

Mr. Thomas Spurgeon at the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

Last Sunday morning Mr. Thomas Spurgeon again preached in the Metropolitan Tabernacle, to a large congregation. Before commencing the services he said: "My dear Christian friends, I have news to tell you this morning which is perhaps more cheering than I have had during the past Sabbaths. My dear father desires me to tell you that he feels better this morning, and hopes to be with you next Lord's Day. He is still very weak and unwell, but at the same time he has made considerable progress since last week. He would have written you a letter, but it is almost as hard for him to think as to speak, his brain is so weary and so worried. We will take courage that he is better, thank God for it, and hope for still greater blessings in the future."

Mr. Spurgeon read, almost without comment, Luke xii. 13-40, and after the usual singing and prayer, announced as his text Phil. iv. 6: "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." He said, "We all know very well that man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward. The vessel is launched upon the sea of life on purpose that it may brave the storms and hurricanes. The reeds grow up in the mire on purpose that they may be shaken by the wind. The grass springs up in the field in order that it may be cut down and cast into the oven. The pleasant paths of life are not without their sorrows, and every rose, however sweet it is, shall prick us with its thorn. This being the case, as every Christian knows full well it is, what shall we do with our troubles? If they must come to us, what is to be done with them? Can we relieve ourselves? Shall we rebel against them, shall we resist them, or shall we suffer them? It is impossible to resist them, for we shall find in the very resistance a new cause of suffering. As the fabled Hydra of old, with one head severed from his body, sprang forward with a hundred in its place, so shall our troubles be one of them subdued, a thousand shall stare us in the face. We cannot resist them, it is as idiotic a task as Don Quixote's when he charged the windmills. Shall we suffer them? We could if we were as strong as Atlas, who bore the world upon his shoulders; but we are not Atlases, we cannot bear the crushing weight. Ah! friend, wouldst thou know what to do with thy cares? Take them quickly to the Burden-bearer, cast them all on Him. This is the panacea for all the ills flesh is heir to. This is the only place where thou art sure of finding rest, poor silly dove! and where the waters of thy troubles cannot reach thee—in the ark, the ark of safety and security."

The preacher then asked his hearers to look at these three parts in his text: 1. BE CAREFUL FOR NOTHING. 2. BE PRAYERFUL FOR EVERYTHING. 3. BE THANKFUL FOR ANYTHING. 1. BE CAREFUL FOR NOTHING. The apostle is speaking chiefly of worldly matters, of terrestrial things. There is a sense in which we need not be careful for heavenly things and the weightier matters of our existence, for our God will take these troubles for us; indeed, He bore them on the Cross on Calvary. But the apostle is speaking mainly of earthly considerations and affairs. He does not mean that we are to desist from a certain legitimate care; that would be impossible, for it is in our nature, our proper nature, to be careful. We must be careful for the future and make provision for it; we must look to ourselves in a certain sense; but Paul means, "Be not over anxious," or "Live not in careful suspense." (Luke xii. 29, margin). We must have care or our affairs will go to rack and ruin, and ourselves as well; but we must not be over anxious, having sleepless nights because of things of time, which must soon pass away. The reasons for this are:

(1.) Because there are much higher considerations.—Here we spend no end of time and thought and talent for things which are not worth it, whereas, on the other hand, there are considerations and matters which well deserve our highest attention and deepest thought. "The life is more than meat and the body is more than raiment," and the soul is more than life, and our eternal glory is of far greater importance than the greatest consideration of time. Mr. Spurgeon had stayed at a doctor's house where the knocker and bell seemed to keep on knocking and ringing, for men and women were sick and wanted to be cured. They were not to be blamed for this; but if they spent so much time and thought for these poor frames, what ought they to do for their eternal souls? If the casket was so precious, how should they count the value of the jewel that was concealed therein? How concerned men were about their property—about losing a few thousands of pounds or gaining them! He had seen a man walking along the middle of a road every day at the same hour, trying to find five hundred pounds, of which he had been robbed there; he was a very careful man even to madness, although his treasure was gone; yet many hardly give a thought to heaven, where their treasure is, and spend whole days without even an atom of care about their eternal welfare. This should not be.

(2.) Because those necessary trifles about which we are obliged to think in some degree, are all seen to and arranged by God. If we think of heavenly things God will see to our earthly affairs. We are not to neglect our business and temporal concerns; but Christ said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." To use a familiar expression, said the preacher, we persist in putting the cart before the horse, and seek our earthly good before our heavenly advantage. "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of them," and He will supply your need. Witness, ye flying sparrows, and ye ravens, too, that cleave the air, ye shall be as lessons to us, for not one of you shall fall to the ground without our heavenly Father's notice; and He says: "Are ye not of more value than many sparrows?" If yonder flowering lily is clothed by God, methinks I shall never suf-

fer. How can it be? A son of God suffer while He clothes the lily! No, no; heaven and earth shall pass away before such a thing as that shall happen. When we begin to worry and fret and fume, we mistrust and distrust God. It is as though we thought His arm was not long enough to reach, or His strength sufficiently powerful to save; so we must have a hand in the matter, and a spoke in the wheel. Cast all your cares upon Him who careth for you.

