the one who would answer this question must know both sides of the argument. The second is a better man, but capable of still more mischief. I mean the unscientific Christian, who troubles his head about reconciling the Bible with science. He had better leave well alone, and not begin his tinkering trade. The mistake made by such men has been that in trying to solve a difficulty, they have either twisted

the Bible, or distorted science. The solution is soon seen to be erroneous, and then we hear the cry that Scripture has been defeated. Not at all; not at all. It is only a vain gloss on it that has been removed. Here is a good brother who has written a tremendous book to prove that the six days of creation represent six great geological periods; and he shows how the geological strata, and attendant organisms follow very much the order of the Genesis story of creation. It may be so, or it may not be so; but if anybody should soon show that the strata do not lie in any such order, what would be my reply? I should say that the Bible never taught that they did. The Bible said, **In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth** (Genesis 1:1). That leaves any length of time for your fire-ages and your ice-periods, and all that, before the establishment of the present age of man. Then we reach the six days in which the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and rested on the seventh day. There is nothing said about long ages of time; but, on the contrary, **the evening and the morning were the first day**, and, **the evening and the morning were the second day**, and so on. I do not here lay down any theory, but simply say that if our friend's great book is all overstatement, the Bible is not responsible for it. It is true that his theory has an appearance of support from the parallelism which he makes out between the organic life of the ages and that of the seven days; but this may be accounted for from the fact that God usually follows a certain order whether he works in long periods or short ones. I do not know, and I do not care, very much about the question; but I want to say this, that if you smash up an explanation, you must not imagine that you have damaged the Scriptural truth which seemed to require that explanation. You have only burned the wooden palisades with which well-meaning men thought to protect an impregnable fort, which needed no such defence. For the most part, we had better leave a difficulty where it is, rather than make another one by our theories. Why make a second hole in the kettle to mend the first? Especially when the first hole is not there at all, and needs no mending! Believe everything in science which is proved: it will not come to much. You need not fear that your faith will be over-burdened. And then believe everything which is clearly in the Word of God, whether it is proved by outside evidence or not. No proof is needed when God speaks. If he said it, that is evidence enough.

But, we are told that we ought to give up part of our old-fashioned theology to save the rest. We are in a carriage travelling over the steppes of Russia. The horses are being driven furiously, but the wolves are closing in on us! There they are! Can you not see their eyes of fire? The danger is pressing. What must we do? It is proposed that we throw out a child or two. By the time they have eaten the baby, we shall have made a little headway; but should they again overtake us, what then? Why, brave man, throw out your wife! 'All that a man has he will give for his life'; that is, give up nearly every truth in the hope of saving one. Throw out inspiration, and let the critics devour it. Throw out election, and all the old Calvinism, and here is a fine feast for the wolves. And the gentlemen who give us this wise advice will be glad to see the doctrines of grace torn limb from limb. Throw out natural depravity, eternal punishment, and the effectiveness of prayer. We have lightened the carriage wonderfully. Now for another drop. Sacrifice the great sacrifice! Have done with the atonement! Brothers, this advice is villainous, and murderous. We will escape these wolves with everything, or we will be lost with everything. It shall be 'the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth', or nothing at all. We will never attempt to save half the truth by casting away any part of it. The wise advice given us involves treason to God and disappointment to ourselves. We will stand by all, or none at all. We will have a whole Bible, or no Bible.

We are told that if we give up something, our adversaries will also give up something; but we do not care what they will do, for we are not in the least afraid of them. They are not the Imperial conquerors they think they are. We ask no quarter from their insignificance. We are of the mind of the warrior who was offered presents to buy him off, and was told that if he accepted so much gold or territory he could return home in triumph, and glory in his easy gain. But he said, 'The Greeks set no store by concessions. They find their glory not in presents, but in spoils.' We shall, with the sword of the Spirit, maintain the whole truth as ours, and shall not accept a part of it as a gift from the enemies of God. The truth of God we will maintain as the truth of God, and we will not keep it because the philosophical mind consents to our doing so. If scientists agree to our believing a part of the Bible, we thank them for nothing. We believe it whether or not. Their assent is of no more consequence to our faith than the consent of a Frenchman to the Englishman's holding London, or the consent of the mole to the eagle's sight. God being with us, we shall not cease from this glorying, but will hold fast to the whole of revealed truth, even to the end.

But now, brothers, while keeping to this first part of my theme - perhaps at too great a length - I say to you that, believing this, we accept the obligation to preach everything which we see in the Word of God as far as we see it. We would not wilfully leave out any portion of the whole revelation of God, but we long to be able to say at the last, **I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.** (Acts 20:27) What mischief may come of leaving out any portion of the truth, or putting in an alien element! All good men will not agree with me when I say that the addition of infant baptism to the Word of God - for it certainly is not there - is fraught with mischief. Baptismal regeneration rides in on the shoulders of Paedo-baptism. But I speak now of what I know. I have received letters from missionaries, not Baptists, but Wesleyans and Congregationalists, who have said to me, 'Since we have been here' (I will not mention the localities lest I get these good men into trouble), 'we find a class of persons who are the children of former converts, and who have been baptised, and are therefore called Christians; but they are not in the slightest better than the heathen around them. They seem to think that they are Christians because of their baptism, and at the same time, being thought Christians by the heathen, their evil lives are a perpetual scandal and a dreadful stumbling-block.' In many cases this must be so. I only use this fact as an illustration. But suppose it to be either some other error invented, or some great truth neglected, evil will come of it. In the case of the terrible truth known to us as 'the terror of the Lord', its omission is producing the saddest results. A good man, whom we do not accept as teaching exactly the truth in this solemn matter, has, nevertheless, most faithfully written again and again to the papers to say that the great weakness of the modern pulpit is that it ignores the justice of God and the punishment of sin. His witness is true, and the evil which he indicates is incalculably great. You cannot leave out that part of the truth which is so dark and so solemn without weakening the force of all the other truths you preach. You rob of their brightness, and of their urgent importance, the truths which concern salvation from the wrath to come. Brothers, leave out nothing. Be bold enough to preach unpalatable and unpopular truth. The evil which we may do by adding to, or taking from the Word of the Lord, may not happen in our own days; but if it should come to ripeness in another generation we shall be equally guilty. I have no doubt that the omission of certain truths by the earlier churches led afterwards to serious error; while certain additions in the form of rites and ceremonies, which appeared innocent enough in themselves, led to Ritualism, and afterwards to the great apostasy of Romanism! Be very careful. Do not

