

Cheer Up, My Comrades!

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon encourages believers to faithfully serve God in whatever capacity they find themselves, assuring them that every form of service, whether active or passive, is valuable in God's kingdom.

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 35:2, Matthew 25:14-30, John 10:27, Luke 10:42, 1 Corinthians 10:31, Luke 22:43, James 5:16

Topics: "Christian Service", "Encouragement", "Faithfulness"

Description

In 'Cheer Up, My Comrades!', C.H. Spurgeon offers heartfelt encouragement to Christians who feel discouraged or limited in their service for the Lord. Drawing on biblical examples and practical wisdom, Spurgeon reminds believers that every form of faithful service, whether active or passive, is precious in God's sight. He challenges listeners to embrace their current circumstances and to serve God with joy and perseverance. This devotional sermon uplifts the weary and inspires renewed commitment to Christ's cause.

Transcript

'And Josiah set the priests in their charges, and encouraged them to the service of the house of the Lord' 2 Chronicles 35:2.

JOSIAH, as you remember, in the early part of his reign set his face against the idolatries that prevailed, to root them out of the land. He then bent his thoughts upon repairing and beautifying the temple. After that it was his heart's aim to restore the sacred services, to observe the solemn feasts, and to revive the worship of God after the due order, according to the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the Lord. Our text tells us something of the method with which he went to work; and it may well serve us as a model.

The first thing is to get every man into his proper place; the next thing is for every man to have a good spirit in his present place, so as to occupy it worthily. I will suppose, dear friends, that in the providence of God you are in your place, and that by the direction of God's Spirit you have also sought and found the precise form of usefulness in which you ought to exercise yourself. To-night it shall not be my business to arrange you; but assuming that it is well for you to keep where you are, my object shall be to encourage you to do your work for your Lord without being cast down. I am hardly going to preach so much as to talk to different persons who are discouraged in the work of the Lord, that we may rouse them up, rally them round us, and encourage them to keep rank.

I. And, first, I would speak a little to THOSE WHO THINK THAT THEY CAN DO NOTHING. They will tell me that in such a sermon not a sentence can concern them: if I am to encourage men to the service of the house of the Lord, it will be in vain for them, as they can do nothing at all. Well, dear friends, you must not take that for granted; you must make quite sure that you cannot do anything before I may venture to speak to you as if it were a matter of fact; for sometimes there is a want of way because there is a want of will. Though I do not go so far as to allege that this is your case, we know too well that 'cannot' often does mean 'will not,' and not to have triumphed may mean that you have not tried. You have been so discouraged that you have excused yourself for inaction, and your inaction has grown into indolence. If a man, under the notion that he could not lift his right hand, constantly kept it still, I should not wonder if, after weeks and months, it would become a matter of fact that he had not the power to use it. It might actually stiffen for no reason but because he had not moved it. Do you not think that, before your muscles get rigid, it would be well to exercise them by attempting some kind of service? Especially you younger folk, if you do not work for the Lord almost as soon as you are converted it will be very difficult afterwards to make you take to it. Aptitude, I have often noticed, comes with employment, and through negligence and sloth people become enervated and helpless. You say that you cannot move your arm, and so you do not move it; take heed, for by-and-by your pretence will become the parent of real powerlessness.

But I will take what you have said as being true. You are ill; the vigour you felt in the bright days of health fails you now; you have to suffer pain, weariness, and exhaustion; you are often detained at home; and home seems now to you a gloomy hospital all the day long, rather than a genial hostelry when evening shadows fall. Little indeed, therefore, can you do; so little that you are apt to reckon it as nothing at all. The thought is a burden to you. You wish you could serve the Lord. How constantly you have dreamed of the pleasure since you have been denied the privilege! How willing your feet would be to run; how ready your hands would be to labour; how glad would your tongue be to testify! You envy those who are able, and you would fain emulate and excel them; not indeed that you harbour ill-will against them, but you devoutly wish that you could do some personal service in the cause of your Master.

