
A Love Found & Founded

Medicinal
Meditations for
the Christian
Soul in Trial

Brian J. Mann (Editor)

A Love Found & Founded
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INTRODUCTION

The writings on the pages ahead are those which have been of benefit to me during a trying time. They are particularly made up of two authors, namely Susannah Spurgeon (the wife of the famous preacher C.H. Spurgeon), and J.C. Ryle. Though many more of the writings of these saints of God may here be included, it was these particular devotions which were greatly used in my own life.

I have edited the writings only to the extent to be of use to the modern reader by using a modern translation of the Bible throughout (*English Standard Version*) and updating language of the devotions wherever I thought it was necessary and useful.

This publication is offered forth with the hopes that some by God's grace will also say with Susannah Spurgeon:

***“By how small a thing, sometimes, does
God send uplifting to His children, when
He has cast them down!”***

The Title of the book *Love Found & Founded* illustrates two principles. The first is that one must discover the love of God making such reading necessary in difficult times. The second is that this love is preconceived and founded upon an eternal endowment of God's own being. The two principles work together to provide a cordial or medicine for the Christian soul in difficult times that I dare say, if eagerly received, will comfort them beyond measure.

Brian J. Mann, SDG

BECAUSE HE LOVES YOU ¹

By Susannah Spurgeon

***"Because the LORD loves you."
(Deuteronomy 7:8)***

MY gracious God, there is a honeycomb of delight and sweetness in these words. Will You put the rod of faith into my hand, this day, and enable me to dip the end of it into this rich provision, that my soul may eat, and be satisfied, and that the eyes of my understanding may be enlightened?

"Because the LORD loves you." This is His great "reason" for all His dealing with His own. It is a full and convincing answer to all the doubts and questionings with which Satan can perplex and distress the Lord's timid ones. The enemy of souls has, regrettably! A powerful associate in the wicked unbelief which lurks within us; but they will both be vanquished when we have learned to use this weapon of war against them.

Come, my heart, try its blessed force and quality at this moment! The foe says, "Why does God send you affliction, and sorrow, and suffering, when those who fear not His Name have

¹ Originally titled: A Honeycomb of Delight

continued quietness and increasing prosperity?" If you can boldly answer, "It is because the Lord loves me," you will have given him such a sword-thrust as will free you, for a time, at least, from his cunning devices and fierce attacks.

Or, look at the text as a shaft of sunlight, piercing through a crack in the shuttered window of some dark experience. Bring your fears and apprehensions out of the dusky corners, and place them within the radiance of this light of love. You will be amazed to see them transformed into confident trusts. Your doubts will vanish as if they had never been, and the evil and bitter things of life will all be changed to blessings in a moment. *"Because the LORD loves you"* is a master-key which fits the wards of the hardest question, and opens the mysteries of the deepest problem. It is a charm of wondrous efficacy, and every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ may not only rejoice in its possession, but use it constantly to obtain all the desire of his heart in spiritual things.

What troubles your poor soul? Is it the loss of health, or friends, or means? Has God taken from you some dearly-loved one, and left you alone on this sad earth? Is He trying and proving you by many different tests and troubles, "to know what was in your heart"? Whatever is your immediate and specific sorrow, if you have grace and faith enough to say, "This

is because the Lord loves me," I dare to promise you that all the bitterness of the affliction will melt away, and the peace of God will fill you with a sweet content which passes understanding. No distress can withstand such Divine solace; no anguish can refuse the relief of this balm of Gilead. If all that happens to you can be traced directly or indirectly to the hand of your loving Lord, how gladly should you bear life's burdens, and how perfect might be the rest in which the heart and mind should dwell!

O gracious Master, looking back over the years that are gone, the interminglings of grief and gladness pass before my eyes as the clouds sail by on an April day; and though the memories of great affliction and sore bereavement cast deep shadows across the scene, and seem for a time to blot out all the brightness, yet, above and beyond those changeful skies, the sun has never ceased shining, and darkness as well as day has proclaimed the immutability of Your love. When the ears of my soul are attuned to catch the soft whisper of Your voice, I hear You saying, "All this, My child, was because the Lord loves you. Left to yourself, you would have destroyed yourself; but in Me was your help found, and the tribulations you have endured were but My servants to whom I entrusted the necessary discipline of their earthly life. "Have you forgotten

those words of Mine, '***As many as I love, I rebuke and discipline***'? (Rev. 3:19)

DO NOT WORRY ABOUT TOMORROW

By J.C. Ryle

"Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?"²⁶ Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"²⁷ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?²⁸ And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin,²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be

added to you.³⁴ ¶ "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. (Matthew 6:25-34)

These verses are a striking example of the combined wisdom and compassion of our Lord Jesus Christ's teaching. He knows the heart of a man. He knows that we are all ready to turn off warnings against worldliness, by the argument that we cannot help being anxious about the things of this life. "Have we not our families to provide for? Must not our bodily needs be supplied? How can we possibly get through life, if we think first of our souls?" The Lord Jesus foresaw such thoughts, and furnished an answer.

He forbids us to keep up an anxious spirit about the things of this world. Four times over He says, "**Don't be anxious.**" About life—about food—about clothing—about tomorrow, "**don't be anxious.**" Be not over-careful. Be not over-anxious. Prudent provision for the future is right. Wearing, corroding, self-tormenting anxiety is wrong.

He reminds us of the providential care that God continually takes of everything that He has created. Has He given us "**life?**" Then He will surely not let us lack anything

necessary for its maintenance. Has He given us a **"body?"** Then He will surely not let us die for lack of clothing. He that calls us into being, will doubtless find food to feed us.

