

FEAR NOT NO. 156

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, OCTOBER 4, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

*“Fear not, you worm Jacob and you men of Israel. I will help you, says the
LORD and your Redeemer the Holy One of Israel.”
Isaiah 41:14.*

I SHALL speak this morning to those that are discouraged, depressed in spirit and sore troubled in the Christian life. There are certain nights of exceeding great darkness through which the spirit has to grope in much pain and misery and during which much of the comfort of the Word is particularly needed. Those seasons occur in this manner. Frequently they occur at the outset of a religious life. A young man, deeply impressed under the ministry has been led to feel the weight of sin. He trusts also he has been led to look for salvation to the Christ who is preached in the Gospel.

In the young ardor of his spirit he devotes himself wholly to Christ—with the most solemn vows he dedicates body, soul, time, talents—all that he has, to the great work of serving God. He thinks it easy to fulfill his vow. He does not count the cost. He reckons it will be easy to forsake merry companions, to renounce old established habits and to become a Christian. Alas, before many days he finds out his mistake. If he did not reckon without his head he certainly reckoned without his heart, for his evil heart of unbelief had deceived him. He knew not how hard would be the struggle and how desperate the wrestling between his old evil nature and the new-born principle of grace within him.

He finds it to be like the rending off of right arms to give up old and cherished habits. He discovers it to be painful to renounce his former pursuits—as painful as it would be to pluck out his right eye. He sits down, then, and he says, “If this is the trouble at the outset, what may I expect as I proceed? Oh my Soul, you were too fast in dedicating yourself to God. You have undertaken a warfare which your prowess can never accomplish. You have started on a journey for which your strength is not adequate. Let me again return unto the world.”

And if the Spirit says, “No, you can not,” then the poor soul sits itself down in deep misery and cries, “I cannot go back and I cannot go forward. What must I do? I am exceedingly discouraged because of the way.” The same feeling often overcomes the most valiant Christian veteran. He who has been long experienced in the things of the Divine life will sometimes be overtaken with a dark night and a stormy tempest. So dark will be the night that he will not know his right hand from his left and so horrible the tempest that he cannot hear the sweet words of his Master say, “Fear not, I am with you.”

Periodical tornadoes and hurricanes will sweep over the Christian. He will be subjected to as many trials of his spirit as trials in his flesh. This much I know, if it is not so with all of you it is so with me. I have to speak today to myself. And while I shall be endeavoring to encourage those who are distressed and down-hearted, I shall be preaching, I trust, to myself, for I need something which shall cheer my heart—why, I cannot tell—from where I do not know but I have a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me. My soul is cast down within me, I feel as if I had rather die than live.

All that God has done by me seems to be forgotten and my spirit flags and my courage breaks down with the thought of that which is to come. I need your prayers. I need God’s Holy Spirit. And I felt that I could not preach today unless I should preach in such a way as to encourage you and to encourage myself in the good work and labor of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What a precious promise to the young Christian, or to the old Christian attacked by lowness of spirits and distress of mind! “Fear not, you worm Jacob and you men of Israel. I will help you, says the LORD and your Redeemer the Holy One of Israel.” Christian Brethren, there are some in this congregation, I hope many, who have solemnly devoted themselves to the cause and service of the Lord Jesus Christ—let them hear, then, the preparation which is necessary for this service set forth in the words of our text.

First, *before we can do any great things for Christ there must be a sense of weakness*—“Worm Jacob.” Secondly, *there must be trust in promised strength*. And thirdly, *there must be fear removed by that promise*—“Fear not, for I will help you.”

I. In the first place, the first qualification for serving God with any amount of success and for doing God’s work well and triumphantly, is A SENSE OF OUR OWN WEAKNESS. When God’s warrior marches forth to battle with plumed helmet and with mail about his loins, strong in his own majesty—when he says, “I know that I shall conquer, my own right arm and my mighty sword shall get unto me the victory”—defeat is not far distant. God will not go forth with that man who goes forth in his own strength. He who reckons on victory having first calculated his own might, has reckoned wrongly, for “it is not by might, nor by power but by my Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts.”

They that go forth to fight, boasting that they can do it, shall return with their banners trailed in the dust and with their armor stained with defeat. For God will not go forth with the man who goes forth in his own strength. God has said it—men must serve Him—they must serve Him in His way and they must serve Him in His strength, too, or He will never accept their service. That which man does, unaided by Divine strength, God never can accept. The mere fruits of the earth He casts away. He will only have the seed of which was sown from Heaven, sprinkled in the heart and harvested by the sun of grace. There must be a consciousness of weakness, before there can be any victory.