Now, I want to encourage you first by reminding you that the law of the Son of David is the same as the law of David himself; and you know the law of David about those that went to the battle. There were some that were lame, and some that were otherwise incapable of action, and he left them with the baggage. 'There,' he said, 'you are very weary and ill: stop in the camp: take care of the tents, and the ammunition, while we go and fight.' Now, it happened once on a time that the men that went to fight claimed all the spoil. They said, 'These people have done nothing: they have been lying in the trenches: they shall not carry off a share of the booty.' But King David there and then made a law that they should share and share equally those that were in the trenches and those that engaged in the fray. 'As his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike. And it was so from that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel.' Nor is the law of the Son of David less gracious. If by sickness you are detained at home, if for any other reason, such as age or infirmity, you are not able to enter into actual service, yet if you are a true soldier and would fight if you could, and your heart is in it, you shall share even with the best and bravest of those who, clad in the panoply of God, encounter and grapple with the adversary.

And, brethren, you have no reason to envy, though you may admire to your heart's content, all who are diligent and successful in the service of Christ. Let me remind you of a law of the kingdom of heaven with which you are all familiar 'He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward.' In truth, it is a splendid appointment to be a servant of the Lord. David thought so, for you often

read at the commencement of his psalms 'A prayer of David, the servant of God,' though you never read, 'A prayer of David, the king of Israel,' for he thought more of being enrolled a servant of God than of being entitled a king of Israel. Health and strength, ability and opportunity to fulfil a mission for the Master are much to be desired, but these are not always to be taken as reliable evidence of personal salvation. A man may preach admirably, and he may work marvels in the church, and yet himself not be a partaker of saving grace. Hence, when the disciples came back from preaching, and said, 'Lord, even the devils are subject to us through thy name,' the Lord said, 'Never the less, in this rejoice not, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.' Judas was amongst them; Judas cast out devils; Judas preached the gospel; and yet Judas was a son of perdition, and is lost for ever. Because you cannot do much you must not infer that therefore you are not saved; for if you were to be among the chief of Christian workers it would not prove that you were certainly a child of God. Do not fret, then, because you are shut out from the cheerful activities in which others share; for, as long as your name is written in heaven, and your heart truly follows after the Lord, you shall have an abundant recompense at the last great day, even though here you are doomed to be a sufferer rather than a worker.

But to me it seems more than possible that some of you, dear friends, whose minds are tinged with melancholy, have painted your own lot in deeper shades than the justice of the case deserves. Is your life indeed a dull routine, which, for lack of busy change and lively enterprise, leaves no record behind? Not so, methinks. 'The rich relics of a well-spent hour' do sometimes pour around your path a stream of light that cheers our eyes, though it may escape your notice. Are you patient under your sufferings? Do you try to keep the flesh in subjection, to govern your spirit, to refrain from murmuring, and to foster cheerfulness? That, my friend, is doing a great deal. I am sure that the holy serenity of a suffering child of God is one of the best sermons that can ever be preached in a family. A sick saint has often been more serviceable in a house than the most eloquent divine could have been. They see how sweetly you submit to the divine will, how patiently you can bear painful operations, how the Lord gives you songs in the night. Why, you are greatly useful. I have sometimes been called to visit bedridden persons who have been unable to rise for many, many years, and it has been within my knowledge that their influence has extended over whole parishes. They have been known as poor pious women or as experienced Christian men, and many have gone to visit them. Christian ministers have said that they derived more benefit from sitting half-an-hour talking to poor old Betsy than they did from all the books in their library, and yet Betsy said that she was doing nothing. Look at your case in that light, and you will see that you can praise God upon your bed, and make your chamber to be as vocal for God as this pulpit ever can be.

Besides, dear friends, do you not think we frequently limit our estimate of serving God to the public exercises of the sanctuary, and forget the strong claims that our Lord has upon our private fidelity and obedience? You say, 'I cannot serve God,' when you cannot teach in the school or preach in the pulpit, when you are unable to sit on a committee or speak on a platform: as if these were the only forms of service to be taken into account. Do you not think that a mother nursing her baby is serving God? Do you not think that men and women going about their daily toil with patient industry discharging the duties of domestic life are serving God? If you think rightly you will understand that they are. The servant sweeping the room, the mistress preparing the meal, the workman driving a nail, the merchant casting up his ledger, ought to do all in the service of God. Though, of course, it is very desirable that we should each and all have some definitely religious work before us, yet it is much better that we should hallow our common handicraft, and make our ordinary work chime with the melodies of a soul attuned for heaven. Let true religion be our life, and then our life will be true religion. That is how it ought to be. 'Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father by

him.' So, then, let the stream of your common life as it flows on, obscure, unobserved, be holy and courageous; you will find that while 'they also serve who only stand and wait,' you shall not be neglected or overlooked who simply sit at Jesus' feet and listen to his words when you can do no more. This is service done for him which he can appreciate; complain who may.