He points out the uselessness of over-anxiety. Our life is entirely in God's hand. All the care in the world will not make us continue a minute beyond the time which God has appointed. We shall not die until our work is done.

He sends us to the birds of the air for instruction. They make no provision for the future. **"They neither sow nor reap."** They lay up no stores against time yet to come. They do not **"gather into barns."** They literally live from day to day on what they can pick up, by using the instinct God has put in them. They ought to teach us that no man doing his duty in the station to which God has called him, shall ever be allowed to come to poverty.

He bids us to observe the flowers of the field. Year after year they are decked with the liveliest colors, without the slightest labor or exertion on their part. **"They neither toil nor spin."** God, by His almighty power, clothes them with beauty every season. The same God is the Father of all believers. Why should they doubt that He is able to provide them with clothing, as well as the lilies **"of the field?"** He who takes thought for

perishable flowers, will surely not neglect the bodies in which dwell immortal souls.

He suggests to us, that anxiety about the things of this world is most unworthy of a Christian. One great feature of unbelief is living for the present. Let the unbeliever, if he will, be anxious. He knows nothing of a Father in heaven. But let the Christian, who has clearer light and knowledge, give proof of it by his faith and contentment. When bereaved of those whom we love, we are not to ***"grieve as others do who have no hope"*** (1 Thess. 4:13). When tried by cares about this life, we are not to be over-anxious, as if we had no God, and no Christ.

He offers us a gracious promise, as a remedy against an anxious spirit. He assures us that if we ***"seek first"*** and foremost to have a place in the kingdom of grace and glory, everything that we really need in this world shall be given to us. It shall be ***"added,"*** over and above our heavenly inheritance. ***"For those who love God all things work together for good."*** ***"No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly"*** (Rom. 8:28; Psalm 84:11).

Last of all, He seals up all His instruction on this subject, by laying down one of the wisest maxims: ***"Tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."*** We are not to carry cares before they come. We are to attend to

today's business, and leave tomorrow's anxieties until tomorrow dawns. We may die before tomorrow. We know not what may happen tomorrow. This only we may be assured of, that if tomorrow brings a cross, He who sends it, can and will send grace to bear it.

In all this passage there is a treasury of golden lessons. Let us seek to use them in our daily life. Let us not only read them, but turn them to practical account. Let us watch and pray against worry, and an over-anxious spirit. It deeply concerns our happiness. Half our miseries are caused by imagining things that we think are coming upon us. Half the things that we expect to come upon us, never come at all. Where is our faith? Where is our confidence in our Savior's words? We may well take shame to ourselves, when we read these verses, and then look into our hearts. But this we may be sure of, that David's words are true, ***"I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his children begging for bread."*** (Psalm 37:25).

THE GOD WHO NEVER MAKES A MISTAKE²

By Susannah Spurgeon

"My times are in Your hand." (Psalm 31:15)

WHY then should I be troubled or tremble? That great, loving, powerful hand keeps all the events of my life sealed and secure within its almighty clasp, and only He, my Maker and my Master, can permit them to pass from His keeping, and be revealed to me one by one, as His will for me. What a compassionate, gracious arrangement! How exceptional to fulfill that sweet promise of His Word, ***"You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you!"*** (Isaiah 26:3). If we fully believed this, we should be absolutely devoid of the care which corrodes and chafes the daily life of so many professing Christians.

"My times," Not one or two important epochs of my history only, but everything that concerns me: joys that I had not expected; sorrows that must have crushed me if they could have been anticipated; sufferings which might have terrified me by their grimness had I looked upon them; surprises which

² Originally titled: A Personal Testimony

infinite love had prepared for me; services of which I could not have imagined myself capable—all these lay in that mighty hand as the purposes of God's eternal will for me. But, as they have developed gradually and silently, how great has been the love which appeared enwrapping and enfolding each one! Has not the grief been measured, while the gladness has far more abounded? Have not the comforts and consolations exceeded the crosses and complaints? Have not all things been so arranged, and ordered, and undertaken, and worked out on our behalf, that we can but marvel at the goodness and wisdom of God in measuring out from that dear hand of His all the *"times"* that have passed over us?

You agree with me in all this, do you not, dear readers? Then, I pray you, apply it to your present circumstances, however dark or difficult they may be. They have come directly from your Father's hand to you, and they are His dear will.

Just up to this previous sentence I had written when suddenly God sent me a *"time"* of such severe and prolonged pain, that my pen fell from my fingers, my words and counsels turned their face inwards, and became a crowd of witnesses rather than a band of exhorters. I hope they have seen some quiet submission to the will of God, some patience, some restful

faith in every difficulty³ of God's dealing with me. But unfortunately it is easier to know what to do than to do it, and far less courageous to point out the foe's hiding-places than to stand the fire of his artillery. I have been brought very low. The gnawing, tearing teeth of pain have fastened themselves upon me, and night and day I have been held fast in their terrible grip.

"Why does my Lord deal this way with His child?" I asked. I sought to know what lesson He would teach me by this physical suffering, which lays me aside from all my beloved work, which feeds me with "the bread of tears," and gives me "tears to drink in great measure." But no direct answer came to my question, and again and again the lesson was "returned" as yet imperfectly learned. Sometimes, all connected thought vanished, and a bewilderment of sorrow took possession of me; yet not one moment did the great Physician leave me; I was in distress, but never in doubt. Day after day, and night after night, the pain continued; but, often, in my weakness, I remembered what I had been trying to write of before the trial came, and I would whisper, "***My times are in Your hand!*** '***My times are in Your hand!*** '***My times are in Your hand!***' This is

³ Original word is "detain" which could mean hindrance, difficulty or the like.

Your doing, O Lord, so it must be a right *'time'*, however sad it may seem to me!"