I think I hear many saying today, “Well, Sir, if that is a qualification for doing much, I have it to a very large extent.” Well, do not marvel, do not wonder. Depend on this—God will empty out all that you have before He will ever put His own into you. He will first empty all your granaries before He will fill them with the finest of the wheat. The river of God is full of water. But there is not one drop of it that takes its rise in earthly springs. God will have no strength used in His battles but the strength which He Himself imparts—and I would not have you that are now distressed in the least discouraged by it. Your emptiness is but the *preparation* for your being filled and your casting down is but the making ready for your lifting up.

Are there others of you that would almost desire to be cast down that they might be prepared to serve God? Let me tell you, then, how you can promote in yourself a sense of your own nothingness. The text addresses us as worms. Now, the mere rationalist, the man who boasts of the dignity of human nature, will never subscribe his name to such a title as this. “Worm?” says he, “I am no worm—I am a man, a man is the most glorious thing that God has made. I am not going to be called a worm. I am a man—I can do anything. I want not your revelations. They may be fit for children, for men of childish minds that only learn by believing—I am a man. I can think out truth. I will make my own Bible, fashion my own ladder and mount on it to Heaven, if there is a Heaven, or make a Heaven, if that is all and dwell in it myself.”

Not so, however, he who is wise and understands. He knows that he is a worm and he knows it in this way—first, he knows it by *contemplation*. He that thinks, will always think himself little. Men who have no brains are always great men. But those who think, must think their pride down—if God is with them in their thinking. Lift up now your eyes, behold the Heavens, the work of God’s fingers. Behold the sun guided in his daily march. Go forth at midnight and behold the Heavens—consider the stars and the moon. Look upon these works of God’s hands and if you are men of sense and your souls are attuned to the high music of the spheres, you will say, “What is man that You are mindful of him and the son of man that You visit him?”

My God! When I survey the boundless fields of ether and see those ponderous orbs rolling therein—when I consider how vast are Your dominions—so wide that an angel’s wing might flap to all eternity and never reach a boundary—I marvel that You should look on insects so obscure as man. I have taken to myself the microscope and seen the short-lived things upon the leaf and I have called them small. I will not call him so again—compared with me he is great—if I put myself into comparison with God. I am so little, that I shrink into nothingness when I behold the Almighty of Jehovah—so little, that the difference between the animalcule and man dwindles into nothing, when compared with the infinite chasm between God and man.

Let your mind rove upon the great doctrines of the Godhead. Consider the existence of God from before the foundations of the world. Behold Him who is and was and is to come, the Almighty. Let your soul comprehend as much as it can of the Infinite and grasp as much as possible of the Eternal and I am sure if you have minds at all, they will shrink with awe. The tall archangel bows himself before his Master’s Throne and we shall cast ourselves into the lowest dust when we

feel what base *nothings*, what insignificant *specks* we are, when compared with our all-adorable Creator. Labor O soul, to know your nothingness and learn it by *contemplating God's greatness*.

Again—if you want to know your own nothingness consider *what you are in suffering*. I was thinking the other evening how small a matter it must be with God to cast any man into the most unutterable agony. We are well and in good spirits. We know not why, but it seems as if God's finger had touched one nerve—but one poor nerve and we are so miserable that we could sit down and weep. We do not know how to bear ourselves. But half an hour ago we could have “smiled at Satan's rage and laced a frowning world.” And God does but put His hand on our hearts and just let one of the strings run loose and what discord there is in our spirits! We are annoyed at the slightest matter. We wish to be continually alone. The very promises yield us no comfort. Our days are nights and our nights are black as Gehenna. We know not how to endure ourselves.

How easily, then, can God cast us into misery! O man, what a little thing you are, if so little a thing can overthrow you. You have heard men talk big words when they have been prosperous. Did you ever hear them talk so when they were in deep distress and great anguish and sorrow? No, then they say, “Am I a sea or a whale that You set a watch upon me? What am I, that You should visit me every morning and chasten me every night? Let me alone, until I swallow down my spittle. Why am I sore vexed? What am I, that You should make me a target for Your arrows and a target for your wrath? Spare me, O my God, for I am less than nothing. I am but a shadow that passes away and declines. Oh deal not harshly with Your servant, for Your mercies sake.” Great sorrow will always make a man think little of himself—if God blesses it to him.

