

FAITH AND REPENTANCE INSEPARABLE

NO. 460

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Repent and believe in the Gospel.”
Mark 1:15.

Our Lord Jesus Christ commences His ministry by announcing its leading commands. He comes up from the wilderness newly anointed, like the bridegroom from his chamber. His love notes are repentance and faith. He comes forth fully prepared for His office, having been in the desert, “tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin.” His loins are girded like a strong man to run a race. He preaches with all the earnestness of a new zeal, combined with all the wisdom of a long preparation. In the beauty of holiness from the womb of the morning He glitters with the dew of His youth.

Hear, O heavens and give ear, O earth, for Messiah speaks in the greatness of His strength. He cries unto the sons of men, “Repent and believe in the Gospel.” Let us give our ears to these words which, like their Author, are full of Divine Grace and the Truth of God. Before us we have the sum and substance of Jesus Christ’s whole teaching—the Alpha and Omega of His entire ministry. And coming from the lips of such an One, at such a time, with such peculiar power, let us give the most earnest heed and may God help us to obey them from our inmost hearts.

I. I shall commence by remarking that *the Gospel which Christ preached was, very plainly, a command.* “Repent and believe in the Gospel.” Our Lord does condescend to *reason*. Often His ministry graciously acted out the old text, “Come, now and let us reason together; though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool.” He does persuade men by telling and forcible arguments, which should lead them to seek the salvation of their souls. He does *invite* men and oh, how lovingly He woos them to be wise!

“Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.” He does *entreat* men. He condescends to become, as it were, a beggar to His own sinful creatures, beseeching them to come to Him. Indeed, He makes this to be the duty of His ministers, “As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ’s place, be you reconciled to God.” Yet, remember, though He condescends to reason, to persuade, to invite, and to beseech, still His Gospel has in it all the dignity and force of a command.

And if we would preach it in these days as Christ did, we must proclaim it as a command from God, attended with a Divine sanction and not to be neglected except at the infinite peril of the soul. When the feast was spread upon the table for the marriage supper, there was an invitation—but it had all the obligation of a command—since those who rejected it were utterly destroyed as despisers of their king. When the builders reject

Christ, He becomes a stone of stumbling to “the disobedient.” But how could they disobey if there were no command?

The Gospel contemplates, I say, invitations, entreaties and beseeching—but it also takes the higher ground of authority. “Repent and believe,” is as much a command of God as, “You shall not steal.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ” has as fully a Divine authority as, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength.” Think not, O Man, that the Gospel is a thing left to your option to choose or not! Dream not, O Sinners, that you may despise the Word from Heaven and incur no guilt! Think not that you may neglect it, and no ill consequences shall follow!

It is just this neglect and despising of yours which shall fill up the measure of your iniquity. It is this concern for which we cry aloud, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?” God *commands* you to repent. The same God before whom Sinai was moved and was altogether on a smoke—that same God who proclaimed the Law with sound of trumpet, with lightning and with thunder, speaks to us more gently but still as Divinely, through His only begotten Son, when He says to us, “Repent and believe in the Gospel.”

Why is this, dear Friends? Why has the Lord made it a command to us to believe in Christ? There is a blessed reason. Many souls would never venture to believe at all if it were not made a penal offense to refuse to do so. For this is the difficulty with many awakened sinners—*may I believe?* Have I a right to believe? Am I permitted to trust Christ? Now this question is put aside, once and for all, and should never irritate a broken heart again. You are commanded by God to do it, therefore you may do it.

Every creature under Heaven is commanded to believe in the Lord Jesus and bow the knee at His name. Every creature, wherever the Gospel comes, wherever the Truth of God is preached, is commanded then and there to believe the Gospel. And it is put in that shape, I say, lest any conscience-stricken sinner should question whether he may do it. Surely, you *may* do what God *commands* you to do! You may throw this at the devil’s lies—“I may do it. I am bid to do it by Him who has authority and I am threatened if I do not with eternal damnation from His Presence, for ‘He that believes not shall be damned.’”

This gives the sinner such a blessed permit, that whatever he may be or may not be, whatever he may have felt or may not have felt, he has a warrant which he may use whenever he is led to approach the Cross. However benighted and darkened you may be, however hard-hearted and callous you may be, you have still a warrant to look to Jesus in the words, “Look unto Me and be you saved all you ends of the earth.” He that commanded you to believe will justify you in believing. He cannot condemn you for that which He Himself bids you do.

But while there is this blessed reason for the Gospel’s being a command, there is yet another solemn and an awful one. It is that men may be without excuse in the Day of Judgment. No man may say at the last, “Lord, I did not know that I might believe in Christ. Lord, Heaven’s gate was shut in my face. I was told that I might not come, that I was not the man.” “No,” says the Lord, with tones of thunder, “the times of man’s ig-

norance I winked at, but in the Gospel I commanded all men everywhere to repent. I sent my Son, and then I sent my Apostles and afterwards my ministers. And I bade them all make this the burden of their cry, 'Repent and be converted every one of you.'

"And as Peter preached at Pentecost, so I bade them preach to you. I bade them warn, exhort, and invite with all affection, but also to command with all authority, compelling you to come in. And inasmuch as you did not come at My command, you have added sin to sin. You have added the suicide of your own soul to all your other iniquities. And now, inasmuch as you did reject My Son, you shall have the portion of unbelievers, for 'he that believes not shall be damned.'"

To all the nations of the earth, then, let us sound forth this decree from God. O Man, Jehovah that made you, He who gives you the breath of your nostrils, He against whom you have offended, commands you this day to repent and believe the Gospel. He gives His promise—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." And He adds the solemn threat—"He that believes not shall be damned." I know some Brethren will not like this but that I cannot help. The slave of systems I will never be, for the Lord has loosed that iron bondage from my neck and now I am the joyful servant of the Truth of God which makes men free.

Offend or please, as God shall help me, I will preach every Truth of God as I learn it from the Word. And I know if there is anything written in the Bible at all, it is written as with a sunbeam, that God in Christ commands men to repent and believe the Gospel. It is one of the saddest proofs of man's utter depravity that he will not obey this command, but that he will despise Christ and so make his doom worse than the doom of Sodom and Gomorrah. Without the regenerating work of God the Holy Spirit, no man will ever be obedient to this command. But still it must be published for a witness against them if they reject it. And while publishing God's command with all simplicity, we may expect that He will Divinely enforce it in the souls of those whom He has ordained unto eternal life.

II. While the Gospel is a command, *it is a two-fold command explaining itself.* "Repent and believe in the Gospel."

I know some very excellent Brethren—would God there were more like them in zeal and love—who, in their zeal to preach up simple faith in Christ have felt a little difficulty about the matter of repentance. And I have known some of them who have tried to get over the difficulty by softening down the apparent hardness of the word *repentance*, by expounding it according to its more usual Greek equivalent, a word which occurs in the original of my text and signifies "to change one's mind."

Apparently they interpret repentance to be a somewhat slighter thing than we usually conceive it to be—a mere change of mind, in fact. Now, allow me to suggest to those dear Brethren that the Holy Spirit never preaches repentance as a trifle. And the change of mind, or understanding, of which the Gospel speaks is a very deep and solemn work—and must not on any account be depreciated. Moreover, there is another word which is also used in the original Greek for repentance—not so often, I admit—but still it is used, which signifies "an after-care," a word which

has in it something more of sorrow and anxiety than that which signifies changing one's mind.

There must be *sorrow* for sin and *hatred* of it in true repentance, or else I have read my Bible to little purpose. In very truth, I think there is no necessity for any other definition than that of the children's hymn—

**“Repentance is to leave
The sins we loved before,
And show that we in earnest grieve,
By doing so no more.”**

To repent does mean a change of mind. But then it is a *thorough* change of the understanding and all that is *in* the mind, so that it includes an illumination—an illumination of the Holy Spirit. And I think it includes a discovery of iniquity and a hatred of it, without which there can hardly be a genuine repentance. We must not, I think, undervalue repentance. It is a blessed Grace of God the Holy Spirit and it is absolutely necessary unto salvation.

The command explains itself. We will take, first of all, *repentance*. It is quite certain that whatever the repentance here mentioned may be, it is a repentance perfectly consistent with faith. And therefore we get the explanation of what repentance must be, from its being connected with the next command, “Believe in the Gospel.” Then, dear Friends, we may be sure that that unbelief which *leads a man to think that his sin is too great for Christ to pardon it*, is not the repentance meant here.

Many who truly repent are tempted to believe that they are too great sinners for Christ to pardon. That, however, is not a part of their repentance, it is a *sin*—a very great and grievous sin—for it is undervaluing the merit of Christ's blood. It is a denial of the truthfulness of God's promise. It is a detracting from the Divine Grace and favor of God who sent the Gospel. Such a persuasion you must labor to get rid of, for it came from Satan and not from the Holy Spirit. God the Holy Spirit never teaches a man that his sins are too great to be forgiven, for that would mean God the Holy Spirit were teaching a lie.

If any of you have a thought of that kind this morning, be rid of it. It comes from the powers of darkness and not from the Holy Spirit. And if some of you are troubled because you never were haunted by that fear, be glad instead of being troubled. He can save you. Be your sin as black as coal, He can save you. And it is a wicked falsehood and a high insult against the majesty of Divine love when you are tempted to believe that you are past the mercy of God. That is not repentance, but a foul sin against the infinite mercy of God.

Then, there is another spurious repentance which makes the sinner dwell *upon the consequences of his sin, rather than upon the sin, itself, and so keeps him from believing*. I have known some sinners so distressed with fears of Hell, and thoughts of death and eternal judgment, that to use the words of one terrible preacher, “They have been shaken over the mouth of Hell by their collar,” and have almost felt the torments of the pit before they went there.

Dear Friends, this is not repentance. Many a man has felt all that, and has yet been lost. Look at many a dying man, tormented with remorse, who has had all its pangs and convictions and yet has gone down to the

grave without Christ and without hope. These things may come with repentance, but they are not an essential part of it. That which is called Law-work, in which the sinner is terrified with horrible thoughts that God's mercy is gone forever, may be permitted by God for some special purpose, but it is not repentance.

In fact, it may often be devilish rather than heavenly, for, as John Bunyan tells us, Diabolus does often beat the great Hell drum in the ears of the men of Mansoul, to prevent their hearing the sweet trumpet of the Gospel which proclaims pardon to them. I tell you, Sinner, any repentance that keeps you from believing in Christ is a repentance that needs to be repented of. Any repentance that makes you think Christ will not save you, goes beyond the Truth of God and against the Truth of God, and the sooner you are rid of it, the better. God deliver you from it, for the repentance that will save you is quite consistent with faith in Christ.

There is, again, a *false repentance which leads men to hardness of heart and despair*. We have known some seared as with a hot iron by burning remorse. They have said, "I have done much evil. There is no hope for me. I will not hear the Word any more." If they hear it, it is nothing to them. Their hearts are hard as adamant. If they could once get the thought that God would forgive them, their hearts would flow in rivers of repentance. But no—they feel a kind of regret that they did wrong—but yet they go on in it all the same. They feel there is no hope and that they may as well continue to live as they were likely to do and get the pleasures of sin since they cannot, as they think, have the pleasures of Divine Grace.

Now, that is not repentance. It is a fire which hardens and not the Lord's fire which melts. It may be a hammer, but it is a hammer used to knit the particles of your soul together and not to break the heart. If, dear Friends, you have never been the subject of these terrors do not desire them. Thank God if you have been brought to Jesus but long not for needless horrors. Jesus saves you, not by what you *feel* but by that finished work, that blood and righteousness which God accepted on your behalf. Remember that no repentance is worth the having which is not perfectly consistent with faith in Christ.

An old saint, on his sickbed, once used this remarkable expression—"Lord, sink me low as Hell in repentance. But"—and here is the beauty of it—"lift me high as Heaven in faith." Now, the repentance that sinks a man low as Hell is of no use except there is the faith, also, that lifts him as high as Heaven. Then the two are perfectly consistent, the one with the other. A man may loathe and detest himself and all the while he may know that Christ is able to save and has saved him. In fact, this is how true Christians live. They repent as bitterly for sin as if they knew they should be damned for it. But they rejoice as much in Christ as if sin were nothing at all.

Oh, how blessed it is to know where these two lines meet, the stripping of repentance and the clothing of faith! The repentance that ejects sin as an evil tenant, and the faith which admits Christ to be the sole master of the heart. The repentance which purges the soul from dead works and the faith that fills the soul with living works, the repentance which pulls down and the faith which builds up. The repentance that scatters stones and

the faith which puts stones together. The repentance which ordains a time to weep and the faith that gives a time to dance—these two things together make up the work of Divine Grace within, whereby men's souls are saved. Be it, then, laid down as a great Truth of God, most plainly written in our text, that the repentance we ought to preach is one connected with faith, and thus we may preach repentance and faith together without any difficulty whatever.

Having shown you what this repentance is not, *let us dwell for a moment upon what it is.* The repentance which is here commanded is the result of faith. It is born at the same time with faith—they are twins and to say which is the elder is beyond my knowledge. It is a great mystery—faith is before repentance in some of its acts and repentance before faith in another view of it. The fact is that they come into the soul together. Now, a repentance which makes me weep and abhor my past life because of the love of Christ which has pardoned it, is the correct repentance.

When I can say, “My sin is washed away by Jesus' blood,” and then repent because I so sinned as to make it necessary that Christ should die—that dove-eyed repentance which looms at His bleeding wounds and feels that her heart must bleed because she wounded Christ—that broken heart that breaks because Christ was nailed to the Cross for it—that is the repentance which brings us salvation.

Again, the repentance which makes us avoid present sin because of the love of God who died for us, this also is saving repentance. If I avoid sin today because I am afraid of being lost if I commit it, I have not the repentance of a child of God. But when I avoid it and seek to lead a holy life because Christ loved me and gave Himself for me and because I am not my own but am bought with a price, this is the work of the Spirit of God.

And again, that change of mind, that carefulness which leads me to resolve that in the future I will live like Jesus and will not live unto the lusts of the flesh, because He has redeemed me, not with corruptible things as silver and gold but with His own precious blood—that is the repentance which will save me and the repentance which He asks of me. O you nations of the earth, He asks not the repentance of Mount Sinai, while you fear and shake because His lightning is abroad. But He asks you to weep and wail because *of Him*—to look on *Him* whom you have pierced and to mourn for Him as a man mourns for his only son.

He bids you remember that you nailed the Savior to the tree, and asks that this argument may make you hate the murderous sins which fastened the Savior there, and put the Lord of Glory to an ignominious and an accursed death. This is the only repentance we have to preach. Not Law and terrors. Not despair. Not driving men to self-murder—this is the terror of the world which works death. But godly sorrow is a sorrow unto salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord.

This brings me to the second half of the command, which is, “*Believe in the Gospel.*” Faith means trust in Christ. Now I must again remark that some have preached this trust in Christ so well and so fully, that I can but admire their faithfulness and bless God for them. Yet there is a difficulty and a danger. It may be that in preaching simple trust in Christ as being the way of salvation, they may omit to remind the sinner that no

faith can be genuine but such as is perfectly consistent with *repentance for past sins*.

My text seems to me to put it thus—no repentance is true but that which consorts with faith, and no faith is true but that which is linked with a hearty and sincere repentance on account of past sins. So then, dear Friends, those people who have a faith which allows them to think lightly of past sins, have the faith of devils, and not the faith of God's elect. Those who say, "Oh, as for the past, that is nothing. Jesus Christ has washed all that away."

Those who can talk about all the crimes of their youth and the iniquities of their riper years, as if they were mere trifles. Those who never think of shedding a tear over past sins, never feel their souls ready to burst because they were such great offenders—such men who can trifle with the past and even fight their battles over again when their passions are too cold for new rebellions—I say that such who think sin a trifle and have never sorrowed on account of it, may know that their faith is not genuine.

Such men as have a faith which allows them to live carelessly in the present, who say, "Well, I am saved by a simple faith," and then sit on the ale-bench with the drunkard, or stand at the bar with the spirit-drinker, or go into worldly company and enjoy the carnal pleasures and the lusts of the flesh—such men are liars. They have not the faith which will save the soul. They have a deceitful hypocrisy. They have not the faith which will bring them to Heaven.

And then, there are some other people who have a faith which leads them to no hatred of sin. They do not look upon sin in others with any kind of shame. It is true they would not do as others do, but then they can laugh at what others commit. They take pleasure in the vices of others—laugh at their profane jests and smile at their loose speeches. They do not flee from sin as from a serpent, nor detest it as the murderer of their best Friend. No, they dally with it. They make excuses for it. They commit in private what in public they condemn. They call grave offenses slight faults and little defalcations.

In business they wink at departures from uprightness and consider them to be mere matters of trade. The fact being that they have a faith which will sit down arm-in-arm with sin and eat and drink at the same table with unrighteousness. Oh, if any of you have such a faith as this, I pray God to turn it out bag and baggage. It is of no good to you. The sooner you are cleaned out of it the better, for when this sandy foundation shall all be washed away, perhaps you may then begin to build upon the rock.

My dear Friends, I would be very faithful with your souls, and would lay the lancet at each man's heart. What is your repentance? Have you a repentance that leads you to look out of self to Christ and to Christ only? On the other hand, have you that faith which leads you to true repentance? To hate the very thought of sin so that the dearest idol you have known, whatever it may be, you desire to tear from its throne that you may worship Christ and Christ only? Be assured of this, that nothing short of this will be of any use to you at the last.

A repentance and a faith of any other sort may do to please you now, as children are pleased with fancies. But when you get on a deathbed and see the reality of things, you will be compelled to say that they are a falsehood and a refuge of lies. You will find that you have been daubed with untempered mortar—that you have said, “Peace, peace,” to yourselves, when there was no peace. Again, I say, in the words of Christ, “Repent and believe in the Gospel.” Trust Christ to save you and lament that you need to be saved. Mourn because this need of yours has put the Savior to open shame, to frightful sufferings and to a terrible death.

III. But we must pass on to a third remark. *These commands of Christ are of the most reasonable character.*

Is it an unreasonable thing to demand of a man that he should *repent*? You have a person who has offended you. You are ready to forgive him—do you think it is at all exacting or overbearing if you ask him to apologize? If you merely ask him, as the very least thing he can do, to acknowledge that he has done wrong? “No,” you say, “I should think I showed my kindness in accepting, rather than any harshness in demanding, an apology from him.” So God, against whom we have rebelled, who is our liege sovereign and monarch, sees it to be inconsistent with the dignity of His kingship to absolve an offender who expresses no contrition.

And I say again, is this a harsh, exacting, unreasonable command? Does God in this mode act like Solomon, who made the taxes of his people heavy? Rather does He not ask of you that which your heart, if it were in a right state, would be but too willing to give, only too thankful that the Lord in His Grace has said, “He that confesses his sin shall find mercy”? Why, dear Friends, do you expect to be saved while you are in your sins? Are you to be allowed to love your iniquities and yet go to Heaven? What? Do you think to have poison in your veins and yet be healthy?

What, Man? Keep the thief in doors and yet be acquitted of dishonesty? Be stained and yet be thought spotless? Harbor the disease, and yet be in health? Ridiculous! Absurd! Repentance is founded on the necessity of things. The demand for a change of heart is absolutely necessary. It is but a reasonable service. O that men were reasonable and they would repent! It is because they are not reasonable that it needs the Holy Spirit to teach their reason right reason before they will repent and believe the Gospel.

And then, again, *believing*—is that an unreasonable thing to ask of you? For a creature to believe its Creator is but a duty. Altogether apart from the promise of salvation, I say, God has a right to demand of the creature that He has made, that He should believe what He tells him. And what is it He asks you to believe? Anything hideous, contradictory, irrational? It may be above reason but it is not contrary to reason. He asks you to believe that through the blood of Jesus Christ, He can still be just and yet the Justifier of the ungodly.

He asks you to trust in Christ to save you. Can you expect that He will save you if you will not trust Him? Have you really the hardihood to think that He will carry you to Heaven while all the while you declare He cannot do it? Do you think it consistent with the dignity of a Savior to save you while you say, “I do not believe You are a Savior and I will not trust You?” Is it consistent with His dignity for Him to save you, and suffer you to re-

main an unbelieving sinner, doubting His Grace, mistrusting His love, slandering His Character, doubting the efficacy of His blood and of His plea?

Why, Man, it is the most reasonable thing in the world that He should demand of you that you should believe in Christ! And this He demands of you this morning. "Repent and believe in the Gospel." O Friends, O Friends, how sad, how sad is the state of man's soul when he will not do this! We may preach to you, but you will never repent and believe the Gospel. We may lay God's commands, like an axe, to the root of the tree, but, reasonable as these commands are, you will still refuse to give God His due.

You will go on in your sins. You will not come unto Him that you may have life. And it is here the Spirit of God must come in to work in the souls of the elect to make them willing in the day of His power. But oh, in God's name, I warn you, if, after hearing this command, you do, as I know you will do, without His Spirit, continue to refuse obedience to so reasonable a Gospel, you shall find at the last it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for you.

For had the things which are preached in London been proclaimed in Sodom and Gomorrah, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and in ashes. Woe unto you, inhabitants of London! Woe unto you, subjects of the British Empire! For if the Truths of God which have been declared in your streets had been preached to Tyre and Sidon, they would have continued even unto this day!

IV. But still, to pass on, I have yet a fourth remark to make and that is, *this is a command which demands immediate obedience.* I do not know how it is, let us preach as we may, we cannot lead others to think that there is any great alarm, that there is any reason why they should think about their souls now. Last night there was a review on Wimbledon Common, and living not very far away from it, I could hear in one perpetual roll the cracks of the rifles and the thunder of the cannon.

One remarked to me, "Supposing there really were war there, we should not sit quite so comfortably in our room with our window open listening to all this noise." No. And so when people come to Chapel, they hear a sermon about repentance and faith. They listen to it. "What do you think of it?" "Oh—very well." But suppose it were real? Suppose they believed it to be real, would they sit quite so comfortably? Would they be quite so easy? Ah, no! But you do not think it is real. You do not think that the God who made you actually asks of you this day that you should repent and believe.

But, Sirs, *it is real* and it is your procrastination, it is your self-confidence that is the sham, the bubble that is soon to burst. God's demand is the solemn reality, and if you could but hear it as it should be heard you would escape for your lives and flee for refuge to the hope that is set before you in the Gospel—and you would do this *today*. This is the command of Christ, I say, today. Today is *God's time*. "Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart, as in the provocation." "Today," the Gospel always cries, for if it tolerated sin a single day, it were an unholy Gospel!

If the Gospel told men to repent of sin tomorrow, it would give them an allowance to continue in it today, and that would, indeed, be to pander to men's lusts. But the Gospel makes a clean sweep of sin and demands of man that he should throw down the weapons of *his* rebellion *now*. Down with them, Man! Every one of them. Down, Sirs, down with them and down with them *NOW!* You must not keep one of them! Throw them down at once! So long as you continue in unbelief, you continue in sin and are increasing your sin. And to give you leave to be an unbeliever for an hour were to pander to your lusts.

Therefore the Gospel demands of you faith and faith *now*, for this is God's time and the time which holiness must demand of a sinner. Besides, Sinner, *it is your time*. This is the only time you can call your own. Tomorrow? Is there such a thing? In what calendar is it written except in the almanac of the fool? Tomorrow! Oh, how you have ruined multitudes! "Tomorrow," say men, but, like the back-wheel of a chariot, they are always near to the front-wheel, always near to their duty. They still go on and on but never get one whit the nearer, for, travel as they may, tomorrow is still a little beyond them—but a little and so they never come to Christ at all. This is how they speak, as an ancient poet said—

***"I will tomorrow, that I will, I will be sure to do it.
Tomorrow comes, tomorrow goes and still you are to do it.
Thus, then, repentance is deferred from one day to another,
Until the day of death is one, and judgment is the other."***

O sons of Men, always *to be* blessed, *to be* obedient—but never obedient. When will you learn to be wise? This is your only time. It is God's time and *this is the best time*. You will never find it easier to repent than now. You will never find it easier to believe than now. It is impossible *now* except the Spirit of God is with you. It will be as impossible tomorrow. But if now you would believe and repent, the Spirit of God is in the Gospel which I preach.

And while I cry to you in God's name, "Repent and believe," He that bade me command you thus to do gives power with the command. Even as Christ spoke to the waves and said, "Be still," and they were still, and to the winds, "Be calm," and they were quiet—so when we speak to your proud heart it will yield because of the Divine Grace that accompanies the word. And you will repent and believe the Gospel. So may it be and may the message of this morning gather out the elect and make them willing in the day of God's power.

But now, lastly, this command, while it has an immediate power, has also a *continual force*. "Repent and believe in the Gospel," is advice to the young beginner and it is advice to the old gray-headed Christian, for this is our life all the way through—"Repent and believe in the Gospel." St. Anselm, who *was* a saint—and that is more than many of them were who were called so—St. Anselm once cried out "Oh, sinner that I have been, I will spend all the rest of my life in repenting of my whole life!"

And Rowland Hill, whom I think I might call St. Rowland, when he was near death, said he had one regret and that was that a dear friend who had lived with him for sixty years would have to leave him at the gate of Heaven. "That dear friend," said he, "is repentance. Repentance has been

with me all my life and I think I shall drop a tear," said the good man, "as I go through the gates, to think that I can repent no more."

Repentance is the daily and hourly duty of a man who believes in Christ. And as we walk by faith from the wicket gate to the Celestial City, so our right-hand companion all the journey through must be repentance. Why, dear Friends, the Christian man, after he is saved, repents more than ever he did before, for now he repents not merely of overt deeds but even of imaginations. He will take himself to task at night and chide himself because he had tolerated one foul thought.

He repents because he has looked on vanity, though perhaps the heart had gone no further than the look of lust. Because the thought of evil has flitted through his mind—for all this he will vex himself before God. And were it not that he still continues to believe the Gospel, one foul imagination would be such a plague and sting to him, that he would have no peace and no rest. When temptation comes to him, the good man finds the use of repentance, for having hated sin and fled from it of old, he has ceased to be what he once was.

One of the ancient fathers, we are told, had, before his conversion, lived with an ill woman and some little time after, she accosted him as usual. Knowing how likely he was to fall into sin he ran away with all his might. She ran after him, crying, "Why do you run away? It is I." He answered, "I run away because I am not I. I am a new man."

Now, it is just that, "I am not I," which keeps the Christian out of sin. That hating of the former "I," that repenting of the old sin that makes him run from evil, abhor it, and look not upon it, lest by his eyes he should be led into sin. Dear Friends, the more the Christian man knows of Christ's love, the more will he hate himself to think that he has sinned against such love. Every doctrine of the Gospel will make a Christian man repent.