One day, I received in the mail a strange, round parcel, which was carried to my bedside. "Please open it," I said to my friend. This was more easily said than done, the wrappings were so voluminous. At last, a lengthy scroll, beautifully illuminated, was drawn out; and as it was unrolled, it was seen to bear the simple but significant words:

GOD NEVER MAKES A MISTAKE.

It was as if some sweet far-off echo of God's love had suddenly embodied itself before me. My soul leapt forward to embrace the blessed truth. And I found solace and strengthening as from the hands of a ministering angel. How it soothed and comforted me! By how small a thing, sometimes, does God send uplifting to His children, when He has cast them down! By how gentle a medicine can⁴ *"He give His beloved sleep"*! (Psalm 127:2) Now, no weakness, or ignorance, or helplessness, or suffering, can prevent me from rejoicing in the

⁴ Originally phrased: "By how gentle an anodyne can..." Anodyne is used here as a noun meaning a painkilling drug or medicine.

face that *"my times"* are in the *"hand"* of a God who never makes a mistake. [Amen.]

WITH JESUS—YET AFRAID

By Susannah Spurgeon

"Where is your faith?" (Luke 8: 25)

It was a matter of life or death with these men! To their dim human vision, there were gathered around that little boat the materials for an awful tragedy! Fierce gusts of stormy wind; devouring waves of the sea; a frail boat every moment in jeopardy of foundering; paralyzing terror in the hearts of all but one of their number—and He was asleep! One can imagine the despair and intensity of the cry with which they awoke with Him, ***"Master, Master, we are perishing!" And he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm"*** (Luke 8:24). In an instant, the turmoil was over, and the danger gone. Yet, we can imagine the grieved look of the reproof in the Lord's face as He turns from the cowering elements to ask the trembling men at His side the question, ***"Where is your faith?"*** Have the winds scattered it? Has the sea swallowed it up? Has your fear utterly swept it away?

To us, looking back over the centuries at this incident on the Sea of Galilee, it seems incomprehensible that the disciples

could be afraid of anything *while Jesus was with them*. We should have thought that His personal presence, whether sleeping or waking, would have been a perfect security to them against all fear of ill. Had they not seen daily manifestations of His mighty power? Had He not healed the sick, opened blind eyes, made lame men walk, multiplied a few loaves and fishes to provide food for a great host, raised the dead to life, and done many other wonderful works? After all they had seen, and felt, and known of His mighty power in the past, one wonders that the present danger should so utterly frighten them. The reason of this may have been that they did not go to Jesus at once, as soon as the gale burst upon them. Perhaps they thought that they could manage the boat and weather the storm by their own efforts and skill. It is possible that self-confidence was lurking in their hearts, and that the Lord used this perilous position to convince them of their absolute helplessness and dependence on Himself for everything.

Ah! Dear friends, does not this teaching come home to our own hearts? Do not we behave in precisely similar fashion when placed in the same alarming circumstances? Some great trial or temptation bursts like a storm into the serenity of our life, and overwhelms us with a sense of danger and distress; we are terrified and trembling, we see nothing but the peril which

surrounds us, we struggle against the storm as best as we can till there is no more endurance in us, and then we go to the Master with the bitter cry of those about to perish!

Yet, as a matter of fact, He has been with us all the time. Has He not promised never to leave us? Is there not always access by faith to His gracious presence? He may be in the hinder part of the ship, asleep, and apparently oblivious of all that is passing around Him; but the pillow beneath His head is His own Omniscience, and, as surely as He ruled those winds and waves on Galilee's lake, and reined in the tempest with a word, so certainly does He manage all the affairs of His children, and appoint or permit all that concerns them. A sincere and steadfast faith in this blessed fact would keep our minds in perfect peace, whatever might befall us; it would lift us above all fear of the perils and storms of life, and hide us as in **"the secret of His tabernacle."** (Psalm 27:5)

Dear Master, You come to each one of us with the same question as that which shamed Your poor timid disciples, **"Where is your faith?"** And we are dumb before You, Lord, as they were, for we have no excuse to offer for our unbelief; we have not even the slight plea which they might have urged, that they had as yet scarcely realized that You were God incarnate, and had asked, wondering among themselves, **"Who then is**

this?" We know You as the once crucified, but now risen Lord, to whom all power in Heaven and on earth has been given, and You may well marvel at our unbelief.

Strange indeed it is that the love of Christ, so boundless and so infinite, should be so grudgingly trusted in by those whose only hope lies in the fullness and freeness of that love as manifested to them. We do not find it difficult to believe and rejoice in the love of a fellow-creature; but when the fathomless love of God is declared to us, we question, and reason, and evade, and calculate, with a stubbornness which only too plainly shows the hardness and unbelief of our heart. O beloved, let us cast away from us, with shame and loathing, the bonds of this cruel sin of doubting, which grieves our Savior's tender heart, and so shamefully dishonors His love! His pathetic question, *"Where is your faith?"* plainly shows that He expects our absolute trust at all times, and that He is disappointed when He fails to find the faith He so much values in His chosen.

A PERILOUS PATHWAY

By Susannah Spurgeon

"Lord... command me to come to you on the water" (Matthew 14:28).

POOR Peter! What weary anxious night of toil and watching he had spent in that storm tossed boat, with a contrary wind blowing so hard, and without the presence of his beloved Lord! But now the fourth watch has begun, the day is breaking, and with the first streaks of dawn, hope springs up in his heart that deliverance will come. It comes in a very unexpected manner, as do most of our great mercies. We fear as we enter into the cloud; but, as it envelopes us, we find it luminous with God's gracious manifestation of Himself. These poor disciples ***"cried out in fear,"*** when they first saw Jesus, though they had been longing and praying for Him all the night, and should have been prepared for any revelation of His glory. But Peter—loving, impulsive Peter—when he heard his Master's voice, was impatient to embrace Him. He could not endure the distance from his Lord which that cruel sea interposed, so he made the

great venture that has been an object-lesson of faith to all succeeding generations.