Know, too, my dear sister, that by thy sorrows the Lord has drawn out thy sympathies. Thou, my dear brother, know that by the discipline which has chastened thee, thou hast learned to be a comforter. Say you, then, that you cannot do anything? I know a few secrets about you that you forget. You do not reckon yourself up as we reckon you. Did you not try to cheer a poor neighbour the other day by telling of the Lord's goodness to you when you were very sick yourself? How started from your eye that tear most sacred shed for a fellow-creature's pain? Is it not your habit, poor sufferer as you are, to let drop just a few words for your Master to others in a like condition whenever you can? You tell me that you cannot do anything. Why, dear hearts, the refreshing of God's saints is one of the highest works in which anyone can be occupied. God will send prophets to his servants at times when they need to be rebuked; if he wants to comfort them he generally sends an angel to them, for that is angel's work. Jesus Christ himself, we read, had angels sent to minister to him. When? Was it not in the garden of Gethsemane, when he was bowed down with sorrow? Comforting is not ordinary work: it is a kind of angelic work. 'There appeared unto him an angel strengthening him.' A prophet was sent to warn the Israelites of their sin; but when a Gideon was to be encouraged to go and fight for his country, it was the angel of the Lord that came to him. So I gather that comforting work is angel's work. You, dear kind Christian men and women, who think that you are not able to do anything but to condole or to console with cheery words some souls cast down and sore dismayed, you are fulfilling a most blessed office, and doing work which many ministers find it difficult to perform. I have known some who have never known suffering or ill-health, and when they try to comfort God's weary people they are dreadfully awkward over it. They are like elephants picking up pins: they can do it, but it is with a wonderful effort. God's tried people comfort each other *con amore*; they take to the work as a fish to water. They understand the art of speaking a word in season to him that is weary, and when this is the case they may not complain that they are doing nothing.

And yet, beloved, you who thought that you did nothing, and now perceive that you are really useful, will, I hope, perceive that there is still a wider region into which you may advance. Breathe to-night the prayer of Jabez, who was more honourable than his brethren, because he was the child of his mother's sorrow; and this was the prayer 'Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast!' Ask God to open up to you a larger region of usefulness, and he will do it.

II. Now let me address a few words to another class of workers WHO THINK THAT THEY ARE LAID ASIDE.

'Dear sir,' says one, 'I wish you would encourage me. I used to be useful once; at least, I was recognized as one of a band of men who worked together right heartily, but since I have changed my residence I am unknown in the neighborhood where I am living, and I seem to have dropped out of the ranks. I have done little or nothing lately, and I feel uneasy about it. I wish that I could get to work.' My dear brother, I hope you will; but do not waste five minutes in thinking it over. These times need so much Christian effort that when a man asks me, 'How shall I do work for Christ?' I am accustomed to say, 'Go and do it.' 'But what is the way to do it?' Start at once. Get at it, my brother. Do not be out of harness a minute. But suppose that you are obliged to desist awhile, do not let your interest in the cause of our Lord and Master decline. Some of the best of God's workers have been laid aside for long periods. Moses was forty years in the desert, doing nothing. A greater than he, our blessed Saviour himself, was thirty years, I will not say doing

nothing, but certainly doing no public work. When you are in a retired and inactive position, be preparing for the time when God brings you out again. If you are put away on the shelf, do not rust there, but pray the Master to brighten you up so that when he comes to use you again you may be fully fitted for the work which he has in hand for you.

While you must be laid aside, I want you to do this, 'pray for others that are at work. Help them; encourage them. Do not get into that peevish, miserable frame of mind which grudges and undervalues other men's works. Be not like the dog in the manger. Some people, when they cannot do anything themselves, do not like anybody else to be diligent and laborious. Say, 'If I cannot help, I will never hinder, but I will cheer my brethren.'

Spend your time in prayer that you may be fit for the Master's use, and, meanwhile, be prompt in helping others. You remember that, at the siege of Gibraltar, when the fleet surrounded it and determined to storm the old rock, the governor fired red-hot shot down upon the men of war. The enemy did not at all admire the governor's warm reception. Think how it was done. Here were gunners on the ramparts firing away, and every man in the garrison would have liked to do the same. What did those do who could not serve a gun? Why, they heated the shot; and that is what you must do. I am master gunner here generally: heat my shot for me, if you will. Keep the furnace going, so that when we do fire off a sermon it may be red-hot, through your earnest prayers. When you see your friends sitting in the Sunday-school, or standing out in the street working for God, if you cannot join them yet say, 'Never mind: I will heat the shot for them. My prayers shall not be wanting, if I can contribute nothing else.' That is counsel for you who are for awhile laid on the shelf.