Election, for instance. "How could I sin," says he. "I that was God's favorite, chosen of Him from before the foundation of the world." Final perseverance will make him repent. "How can I sin," says he, "that am loved so much and kept so surely? How can I be so villainous as to sin against everlasting mercy?" Take any doctrine you please, the Christian will make it a fountain for sacred woe. And there are times when his faith in Christ will be so strong that his repentance will burst its bonds and will cry with George Herbert—

***"Oh, who will give me tears?
Come, all you springs,
You clouds and rain dwell in my eyes,
My grief has need of all the watery things
That nature has produced. Let every vein
Suck up a river to supply my eyes
My weary weeping eyes. Too dry for me,
Unless they set new conduits, new supplies
To bear them out and with my state agree."***

And all this is because he murdered Christ. Because his sin nailed the Savior to the tree. And therefore he weeps and mourns even to his life's end. Sinning, repenting and believing—these are three things that will stay with us till we die. Sinning will stop at the river Jordan. Repentance will die triumphing over the dead body of sin. And faith itself, though perhaps it may cross the stream, will cease to be so necessary as it has been

here, for there we shall see even as we are seen and shall know even as we are known.

I send you away when I have once again solemnly declared my Master's will to you this morning, "Repent and believe in the Gospel." Here are some of you come from foreign countries and many of you are from our provincial towns in England. You came here, perhaps, to hear the preacher of whom many a strange thing has been said. Well and good, and may stranger things still be said if they will but bring men under the sound of the Word that they may be blessed.

Now, this I have to say to you this morning—In that Great Day when a congregation ten thousand times thousands larger than this shall be assembled. And on the Great White Throne the Judge shall sit—there will be not a man, or woman, or child, who is here this morning, able to make excuse and say, "I did not hear the Gospel. I did not know what I must do to be saved!"

You have heard it—"Repent and believe in the Gospel." That is, trust Christ. Believe that He is able and willing to save you. But there is something better. In that Great Day, I say, there will be some of you present—oh, let us hope all of us—who will be able to say, "Thank God that by His Grace I yielded up the weapons of my proud rebellion by repentance! Thank God that by His Grace I looked to Christ and took Him to be my Savior from first to last. For here am I, a monument of Divine Grace, a sinner saved by blood, to praise Him while time and eternity shall last!"

God grant that we may meet each other at the last with joy and not with grief! I will be a swift witness against you to condemn you if you believe not this Gospel. But if you repent and believe, then we shall praise that Divine Grace which turned our hearts and so gave us the repentance which led us to trust Christ and the faith which is the effectual gift of the Holy Spirit. What shall I say more unto you?

Why? Why will you reject this? If I have spoken to you of fables, of fictions, of dreams, then turn on your heel and reject my discourse. If I have spoken in my own name, who am I that you should care one whit for me? But if I have preached that which Christ preached, "Repent and believe in the Gospel," I charge you by the living God, I charge you by the world's Redeemer, I charge you by the Cross of Calvary, and by the blood which stained the dust at Golgotha—obey this Divine message and you shall have eternal life. But refuse it, and on your own heads be your blood forever and ever!

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

AN ASTOUNDING MIRACLE

NO. 1765

A SERMON PREACHED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 10, 1884,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And they went into Capernaum, and straightway on the Sabbath day He entered into the synagogue, and taught. And they were astonished at His doctrine: for He taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes. And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, saying, Let us alone, what have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold your peace, and come out of him. And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him. And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? What new doctrine is this? For with Authority commands He even the unclean spirits, and they do obey Him. And immediately His fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.”
Mark 1:21-28.

You will find the same narrative in Luke, at the fourth chapter, from the 31st to the 37th verse. It will be handy for you to be able to refer to the second passage, from which I shall quote one or two matters. These two Evangelists commence the narrative by telling us of the singular authority and power which there was about the Savior's teaching—authority so that no man dared question His doctrine—power, so that every man felt the force of the Truths of God which He delivered. “They were astonished at His teaching, for His Word was with power.” Why was it that the Savior's teaching had such a remarkable power about it? Was it not, first, because He preached the Truth of God? There is no power in falsehood except so far as men choose to yield to it because it flatters them, but there is great force in the Truth of God—it makes its own way into the soul.

As long as men have consciences they cannot help feeling when the Truth is brought to bear upon them. Even though they grow angry, their very resistance proves that they recognize the force of what is spoken. Moreover, the Savior spoke the Truth in a very natural, unaffected manner—the Truth of God was in Him and it flowed freely from Him. His manner was truthful as well as His matter. There is a way of speaking the Truth so as to make it sound like a lie. Perhaps there is no greater injury done to the Truth of God than when it is spoken in a doubtful manner,

with none of the accent and emphasis of conviction. Our Savior spoke as the Oracles of God—He spoke the Truth of God as Truth should be spoken, unaffectedly and natural—as One who did not preach professionally, but out of the fullness of His heart.

You all know how sermons from the heart go to the heart. Moreover, our great Exemplar delivered His teaching as one who most heartily believed what He was speaking, who spoke what He knew, yes, spoke of things which were His own. Jesus had no doubts, no hesitancy, no questions—and His style was as calmly forcible as His faith. Truth seemed to be reflected from His face just as it shone forth from God in all its native purity and splendor. He could not speak otherwise than He did, for He spoke as He was, as He felt and as He knew. Our Lord spoke as One whose life supported all that He taught. Those who knew Him could not say, “He speaks after a right kind, but He acts otherwise.”

There was about His whole conduct and deportment that which made Him the fit Person to utter the Truth of God because the Truth was Incarnate and embodied and exemplified in His own Person. Well might He speak with great assurance when He could say, “Which of you convicts Me of sin?” He was as pure as the Truth which He proclaimed. He was not a speaking-machine, sounding out something with which it has no vital connection; but out of the midst of His own heart there flowed rivers of Living Waters. Truth overflowed at His lips from the deep well of His soul—it was in Him and, therefore, came *from* Him. What He poured forth was His own life, with which He was endeavoring to impregnate the lives of others. Consequently, for all these reasons, and many besides, Jesus spoke as One that had authority—His tone was commanding, His teaching was convincing.

Meanwhile, the Holy Spirit who had descended upon Him in His Baptism, rested upon Him, and bore witness by His Divine operations in the consciences and hearts of men. If Jesus spoke of sin, the Spirit was there to convince the world of sin. If He set forth a glorious righteousness, the Holy Spirit was there to convince the world of righteousness and when He told men of the coming judgment, the Holy Spirit was present to make them know that a judgment would surely come at which each of them must appear. Because of His unlimited anointing by the Spirit, our Lord spoke with power and authority of the most astonishing kind, so that all who heard Him were compelled to feel that no ordinary Rabbi stood before them!

That power and authority was seen all the more in contrast with the Scribes, for the Scribes spoke hesitatingly. They quoted authority; they begged leave to venture an opinion; they supported their ideas by the opinion of Rabbi this, although it was questioned by Rabbi the other—they spent their time in tying and untying knots before the people, quibbling about matters which had no practical importance whatever! They were wonderfully clear upon the tithing of mint and anise. They enlarged most copiously upon the washing of cups and basins. They were profound upon phylacteries and borders of garments. They were at home upon such rubbish which would neither save a soul, nor slay a sin, nor suggest a vir-

tue. While handling the Scriptures they were mere word-triflers, lettermen whose chief objective was to show their own wisdom.

Such attempts at oratory and word-spinning were as far as the poles asunder from the discourses of our Lord. Self-display never entered into the mind of Jesus. He was so absorbed in what He had to teach that His hearers did not exclaim, “What a preacher is this!” but, “What a Word of God is this!” And, “What new teaching is this!” The Word and the teaching with their admirable authority and amazing power subdued men’s minds and hearts by the energy of Truth! Men acknowledged that the great Teacher had taught them something worth knowing and had so impressed it upon them that there was no shaking themselves free of it.

Now, when they were beginning to perceive this authority in His Word, our Lord determined to prove to them that there was real power at the back of His teaching and that He had a right to use such authority, for He was Jesus Christ, the Son of God, clothed with Divine authority and power. It occurred to Him to display before their eyes the fact that as there was power about His speech, there was also power about *Himself*—that He was mighty in deed as well as in Word—and therefore He worked the miracle now before us. This most astounding deed of authority and power has been passed over by certain expositors as having too little of incident about it to be of much interest, whereas, to my mind, it rises, in some respects, above all other miracles and is certainly excelled by none in its forcible demonstration of our Lord’s authority and power!

It is the first miracle which Mark gives us. It is the first which Luke gives us. And it is, in some respects, the first of miracles, as I hope I may show before I have done. Remember, however, that the objective of the miracle is to reveal more fully the power and authority of our Lord’s Words and to let us see, by following signs, that His teaching has an Omnipotent force about it. This Truth is much needed at the present moment, for if the Gospel does not still save men—if it is still not “the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes”—then the attacks of skepticism are not easily repelled. But if it is still a thing of power over the minds of men—a power conquering sin and Satan—then they may say what they like, our only answer shall be to lament their doubts and to scorn their scorning! O for an hour of the Son of man! O where is He that trod the sea and bade the rage of Hell subside with a word?

I. First, then, to show forth this power and authority, Out LORD SELECTS A MOST UNHAPPY PERSON ON WHOM TO PROVE HIS POWER. This person was, first, *one possessed*. A devil dwelt within him. We cannot explain this fact any more than we can explain madness. Many things which happen in the world of our minds are quite inexplicable and, for that matter, so are many facts in the world of matter. We accept the recorded fact—an evil spirit entered into this man and continued in him. Satan, you know, is God’s ape—he is always trying to imitate Him, to caricature Him. So, when God became Incarnate, it occurred to Satan to become incarnate, too—and this man I may call, without any misuse of words—an incarnate devil! Or, at any rate, the devil was incarnated in him.

He had become like a devil in human form, and so was, in a certain manner, the opposite of our Lord Jesus. In Jesus dwelt the fullness of the Godhead bodily by an eternal union. In this man the devil dwelt for a while. Is not this an awful picture? But note the fact the man whom Jesus selects to prove His power and authority on was so far gone that the foul fiend controlled his mind and made a kennel of his body! I wondered, when thinking this over, whether a person of whom this man is the emblem would come into the congregation today, for I have seen such people. I have not dared personally to apply such an epithet to any man, but I have heard it applied—I have heard disgusted friends and indignant neighbors, worn out with the drunken profanity, or horrible filthiness of some man, say, “He does not seem to be a man, He acts like the Evil One.”

Or when it has been a woman, they have said, “All that is womanly is gone. She seems to be a female fiend.” Well, if such shall come within sound of my voice, or within reading of this sermon, let them take note that there is help, hope, and health—even for them! The power of Jesus knows no limit! Upon one who was the Devil’s own did our gracious Lord display His authority and power in connection with His Gospel teaching—and He is not less able *now* than then! This man, further, was *one whose personality was, to a great extent, merged in the Evil One*. Read the 23rd verse—“There was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit.” The rendering might be equally accurate if we read it, “A man in an unclean spirit.”

Do you see that? Not only a man *with* an unclean spirit in him, but a man *in* an unclean spirit! The phrase is simple enough, we speak of a man being in drink. For liquor to be in a man does not mean half as much as for a man to be in liquor. To give a more pleasant illustration, we speak of a person’s being “in love.” He is absorbed in his affection. We should not express a tenth as much if we said that love is in the man. A man can be in a rage, in a passion and even so was this man in an evil spirit! He was completely ruled by the Evil One. The poor creature had no power over himself, whatever, and was not, himself, actually responsible. In all that I say of him, I am not condemning him, but only using him as a type of human sin. Please do not forget this.

As far as the narrative is concerned, the man, himself, scarcely appears. It is the unclean *spirit* that cries out, “Let us alone! I know who You are.” These are words spoken by the man, but they are the sentiments of the demon who used the man’s organs of speech according to his own will. The man was scarcely a man with a will or wish of his own! In fact, you do not notice him till you see him flung down into the midst of the synagogue. You only see the proper man when the Savior raises him up before them all—unharmful and rational. Until the miracle is worked, the man is lost in the unclean spirit that dominates him. Have you ever seen such men? You say, sometimes, and you say truly, “alas, poor wretch! The drink has the mastery over him; he would never do such things as he does if he was not in drink.”

We do not mean to excuse him by such an expression—far from it! Or it may be the man is a gambler and you say, “He is quite overtaken by gam-

ing; though he impoverishes his wife and children, yet he is possessed by that spirit so completely that he has not the mind nor the will to resist the temptation." Or it may be that such another person is carried away with unchaste affections and we say, "How sad! There was something about that man which we used to like. In many points he was admirable, but he is so deluded by his bad passions that he does not seem to be himself." We almost forget the man and think mainly of the dreadful spirit which has degraded him lower than the beasts.

This is the type and emblem of such a person as that our Lord selected as the platform to show His power! I wonder whether this voice of mine will reach one of that sort? I sincerely hope that none of you are in such a condition, but if you should be, still there is hope for you in Christ Jesus! He is able to deliver such as are led captive at the will of Satan. Though you seem wholly given up and utterly abandoned to the dominion of a terrible sin to which you yield a willing obedience, yet Jesus can break off the iron yoke from your neck and bring you into the liberty of holiness! It will be an awful thing for you to die in your sins—and you surely will unless you believe in the Lord Jesus! But if you look to Him, He can make you pure and holy and create you anew!

Note further, for we must show you how our Lord selects the worst of cases, it was a man *in whom the evil spirit was at his worst*. Kindly look at the fourth chapter of Luke, verse 33, and you will see that in this man there was "the spirit of an *unclean* devil." Think of that! The devil is never particularly clean at any time—what must an unclean devil be? The ruling spirit in the man was not only a devil, but an unclean devil! Satan sometimes cleans himself up and comes out quite bright and shining, like an angel of light—but do not mistake him—he is still a devil, for all his pretended purity! There are glittering sins and respectable sins—and these will ruin souls—but this poor man had a disreputable demon in him, a spirit of the foulest, coarsest and most abominable order!

I suppose this foul spirit would incite its victim to filthy talk and obscene acts. The Evil One delights in sins against the Seventh Commandment. If he can lead men and women to defile their bodies, he takes special delight in such crimes. I doubt not that this poor creature was reduced to the most brutal form of animalism. I can well believe that in his body he was filthy. And that in his talk, in all the thoughts that hurried through his poor brain, and in all his actions, He went to a pitch of uncleanness upon which we need not permit a conjecture. If we were to say of such a character as this man pictured, "Let us turn out of the way," who could blame us? If we separated from such sinners, who could censure us?

We do not desire to go near to Satan in any shape, but most of all we would shun him when he is openly and avowedly unclean. You say, "We could not bear to hear the man speak. The very look of him is offensive." Nor is it strange that you should! There are women so fallen that modesty trembles to be seen in their company. And the feeling that makes you shudder at them is not to be condemned, so long as it does not spring from self-righteousness or lead to contempt. Yet, now, see it and wonder!

Our blessed Lord and Master fixed His eyes of old on the man with the unclean devil in him—and today He fixes His eyes of mercy on the basest and vilest of mankind, that in their conversion He may show the power and authority of His Word! Lord, do so at this moment! Let us see, today, the miracles of Your Grace. Bring the chief of sinners to repentance! Raise up those who are fallen to the lowest degree!

In this man there did not seem to be anything for the Lord to begin with. When you are trying to bring a man to the Savior, you look over him to see where you can touch him—what there is in him that you can work with. Perhaps he is a good husband though he is a drunk and you wisely attempt to work upon his domestic affections. If a man has some point of character upon which you can rest your lever, your work is comparatively easy. But with some people, you look over them from top to bottom and you cannot find a spot for hope to rest upon! They seem so utterly gone that there is neither reason, nor conscience, nor will, nor power of thought left in them. Of all this, the possessed man in the synagogue is a striking example, for when the Lord comes into the synagogue, the poor wretch does not begin to pray, “Lord, heal me.”

No, his first cry is, “Let us alone.” He does not seem to resist this cry of the evil spirit in him, though it was so much to his own injury. And he goes on to say, “What have we to do with You, You Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are.” The possessed man seems wholly lost in the dominating spirit of evil which permeated his entire being! Now I look upon this, though it is negative, as a very glaring part of the difficulty, for I do not care how far a man has gone in outward sin, if he has some point left in him of common honesty, or love to his family, or a generous heart, you know where to commence operations and your work is hopeful. Even leviathan has some crevice between his scales though they are shut up together as with a close seal.

And there is some joint in the harness of most men, even though mail may cover them from head to foot. But in those outcasts of whom I am now speaking, there is neither lodgment for hope, nor foothold for faith, nor more than a bare ledge for love! As the man in the synagogue was shut up within the demon’s influence, so are some men encompassed by their iniquity, blocked up by their depravity! Yet the great raiser up of the fallen can rescue even these! He is able to save unto the uttermost!

One other matter makes the case still more terrible—*He was a man upon whom religious observances were lost.* He was in the synagogue on the Sabbath and I do not suppose that this was anything unusual. The worst man of all is one who can attend the means of Grace and yet remain under the full power of evil. Those poor outside sinners who know nothing of the Gospel at all and never go to the House of God at all—for them there remains at least the hope that the very novelty of the Holy Word may strike them. But as for those who are continually in our synagogues, what shall now be done for them if they remain in sin? It is singular, but true, that Satan will come to a place of worship.

“Oh,” you say, “surely he will never do that?” He did it as long ago as the days of Job, when the sons of God came to present themselves before

the Lord—and Satan came, also, among them. The evil spirit led this unhappy man to the synagogue that morning and it may be he did so with the idea of disturbing the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ. I am glad he was there. I wish that all the slaves of sin and Satan would attend Sabbath worship. They are then within range of the Gospel gun and who can tell how many may be reached? Yet how sad it was that the influences of religious worship had altogether failed to rescue this man from his thrall-dom!

They sang in the synagogue, but they could not sing the evil spirit out of him. They read the lessons of the day in the synagogue, but they could not read the foul spirit out of him! They gave addresses from passages of Scripture, but they could not address the unclean spirit out of him. No doubt some of the godly prayed for him, but they could not pray the devil out of him. Nothing can cast out Satan but the Words of Jesus, Himself! His own Words, from His own lips, have power and authority about them, but everything short of that falls to the ground. O Divine Redeemer, let Your Omnipotence be displayed in turning great sinners into sincere penitents!

You see, then, what a terrible case the Master selected. I am sure I have not exaggerated. O the comfort which lies in the thought that He still chooses to save persons of whom this wretched being is the fit emblem and representative! O you vilest of the vile, here is hope for you!

II. Let us now look a little further and observe that OUR LORD ENCOUNTERS A FIRMLY-ENTRENCHED ENEMY. The evil spirit in this man had ramparted and bulwarked himself against the assault of Christ, for as I have said, *he had the man fully at his command*. He could make him say and do whatever he pleased. He had that man so at his command that he brought him to the synagogue that day and *he compelled him to become a disturber of the worship*. Quietness and order should be in the assemblies of God's people, but this poor soul was egged on to cry out and make horrible noises, so as to raise great tumult in the congregation. The Jews allowed all the liberty they could to persons possessed and, so long as their behavior was bearable, they were tolerated in the synagogues.

But this poor mortal broke through the bounds of propriety and his cries were a terror to all. But look, the Lord Jesus deals with this disturber! This is the very man in whom He will be glorified. So have I seen my Lord convert His most furious enemy and enlist unto His service the most violent of opposers. The Evil One *compelled his victim to beg to be left alone*—as we have it here, “Let us alone.” In the Revised Version of Luke, the same rendering is put in the margin, but in the text we have, “Ah!” While the Lord Jesus was teaching there was suddenly heard a terrible, “Ah!” A horrible, hideous outcry startled all and these words were heard—“Ah! What have we to do with You?” It was not the voice of supplication! It was distinctly the reverse—it was a prayer not *for* mercy, but *against* mercy!

The translation is, however, quite good if we read, “Let us alone.” Is it not a horrible thing that Satan leads men to say, “Do not trouble us with your Gospel! Do not bother us with religion! Do not come here with your

tracts! Let us alone!" They claim the wretched right to perish in their sins—the liberty to destroy their own souls! We know who rules when men speak thus—it is the Prince of Darkness who makes them hate the Light of God. Oh, my Hearers, do not some of you say, "We do not want to be worried with thoughts of death, judgment and eternity! We do not desire to hear about repentance and faith in a Savior! All we want of religious people is that they will let us alone."

This cruel kindness we cannot grant them! How can we stand by and see them perish? Yet how sad the moral condition of one who does not wish to be made pure! You would think it impossible for Jesus to do anything with a man while he is crying out, "Let us alone." Yet it was the *evil spirit in this man that our Lord met and overcame!* Is there not encouragement for us to deal with those who give us no welcome, but shut the door in our faces? The foul spirit *made the man renounce all interest in Christ.* He coupled him with himself and made him say, "What have we to do with You, You Jesus of Nazareth?" This was a disclaimer of all connection with the Savior. He almost resented the Savior's Presence as an intrusion! The voice seems to cry to Jesus, "I have nothing to do with You! Go Your way and leave me alone. I do not want You! Whatever You can do to save or bless me is hereby refused. Only let me alone."

Now, when a man deliberately says, "I will have nothing to do with your Jesus. I want no pardon, no salvation, no Heaven," I think the most of you would say, "That is a hopeless case. We had better go elsewhere." Yet even when Satan has led a man this far, the Lord can drive him out! He is mighty to save! He can change even the hardest heart. The unclean spirit did more than that—*He caused this man to dread the Savior,* and made him cry out, "Ah! Have You come to destroy us?" Many persons are afraid of the Gospel. To them religion wears a gloomy aspect. They do not care to hear of it for fear it should make them melancholy and rob them of their pleasures. "Oh," they say, "religion would get me into Bedlam! It would drive me mad." Thus Satan, by his detestable lies, makes men dread their best Friend and tremble at that which would make them happy forever!

A further entrenchment Satan had cast up—*he made his victim yield an outward assent to the Gospel.* "I know who You are," said the spirit, speaking with the man's lips, "the Holy One of God." Of all forms of Satan's devices, this is one of the worst for workers, when men say, "Yes, yes, what you say is very proper!" You call upon them and talk about Jesus and they answer, "Yes, Sir. It is quite true. I am much obliged to you, Sir." You preach the Gospel and they say, "He made an interesting discourse and he is a very clever man!" You buttonhole them and speak about the Savior—they reply, "It is very kind of you to talk to me so earnestly. I always admire this sort of thing. Zeal is much to be commended in these days." This is one of the strongest of earthworks, for the cannonballs sink into it and their force is gone. This makes Satan secure in his hold on the heart. Yet the Savior dislodged this demon and therein displayed His power and authority! Have I not proved my point? Jesus selected a most unhappy individual to become an instance of His supremacy over the powers of dark-

ness! He selected a most firmly-entrenched spirit to be chased out of the nature which had become his stronghold.

III. We have something more pleasant to think upon as we notice that **OUR LORD CONQUERED IN A MOST SIGNAL MANNER.** The conquest *began as soon as the Savior entered the synagogue* and was thus under the same roof with the devil. Then the Evil One began to fear! That first cry of, “Ah,” or, “Let us alone,” shows that the evil spirit knew his Conqueror. Jesus had not said anything to the man. No, but the Presence of Christ and His teaching are the terror of fiends. Wherever Jesus Christ comes in, Satan knows that he must go out. Jesus has come to destroy the works of the devil and the Evil One is aware of his fate. Now, as soon as one of you shall go into a house with the desire to bring the inmates to Christ, it will be telegraphed to the bottomless pit directly! Insignificant person as you may think yourself, you are a very dangerous person to Satan’s kingdom if you go in the name of Jesus and proclaim His Gospel.

The Lord Jesus Christ opened the Book and read in the synagogue and soon His explanation and teaching with authority and power made all the evil spirits feel that their kingdom was shaken. “I beheld,” said our Lord at another time, “Satan fall like lightning from Heaven,” and that fall was commencing in this “beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God.” The first token of our Lord’s triumph was the evident alarm which caused the evil spirit to cry out! The next sign was *that the devil began to offer terms to Christ*, for I take it that is the reason why he said, “I know who You are, the Holy One of God.” He did not confront our Lord with the hostile doubt, “If you are the Son of God,” but with the compliment, “I know who You are.”

“Yes,” the false spirit said, “I will allow this man to say his creed, and avow himself one of the orthodox and then, perhaps, I shall be let alone. The man is sound in his views and so my living in him cannot be a bad thing, after all. I am quite willing to admit all the claims of Jesus, so long as He will not interfere with my rule over the man.” The Evil One had read his Bible and knew how Daniel had called Jesus, “the Most Holy,” and so he calls Him “The Holy One of God.” “I am quite willing to admit it all,” says the devil, “only let me stay in the man. Do not meddle with me and this man’s lips shall confess the truth.” And so, when Jesus comes in His power, and men hear His Words, this deceitful compromise is often proposed and attempted! The sinner says, “I believe it all. I deny nothing. I am no infidel, but I mean to keep my sin and I do not intend to feel the power of the Gospel so as to repent and have my sin chased out of me. I will agree to the Gospel, but I will not allow it to control my life.”

However, this coming to terms shows that the fallen spirit knows his Destroyer. He could wish to be let down easily. He is willing to crouch, to cringe, to fawn and even to bear testimony to the Truth of God if he may but be allowed to keep in his den—that den a human soul. Liar as he is, it must go sadly against the grain for him to say, “I know who You are,” yet he will do this if he may be allowed to keep dominion. So when Jesus draws near to men’s minds, they say, “We will be orthodox, we will believe the Bible and we will do anything else You prescribe, only do not disturb

our consciences, interfere with our habits, or dislodge our selfishness." Men will accept *anything* rather than renounce their sin, their pride, their ease.

Then came our Lord's real work on this man. *He gave the evil spirit short and sharp orders.* "Silence! Come out!" "Jesus rebuked him." The word implies that He spoke sharply to him. How else could He speak to one who was maliciously tormenting a man who had done him no harm? The Greek word might be read, "Be muzzled." It is a harsh word. Such as an unclean tormenting spirit deserves. "Silence! Come out." That is exactly what Jesus means that the devil shall do when He delivers men from him. He says to him, "Come out of the man. I do not want pious talk and orthodox professing. Hold your peace and come out of him." It is not for evil spirits, nor yet for ungodly men, to try to honor Christ by their words. Traitors bring no honor to those they praise. Liars cannot witness to the Truth of God—or if they do, they damage its cause. "Be still," says Jesus. And then, "Come out."

He speaks as a man might call a dog out of a kennel, "Come out." "Oh," says the unclean spirit, "let me stay and the man shall go to Church! He shall even go to the sacrament." "No," says the Lord, "Come out of him. You have no right within him. He is Mine, and not yours. Come out of him!" I pray that the Master may give one of His mighty calls at this moment and speak to some poor besotted creature—and say to the devil in him, "Come out of him!" O Sinners, you must quit your sin or it will ruin you forever! Are you not eager to be rid of it? Now, see the conquest of Christ over the unclean spirit. *The fiend did not dare to utter another word,* though he went as near it as he could. He "cried with a loud voice." He made an inarticulate howling as he left the man. As he came out, he tried to do his victim some further injury, but in that he also failed.

He convulsed him and threw him down in the midst of the synagogue, but Luke adds, "He came out of him, having done him no hurt." From the moment when Jesus bade him, "Come out," his power to harm was gone! He came out like a whipped cur. See how Jesus triumphs! As He did this, literally, in the man in the synagogue, so He does it *spiritually* in thousands of cases. The last act of the fiend was malicious, but fruitless. I have seen a poor creature rolled in the dust of despair by the departing enemy, but he has soon risen to joy and peace. Have you not seen him in the Enquiry Room, weeping in the dismay of his spirit? But that has caused him no real harm—it has even been a benefit to him by causing him to feel a deeper sense of sin—and by driving him quite out of himself to the Savior.