The whole account, as given in the Gospel, is a striking picture of many phases of our Christian life; but in this brief meditation I am looking chiefly at two points on the glowing canvas: (1) Permission Sought : **"Lord...command me to come"** and (2) The Perilous Pathway : **"on the water."**

Beloved reader, I will suppose that you, like myself, are longing for the closer realization of Christ's presence, thirsting for nearer and dearer communion with Him, yet, alas! too often failing to obtain an abiding consciousness of it. How are we to secure the blessing? How are we to step out of the old life, into a new and Divine experience? Not by our own efforts, most assuredly. If Peter had attempted to leave his boat without his Lord's command, he would not have planted one foot upon the waves, and would have sunk immediately.

Our dependence upon God is absolute. Our own struggles after likeness to Christ, and fellowship with Him, are, in themselves, unavailing. He must **"draw"**, or we cannot **"run after Him."** (Sol. 1:4) He must **"command"**, or we cannot **"come."** Pride and self-sufficiency are laid in the dust by this doctrine; but that only proves its truth and necessity. And the true believer is driven by it, not to relinquish his desires, but to

increase his earnest pleadings that God would speak the word of sovereign grace.

"Command me to come." Frances Ridley Havergal used to say, "All God's biddings are enablings," and herein lies the secret of the life of faith, that the obedient heart agrees completely with the Lord's declaration, **"Apart from Me you can do nothing"** (John 15:5). Ah! Dear souls, be very sure that, if you have a real desire to come to Christ, He gave it to you, and is more than ready to give also the power to take that step of faith, "out of self, into Him," which has previously seemed impossible. He is waiting to **"command"** you; it is for this that He has come walking over the sea of separation, and so far revealed Himself to you as to make you long to know more of Him; and, as soon as you have learned your own helplessness, and His Almighty strength, quicker than on the wings of the wind will the sweet call reach you, **"COME."**

"On the water." Now is the test of faith. To walk on the water, was Peter's own proposition; and the Lord granted his request. He could have been at His disciple's side in a moment, and spared him the trial of faith, and the discovery of its feebleness which this experience gave him. But it seems to be the law of the Kingdom that we come to Christ on the very waves which separate us from Him; and this is doubtless for our

profit, that we may again prove our own weakness, and learn to trust wholly in His strength. Perhaps, in the first flush of joy that the Lord has commanded us to come, it seems an easy thing to "walk on the water and come to Jesus," and self-confidence whispers that we are quite able of ourselves to tread the wondrous pathway. But we soon discover our helplessness apart from Him. The wind is rowdy, the waves are threatening, we remember the great deep beneath us, fear overcomes faith, and **"beginning to sink,"** we cry, **"Lord, save me!"**

Yet how often is it **"on the water"** that we find a royal road to His dear feet, and how frequently do our fears and disabilities force upon us the conviction that our blessed Master is truly a Divine and Almighty Savior! How quickly His outstretched hand delivers and supports us, how calm and safe we feel when we joyfully realize His immediate presence !

I think the dear Lord must have kept Peter's hand in His own as they walked back to the ship, for the wind did not cease till they were on board, yet we hear of no further fears of sinking ; any way, I know that, whatever may be the depth or danger of the seas of sin, or sorrow, or trial over which Christ bids us come to Him, His right hand will hold us safely till we reach the fair haven of Emmanuel's Land.

DIVINE STRENGTHENING

By Susannah Spurgeon

***I will strengthen you, I will help you
(Isaiah 41:10).***

Who will come with me to the King this day, to lay at His feet a petition for the fulfillment of this Word of His grace upon which He has caused us to hope? We shall be a company of Feeble-minds, and Much-afraids, and Fearings, and Ready-to-halts, and we may make but a sorry appearance in His courts; but our necessities admit of no delay, and this King is so gracious, and has so much love and pity for weak and needy ones, that He is sure to grant us, not an audience merely, but according to the desire of our heart. My own condition is such that I must have His help, or faint, and utterly fail, and I know there are many in like stress of need who will seek the King's face with me.

Blessed be His Name, we may come into His presence with holy boldness and confidence, bringing with us the warrant of our faith in His own precious promise, fairly and legibly written on the pages of His Word, without blot or erasure, and with no "ifs" and "buts" to mar its sublime simplicity: ***"I will strengthen you, I will help you."*** Does He not love to be

trusted? Does He not honor faith? Can one word of His good promise fail, or shall not the thing which He has said surely come to pass?

And, as to our present need of support, some of us can say, with tear-filled eyes, "O Lord, if weakness be a plea for Your promised strength, then are we truly fit objects of Your mercy, for we are at the lowest ebb of helplessness, we have scarcely strength left to feel that we are feeble, we are *'brought into the dust of death.'*" (Psalm 22:15)" God has *"weakened our strength in the way,"* (Psalm 102:23) to teach us our dependence upon Himself ; He has humbled us, that He may lift us up: He has shown us our own nothingness, that He may be our All-in-all.