Again—if you would know your own weakness, *try some great labor for Christ*. I can understand how some minister who preaches to his hundred-and-fifty on a Sabbath day and regards himself as having a large congregation, should be very precise about the color of his cravat and about the respect that is paid to his dignity in his little church. I can well comprehend how he should be as big as my Lord Archbishop—because he does nothing. He has nothing at all to try him. But I cannot imagine Martin Luther standing before the Diet at Worms being proud because he had to do such a deed as that.

I cannot conceive John Calvin, in his incessant labors for Christ, leading on the Reformation and teaching the Truth of God with power saying to himself, “Lo! this great Babylon that I have built.” I can suppose the man that has nothing to do and that is doing nothing sitting down in devout complacency with his own adorable self. But I cannot conceive, if you nerve yourselves to great labors but what you will have to say, “Lord, what a worm am I that You should call me to such work as this!” Turn, if you please, to the history of all men who have done great deeds for God and you will find them saying, “I marvel that God would use *me* thus!”

“This day my mind was exceedingly cast down,” says one of them, “for God had called me to a great labor and I never felt so much of my own insufficiency as I did today.” Says another, “I have tomorrow to do such-and-such an eminent service for my Master. I can say that when I was in my low estate, I was often exalted above measure but this day my God has cast me into the lowest depths at the recollection of the work for which He has engaged me.” Go and do something, some of you and I will be bound to say it will be the means of pricking that fair bubble of your pride and letting some of it blow away.

If you would understand what is meant by being a worm, go and do what the 15th verse says the worm should do—go and thrash the mountains and beat them small—make the hills as chaff fanned by the wind, scatter them and then rejoice in God. And if you can do that—

*“The more God's glories strike your eyes,
The humbler you will lie.”*

Devout contemplation, sharp suffering, hard labor—all these will teach us what little creatures we are. Oh, may God by all means and every means keep us well understanding and knowing that we are nothing more and nothing better than worms!

How easy it is, my Brethren, for you and I to fly up! How hard to keep down! That demon of pride was born with us and it will not die one hour before us. It is so woven into the very warp and woof of our nature that till we are wrapped in our winding-sheets we shall never hear the last of it. If any man tells me that he is humble, I know him to be pro-

foundly proud. And if any man will not acknowledge this truth—that he is desperately inclined to self-exaltation—let him know that his denial of this truth is the best proof of it.

Do you know what is the sweetest flattery in all the world? It is that flattery that Caesar's courtier of old gave to him, when they said Caesar hated flattery, being then most highly flattered. We do not hate flattery, anyone of us. We all like it. We do not like it if it is labeled flattery. But we like it if it is given in a little underhand fashion. We all love praise—

*“The proud to gain it toils on toils endure,
The modest shun it but to make it sure.”*

We all love it, every soul of us and it is right and meet that we should all bow before God and acknowledge that pride which is woven into our nature and ask Him to teach us what little things we are, that we may claim this promise—
“Fear not, you worm Jacob.”

II. Now the next point. Before devoting ourselves to Christ, or doing any great labor for the Savior, it is necessary THERE SHOULD BE TRUST IN THE PROMISED STRENGTH. “I will help you, says the LORD and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.” It is a certain fact, that though men are worms, they do what worms never could do. Although men are nothing, they do accomplish deeds which need even this power of the Infinite to rival them. How shall we account for this? Certainly it is not the *worms*! It must be some secret energy which gives them might.

The mystery is unraveled in the text. “I will help you, says the LORD.” In ancient history there is a story told of a valiant captain whose banner was always foremost in the fight, whose sword was dreaded by his enemies, for it was the herald of slaughter and of victory. His monarch once demanded of him that he should send this potent sword to him to be examined. The monarch took the sword, quietly examined it, and sent it back with this message—“I see nothing wonderful in the sword. I cannot understand why any man should be afraid of it.”

The captain sent back in the most respectful manner a message of this kind—“Your Majesty has been pleased to examine the sword but I did not send the arm that wielded it. If you had examined that and the heart that guided the arm, you would have understood the mystery.” And now we look at men and see what men have done and we say, “I cannot understand this, how was it done?” “Why, we are only seeing the sword. If we could see the heart of infinite love that guided that man in his onward course, we should not wonder that he, as God's sword, gained the victory.

Now the Christian may remember that little though he is, God is with him. God will help him and that right early. Brethren, I like a man who, when he begins to do anything, is afraid of himself and says, “It is of no use. I cannot do it.” Let him alone—he will do it. He is all right. The man who says, “Oh there is nothing to it, I can do it,” will break down to a dead certainty. But let him begin by saying, “I know what I am and I feel confident I cannot do it unless I have something more given to me than I feel today”—that man will come back with flying banners, the trumpets proclaiming that he has been victorious. But it must be because he puts reliance upon *help promised*.