Oh, what a splendid triumph this is for our Lord when out of a great sinner the reigning power of sin is expelled by a word! How our Master tramples on the lion and the adder! How He treads under His feet the young lion and the dragon! If the Lord will speak today with power to any soul, however vicious, or depraved, or besotted—his reigning sins shall come out of him and the poor sinner shall become a trophy of His Sovereign Grace!

IV. Lastly, THE SAVIOR RAISES BY WHAT HE DID A GREAT WONDERMENT. The people that saw this were more astonished than they generally were at the Savior's miracles, for they said, "What thing is this? What new teaching is this? For with authority commands He even the unclean spirits and they obey Him!" The wonder lay in this—here *was man at his very lowest*—he could not be worse! I have shown you the impossibility of anybody being worse than this poor creature was. I mean not that he was morally evil, for, as I have hinted before, the moral element does not actually enter into the man's case. But he is the instructive *picture* of the worst man morally—utterly and entirely possessed of Satan—and carried away to an extreme degree by the force of evil.

Now, under the preaching of the Gospel, the worst man that lives may be saved! While he is listening to the Gospel, a power goes with it which can touch the hardest heart, subdue the proudest will, change the most perverted affections and bring the most unwilling spirit to the feet of Jesus! I speak now what I know, because I have seen it in scores and hundreds of cases—that the least likely persons, about whom there seemed to be nothing whatever helpful to the work of Grace or preparatory for it—have, nevertheless, been turned from the power of Satan unto God! Such have been struck down by the preaching of the Gospel and the devil has been made to come out of them, then and there, and they have become new creatures in Christ Jesus! This creates a great wonderment and causes great staggering among the ungodly—they cannot understand it—and they ask, "What thing is this? And what new doctrine is this?" This is a convincing sign which makes the most obdurate unbeliever question his unbelief!

Notice, in this case, that *Jesus worked entirely and altogether alone*. In most of His other miracles, He required faith. In order to salvation there must be faith, but this miracle before us is not a parable of man's experience so much as of Christ's working—and that working is not dependent upon anything in *man*. When a man is commanded to stretch out His withered hand, or told to go to the Pool of Siloam and wash, He does something. But in *this* case the man is ignored. If he does anything it is rather to resist than to assist—the devil makes him cry, "Let us alone; what have we to do with You?" The Lord Jesus Christ here displays His Sovereignty, His power, and His authority—utterly ignoring the man, consulting neither his will nor his faith—but sovereignly bidding the fiend, "Be silent and come out."

The thing is done and the man is delivered from his thralldom before he has had time to seek or pray. The miracle seems to me to teach this—that the power of Christ to save from sin does not lie in the person saved—it lies wholly in Jesus Himself. And, further, I learn that though the person to be saved is so far gone that you could scarcely expect faith of him, yet the Gospel coming to him can bring faith with itself and do its own work, *ab initio*, from the very beginning. What if I say that the Gospel is a Seed that makes its own soil! It is a spark that carries its own fuel! It is a life which can implant itself within the ribs of death, yes, between the jaws of destruction!

The Eternal Spirit comes with His own light and life—and creates men in Christ Jesus to the praise of the glory of His Grace. Oh, the marvel of this miracle! I was never led more greatly to admire the splendor of the power of Christ to rescue men from sin than at this hour. And, to conclude, I notice our Lord *did nothing but speak*. In other cases He laid His hands upon the diseased, or led them out of the city, or touched them, or applied clay, or used spittle. But in this case He does not use any instrumentality—His *Word* is all. He says, “Hold your peace and come out of him,” and the unclean spirit is evicted. The Word of the Lord has shaken the kingdom of darkness and loosed the bonds of the oppressed! As when the Lord scattered the primeval darkness by the fiat, “Light be,” so did Jesus give the Word and its own intrinsic power banished the Messenger of Darkness.

Oh, you that preach Christ, preach Him boldly! No coward lips must proclaim His invincible Gospel! Oh, you that preach Christ, never choose your place of labor! Never turn your back on the worst of mankind! If the Lord should send you to the borders of Perdition, go there and preach Him with full assurance that it shall not be in vain! Oh, you that would win souls, have no preference as to which they shall be, or, if you have a choice, select the very worst! Remember, my Master’s Gospel is not merely for the moralist in his respectable dwelling, but for the *abandoned* and *fallen* in the filthy dens of the outcast! The all-conquering light of the Sun of Righteousness is not for the dim dawn, alone, to brighten it into the full blaze of day, but it is meant for the blackest midnight that ever made a soul to shiver as in the shadow of death!

The name of Jesus is high over all, in Heaven, earth and sky! Therefore let us preach it with authority and confidence—not as though it were an invention of men. He has said He will be with us and, therefore, nothing is impossible! The Word of the Lord Jesus cannot fall to the ground! The gates of Hell cannot prevail against it! The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands! The Lord shall bruise Satan under our feet shortly. I have gone to great lengths in this sermon because I would reach *sinners* who have gone to great lengths. Oh that they would accept this message of amazing mercy! He who has come to save sinners is God—and this is the surest ground of hope for the very worst! Hear this I pray you—it is the Lord your God who speaks to you—“Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.”

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark 1:1-28.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—679-80, 331, 440.**

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THE BEST HOUSE-VISITATION

NO. 1236

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 23, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“Now as soon as they had come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. But Simon’s wife’s mother lay sick of a fever, and they told Him about her at once. And He came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them. And at evening, when the sun did set, they brought unto Him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door.”
Mark 1:29 - 33.

WE see before us small beginnings and grand endings. One man is called by the voice of Jesus, and then another. The house in which they dwell is consecrated by the Lord's Presence and, by-and-by, the whole city is stirred from end to end with the name and fame of the Great Teacher. We are often wishing that God would do some great thing in the world. We look abroad for instruments which we think would be peculiarly fit and think of places where the work might suitably begin. It might be quite as well if we asked the Lord to make use *of us* and if we were believingly to hope that even our feeble instrumentality might produce great results by His power! And it would honor Him if we asked that *our abode* might become the central point from which streams of blessing should flow forth to refresh the neighborhood.

Peter's house was by no means the most notable building in the town of Capernaum. It was probably not the poorest dwelling in the place, for Peter had a boat of his own, or perhaps a half share in a boat with his brother Andrew. Or possibly he and Andrew and James and John were proprietors of some two or three fishing boats, for they were partners and they appear to have employed hired servants (Mark 1:20). Still Peter was not rich nor famous. He was neither a ruler of the synagogue, nor an eminent scribe, and his house was not at all remarkable among the habitations which made up the little fishing suburb down by the seashore.

Yet to this house did Jesus go. He had foreknown and chosen it of old and had resolved to make it renowned by His Presence and miraculous power. There hung the fisherman's nets outside the door—the sole escutcheon and coat of arms of one who was ordained to sit upon a throne and judge with his fellow Apostles the 12 tribes of Israel! Beneath that lowly roof Emmanuel deigned to unveil Himself—God With Us showed Himself! God with Simon. Little did Peter know how Divine a blessing entered his house when Jews crossed the threshold, nor how vast a river of mercy would stream forth from his door down the streets of Capernaum.

Now, dear Friend, it may be that your dwelling, though very dear to you, is not very much thought of by anybody else. No poet or historian

has ever written its annals, nor artist engraved its image. Perhaps it is not the very poorest cottage in the place in which you live. Still it is obscure enough and no one, as he rides along, asks, "Who dwells there?" or, "What a remarkable house that is!" Yet is there any reason why the Lord should not visit you and make your house like that of Obededom, in which the Ark abode, or like that of Zacchaeus, to which salvation came? Our Lord can make your dwelling the center of mercy for the whole region—a little sun scattering light in all directions—a spiritual dispensary distributing health to the multitudes around!

There is no reason except in yourself why the Lord should not make your residence in a city a greater blessing to it than the cathedral and all its clergy! Jesus cares not for fine buildings and carved stones. He will not refrain from coming to your cottage and, stopping there, He will bring a treasury of blessings with Him which shall enrich your house and shall ensure the richest of blessings to your neighbors. Why should it not be? Have you faith to pray, this moment, that it may be so? How much do I wish you would! More good, by far, will be done by a silent prayer now offered by yourself to that effect than by anything which can be spoken by me.

If every Christian here will now put up the supplication, "Lord, dwell where I dwell, and in so doing make my house a blessing to the neighborhood," marvelous results must follow! I am going to speak of three things this morning. The first is, *how Grace came to Peter's house*. Secondly, *what Grace did when it got there*. And thirdly, *how Grace flowed forth from Peter's house*.

I. HOW GRACE CAME TO PETER'S HOUSE. The first link in the chain of causes was that *a relative was converted*. Andrew had heard John the Baptist preach and had been impressed. The text which was blessed to him was probably, "Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." Andrew followed Jesus and, having become a disciple, he desired to lead others to be disciples, too. He began, as we all ought to begin, with those nearest to him by ties of relationship—"He first finds his own brother, Simon."

Beloved Friend, if you are, yourself, saved, you should look about you and inquire, "To what house may I become a messenger of salvation?" Perhaps you have no family of your own. I do not know whether Andrew had—he seems at the time of this narrative to have lived in a part of the same house as Peter—possibly they each had a house at Bethesda, which was their own city, but they lived together when they went on business to Capernaum. Perhaps Andrew had no wife and no children, I cannot tell. If it were so, I feel sure that he said to himself, "I must seek the good of my brother and his family."

I believe if we are really lively and thoughtful Christians, our conversion is an omen for good to all our kinsfolk. We shall not idly say, "I ought to have looked after my own children and household, if I had any, and having none I am excused." But we shall consider ourselves to be debtors to those who are kindred householders. I hope that some Andrew is here who, being himself enlisted for Jesus, will be the means of conquering for Jesus a brother and a brother's household. If there are no Andrews, I

hope some of the Marys and Marthas will be fired with zeal to make up for the deficiency of the men and will bring brother Lazarus to the Lord!

Uncles and aunts should feel an interest in the spiritual condition of nephews and nieces. Cousins should be concerned for cousins and all ties of blood should be consecrated by being used for purposes of Grace. Moses, when he led the people out of Egypt, would not leave a hoof behind, nor ought we to be content to leave one kinsman a slave to sin. Abraham, in his old age, took up sword and buckler for his nephew Lot, and aged Believers should look about them and seek the good of the most distant members of their families. If it were always so, the power of the Gospel would be felt far and wide!

The household of which Peter was master might never have known the Gospel if a relative had not been converted. This first link of Grace drew on another of much greater importance, namely, that *the head of the family became a convert*. Andrew sought out his brother and spoke to him of having found the Messiah—then he brought him to Jesus and our Lord at once accepted the new recruit and gave him a new name. Peter believed and became a follower of Christ and so the head of the house was on the right side. Heads of families, what responsibilities rest upon us! We cannot shake them off—let us do what we may!

God has given us little kingdoms in which our authority and influence will tell for the better or the worse to all eternity. There is not a child or a servant in our house but what will be impressed for good or evil by what we do. True, we may have no wish to influence them, and we may endeavor to ignore our responsibility, but it cannot be done—parental influence is a throne which no man can abdicate. The members of our family come under our shadow and we either drip poison upon them like a deadly upas tree, or else beneath our shade they breathe an atmosphere perfumed with our piety. The little boats are fastened to our larger vessel and are drawn along in our wake.

O fathers and mothers, the ruin of your children or their salvation will, under God, very much depend upon you! The gracious Spirit may use you for their conversion, or Satan may employ you as the instruments of their destruction. Which is it likely to be? I charge you, consider. It is a notable event in family history when the Grace of God takes up its headquarters in the heart of the husband and the father—that household's story will, from then on, be written by another pen. Let those of us who are the Lord's, gratefully acknowledge His mercy to us, personally, and then let us return to bless our household! If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth. Let us pray to be as clouds of Grace to our families. Whether we have only an Isaac and an Ishmael, like Abraham, or 12 children like Jacob, let us pray for each and all that they may live before the Lord, and that we and all that belong to us may be bound up in the bundle of life.

Note, further, that the third step in the coming of Grace to Peter's house was that after the conversion of the brother and Peter, *there were certain others converted who were partners and companions with the two brothers*. It is a great help to a man to find godly co-workers. If he must go fishing like Peter, it is a grand thing to have a James and a John as one's

partners in the business. How helpful it is to piety when Christian men associate, from day to day, with their fellow Christians and speak often, one to another, concerning the best things. Firebrands placed closely together will burn all the more freely. Coals laid in a heap will glow and blaze and so hearts touching hearts in Divine things cause an inward burning and a sacred fervor seldom reached by those who walk alone.

Many Christians are called to struggle hard for spiritual existence through having to work with unbelievers. They are not only sneered at and persecuted, but all sorts of doubts and blasphemies are suggested, and these materially hinder their growth in the heavenly life. When they are brought into this trial, in the course of Providence, they have need of great Grace to remain firm under it. Beloved Brother, if in your daily business you meet with none to help but many to hinder, you must live all the nearer to *God*, for you require a double measure of Grace. But if in the Providence of God you happen to be placed where there are helpful Christian companions, do not readily change that position, even though your income would be doubled thereby. I would sooner work with James and John for 20 shillings a week than with swearers and drunkards for sixty.

You who reside with really consistent Christians are much favored and ought to become eminent Christians. You are like flowers in a conservatory and you ought to bloom to perfection. You live in a lavender garden and you ought to smell sweetly. Prove that you appreciate and rightly use your privileged position by endeavoring to bring Grace to your house, that it may be altogether the Lord's.

A fourth and more manifest step was taken when *Peter and his friends were drawn closer to their Lord*. The good man of the house was already saved and his brother and companions, but by the Grace of God they rose to be something more than merely saved, for they received a call to a higher occupation and a nobler service. From fishermen they were to rise into fishers of men and, from rowing in their own boats, to become pilots of the boat of the Church. Peter was already a disciple, but he was in the background.

He must come to the front—he had been more a fisherman than a disciple, but now he must be more a disciple than a fisherman! He must now follow Jesus by a more open manifestation, a more constant service, a nearer communion, a more attentive discipleship, a fuller fellowship in suffering. And for this he must receive an inward preparation by the Divine Spirit—he was, in fact, by the call of his Lord and Master, lifted to a higher platform altogether, upon which he would abide and learn by the Spirit what flesh and blood could never reveal.

Beloved, what a difference there may be between one Christian and another! I have sometimes seen it with astonishment and though I would not go so far as to say that I have seen as much difference between one Christian and another as between a Christian and a worldling—for there must ever be between the lowest grade of life and the fairest form of death a wider distinction than between the lowest and highest grades of life, yet still it is a very solemn difference. We know some who are saved—at least we hope they are—but oh, how few are the fruits of the Spirit! How feeble

is the light they give! How slender is their consecration! How small is their likeness to Him whom they call Master and Lord!

Thank God, we have seen others who live in quite another atmosphere and exhibit a far different life. It is not a higher life—I hardly like that term—for the life of God is one and the same in all Believers, but it is a higher *condition* of the life, more developed, more vigorous, more influential! It is a condition of life which has a clearer eye and a nimbler hand, a quicker ear and a more musical speech. It is a life of health, whereas too many only know life as laboring under disease and ready to give up the ghost.

There are Mephibosheths among the king's favorites, but give me the life of Naphtali, "satisfied with favor and full of the blessing of the Lord." Or of Asher, of whom it is written, "let him dip his foot in oil." An owl is alive though it loves the darkness and a mole is alive though it is always digging its own grave. But give me the life of those who mount as on the wings of eagles! Give me those who live upon the fat things, full of marrow, and drink the wines on the lees well refined! These are the mightier of Israel whose joyous energy far surpasses that of the weary and faint. These are not they whose faith is feeble and whose love is cold.

Now, Peter and his friends, at this time, had been called from their fishing tackle and their boats to abide with Jesus in His humiliation and learn of Him the secrets of the Kingdom of God, which afterwards they were to teach to others. They had heard the Master say, "Follow Me," and they had left all at His bidding. They were in the path of fellowship, boldly pressing on at their Lord's command, so that now they had taken a grand stride in their Christian career. And that is the time, Beloved, when men bring blessings on their houses. Oh, I could sigh to think of the capacities which lie dormant in some Christians! It is sad to think how their children might grow up and, with God's blessing, become pillars in the House of the Lord and perhaps ministers of the Gospel, under the influence of an earnest consecrated father and mother.

But instead, the dullness, the lukewarmness, the worldliness and the inconsistencies of parents are hindering the children from coming to Christ, hampering them as to any great advances in the Divine Life, dwarfing their stature in Grace and doing them lifelong injury! Brothers and Sisters, you do not know the possibilities which are in you when God's Spirit rests upon you! But this much is certain, if you, yourselves, are called into a higher form of Divine Life, you shall then become mediums of blessing to your relatives. Your husband, your wife, your child, your friends and the whole of your family shall be the better for your advance in spiritual things.

Now, observe further, that at this time when the Lord was about to bless the household of Peter *He had been further instructing Peter and Andrew and James and John*, for He took them to the synagogue and they heard Him preach. A delightful sermon it was—a sermon very full of energy and very unlike the discourses of ordinary preachers, for it had authority and power about it. And it was when they came home from synagogue, after hearing such a sermon, that the blessing descended upon the house.

The best of us need instruction. It is unwise for Christian people to be so busy about Christ's work that they cannot listen to Christ's Words. We must be fed or we cannot feed others. The synagogue must not be deserted if it is a synagogue where Christ is present. And oh, sometimes when the Master is present, what a power there is in the Word of God! It is not the preacher's eloquence. It is neither the flow of language, nor the novelty of thought. There is a secret, quiet influence which enters into the soul and subdues it to the majesty of Divine Love. You feel the vital energy of the Divine Word and it is not *man's* word to you, but the quickening voice of God sounding through the chambers of your spirit and making your whole being to live in His sight!

At such times the sermon is as manna from Heaven, or as the bread and wine with which Melchisedec met Abraham! You are cheered and strengthened by it and go away refreshed. My dear Brother, my dear Sister, *then* is the time to go home and take your Lord home with you! Peter and his friends had so enjoyed the great Teacher's company at the synagogue that they begged Him to abide with them. And so they went straight away with Him from the synagogue into the house. Can you do that, this morning? If my Lord shall come and smile upon you and warm your hearts, do not lose Him as you go down the aisles! Do not let Him go when you reach the streets and are walking home! Do not grieve Him by chit-chat about worthless matters, but take Jesus home with you!

Tell Him it is noon and entreat Him to tarry with you during the heat of the day. Or if it is in the evening, tell Him the day is far spent and beseech Him to abide with you. You can always find some good reason for detaining your Lord. Do as did the spouse of old, when she said, "I found Him whom my soul loves. I held Him, and would not let Him go until I had brought Him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me." Is there not a sick one at home? Take Jesus home to her! Is there no sorrow at home? Entreat your Lord to come home to help you in your distress! Is there no sin at home? I am sure there is. Take Jesus home to purge it away!

But, remember, you cannot take Him home with you unless you first have Him with you *personally*. Labor after this, then—be not satisfied without it. Resolve to be His servant—that I trust you are—to be His servant walking in the light as He is in the light, and having fellowship with Him. That I hope you are. And then, having gone so far, resolve that you will take Him to your friends and to your kinsfolk, so that your whole house may be blessed. I desire, before I pass to the second point, to lay great stress upon this.

We have an old proverb that charity must begin at home. Let me shape it into this—piety must begin with *yourself*. Before you ask salvation for your family, lay hold upon it for yourself! This is not selfishness. Indeed, the purest benevolence makes a man desire to be qualified to benefit others. And you cannot be prepared to bless others unless God has first blessed you. Is it selfishness which makes a man stand at the fountain to fill his own cup, when he intends to hand that cup round for others to drink? Is it selfishness for us to pray that in us there may be a well of wa-

ter springing up unto everlasting life when our second thought is that out of us may flow rivers of living water whereby others may be replenished?

It is not selfishness to wish that the power of the Lord may be upon you, if you long to exercise that power upon the hearts of others for their good! Look you well, Brothers and Sisters, to yourselves! You cannot bless your children—you cannot bless your households—till, first of all, the anointing of the Lord rests upon yourselves. O Spirit of the living God, breathe upon us that we may live yet more abundantly, and then shall we be chosen vessels to bear the name of Jesus to others!

II. Now we take the second step and show WHAT GRACE DID IN PETER'S HOUSE WHEN IT CAME THERE. The first effect that Grace produced was, *it led the family to prayer*. The four friends have come in and no sooner are they in than they begin to speak with the Master, for the text tells us, "And they told Him about her at once"—of Peter's wife's mother who lay sick. I like that expression—I do not know whether you have noticed it—"And they told Him about her *at once*." Luke tells us, "They besought Him." I have no doubt Luke is right, but Mark is right, too. "They told Him about her at once." It looks to me as if it taught me this—that sometimes all I may do with my sore affliction is just to tell my own dear Lord about it and leave it to His loving judgement to act as He sees fit.

Have you any temporal trouble or sickness in the house? Tell Jesus about it! Sometimes that is almost as much as you may do. You may beseech Him to heal that dear one, but you will have to say, "Not as I would, but as You will," and so will feel that all you may do is to tell Jesus the case and leave it with Him. He is so gentle and loving that He is sure to do the kindest thing—and the thing which is most right to do. Therefore we may be content to "tell Him about her at once." With regard to *spiritual* things, we may press and be very importunate, but with regard to *temporal* things, we must draw a line and be satisfied when we have told Jesus and left the matter to His discretion.

Some parents may, when their children are ill, plead with God in a way which shows more of nature than of Grace, more clearly the affection of the mother than the resignation of the Christian, but such should not be the case. If we have committed our way unto the Lord in prayer and meekly told Him of our crisis, it will be our wisdom to be still and watch till God, the Lord, shall speak. He cannot be either unjust or unkind, therefore should we say, "Let Him do what seems good to Him." Very likely this good woman, Peter's wife's mother, was, herself, a believer in Christ, but I venture to take her case as typical of spiritual success, not at all wishing, however, to insinuate that she was *spiritually* sick, for she may have been one of the most devoted of Christians.

But now, suppose *you* take Jesus Christ home with you. Dear Friend, if you have an unconverted one in the house, you will immediately begin to "tell Him about her at once." "They told Him about her at once." That is a very simple type of prayer, is it not? Yes, in some respects it is and, therefore, I urge you to use it. Do not say you cannot pray for your child—you can tell Jesus about her. Do not say you cannot plead for your brother or your sister—you can go in a childlike manner and tell Jesus about the

case, and that is prayer. To *describe* your needs is often the best way of asking for help.

I have known a person say to a man of whom he needed aid, "Now, I am not going to ask you for anything. I only want you to hear my story and then you may do as you like." And if he wisely tells his story, the other begins to smile and says, "You do not call that, asking, I suppose?" Tell Jesus Christ all about it! His view of the matter will be to your advantage. This elementary form of prayer is very powerful. The police do not allow people to beg in the streets, but I do not know that there is any law to prevent their sitting down in attitudes of misery and exhibiting holes at the knees of their trousers and bare feet staring through shoes with no soles!

I saw that exhibition this morning. The man was not begging, but it was wonderfully like it and answered the purpose better than words. To tell Jesus Christ about your unconverted relative or friend, may have in it a great deal of power. It may be, in fact, one of the most earnest things you could do because the absence of spoken pleas and arguments may arise from your being so burdened with anxiety that you cannot find words to say, "Lord relieve me." But you stand there and sigh under the burden, and those groans, which cannot be uttered, act as urgent pleas with the pitiful heart of Christ and cry aloud in His ear, "Lord, help me!"

Telling Jesus is a simple mode of praying, but I think it is a very believing mode. It is as if they felt, "We only need to tell the case and our blessed Lord will attend to it. If we tell Him of her, there shall be no need to clasp His knees and cry with bitter tears for pity upon the fevered one, for as soon as He hears, so loving is His heart, He will stretch out His hand of power." Go to Jesus, then, dear Friends, in that spirit, about your unconverted friend or child and, "Tell Him about her."

There is something very instructive about this particular case because we are apt to think we must not tell the Lord of the more common troubles which occur in our family, but this is a great error. Too common? How can the commonness of an evil put it out of the list of proper subjects for supplication? The seaboard of Capernaum in which Peter dwelt is said, by travelers, to be a peculiarly damp, marshy, feverish place—no end of people had the fever just around the house. But Peter and Andrew did not argue that they must not tell the Lord because it was a common disease. Do not let Satan get an advantage over you by persuading you to keep back commonplace troubles or sins from your loving Lord.

Beloved, if He counts the hairs of your heads. If not a sparrow falls to the ground without His knowledge. Depend upon it, your most common trouble will be of concern to Him. "In all their afflictions He was afflicted." It is a great mistake to think you may not carry to your Redeemer the ordinary trials of the day. Tell Him, yes, tell Him all! If your child is only a common sinner. If there is no unusual depravity in him. If your son has never grieved you by perverseness. If your daughter has always been amiable and gentle, do not think there is no need to pray! If it is only a common case of the fever of sin, yet it will be deadly in the end unless a balm is found—therefore tell Jesus of it at once! Do not wait till your son

becomes a prodigal, pray at once! Do not delay till your child is at death's door, pray now!

But sometimes a difficulty arises from the other side of the matter. Peter's wife's mother was attacked by no ordinary fever. We are told it was "a great fever"—the expression used implies that she was burning with fever—and she was intensely debilitated, for she was laid or prostrate. Now the devil will sometimes insinuate, "It is of no use for you to take such a case to Jesus. Your son has acted so shamefully, your daughter is so willful—such a case will never yield to Divine Grace in answer to prayer." Do not be held back by this wicked suggestion! Our Lord Jesus Christ can rebuke great fevers and He can lift up those that are broken down and rendered powerless by raging sin! "Wonders of Grace to God belong." Go and tell Jesus of the case, common or uncommon, ordinary or extraordinary, even as they told Jesus about her.

Now notice one or two reasons why we think they were driven to tell Jesus about her. I know the great reason, but I will mention the little ones first. I fancy they told Jesus about her, at first, because it was a contagious fever and it is hardly right to bring a person into a house that has a great fever in it without letting them know. If there is a great sin in your house, you may, perhaps, feel in your heart, "How can Jesus Christ come to my house while my drunken husband acts as he does?" Perhaps, more sorrowful still, the wife drinks in secret and the husband, who sees it with deep regret, says, "How can I expect the Lord to bless us?"

Or perhaps some great, sad sin has defiled your child and you may well say, "How can I expect the Lord to smile on this house? I might as well expect a man to come into a house which is infected with typhus fever." Never mind. Tell Jesus all about it and He will come, fever or no fever, sin or no sin. I think, perhaps, they told Him about her because it would be some excuse for the scantiness of the entertainment they were likely to give. What could Peter and Andrew do at preparing a meal? The principal person in the house was ill and could not serve. We poor men are miserable hands at spreading a table—we need a Mary or a Martha to help us, or a Peter's wife, or a Peter's wife's mother. And so they say, with long faces, "Good Master, we would gladly entertain You well, but she who would delight to serve You is sick."