Most of us have needed this discipline of complete failure in ourselves to convince us that our strength is in God alone. He has had to humble us, and to prove us, to know what is in our heart; and, alas! With some of us, it has taken as long a time to do this as in the days of old, when the Lord's people wandered in the wilderness for forty years before they learned the lesson. Ah! What trouble our God takes with us! What ungrateful, perverse, rebellious children we have been! He has had to empty us of so much that is abominable in His sight: our pride; our self-sufficiency; our carnal security; our own

righteousness—before He could fill us with His Spirit, and take pleasure in us. It is no wonder then that the process has been a painful one, and cost us many a cry and groan. We have been cast headlong from the heights of our pride and self-exaltation, and then, as we lay bruised and bleeding on the ground of self-abasement, crushed under a sense of our own utter weakness, the Lord has drawn near, and given this gracious assurance, "***I will strengthen you; I will help you.***" "I, the Lord your God, will hold your right hand, saying to you, Fear not."

But how shall I describe the joy with which we caught the first soft whisper of His tender voice, and recognized the strength-giving touch of His mighty hand? "***I was brought low,***" (Psalm 116:6) we said, the words were scarcely audible, we were so weak; but faith touched our lips with a comforting medicine, and then, loud and clear from our loosened tongue, rang out the triumphant testimony, "***AND HE HELPED ME!***"

Is it not wonderful, the incoming of Divine strength into an empty heart? Now we know by experience what the apostle meant when he wrote, "***He said to me***"***My grace is sufficient for you, for my power [i.e. strength] is made perfect in weakness***" (2 Cor. 12:9). Here we have the same Promiser and the same promise, but in other words. "***I will strengthen you.***" "I, the Almighty God, whose power is infinite, will strengthen

you, a poor worm of the dust!" Oh, the condescension and tenderness of our God! Our extremity is His opportunity; His mercy follows hard after our misery; and as soon as He has taught us our exceeding need, He supplies it with the abundances of His exceeding love. Then it is that He gives us "***a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit***" (Isa. 61:3). And, oh! with what joyful hearts and shining eyes do we afterwards walk in the light of His countenance! "Dear Lord," we say, "it is worthwhile being weak, to be thus gloriously strengthened by You!"

AN UNCHANGEABLE GOD

By Susannah Spurgeon

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

AN UNCHANGEABLE GOD! O heart of mine, unpredictable and wavering, is not the fact that you have an immutable [i.e. changeless] God one of your most precious comforts? Is it not the blessed sanctuary where alone your weary wings can fold themselves to perfect rest? When friends fail and forsake, when earthly joys vanish, when a sense of the instability of the world's firmest things shakes your whole being with a great dread, and your own fickleness is the saddest part of all—then, your Lord's immutability is a tower of refuge, into which you can indeed enter, and cling fearlessly to His assuring words: ***"I the LORD do not change"*** (Mal. 3:6).

If the Spirit of God will open to us the door of our text, we shall at once have entrance into the Heavenly places in Christ Jesus. At the very threshold, His Name is as sweet-dropping myrrh; and on the doorposts and lintel, we see the dark and sacred stains which tell the wondrous story of

salvation through His sacrifice, and life by His death. If we do but begin to speak of Jesus Christ—of **"The great love with which He loved us,"** (Eph. 2:3) and His atoning death for us—we are quickly ushered into **"the shelter of the Most High,"** where we may **"abide in the shadow of the Almighty"** (Ps. 91:1). Blessed Name! It is the master-key to all Heaven's portals, the "open sesame" of the gates of Paradise.

"Jesus Christ...the same." Think of the never-varying purpose of our Savior's existence, both human and Divine. As He was in eternity, covenanting with His Father to bear our sins, and to impute to us His righteousness. As He was on earth, loving, blessing, healing, pitying, saving. As He was in life, in death, in resurrection, and in ascension—"this same Jesus" is now, and ever will be; He has never changed, His tenderness has never varied, His compassions have never failed. May He enable us to realize the eternal rest and immovability of His designs of love and mercy, that we may trust Him as unreservedly as such a God deserves to be trusted!

"Yesterday." The Lord of all Creation knows not the boundaries of time. The scripture says, **"a thousand years in Your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night"** (Ps. 90:4) Then, to Him it is but as yesterday since He gave His life to ransom our souls! How He must have loved us.

Was it not even to death? His heart was filled with such tender pity for us, as poor lost sinners, that He endured the cross, He bore the awful weight of God's wrath, that pardon and acceptance might be made for us. And He loves us now with just that very same love which **yesterday** caused Him to die! Does not this though move our hearts to **peace and joy in believing**? (Rom. 15:13) Can we not rest our burdened souls on such a steadfast Savior?

"Today." He is on His Throne today, reigning and ruling, with all power in Heaven, and earth, and hell; but He is still "this same Jesus." He wears His priesthood still, and is pleading for His people, calling them to follow Him, cleansing them, opening their blind eyes, and delivering them from death. We sometimes think that, if we could but see the Lord Jesus, and fall at His feet, and touch the hem of His garment, and sob out all our griefs in His lovely presence, we should then have the full assurance of faith, and never, never doubt Him again. Ah! But that would be sight, not faith. And this could not glorify Him as our perfect trust can do. **"Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory"** (1 Pet. 1:8).

"And forever." Dear reader, what has Jesus Christ been to you in the past years? Have you any fault to find with Him? Has He not loved, and pardoned and blessed, and tolerated with you as only such a gracious Lord could do? What is He to you today? Does not your helpless soul still hang on Him? Have you any other plea than His most precious blood; any hope but in His merit? Has He ever cast you from Him, and refused the mercy you have asked?

