

UNTIL *He*
COMES

CHARLES SPURGEON

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COMES

TWENTY REFLECTIONS ON THE LORD'S SUPPER



WHITAKER
HOUSE

All Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Holy Bible.

UNTIL HE COMES

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PREFATORY NOTE

*F*or many years, whether at home or abroad, it was Mr. Spurgeon's constant custom to observe the ordinance of the Lord's Supper every Sabbath day, unless illness prevented. This he believed to be in accordance with apostolic precedent; and it was his oft-repeated testimony that the more frequently he obeyed his Lord's command, "*This do in remembrance of Me*" (Luke 22:19), the more precious did his Savior become to him, while the memorial celebration itself proved increasingly helpful and instructive as the years rolled by.

Several of the discourses published here were delivered to thousands of communicants in the Metropolitan Tabernacle, while others were addressed to the little companies of Christians—of different denominations, and of various nationalities—who gathered around the communion table in Mr. Spurgeon's sitting room at Mentone. The addresses cover a wide range of subjects; but all of them speak more or less fully of the great atoning sacrifice of which the broken bread and the filled cup are the simple yet significant symbols.

Mr. Spurgeon had intended to publish a selection of his Communion Addresses; so this volume may be regarded as another of the precious literary legacies bequeathed by him to his brethren and sisters in Christ

who have yet to tarry a while here below. It is hoped that these sermon-ettes will be the means of deepening the spiritual life of many believers, and that they will suggest suitable themes for meditation and discourse to those who have the privilege and responsibility of presiding at the ordinance.

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1

MYSTERIOUS VISITS

AN ADDRESS TO A LITTLE COMPANY AT THE
COMMUNION TABLE AT MENTONE

You have visited me in the night.

(Psalm 17:3)

*I*t is a theme for wonder that the glorious God should visit sinful man. “*What is man, that You are mindful of him? and the son of man, that You visit him?*” (Psalm 8:4). A divine visit is a joy to be treasured whenever we are favored with it. David speaks of it with great solemnity. The psalmist was not content barely to speak of it; but he wrote it down in plain terms, that it might be known throughout all generations: “*You have visited me in the night.*” Beloved, if God has ever visited you, you also will marvel at it, will carry it in your memory, will speak of it to your friends, and will record it in your diary as one of the notable events of your life. Above all, you will speak of it to God Himself, and say with adoring gratitude, “*You have visited me in the night.*” It should be a solemn part of worship to remember and make known the

condescension of the Lord, and say, both in lowly prayer and in joyful psalm, *"You have visited me."*

To you, beloved friends, who gather with me about this communion table, I will speak of my own experience, nothing doubting that it is also yours. If our God has ever visited any of us, personally, by His Spirit, two results have attended the visit: it has been sharply searching, and it has been sweetly solacing.

When first of all the Lord draws nigh to the heart, the trembling soul perceives clearly the searching character of His visit. Remember how Job answered the Lord: *"I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eye sees You. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes"* (Job 42:5–6). We can read of God, and hear of God, and be little moved; but when we feel His presence, it is another matter. I thought my house was good enough for kings; but when the King of kings came to it, I saw that it was a hovel quite unfit for His abode. I had never known sin to be so *"exceeding sinful"* (Romans 7:13) if I had not known God to be so perfectly holy. I had never understood the depravity of my own nature if I had not known the holiness of God's nature. When we see Jesus, we fall at His feet as dead; till then, we are alive with vainglorious life. If letters of light traced by a mysterious hand upon the wall caused the joints of Belshazzar's loins to be loosed, what awe overcomes our spirits when we see the Lord Himself! In the presence of so much light our spots and wrinkles are revealed, and we are utterly ashamed. We are like Daniel, who said, *"I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption"* (Daniel 10:8). It is when the Lord visits us that we see our nothingness, and ask, *"What is man?"*

I do remember well when God first visited me; and assuredly it was the night of nature, of ignorance, of sin. His visit had the same effect upon me that it had upon Saul of Tarsus when the Lord spoke to him out of heaven. He brought me down from the high horse, and caused me to fall to the ground; by the brightness of the light of His Spirit He made me grope in conscious blindness; and in the brokenness of my heart I cried, *"Lord, what will You have me to do?"* (Acts 9:6). I felt

that I had been rebelling against the Lord, kicking against the pricks, and doing evil even as I could; and my soul was filled with anguish at the discovery. Very searching was the glance of the eye of Jesus, for it revealed my sin, and caused me to go out and weep bitterly. As when the Lord visited Adam, and called him to stand naked before Him, so was I stripped of all my righteousness before the face of the Most High. Yet the visit ended not there; for as the Lord God clothed our first parents in coats of skins, so did He cover me with the righteousness of the great sacrifice, and He gave me songs in the night. It was night, but the visit was no dream: in fact, I there and then ceased to dream, and began to deal with the reality of things.