How often a family is hindered from entertaining Christ through some sick soul that is in the house. "O Lord, we would have family prayer, but we cannot—the husband will not permit it." "Lord, we would make this household ring with Your praises, but we should make one tenant of it so angry that we are obliged to be quiet." "We cannot give You a feast, Good Lord. We have to set before You a little as best we can, or the house would grow too hot to hold us." Never mind. Tell Jesus about it and Jesus will come and sup with you, and turn the impediment into an assistance.

Moreover, the faces of the friends looked so sad. I dare say while in the synagogue Peter had almost forgotten about his wife's mother. He had been so pleased with the preaching, but when he reached home the first question, when he crossed the door was, "How is she now?" The servants replied, "Alas, Master, the fever rages terribly." Down went Peter's spirits! A cloud came over his countenance and he turned to Jesus and cried,

“Good Master, I cannot help being sad, even though You are here, for my wife’s mother, whom I love much, is sick of a fever.” That sadness may have helped Peter to “tell Him about her.”

But I think the grand reason was this, that our blessed Lord had such a sympathetic heart that He always drew everybody’s grief out of them. Men could not keep anything to themselves where He was! He looked like one who was so much like yourself, so much in all points tried like as you are, that you could not help telling Him. I exhort you, that love my Lord, to allow His sweet sympathy to extract from you the grief which wrings your heart! Let it enable you to tell Him of your unconverted relative. He endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself, He loved the souls of men and died for them! Therefore He can tenderly enter into the anxieties which you feel for rebellious souls hardened in sin. Therefore, “tell Him about her.”

I think, however, that they told Him about her because they expected that He would heal her. Tell Jesus about your child, or your friend who is unconverted, and expect that He will look upon them with an eye of love. He can save. It is like He to do it. He delights to do it! It will honor Him to do it! Expect Him to do it and tell Him the case of your unregenerate friend this very day. May I put the question all round? You have, each of you, probably, someone left in your family unsaved and you have said, “I was in hopes that this one would be converted.” Have you ever told Jesus about her or about him? Oh, I hope you can answer, “Yes, I have many times.” But it is just possible you have not made a set business of it.

Begin now, and go upstairs and take time every day to tell the Lord every bit about Jane, or Mary, or Thomas, or John. Wrestle with God, if need be, all night long, and say, “I will not let You go except You bless me.” I do not think that many of you will be very long with that trouble to carry when you have, in that manner, told it to your Lord. This is what they did when Jesus came. *Immediately* they told Him about her, for the word, “Anon,” is really, in the Greek, “immediately.” Directly Christ went in they told Him about her and directly Christ went to heal her.

So the first work Divine Grace worked in the house was it led them to pray and, secondly, *this led the Savior to heal their sick*. He went into the chamber, spoke a word, gave a touch, lifted up the sick woman and she was restored! And the wonderful thing was she was able to rise from the bed, immediately, and wait upon them! This never occurs in the cure of a fever, for when a fever goes, it leaves the patient very weak and he needs days and weeks, and sometimes months, before he recovers his strength. But the cures of Christ are perfect! And so, at once the patient rose and ministered unto them. Thus we see that when Divine Grace came into that house and worked its cure *it quite transformed the family*.

Look at the difference. There is the poor woman, the patient, shivering and then, again, burning, for the fever is on her. She can scarcely lift hand or foot. Now look at her! She is busily serving, with a smiling face! No one is more happy or healthy than she! So when God’s Grace comes, the one who has been the object of the most anxiety becomes the happiest of all! The sinner, saved by Sovereign Grace, becomes a servant of the Lord! The patient becomes the hostess! Note the change in the rest of

them. They had all been heavy of heart, but now they are rejoicing! There is no anxiety on Peter's face now! Andrew is no more troubled—the skeleton in the closet has disappeared, the sickness has been chased out—and they can all sing a gladsome hymn!

The house is changed from an hospital to a church, from an infirmary to a banqueting hall! The Lord, Himself, seems changed, too, if change can come over Him, for, from a physician going carefully into a sick room, He comes forth a King who has subdued an enemy and they all look upon Him with wonder and reverence as the mighty Lord, victorious over invisible spirits! Now, I pray God that our household may be transformed and transfigured in this way! I pray that our Luz may become a Bethel, our valley of Achor, a door of smile, our sons of perverseness, a seed to serve the Lord! If you, yourself, get a fullness of Grace, the next step is for your *families* to receive of the boundless fullness till not one shall be soul-sick at home, but all shall be happy in the Lord and all shall serve Him!

III. When Mercy had once entered, let us see HOW GRACE FLOWED FORTH FROM THE HOUSE. They could not keep the fact hidden indoors that Peter's wife's mother was cured. I do not know who told about it. Had it been in our day I should have thought it was one of the servants over the railings of the backyard, where they are so fond of talking. Or perhaps some friend who came in and was told the news. Perhaps the doctor called round to see the good woman and, to his utter astonishment, found her up and about the house. He goes to his next patient and says, "My business will soon come to an end! My patient who had fever yesterday has been made perfectly whole by one, Jesus, a Prophet of Nazareth!"

Somehow or other it oozed out. You cannot keep the Grace of God a secret! It will reveal itself. You need not *advertise* your religion—*live* it—and other people will talk about it. It is good to speak for Christ whenever you have a fair opportunity, but your *life* will be the best sermon. The story went through the town and a poor man on crutches thought to himself, "I will hobble out to Peter's house!" Another who used to creep through the streets on all fours quietly whispered, "I will go to Peter's house and see." Others, moved by the same impulse, started for the same place. Many who had sick ones said, "We will carry our friends to Peter's house." So the house grew popular and, lo, around the door there was such a sight as Peter had never seen before! It was a great hospital! All down the street patients were clamoring to see the great Prophet. "And all the city was gathered together at the door."

And, now, what do you say about Peter's house? We began with calling it a humble lodging where a fisherman dwelt. Why, it has become a royal hospital, a palace of mercy! Here they come with every kind of sickness! Lepers, cripples, the lame and withered—and there is the loving Master—moving here and there till He has healed every one of them! The streets of Capernaum rang that night with songs of joy! There was dancing of a new kind in the streets, for the lame man was leaping! And the music that accompanied the dancing was of a new kind, too, for then did the tongues of the dumb sing, "Glory be to God." It was out of Peter's *house* that all this mercy came!

Ah, Brothers and Sisters, I would to God He would look first on Peter and then on Peter's wife's mother, or Peter's child or relative, and then on the whole house, and then from the house cause an influence to stream forth and to be felt by all the neighborhood! "It cannot be so with *my* home," says one. Why not, dear Brother? If you are straitened at all, you are not straitened in God—you are straitened in yourself. "But I live in a place," says one, "where the ministry is lifeless." The more reason why you should be a blessing to the town. "Oh, but I live where many active Christians are doing a great deal of good." The more reason why you should be encouraged to do good, too. "Oh, but ours is an aristocratic neighborhood." They need the Gospel most of all. How few of the great and mighty are ever saved!

"Oh, but ours is such a low neighborhood." That is just the place where the Gospel is likely to meet with a glad reception, for the poor have the Gospel preached to them and they will hear it. You cannot invent an excuse which will hold water for a moment—God can make your house to be the center of blessing to all who dwell around it—if you are willing to have it so. But the way to have it so I have described. First, you must, yourself, be saved, yourself called to the highest form of life, yourself warmed in heart by the Presence of your Master.

Then your family must be blessed and after that the widening circle around your habitation. Oh that it might be so! I know some Brethren who, wherever they are, are burning and shining lights. But I know some others who are lamps, but it would be difficult to say whether they are lit or not. I think I see a flicker, but I am not sure. Brothers and Sisters, aspire to be abundantly useful. Do you wish to live ignoble lives? Do you wish to be bound to the loathsome carcass of a dead Christianity? I abhor lukewarmness from my very soul—let us have done with it! We have a very short time in which to bear our testimony. We shall soon be at rest—let us tell the world while we can! The shadows are lengthening, the day is drawing to a close. Up! Brethren, up! If you are to bring jewels to Jesus, if you are to crown His head with many crowns, up, I pray you, labor for Him while you can!

There are some here who are unconverted. I have not spoken to them, but I have tried to set you all speaking to them. Will you do it, or shall I keep you to hear the second half of my sermon? No, I will trust you to deliver it and may God bless you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark 1:14-45.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—89 (PART II), 391, 394.**

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A LIFT FOR THE PROSTRATE

NO. 2980

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 22, 1906.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 19, 1875.

“And he (that is, Jesus) came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.”
Mark 1:31.

PETER'S wife's mother was sick of a very terrible fever. It was no ordinary one, such as, we are told, is common in the district when she lived, but “Luke, the beloved physician,” as Paul calls the Evangelist, tells us that “Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever.” You know that it is the nature of fever to leave the patient prostrate even when the disease departs, but Jesus Christ not only intended to heal Peter's wife's mother and to heal her at once, but He also meant that she should be so completely cured that she should have no lingering prostration. Christ's cures are always perfect cures, not partial ones! He does not cause the fever to go and permit the prostration to remain—He takes away both the fever and the prostration!

It is possible that the poor patient had almost given up all hope of recovery and, probably those who were around her would also have despaired if they had not had faith in the Great Physician, the Lord Jesus Christ. It was, therefore, for her encouragement and for theirs, also, that our Lord bent over the bed where the fevered woman lay, took her by the hand, thus cheering her by showing that He was not afraid to come into contact with her and then, gently lifted her up. And she, yielding to the kindly gesture, rose and sat up—no, not merely sat up, but left the bed, being so perfectly restored that she began at once to minister to them as the housewife whose duty it was to care for their comfort!

I hope that there are many in this congregation whom Jesus Christ means to bless, who are, at present, in a state of utter prostration. They are so despondent that their spirits sink almost to the point of despair. They cannot believe that there is mercy for them—they have relinquished all hope of that. They did, at one time, have some measure of hope, but it is all gone. They are in the prostrate condition of Peter's mother-in-law and they need Christ to do for them the two things which He did for her. First, *He came into contact with her* and, secondly, *He gently lifted her up and completely restored her.* May He do the same for you!

I. Our first concern, in looking after prostrate souls, is to tell them that JESUS CHRIST COMES INTO CONTACT WITH THEM.

You think, my poor distressed Friend, that Jesus Christ will have nothing to do with you. You have read and heard about Him, but He

seems to you to be a long way off and you cannot reach Him. Neither does it seem at all probable to you that He will ever come your way and look with pity upon you. Now, listen.

In the first place, *Jesus Christ has come into contact with you*, for you are a member of the human race of which Jesus Christ also became a member by His Incarnation. Never forget that! While it is perfectly true that Christ “is over all, God blessed forever,” yet it is equally true that He deigned to be born into this world as the Infant of an earthly mother, and that He condescended to live here under the same conditions as the rest of us—suffering the same weakness, sickness, sorrow and death as we do—for our sakes. Never think of Jesus, I pray you, as though He were only a spirit, at whose Presence you have cause to be alarmed! But think of Him as a man like yourselves, eating and drinking as others did—not a recluse, shutting Himself away from sinners—but living as a Man among men, the perfect specimen of Manhood, the Man, Christ Jesus, for thus He has come near to you! You would not be afraid to speak to one of your fellow men—then do not be afraid to speak to Jesus! Tell Him all the details of your case, for He was never a Man of a proud and haughty spirit. He was not one who said, “Stand by, for I am holier than you!” No, He was a man with a great heart of love. He was so full of attractiveness that even children came and clustered around His feet! And when His disciples would have driven them away, He said, “Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the Kingdom of God.” He never repelled even the very worst of mankind when they approached Him—He longed to gather them to Himself. He wept over the guilty city of Jerusalem and said, “How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would not!” Come, then, distressed spirit, and see, in the very fact that Jesus is Immanuel, God With Us, that He has come near to you and laid His hand upon you!

“Ah,” you say, “I can comprehend that He has come near to *men*, but then, I am not merely a man, but a sinful man.” Yes, and *Jesus has come near to sinful men* and His name is called Jesus because He is the Savior from sin! His work in this world was not to seek saints, but, “to seek and to save that which was lost.” My Master’s errand was not to the good, the excellent, the righteous, but to the evil, the unholy, the unrighteous! He said, “They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” If He did not come to save sinners, why did He come as a Sacrifice? Sacrifice is only required where there is sin—an Atonement is only needed where there is guilt! Christ comes to you, a guilty sinner, and He lays His hand upon you, even as He laid it upon Peter’s wife’s mother when she was sick of that great fever!

Do I hear you say, as in a whisper—as if you were afraid that anyone else might hear you, that you are not only a sinner, but a great sinner—that you have sinned beyond the ordinary guilt of the common mass of mankind—that there are some points in which the crimson of your guilt is of a deeper dye than that of any other man? My Friend, let me assure you that *Jesus Christ came to save the chief of sinners*. Do you see Him

on the Cross, enduring those indescribable pangs of death? Can you hear His death cries and that soul-piercing shriek, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" and still think that such a death as that was on behalf of little sinners' trifling offenses, mere peccadilloes or mistakes? Ah, no! the Son of God came to give His life a Ransom for many great sins and many great sinners! The grandeur of the Atonement of Christ is a proof that its objective was the removal of sin, however great that sin may be! The Son of God is Himself the Savior of sinners! There must, therefore, be a colossal greatness about sin to need the *Son of God* to remove it, and to need that the Son of God *should die* before the more than Herculean labor of putting sin away could be performed. But, having put away sin by the Sacrifice of Himself, He is now able to save even the greatest of sinners.

That Jesus has come into contact with great sinners is very clear, or, as you read the record of His life, you see that His preaching was constantly aimed at just such characters. If you take a survey of *His usual congregations, you will discover that they were largely made up of such characters*. The Pharisees said, with contempt, but no doubt with truth, "This Man receives sinners and eats with them." Just at that very time, we have the record, "Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners to hear Him." His preaching evidently attracted them and He never seems to have been surprised that it did, nor to have expressed His disgust that He should have drawn around Him such a low and degraded class of hearers! No, but on the contrary, He said that He was sent to seek lost sheep till He found them, and to welcome the wandering prodigal when He came back to His Father's house. Our Lord Jesus Christ, from the character of His congregation and the tone of His preaching, evidently came to this world on purpose to come into contact with the very worst of sinners! I want you to realize, dear Friend, that my Lord Jesus Christ is a Man, and that He is not a Man who has come to look for congenial companions who might be worthy to be numbered among His acquaintances—He has come to look after uncongenial men and women to whom He may bring the blessings of salvation! He has come not to be ministered unto, but to minister—not to receive, but to bestow blessings. His purpose in being here, in this world, is not to pick out, here and there, a noble and notable character, but to seek after souls that need His Grace and to come to them and bless and save them! So He has, in this respect, come near to you!

Remember that commission of His, which He gave to His disciples a little while before He went back to Heaven—"Go you into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." On another occasion, after His Resurrection, He reminded them "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." That is, beginning at the very place where the people lived who had crucified Him! "Begin where they live who have stained their hands with My blood. Begin with them and then go to every other creature in the whole world, and say to sinners in every part of the globe, 'Whoever believes on the Son of God has everlasting life.'" In giving that

commission, our Lord Jesus Christ reached His hand across the centuries that He might touch you—and I have come here to obey His commission by preaching the Gospel to you, for you are included in the term, “every creature.” So Jesus Christ comes into contact with you through the preaching of His Word at this very moment!

There is one solemn thought that I should like you to think of. It is this—having entered this House of Prayer and having heard the Gospel, as you will have done before this service is over, *the Lord Jesus Christ has so come into contact with you that you will never lose the impression of that contact, whether you are lost or saved.* If you are lost, you will have the additional guilt of having rejected Him—neither can you ever clear yourself of that guilt, do what you may. Your ears have heard the Word of God so that if you do not receive it, you will be numbered among those to whom the Gospel came, but who judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life—like some of those to whom the Apostle Paul preached and, therefore—it shall condemn you. For, to everybody who hears the Gospel there is a savor in it—to some, it is a savor of death unto death—and to others a savor of life unto life. There is not a man, woman, or child who has understanding enough to know what we mean by preaching the Gospel, who will be able to go out of this House of Prayer without receiving some token of contact with the Lord Jesus Christ. Either His blood will be upon you to save you, or else there will be realized in you that dreadful curse which the Jews invoked upon themselves, “His blood be on us, and on our children,” which abides upon them as a curse unto this day! You shall either be cleansed from guilt by the blood of Jesus, or else you shall be guilty of rejecting Him—and so putting yourselves in the same category as the Jews who rejected Him and who nailed Him to the accursed tree. One way or other, you can be sure of this, “The Kingdom of God is come unto you.” It is a solemn fact to have to state this, but so it is. Jesus Christ has, in some way or other, put His hand upon you and He is now in contact with you.

II. Leaving that point, however, I feel joy in passing on to the next one. When Jesus grasped the hand of Peter’s wife’s mother, HE THEN BEGAN TO GENTLY LIFT HER UP. She, willingly enough, responded to His touch and, by at once recommencing her household duties, proved that she was perfectly healed!

Now, there are some poor, prostrate, desponding souls, who need somebody to give them a lift. And I would that the Lord, even while I am preaching, might take some of you by the hand and lift you up. My objective will be to mention a few things which may help to give you a lift. You need to be saved. You long to be saved, but you fear that you never will be, and it is that very fear which keeps you from being saved! If you could but hope, your hope would be realized—but you do not feel as if you dared even to hope! Now, give me your hand and let me try to give you a lift.

First, *remember that others who were very like what you now are, have been saved.* Do you not know some people who used to be very much in the condition in which you are at the present moment? If you do not, then find out the nearest Christian friend among your acquaintances—

tell him what you regard as the peculiarity of your condition—and I feel almost certain that he will say to you, “Why, that is not anything peculiar! That is just how I was before I found the Savior.” If you do not find it so with the first Christian person whom you meet, you ought not to be surprised, because, of course, all Christians are not alike, but I feel sure that you will not have talked to many Christian people before you will find that what you consider to be very remarkable peculiarities in yourself will turn out to have been very common, for a great many other people have been in exactly the same state! I challenge you, who are very despondent, to see whether you cannot find some who once were as you now are, who have been saved—and when you do find them, the reasoning is very clear. If A is saved, and B is like A, then why should not B also be saved?

“Ah,” you say, “I have very few Christian acquaintances of whom I can make enquiry.” Very well, then, I will give you another simple test. *Take your Bible and look up the cases of conversion and see whether the saved ones were not very much like you now are.* And if that should not satisfy you, turn to the various promises that the Lord Jesus has made to seeking sinners and see whether there is not one that is suited to such a sinner as you are. I think that you cannot go far in an honest examination of the promises of the Gospel without saying, “Well, now, it really does look as if I could squeeze in there. At any rate, I think that description exactly meets my case.” I should not be surprised if you meet with some text, of which you will say, “Why, that looks as if it had been written entirely for me! It is such an accurate description of my forlorn condition.” Well, then, if you find that Christ has invited such sinners as you are, and that according to the Inspired record, He has saved such as you are, why should not you also have hope? Have you been a thief? Remember that—

***“The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day.
And there may you, though vile as he,
Wash all your sins away!”***

Have you been a sinner in a more immodest sense? Remember that there was a woman who was “a sinner” in that very sense, who washed Christ’s feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Have you been a swearer? I should think that Simon Peter had been a great swearer before he was converted, or else he would not have used oaths and curses so freely when he denied his Master! Yet, in spite of that old habit breaking out again, Simon Peter was not only saved, but he became one of the most useful servants of our Lord Jesus Christ! I might continue to mention all sorts of sinners and say to you, “Such a one as you now are has been saved, and has gone to Heaven—is not that a lift for you?” I pray the Lord to make it so! Others like you have been saved, so why should not you, also, be saved? Therefore, be of good courage, poor prostrate sinner!

Let me give you another lift. *Salvation is all of Divine Grace.* That is to say, it is altogether of God’s free favor. God does not save any man because there is anything in him that deserves salvation. The Lord saves

whomever He wills to save! This is one of His grand prerogatives of which He is very firm. His own declaration is, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." And Paul's conclusion from that declaration is, "So then, it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy." Well, now, if it is God's will to bestow His mercy upon sinners according to His own Sovereign Grace in Christ Jesus, irrespective of anything good in them, why should He not show mercy to you? You have been looking for some reason in yourself why He should show mercy to you, but you cannot find any such reason—and I can tell you that there never was any reason in sinners, themselves, why God should save them! He has always saved them for reasons known only to Himself which He has never revealed—and which He tells us He will not reveal. He asks, like the householder in the parable, "Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with My own?" And so He will! No man has any right to salvation. We have all forfeited all claims of merit, so, when the Lord gives His mercy, He gives it wherever He pleases. Why, then, should He not give it to you as well as to anybody else?

I may also remind you that *faith in Jesus Christ always saves the soul*—simply trusting Him, as we were singing just now—

***"Only trust Him! Only trust Him!
Only trust Him now!
He will save you! He will save you!
He will save you now!"***

There have been a great many who have put this to the test and they have found that faith in Christ has saved them. There are some people, nowadays, who tell us that this is immoral doctrine—they say that we ought to preach up good works. We *do* preach up good works in the most forcible manner, for we say that faith in Jesus Christ prevents men from living in sin! We do not preach good works as a requirement of salvation. That would be as foolish as children who take flowers and stick them in the ground, and say, "Oh, what a beautiful garden we have!" We plant the seeds of the flowers, or the roots of the flowers of Grace, for faith in Jesus Christ is the seed and the root of virtue—and he that believes in Jesus Christ is saved, not merely from the punishment of sin, but from the sin itself—from the power of sin, from the habit of sin! If it is still said that this is immoral doctrine, let the thousands of men and women who have been saved from drunkenness, lasciviousness and profanity by simply believing in Jesus, rise up and enter their solemn protest against the wicked charge that there is anything immoral in this teaching! Immoral doctrine? Why, it has brought *millions* to Christ and millions to Heaven! If this Doctrine could truly be called immoral, then God, Himself, might be charged with being immoral, for this Gospel assuredly came from Him and it is nothing short of blasphemy to call it immoral! Hear this Gospel, Sinner! You have no good works and you will never have any until you repent of sin and trust the Lord Jesus Christ! If you try to have any, they will all break down because the motive at the back of those supposed good works will be this—you will do them in the hope of thereby saving yourself. What is that but sheer selfishness—dead selfishness, which cannot be acceptable with God? But, Sirs, if you will

only trust the Lord Jesus Christ, you shall receive the immediate pardon of your sin and with that pardon will come heartfelt gratitude to Him who gives you the pardon! And with that gratitude will come intense hatred of everything that He hates, and fervent love of everything that He loves. *And then you will do good works!* But from what motive? Why, out of gratitude to Him—and not being the result of selfishness, they will really be good works, for they will be done with the view of pleasing God—not as a means of getting something for yourself.

Every soul, then, that has believed in Jesus has found everlasting life and deliverance from sin. Very well, then, you also will find the same blessings if you now trust wholly in Him. They did “only trust Him”—do the same—“only trust Him now.” They dropped into the arms of Christ, He caught them and holds them fast. Do the same—drop now into the arms of Christ who stands beneath you, ready to catch you—and you shall most certainly be saved! This is Christ’s own declaration, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” The belief is to come first, and the baptism is to follow as the confession of the belief. Christ commanded His disciples to observe that order—“Go you, therefore, and teach (or, make disciples of) all nations, baptizing them, (those who are made disciples), into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” This is what Christ Himself said. So, if you have believed in Him and have been baptized on profession of that faith, you are saved, just as myriads of others have been saved! I have thus tried to give you a further lift and I pray the Lord Jesus to take you by the hand and lift you up, you fevered and prostrate patients who cannot rise without His power being poured into you!

Let me try to give you a lift in another way. I think I hear you say, “O Sir, I know the Gospel but, somehow, I cannot get hold of it. I know what praying means, but I cannot pray as I would. I know what repenting is, but I cannot repent as I would.” Here is a text which will, I hope, give you a lift—“The Spirit also helps our infirmities.” Can you not look up to Heaven and ask that blessed Spirit to help you? What, though your heart is hard as the nether millstone, the Spirit of God can make it soft in a moment! Though it seems impossible for you to believe in Jesus, the gracious Spirit is ready right now to enable you to believe in Him! If now you seem to be the very reverse of what you ought to be, the blessed Spirit can completely change your nature! He can open blind eyes and unstop deaf ears and take away the stony heart out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh! I know that you cannot help yourself, but I also know that the Holy Spirit can help you, for nothing is impossible to Him! Come, heavenly Wind, and breathe upon these dry bones! Quicken them into life and activity so that where there was nothing but death, there may be a living army to serve the living Lord! And, blessed be His holy name, He will do it for, wherever there is a true, heart-felt prayer for His Presence, He is already present, dictating that prayer! No one really prays until the Holy Spirit teaches him how to pray! So, you who are like Peter’s wife’s mother, have we been able to lift you up yet? May the Lord’s

almighty hand be stretched out to you, for ours alone will be too weak to lift you up!

Here is another lift for you. Notwithstanding all that I have said, you still think that you deserve to be lost and that you must be lost, *for your being punished will show the Justice of God*. That is true, as far as it goes, but let me tell you something else that is equally true. *Your being saved will glorify the Mercy of God* and “He delights in mercy.” I recollect the time when I thought that if Jesus Christ saved me, it would be the biggest thing He ever did. I thought so then, and I do not know but that I think so now. And I feel sure that when I get to Heaven, I shall still have that idea. And if you, dear Friend, think the same concerning yourself, I expect you are about right! Jesus Christ, however, loves to do big things. He delights to show great mercy to great sinners and if there is one man here who seems not to have any good point about him, but whom everybody knows as being a renowned sinner—well, I pray the Lord to save you, my Friend, because then the devils in Hell will hear of it and they will be angry! And I like them to be angry for such a reason as that! And the wicked men with whom you have been accustomed to associate, will hear of it and they will say, “What? Old Jack a Christian? Harry turned Baptist? I never would have believed such a thing to be possible!” We like to have just such converts as these and my Lord likes to have them, too, for such victories of Sovereign Grace cause a great stir in the camp of the Philistines—and they begin to tremble, and cry, “Who will be the next to turn?” And so the Kingdom of Heaven grows, Satan’s fame gets dimmed and the fame of Jesus of Nazareth grows brighter and brighter!