"Ah, no!" You say, "**He is all my salvation, and all my desire ;'**" (cf. 2 Sam. 23:5) and though I have treated no other friend so ill, I have proved that, **'As high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him.'**" (Psalm 103:11) Then, let the past assure you for the future. All He has been to you, all He now is, He will still be, not only to-morrow, but **"forever."**

*"Unchangeable His will,
Whatever be my frame ;
His loving heart is still
Eternally the same :
My soul through many changes goes,
His love no variation knows."*

TABLES IN THE WILDERNESS

By Susannah Spurgeon

They spoke against God, saying, "Can God spread a table in the wilderness?" (Psalm 78:19)

TO be sure He can! The question is a most distrustful and cruel one! Our indignation burns against the rebellious people who could discredit the power of their gracious God, though He had done such great things for them. ***"He split rocks in the wilderness and gave them drink abundantly as from the deep. He made streams come out of the rock and caused waters to flow down like rivers."*** (Ps. 78:15-16) He had delivered them from the maddening bonds of slavery, and had fed them with bread from Heaven; yet they doubted His ability to supply them with the meat their heart desired, and ***"they spoke against God"*** in thus questioning His love and care.

As we read their history, and wonder at their hardness of heart, we say, "How could they be so blind, so ungrateful, so perversely unbelieving?" But, the next moment, we bow our heads in shame, and our own hearts condemn us as we remember how often we have committed the very same sin. We, too, have ***"provoked [or limited KJV] the Holy One of***

Israel," (Psalm 78:41) and grieved the Spirit of our gracious God by our persistent unbelief; for, many a time have we thought, even if we have not said it, **"Can God spread a table in the wilderness ?"** when His loving, bounteous hand has been preparing and spreading it before us! Have you not found it so? Have you not sometimes been shamed into a lively faith by receiving the very blessings which you doubted the Lord's power to give? Has He not often proved Himself **"able to do far more abundantly"** (Eph. 3:20) above all that you have asked or thought, even while your faithless heart **"did not believe in God, or trust in His saving power"?** (Ps. 78:22)

Dear readers, I would gladly take you into the wilderness with me, this morning, and bid you look back upon some of the **"tables"** which, in past days, the Lord has furnished for you there.

Do you not remember that desert experience of sore affliction, when you were laid very low, when heart and flesh failed, and you were brought into the dust of death? Did not the Lord then come and strengthen you upon your **"sickbed"** (Ps. 41:3) and tenderly furnish your sick-room table with rich medicines of His love, and the life-giving elixir of His healing power? And, after that display of His mercy, can you not

recollect how quickly the fever left you, and what joy it was to rise and minister unto Him? (cf. Mark 1:31)

Or, have you forgotten that dread hour of spiritual darkness, a **"howling waste of the wilderness"** (Deut. 32:10) and of terror, when your soul was attacked by some horrible temptation, and Satan beset you so furiously that for a moment you almost despaired of rescue? Was not that very moment the time of the Lord's gracious relief and support? Did He not appear on your behalf, and lead you forth from the conflict to find the table of His love spread as for a banquet for your sake, and the leaves of the Tree of Life ready plucked for the healing of your wounds?

Can you not recall those other seasons of distress, when some sad bereavement, or some great crisis of your life had brought you into a Sahara of desolation and grief? Almost broken in heart, your soul fainted within you, and you **"wandered in desert wastes"** (Ps. 107:4) believing yourself to be cut off from the land of the living. But you cried unto God and how blessedly He did answer you! He turned the dry ground into water-springs, the sandy desert into a rich pasture of grace and mercy, and there He prepared **"a table before you,"** and the desert yielded royal delicacies.

Ah! These tables in the wilderness! They are standing rebukes to our want of faith, and constant memorials of God's faithful love! Yes; but times without number it is true of us, as of those cities we read of in the Gospels, where **"He did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief"** (Matt. 13:58). God does not work wonders for us if we mistrust Him. His miracles of grace and power are wrought on behalf of those whose faith is strong enough to claim the performance of His Word. How very few of us, who call ourselves Christians, ever live up to our high privileges, as **"heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ!"** Did we but realize our true position as sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty, there would be nothing impossible to us. A recent writer on this subject says :

"If there be a discrepancy between our life and the fulfillment and enjoyment of all God's promises, the fault is ours. If our experience be not what God wants it to be, it is because of our unbelief in the love of God, in the power of God, and in the reality of His promises."

Is not this the reason why so many of God's own children are living at such a miserably low level of spiritual existence? It is a positive fact that they do not believe what

God has said; they are as distrustful as if He had never given them the blessed assurance, **"I THE LORD DO NOT CHANGE "** (Mal. 3:6); and as poor as though He had never made the promise, **"WHATEVER YOU ASK OF THE FATHER IN MY NAME, HE WILL GIVE IT TO YOU"** (John 16:23); and as unhappy and full of care as if His own lips had not spoken those other sweet words , **"LET NOT YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED. BELIEVE IN GOD, BELIEVE ALSO IN ME."** (John 14:1)

Beloved, when you think of the wilderness through which you have been brought, never forget the tables and their furnishings which were there prepared for you. This will help you to trust God for the future while you praise Him for the past.

INCREASE OUR FAITH

By J.C. Ryle

"Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. ²³ And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, ²⁴ but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. ²⁵ And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. ²⁶ But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" and they cried out in fear. ²⁷ But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid." ²⁸ ¶ And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." ²⁹ He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. ³⁰ But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." ³¹ Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" ³² And

when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.³³ And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."³⁴ ¶ And when they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret.³⁵ And when the men of that place recognized him, they sent around to all that region and brought to him all who were sick³⁶ and implored him that they might only touch the fringe of his garment. And as many as touched it were made well. (Matthew 14:22-36)

The history contained in these verses, is one of singular interest. The miracle here recorded brings out in strong light the character both of Christ and His people. The power and mercy of the Lord Jesus, and the mixture of faith and unbelief in His best disciples, are beautifully illustrated.