(3.) Because the smallest affairs of life are entirely beyond our control.—We cannot effect in the smallest degree our own concerns. Man can do a great deal,—he can flash a message around the world, or hear a fellow-man speak to him thousands of miles away; he can listen through the microphone and hear the footsteps of a fly; but he cannot turn one hair white or black, or add one cubit to his stature. We think we are managing our affairs, but it is not so; it is the hand of God if any good comes to us at all. We sometimes, as it were, climb up to the tower and turn round the weather-vane, and flatter ourselves that we have changed the wind. God alone can arrange and determine, and settle even our smallest concerns, therefore let us leave all to Him.

(4.) Because nothing is too small for God to care for.—We seem readily to believe that nothing is too great for God to care for, but it seems more difficult to feel as confident about the little things. We can see God in the flash that walks out of the thundercloud, but we want the grace to see him smile in a dew-drop. How near this brings us to God! We can tell Him the little trifles that are hardly worth mentioning to our earthly parents, and he will be deeply interested in them.

II. BE PRAYERFUL FOR EVERYTHING.—Some mercies will be given if we do not ask for them, but it is a sorry way of having them. Just as the echo is sweeter than the original voice, so is answered prayer better than the blessing that comes unasked.

(1.) Because of the privilege of prayer.—We have not only the ear, but the heart of God. We can talk with Him as a man speaks with his friend, and He will be familiar, condescending, free. The blood of God's dear Son opened the way to the mercy seat; men prayed before, but they never had the nearness of access that we have. The privilege purchased at so vast a cost must be great indeed.

(2.) Because of the power of prayer.—It has a soothing effect. When we tell a dear loving human friend of our woes and troubles, it seems as though we were undoing the safety-valve of our heart. It is sweeter still to unburden our hearts to God and unbosom all our pent-up woes.

(3.) Because there is no limit to prayer.—The Lord says, "There is nothing we may not ask Him about." Some people tell us it is no use to pray, for God will not alter His decrees; but since we are told to pray, pray we must. He has decreed that men shall pray. Those other decrees we have nought to do with, but with this we have. He says "I will be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." The text says "and supplication." Prayer must be heartfelt, not formal. We must come as supplicants.

Prayer is the Christian's vital breath, The Christian's native air, His watchword at the gates of death, He enters heaven by prayer.

Prayer is the hand that takes the harp from off the willows, and brings sweetest music from its strings. Prayer is the white-robed angel that glitens at the foot of the sepulchre where hopes have long lain buried, and rolls away the stone. Prayer is the rope on earth that rings the bells in the eternal belfry up yonder. It is the hand that shakes the tree and brings down the luscious fruit of promise. It is the breath that drives the cloud from off the face of God, and makes the sun shine forth once more.

Prayer makes the darkest cloud withdraw; Prayer climbs the ladder Jacob saw; Gives exercise to faith and love, Brings every blessing from above.

III.—BE THANKFUL FOR ANYTHING. (1.)—Because we do not deserve anything but wrath. The expression is sometimes used—"We are ill-deserving, hell-deserving sinners. How true it is! This language is strongly true and truly strong. If we deserve nothing but ill and hell and yet receive benefits and blessings, let us praise the Lord.

(2.) Because ingratitude is one of the worst of sins.—We are grateful for the hospitality and kindness of earthly friends, and yet though we have our food and clothes and all from God, we sometimes scarce give him a "Thank you," for it. Our great poet says:

How sharper than a serpent's tooth Is an ungrateful child!

Yet some children of the Most High God are ungrateful to Him many a time. There are some flowers whose nature is scentless and there are some persons whose natures are thankless.

In conclusion, Mr. Spurgeon pointed out that the three parts of his text were really one, and said, "What God hath joined together let no man put asunder." In illustrating the connection between thankfulness for mercies received and prayer for fresh blessings, he quoted the well-known lines:

The best return for one like me, So wretched and so poor, Is from His gifts to draw a plea, And ask Him still for more,

and added that his friends in Australia said to him, "Come again, come and welcome, and you will show that you have liked your trip." God says the same, "If you have been blessed come again, come and welcome, I have greater blessings in store for you." After just referring to the result of obedience, to the exhortations of the text as taught in the verse, he closed with an earnest appeal to the unconverted to seek the peace which passeth all understanding, and with the benediction dismissed the vast congregation.

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