“Ah,” says one, “I never looked at it in that light, for, certainly, if Jesus Christ were to save *me*, it would be the biggest wonder on earth!” Then I think it is very likely that He *will* save you, for He delights to do great wonders and to work mighty marvels! How do you think that a doctor gets to have great fame? There are some physicians in London who have so many patients waiting to see them that the poor sufferers have to wait hours before they can get in. How did those doctors get to be so celebrated? If I were to tell you they got all their fame through curing chapped hands, sore fingers and warts, you would say, “Nonsense! Nobody gets fame through doing such little things as that!” How did they get their honor, then? Oh, there was a poor man who was near death. He had been given up by several other doctors, but this one was enabled by God to heal him. Or there was a man whose leg was about to be amputated and this doctor said, “I will save that man’s limb.” Or there was a complicated case of internal disease and this doctor said, “I understand that case,” and he cured it—and everybody talked about the wonderful cure—and now, everybody goes to that doctor! He became famous through curing bad cases—one really bad case brought him more credit than 50 minor maladies might have done. So is it with the Great Physician and you big sinners with such a complication of disorders that nobody but Christ can cure you! My Lord and Master has a wondrous way of healing those who appear to be incurable! And when He cures such cases as yours, Heaven and earth and Hell hear of it and it makes

Him famous. So I would encourage you to hope that He will save even you, though you are as prostrate as Peter's wife's mother was before Christ took her by the hand and lifted her up. May my gracious Lord and Master help you to take encouragement from what He has done for others who were in as sad a state as you are now in!

Though your case seems so hopeless to you, or, if you have any hope of recovery, you feel that it will take a long while, I want to remind you that *Jesus Christ pardons sinners in an instant*. A man is as black as midnight one moment, and as bright as noonday the next! Jesus Christ lifted up upon the Cross has such mighty power that if a man had all the sins of mankind resting upon him, yet, if he did but look to Christ by faith, his sins would all be gone in a moment! Did you ever see that wonderful sculpture which represents the Laocoon and his sons with the monstrous snakes twisted all about their limbs? Well, though you should be another Laocoon and sinful habits should be twisted all about you, so that it would be impossible for you to free yourself from them, yet, if you look to Jesus by faith, those monsters shall drop dead at your feet! Jesus Christ, the Seed of the woman, sets His foot upon the monster, Sin, and breaks its head. And if you believe in Jesus, that pierced foot of His shall crush the life out of your sins and you shall be delivered from their power. Oh, that you might have Grace to trust in Jesus for instantaneous pardon, instantaneous regeneration, instantaneous deliverance from nature's darkness into God's most marvelous light! If you are as prostrate as Peter's wife's mother was, you ought not to lie still any longer when Christ is ready to give you such a lift as that!

But if you do, I bid you remember, poor desponding, despairing sinner, that *He who has come to save such as you are is a Divine Savior*. What a deathblow this ought to be to every doubt! You say that there is a difficulty in your case. Yes, there is always a difficulty where there is only *finite* power. There always will be difficulties where there are creatures with limited capacities. But here is the Creator—the Creator in human flesh—He who made the heavens and the earth has come down to live here as a Man and to die upon the Cross in order that He may save sinners! What difficulty can there be in the Presence of Omnipotence? Talk not of difficulty in the Presence of the almighty God! He has but to will anything and it is done—to speak and it stands fast forever! Jesus Christ, my Lord and Master, is able to save unto the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him, and He is able to save them with the greatest possible ease. What an easy thing it was for Christ to bless men, women and children when He was here upon earth! A poor woman came in the crowd and just *touch'd the hem of His garment*—she could not get near enough to touch Him—but she just touched the hem of His garment with her finger. There was contact between her and Christ through her finger and the hem of His garment and she was made whole that very instant! There were other cases in which Christ healed people who were miles away from Him at the time. “Go your way,” He said to the nobleman, “your son lives.” He had not been near him! He could work the miracle just as easily at a distance.

O Sinner, nothing is impossible with God! If you are sick and near death, Jesus Christ is able to save you! If I saw you at the very gates of Hell—so long as you had not actually crossed the threshold—if I saw you trembling there and you said to me, “Can Jesus Christ save me now?” I would reply, “Yes, my Brother, look unto Him and He will take you from the gates of Hell to the gates of Heaven in a single moment!” He said when on earth, “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men,” and it is just as true today! “Come, now, and let us reason together, says the Lord; though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”—

***“Only trust Him! Only trust him!
Only trust Him now!
He will save you! He will save you!
He will save you now!”***

Oh, that He would bless this word to you! Christ is God as well as Man. He suffered on the Cross in the place of sinners, but He lives after the suffering has been accomplished! He lives as the Savior who is mighty to save and whoever will take Him as his or her own Savior shall find it to be so this very hour!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 1:14-35.**

Verse 14. *Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.* When one servant of God is laid aside, it is a call to the rest to be the more earnest. So after John the Baptist was put into prison, “Jesus came into Galilee.” Sometimes a loss may be a gain—and if the loss of John was the means of bringing out Jesus, certainly both the Church and the world were the gainers! “Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.”

15. *And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand: repent you, and believe the Gospel.* It is clear, from this passage, that our Lord exhorted men to repent and to believe the Gospel. There are some who profess to be His followers who will not allow us to do this. We may teach men, and warn them, they say, but we must not exhort them to repent and believe! Well, as the contention of these people is not in accordance with the Scriptures, we are content to follow the Scriptures and to do as Jesus did—so we shall say to sinners, “Repent you, and believe the Gospel.”

16-18. *Now as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishermen. And Jesus said unto them; Come you after Me, and I will make you fishers of men. And straightway they forsook their nets and followed Him.* The Gospel minister is like the fisherman with a net. I have sometimes heard the comparison drawn as though the Gospel fisherman had a hook and a line, which he has not. His business is not to entice a fish to swallow his bait but to cast the net all round him and lift him, by His Grace, out of the element in which he lies in sin, into the boat where Christ still sits, as He sat in the olden days in the boat on the sea of Galilee. To shut the

sinner up to faith in Jesus Christ—that is the main work of the true Gospel fisherman!

19, 20. *And when He had gone a little farther, He saw James, the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother, who also were in a ship mending their nets. And straightway He called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after Him.* They never had cause to regret that they did! Whatever they left, they were abundantly rewarded. They had a rich reward here on earth—and they have a far richer reward in Heaven. Whatever a man gives up for Christ is a blessed investment which will, sooner or later, bring him good interest!

21, 22. *And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the Sabbath day He entered into the synagogue, and taught. And they were astonished at His doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.* He did not do as the scribes did, who made a great parade of learning by quoting this Rabbi and the other. Jesus said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you.” He spoke as one who felt that He had authority to speak in His own name, and in the name of God, His Father. This method of teaching quite astonished the Jews. I wish that those who now hear the Gospel might be astonished at it, and be astonished into the belief of it by the power with which it comes home to their consciences and hearts.

23, 24. *And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying, Let us alone.* How often that is still the cry of sinners, “Let us alone. Why do you not hold your own views and let us alone?” Yes, the devils and those whom they control, still say, “Let us alone.” But it is a part of the Gospel to attack that which is not the Gospel—and it is as much the duty of the minister of the Gospel to denounce error as to proclaim the Truth of God. If we do so, the old cry will still be heard, “Let us alone. Let us alone!”

24, 25. *What have we to do with You, You Jesus of Nazareth? Are You come to destroy us? I know You who You are, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him.* He did not want any testimony from the devil. When a man of ill character once praised Plato, the philosopher said, “What can I have done wrong that such a fellow as that speaks well of me?” So when the devil bore testimony to the Divinity of Christ, “Jesus rebuked him.”

25, 26. *Saying, hold your peace, and come out of him. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him.* For, if Satan must come out of a man, he will do him as much mischief as he can before he departs. His wrath is all the greater because his time is so short—

**“He worries whom he can’t devour,
With a malicious joy.”**

27. *And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority commands He even the unclean spirits, and they do obey Him.* It was the authority of His preaching which first astonished them. And then the authority with which He worked His miracle and subdued the world of demons. Blessed be God! Christ has not abdicated His

authority! He is still the great Messenger of God, full of Divine authority to save men and to deliver them from the power of Satan.

28-30. *And immediately His fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee. And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and soon they told Him of her.* Christ was a house-to-house missionary, as well as an open-air preacher. There is much good to be done by those who know how to visit and to look after individual cases. There is great good to be done in that way—as well as by dealing with mankind in the bulk.

31-35. *And He came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them. And at evening, when the sun set, they brought unto Him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And He healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils: and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew Him. And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.* His hard day's work probably ran on far into the night. Yet, "a great while before day," He was up at the sacred work of supplication! The more work we have to do with men for God, the longer we ought to be at work with God for men. If you plead with men, you cannot hope to prevail unless you first plead with God. And, inasmuch as our Lord had great success the day before, it teaches us that the greatest success does not release us from the necessity of still waiting upon God. If God has given you much, my Brother, go with your basket and ask for more. Never stop prayer. Increase your spiritual hunger and God will increase the richness of the gifts He will bestow upon you!

**HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—429, 499.
AND FROM "SACRED SONGS AND SOLOS"—64.**

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

BEFORE DAYBREAK WITH CHRIST NO. 1769

A SERMON DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 14, 1884,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And in the morning, rising up a great while before day,
He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and
there prayed. And Simon and they that were with
Him followed after Him. And when they had
found Him, they said unto Him, All men
seek for You. And He said unto them,
Let us go into the next towns, that I may
preach there also for therefore came I forth.
And He preached in their synagogues throughout
all Galilee, and cast out devils.”
Mark 1:35-39.*

A WONDERFUL day was closed and crowned by a wonderful evening. Capernaum had been exalted to Heaven that day, for deeds worthy of Heaven had been worked in her. Within the synagogue the power and authority of the new Teacher had been seen, but at the close of the Sabbath, when the people felt more free to lay their sick before Him, His Divine Majesty was glorified before all in the open streets of the little town. Galilee had never before seen such a day of preaching, or such an eventide of healing. “At even, when the sun did set, they brought unto Him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And He healed many that were sick of different diseases, and cast out many devils.”

Surely this day was worthy to take a front rank among “the days of the Son of Man.” A very wonderful evening! Did not they think it so who had long grown to their beds, but suddenly found themselves walking, leaping and praising God? Those must have thought it so who beheld their pining relatives restored to health and vigor. Even devils must have felt it to be so, as they fled pell-mell into the deep! Assuredly the people of the city must have been greatly excited—on the housetops, in the market and in every lane and alley the one theme of talk must have been the new Rabbi—His strange teaching and His unrivalled miracles!

After our Lord’s sermon in the synagogue He held an inquiry-meeting in the street—He had no other assembly room. There He led them to look to Him and obtain healing; and as this went on, crowds of persons were present confessing what the Lord had done for them. One might be content to die after being present at such a scene! After that evening was over and men went home, they said, “It was a very extraordinary occasion. What new teaching is this? What power is this? We have never seen its like.” It was a day from which to date an era—Heaven and earth and Hell were all

affected by it! That pure teaching opening the mystery of the Kingdom; that healing energy setting forth the power of the redeeming King! No wonder that all tongues were fluent and all lips eloquent, when there was so Divine a subject to enlarge upon!

Children and unlettered peasants could repeat the chronicle of that day of Grace. They needed not to expatiate, much less to exaggerate, for, in truth, it was a heavenly day and grew even brighter as the shadows fell. Those evening hours were as the hands of Mercy, all bedecked with rings and jewels of heavenly charity—Love was then in her bridal attire and miracles were the bespangled ornaments of her beauty! Do you not think that the wonderful evening was followed by an equally wonderful morning? That Sunday morning, as we now call the first day of the week, was it not equally notable? Remember the grand excitement of the day and its long eventide—and then observe the hallowed devotion of the coming dawn.

The Preacher and Miracle-Worker had been worked up to a high pitch and we should not have wondered had He needed lengthened rest. But instead thereof we read, “Rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.” Jesus has taken such necessary sleep as He desired and He wakes. It is still dark and all the inhabitants of the house are asleep. He very quietly and noiselessly steals out of the chamber and finds His way into the street. And you see Him go along, alone, till He has left the narrow roadway and reached the open fields. The gleaming of the morning has hardly come—the dawn is scarcely gray. It is, “a great while before daylight,” and the darkness hangs all around with its friendly veil.

But Jesus knows His way—He had been down those streets healing the sick—and out in the open He is at home, for He is acquainted with solitude and the lines upon the face of sleeping Nature are familiar to Him. He turns to the most solitary hillside. Yonder is a hollow. He who enters that recess is quite out of sight. Jesus has passed into that hidden place and there, in the darkness, He kneels. He cries! He supplicates! He speaks with God! He prays! Is this His rest after a toilsome day? Is this His preparation for coming labor? It is even so! That early morning of prayer explains the evening of power. As Man, He had not possessed that wonderful power over human minds if He had not perpetually communed with God. And now that His day’s work is done and the marvelous evening is over, all is not ended—a life-work still remains before Him and, therefore, He must pray.

He feels a necessity that there should be more marvelous evenings—that there should be further displays of power—and therefore the Great Worker draws near, again, to the Source of strength, that He may, afresh, gird up His loins for that which lies before Him. Dear Friends, there is always a connection, even if we do not see it, between that great crowd on Sunday, and the pleadings of the saints—a most intimate connection between the flocking converts of the ministry and those secret prayers which follow and precede it. There is such a connection that the two cannot be parted! God will not send great blessings in the way of open conversion if

secret prayer is neglected. Let the preacher or the Church fail to pray and God will refuse to bless!

Yes, and after conversions, unless there is, again, special prayer presented by the Lord's servants, much that looked like blessing may turn out to have been but the semblance of it and future blessings may be withheld. If I could impress my heart on every syllable, and baptize every word with my tears, I could not too earnestly entreat you to be, above all things, earnest in prayer! I delight to think of our Lord as praying before He did a great thing—it was His custom so to do! Perhaps the early morning prayer of our text preceded the Sermon on the Mount. I am not quite sure about that fact, though certain of the writers of Harmonies are assured of it. But I am quite certain that this special supplication followed an evening of miracles and it seems to teach us that when *God is with us*, we should have even more anxiety than ever to *keep* Him with us.

When the blessing has really come and souls are being saved on all sides, then are we to redouble our cries to Heaven, that the merciful Presence may be retained and enjoyed to a still higher degree! Fresh from the wonderful successes of that miraculous night, the Christ of God goes, on the Sunday morning, to open the gates of the day with the uplifted hands of His prayers! Prayer should be our companion at all times. Pray when you are pining for a blessing. Pray when you have newly *obtained* a blessing.

Now, we shall look at four points of our Savior's Character as we see them in these few verses. Let us hear the melody of four of those golden bells which adorn the garments of our great High Priest. First, we are caused to observe—*Prayer by Him intensely esteemed*. Secondly, *popularity weighed in the balances and lightly valued*. Thirdly, *practical duty followed out*, for when they said, "All men seek for You," He said to them, "Let us go into the next towns that I may preach there also for therefore came I forth." The fourth point is well worthy of attention. Here it is—*preaching always to the forefront with Him*. Whatever He does *not* do, He *does* preach and, though He works miracles such as casting out devils, He evidently regards all bodily cures as subsidiary to His main work.

"Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also for therefore came I forth." We shall put the four things together and see how the power and the preaching hang upon one another, and how the despising of popularity is fitly conjoined with the intense purpose to carry out His life-work.

I. First, then, let us think a little about our Lord in His private communion with the Father—PRAYER—HOW INTENSELY IT WAS ESTEEMED BY HIM! He rose up early that weekday morning and retired to a solitary place to pray, *to teach us not to keep our religiousness for Sabbath days*, or retain our prayerfulness for one day of the week. Many Jews in Christ's day said, "We have been to synagogue." And when going to synagogue was over, their religion was over, too. At this day we are surrounded by persons whose godliness is circumscribed within the four walls of their synagogue, their church, their tabernacle, or whatever else they like to call it. Religion means to many the observance of certain ceremonies at

stated times. They put on different clothes and tread another floor—and then their religion begins.

Do they put on different garments on the Sabbath because they are different men, or because they wish to be thought so? There is such a thing as a Sunday religion and he that has it will be lost. The religion which only lives in our religious assemblies—how can it serve our turn? Shall we be at the meeting all the week? Shall we die in the place of worship? In all probability we shall die in our beds at home and, therefore, we need a *household* godliness. Prayer on Sunday is well enough, but far better is the supplication which continually waits upon God. Our Sunday prayer should abound, but the weekdays equally need prayer and should be saturated with it. Grace is for streets and shops as well as for sanctuaries.

It is well when God rules our thoughts as much in the shop as in the Prayer Meeting—when we are as much under the governance of our Lord Jesus Christ when we are busy in the family as when we are sitting in the Church of God. Oh, let us see to this! Our Master gives us a good example, here. It was not upon the Sabbath morning that He woke so early—it was on the first day of the week, not yet rendered sacred by His Resurrection, that our Lord left His bed and wended His way through the shadows to find a place for fellowship with the Father!

You observe that in His prayer *He desired very much to be alone*. He was anxious that His prayer might not be seen of men. Woe unto that man whose devotion is observed by everybody and who never offers a secret supplication! Secret prayer is the secret of prayer, the soul of prayer, the seal of prayer, the strength of prayer! If you do not pray alone, you do not pray at all. I care not whether you pray in the street, or in the church, or in the barracks, or in the cathedral—but your heart must speak with God in secret—or you have not prayed. “You, when you pray, enter into your closet and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father which is in secret; and your Father which sees in secret shall reward you openly!” The less prayer is observed on earth, the more it is observed in Heaven. That which is carefully concealed from men is seen of the Father.

I suppose, too, that our Lord loved to be alone *that He might pray aloud*. It is not necessary to pray with the voice—it is sometimes highly undesirable that you should pray aloud—but yet, as a rule, you will find it greatly advantageous to yourself to use your voice as well as your mind in prayer. I speak what I have often proved. I am accustomed to pray without uttering a single sound, but I find a relief and a stimulus in occasionally “crying aloud.” In a lone spot where I shall not be heard, I find it an intense delight to pour out my heart aloud, using words and exclamations whereby the spirit expresses itself with freedom and force. I think that the Savior, who was intensely Human, felt much rest in the unrestrained pouring out of His heart and soul before His Father. He was supremely Human as He was certainly Divine—and I do not doubt that it was a comfort to Him to awaken the hills with His praises, startle the glens with His groans and put a tongue into every bush and tuft by His strong crying and tears.

All Nature was akin to Him and the desert places were meet chambers for His great soul, wherein as in His own house “the Holy Child Jesus”

might speak with the Father face to face. I commend to you, who would attain to high communion with the Eternal that, as often as you can, you get so far afield as to be able to pray aloud and use the unrestrained voice in prayer. "My voice shall You hear in the morning, O God." David continually speaks of crying with his voice unto God. It is not essential, but it is often helpful. Our blessed Master desired to get alone because there He would feel free to express Himself—to *tell out His very secrets to the great Father*. His prayers in solitude! They must have been marvelous communications! How familiar with God and yet how lowly! How simple, yet how spiritual! How full! How deep! How intense!

Perhaps you have desired that they had been recorded, but you need not that I remind you that the world, itself, could not have contained all the books that might have been written! Be grateful for those that are written and believe that Infinite Wisdom is as much displayed in the concealment of a part of our Lord's life as in the publication of the rest of it. Perhaps those prayers of His were such as we might not hear. Every saint pleads, at times, in forms of passionate petition which nobody else should hear but God. When we are quite alone, we may dare to say things which might seem too venturesome for any other. I am glad that we have not many of Luther's prayers, for I conceive that the great bold German often said things to his God which a common Christian might not dare to say. That which was perfectly reverent in him might have savored of presumption if you or I had ventured upon it! That which the Lord accepted from Luther, whom He had placed in so singular a position and constituted in so remarkable a way for his work, might have been offensive if spoken by another.

The Master's prayers were a free, outspoken talk with the Most High. His heart was open to the Lord as yonder river to the shining of the moon above it. Certainly, our Lord Jesus Christ rose up early and went alone in the dark to pray, *because He loved to put prayer first of all*. He would go nowhere till He had prayed. He would attempt nothing till He had prayed. He would not cast out a devil, He would not preach a sermon, He would work no cure, however necessary, however profitable, until, first of all, He had drawn near to God. Take good heed unto yourselves, my Brothers and Sisters, that you follow the same rule. Look no man in the face till you have seen the face of God. Speak with none till you have spoken with the Most High. Go not to your labor with your loins ungird with the girdle of devotion, lest you fail therein. Take not to running till you have, in prayer, laid aside every weight, lest you lose the race.

We cannot, we must not, think of entering upon a day, or upon an enterprise, without first saying, "Bring here the ephod: let us ask counsel of the Lord!" We can do nothing without our God! Let us attempt nothing without Him. So the Savior rises a great while before day and gets alone with His God, that for Him prayer might perfume the morning dew and sweeten the first breath of the dawn. *There was about the Savior an intense desire to meet with God*—to commune with the Father. Herein there is a living likeness between His prayers and ours, but yet His devotions must have been very different from ours because He had no sin to confess as we have. A large part of our communion with God must lie in our con-

fession of sin, in our expression of personal weakness and in our pleading the righteousness of our Divine Redeemer.

But this Blessed One had no sins to admit before the Host High and no weakness to lament, for in Him was neither sin nor tendency to sin. I can conceive that much of His devotion was shown in converse with the Father, when His blessed mind, forever in agreement with the mind of God, spoke to God and God revealed Himself to Him. Intimate communion must have been the main ingredient of the Savior's prayers. Some of the sweetest devotion Christians ever enjoy does not lie in asking anything of the Father, but in the enjoyment of the Father, Himself. Two friends in closest communion do not spend their time in mutual explanations and setting things straight—nor even in asking favors of each other—they proceed to heart-to-heart conversation, known only to those who have enjoyed the like.

We are always in need and, therefore, our daily devotion must consist largely of petitions, but yet we are, by Divine Grace, the children of the Lord, and the child says many things to his Father beside that which takes the form of a request. Have we not, with joyful reverence, told our heavenly Father how we love Him? How we long to be more like He? How we desire to serve Him? That is how we talk—alone with God—our heart is to the heart of God as the echo to the living voice which calls to it. The Savior would tell the Father of all His love to Him, how He desired nothing but the salvation of those whom the Father gave Him, how He devoted Himself to glorify His name in them, for they were His and He was Surety for them. All that the Divine Jesus could and would say to His Father, we may not endeavor to imagine. We could not be permitted to stand by and hear those solitary prayers, but they must have been something unique, worthy of the Sacred Persons who there held solemn dialogue. Yes, the great heart of Jesus swam in supplication as in its element—and in proportion as we become like He, we shall be of His mind as to private prayer.

One said to me the other day what I have sometimes read, but I was especially shocked to hear it. She said, "I am so conformed to the mind and will of God that I do not need to pray." I answered in sad surprise, "I pray God will open your eyes to see the delusion under which you are laboring, for the Holy Lord Jesus Christ *abounded* in prayer, notwithstanding His absolute perfection." That kind of perfection which leads a man to think that he does not need to pray is damnable! I will use no calmer word. I believe that the "doctrine of sinless perfection," as it is frequently taught in these fanatical days, will be the ruin of many a soul that holds it! Could you cease to pray, you would cease to live spiritually. It is the very breath of your nostrils if you are a child of God!

As to your being so perfect as to need no more prayer and watchfulness, you lie to your own soul, as surely as you live! Instead of believing in your perfection, I pray God deliver you from so terrible a delusion. If you were perfect, you would still need to pray. No, you would pray *more* than ever and your life, like that of Jesus, would be steeped and saturated in prayer! Our Lord, because He was perfect, longed perpetually to draw near unto God. "Oh," says one, "I live in the spirit of prayer and, therefore, I do not need times and seasons for prayer." And do you think that Christ did

not live in the spirit of prayer? Yet He must have His special time and place to pray! Do not fall under the injurious notion that because your spirit cries to God in prayer all day long, therefore there must not be some season for more immediately coming into God's Presence! If you do thus imagine, I am afraid that it will prove a snare to your feet. The Lord Jesus Christ, who knew better than you, that the main thing is the *spirit* of prayer rather than the *act* of prayer, yet, Himself retired into desert places to maintain the act and exercise of prayer!

Be spiritual. Be baptized into the spirit of prayer, but do not be deceived by the enemy who can spirit a duty away while we dream that we only spiritualize it! We had better preserve the very bones of prayer, the posture, time and place, rather than let it all ooze away into an impalpable mental condition. God keep us prayerful! He will do so if He makes us like His dear Son. Further, I want you to notice concerning our Lord's prayer that there can be no doubt that *in His prayer He prayed for Himself*. Much of His prayer belonged to Himself, and to Himself, only. He was, we know, in one great instance, "heard in that He feared," and He was heard in many other things known only to Himself. But our Lord also much abounded in *prayer for His disciples*—He took their cases, one by one, and pleaded with the Father for them.

Remember how He prayed for Peter—supplicating for him before he came into danger? He said. "Simon, Simon, Satan has desired to have you." The enemy had only reached as far as the *desire*, but the Good Shepherd was quicker than the wolf and had already interceded—"but I have prayed for you." Christ had outstripped the devil! He had already prayed *before* the temptation came. And here on earth, as a father in the midst of his children, He took care that none of them should be in danger through the lack of His loving intercession! And do you not think that He was praying, too, at that time, *for the sinners that were round about Him*?

It is His practice in Heaven to make intercession for the transgressors—and I am sure that He did it here below. As He looked into those faces in the streets of Capernaum, He read the stories of their sin and these came back to His memory amid those lone hills. He knew more about men than we do, for He could search their thoughts. He knew how foolish they were and how far they had gone aside from God—and so, in the silence of the desert, He prayed with wide knowledge and profound sympathy—and He spoke with the Most High in eager pleas for those whose sins He measured and whose doom He foresaw.

To do His people and the world the grandest service in His power till He should lay down His life, our Lord stole away amid the heathery hills or the stony heaps of the shores of Galilee. Dear Friends, take care that you pray. Need I say it? Take care that you use all aids to prayer, such as being alone and rising early to pray. If your Lord needed prayer, you require it much more. Take care that you pray much in the time of your success. Do not think that because of the wonders God did for you last night, you are not to pray in the morning, but set double guard over your spirit in the moment of rejoicing lest you be carried away by pride. "Oh," you say, "but my prayers are so often disturbed!" I know! The devil is sure to send somebody to knock at the door when you want to be quiet in prayer. Your

Lord can sympathize with you in that, for Simon and they that were with Him followed after Him and disturbed the solitude which He had sought with so much care.

Simon was always to the front and sometimes mischievously so. And here He is, leading the way in disturbing His Master! Do not wonder if Satan finds a Simon to worry *you*. But as your Lord knows what it is to be disturbed, He can help you to bear up under disturbances. He can cheer you when these interruptions distress you and He can aid you to renew your pleadings when the chain of your prayer has been broken. I regret that I can say no more on this point, because my time has fled.

II. Only just a word or two, in the second place, upon POPULARITY WEIGHED by the Savior. The disturbance that came to the Savior's prayers arose out of the desire of His disciples to tell Him that everybody was after Him and, according to Luke's account in his fourth chapter, the people of the town were close on the heels of the disciples, to pray him not to go away, but to stop and be their Prophet and heal their sick. Our Lord's popularity was of the best kind—it had not been gained by any arts or tricks, nor by pandering to their pride, nor by yielding to their prejudices. He had preached nothing but the Truth of God and He had worked no miracle among them for the mere sake of display, but only for their good.