III. Others there are who are much discouraged because THEY HAVE BUT SMALL TALENT. 'Oh,' they say, 'I wish I could serve Jesus Christ like Paul, or like Whitefield' that I could range the country through proclaiming his dear name and winning thousands of converts. But I am slow of speech and dull of thought, and what I attempt produces little or no effect.' Well, brother, mind that you do what you can. Do you not recollect the parable of the men who had talents entrusted to them? I do not want to lay undue stress upon the fact that it was the man who had one talent who buried it. Yet why is he represented as doing so? I think it was not because the men of two and five talents do not sometimes bury theirs, but because the temptation lies most with the one talent people. They say, 'What can I do? What is the use of me? I may be excused.' That is the temptation. Brother, do not be entangled in that snare. If your Lord has only given you one talent he does not expect you to make the same interest upon it as the man does with five; but still he does expect his interest, and therefore do not wrap your talent in a napkin. It is but with strength imparted that any of us can serve him. We have nothing to consecrate to him but the gift we have first received from him. You are weak. You feel it; but what says your God to you? 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.' He can make you useful though you have no extraordinary endowments. Grape-shot may do great execution, though it cannot compare with grenade or bomb-shell. A sinner may be brought to Christ by the simple earnestness of a peasant or an artisan, without calling in the aid of a professor's learning or a preacher's eloquence. God can bless you far above what you think to be your capacity, for it is not a question of your ability but of his aid. You have no self-reliance, you tell me. Then take refuge in God, I entreat you, for you evidently want more of the divine succor. Go and get it; it is to be had. He girds the weak with strength. 'The young men shall faint and be weary, but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.' Why, I think you are more likely to do good than if you had five talents, for now you will pray more and you will depend more upon God than you would have done if you had possessed strength of your own.

One other word. As you are not enriched with many talents, mind you economize those you have. Do you know how merchants and tradesmen who have only a small capital in business manage to compete with those who have larger means? They try to turn their money over every day. The costermonger cannot afford to deal out his goods to gentlemen who will pay him in three months. Not he. He must get his ready money at the door, and then go and buy another stock to-morrow morning, and turn it over, or else he could not pick up his living with so small a capital. If you have only ninepence, make it 'nimble,' and you will get as much profit out of a nimble ninepence as another out of a lazy crown. Activity often makes up for lack of ability. If you cannot get force by the weight of the ball, get it by the velocity with which it travels. A little man with one talent all ablaze may become a perfect nuisance to the devil, and a champion for Christ. As for that great divine with his five talents, who marches on so sleepily, Satan can always overmatch him and win the day. If you can but turn over your one talent again and again, in the name of God, you may achieve great wonders. So I would encourage you in the work of the Lord.