Now, Christian, I see you this morning ready to run away from the battle. You have been so dispirited this last week, through many adverse circumstances, that you are ready to give up your religion. Now, Man, here is a Brother comrade that is passing through just the same thing. He comes here this morning, half inclined to run off to Tarshish like Jonah did of old. Only he could not find a boat, or else he might have sailed away. And he has come here to pat you on the shoulder and say, “Brother, do not let us play deserters, after all. Let us up to arms and still fight for our Master. For the promise says, “I will help you.”

Brother, what an all-sufficient promise that is—“I will help you.” Why, it matters not what God has given us to do. If He helps us we can do it. Give me God to help me and I will split the world in halves and sliver it till it shall be smaller than the dust of the threshing floor. Yes, and if God is with me, this breath could blow whole worlds about, as the child blows a bubble. There is no telling what man can do when God is with him. Give God to a man and he can do all things. Put God into a man's arm and he may have only the jawbone of an ass to fight with but he will lay the Philistines in heaps—put God into a man's hand and he may have a giant to deal with and nothing but a sling and a stone. But he will lodge the stone in the giant's brow before long.

Put God into a man's eye and he will flash defiance on kings and princes. Put God into a man's lips and he will speak right honestly, though his death should be the wages of his speech. There is no fear in a man who has got God with him. He is all-sufficient. There is nothing beyond his power. And my Brethren, what an opportune help God's is! God's help

always comes in at the right time. We are often making a fuss because God does not help us when we do not want to be helped. “Oh!” says one, “I do not think that I could die for Christ. I feel I could not. I wish I felt that I had strength enough to die.”

Well, you just won’t feel that because you are not going to die and God will not give you strength to die with to lay up till the dying time comes. Wait till you are dying and then He will give you strength to die. “Oh!” says another, “I wish I felt as strong in prayer as So-and-So.” But you do not want so much strength in prayer and you shall not have it. You shall have what you want and you shall have it when you want it. But you shall not have it before. Ah, I have often cried to God and desired that I might feel happy before I began to preach—that I might feel I could preach to the people. I could never get it at all. And yet sometimes God has been pleased to cheer me as I have gone along and given me strength that has been equal to my day.

So it must be with you. God will come in when you want Him—not one minute before, nor yet one minute later. “I will help you.” I will help you when you need help! And oh, Brethren, what an ennobling thing it is to be helped by God! To be helped by a fellow man is no disgrace but it is no honor. But to be helped by God—what an honor that is! When the Christian Prophet preaches his Master’s Word and feels that he has girded about his loins the belt of the Almighty to strengthen him for his day’s work—that he may not fear the people—what a noble being he is then! When the Christian philanthropist goes into the prison, in the midst of reeking disease and death and feels that God has put the wing of the angel over him to shield him in the day of pestilence, how it ennoble and honors him to have God with him!

To have His strength girding his loins and nerving his arm is just the highest thing to which man can attain. I thought but yesterday, “Oh, if I were a cherub I would stand with wings outstretched and I would bless God for opportunities for serving Him.” But I thought within myself, “I have an opportunity of serving God but I am too weak for it. O my God, I wish You had not put the load on me.” And then it struck me, “Do the cherubim and seraphim ever say that? Do they ever for a moment say, “I have not strength enough to do it!” No. If a cherub had a work to do which was beyond his might, he would meekly bow his head and say, “My Lord. I fly, I fly! He that commanded the deed will enable me to perform it.” And so must the Christian say, “My God, do You command? It is enough—‘tis done. You never did send us to a warfare in our own strength and You will never do so. You will help us and be with us to the end.” Before we can do much, then, *we must know our own weakness and believe God’s strength.*

III. And now comes the last point, upon which I shall be brief. We must then, LABOR TO GET RID, AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, FEAR. The Prophet says. “Fear not.” You are a worm but do not fear. God will help you, why should you fear? Let us labor to get rid of fear when we are certain we are serving our Master. And let these be our reasons—

Get rid of fear, *because fear is painful.* How it torments the spirit! When the Christian trusts, he is happy. When he doubts, he is miserable. When the Believer looks to his Master and relies upon Him, he can sing. When he doubts his Master, he can only groan. What miserable wretches the most faithful Christians are when they once begin doubting and fearing! It is a trade I never like to meddle with because it never pays the expenses and never brings in any profit—the trade of doubting. Why, the soul is broken in pieces, lanced, pricked with knives, dissolved, racked, pained. It knows not how to exist when it gives way to fear.