Yet He did not care for the best of popularity. He did not think it worth the having for its own sake and, therefore, He shunned it to the utmost. His popularity could be used and He did use it—for when the people came together He preached the Gospel to them—but applause had no charms for Him. He knew what poor stuff it is—of what gas it is made. He knew how uncertain it is—how, like the wind, it will veer round in no time. He knew that it might prove dangerous and it did, for they sought, by-and-by, to make Him a king. Even His disciples would, if they could, have turned Him from His spiritual purpose. Poor hearts! They wished to see Him honored, but they did not know that honor from men would have brought no honor to Him. When they told our Lord, "All men seek you," He did not take notice of it, but proposed to go elsewhere and preach the Gospel.

Oh, dear Friends, if ever you succeed in Christ's Kingdom, bless God for your spiritual success, but do not think much of the approbation which follows upon it. Pass it over in silence, as though you heard it not. What is human approbation? What can it do for you? "When we have done all, we are unprofitable servants." If we have done anything good, no credit is due to us, but only to the Lord, whose Grace has made us to be His *workmanship*! If the Lord Jesus Christ, who preached by His own authority and power, and who worked miracles by His own might, yet fled away as much as He could from the applause of men, much more let each one of us do so! Oh, to walk before the Lord and be blind and deaf to all the censures and the plaudits of the poor creatures around us!

I have seen men whom God has greatly blessed, who have been highly honored by their Brethren, and yet they have been cast down and have, therefore, been made to lie low in their own esteem. On the other hand, I have observed others whose usefulness in the Church has not appeared to anybody but themselves, and yet they have been so tall that they almost

needed St. Paul's Cathedral to stand upright! Their self-esteem has been 10 times taller than the esteem of their wiser brethren! Let us prefer to be found among the useful and lowly, rather than among the self-conceited and useless! God will not greatly bless us if we grow great.

We may soon become too big to be used to win souls. I notice that soul-winning is generally accomplished by humble instruments. It is a delicate task and the Lord, who does it, will not use those who are great, strong and mighty in their own esteem. When the Lord finds His servants lowly, like the Lord Jesus Christ, then they shall be used! The longer I live, the more do I see that, as a rule, pride is the death of all true spiritual usefulness. As you love God and would desire to honor Him by a useful life, put far from you the temptation to sip of the intoxicating cup of human honor! Drafts of worldly glory are not for the priests of the Most High! Though not in the Savior's case, yet in ours, there is a close connection between our prayers and our being kept humble before the Lord.

It is remarkable how kindly our neighbors watch over our vineyards in that respect. They are all in a fraternal flutter for fear we should grow vain—it is very good of them, but we do not wish them to rob themselves for our advantage! “Ah, Sir,” said a good lady to me one day, “I pray for you every day that you may be kept humble!” She was a wonderfully fine-looking woman and splendidly dressed and, therefore, I replied, “Thank you much; but you remind me of a failure in my duty. I have never prayed *for you* that you might be kept humble.” “Dear Sir,” she cried, “there is no need for such prayers, for I am not tempted to be proud.”

How proud she was to have attained to such a delusion! When anybody says, “I am not tempted to be proud,” shrewd common sense suggests that it is time to wake up, lest the enemy get a fatal advantage over the vain spirit! When there is much prayer—*abundant* prayer and drawing near to God—then the greatest success can be borne without risk. Prayer ballasts the ship and so, when God fills the sails with a prosperous wind, the vessel is not overborne.

III. Notice, thirdly, how our Lord put aside all the dangers of popularity by setting before us PRACTICAL DUTY FOLLOWED OUT. They said, “All men seek You.” I think that most of us would have replied, “Well, then, let us go down and talk to them.” But Jesus cries, “Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also.” Instead of desiring honor, He shuns it! Yes, He leaves no space for it, for He occupies each hour with a new labor. *He will break up new soil*—old harvests only serve to fill the basket for new seed-sowings. He will go to *encounter other trials* as soon as the first are overcome. When He enters a place for the first time, there is opposition, and Jesus is eager to face it. For Him there remained no love of ease, no resting upon laurels already won.

His nobly impatient spirit cries, “We have done something for Capernaum; let us seek fresh fields and new pastures.” He will also *enlist assistance* and awaken others to share in the Holy War. How condescendingly the Master puts it! He says, “Let us go.” “O Divine Master, all men seek You.” And the answer is, “Let us go into the next towns.” He lifted His poor disciples into the *us* with Himself! Because they are, through the rest of their lives, to be associated with Him in His holy work, He takes care that

in the first flush of His success they shall be brought to the front in connection with Himself. They will feel how unworthy they are to be in such high fellowship—they will admire His condescension in putting them there—and they will be the more ready to go on with Him, taking their full part in evangelizing the other villages and towns.

Our Lord is thinking of the whole business! It is all before His mind's eye what He is to do personally and what He is to do through each one of them. The practical duty of doing His part of the work and using them for their part of the work is strong upon Him. With a quick eye He sees not what has been done, but what is *to be done!* Not what God has given, but what God will still give in answer to the prayers which He has prayed—and He expects that it will be so large that He will need all His followers to help Him in the process of gathering it in! So He says, "Let us go into the next towns." He does not say, "Let us rest and be thankful," but He obeys the secret instinct which drives Him forward to be doing more and more of good to the sons of men. He feels within His soul that imperial *must* which, every now and then, crops up in His story as it is told by the Evangelists.

He is under a necessity to do the Father's will in blessing the sons of men. All else is as nothing to Him—"Therefore came I forth," He says. The errand for which He came forth evidently presses Him, constrains Him, impels Him! He must go forward till all His baptism is accomplished! His slow of understanding disciples cry, "All men seek You; stay in Capernaum!" But He thinks of the myriads who do *not* seek Him, but need Him more than those who do! Let His zeal for the unseeking multitudes inflame our hearts and let us, in enthusiastic chorus, sing concerning the lost sheep—

***"O, come, let us go and find them!
In the paths of death they roam!
At the close of the day it will be sweet to say,
'I have brought some lost one home.'"***

Jesus seemed to say, "Come with Me and I will lead the way, for therefore am I sent, that all over Galilee and Judea I may wander after wandering souls and give them health of body and salvation of spirit."

This absorption in His life-purpose is one great evidence and accompaniment of our Lord's perfect spiritual sanity. He could not repose in work *done*, for the work which remained drove Him always onward! I say not that the Master could possibly have gloried—He never did glory—never would have gloried with any sinful pride. But in your case and mine, the way to keep from ever glorying in what we have done is to think of what we have yet to do—

***"Forget the steps already trod,
And onward urge your way."***

You know what the general said when one of his officers rode up and cried, "Sir, we have taken a standard!" "Take another," he cried. Another officer salutes him and exclaims, "Sir, we have taken two guns." "Take two more," was the only reply. This way lies the reward of holy service—you have done much—you shall do more. Have you won a soul? Win another! Did you bring 50 to Christ? Bring 50 more! If you have been faithful in little, you shall be entrusted with much.

What is all we have accomplished compared with the necessities of this immeasurable city, compared with the needs of our nation, compared with the desolated condition of the world? Brothers, in the hour of success, resolve on wider labor. Go forward! Press on! Go to other cities. Attempt other methods of service, for therefore came you forth from God.

IV. Now I must close—compelled to do so by the incessant ticking of the clock—when I have noticed how the Lord Jesus Christ in all things makes us see **PREACHING PUT TO THE FRONT**, for He says, “Let us go into the next towns, *that I may preach* there also: for therefore came I forth.” It is refreshing to hear preaching spoken of without a sneer. “The Pulpit is a worn-out piece of furniture,” so they say. Printers have quite annihilated preachers—the few of us who survive may as well go home to our beds! Well, I am not going to speak of any excellence in preachers, or stand up for my Brothers as though we were the wisest of all men. Suppose I confess that we are a set of fools? This is nothing remarkable—we have always been so!

But it still remains written in Scripture, “It pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.” Such is our folly that we are fools enough to go on preaching after our critics have decided that we belong to the dead past! The wise men tell us about our day being over, but notwithstanding all of that, we shall keep to our marching orders—“Go you into all the world and preach!” In that day when stock shall be taken of results and judgment shall be according to equity, it will be found that the preachers of the Gospel have, after all, with all their imperfections, been the great instruments in the hands of God for bringing in His people to eternal salvation!

The people are supposed to read books in these times of the School Board and, therefore, they do not need living speech. We are glad that the people should read, but much of what they read which is best worth reading was first heard from the pulpit! We know of no rivalry between the printed word and the preached Word—it is often the same thing. But I reckon that the most of you who have been converted to God will say that it was not what you read, but what you *heard* which was used of the Holy Spirit for your conversion! When heart speaks to heart with accents of emotion, it is somehow different from the paper. Some Brothers read their sermons and I do not condemn them, but I know that most of the people feel a kind of chill creeping over them as they hear the leaves rustle. It may be a prejudice, but I know that nine out of 10 are numbed by the foolscap for the reading.

I confess I feel the influence myself—a read sermon usually freezes me to the marrow, or else makes me fidget upon my seat. When a warm heart speaks to an earnest ear, it proves itself a suitable means for the transmission of blessing. The man bears witness better than the paper can! He speaks what he knows and he throws a tone, a force, a light, a vigor into what he says which the printing press cannot possibly communicate to the page! I know you grumble at the dullness of preachers and I do not wonder at it, but I believe that the improvement of that matter lies much with yourselves. You shall find, I believe, that when more attention has been paid to the ministry—when you have prayed more for students—and

when more care has been exercised in churches that only the right kind of men shall be helped into the ministry, the preachers of the Word of God will rise into higher rank in esteem.

When, instead of a man's being set apart for a minister because his father has a living to give him. Or because he cannot pick up a subsistence anywhere else. When, instead of the power of simony and patronage—men shall only be introduced into the ministry who are really *moved by the Holy Spirit*—then the dishonor will be wiped from the pulpit and it shall be seen to be the tower of the flock, the castle of the Truth of God. We preach Christ Crucified and preach it because we are commanded to preach it. And we are well assured that wisdom is justified of her children. God's grand means of preaching the Gospel, which the Lord Jesus followed so closely, is used for the sure accomplishment of eternal purposes!

I leave that point, because I need to say this much more—it is the *praying* man that is the right *preaching* man—and if any of you long to do good to your fellow men, you must begin on your knees! You cannot have power with man for God until first you have power with God for man! Solitary prayer was the equipment for the Prince of Preachers when He came forth among the crowds—it is the best equipment for you, also. In solitary vigil, buckle on the armor of the Light of God. Workers for God, I entreat you to be abundant in supplication, that if success comes, you may not be elevated unduly by it. That if failure comes, you may not be depressed unduly by it. Come what may, having *prayed*, it is yours to continue steadfast in present duty, still doing that for which you were sent, and still believing that the Gospel of Jesus will prevail. Oh, my Comrades, may the Lord uphold us even to the end!

As for you here present who never pray, *what will become of you?* As for you who, instead of preaching, do not care to *hear* preaching, what will become of you? If the Lord Jesus Christ went out to pray so early in the morning, do you know what He was praying for? Why, for the salvation of sinners like you, that you might be saved! His cries and tears were for those who neither plead nor weep for themselves! When Jesus stood up to preach, what had He on His mind but the salvation of sinners like you? Shall He think of *you* and will you not think of *Him*? Oh, look to Him! See how He loves sinners!

Now that He has been dead and buried, and has risen again and gone into His Glory, He still lives to save sinners! Look to Him! Trust Him! Seek Him, tonight, in solitary prayer, and He will meet with you. Tomorrow morning rise up early, “a great while before day,” if you have no other means of being alone, and cry to Him for mercy and He will set Heaven's gate open before you—and answer you even as His Father answered Him! The Lord bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SECTION—Mark 1:29-40.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—340, 262, 250.**

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THE LORD AND THE LEPER

NO. 2008

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 12, 1888,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

“And there came a leper to Him, beseeching Him and kneeling down to Him and saying unto Him, if You will, You can make me clean. And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth His hand and touched him and said unto him, I will, Be you clean. And as soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him and he was cleansed.”

Mark 1:40-42.

BELOVED, we saw in the reading that our Lord had been engaged in special prayer. He had gone alone on the mountainside to have communion with God. Simon and the rest search for Him and He comes away in the early morning with the burrs from the hillside upon His garments, the smell of the field upon Him, even of a field that the Lord God had blessed. He comes forth among the people, charged with power which He had received in communion with His Father. And now we may expect to see wonders. And we do see them. For devils fear and fly when He speaks the Word.

And by-and-by, one comes to Him—an extraordinary being, condemned to live apart from the rest of men—lest he should spread defilement all around. A leper comes to Him and kneels before Him and expresses confident faith in Him that He can make him whole. Now is the Son of Man glorious in His power to save.

The Lord Jesus Christ at this day has all power in Heaven and in earth. He is charged with a Divine energy to bless all who come to Him for healing. Oh, that we may see today some great wonder of His power and grace! Oh, for one of the days of the Son of Man here and now! To that end it is absolutely needful that we should find a case for His spiritual power to work upon. Is there not one here in whom His grace may prove its omnipotence? Not you, you good, you self-righteous! You yield Him no space to work in. You that are whole have no need of a physician—in you there is no opportunity for Him to display His miraculous force.

But yonder are the men we seek for. Forlorn and lost, full of evil and self-condemned, *you* are the characters we seek. You that feel as if you were possessed with evil spirits and you that are leprous with sin—*you* are the persons in whom Jesus will find ample room and space enough for the display of His holy skill. Of you I might say, as He once said of the man born blind—you are here that the works of God may be manifest in you. You, with your guilt and your depravity—you furnish the empty vessels into which His grace may be poured—the sick souls upon whom He may display His matchless power to bless and save. Be hopeful, then, you sinful ones! Look up this morning for the Lord's approach and expect that even in *you*, He will work great marvels.

This leper shall be a picture—yes, I hope a mirror—in whom you will see yourselves. I do pray that as I go over the details of this miracle many here may put themselves in the leper's place and do just as the leper did and receive, just as the leper received, cleansing from the hand of Christ. O Spirit of the living God, the thousands of our Israel now entreat You to work, that Jesus, the Son of God, may be glorified here and now!

I. I will begin my rehearsal of the Gospel narrative by remarking, first, that THIS LEPER'S FAITH MADE HIM EAGER TO BE HEALED. He was a leper. I will not stop just now to describe what horrors are compacted into that single word. But he believed that Jesus could cleanse him and his belief stirred him to an anxious desire to be healed at once.

Alas, We have to deal with spiritual lepers eaten up with the foul disease of sin. But some of them do not believe that they ever can be healed and the consequence is that despair makes them sin most greedily. "I may as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb," is the inward impression of many a sinner when he fears that there is no mercy and no help for him. Because there is no hope they plunge deeper and yet deeper into the slough of iniquity. Oh, that you might be delivered from that false idea! Mercy still rules the hour. There is hope while Jesus sends His Gospel to you and bids you repent.

"I believe in the forgiveness of sins"—this is a sweet sentence of a true creed. I believe also in the renewal of men's hearts. For the Lord can give new hearts and right spirits to the evil and unthankful. I would that you believed it. For if you did, I trust it would quicken you into seeking that your sins might be forgiven and your minds might be renewed. Do you believe it? Then come to Jesus and receive the blessings of free grace.

We have a number of lepers who come in among us whose disease is white upon their brows and visible to all beholders and yet they are indifferent—they do not mourn their wickedness, nor wish to be cleansed from it. They sit among God's people and they listen to the doctrine of a new birth and the news of pardon and they hear the teaching as though it had nothing to do with them. If now and then they half wish that salvation would come to them, it is too languid a wish to last. They have not yet so perceived their disease and their danger as to pray to be delivered from them.

They sleep on upon the bed of sloth and care neither for Heaven nor Hell. Indifference to spiritual things is the sin of the age. Men are stolid of heart about eternal realities. An awful apathy is upon the multitude. The leper in our text was not so foolish as this. He eagerly desired to be delivered from his dreadful malady—with heart and soul he pined to be cleansed from its terrible defilement. Oh that it were so with you! May the Lord make you feel how depraved your heart is and how diseased with sin are all the faculties of your soul! Alas, dear Friends—there are some that even love their leprosy! Is it not a sad thing to have to speak thus? Surely, madness is in men's hearts. Men do not wish to be saved from doing evil. They love the ways and wages of iniquity.

They would like to go to Heaven but they must have their drunken frolics on the road. They would very well like to be saved from Hell but not

from the sin which is the cause of it. *Their* notion of salvation is not to be saved from the love of evil and to be made pure and clean. But that is God's meaning when He speaks of salvation. How can they hope to be the slaves of sin and yet at the same time be free? Our first necessity is to be saved from sinning. The very name of Jesus tells us that—He is called Jesus, because “He shall save His people from their sins.” These persons do not care for a salvation which would mean self-denial and the giving up of ungodly lusts.

O wretched lepers, that count their leprosy to be a beauty and take pleasure in sin which in the sight of God is far more loathsome than the worst disease of the body! Oh, that Christ Jesus would come and change their views of things until they were of the same mind as God towards sin. And you know He calls it, “that abominable thing which I hate.” Oh, if men could see their love to wrong things to be a disease more sickening than leprosy they would gladly be saved and saved at once! Holy Spirit, convict of sin, that sinners may be eager to be cleansed!

Lepers were obliged to consort together—lepers associated with lepers and they must have made up a dreadful confraternity. How glad they would have been to escape from it! But I know spiritual lepers who love the company of their fellow lepers. Yes, and the more leprous a man becomes, the more do they admire him. A bold sinner is often the idol of his comrades. Though foul is his life, others cling to him for that very reason. Such persons like to learn some new bit of wickedness—they are eager to be initiated into a yet darker form of impure pleasure. Oh how they long to hear that last lascivious song—to read that last impure novel!

It seems to be the desire of many to know as much evil as they can. They flock together and take a dreadful pleasure in talk and action which is the horror of all pure minds. Strange lepers that heap up leprosy as a treasure! Even those who do not go into gross open sin are pleased with infidel notions and skeptical opinions—which are a wretched form of mental leprosy. O horrible malady, which makes men doubt the Word of the living God! Lepers were not allowed to associate with healthy persons except under severe restrictions. Thus were they separated from their nearest and dearest friends.

What a sorrow! Alas, I know persons thus separated who do not wish to associate with the godly—to them holy company is dull and wearisome. They do not feel free and easy in such society and therefore they avoid it as much as decency allows. How can they hope to live with saints forever when they shun them now as dull and moping acquaintances?

O my Hearers, I have come here this morning in the hope that God would bless the Word to some poor sinner who feels he is a sinner and would rather be cleansed—such is the leper I am seeking with my whole heart. I pray God to bless the Word to those who wish to escape from evil company—who would no longer sit in the assembly of the mockers—nor run in the paths of the unholy. To those who have grown weary of their sinful companions and would escape from them, lest they should be bound up in bundles with them to burn at the last great day—to such I speak this time with a loving desire for their salvation.

I hope my word will come with Divine application to some poor heart here that is crying, "I wish I might be numbered with the people of God. I wish I were fit to be a door-keeper in the house of the Lord. Oh, that my dreadful sinfulness were conquered so that I could have fellowship with the godly and be myself one of them!" I hope my Lord has brought to this place just such lost ones, that He may find them. I am looking out for them with tearful eyes. But my feeble eyes cannot read inward character. And it is well that the loving Savior who discerns the secrets of all hearts and reads all inward desire is looking from the watchtowers of Heaven, that He may discover those who are coming to Him—even though as yet they are a great way off.

Oh that sinners may now beg and pray to be rescued from their sins! May those who have become habituated to evil long to break off their evil habits! Happy will the preacher be if he finds himself surrounded with penitents who hate their sins and guilty ones who cry to be forgiven and to be so changed that they shall go and sin no more.

II. In the second place, let us remark that THIS LEPER'S FAITH WAS STRONG ENOUGH TO MAKE HIM BELIEVE THAT HE COULD BE HEALED OF HIS HIDEOUS DISEASE.

Leprosy was an unutterably loathsome disease. As it exists, even now, it is described by those who have seen it in such a way that I will not harrow your feelings by repeating all the sickening details. The following quotation may be more than sufficient. Dr. Thomson in his famous work, "The Land and the Book," speaks of lepers in the East and says, "The hair falls from the head and eye-brows. The nails loosen, decay and drop off. Joint after joint of the fingers and toes shrink up and slowly fall away. The gums are absorbed and the teeth disappear. The nose, the eyes, the tongue and the palate are slowly consumed."

This disease turns a man into a mass of loathsomeness—a walking pile of pests. Leprosy is nothing better than a horrible and lingering death. The leper in the narrative before us had sad personal experience of this and yet he believed that Jesus could cleanse him. Splendid faith! Oh that you who are afflicted with moral and spiritual leprosy could believe in this fashion! Jesus Christ of Nazareth can heal even *you*. Over the horror of leprosy faith triumphed. Oh, that in *your* case, it would overcome the terribleness of sin!

Leprosy was known to be incurable. There was no case of a man being cured of real leprosy by any medical or surgical treatment. This made the cure of Naaman in former ages so noteworthy. Observe, moreover, that our Savior Himself, so far as I can see, had never healed a leper up to the moment when this poor wretch appeared upon the scene. He had cured fever and had cast out devils but the cure of leprosy was, in the Savior's life, as yet an unexampled thing. Yet this man, putting this and that together and understanding something of the nature and character of the Lord Jesus Christ, believed that He could cure him of his incurable disease. He felt that even if the great Lord had not yet healed leprosy, He was assuredly capable of doing so great a deed and he determined to apply to Him.

Was not this grand faith? Oh, that such faith could be found among my hearers at this hour! Here me, O trembling Sinner—if you are as full of sin this morning as an egg is full of meat—Jesus can remove it all. If your propensities to sin are as untamable as the wild boar of the wood, yet Jesus Christ, the Lord of All, can subdue your iniquities and make you the obedient servant of His love. Jesus can turn the lion into a lamb and He can do it NOW! He can transform you where you are sitting, saving you in yonder pew while I am speaking the Word. All things are possible to the Savior God. And all things are possible to him that believes. I wish you had such a faith as this leper had, although if it were even less it might serve your turn, since you have not all his difficulties to contend with.

Since Jesus has already saved many sinners like yourself and changed many hearts as hard as yours, if He shall regenerate you, He will be doing for you no strange thing but only one of the daily miracles of His Divine Grace. He has now healed thousands of your fellow lepers—can you not believe that He can heal the leprosy in you?

This man had a marvelous faith—to believe while he was personally the victim of the mortal malady. It is one thing to trust a doctor when you are well, but quite another to confide in him when your body is rotting away. For a real, conscious sinner to trust the Savior is no mean thing. When you hope that there is some good thing in you it is easy to be confident. But to be conscious of total ruin and yet to believe in the Divine remedy—this is real faith. To see in the sunshine is mere natural vision. But to see in the dark needs the eye of faith! To believe that Jesus has saved you when you see the signs of it is the result of reason. But to trust Him to cleanse you while you are still defiled with sin—this is the essence of saving faith.

The leprosy was firmly seated and fully developed in this man. Luke says that he was “full of leprosy”—he had as much of the poison in him as one poor body could contain. It had come to its worst stages in him. And yet he believed that Jesus of Nazareth could make him clean. Glorious confidence! O my Hearer, if you are full of sin, if your propensities and habits have become as bad as bad can be, I pray the Holy spirit to give you Divine Grace and renew you and do it at once. With one Word of His mouth Jesus can turn your death into life, your corruption into comeliness. Changes which we cannot work in others, much less in ourselves, Jesus, by His invincible Spirit can work in the hearts of the ungodly.

Of these stones he can raise up children unto Abraham. His moral and spiritual miracles are often worked upon cases which seem beyond all hope—cases which pity itself endeavors to forget because her efforts have been so long in vain. I like best about this man’s faith the fact that he did not merely believe that Jesus Christ could cleanse a leper but that He could cleanse *him*! He said, “Lord, if You will, You can make *me* clean.” It is very easy to believe for other people. There is really no faith in such impersonal, proxy confidence. The true faith believes for itself first, and then for others.

Oh, I know some of you are saying, “I believe that Jesus can save my brother. I believe that He can save the vilest of the vile. If I heard that He

had saved the biggest drunkard in Southward I should not wonder.” Can you believe all this, and yet fear that He cannot save *you*? This is strange inconsistency. If He heals another man’s leprosy, can He not heal *your* leprosy? If one drunkard is saved, why not another? If in one man a passionate temper is subdued, why not in another? If lust and covetousness, and lying and pride have been cured in many men, why not in *you*? Even if you are a blasphemer, blasphemy has been cured—why should it not be so in your case?

Jesus Christ can heal you of that particular form of sin which possesses you, however high a degree its power may have reached. Nothing is too hard for the Lord. Jesus can change and cleanse you *NOW*. In a moment He can impart a new life and commence a new character. Can you believe this? This is the faith which glorified Jesus and brought healing to this leper. And it is the faith which will save you at once if you now exercise it. O Spirit of the living God, work this faith in the minds of my dear hearers that they may thus win their suit with the Lord Jesus and go their way healed of the plague of sin!

III. Now, notice, thirdly, that this man’s faith WAS FIXED ON JESUS CHRIST ALONE. Let me read the man’s words again. He said unto Jesus, “If You will, You can make me clean.” Throw the emphasis upon the pronouns. See him kneeling before the Lord Jesus and hear him say, “If *You* will, *You* can make me clean.” He has no idea of looking to the disciples—no, not to one of them or to all of them. He had no notion of trusting in a measure to the medicine which physicians would prescribe for him. All that is gone. No dream of other hope remains. But with his eye fully fixed on the blessed Miracle-worker of Nazareth, he cries, “If *YOU* will, *YOU* can make me clean.”

In himself he had no shade of confidence. Every delusion of that kind had been banished by a fierce experience of his disease. He knew that none on earth could deliver him and that by no innate power of constitution could he throw out the poison. But he confidently believed that the Son of God could, by Himself, effect the cure. This was God-given faith—the faith of God’s elect and Jesus was its sole Object.

How came this man to have such faith? I cannot tell you the outward means but I think we may guess without presumption. Had he not heard our Lord preach? Matthew puts this story immediately after the Sermon on the Mount and says, “When He was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, if You will, You can make me clean.” Had this man managed to stand at the edge of the crowd and hear Jesus speak—and did those wondrous words convince him that the great Teacher was something more than man?

As he noted the style and manner and matter of that marvelous sermon, did he say within himself, “never man spoke like this man. Truly He is the Son of God. I believe in Him. I trust Him. He can cleanse me”? May God bless the preaching of Christ crucified to you who hear me this day! Is not this used of the Lord and made to be the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes?

Perhaps this man had seen our Lord's miracles. I feel sure he had. He had seen the devils cast out and had heard of Peter's mother-in-law, who had lain sick of a fever and had been instantaneously recovered. The leper might very properly argue—"To do this requires omnipotence." And once granted that omnipotence is at work, then omnipotence can as well deal with leprosy as with fever. Did he not reason well if he argued thus—"What the Lord has done, He can do again—if in one case He has displayed almighty power, He can display that same power in another case"? Thus would the acts of the Lord corroborate His Words and furnish a sure foundation for the leper's hope.