go an inch beyond the line of Scripture, and do not stay an inch on this side of it. Keep to the straight line of the Word of God as far as the Holy Spirit has taught you, and hold back nothing that he has revealed. Do not be so bold as to abolish the two ordinances which the Lord Jesus has ordained, though some have ventured on that course. Neither exaggerate those ordinances into inevitable channels of grace, as others have superstitiously done. Keep to the revelation of the Spirit. Remember, you will have to give an account, and that account will not be with joy if you have played false with God's truth. Remember the story of Gylippus, to whom Lysander entrusted bags of gold to take to the city authorities. Those bags were tied at the mouth, and then sealed; and Gylippus thought that if he cut the bags at the bottom he might extract a portion of the coins, and then he could carefully sew the bottom up again, and the seals would not be broken, and no one would suspect that gold had been taken. When the bags were opened, to his horror and surprise, there was a note in each bag stating how much it should contain, and so he was detected. The Word of God has self-verifying clauses in it so that you cannot run away with a part of it without the remainder of it accusing and convicting you. How will you answer for it 'in that day', if you have added to, or taken from the Word of the Lord? I am not here to decide what you ought to consider to be the truth of God; but, whatever you judge it to be, preach it all, and preach it definitely and plainly. If I differ from you, or you from me, we shall not differ very much if we are equally honest, straightforward, and God-fearing. The way to peace is not concealment of convictions, but the honest expression of them in the power of the Holy Spirit.

One more word. We accept the obligation to preach all that is in God's Word, definitely and distinctly. Too many preach indefinitely, handling the Word of God deceitfully. You might attend their ministry for years and not know what they believe. I heard this concerning a certain cautious minister who was asked by a hearer, 'What is your view of the atonement?' He answered, 'My dear sir, that is just what I have never told anybody, and you are not going to get it out of me.' This is a strange moral condition for the mind of a preacher of the gospel. I fear that he is not alone in this reticence. They say 'they consume their own smoke'; that is to say, they keep their doubts for home consumption. Many dare not say in the pulpit what they say *sub rosa* [privately] in a closed meeting of ministers. Is this honest? I am afraid that it is with some as it was with the schoolmaster in one of the towns of a Southern state in America. A grand old black preacher, one Jasper, had taught his people that the world is as flat as a pancake, and that the sun goes round it every day. This part of his teaching we do not receive; but certain ones had done so, and one of them, going to a schoolmaster with his boy, asked, 'Do you teach the children that the world is round or flat?' The schoolmaster cautiously answered, 'Yes.' The enquirer was puzzled, but asked for a clearer answer. 'Do you teach your children that the world is round, or that the world is flat?' Then the American dominie [master] answered, 'That depends on the opinions of the parents.' I suspect that even in Great Britain, in some few cases, a good deal depends on the leaning of the leading deacon, or the principal subscriber, or the favoured youth in the congregation. If it be so, the crime is loathsome.

But whether for this or for any other cause, if we teach with double tongue, the result will be highly injurious. I venture here to quote a story which I heard from our beloved brother Brown. A cadger [an artful beggar] called on a minister to extract money from him. The good man did not like the beggar's appearance much, and he said to him, 'I do not care for your case, and I see no special reason why you should come to me.'

The beggar replied, 'I am sure you would help me if you knew what great benefit I have received from your blessed ministry.' 'What is that?' said the pastor. The beggar then replied, 'Why, sir, when I first came to hear you I cared neither for God nor the devil, but now, under your blessed ministry, I have come to love them both.' What a marvel if, under some men's shifty talk, people grow to love both truth and falsehood! People will say, 'We like this form of doctrine, and we like the other also.' The fact is, they would like anything if only a clever deceiver would put it plausibly to them. They admire Moses and Aaron, but they would not say a word against Jannes and Jambres [Egyptian magicians]. (2 Timothy 3:8) We will not join in the confederacy which seems to aim at such an understanding. We must preach the gospel so distinctly that our people know what we are preaching. **If the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle?** (1 Corinthians 14:8) Do not puzzle your people with doubtful speeches. 'Well', said one, 'I had a new idea the other day. I did not enlarge on it, but I just threw it out.' That is a very good thing to do with most new ideas. Throw them out, by all means; but mind where you are when you do it; for if you throw them out from the pulpit they may strike somebody, and inflict a wound on his faith. Throw out your fancies, but first go alone in a boat a mile out to sea. When you have once thrown out your unconsidered trifles, leave them for the fish.

We have, nowadays, around us a class of men who preach Christ, and even preach the gospel; but then they preach a great deal else which is not true, and thus destroy the good of all that they deliver, and lure men to error. They might be called 'evangelical', and yet be of the school which is really anti-evangelical. Look well to these gentlemen. I have heard that a fox, when closely hunted by the dogs, will pretend to be one of them and run with the pack. That is what certain ones are aiming at just now: the foxes would appear to be dogs. But in the case of the fox, his strong scent betrays him, and the dogs soon find him out; and even so, the scent of false doctrine is not easily concealed, and the game does not last for long. There are some ministers of whom we scarce can tell whether they are dogs or foxes; but all men will know our quality as long as we live, and they will be left in no doubt as to what we believe and teach. We will not hesitate to speak in the strongest Anglo-Saxon words we can find, and in the plainest sentences we can put together, what we hold as fundamental truth.

Thus, I have been dwelling all this time on my first heading, and the other two must, therefore, occupy less time, though I judge them to be of prime importance.

2. Our Army

Now we must review OUR ARMY.