IV. With workers WHO ARE UNDER GREAT DIFFICULTIES I would now have a word. I have known the day when perplexities pleased me, dilemmas afforded me delight, and instead of declining a difficult task I rather like it. Even now I enjoy puzzling over a problem, and attempting what others decline. Nothing good in this world can be effected without difficulty. The biggest diamonds lie under heavy stones which sluggards cannot turn over. That which is easy to do is hardly worth doing. In the face of difficulty the man of ardent, persevering spirit braces up his nerves, sharpens his wits, and brings all his powers into play to achieve an object that will reward his efforts. Have you great difficulties dear friend? You are not the first worker for God who has had difficulties to encounter. Let us go back to Moses again. He was to bring Israel out of Egypt; but his path did not appear very plain. He must go before Pharaoh and issue God's command. Pharaoh looked him through when he said, 'Let my people go.' The haughty monarch was greatly surprised to hear anybody, especially a Hebrew, talk like that; and so he bade him begone. But Moses returns with, 'Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go'; and his courage was not even then crowned with immediate success. There must be plague upon plague, plague upon plague, till at last proud Pharaoh's heart was broken, the Israelites were saved from the hand of him that hated them; and Egypt was glad when they departed. This, however, was but the beginning of the mission of Moses. His was a life of difficulty the meekest man, but the most provoked; and until he got to the top of Pisgah, and his gracious Master kissed away his soul, the prophet of Horeb had never done with difficulties. Any good thing, I say, especially any good thing done for God, must be surrounded with difficulties, and resisted by adversaries. Look at Nehemiah, and Ezra, and Zerubbabel, and those that built Jerusalem, the second time. These good men wrought zealously, but Sanballat and Tobiah were jeering and jesting, and trying to throw down the wall. If you build a city without difficulty, it is not Jerusalem. Be sure of that. As soon as ever you begin working for God you will find a great power working against you. If you encounter opposition, take it as a good sign. When our young men go to a provincial town to preach, and I want to know how they are getting on, after listening to their story, I ask, 'Has somebody slandered you yet? Do the newspapers denounce you as a fool?' If they say 'No,' I conclude that they are not getting on much. If Christ's cause is prospering the world will reproach the soul-winner; if you do damage to the devil's kingdom he will roar at you. Should your course be smooth, it is because he says, 'There is nothing to disturb me in that man's monotonous talk. I need not let fly the fiery dart of calumny at him: he is a chip in the porridge, I will let him alone.' Such a man generally goes through life very comfortably. People say, 'He is a quiet, inoffensive sort of man.' We do not want such soldiers in the service of Christ. 'What a disagreeable person!' said a king once of an officer whose sword rattled on the floor. 'That sword of his is most offensive.' 'Sire,' said the officer, 'that is exactly what your majesty's enemies think.' When ungodly persons say that we are troublesome, we are not broken-hearted at being out of their good looks. If the

king's enemies think us troublesome, we reckon it to be high praise. When you, my dear brother, meet with opposition, encounter it with prayer. Exercise more faith. Antagonists ought never to hinder your going forward in the cause of Christ. Diamond must cut diamond. There is nothing so hard in this world but you can cut it with something harder. If you ask God to steel your soul up to the conquering point, and to make your resolution like an adamant stone, you can cut your way through an alp of diamond in the service of your Lord and Master.

Let me inspirit you in the face of assailants. The forces ranged against you might be stumbling-blocks to fools, but they shall only prove a stimulus to men. One day your honour shall be the greater and your reward shall be the higher because of these adverse elements. Therefore, be brave and fear not, but advance in the strength of God.

V. Fain would I now speak a passing word of comfort to another class of workers'THOSE THAT ARE NOT APPRECIATED. I am not going to say much, because I have not much sympathy with them. Yet I know that the smallest slight chafes those who are over sensitive. They murmur, 'I do my best, and nobody thanks me.' You think yourself a martyr, and complain that you are mis-represented. Be it so, dear friend; that was your Master's lot, and it is the lot of all his servants. This is a cross we must all carry, or we shall never wear the crown. Do you fancy that this is a new experience? Look at Joseph. His brethren could not bear him, and yet it was he that saved the family and fed them in time of famine. Look at David. His brothers asked why he had left the charge of the sheep to come down to the battle, suspecting that the pride of his heart had brought him among the soldiers and the standards. Yet nobody could bring back Goliath's head but that young David. Take a lesson from the ruddy hero; take no notice of what your brethren say about you. Go and bring back the giant's head. A good adventure is the best answer to evil accusations. If you are serving the Master let their scandal stir you up to more self-consecration. If they cry out against you as too forward, serve the Lord with more vigour, and you will antidote the venom of their tongues. Did you enter into Christ's work in order to be honoured among men? Then retire from it, for you came with a bad motive. But if you enlisted purely to bring honour to Him, and to win his smile, what more do you want? What more do you want? Be not therefore disheartened because you are not applauded. Be certain of this, that to be kept in the rear rank is often necessary to future eminence. If you take a man and put him in front, and pat him on the back and say, 'What a great man he is!' he will make a false step before long, and there will be an end of your hero; but when a man is brought forward by God, he is often one whom everybody criticizes, finds fault with, and declaims as an impostor, but the banter he is exposed to serves as ballast for his mind. When he comes off with success he will not be spoiled with conceit, for the grace of God will make him bow with gratitude. The sword that is meant for a princely hand, to split through skull and backbone in the day of battle, must be annealed in the furnace again and again; it cannot be fit for such desperate work until it has passed through the fire full many a time. Do not ask to be appreciated. Never be so mean as that. Appreciate yourself in the serenity of conscience, and leave your honour with your God.

VI. I must speak now, in the last place, a little more at length to THOSE WHO ARE DISCOURAGED BECAUSE THEY HAVE HAD SO LITTLE SUCCESS.