My Hearer, have you not seen Jesus save others? Have you not at least read of His miracles of Divine Grace? Believe Him, then, for His works' sake, and say to Him, "Lord, if You will, You can make *me* clean."

Besides, I think this man may have heard something of the story of Christ and may have been familiar with the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah. We cannot tell, but some disciple may have informed him of John's witness concerning the Christ and of the signs and tokens which supported John's testimony. He may thus have discerned in the Son of Man, the Messiah of God—the Incarnate Deity. At any rate, as knowledge must come before faith, he had received knowledge enough to feel that he could trust this glorious Personage and to believe that, if He willed it, Jesus could make him clean.

O my dear Hearers, cannot you trust the Lord Jesus Christ in this way? Do you not believe—I hope you do—that He is the Son of God? And if so, why not *trust* Him? He that was born of Mary at Bethlehem was God over all, blessed forever! Do you not believe this? Why, then, do you not rely upon God in your trouble? You believe in His consecrated life, His suffering death, His resurrection, His ascension, His sitting in power at the right hand of the Father—why do you not trust Him? God has highly exalted Him and caused all fullness to dwell in Him—He is able to save unto the uttermost—why do you not *come* to Him?

Believe that He is able and then with all your sins before you, red like scarlet—and with all your sinful habits and your evil propensities before you, ingrained like the leopard's spots—believe that the Savior of men can at once make you whiter than snow as to past guilt and free from the present and future tyranny of evil. A Divine Savior must be able to cleanse you from all sin. Only Jesus can do it—and He can do it—do it Himself alone, do it now, do it in *you*, do it with a Word.

If Jesus wills to do it, it is all that is needed—for His will is the will of the Almighty Lord. Say, "Lord, if You will, You can make me clean." Faith must be fixed alone on Jesus. No other name is given among men whereby we must be saved. I do pray the Lord to give that faith to all my dear friends present this morning who as yet have not received cleansing at the Lord's hands. Jesus is God's ultimatum of salvation—the unique hope of guilty men both as to pardon and renewal. Accept Him now.

IV. Now let me go a step further—THIS MAN'S FAITH HAD RESPECT TO A REAL MATTER-OF-FACT CURE. He did not think of the Lord Jesus Christ as a priest who would perform certain ceremonies over him and

formally say, "You are clean." For that would not have been true. He wanted *really* to be delivered from the leprosy. To have those dry scales into which his skin kept turning, taken all away. That his flesh might become as the flesh of a little child. He wanted that the rottenness, which was eating up his body, should be stopped—and that health should be actually restored.

Friends, it is easy enough to believe in a mere priestly absolution if you have enough credulity. But we need more than this. It is very easy to believe in Baptismal regeneration but what is the good of it? What practical result does it produce? A child remains the same after it has been baptismally regenerated as it was before and it grows up to prove it. It is easy to believe in Sacramentarianism if you are foolish enough. But there is nothing in it when you believe in it. No sanctifying power comes with outward ceremonials in and of themselves. To believe that the Lord Jesus Christ can make us love the good things which once we despised and shun those evil things in which we once took pleasure—this is to believe in Him, indeed. Jesus can totally change the nature and make a sinner into a saint. This is faith of a practical kind. This is a faith worth having.

None of us would imagine that this leper meant that the Lord Jesus could make him feel comfortable in remaining a leper. Some seem to fancy that Jesus came to let us go on in our sins with a quiet conscience. But He did nothing of the kind. His salvation is cleansing *from* sin and if we love sin we are not saved from it. We cannot have justification without sanctification. There is no use in quibbling about it. There must be a change—a radical change, a change of heart—or else we are not saved. I put it now to you, Do you desire a moral and a spiritual change, a change of life, thought and motive?

This is what Jesus gives. Just as this leper needed a thorough physical change so do you need an entire renewal of your spiritual nature so as to become a new creature in Jesus Christ. Oh that many here would desire this, for it would be a cheering sign. The man who desires to be pure is beginning to be pure. The man who sincerely longs to conquer sin has already struck the first blow. The power of sin is shaken in that man who looks to Jesus for deliverance from it. The man who frets under the yoke of sin will not long be a slave to it. If he can believe that Jesus Christ is able to set him free, he shall soon quit his bondage. Some sins which have hardened down into habits will yet disappear in a moment when Jesus Christ looks upon a man in love.

I have known many instances of persons who, for many years, had never spoken without an oath, or a filthy expression, who, being converted, have never been known to use such language again—and have scarcely ever been tempted in that direction. This is one of the sins which seem to die at the first shot and it is a very wonderful thing it should be so. Others I have known so altered at once that the very propensity which was strongest in them has been the last to annoy them afterwards—they have had such a reversion of the mind's action. While other sins have worried them for years and they have had to set a strict watch against them—yet their favorite and dominant sin has never again had the slightest influ-

ence over them—except to excite an outburst of horror and deep repentance.

Oh, that you had faith in Jesus that He could thus cast down and cast out your reigning sins! Believe in the conquering arm of the Lord Jesus and He will do it. Conversion is the standing miracle of the Church. Where it is genuine, it is as clear a proof of Divine power going with the Gospel as was the casting out of devils, or even the raising of the dead in our Lord's day. We see these conversions still. And we have proof that Jesus is able to work great moral marvels still. O my Hearer, where are you? Can you not believe that Jesus is able to make a new man of you? O Brothers and Sisters who have been saved, I entreat you to breathe a prayer at this time for those who are not yet cleansed from the foul disease of sin. Pray that they may have grace to believe in the Lord Jesus for purification of heart, pardon of sin and the implantation of eternal life. Then when faith is given the Lord Jesus will work their sanctification and none shall effectually hinder. In silence let us pray for a moment. (Here there was a pause and silent prayer went up to Heaven).

V. And now we will go another step—THIS MAN'S FAITH WAS ATTENDED WITH WHAT APPEARS TO BE A HESITANCY. But after thinking it over a good deal, I am hardly inclined to think it such a hesitancy as many have judged it to be. He said, "If You will, You can make me clean." There was an "if" in this speech and that "if" has aroused the suspicions of many preachers. Some think it supposes that he doubted our Lord's willingness. I hardly think that the language justly bears so harsh a construction.

What he meant may have been this—"Lord, I do not know yet that You are sent to heal lepers. I have not seen that You have ever done so. But, still, if it is within the compass of Your commission, I believe You will do it and assuredly You can if You will. You can heal not only some lepers but me in particular—You can make me clean." Now, I think this was a legitimate thing for him to say, as he had not seen a leper healed—"If it is within the compass of Your commission, I believe You can make me whole."

Moreover, I admire in this text the deference which the leper pays to the sovereignty of Christ's will as to the bestowal of His gifts. "If You will, You can make me clean"—as much as to say, "I know You have a right to distribute these great favors exactly as You please. I have no claim upon You. I cannot say that You are bound to make *me* clean. I appeal to Your pity and free favor. The matter remains with Your will." The man had never read the text which says, "It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs but of God that shows mercy," for it was not yet written. But he had in his mind the humble spirit suggested by that grand Truth. He owned that Divine Grace must come as a free gift of God's good pleasure when he said, "Lord, if You will."

Beloved, we need never raise a question as to the Lord's will to give grace when we have the will to receive it. But still, I would have every sinner feel that he has no claim upon God for anything. O Sinner, if the Lord should give you up, as He did the heathen described in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, you deserve it. If He should never look upon

you with an eye of love, what could you say against His righteous sentence? You have willfully sinned and you deserve to be left in your sin. Confessing all this, we still cling to our firm belief in the power of Divine Grace and cry, "Lord, if You will, You can." We appeal to our Savior's pitying love, relying upon His boundless power.

See, also, how the leper, to my mind, really speaks without *any* hesitancy, if you understand him. He does not say, "Lord, if You put out Your hand, You can make me clean." Nor, "Lord, if You speak, you can make me clean." But only, "Lord, if You *will*, You can make me clean"—Your mere *will* can do it. Oh, splendid faith! If you are inclined to spy a little halting in it, I would have you admire it for running so well with a lame foot. If there was a weakness anywhere in his faith—still it was so strong that the weakness only manifests its strength.

Sinner, it is so. And I pray God that your heart may grasp it—if the Lord wills it He can make you clean. Do you believe this? If so, carry out practically what your faith will suggest to you—namely, that you come to Jesus and plead with Him and get from Him the cleansing which you need. To that end I am hoping to lead you, as the Holy Spirit shall enable me.

VI. In the sixth place, notice that THIS MAN'S FAITH HAD EARNEST ACTION FLOWING OUT OF IT. Believing that, if Jesus willed, He could make him clean, what did the leper do? At once he came to Jesus. I know not from what distance, but he came as near to Jesus as he could. Then we read that he besought Him. That is to say, he pleaded and pleaded and pleaded again. He cried, "Lord, cleanse me! Lord heal my leprosy!" Nor was this all. He fell on his knees and worshipped. For we read, "Kneeling down to Him." He not only knelt but knelt to Jesus. He had no difficulty as to paying Him Divine honor. He worshipped the Lord Christ, paying Him reverent homage.

He then went on to honor Him by an open acknowledgment of His power, His marvelous power, His infinite power, by saying, "Lord, if You will, You can make me clean." I should not wonder if some that stood by began to smile at what they thought was the poor man's fanatical credulity. They murmured, "What a poor fool this leper is, to think that Jesus of Nazareth can cure him of his leprosy!" Such a confession of faith had seldom been heard. But whatever critics and skeptics might think, this brave man boldly declared, "Lord, this is my confession of faith—I believe that if You will, You can make me clean."

Now, poor Soul, you that are full of guilt and hardened in sin and yet anxious to be healed—look straight away to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is here now. In the preaching of the Gospel He is with us always. With the eyes of your mind, behold Him, for He beholds you. You know that He lives even though you see Him not. Believe in this living Jesus. Believe for perfect cleansing. Cry to Him, worship Him, adore Him, trust Him. He is very God of very God. Bow before Him and cast yourself upon His mercy. Go home and on your knees say, "Lord, I believe that You can make *me* clean." He will hear your cry and will save you. There will be no interval

between your prayer and the gracious reward of faith, of which I now speak.

VII. Lastly, HIS FAITH HAD ITS REWARD. Have patience with me just a minute. The reward of this man's faith was, first, that his very words were treasured up. Matthew, Mark, Luke—all three of them record the precise words which this man used—"Lord, if You will, You can make me clean." They evidently did not see so much to find fault with in them as some have done—on the contrary, they thought them gems to be placed in the setting of their Gospels. Three times over are they recorded, because they are such a splendid confession of faith for a poor diseased leper to have made. I believe that God is as much glorified by that one sentence of the leper as by the song of Cherubim and Seraphim, when they continually cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth."

A sinner's lips declaring his confident faith in God's own Son can breathe sonnets unto God more sweet than those of the angelic choirs. This man's first words of faith are folded up in the fair linen of three Evangels and laid up in the treasury of the House of the Lord. God values the language of humble confidence.

His next reward was that Jesus echoed his words. He said, "Lord, if You will, You can make me clean." And Jesus said, "I will, be you clean." As an echo answers to the voice, so did Jesus to His supplicant. The Lord Jesus was so pleased with this man's words that He caught them as they leaped out of his mouth and used them Himself, saying, "I will, be you clean."

If you can only get, then, as far as this leper's confession, I believe that our Lord Jesus from His Throne above, will answer your prayer. So potent were the words of this leper that they moved our Lord very wonderfully. Read the forty-first verse—"And Jesus, moved with compassion." The Greek word here used, if I were to pronounce it in your hearing, would half suggest its own meaning. It expresses a stirring of the entire manhood, a commotion in all the inward parts. The heart and all the vitals of the man are in active movement. The Savior was greatly moved.

You have seen a man moved, have you not? When a strong man is unable any longer to restrain himself and is forced to give way to his feelings, you have seen him tremble all over and at last burst out into an evident break-down. It was just so with the Savior—His pity moved Him—His delight in the leper's faith mastered Him. When He heard the man speak with such confidence in Him, the Savior was moved with a sacred passion, which, as it was in sympathy with the leper, is called "compassion." Oh, to think that a poor leper should have such power over the Divine Son of God! Yet, my Hearer, in all *your* sin and misery—if you can believe in Jesus—you can move the heart of your blessed Savior. Yes, even now His heart yearns towards you.

No sooner was our Lord Jesus thus moved than out went His hand and He touched the man and healed him immediately. It did not require a long time for the working of the cure. But the leper's blood was cooled and cleansed in a single second. Our Lord could work this miracle and make all things new in the man. For "all things were made by Him. And without Him was not anything made that was made." He restored the poor, decay-

ing, putrefying body of this man and he was cleansed at once. To make him quite sure that he was cleansed the Lord Jesus bade him go to the priest and seek a certificate of health. He was so clean that he might be examined by the appointed sanitary authority and come off without suspicion.

The cure which he had received was a real and radical one and therefore he might go away at once and get the certificate of it. If our converts will not bear practical tests, they are worth nothing. Let even our enemies judge whether they are not better men and women when Jesus has renewed them. If Jesus saves a sinner, he does not mind all men testing the change. Our converts will bear the test. Come here, angels! Come here, pure intelligences, able to observe men in secret! Here is a wretch of a sinner who came here this morning. He seemed first cousin to the devil. But the Lord Jesus Christ has converted him and changed him. Now look at him, angels. Look at him at home in his chamber!

Watch him in private life. We can read your verdict. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents." And this proves what you think. It is such a wonderful change and angels are so sure of it, that they give their certificates at once. How do they give their certificates? Why, each one manifests his joy as he sees the sinner turning from his sinful ways. Oh, that the angels might have work of this kind to do this morning! Dear Hearer, may you be one over whom they rejoice! If you believe on Jesus Christ and if you will trust Him as the sent One of God—fully and entirely with your soul—He will make *you* clean.

Behold Him on the Cross and see sin put away. Behold Him risen from the dead and see new life bestowed. Behold Him enthroned in power and see evil conquered. I am ready to be bound for my Lord, to be His surety, that if you, my Hearer, will come to Him, He will make you clean. Believe your Savior and your cure is final. God help you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

Portion Of Scripture Read Before Sermon—Mark 1:16-45.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—428, 602, 546.

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***"They came to Him from every quarter."
Mark 1:45.***

THE fact as it stands is well worthy of our notice and offers considerable encouragement to us. The multitudes came to hear our Lord and to see His miracles. He could not be hidden—wherever He appeared a congregation soon assembled. Indeed, the crowds became too large and too pressing, “insomuch that they trod one upon another.” Few preachers suffer from our Lord’s difficulty, but it was a frequent necessity with Him to use means to diminish the crowds and, therefore, He repaired to desert places, or took boats and crossed the sea. I gather from this, dear Friends, that notwithstanding the holiness of our Lord’s doctrine and the way in which it runs counter to the desires of the carnal heart. Notwithstanding the plainness of His rebukes and the way in which He lays pride in the dust, there is a remarkable attractiveness to all kinds of men in the teaching of the Lord Jesus.

If we would find a topic calculated to interest the masses, we need not go abroad for novelties—the old, old Gospel will best collect the eager anxious throng. Other things being equal, you shall find that more men will be drawn together to hear of Christ than to listen to any other topic. And this will continue year after year while other subjects have lost what temporary interest they once possessed. Give a man any other theme you please and let him expound upon it three or four times a week in the same place, to the same audience, and it will not be long before his hearers will be weary and he, himself, will be worn out.

I do not believe it would be possible to retain, year after year, a mass of attentive hearers, and send them away longing for more, with any theme except Jesus Christ and Him crucified! If you bring Jesus forth, the people will continue to come to Him from every quarter, for the prophecy of Jacob is still true, “To Him shall the gathering of the people be.” The attraction in the instance before us was not only Jesus *preaching*, but Jesus displaying His healing power. The works which He did bore witness of Him until the people asked, “What thing is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey Him.” The news of lame men leaping and lepers cleansed brought the people together. Even thus, let but Jesus be in any congregation manifesting His saving work—Jesus breaking hard hearts, Jesus binding up broken spirits, Jesus reclaiming the outcasts, Jesus gathering the lambs in His bosom, Jesus in action—then be sure of this, the people will come together till you will have to cry “Who are these that fly as a cloud and as doves to their windows?”

The best advertisement for Jesus is the personal testimony of every soul whom He has blessed! To blaze abroad His fame you need hire no hack writers or mercenary tongues—they shall speak best of Him who tell about the things which they have done touching the king, whose tongues are as the pens of ready writers because their hearts dictate the matter. They have experienced His power and, therefore, they cannot but speak what they have seen and felt! Jesus Christ, healing and spoken of by those whom He had healed, drew multitudes to Himself in the olden times. And I gather from this the expectation that if any of us will preach Christ in Christ's way, accompanied by Christ's power in the healing of men, we shall, even in desert places, see the people coming together! And all the more so because He has been lifted up upon the Cross and, therefore, will draw all men unto Him.

But, dear Friends, there was an inner circle. The mere hearers did but come to Him in the lowest sense. I do not think Jesus Christ set much store by drawing multitudes around Him to listen to His words or look upon His miracles. I am sure He did not, for He sought to avoid such popularity and, therefore, He forbade the leper to speak of his cure and He withdrew Himself to escape from the people. If He had considered that success was to be measured by the size of His audience, He would have remained where the crowds were assembled. But He formed a more accurate judgment and knew that as the heap upon the threshing floor contains abundance of chaff, even so in the great gatherings of mere *hearers*, there are multitudes whose adherence is of little value.

Beloved, if men only come together to hear the Gospel, our work will end in dreary disappointment and the gatherings on the Sabbath will prove to be wretched wastes of time! But my text can be carried, as a matter of fact, very much further, for disciples came to Jesus from every quarter in a far better sense. He called, by His mysterious power, one and another who became His followers and they came to Him in the best sense. We read that He went into a mountain and called whom He would and they came to Him—this was a better coming. Of them it may be said, "They came to Him from every quarter."

It is very beautiful to see what a mixture Christ's disciples were. There were fishermen, but they were not all of that class, for there was among them a man of the Pharisees, a ruler of the Jews. There was a devout Nathanael, but there was also a publican to whose house salvation came. They were not all of the lower ranks, for among the holy women who ministered to him were some from Herod's court. And one who is called, "the beloved physician," followed Him as his Lord. They were not all of commendable characters, for a woman that was a sinner was His true disciple, but there were others against whom no moral fault has ever been alleged. They came to Him drawn by His mysterious power from every portion of the land, from every condition and rank, from many phases of mind and types of character—"they came to Him from every quarter."

That is the matter of fact—I am now going to use the fact typically. I believe that as it was literally true that men came to hear our Lord and others came to believe on Him from every quarter, so it still is—and unto the

Lord Jesus Christ men and women, in the preaching of the Gospel, are still coming from every quarter.

I. I will begin with the exterior ring again. OF THE OPEN OR PROFESSIONAL COMING TO CHRIST it may be said with a great deal of sorrow, "They came to Him from every quarter." The Gospel, when it is preached, draws many to itself who are not saved by it. The kingdom of Heaven is like unto a net which men cast into the sea and it gathers fish of every kind. There is a day coming in which they will put the good into vessels and cast the bad away, but throughout this dispensation there will be every kind in the net. Tares will grow with the wheat and fruitless branches will be in the vine.

Men come to Christ by the avowal of Christianity, by the appropriation of its ordinances and the subscribing of its creed—and in this sense they still come to Him from every quarter. You must not imagine that in this Church all who have come to Christ nominally have really come. Do not indulge such a delusion, for if you do, you will certainly be deceived! You may belong, my dear Brothers and Sisters, to some little Bethel or select Ebenezer, but do not indulge the hope that all who professedly come to Christ, even there, though they are all so admirably sound and orthodox, have, all of them, really come to Jesus, for even *there* a mixture will be found. "Many are called and few are chosen." You shall take any 12 you will, but you cannot be sure but what one of them is a devil, for among the 12 selected by the Master, Judas Iscariot was found. They come to Christ from *every* quarter—from the land of hypocrisy and formality as well as from the country of sincerity.

Many came to Christ in His day and followed Him from the lowest of motives. Loaves and fishes were good bait, then, and they still are. We have not many of these attractions in *this* Church, but in certain quarters there are large loaves of very choice bread, exceedingly well buttered. And there are fishes, too, of the best kind—great fishes well cured, whose savory smell is dear to many. A taste for the Church loaves and fishes is pretty common, still, so that many come to the Church and, nominally to Christ, from the quarter of the land called *selfishness*. And so they make a gain of godliness. Some came to our Lord merely to receive benefits to their bodies—they brought a blind eye to be healed, or a withered arm to be restored—but they obtained no *spiritual* gifts. Thus do many derive benefit from the religion of Jesus of a moral and mental kind, but they miss the nobler gifts of the *spiritual life*.

No doubt many are charmed by Christian society, by the comforts of religious worship and by the degree of respectability which arises out of a profession—but they are not saved souls. We must not wonder when the loaves grow small and are only made of barley. And the fishes decrease in number if the mere hangers-on show us their true quality and disappear. He who comes to Christ for what he can get of worldly goods will leave Him when poverty and shame lie in the way. A number came to Christ out of admiration of His eloquence, for He spoke as never man spoke, and it is no wonder that a woman of the multitude exclaimed in admiration, "Blessed is the womb that bore You and the paps that gave You suck!"

How true, however, was our Lord's reply, "Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it." He turned her mind to something *better* than admiration, namely, *believing* reception! But with such a Speaker and with such gracious matter it was no marvel that among His followers were found admirers of the Speaker as well as believers in the Savior. We must not wonder if we still find that some profess to come to Christ because He is eloquently set forth by His ministers, or because the poetical beauties of the Bible and the natural charms of religion win their tastes and hold them with their spell. But it is a poor coming which arises from this and nothing more!

A large number came to our Lord like the region of transient enthusiasm. "Lord, I will follow You wherever You go," said one, but he failed to do so. There were stony-ground hearers in those days whose blade of promise, because it had no depth of earth, sprang up very speedily, but as speedily withered away. Do not be astonished, Brothers and Sisters, if the stony-ground hearers perplex and disappoint us! They still come to Jesus from Pliable's country and come only to go back to their own place. There were those who came to Jesus Christ through misunderstanding His Character. If they had known Him better, they would not have followed Him as far as they did. And they proved this, for when they discovered more, they went back and walked no more with Him.

When He began to unveil certain parts of the Truth of God concerning Himself which had been hidden before, they said, "This is a hard saying, who can bear it?" When His Cross became more apparent and their vision of an earthly kingdom grew more and more dim, they proved that they had followed Him under an error, for they went their way. And no doubt many, today, profess the name of Jesus who are not aware what discipleship really involves. They do not know Him nor His Cross, nor the Truths of God He came to teach, and we may expect to see these go back when fuller discoveries shall startle them. They came to Him from every quarter.

Brother minister, friend working in the Sunday school, laborer for Christ in any low district—you may fairly expect that the people will come to Christ—but do not expect that they will all come from the land of honesty and truth! Do not count all fish that come to the net, or it may happen that your sure disappointment will dampen your zeal and diminish your confidence in the Gospel. Expect to take good fish in your net, but reckon upon finding the dog fish there, too, breaking your lines and attacking your other fish. Out of the best haul a fisherman ever makes there is something to throw away. When you sow good seed, look for wheat to spring up, but be not surprised if tares spring up, also! Just now the sun and the showers are making the corn grow fast, but the weeds are growing, too. It must be so.

Those influences which cause the good to be more lively appear to awake the energies of the Evil One. Whenever the devil is asleep, the Church is asleep, but whenever the Church wakes, the devil wakes, too. Every worker for Christ may reckon on mixed results—and when they come he must not despair as though some strange thing happened to him. Yet let us be thankful that many came to Jesus from the land of sin-

cerity, men convinced that He was the Christ, men like the disciple to whom He said, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood has not revealed this unto you." Some, in coming, gave Him their whole hearts and from then on sat at His feet and received His words.

Some of the best were with Him, though there were some of the worst. Grateful hands were there which could break an alabaster box and pour it out for His sake, as well as cruel hands which could clutch the blood-stained pieces of silver—the price of His betrayal. I leave that point when I have asked you from what quarter *you* came. Are you true men, or spies? Do you come from the assemblies of deceit, or from the abodes of sincerity? Search and look! "Examine yourselves whether you are in the faith. Prove your own selves. Know you not, your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you, except you are reprobate?" I pray God this none of us may be found reprobate in that day!

II. Secondly, we will advance to something nearer and better. OF THE FIRST REAL SPIRITUAL COMING TO CHRIST BY FAITH it may be said, in the words of the text, "They came to Him from every quarter." Let me here employ an illustration. Seeking rest and health last week, I seated myself, for a little while, near a very rustic church which stands empowered in the woods. As I sat there I moralized upon the various paths which led up to the church porch. Each trail through the grass came from a different quarter, but they all led to one point. As I stood there, this reflection crossed me—even thus, men come to Christ from all quarters of the compass—and if, indeed, saved, they all come to Him.

There is a path yonder which rises from a little valley. The little church stands on the hillside. There is a brook at the bottom and worshippers who come from the public road must cross a rustic bridge and then ascend the hill. Such comers rise at every step they take. Many burdened ones come to Christ from the deep places of self-abasement—they know their sinfulness and feel it—their self-consciousness has almost driven them to despair! They are down very low and every step they take to Christ is a step upwards. They have a little hope as they look to Him and then a little more, till it comes to a humble trust. Then from a feeble, trembling trust, it rises to a simple faith and so they advance, till, when they stand near to Jesus they reach to the full assurance of faith. Thus from soul distress and self-despair they come to the Lord Jesus and He receives them graciously.

Through the churchyard there was another path and it ran uphill from where I stood and, therefore, everyone who came that way *descended* to the Church door. These may represent the people who think much of themselves. They have been brought up in morality and lived in respectability in the town of Legality. They have never turned aside to the grosser vices and are among the models of behavior. Every step these good people take towards Christ is downward—they think less of themselves and still less until regret leads to repentance, repentance to bitter grief—and grief leads to self-abhorrence. So they come down to the level where Jesus meets with sinners, by admitting they are *nothing* and that Christ is *all*.

The two paths which I have mentioned were supplemented by a third which led through a thick and tangled forest—a narrow way wound between the oak trees and the dense underbrush. And I noticed that it led over a boggy place through which stepping stones had been carefully placed for the traveler, that he might not sink in the mire. Many a seeker has found his way to Jesus by a similar path. Dark with ignorance and thorny with evil questions, the path winds and twists about and leads through the Slough of Despond where a man had better pick his steps very carefully or he may sink in despair. Those whom Divine Grace leads, arrive at rest in Christ, but it is through the woods and through the slough.

Once more, I recognized another path which came in from the farmer's fields—through lands where the plow and the sickle are busy, each in its season—so that those who come from that quarter to worship come across the place of toil and may fitly represent those who are full of earnestness and effort and have as much need of Jesus as any. They do not know, yet, the way of salvation, but they follow after righteousness by the Law and strive to enter in at the strait gate in their own strength. But if they ever come to Christ, they will have to leave those fields and the plow and sickle of their own strength—and submit to receive Jesus as their All in All.