What can individuals do in a great crusade? We are associated with all the people of the Lord. We have for comrades the members of our churches; these must go out and win souls for Christ. We need the co-operation of the entire brotherhood and sisterhood. What will be accomplished unless the saved ones go out, all of them, for the salvation of others? But the question is now raised: 'Is there to be a church at all?' Is there to be a distinct army of saints, or must we include atheists? You have heard of 'the church of the future' which we are to have instead ... [At this point the audience could not be restrained, but stopped the speaker with cheers and laughter, to which he answered, 'No; do not stop me in the middle of a sentence. My rule is not to mention names, and yet you have found a name hidden in a harmless word.'] ... of the Church

of Jesus Christ. All narrowness will cease unless the theatre and the public-house prove too much for the church. As its extreme lines take in atheists, we may hope, in our charity, that it will include evil spirits also. What a wonderful church it will be, certainly, when we see it! It will be anything you like, but not a church. When the soldiers of Christ have included in their ranks all the banditti [bandits] of the adversary, will there be any army left for Christ at all? Is it not distinctly a capitulation at the very beginning of the war? That is how I take it.

We must not only believe in the church of God, but recognise it as very distinct. Some denominations recognise anything and everything over and above the church. Such a thing as a meeting of the church is unknown. In some, 'the church' signifies the ministers or clergy; but in truth it should signify the whole body of the faithful, and there should be an opportunity for them to meet together to act as a church. It is, I judge, for the true church to carry on the work of God in the land. The final power and direction is with our Lord Jesus, and under him it should lie, not with some few who are chosen by delegation or by patronage, but with the whole body of believers. We must, more and more, acknowledge the church which God has committed to our charge; and in so doing, we shall evoke a strength which otherwise would lie dormant. If the church is recognised by Christ Jesus, it is worthy of being recognised by us; for we are the servants of the church.

Yes; we believe that there ought to be a church. But churches are very disappointing things. Every pastor of a large church will acknowledge this in his own soul. I do not know that the churches of today are any worse than they were in Paul's time, or any better. The churches at Corinth and Laodicea and other cities exhibited grave faults; and if there are faults in ours, let us not be amazed; but yet let us grieve over such things, and strive after a higher standard. Even though the members of our church are not all they ought to be, neither are we ourselves. Yet, if I went anywhere for choice company, I should certainly resort to the members of my church — 'These are the company I keep. These are the choicest friends I know.' O Jerusalem, with all your faults, I love you still! The people of God are still the aristocracy of the race. God bless them! Yes, we mean to have a church.

Now, is that church to be real or statistical? That depends very largely on you, dear brothers. I would urge you to have no church unless it is a real one. The fact is, that too frequently religious statistics are shockingly false. Cooking of such accounts is not an unknown art in certain quarters, as we know. I heard of one case the other day where an increase of four was reported; but had the roll been amended in the least, there must have been a decrease of twenty-five. Is it not falsehood when numbers are manipulated? There is a way of making figures figure as they should not figure. Never do this. Let us not keep names on our books when they are only names. Certain of the good old people like to keep them there, and cannot bear to have them removed; but when you do not know where individuals are, nor what they are, how can you count them? They have gone to America, or Australia, or to heaven, but as far as your roll is concerned they are with you still. Is this right? It may not be possible to be absolutely accurate, but let us aim at it. We ought to look on this in a very serious light, and purge ourselves of the vice of false reporting; for God himself will not bless mere names. It is not his way to work with those who play a false part. If there is not a real person for each name, amend your list. Keep your church real and effective, or make no report.

A merely nominal church is a lie. Let it be what it professes to be. We may not glory in statistics, but we ought to know the facts.

But is this church to increase or is it to die out? It will do either the one or the other. We see our friends going to heaven, and, if there are no young men and young women converted and brought in and added to us, the church on earth will have emigrated to the church triumphant above; and what is to be done for the cause and the kingdom of the Master here below? We should be crying, praying, and pleading that the church will grow continually. We must preach, visit, pray, and labour for this end. May the Lord add to us daily such as are being saved! (Acts 2:47) If there is no harvest, can the seed be the true seed? Are we preaching apostolic doctrine if we never see apostolic results? Oh, my brothers, our hearts should be ready to break if there is no increase in the flocks we tend. O Lord, we beseech you, send now prosperity!

If a church is to be what it ought to be for the purposes of God, we must train it in the holy art of prayer. Churches without prayer-meetings are sadly common. Even if there were only one such, it would be one to weep over. In many churches, the prayer-meeting is only the skeleton of a gathering; the form is kept up, but the people do not come. There is no interest, no power, in connection with the meeting. Oh, my brothers, let it not be so with you! Train the people to continually meet together for prayer. Rouse them to incessant supplication. There is a holy art in it. Study to show yourselves approved by the prayerfulness of your people. If you pray yourself, you will want them to pray with you; and when they begin to pray with you, and for you, and for the work of the Lord, they will want more prayer themselves, and their appetite will grow. Believe me, if a church does not pray, it is dead. Instead of putting united prayer last, put it first. Everything will depend on the power of prayer in the church.

We ought to have our churches all busy for God. What is the use of a church that simply assembles to hear sermons, even as a family gathers to eat its meals? Where, I say, is the profit, if it does no work? Are not many professed believers sadly slow in the Lord's work, though diligent enough in their own? Because of Christian idleness, we hear of the necessity for amusements, and all sorts of nonsense. If they were at work for the Lord Jesus we should not hear of this. A good woman said to a housewife, 'Mrs. So-and-so, how do you manage to amuse yourself?' 'Why', she replied, 'my dear, you see there are so many children that there is much work to be done in my house.' 'Yes', said the other, 'I see it. I see that there is much work to be done in your house; but as it is never done, I was wondering how you amused yourself.' Much needs to be done by a Christian church within its own bounds, and for the neighbourhood, and for the poor and the fallen, and for the heathen world, and so forth; and if it is well attended to, minds and hearts and hands and tongues will be occupied, and diversions will not be looked for. Let idleness come in, and that spirit which rules lazy people, and there will arise a desire to be amused. What amusements they are, too! If religion is not a farce with some congregations, at any rate they turn out better to see a farce than to unite in prayer. I cannot understand it. The man who is all aglow with love for Jesus finds little need for amusement. He has no time for trifling matters. He is in dead earnest to save souls, and establish the truth, and enlarge the kingdom of his Lord. There has always been some pressing claim for the cause of God on me; and, that settled, there has been another, and another, and another, and the scramble has been to find opportunity to do the work that must be done, and hence I have not had the time for gadding abroad after frivolities. Oh, to get a working church! The German