We learn, in the first place, from this miracle, what absolute dominion our Savior has over all created things. We see Him *"walking on the sea,"* as if it was dry land. Those angry waves which tossed the boat of His disciples back and forth, obey the Son of God, and become a solid floor under His feet. That liquid surface, which was agitated by the least breath of wind, bears up the feet of our Redeemer, like a rock. To our poor, weak minds, the whole event is utterly incomprehensible.

The picture of two feet walking on the sea, is said by Doddridge to have been the Egyptian emblem of an impossible thing. The man of science will tell us, that for material flesh and blood to walk on water is a physical impossibility. Enough for us to know that it was done. Enough for us to remember, that to Him who created the seas at the beginning, it must have been perfectly easy to walk over their waves when He pleased.

There is encouragement here for all true Christians. Let them know that there is nothing created, which is not under Christ's control. "All things serve Him." He may allow His people to be tried for a season, and tossed back and forth by storms of trouble. He may be later than they wish in coming to their aid, and not draw near until the **"fourth watch of the night."** But never let them forget that winds, and waves, and storms are all Christ's servants. They cannot move without Christ's permission. **"Mightier than the thunders of many waters, mightier than the waves of the sea, the LORD on high is mighty!"** (Psalm 93:4) Are we ever tempted to cry with Jonah, **"the flood surrounded me; all your waves and your billows passed over me."** (Jonah 2:3) Let us remember they are **"His"** billows. Let us wait patiently. We may yet see Jesus coming to us, and **"walking on the sea."**

We learn, in the second place, from this miracle, what power Jesus can bestow on those who believe on Him. We see Simon Peter coming down out of the ship, and walking on the water, like His Lord. What a wonderful proof was this of our Lord's divinity! To walk on the sea Himself was a mighty miracle. But to enable a poor weak disciple to do the same, was a mightier miracle still.

There is a deep meaning in this part of our history. It shows us what great things our Lord can do for those that hear His voice, and follow Him. He can enable them to do things which at one time they would have thought impossible. He can carry them through difficulties and trials, which without Him they would never have dared to face. He can give them strength to walk through fire and water unharmed, and to get the better of every foe. Moses in Egypt, Daniel in Babylon, the saints in Nero's household, are all examples of His mighty power. Let us fear nothing, if we are in the path of duty. The waters may seem deep. But if Jesus says, **"Come,"** we have no cause to be afraid. ***"Whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do."***

(John 14:12)

Let us learn, in the third place, from this miracle, how much trouble disciples bring on themselves by unbelief. We see

Peter walking boldly on the water for a little way. But incidentally when he sees "*the wind*" he is afraid, and begins to sink. The weak flesh gets the better of the willing spirit. He forgets the wonderful proofs of his Lord's goodness and power, which he had just received. He considered not that the same Savior, who had enabled him to walk one step, must be able to hold him up forever. He did not reflect that he was nearer to Christ when once on the water, than he was when he first left the ship. Fear took away his memory; alarm confused his reason. He thought of nothing but the winds and waves and his immediate danger, and his faith gave way. He cried "*Lord, save me.*"

What a lively picture we have here of the experience of many a believer! How many there are who have faith enough to take the first step in following Christ, but not faith enough to go on as they begun. They take fright at the trials and dangers which seem to be in their way. They look at the enemies that surround them, and the difficulties that seem likely to beset their path. They dwell on them more than on Jesus, and at once their feet begin to sink. Their hearts faint within them. Their hope vanishes away. Their comforts disappear. And why is all this? Christ is not altered. Their enemies are not greater than they were. It is just because, like Peter, they have ceased to

look to Jesus, and have given way to unbelief. They are taken up with thinking about their enemies, instead of thinking about Christ. May we lay this to heart, and learn wisdom.

Let us learn, in the last place, from this miracle, how merciful our Lord Jesus Christ is to weak believers. We see Him stretching forth His hand immediately to save Peter, as soon as Peter cried to Him. He does not leave him to reap the fruit of his own unbelief, and sink in the deep waters. He only seems to consider his trouble, and to think of nothing so much as delivering him from it. The only word He utters, is the gentle reproof, "***O You of little faith, why did you doubt?***"

Behold in this concluding part of the miracle, the exceeding "gentleness of Christ!" He can bear with much, and forgive much, when He sees true grace in a man's heart. As a mother deals gently with her infant, and does not cast it away because of its little waywardness and mischievousness, so does the Lord Jesus deal gently with His people. He loved and pitied them before conversion, and after conversion He loves and pities them still more. He knows their feebleness, and bears long with them. He would have us know that doubting does not prove that a man has no faith, but only that his faith is small. And even when our faith is small, the Lord is ready to help us.

"When I thought, "My foot slips," your steadfast love, O LORD, held me up" (Psalm. 94:18).

How much there is in all this to encourage men to serve Christ! Where is the man that ought to be afraid to begin running the Christian race, with such a Savior as Jesus? If we fall, He will raise us again. If we err, He will bring us back. But His mercy shall never be altogether taken from us. He has said, ***"I will never leave you, nor forsake you"*** (Heb. 13:5) and He will keep His word. May we only remember, that while we do not despise little faith, we must not sit down content with it. Our prayer must ever be, ***"Lord, increase our faith"*** (Luke 17:5).

GRACE WHEREVER & PRAYER

By J.C. Ryle

*And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon.
22 And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon."²³ But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, "Send her away, for she is crying out after us."²⁴ He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."²⁵ But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me."²⁶ And he answered, "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."²⁷ She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."²⁸ Then Jesus answered her, "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly. (Matthew 15:21-28)*

Another of our Lord's miracles is recorded in these verses. The circumstances which attend it are curiously full of

interest. Let us take them up in order, and see what they are. Every word in these narratives is rich in instruction.