I think you will remember that, when the Lord first visited you in the night, it was with you as with Peter when Jesus came to him. He had been toiling with his net all the night, and nothing had come of it; but when the Lord Jesus came into his boat, and bade him launch out into the deep, and let down his net for a draught, he caught such a great multitude of fishes that the boat began to sink. See! the boat goes down, down, till the water threatens to engulf it, and Peter, and the fish, and all. Then Peter fell down at Jesus' knees, and cried, "*Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord!*" (Luke 5:8). The presence of Jesus was too much for him: his sense of unworthiness made him sink like his boat, and shrink away from the divine Lord. I remember that sensation well; for I was half inclined to cry with the demoniac of Gadara, "*What have I to do with You, Jesus, You Son of the Most High God?*" (Mark 5:7). That first discovery of His injured love was overpowering; its very hopefulness increased my anguish; for then I saw that I had slain the Lord who had come to save me. I saw that mine was the hand that made the hammer fall, and drove the nails that fastened the Redeemer's hands and feet to the cruel tree.

My conscience felt and own'd the guilt,
 And plunged me in despair;
 I saw my sins His blood had spilt,
 And help'd to nail Him there.¹

1. John Newton, "The Great Sight," 1779.

This is the sight that breeds repentance: “*They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him*” (Zechariah 12:10; see also John 19:37). When the Lord visits us, He humbles us, removes all hardness from our hearts, and leads us to the Savior’s feet.

When the Lord first visited us in the night, it was very much with us as with John, when the Lord visited him in the isle that is called Patmos. He tells us, “*And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead*” (Revelation 1:17). Yes, even when we begin to see that He has put away our sin, and removed our guilt by His death, we feel as if we could never look up again, because we have been so cruel to our best Friend. It is no wonder if we then say, “It is true that He has forgiven me; but I never can forgive myself. He makes me live, and I live in Him; but at the thought of His goodness I fall at His feet as dead. Boasting is dead, self is dead, and all desire for anything beyond my Lord is dead also.” Well does Cowper write of—

That dear hour, that brought me to His foot,
And cut up all my follies by the root.²

The process of destroying follies is more hopefully performed at Jesus’ feet than anywhere else. Oh, that the Lord would come again to us as at the first, and like a consuming fire discover and destroy the dross which now alloys our gold! The word “visit” brings to us who travel the remembrance of the government officer who searches our baggage; thus doth the Lord seek out our secret things. But it also reminds us of the visits of the physician, who not only finds out our maladies, but also removes them. Thus did the Lord Jesus visit us at the first.

Since those early days, I hope that you and I have had many visits from our Lord. Those first visits were, as I said, sharply searching; but the later ones have been sweetly solacing. Some of us have had them, especially in the night, when we have been compelled to count the sleepless hours. “Heaven’s gate opens when this world’s is shut.” The night is still; everybody is away; work is done; care is forgotten, and then the Lord Himself draws near. Possibly there may be pain to be endured, the

2. William Cowper, “Truth,” 1782.

head may be aching, and the heart may be throbbing; but if Jesus comes to visit us, our bed of languishing becomes a throne of glory. Though it is true *“He gives His beloved sleep”* (Psalm 127:2), yet at such times He gives them something better than sleep, namely; His own presence, and the fullness of joy which comes with it. By night upon our bed we have seen the unseen. I have tried sometimes not to sleep under an excess of joy, when the company of Christ has been sweetly mine.

“You have visited me in the night.” Believe me, there are such things as personal visits from Jesus to His people. He has not left us utterly. Though He is not seen with the bodily eye by bush or brook, nor on tile mount, nor by the sea, yet He does come and go, observed only by the spirit, felt only by the heart. Still he stands behind our wall, He shows Himself through the lattices.

Jesus, these eyes have never seen
That radiant form of Thine!
The veil of sense hangs dark between
Thy blessed face and mine!

I see Thee not, I hear Thee not,
Yet art Thou oft with me,
And earth hath ne’er so dear a spot
As where I meet with Thee.

Like some bright dream that comes unsought,
When slumbers o’er me roll,
Thine image ever fills my thought,
And charms my ravish’d soul.

Yet though I have not seen, and still
Must rest in faith alone;
I love Thee, dearest Lord! and will,
Unseen, but not unknown.³

3. Ray Palmer, *“Jesus, These Eyes Have Never Seen,”* (1858).

Do you ask me to describe these manifestations of the Lord? It would be hard to tell you in words: you must know them for yourselves. If you had never tasted sweetness, no man living could give you an idea of honey. Yet if the honey is there, you can "taste and see." To a man born blind, sight must be a thing past imagination; and to one who has never known the Lord, His visits are quite as much beyond conception.

For our Lord to visit us is something more than for us to have the assurance of our salvation, though that is very delightful, and none of us should rest satisfied unless we possess it. To know that Jesus loves me, is one thing; but to be visited by Him in love, is more.