It was my great delight a few evenings ago to meet a splendid band of men and women who are the Sunday-school teachers of this church. You will think it strange that I did not till then thoroughly estimate the extent of their work, as I had never added up the total of the various schools; but when I did so, and found that they mounted up to six thousand children, I felt full of joy. I shall run over with delight if they increase to twelve thousand in another twelve months. For so large a district this would not be too many,

but still our present number is most encouraging. Now, I know that some of our teachers are working away in back streets, in rooms not connected with any place but this, and we hardly knew of them, because they were pursuing their simple, unobtrusive labours so quietly. Are there any of you who fear that you have toiled in vain and spent your strength for nought? I would entreat you, dear friends, not to be satisfied with casting in the seed unless you reap some good results; yet do not be so faint-hearted as to give up because of a little disappointment. Though you cannot be satisfied without fruit, yet do not cease to sow because one season proves a failure. I would not have our friends the farmers abandon agriculture because this year they have a bad crop: if they were to measure their future prospects by the present failure, it would be a great pity. If you have preached or taught, or done work for Christ with little success until now, do not infer that you will always be unsuccessful. Regret the lack of prosperity but do not relinquish the labour of seeking it. You may reasonably be sorrowful, but you have no right to despair. Non-success is a trial of faith which has been endured by many a trusty servant who has been triumphant in the issue. Did not the disciples toil all night, and catch nothing? Did we not read just now of some who cast the net, and yet took no fish? Did not our Lord say that some seed would fall on stony ground, and some among the thorns, and that from these there would be no harvest? What good did Jeremiah do? I have no doubt he laboured, and God blessed him, but the result of his preaching was that he said, 'The bellows are burned in the fire.' He had blown up the fire till he had burnt the bellows, but no man's heart was melted. 'Woe is me!' said he. 'Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears!' I do not know what was the result of Noah's ministry, but I do know that he was a preacher of righteousness for a hundred and twenty years, and yet he never brought a soul into the ark except his own family. Poor preaching we may count it judging by the influence it exerted: and yet we know that it was grand preaching, such as God commended. Do not, then, grudge the time, or the strength, you lay out in the service of our great Lord because you do not see your efforts thrive, for better men than you have wept over failure.

Remember, too, that if you really do serve the Lord thoroughly and heartily, he will accept you and acknowledge your service, even though no good should come of it. It is your business to cast the bread on the waters: if you do not find it after many days, that is not your business. It is your business to scatter the seed; but no farmer says to his servant, 'John, you have not served me well, for there is no harvest.' The man would say, 'Could I make a harvest, sir? I have ploughed, and I have sowed. What more could I do?' Even so our good Lord is not austere, nor does he demand of us more than we can do. If you have ploughed and if you have sowed, although there should be no harvest, you are clear and accepted. Did it never strike you that you may be now employed in breaking up ground and preparing the soil from which other labourers who come after you will reap very plentifully. Perhaps your Master knows what a capital ploughman you are. He has a large farm, and he never means to let you become a reaper because you do the ploughing so well. Your Master does not intend you to take part in the harvest because you are such a good hand at sowing; and as he has crops that need sowing all the year round he keeps you at that work. He knows you better than you know yourself. Perchance if he were once to let you get on the top of a loaded wagon of your own sheaves, you would turn dizzy and make a fall of it; so he says, 'You keep to your ploughing and your sowing, and somebody else shall do the reaping.' Peradventure when your course is run you will see from heaven, where it will be safe for you to see it, that you did not labour in vain nor spend your strength for nought. 'One soweth and another reapeth.' This is the divine economy. I think that every man that loves his Master will say, 'So long as there does but come a harvest, I will not stipulate about who reaps it. Give me faith enough to be assured that the reaping will come, and I will be content.' Look at William Carey going to India, his prayer being 'India for Christ.' What did Carey live to see? Well, he saw good-speed enough to rejoice his heart: but certainly he did not see the fulfillment of all his prayer.