churches, when our dear friend Mr. Oncken was alive, always carried out the rule of asking every member, 'What are you going to do for Christ?' and they put their answers down in a book. The one thing that was required of every member was that he should continue doing something for the Saviour. If he ceased to do anything, it was a matter of church discipline, for he was an idle professor, and could not be allowed to remain in the church like a drone in a hive of working bees. He must do or go. Oh for a vineyard without a barren fig-tree to burden the ground! At present, most of our sacred warfare is carried out by a small body of intensely living, earnest people, and the rest are either in hospital, or are mere camp followers. We are thankful for that consecrated few; but we pine to see the altar fire consuming all who have professed to lay themselves on the altar.

Brothers, we want churches also that produce saints; men and women of mighty faith and prevailing prayer; men and women of holy living, and of consecrated giving; men and women filled with the Holy Spirit. We must have these saints as rich clusters, or surely we are not branches of the true vine. I would desire to see in every church a Mary sitting at Jesus' feet, a Martha serving Jesus, a Peter and a John; but the best name for a church is 'All Saints.' All believers should be saints, and all are saints. We have no connection with 'the Church of Latter-day Saints', but we love everyday saints. Oh for more of them! If God shall so help us that the whole company of the faithful - each one of them individually - shall come to the fullness of the stature of a man in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 4:13), then we shall see greater things than these. Glorious times will come when believers have glorious characters.

We also want churches that know the truth, and are well-taught in the things of God. What do some Christian people know? They come and hear, and, in the fullness of your wisdom, you instruct them; but how little they receive to lay by in store for edification! Brothers, the fault lies partly with us, and partly with them. If we taught better, they would learn better. See how little many Christians know, not enough to give them discernment between living truth and deadly error. Old-fashioned believers could give you chapter and verse for what they believed; but how few of them remain! Our respected grandsires were at home when they talked about 'the covenants'. I love those who love the covenant of grace, and base their divinity on it: the doctrine of the covenants is the key to theology. **Those who feared the LORD spoke to one another.** (Malachi 3:16) They used to speak of everlasting life, and all that comes of it. They had a good argument for this belief, and an excellent reason for that other doctrine; and to try to shake them was by no means a hopeful task. You might as well hope to shake the pillars of the universe; for they were steadfast, and could not be carried about with every wind of doctrine. (Ephesians 4:14) They knew what they knew, and they held fast what they had learned.

What is to become of our country, with the present deluge of Romanism pouring out on us through the ritualistic party, unless our churches abound in firm believers who can discern between the regeneration of the Holy Spirit and its ceremonial substitute? What is to become of our churches in this day of scepticism, when every fixed truth is pointed at with the finger of doubt, unless our people have the truths of the gospel written on their hearts? Oh, for a church of out-and-out believers, impervious to soul-destroying doubts which pour on us in showers!

Yet all this does not reach our ideal. We want a church of a missionary character which will go out to gather a people to God from all parts of the world. The church is a soul-saving company, or it is nothing. If the salt exercises no preserving influence on what surrounds it, what is the use of it? Yet some shrink from effort in their immediate neighbourhood because of the poverty and vice of the people. I remember a minister who is now deceased, and a very good man he was too in many respects; but he utterly amazed me by a reply he made to a question of mine. I remarked that he had an awful neighbourhood round his chapel, and, I asked, 'Are you able to do much for them?' He answered, 'No. I feel almost glad that we keep clear of them; for, you see, if any of them were converted, it would be a fearful burden on us.' I knew him to be the soul of caution and prudence, but this took me aback, and I sought an explanation. 'Well', he said, 'we should have to keep them. They are mostly thieves and harlots, and, if converted, they would have no means of livelihood, and we are a poor people, and could not support them!' He was a devout man, and one with whom it was profitable to converse; and yet that was how he gradually came to look at the case. His people, with difficulty, sustained the expenses of worship, and thus chill poverty repressed a gracious zeal, and froze the genial current of his soul. There was a great deal of common sense in what he said, but yet it was an awful thing to say. We want a people who will not forever sing:

**We are a garden walled around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground;
A little spot enclosed by grace,
Out of the world's wild wilderness.**

It is good verse for occasional singing, but not when it comes to mean, 'We are very few, and we wish to be like this.' No, no, brothers! We are a little detachment of the King's soldiers detained in a foreign country on garrison duty; yet we mean not only to hold the fort, but to add territory to our Lord's domain. We are not to be driven out; but, on the contrary, we are going to drive out the Canaanites; for this land belongs to us, it is given to us by the Lord, and we will subdue it. May we be fired with the spirit of discoverers and conquerors, and never rest while there yet remains a class to be rescued, and a region to be evangelised!

We are rowing like lifeboat men on a stormy sea, and we are hurrying to yonder wreck where men are perishing. If we may not draw that old wreck to shore, we will at least, by the power of God, rescue the perishing, save life, and bear the redeemed to the shores of salvation. Our mission, like our Lord's, is to gather out the chosen of God from among men that they may live to the glory of God. Every saved man should be, under God, a saviour; and the church is not in the right state until she has reached that conception of herself. The elect church is saved that she may save, cleansed that she may cleanse, blessed that she may bless. All the world is the field (Matthew 13:38), and all the members of the church should work there for the great Husbandman. Waste lands are to be reclaimed, and forests broken up by the plough, till the solitary place begins to blossom as the rose. (Isaiah 35:1) We must not be content with holding our own: we must invade the territories of the prince of darkness.