Nor is it simply a close contemplation of Christ; for we can picture Him as exceedingly fair and majestic, and yet not have Him consciously near us. Delightful and instructive as it is to behold the likeness of Christ by meditation, yet the enjoyment of His actual presence is something more. I may wear my friend's portrait about my person, and yet may not be able to say, "*You have visited me.*"

It is the actual, though spiritual, coming of Christ that we so much desire. The Catholic Church says much about the real presence; meaning thereby, the corporeal presence of the Lord Jesus. The priest who celebrates mass tells us that he believes in the real presence, but we reply, "Nay, you believe in knowing Christ after the flesh, and in that sense the only real presence is in heaven; but we firmly believe in the real presence of Christ which is spiritual, and yet certain." By spiritual we do not mean unreal; in fact, the spiritual takes the lead in real-ness to spiritual men. I believe in the true and real presence of Jesus with His people: such presence has been real to my spirit.

Lord Jesus, You have visited me. As surely as the Lord Jesus came really as to His flesh to Bethlehem and Calvary, so surely does He come really by His Spirit to His people in the hours of their communion with Him. We are as conscious of that presence as of our own existence.

When the Lord visits us in the night, what is the effect upon us? When hearts meet hearts in fellowship of love, communion brings first peace, then rest, and then joy of soul. I am speaking of no emotional

excitement rising into fanatical rapture; but I speak of sober fact, when I say that the Lord's great heart touches ours, and our heart rises into sympathy with Him.

First, we experience peace. All war is over, and a blessed peace is proclaimed; the peace of God keeps our heart and mind by Christ Jesus.

Peace! perfect peace! in this dark world of sin?
 The blood of Jesus whispers peace within.
 Peace! perfect peace! with sorrows surging round?
 On Jesus' bosom nought but calm is found.⁴

At such a time there is a delightful sense of rest; we have no ambitions, no desires. A divine serenity and security envelop us. We have no thought of foes, or fears, or afflictions, or doubts. There is a joyous laying aside of our own will. We are nothing, and we will nothing: Christ is everything, and His will is the pulse of our soul.

We are perfectly content either to be ill or to be well, to be rich or to be poor, to be slandered or to be honored, so that we may but abide in the love of Christ. Jesus fills the horizon of our being.

At such a time a flood of great joy will fill our minds. We shall half wish that the morning may never break again, for fear its light should banish the superior light of Christ's presence. We shall wish that we could glide away with our Beloved to the place where He feeds among the lilies. We long to hear the voices of the white-robed armies, that we may follow their glorious Leader whithersoever He goeth. I am persuaded that there is no great actual distance between earth and heaven: the distance lies in our dull minds. When the Beloved visits us in the night, He makes our chambers to be the vestibule of His palace halls. Earth rises to heaven when heaven comes down to earth.

Now, beloved friends, you may be saying to yourselves, "We have not enjoyed such visits as these." You may do so. If the Father loves you even as He loves His Son, then you are on visiting terms with Him.

4. Edward Henry Bickersteth, "Peace, Perfect Peace, in This Dark World?"

If, then, He has not called upon you, you will be wise to call on Him. Breathe a sigh to Him, and say,

When wilt Thou come unto me, Lord?
Oh come, my Lord most dear!
Come near, come nearer, nearer still,
I'm blest when Thou art near.

When wilt Thou come unto me, Lord?
I languish for the sight;
Ten thousand suns when Thou art hid,
Are shades instead of light.

When wilt Thou come unto me, Lord?
Until Thou dost appear,
I count each moment for a day,
Each minute for a year.⁵

“As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after You, O God” (Psalm 42:1). If you long for Him, He much more longs for you. Never was there a sinner that was half so eager for Christ as Christ is eager for the sinner; nor a saint one tenth so anxious to behold his Lord as his Lord is to behold him. If you are running to Christ, He is already near you. If you sigh for His presence, that sigh is the evidence that He is with you. He is with you now: therefore be calmly glad.

Go forth, beloved, and talk with Jesus on the beach, for He oft resorted to the seashore. Commune with Him amid the olive groves so dear to Him in many a night of wrestling prayer. If ever there was a country in which men should see traces of Jesus, next to the Holy Land, this Riviera is the favored spot. It is a land of vines, and figs, and olives, and palms; I have called it “Your land, O Immanuel.” While in this Mentone, I often fancy that I am looking out upon the Lake of Gennesaret, or walking at the foot of the Mount of Olives, or peering into the mysterious gloom of the Garden of Gethsemane. The narrow

5. Thomas Shepherd, “When Wilt Thou Come?” (1692).

streets of the old town are such as Jesus traversed, these villages are such as He inhabited. Have your hearts right with Him, and He will visit you often, until every day you shall walk with God, as Enoch did, and so turn weekdays into Sabbaths, meals into sacraments, homes into temples, and earth into heaven. So be it with us! Amen.