Successive missionaries have since gone and spent their life on that vast field of enterprise. With what result? A result amply sufficient to justify all their toil, but, as compared with the millions that sit in heathendom, utterly inadequate to the craving of the church, much less to the crown of Christ. It does not much matter how any one man fares. The mighty empire will revert to the world's Redeemer, and I can almost trace in the records of the future the writing of 'These be the names of the mighty men whom David had,' as the valiant deeds of his heroes are chronicled by our Lord. When old St. Paul's cathedral had to be taken down in order to make room for the present noble edifice, some of the walls were immensely strong and stood like rocks. Sir Christopher Wren determined to throw them down by the old Roman battering-ram. The battering-ram began to work, and the men worked at it for hours and hours, day after day, without apparent effect. Blow after blow came on the wall; tremendous thuds that made the bystanders tremble. The wall continued to stand till they thought it was a useless operation. But the architect knew. He continued working his battering-ram till every particle of the wall felt the motion, and at last over it went in one tremendous ruin. Did anybody commend those workmen who caused the final crash, or ascribe all the success to them? Not a bit of it. It was the whole of them together. Those who had gone away to their meals, those who had begun days before, had as much honour in the matter as those who struck the last blow. And it is so in the work of Christ. We must keep on battering, battering, battering, and at last though it may not be for another thousand years the Lord will triumph. Though Christ cometh quickly he may not come for another ten thousand years, but in any case idolatry must die, and truth must reign. The accumulated prayers and energies of ages shall do the deed, and God shall be glorified. Only let us persevere in holy effort, and the end is sure. When a certain American general was fighting they said, 'What are you doing?' He said, 'I am not doing much, but I keep pegging away.' That is what we must do. We cannot do much at any one time, but we must keep on. We must keep on pegging away at the enemy, and something will come of it by-and-by.

Possibly, dear friends, some of you who think you have had slender success may have had a great deal more than you know of. Others there may be whose want of success should suggest to them to try somewhere else, or else to try some other method. If we cannot do good in one way we must do it in another. Bring the matter before God in prayer. Cry mightily to him, for he will help you yet to do it, and his shall be the glory. When he has laid you low, when he has taught you how inefficient you are, when he has driven you in despair to rely implicitly upon himself, then it may be that he will give you more trophies and triumphs than you ever dreamed of. Anyhow, whether I prosper in life or not is not my question. To bring souls to Christ is my main endeavour, but it is not the ultimate proof of my ministry. My business is to live for God, to lay aside self, and give myself up wholly to him, and if I do that I shall be accepted whatever else may happen. I wish we had the spirit of that brave old man who was condemned to the stake. They were going to burn him. He knew that the sentence was to be carried out the next morning, but with a soul full of courage, and with a merry heart, he sat the last thing at night talking with his friends' faggots and fire to face in the morning, recollect' and he said to one of them, 'I am an old tree in my Master's orchard. When I was young I bore a little fruit by his grace. It was unripe and sour, but he bore with it: and I have grown mellow in my older days and brought forth some fruit for him by his grace. Now the tree has grown so old that my Master is going to cut it down and burn the old log. Well, it will warm the hearts of some of his family while I am burning'; and he even smiled for joy to think that he might be put to so good a purpose. I want you to have that spirit, and to say, 'I will live for Christ while I am young: I will die for him, and warm the hearts of my brethren. You know that the persecutions of those martyr days begat such heroism and gallantry among disciples as prudent people in peaceful times can scarcely credit. It is said of the old Baptist church over in the City that the members went to Smithfield early one morning to see their pastor burnt, and when some one asked the young people what they went there for, they said that they

went to learn the way. That is splendid! They went to learn the way. Oh, go to the Master's cross to learn the way to live and die! See how he spent himself for you, and then sally forth and spend yourselves for him. 'Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall ye be glorious in the sight of the Lord.' Though you may think that you do not succeed, your whole-hearted consecration shall be your honour in the day of the Lord. By your hallowed life, and your humble service, you shall bring glory to his name. O Lord, set us in our charges, and encourage us in the service of thy house! 'Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; establish thou the work of our hands: yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.' May the blessing of our covenant God rest upon you, my brethren, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON'John 21.

HYMNS FROM 'OUR OWN HYMN BOOK'245, 674, 694.

BELOVED FRIENDS,'On this first day of a New Year I salute you with hearty good wishes, and pray that every blessing may attend your future steps. I beg also on my own behalf your prayers that through another year my ministry may be more edifying to the saints, more persuasive with sinners, and more acceptable to the Lord. I thank the great Healer that this day smiles upon me, and sees me free from pain, reviving in strength, and restored in spirit. I shall hope soon to be at work again. Oh for an anointing with fresh oil.

Yours to serve in hearty earnest,

Menton, Jan. 1, 1880.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/ch-spurgeon/cheer-up-my-comrades/>

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