We see, in the first place, that true faith may sometimes be found, where it might have been least expected. A Canaanite woman cries to our Lord for help, on behalf of her daughter. **"Have mercy on me,"** she says, **"O Lord, Son of David."** Such a prayer would have showed great faith, had she lived in Bethany, or Jerusalem. But when we find that she came from the **"district of Tyre and Sidon,"** such a prayer may well fill us with surprise. It ought to teach us, that it is grace, not place, which makes people believers. We may live in a prophet's family, like Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, and yet continue unrepentant, unbelieving, and fond of the world (2 Kings 5:21-27). We may dwell in the midst of superstition and dark idolatry, like the little girl in Naaman's house (2 Kings 5:1-4), and yet be faithful witnesses for God and His Christ. Let us not despair of anyone's soul, merely because his lot is cast in an unfavorable position. It is possible to dwell in the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, and yet sit down in the kingdom of God.

We see, in the second place, that affliction sometimes proves a blessing to a person's soul. This Canaanite mother no doubt had been severely tried. She had seen her darling child oppressed with a demon, and been unable to relieve her. But

yet that trouble brought her to Christ, and taught her to pray. Without it she might have lived and died in careless ignorance, and never seen Jesus at all. Surely it was good for her that she was afflicted. (Psalm 119:71)

Let us mark this well. There is nothing which shows our ignorance so much as our impatience under trouble. We forget that every cross is a message from God, and intended to do us good in the end. Trials are intended to make us think—to wean us from the world, to send us to the Bible, to drive us to our knees. Health is a good thing; but sickness is far better, if it leads us to God. Prosperity is a great mercy, but adversity is a greater one, if it brings us to Christ. Anything, anything is better than living in carelessness, and dying in sin. Better a thousand times be afflicted, like the Canaanite mother, and like her flee to Christ, than live at ease, like the rich *"fool,"* and die at last without Christ and without hope. (Luke 12:20)

We see, in the third place, that Christ's people are often less gracious and compassionate than Christ Himself. The woman about whom we are reading, found little favor with our Lord's disciples. Perhaps they regarded an inhabitant of the district of Tyre and Sidon, as unworthy of their Master's help. At any rate they said, *"Send her away."*

There is only too much of this spirit among many who profess and call themselves believers. They are apt to discourage inquirers after Christ, instead of helping them forward. They are too ready to doubt the reality of a beginner's grace, because it is small, and to treat him as Saul was treated when he first came to Jerusalem after his conversion. **"They did not believe that he was a disciple"** (Acts 9:26). Let us beware of giving way to this spirit. Let us seek to have more of the mind that was in Christ. Like Him let us be gentle, and kind, and encouraging in all our treatment of those who are seeking to be saved: above all, let us tell men continually that they must not judge of Christ by Christians. Let us assure those who there is far more in that gracious Master, than there is in the best of His servants. Peter, and James, and John may say to the afflicted soul, **"Send her away."** But such a word never came from the lips of Christ. He may sometimes keep us long waiting, as He did this woman. But He will never send us away empty.

We see, in the last place, what encouragement there is to persevere in prayer, both for ourselves and others. It is hard to conceive a more striking illustration of this truth, than we have in this passage. The prayer of this afflicted mother at first seemed entirely unnoticed—Jesus **"did not answer her a word,"** yet she prayed on. The answer which incidentally fell

from our Lord's lips sounded discouraging—***"I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."*** Yet she prayed on, ***"Lord, help me."*** The second answer of our Lord was even less encouraging than the first—***"It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."*** Yet ***"hope deferred"*** did not ***"make her heart sick."*** (Prov. 13:12) Even then she was not silenced. Even then she finds a plea for some ***"crumbs"*** of mercy to be granted to her. And her persistence obtained at length a gracious reward. ***"O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire."*** That promise never yet was broken, ***"Seek and you shall find"*** (Matt. 7:7).

Let us remember this history, when we pray for ourselves. We are sometimes tempted to think that we get no good by our prayers, and that we may as well give them up altogether. Let us resist the temptation. It comes from the devil. Let us believe, and pray on. Against our besetting sins, against the spirit of the world, against the wiles of the devil, let us pray on, and not lose heart. For strength to do duty, for grace to bear our trials, for comfort in every trouble, let us continue in prayer. Let us be sure that no time is so well-spent in every day, as that which we spend upon our knees. Jesus hears us, and in his own good time will give an answer.

Let us remember this history, when we intercede for others. Have we children, whose conversion we desire? Have we relatives and friends, about whose salvation we are anxious? Let us follow the example of this Canaanite woman, and lay the state of their souls before Christ. Let us name their names before Him night and day, and never rest until we have an answer. We may have to wait many a long year. We may seem to pray in vain, and intercede without profit. But let us never give up. Let us believe that Jesus is not changed, and that He who heard the Canaanite mother, and granted her request, will also hear us, and one day give us an answer of peace.

Commendation for *A Love Found & Founded*

The collected readings in “A Love Found and Founded”, from the pen of two 19th century writers, are of inestimable value to the believer experiencing times of trial or who’s suffering down in the depths. J.C. Ryle and Susannah Spurgeon are brought into one volume to come alongside, as a tender brother and sister might, and address the reader as a family member enduring the trials common to man. It deserves a wide reading among believers in every condition, because whether you are in trial now or not – you will be. These seasoned saints can help.

~Dennis Gundersen, President, Grace & Truth Books

If this publication has been of help to you and you wish to make a positive comment and recommendation which may be used in a future publication of it, please email: mann4Christ@gmail.com and put in the subject line “Love Found & Founded” Or you may write:

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Thank you.