My brothers, what is our relation to this Church? What is our position in it? We are servants. May we always know our place, and keep it! The highest place in the Church will always come to the man who willingly chooses the lowest place; while he who

aspires to be great among his brothers will sink to be least of all. Certain men might have been something if they had not thought themselves so. A consciously great man is an evidently little one. A lord over God's heritage is a base usurper. He who in his heart and soul is always ready to serve the very least of the family, who expects to be put upon, and willingly sacrifices reputation and friendship for Christ's sake, he will fulfil a heaven-sent ministry. We are not sent to be ministered unto, but to minister.

Let us sing to our Well-Beloved:

**There's not a lamb in all thy flock,
I would disdain to feed;
There's not a foe before whose face
I'd fear thy cause to plead.**

We must also be examples to the flock. He who cannot be safely imitated ought not to be tolerated in a pulpit. Did I hear of a minister who was always disputing for pre-eminence? Or of another who was mean and covetous? Or of a third whose conversation was not always pure? Or of a fourth who did not rise, as a rule, till eleven o'clock in the morning? I would hope that this last rumour was altogether false. An idle minister - whatever will become of him? A pastor who neglects his office? Does he expect to go to heaven? I was about to say, 'If he does go there at all, may it be soon.' A lazy minister is a creature despised by others, and offensive to God. 'You give your minister only £50 a year!' I said, to a farmer. 'Why, the poor man cannot live on it.' The answer came, 'Look here, sir! I tell you what: we give him a good deal more than he earns. It is a sad pity when that can be said; it is an injury to all those who follow our sacred calling. We are to be examples to our flock in all things. In all diligence, in all gentleness, in all humility, and in all holiness, we are to excel. When Caesar went on his wars, one thing always helped his soldiers to bear hardships: they knew that Caesar fared as they fared, he marched if they marched, he thirsted if they thirsted, and he was always in the heat of the battle if they were fighting. We must do more than others if we are officers in Christ's army. We must not cry, 'Go on', but, 'Come on.' Our people may justly expect of us, at the very least, that we should be among the most self-denying, the most laborious, and the most earnest in the church, and even more. We cannot expect to see holy churches if we, who are bound to be their examples, are unsanctified. If there is, in any of our brothers, consecration and sanctification, plain for all men to see, God will bless them, and God will bless them more and more. If they are lacking in us, we need not search far to find the cause of our non-success.

I have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now because the time is long and you are weary. I desire, however, if you can gather up your patience and your strength, to dwell for a little on the most important part of my triple theme. Here, allow me to pray for his help, whose name and person I would magnify. Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove, and rest on us now!

3. Our Strength

Granted that we preach the Word alone; granted that we are surrounded by a model church, which, alas, is not always the case; but, granted that it is so, OUR STRENGTH is the next consideration. This must come from THE SPIRIT OF GOD. We believe in

the Holy Spirit, and in our absolute dependence on him. We believe; but do we believe it in practice? Brothers, as to ourselves and to our own work, do we believe in the Holy Spirit? Do we believe because we habitually prove the truth of the doctrine?

We must depend on the Spirit in our preparations. Is this the fact with us all? Are you in the habit of working your way into the meaning of texts with the guidance of the Holy Spirit? Everyone who goes to the land of heavenly knowledge must work his passage there; and he must work out his passage in the strength of the Holy Spirit or he will arrive at some island in the sea of fancy and never set his foot on the sacred shores of the truth. You do not know the truth, my brother, just because you have read Hodge's 'Outlines', or Fuller's 'Gospel worthy of all Acceptation', or John Owen on the Holy Spirit, or any other classic of our faith. You do not know the truth, my brother, merely because you accept the Westminster Assembly's Confession, and have studied it perfectly. No; we know nothing till we are taught by the Holy Spirit who speaks to the heart rather than to the ear. It is a wonderful fact that we do not even hear the voice of Jesus till the Spirit rests on us. John says, **I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice.** (Revelation 1:10) He did not hear that voice till he was in the Spirit. How many heavenly words we miss because we do not abide in the Spirit!

We cannot succeed in supplication unless the Holy Spirit helps us in our infirmities, for true prayer is **praying...in the Spirit.** (Ephesians 6:18) The Spirit makes an atmosphere around every living prayer, and within that circle prayer lives and prevails; outside of it, prayer is a dead formality. As to ourselves, then, in our study, in prayer, in thought, in word, and in deed, we must depend on the Holy Spirit.

In the pulpit, do we really and truly rest on the aid of the Spirit? I do not censure any brother for his mode of preaching, but I must confess that it seems very odd to me when a brother prays that the Holy Spirit may help him in preaching, and then I see him put his hand behind him and draw a manuscript out of his pocket, so fashioned that he can place it in the middle of his Bible, and read from it without being suspected of doing so. These precautions for ensuring secrecy look as though the man was a little ashamed of his paper; but I think he should be far more ashamed of his precautions. Does he expect the Spirit of God to bless him while he is practising a trick? And how can he help him when he reads out of a paper from which anyone else might read without the Spirit's aid? What has the Holy Spirit to do with the business? Truly, he may have had something to do with the manuscript in the composing of it, but in the pulpit his aid is superfluous. The truer thing would be to thank the Holy Spirit for assistance rendered, and ask that what he has enabled us to get into our pockets may now enter the people's hearts. Still, if the Holy Spirit should have anything to say to the people that is not in the paper, how can he say it through us? He seems to me to be very effectively blocked as to freshness of utterance by that method of ministry. Still, it is not for me to censure, although I may quietly plead for liberty in prophesying, and room for the Lord to give us in the same hour what we shall speak.