Up, Christian! You are of a sorrowful countenance—up and chase your fears away. Why would you be forever groaning in your dungeon? Why should the Giant Despair forever beat you with his crab tree club? Up! Drive him away! Touch the key of the promises. Be of good cheer! Fear never helped you yet and it never will.

Fear, too, is *weakening.* Make a man afraid—he will run at his own Shadow. Make a man brave and he will stand before an army and overcome them. He will never do much good in the world who is afraid of men. The fear of God brings blessings but the fear of men brings a snare and such a snare that many feet have been tripped. No man shall be faithful to God if he is fearful of man. No man shall find his arm sufficient for him and his might equal to his emergencies unless he can confidently believe and quietly wait. We must not fear. For fear is weakening.

Again—we must not fear. For fear *dishonors God.* Doubt the Eternal? Distrust the Omnipotent? Oh, traitorous Fear! Think you that the arm which piled the Heavens and sustains the pillars of the earth shall ever be palsied? Shall the brow which eternal ages have rolled over, without scathing it, at last be furrowed by old age? What? Shall the Eternal fail you? Shall the faithful Promiser break His oath? You dishonor God, O Unbelief! Get out of here! God is too wise to

err, too good to be unkind—leave off doubting Him and begin to trust Him—for in so doing you will put a crown on His head—but in doubting Him you do trample His crown beneath your feet.

And lastly, doubt not the Lord, O Christian, for in so doing *you do lower yourself*. The more you believe, the greater you are. But the more you doubt, the less you become. It was said of the world's conqueror, that when he was sick, he cried like a child. "Give me some drink," cried one, like a sick girl it was said to his dishonor. And is it not to the dishonor of a Christian who lives in secret on his God and professes to trust alone in Him, that he cannot trust Him? That a little child will overcome his faith? Oh, poor little boat that is upset by a raindrop! O poor puny Christian that is overcome by every straw—that stumbles at every stone! Then, Christian Brothers and Sisters, behave like men and women!

It is childish to doubt. It is manhood's glory to trust. Plant your foot upon the immovable Rock of Ages. Lift your eye to Heaven. Scorn the world—never play craven. Bend your fist in the world's face and bid defiance to it and Hell and you are a man and noble. But crouch and cringe and dread and doubt and you have lost your Christian dignity and are no longer what you should be. You do not honor God. "Fear not, you worm Jacob. I will help you, says the LORD." Then why should you fear?

I feel that my voice fails me and with it my very powers of thought, too. Therefore I can only turn to my comrades in arms, in the good war of Christ and say to them—Brethren, you and I can do nothing of ourselves—we are poor puny things. But let us attempt great things—for God is with us! Let us dare great things, for God will not leave us. Remember what He has done. And remember, what He has done of old, He will do again. Remember David the shepherd boy. Remember well of Shamgar, with his ox-goad. Forget not the jawbone of the ass and the stone from the sling. If these worked wonders, why should not we? If little things have done great things, let us try to do great things also. You know not, you atoms, but that your destiny is sublime. Try and make it so by faith.

And the least of you may be mighty through the strength of God. Oh for grace to trust God and there is no telling what you can do. Worms, you are nothing but you have eaten princes. Worms you are nothing but you have devoured the roots of cedars and laid them level with the earth. Worms, you are nothing but you have piled rocks in the deep, deep sea and wrecked mighty navies. Worms, you have eaten through the keel of the proudest ship that ever sailed the ocean. If you have done this yourselves, what cannot we do? Your strength lies in your mouths. Our strength lies in ours, too. We will use our mouths in prayer and in constant adoration and we shall conquer yet, for God is with us and victory is sure—

*"You trembling souls! Dismiss your fears.
Let mercy be your theme.
Mercy, which, like a river,
Flows in one continued stream.
Fear not the powers of earth and Hell—
GOD will these powers restrain,
His mighty arm their rage repel,
And make their efforts vain.
Fear not the want of outward good—
He will for His provide
Grant them supplies of daily food,
And all they need beside.
Fear not that He will ever forsake
Or leave His work undone
He's faithful to His promises—
And faithful to His Son.
Fear not the terrors of the grave,
Or death's tremendous sting
He will from endless wrath preserve —
To endless glory bring."*

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307