Furthermore, we must depend on the Spirit of God as to our results. No one among us really thinks that he could regenerate a soul. We are not so foolish as to claim power to change a heart of stone. We may not dare to presume quite so far as this, and yet we may come to think that, by our experience, we can help people over spiritual difficulties. Can we? We may be hopeful that our enthusiasm will drive the

living church before us, and drag the dead world after us. Will it be so? Perhaps we imagine that if we could only get up a revival, we should easily secure large additions to the church? Is it worth while to get up a revival? Are not all true revivals to be got down? We may persuade ourselves that drums and trumpets and shouting will do a great deal. But, my brothers, **the LORD was not in the wind.** (1 Kings 19:11) Results worth having come from that silent but omnipotent Worker whose name is the Spirit of God. In him, and in him alone, must we trust for the conversion of a single Sunday-school child, and for every genuine revival. For the keeping of our people together, and for the building of them up into a holy temple, we must look to him. The Spirit might say, even as our Lord did, **for without me you can do nothing.** (John 15:5)

What is the Church of God without the Holy Spirit? Ask what would Hermon be without its dew, or Egypt without its Nile? Behold the land of Canaan when the curse of Elijah fell on it, and for three years it felt neither dew nor rain! (1 Kings 17:1) Such would Christendom become without the Spirit. What the valleys would be without their brooks, or the cities without their wells; what the corn-fields would be without the sun, or the vintage without the summer - that would be our churches without the Spirit. As well think of day without light, or life without breath, or heaven without God, as of Christian service without the Holy Spirit. Nothing can supply his place if he is absent. The pastures are a desert, the fruitful fields are a wilderness, Sharon languishes, and Carmel is burned with fire.

‘Blessed Spirit of the Lord, forgive us that we have done you such a bad service by our forgetfulness of you, by our proud self-sufficiency, by resisting your influences and quenching your fire! Henceforth, work in us according to your own excellence. Make our hearts tenderly impressionable, and then turn us as wax to the seal, and stamp on us the image of the Son of God.’

With some such prayer and confession of faith as this, let us pursue our subject in the power of the good Spirit of whom we speak.

What does the Holy Spirit do? Beloved, what is there of good work that he does not do? It is his to quicken, to convince, to illuminate, to cleanse, to guide, to preserve, to console, to confirm, to perfect, and to use. How much might be said under each one of these heads! It is he who works in us to will and to do his pleasure. (Philippians 2:13) He who has performed all things is God. Glory be to the Holy Spirit for all that he has accomplished in such poor, imperfect natures as ours! We can do nothing apart from the life-sap which flows to us from Jesus the Vine. What is our own is fit only to cause us shame and confusion of face. We never go a step towards heaven without the Holy Spirit. We never lead another on the heavenward road without the Holy Spirit. We have no acceptable thought, or word, or deed, apart from the Holy Spirit. Even the uplifting of the eye of hope, or the urgent prayer of the heart's desire, must be his work. All good things are from him and through him, from beginning to end. There is no fear of exaggeration here. Do we, however, translate this conviction into our actual practice?

Instead of enlarging on what the Spirit of God does, let me refer to your experience, and ask you a question or two. Do you remember times when the Spirit of God was graciously present in fullness of power with you and with your people? What seasons they were! The Sabbath was a high day. Those services were like the worship of Jacob

when he said, **Surely the LORD is in this place.** (Genesis 28:16) What mutual telegraphing goes on between the preacher in the Spirit and the people in the Spirit! Their eyes seem to talk to us as much as our tongues talk to them. They are then a very different people from what they are on ordinary occasions. There is even a beauty on their faces while we are glorifying the Lord Jesus, and they are enjoying and drinking in our testimony. Have you ever seen a gentleman of the modern school enjoying his own preaching? Our evangelical preachers are very happy in delivering what our liberal friends are pleased to call their 'platitudes'; but the moderns in their wisdom feel no such joy. Can you imagine a Downgrader in the glow of what our Welsh friends call the 'hwyl'? How grimly they discourse on the Post Exilic theory! They remind me of Ruskin's expression - 'Turner had no joy in his mill.' I grant you, there is nothing to enjoy, and they are evidently glad to get through their task of piling up meatless bones. They stand at an empty manger, amusing themselves by biting their crib. They get through their preaching, and they are dull enough till Monday comes with a football match, or an entertainment in the school-room, or a political meeting. To them preaching is 'work', though they don't put much work into it. The old preachers, and some of those who now live, but are said to be 'obsolete', think the pulpit a throne, or a triumphal chariot, and are near heaven when helped to preach with power. Poor fools that we are, preaching our 'antiquated' gospel! We do enjoy the task. Our gloomy doctrines make us very happy. Strange, is it not? The gospel is evidently marrow and fatness to us, and our beliefs - despite the fact that they are very absurd and unphilosophical - do content us, and make us very confident and happy. I may say of some of my brothers, that their very eyes seem to sparkle, and their souls glow, while enlarging on free grace and dying love. It is so, brothers, that when we have the presence of God, then we and our hearers are carried away with heavenly delight. Nor is this all. When the Spirit of God is present, every saint loves his fellow saint, and there is no strife among us unless it be who shall be the most loving. Then prayer is wrestling and prevailing, and ministry is sowing good seed and reaping large sheaves. Then conversions are plentiful, restorations are abundant, and advances in grace are seen on every side. Hallelujah! With the Spirit of God all goes well.

But do you know the opposite condition? I hope you do not. It is death in life. I trust you have never, in your scientific experiments, been cruel enough to put a mouse under an air pump, and gradually exhaust the receiver. I have read of this fatal experiment. Alas, poor mouse! As the air gets thinner and thinner, how great his sufferings, and when it is all gone, there he lies - dead. Have you never yourself been under an exhausted receiver, spiritually? You have only been there long enough to perceive that the sooner you escape, the better for you. Said one to me the other day, 'Well, as to the sermon which I heard from the modern-thought divine, there was no great harm in it; for on this occasion he kept clear of false doctrine; but the whole affair was so intensely cold. I felt like a man who has fallen down a crevasse in a glacier, and I felt shut up as if I could not breathe the air of heaven.' You know that arctic cold; and it may occasionally be felt even where the doctrine is sound. When the Spirit of God is gone, even truth itself becomes an iceberg. How wretched is religion, frozen and lifeless! The Holy Spirit has gone, and all energy and enthusiasm have gone with him. The scene becomes like that described in the Ancient Mariner, when the ship was becalmed:

**The very deep did rot,
Alas, that ever this should be!**

**Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.**

Within the ship all was death. And we have seen it so within a church. I am tempted to apply Coleridge's lines to much that is to be seen in those churches which deserve the name of 'congregations of the dead.' He describes how the bodies of the dead were inspired and the ship moved on, each dead man fulfilling his office in a dead and formal fashion:

**The helmsman steered, the ship moved on;
Yet never a breeze up blew:
The mariners all 'gan work the ropes,
Where they were wont to do;
They raised their limbs like lifeless tools -
We were a ghastly crew.**

All living fellowship was lacking, for the Ancient Mariner says:

**The body of my brother's son
Stood by me, knee to knee:
The body and I pulled at one rope,
But he said nought to me.**

It is much the same in those 'respectable' congregations where each knows his fellow, and a dignified isolation supplants all saintly communion. To the preacher, if he is the only living man in the company, the church affords very dreary society. His sermons fall on ears that hear them not at all.

**'Twas night, calm night, the moon was high;
The dead men stood together.
All stood together on the deck
For a charnel-dungeon fitter:
All fixed on me their stony eyes,
That in the moon did glitter.**

Yes, the preacher's moonlight, cold and cheerless, falls on faces which are like it. The discourse impresses their stolid intellects, and fixes their stony eyes. But hearts! Well, hearts are not in fashion in those regions. Hearts are for the realm of life; but without the Holy Spirit what do congregations know of true life? If the Holy Spirit has gone, death reigns, and the church is a tomb. Therefore, we must entreat him to abide with us, and we must never rest till he does so. O brothers, let it not be that I talk to you about this, and that then we permit the matter to drop. But let us each one with heart and soul seek to have the power of the Holy Spirit abiding on him.

Have we received the Holy Spirit? Is he with us now? If it be so, how can we secure his future presence? How can we constrain him to abide with us? I would say, first, treat him as he should be treated. Worship him as the adorable Lord God. Never call the Holy Spirit 'it', nor speak of him as if he were a doctrine, or an influence, or an orthodox myth. Revere him, love him, and trust him with familiar yet reverent confidence. He is God; let him be God to you.

See to it that you act in conformity with his working. The mariner travelling to the East cannot create the winds at his pleasure; but he knows when the trade winds blow, and he takes advantage of the season to speed his vessel. Put out to sea in holy enterprise, when the heavenly wind is with you. Take the sacred tide at its flood. Increase your meetings when you feel that the Spirit of God is blessing them. Press home the truth more earnestly than ever when the Lord is opening ears and hearts to accept it. You will soon know when there is dew about; prize the gracious visitation. The farmer says, 'Make hay while the sun shines.' You cannot make the sun shine; that is quite out of your power; but you can use the sun while it shines. **When you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry trees, then you shall advance quickly.** (2 Samuel 5:24) Be diligent in season and out of season; but in a lively season be doubly busy.

Evermore, in beginning, in continuing, and in ending any and every good work, consciously and in very truth depend on the Holy Spirit. Even a sense of your need of him he must give you; and the prayers with which you beg him to come must come from him. You are engaged in a work so spiritual, so far above all human power, that to forget the Spirit is to ensure defeat. Make the Holy Spirit the *sine qua non* [an indispensable condition] of your efforts, and go so far as to say to him, **If your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here.** (Exodus 33:15) Rest only in him, and then reserve for him all the glory. Be specially mindful of this, for this is a tender point with him. He will not give his glory to another. (Isaiah 48:11) Take care to praise the Spirit of God from your inmost heart, and gratefully wonder that he should condescend to work through you. Please him by glorifying Christ. Render him homage by yielding yourself to his impulses, and by hating anything that grieves him. The consecration of your whole being will be the best psalm in his praise.

There are a few things which I want you to remember, and then I have done. Remember that the Holy Spirit has his ways and methods, and there are some things which he will not do. Be aware that he makes no promise to bless compromise. If we make a treaty with error or sin, we do it at our own peril. If we do anything that we are not clear about, if we tamper with truth or holiness, if we are friends of the world, if we make provision for the flesh, if we preach half-heartedly and are in league with errorists, we have no promise that the Holy Spirit will go with us. The great promise runs in quite another strain - **Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.** (2 Corinthians 6:17-18; Isaiah 52:11) In the New Testament, only in that one place, with the exception of the book of Revelation, is God called by the name of 'the Lord God Almighty.' If you want to know what great things the Lord can do, as the Lord God Almighty, be separate from the world, and from those who apostatise from the truth. The title, 'Lord God Almighty' is evidently quoted from the Old Testament. 'El Shaddai' — God all-sufficient, the many-breasted God. We shall never know the utmost power of God for supplying all our needs till we cut connections once for all with everything that is not according to his mind. That was great of Abraham when he said to the king of Sodom, **I have lifted up my hand to the LORD, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth, that I will take nothing that is yours, lest you shall say, I have made Abram rich.** (Genesis 14:22) No, no. That was a direct repudiation. The man of God will have nothing to do with Sodom, or with false doctrine. If you see

anything that is evil, repudiate it. Have done with those who have done with truth. Then you will be prepared to receive the promise, and not till then.

Dear brothers, remember that wherever there is great love, there is sure to be great jealousy. 'Love is strong as death.' What next? 'Jealousy is cruel as the grave.' **God is love** (1 John 4:8, 16), and for that very reason, **I the LORD your God am a jealous God**. (Exodus 20:5; Deuteronomy 5:9) Keep clear of everything that defiles, or that would grieve the Holy Spirit; for if he is vexed with us, we will soon be put to shame before the enemy.

Note, next, that he makes no promise to cowards. If you allow the fear of man to rule you, and wish to save yourself from suffering or ridicule, you will find small comfort in the promise of God. **Whoever desires to save his life will lose it**. (Matthew 16:25) The promises of the Holy Spirit to us in our warfare are to those who quit themselves like men, and, by faith, are made brave in the hour of conflict. I wish we had come to this pass, that we utterly despise ridicule and blame. Oh to have the self-oblivion of that Italian martyr of whom John Foxe speaks! They condemned him to be burned alive, and he heard the sentence calmly. But, you know, burning martyrs, however delightful, is also expensive; and the mayor of the town did not care to pay for the fagots, and the priests who had accused him also wished to do the work without personal expense. So they had an angry squabble, and there stood the poor man for whose benefit these fagots were to be contributed, quietly hearing their mutual recriminations. Finding that they could not settle it, he said, 'Gentlemen, I will end your dispute. It is a pity that you should either of you be at so much expense to find fagots for my burning. For my Lord's sake, I will even pay for the wood that burns me, if you please.' There is a fine touch of scorn as well as meekness there. I do not know that I would have paid that bill; but I have even felt inclined to go a little out of the way to help the enemies of the truth to find fuel for their criticisms of me. Yes, yes; I will yet be more vile, and give them more to complain of. I will go through with the controversy for Christ's sake, and do nothing whatever to quiet their wrath. Brothers, if you trim a little, if you try to save a little of your reputation with the men of apostasy, it will go ill with you. He who is ashamed of Christ and his Word in this evil generation shall find that Christ is ashamed of him at the last. (Mark 8:38)

I will be very brief on these final points. Remember, next, that the Holy Spirit will never set his seal to falsehood. Never! If what you preach is not the truth, God will not own it. See that you do well in this.

What is more, the Holy Spirit never sets his signature to a blank cheque. That would be unwise on the part of man, and the holy Lord will not perpetrate such a folly. If we do not speak clear doctrine with plainness of speech, the Holy Spirit will not put his signature to our empty ranting. If we do not come out distinctly with Christ and him crucified, we may say farewell to true success.

Next, remember that the Holy Spirit will never sanction sin; and to bless the ministry of some men would be to sanction their evil ways. **Be clean, you who bear the vessels of the LORD**. (Isaiah 52:11) Let your character correspond with your teaching, and let your churches be purged from open transgressors, lest the Holy Spirit disown your teaching, not for its own sake, but because of the ill-repute of unholy living which dishonours it.

Remember, again, that he will never encourage idleness. The Holy Spirit will not come in to rescue us from the consequences of wilful neglect of the Word of God and study. If we allow ourselves to go up and down all the week doing nothing, we may not climb the pulpit stairs and dream that the Lord will be there and then tell us what to say. If help were promised to such, then the lazier the man, the better the sermon. If the Holy Spirit worked only through impromptu speakers, the less we read our Bibles, and the less we meditated on them, the better. If it is wrong to quote from books, 'attention to reading' should not be recommended. All this is obviously absurd, and not one of you will fall into such a delusion. We are bound to be much in meditation, and give ourselves wholly to the Word of God and prayer; and when we have given attention to these things, we may look for the Spirit's approbation and co-operation. We ought to prepare the sermon as if all depended on us, and then we will trust the Spirit of God, knowing that all depends on him. The Holy Spirit sends no one into the harvest to sleep among the sheaves, but to bear the burden and heat of the day. We may well pray God to send 'more 'labourers' into the vineyard, for the Spirit will be with the strength of labourers, but he will not be a friend of loiterers.

Remember again that the Holy Spirit will not bless us in order to sustain our pride. Is it not possible that we may be wishing for a great blessing that we may be thought great men? This will hinder our success. The string of the bow is out of order, and the arrow will turn aside. What does God do with men that are proud? Does he exalt them? I believe not. Herod made an eloquent oration, and he put on a dazzling silver robe which glistened in the sun, and when the people saw his clothing, and listened to his charming voice, they cried, **It is the voice of a god, and not of a man** (Acts 12:22); but the Lord struck him, and he was eaten up by worms. Worms have a prescriptive right to proud flesh; and when we get very high and mighty, the worms expect to make a meal of us. **Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.** (Proverbs 16:18) Keep humble if you would have the Spirit of God with you. The Holy Spirit takes no pleasure in the inflated oratory of the proud. How could he? Would you have him endorse bombast? **Walk humbly with your God** (Micah 6:8) O preacher! for you cannot walk with him in any other fashion. And if you do not walk with him, your walking will be vain.

Consider, again, that the Holy Spirit will not dwell where there is strife. Let us follow peace with all men, and specially let us keep peace in our churches. Some of you are not yet favoured with this boon; and possibly it is not your fault. You have inherited old feuds. In many a small community, all the members of the congregation are cousins to one another, and relations usually agree to disagree. When cousins cheat their cousins, the seeds of ill-will are sown, and these intrude even into church life. Your predecessor's high-handedness in past time may breed a good deal of quarrelling for many years to come. He was a man of war from his youth, and even when he is gone, the spirits which he called from the vast deep remain to haunt the spot. I fear you cannot expect much blessing, for the Holy Dove does not dwell in troubled waters. He chooses to come where brotherly love continues. For great principles, and matters of holy discipline, we may risk peace itself; but, for self or party, may such conduct be far from us.

Lastly, remember the Holy Spirit will only bless in conformity with His own set purpose. Our Lord explains what that purpose is — **He will glorify me.** (John 16:14) He has

come down for this great purpose, and he will not put up with anything short of it. If, then, we do not preach Christ, what is the Holy Spirit to do with our preaching? If we do not make the Lord Jesus glorious; if we do not lift him high in the esteem of men; if we do not labour to make him King of kings, and Lord of lords; we will not have the Holy Spirit with us. Vain will be preaching, music, architecture, energy, and social status. If our one design is not to magnify the Lord Jesus, we will work alone, and work in vain.

This is all that I have to say to you at this time. But, my dear brothers, it is a great 'all' if first considered, and then carried out. May it have practical effect on us! It will, if the great Worker uses it, and not else. Go forth, O soldiers of Jesus, with **the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.** (Ephesians 6:17) Go forth in the company of the godly whom you lead, and let every one be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might. As men alive from the dead, go forth in the quickening power of the Holy Spirit. You have no other strength. May the blessing of the Triune God rest on you, one and all, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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