Now, do not suppose that the trails which I have mentioned are the *only* ones. There is only one Christ, but many are the quarters from which men come to Him. It would be impossible to describe all the ways by which men come to Christ and all the quarters from which they come. To our first believing we are all led by the Spirit of God, but very singular are the experiences of God's people and, perhaps, each man has a road peculiar to himself. We do not know all the ways by which souls arrive at Christ, but there is this mercy—*He* knows the ways by which His redeemed are coming to Him and He knows where they are.

I remember being at Wootton-Under-Edge, in Mr. Hills' garden, and being informed that on the Sabbath morning the quaint old gentleman would go into his garden and watch the people coming to the Meeting House. He would sit in his garden with his telescope, in the center of an amphitheatre of hills, and observe the country people coming down and look for any peculiar action. He then might mention it in his sermon, very much to the astonishment of the persons concerned! Our Lord Jesus, sitting in the center to which His redeemed are coming, sees them all, even when they are yet a great way off. If we can conceive a soul millions of miles off from Him, as far off as a comet is gone from the sun when it wanders to its utmost tether, yet our Lord Jesus Christ knows where the wanderer comes from and notes the time when the turning begins and the hour when the face is set towards Himself!

He can spy out Grace in a man's heart long before the man, himself, is conscious of it, and long before the most hopeful minister in the world could see a trace of Divine life in the soul. What a mercy this is! They come to Him from every quarter and He knows where they come from and how far they are on the road! Let us pray for all who are coming to Christ,

as well as for those who have actually laid hold upon Him—"Lord Jesus, we pray You help those who are coming Your way. Draw them till they come nearer. Far away as they are, yet make them near." We do not always know when men are coming, but when we perceive some little desire in that direction, let us imitate the great Father in the parable and run to meet them and see if we can help them on the journey.

Perhaps they need another stepping stone to be placed for them and we may drop one where their feet can reach it, or like Help, in "Pilgrim's Progress" we may help them out from the slough into which they have slipped. Do this for Christ's sake! Remember that of all who come to Christ from every quarter, never one was disappointed with Him yet. They come from various regions, drawn by the hope that Jesus will supply their needs—and He does supply them. All sorts of people who come to Christ, believingly, find in Him all that is needed to meet their peculiar cases. Sweet, also, is the thought that He never casts out a sinner, come from where he may. They arrive from different quarters, but He has no prejudice against Galilee or Judea, or Tyre or Sidon—He receives all comers!

The elder in the Book of Revelation asked a deeply interesting question, "From where did they come?" and, blessed be God, it is one which will never be answered to the prejudice of anyone who draws near to Jesus by faith! O Sinners, you may come from the thieves' kitchen, or from the convicts' cell! You are as welcome to Jesus as those who come from homes of virtue. You may come from the seat of the scorner. You may come from the bench of the drunk and if you come you shall receive a hearty welcome! You, too, O hopeful ones, may come from the home of piety and from the school of truth—and when you come, you will find the gates set wide open to receive you!

Come from the tents of Jacob, or from the tents of Kedar. Come from the holy mountain or from the lonely wilderness and you shall, all alike, find that He will in no way cast you out! It is a very pleasant reflection to us that when needy souls draw near to Jesus they cause Him no sorrow, but rather bring Him joy. All His redeeming work is done. He has only to receive the recompense due to Him. They come, says one, with the burden of their sins and lay them upon Him. I answer, this is only true in a certain sense and must not be misunderstood. It is a great joy to think that no burden can come on our Lord's shoulders, now—no man can lay sin upon Christ anymore—it was laid on Him by the Father long ago. And, since He has made full atonement for it, not a particle of it remains!

Each redeemed one has cost Christ His life, already, and therefore, as each one actually comes, He costs Him nothing! On the contrary, He sees in each one the recompense for the travail of His soul. If we saw sinners coming by thousands to Christ and knew that He would have to bear the chastisement of their peace and be bruised, again, for their iniquities, we might well be sorrowful! But it is not so—He has finished the atoning work! Agony and pain are all over and now, as the redeemed come to Him, they gladden His heart! They increase His praise, they reward His pains. Oh that they would come in troops, like the flocks of Carmel for number! I may say in rustic language, "the more the merrier!" Let them gather from

every quarter, each one bringing with him a crown of love for the Redeemer's brow!

Brothers and Sisters, there is no fear that the multitudes will cease to come from every quarter. The Greek word might be rendered, "They kept on coming to Him from every quarter." Even thus it is now. They are coming, they *always* will be coming, there will never be a time when they will not come! In the prophetic words of the 22nd Psalm, we are told that, "they shall come." We fall into a dull state at times and but few are converted, yet the Lord revives us by His Spirit and thousands are saved! We had notable evangelists among us preaching the Gospel and some persons imagined that when they were gone we should see no more of the work, but it is not so, sinners are still coming to Jesus and they will come.

The question for each one of my hearers is this—Am I coming, or have I come to Jesus? They came from every quarter—have I come? You strangers from beyond the sea. You good people from the country, are *you* coming to Jesus? You Londoners who regularly hear the Gospel in this house, are *you* coming? You who only occasionally listen to it, are *you* coming to Jesus? God grant that it may be said this morning of this mixed assembly, "They came to Jesus from every quarter!"

III. Thirdly, since coming to Christ is not a matter of once in your life and the Scripture says plainly, "Unto whom coming," to show us that the Christian is *always* coming to Christ, we will, therefore, follow out our point in reference to THE DAILY COMINGS OF SAVED SOULS TO JESUS. Here, too, they come to Him from every quarter. Let us think a minute. This morning the desire of every renewed soul here has been to come to Christ—and I hope that desire has been fulfilled to us all. If so, we have come to Him from every quarter! You who are very poor have forgotten your poverty this morning and found exceedingly great riches in Him. And, on the other hand, I trust that you who are wealthy have forgotten your worldly treasures and rejoiced to be only rich in Him.

If you have had a trying week, a perplexing week, a week of losses and crosses, you have, nevertheless, approached Him from that quarter and found Him a sure solace for your cares. Another has had a week of prosperity and success, but you, too, have not been content till you could leave the best things of earth to embrace the Lord from Heaven. From all points of experience you have come. Among the number of God's people here, this morning, who have had communion with Christ, what a variety of outward circumstances would be found in the quarters from which they have come! Men and women come to our Lord from every quarter as to mental pursuits. The great student, the critic, the profound mathematician, the acute philosopher—all these, when taught of the Holy Spirit, delight to come to Jesus for rest!

I am sure I speak their mind when I say it is a great relief on Sunday to have done with puzzling problems and feed upon the simplicities of Jesus. I have heard say that men of great minds, when they come to hear a sermon, if they detect an attempt at something very fine on the part of the preacher and meet with displays of mere intellect, they turn away disappointed and say, "We have had enough of this all week." The Sabbath is a

day of rest and that minister breaks the Sabbath in spirit who leads the people into the bondage of human wisdom instead of setting before them the Lord Jesus in whom, alone, they can find rest for their souls.

There are a few, blessed be God, who come to Jesus from the quarter of human culture and are delighted to come! These find more in Jesus Christ simply preached than the most capacious mind can take in. Blessed be God, thousands who are not philosophers or mathematicians are doing the same! Their thoughts are not very deep or penetrating, but they come to Christ in deed and of a truth and receive Him gladly. It is astonishing what a great deal of Christ some very ignorant people can take in! Converse with a godly old shepherd—the man may scarcely know his letters—but listen how he speaks of Divine things!

Go and sit with a poor Christian woman in her cottage who never went beyond the village, and never will, unless an inhospitable sect should forbid her bones to be laid in the public graveyard with congenial rites—but she knows her Savior—and many a memorable fact will she tell you concerning Him! These Grace-taught saints know more about Christ, though the world calls them ignorant, than the most learned men can possibly know by human teaching! Thus you see they come to Jesus Christ from every quarter of mental condition.

And I thank God they come to Christ from all points of theological thought. My Brother over yonder, who loves the eternal purposes, how readily he comes to Jesus from considering the Covenant and the everlasting decrees of Grace. It is pleasant to come over the eternal hills to Jesus! My other Friend, over yonder, does not love this way. I wish he did. He dwells mainly upon the responsibility of man and upon the great love of God to all mankind, yet he comes to Jesus across the plains of infinite benevolence and delights to see in Jesus the sinner's All in All. John Wesley sings—

“Jesus, lover of my soul.”

And Toplady, who viewed things from another point of view, sings—

“Rock of Ages, cleft for me.”

They come from every quarter! Thank God that it is so! Different lines of thought about the Truth of God meet in Jesus, even as all great railways meet in London.

I trust we have come to Christ from every quarter of our own spiritual experience. We have been cast into the deeps, but, “out of the depth, have I cried unto You, O Lord, and You heard me.” Upon the heights, also, we have stood, but there we have sung, “You make my feet like hinds' feet. You make me to stand upon my high places.” We have exulted in God and we have comforted ourselves in God! We have delighted ourselves in the light of His Countenance and we have also rejoiced under the shadow of His wings. From all quarters of emotion we have turned to the Beloved of our souls. And so from different characteristics of mind have souls come to Christ. Mary is contemplative and for her there is a seat at the Master's feet. Peter is active and for him there are sheep to be fed and lambs to be tended.

In our Lord, persons of various dispositions can all find what they need. The loving mind which dives deep and is a little inclined to the mystic school can find, in Jesus, the fullest scope, even as Madame Guyon did. Warm hearts need no other fuel for their flame than the love of Jesus—see how that theme kept George Herbert in a perpetual glow! And you, too, my Brothers and Sisters, active and energetic, you who spend and are spent in philanthropic works and deeds of devotion to God, you find in Jesus Christ all that can sustain your ardor and sanctify your activities. From every quarter saints come to our Lord as to a living well and never come in vain!

It makes my Lord so much the more precious to me when I remember that He is so precious to multitudes of others. 'Tis true, He is so necessary and so satisfying to my own soul that He seems as if He had been prepared on purpose for me! Infinite wisdom could not devise a Savior who suited my case more fully! It does, however, increase my joy in Him that thousands, and tens of thousands, think the same, each one for himself! Tradition says of the manna that it tasted just as every man desired and was grateful to every palate—it is so with the Bread of Heaven—it has a choice adaptation to each Believer's need and a fullness to supply the necessities of each tried heir of the kingdom! You may have a whole Christ to yourself and yet millions of happy spirits are doing the same and living upon His inexhaustible stores! Rejoice, my Brothers and Sisters, in this, for to the generous heart this piles up the ecstasy and gives us Heaven upon Heaven in the fact that so vast a number, as well as ourselves, find their all in Jesus.

Not only do we come to Him, but Grace brings other Believers to Him from every quarter. Let it be one of our aims always to be path-makers—to clear the ways for our Brethren to come nearer to our Lord. When we see them coming from the woods, let us show them the way over the trail. Or if they find it hard to climb the steep ascent from the valley, let us lend them a hand. If we fear that they are too high up, let us show them the way down by walking humbly, ourselves. Wherever they are, let it be our endeavor to bring them to Christ! Our Lord Jesus is the common meeting place of saints—let us commune with all who commune with Him.

Let us maintain holy communion with those who love Him and we shall be blessed thereby. My Brother knows something about my Lord that I do not—and I know something about Him which he has not yet learned—therefore we can aid each other by holy communion. In the olden times, “they that feared the Lord spoke often, one to another,” and I know it was good talk, for God, Himself, listened to it. It is said that “the Lord listened and heard,” and He thought so much of what was spoken that He made a volume of it, “and a book of memorial was written for them that feared the Lord and thought upon His name.”

IV. Lastly, Brothers and Sisters, my text is full of THAT GREAT GATHERING WHICH IS APPROACHING NEARER EVERY MOMENT, and which will be complete when—

***“All the chosen race
Shall meet around the Throne,***

***Shall bless the conduct of His Grace
And make His wonders known.***

Saints come to Jesus in Glory from every quarter! He is the center of the Church. Many have reached the Lord, up yonder, and are now bowing before His Throne. Men of every age are there, from Adam to Moses, from Joshua to the time of the kings and the Prophets—and even to this hour they continue to come to Him. They come from every quarter of the globe and from every race and tribe. What a gathering it must be! Heaven is cosmopolitan and Christ has abolished all distinction between Jew and Gentile, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free—they all meet in Him and He is All and in all.

What a mixed company and yet how uniform in their joy and in their satisfaction in Him. David said, “I shall be satisfied when I awake in His likeness.” You are not David, but you can say the same! Yes, we shall meet in Him from every quarter! The main point to dwell upon is that they, wherever they hail from, all come to *Him*. It is a very pleasant prospect to think of meeting our fellow servants in Heaven. But it must never be allowed to bear comparison with the prospect of meeting the Master. Of course we shall see them all. Old John Ryland said most quaintly—

***“They all shall be there, the great and the small;
Poor I shall shake hands with the blessed St. Paul,”***

and no doubt we shall! Like peers we shall sit in that royal house of lords! We, each one, shall take his own seat in that parliament of kings, for He has “made us kings and priests unto God.”

What companions we shall have! What most high and solemn communion with the best and purest spirits that ever scattered light over the darkness of this world! But here is the point, we shall be with *Him*. We shall not care much, I believe, about anything else compared with being with Him where He is and beholding His Glory. This is Heaven to me! We shall come to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn—but then, since Christ is in them *all* and they are all members of *His* body, it will be only another form of coming to Him and, will, by no means interfere, but rather enlarge our fellowship with our glorious Head!

I would like to say, just to finish, that I believe this idea of coming to Christ from every quarter is capable of an expansion which I leave for you to think upon and will not, therefore, explain at length. The day comes when the Lord Jesus will “gather together in one, all things which are in Him, both which are in Heaven and which are on earth.” Then shall He head up all the things which are in Him and these shall come to Him from every quarter. Of this, His mysterious Person is the prophecy and foretaste! Is it not wonderful what a gathering up of everything there is in the Person of our blessed Lord? The material universe has a part in Him, for He was born into that flesh and blood which links us to the inanimate matter beneath our feet.

With mind in its lower form He is akin, for He had and has a human soul. To spirits He is Brother, for He is the Head of the spiritual seed. To crown all, with God, Himself, He is one! God, considered in His absolute Godhead, stands alone, and a gulf divides Him from all creatures. But God in Christ Jesus takes the whole sweep of creation into Himself and

when you shall behold Him in the ages to come, this will more and more clearly appear to you. The glorious Christ of God brings all creation to a focus and unites it in one, around His Person. We shall understand this better, by-and-by. Meanwhile it is sweet to muse upon it.

I saw a scene depicted upon a painted window of the Church of St. Etienne, in Lyons, which struck me very much. It represents our Lord after the temptation in the wilderness, when He was with the wild beasts, and the angels ministered unto Him. The angels are depicted as bringing Him fruits and drinks, bread and meat and making harmony on instruments of music. Above Him the sun shines softly upon Him. Over His head is a tree bearing fruit, the branches of which seem to bow to Him, laden with mellow refreshment. At His feet a little stream warbles as it flows and causes the grass and the wild flowers to flourish around Him. While the flowers are blooming for Him beneath, tender doves above Him are cooing with delight and birds of the air are pausing to sing to Him.

A gentle fawn is fearlessly drinking from the brook close to His hands, while a lion, humbly lying down before Him, is paying Him homage. A rabbit is feeding at ease right by the wild beast. Everything is happy, peaceful and at home. The angels and the rabbits, the lion and the gazelle, the heavens above and the flowers beneath all meet in Him—even the sun seems to have, himself, become a lovely flower and turns to the yet greater light! Jesus is the center of them all! I admire the artist's thought—it has truth within it. Our Lord has blessed and consecrated the very earth, for it felt the impressions of His holy feet. And the water of the river is no longer common or unclean, for was He not buried in Baptism there? Every sunbeam is now gracious, for the sun has looked on HIM!

The lower creatures, too, are to be treated tenderly, for *He* loved them. They came to Him from the time when the oxen fed from His manger where He lay as a Baby to the day when the ass was not divided from her foal when He rode through the streets of Jerusalem. Let us treat all things reverently, for He condescended to think of them all. From the angels down to the waves of the sea and the clay of which He made healing ointment, all things in their spheres ministered upon Him and so they came to Him from every quarter! And the day comes when the creatures emancipated from the bondage to which they have been unwillingly subjected shall find redemption in Him (Rom. 8:21)!

To Him shall they come from every quarter—as many as are in Him—and both the lowest material and the loftiest spirit shall rejoice in the new heavens and the new earth where righteousness dwells. Then shall dragons and all deeps, mountains and all hills, beasts and all cattle, creeping things and flying fowl, kings of the earth and all people praise the name of the Lord! And the heavens and the Heaven of heavens, angels, sun and moon and stars of light shall magnify His Glory! Then shall the trees of the forests rejoice before the Lord! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark 1:9.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—416, 425, 436.**

THE NEW FASHION

NO. 1269

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; so that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.”
Mark 2:12.***

IT is very natural that there should be many surprising things in the Gospel, for it is remarkable beyond measure that there should be a Gospel at all. As soon as I begin thinking of it I exclaim with Bunyan, “O world of wonders, I can say no less.” And I invite you all to join with the multitude in saying with the text, “We never saw it on this fashion.” When man had sinned, God might instantly have destroyed our rebel race, or He might have permitted it to exist as the fallen angels do—in a state of enmity to all goodness and in consequent misery. But He who passed the angels by took up the seed of Abraham and looked upon *man*—that insignificant item in the ranks of creatureship and determined that man should experience salvation and show forth His Divine Grace.

It was a wonderful thing, to begin with, that there should be a Gospel for men. And when we remember that the Gospel involved the gift of the only-begotten Son of God. When we remember that it was necessary that God, the invisible Spirit, should be veiled in human flesh. When we think about the fact that the Son of God should become the son of Mary, should be subject to pain and weakness, poverty and shame—when we remember all this, we may expect to find great wonders clustering round such a stupendous fact!

Beholding God in human flesh, miracles no longer strike us as being at all marvelous, for the Incarnation of God outmiracles miracle! But we must further remember that in order to bring the Gospel to us it was necessary that God should, in our nature, offer Atonement for human sin. Think of it! The holy God making Atonement for sin! When the angels first heard of it, they must have been lost in astonishment, for they “never saw it on this fashion.” Shall the Offended *die* for the offender? Shall the Judge bear the chastisement of the criminal? Shall God take upon Himself the transgression of His creature? Yet so it has been, and Jesus Christ has borne, that we might *never* bear, the consequences of sin—no, sin itself. “For the transgression of My people was He stricken.” Jesus was made a curse for us, as it is written, “Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree.”

Now, a commonplace result could not be imagined as growing out of a Gospel sent to rebellious men, much less a Gospel involving the Incarnation and the death of the Son of God! Everything in God’s creation is made to scale. There is a balance between the dewdrop on the rose and the most majestic of yonder orbs that adorn the brow of night. Law regulates everything, from a single drop of water to the ocean itself. Everything is propor-

tionate and, therefore, we are persuaded that in an economy in which we start with an Incarnate God and an infinite Atonement there must be something very striking. And we ought to be prepared to exclaim frequently, "We never saw it on this fashion."

Commonplaces are foreign to the Gospel. We have entered the land of wonders when we behold the love of God in Christ Jesus. Romance is out-romanced in the Gospel. Whatever marvels men are able to imagine, the facts of God's amazing Grace are more extraordinary than anything imagination has ever conceived. I desire at this time to say two or three things to those who are not familiar with the Gospel. Some have dropped in here to whom the Gospel, as we believe it, is quite a new thing. I want to say to them, first, *do not disbelieve it because it strikes you as doing something very strange*. In the second place, remember that *in the Gospel there must be amazing and surprising things* and we shall try to set them out before you, hoping that, so far from your disbelieving them, faith may be worked in your soul as you hear them. And, thirdly, *if any of these strange things should have happened to you, and you should have to say, "We never saw it on this fashion," then glorify God and give new honors to His name*.

I. First, then, DO NOT DISBELIEVE THE GOSPEL BECAUSE IT SURPRISES YOU. Remember, in the first place, that *nothing stands so much in the way of real knowledge as prejudice*. Our race might have known a great deal more of scientific facts if it had not been so largely occupied and captivated with scientific supposition. Take up books upon most sciences and you will find that the main part of the material is an answer to many *theories* that have been set up in ages gone by, or originated in modern times. Theories are the nuisances of science, the rubbish which must be swept away that the precious facts may be laid bare.

If you go to the study of a subject, saying to yourself, "This is how the matter must shape itself," having beforehand made up your mind what the facts ought to be, you will have put in your own way a difficulty more severe than the subject itself could place there. Prejudice is the stumbling block of advance. To believe that we know before we *do* know is to prevent our really making discoveries and coming to right knowledge. When an observer first discovered that there were spots on the sun he reported it, but he was called before his "Father Confessor" and upbraided for having reported anything of the kind.

The Jesuit said that he had read Aristotle through several times and he had found no mention in Aristotle of any spots on the sun and, therefore, there could be no such things. And when the offender replied that he had *seen* these spots through glasses, the father told him that he must not believe his eyes—he must believe *him* because it was certain, to begin with, that if Aristotle had not indicated the spots, spots there could not be—and he must not believe it. Now, there are some who come to hear the Gospel in that spirit.

They have a notion of what the Gospel ought to be—a pretty firm and strong cast-iron creed of their own manufacturing—or an hereditary one which they have received with the old family chest of drawers. And they are, therefore, unprepared to hear candidly and learn. Neither do they

turn to Scripture to discover the mind of the Spirit of God, but to find some color for their prejudices. It is easy to show a man a thing if he will open his eyes, but if he shuts his eyes and resolves not to see, the task is difficult.

You may light a candle pretty readily, but you cannot do so if it has an extinguisher over it. And there are persons who have extinguished their souls and covered them over with prejudices. They act as judges of what the Gospel *ought* to be and, if there is anything said that does not suit their preconceived notions, straightway they are offended. This is very absurd and, in a matter in which our souls are concerned, it is something worse than ridiculous! It is dangerous to the highest degree. We ought to come to the preaching of the Word of God praying, "Lord, teach me! Blessed Spirit guide me into all Truth. Let me see a doctrine to be in Your Word and I will accept it, though it should shock all my prejudices. Though it should seem to me to be a totally new thing, yet, if clearly it is the Word of God, I am willing to receive it and to rejoice in it."

God give us such a spirit, so that when we have to say in the words of the text, "We never saw it on this fashion," yet still our prejudices may not prevent our accepting the Truth of God! Let us remember, dear Friends, that *many things which we know to be true would not have been believed by our fathers if they had been revealed to them*. I feel morally certain that there were many generations of Englishmen who, if they could have been informed that men would travel at 40 or 50 miles an hour over the surface of the earth, drawn without horses, but by a *steam* engine, they would have shaken their heads, and laughed such a prediction to scorn.

Even a little time ago, if someone had prophesied that we should be able to speak across the Atlantic in a single instant and speedily obtain a reply by a cable that should be laid along the ocean's bottom, we, ourselves, could not have conceived it to be possible. How could it be? And yet these things are common everyday facts with us now. Let us, therefore, *expect* that when we come to deal with what is more wonderful than creation and far more wonderful than any of the inventions of man, we will meet with things which will be hard to be believed. Let us willingly give up our heart and soul to receive the impress of the Truth of God and constantly exercise a simple faith in what God reveals.

It is well known that *there are many things which are undoubted facts which certain classes of men find it hard to believe*. Some time ago a Missionary had told his congregation that in the winter time the water in England became so hard that a man could walk upon it. Now they believed a good deal that he had said, but they did not believe *that!* And they whispered to one another that the Missionary was a great liar. One of them was brought over to England. He came over with the full conviction that it was a most ridiculous thing to suppose that any man could ever walk across a river.

At last the frost came, the river was frozen over and the Missionary took his friend down to it. The good man stood on the ice, himself, but he could not persuade his convert to venture. "No," he said, "I do not believe it." "But you can see it, Man!" said the other. "Come along with you! Come here!" "No," he said, "I never saw it so. I have lived 50 years in my own

country and I never saw a man walk on a river before.” “But here I am, doing it,” said the Missionary, “come along with you!” And he seized his hand and pulled so vigorously that at last the African tried the frozen water and found that it did support his weight. Thus a statement proved to be none the less true because it was contrary to experience!

The same rule holds good in the case of the Gospel. Yet you must expect to find in it certain things which you could not have believed to be true. But if some of us have proven them to be facts and are living in the daily enjoyment of them, do not stubbornly refuse to try them, yourself. If we get you by the hand affectionately and say, “Come on to this River of Life. It will bear you, you can walk in safety here. We are doing so and have done so for years,” do not act towards us as if we were deceivers. And do not put us off with the absurd argument that the Gospel cannot be true because *you* have not, until this time, tried it and, therefore, have no experience of its power!

Why, my dear Friend, it may be true for all that, just as the ice was a matter of fact though the friend from Africa had never seen it. He found the ice a reality when he, at last, ventured upon it and you will find Jesus Christ and the precious things of the Gospel to be sure and firm and true, as we have found them to be, if you will only venture your soul upon them! I merely mention these things to prepare your mind for the full conviction that *the fact that a Gospel statement seems new and astonishing ought not to create unbelief in the mind.*

My beloved Friend, it may be that you exclaim, “I cannot hope that my sin can be forgiven. I cannot imagine that my heart can be changed. I cannot suppose it possible that, by one simple act of faith, I could be a saved man.” No, but do you not see that every man measures things according to his own standard? We measure other people’s corn, but we always do it with our own bushel. We even try to measure *God* by our own standard and there is a text which very sweetly rebukes us for it, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the Lord.” What I consider it right to expect from God may, very naturally, be a very different thing from what God may be prepared to give me.

Perhaps I judge of His behavior towards me by what I deserve, and if I do so, what can I look for? Or, perhaps, I judge of His mercy by my own, and considering whether I could forgive to 70 times seven—whether, if often provoked, I could still overlook the transgression. I find in my own heart no very great powers of forgiveness and then I conclude that God is as hard and as unwilling to forgive as I am. But we must not so judge. Oh, Sinners, *you* must not do so!

If you are longing for a great salvation, you must not sit down and begin to calculate the Godhead by inches and measure out the merit of Christ by yards and calculate whether He can do this, or can do that. A God—what is there that He *cannot* do? Did Jesus make an Atonement boundless as His Nature? Then what sin is there which that Atonement cannot wash away? Judge not the Lord according to human judgement! Know you, O Man, that He is no small stream or lake which you can measure, and whose capacity you can calculate—He is a sea without a

bottom and without a shore—and all your thoughts are drowned when you attempt to measure Him!

Lift up your thoughts as high as you ever will and think great things of God—and *expect* great things from God—and when you shall have enlarged your expectation and your faith shall have grown to its very utmost, God is able to do exceeding abundantly *above* what you ask, or even think. “Can you, by searching, find out God?” Do you expect that you can exceed Him and desire more and hope for more than He is able to give? O, it cannot be! Consider this—that you are very liable to make a mistake as to what the Gospel is. Why? Because your mode of estimating it must naturally be a false one since you judge only from what you *know*, and what you are capable of, while God is infinitely above all that you know or can conceive.

Further, let me remind you, dear Friend, you who are a stranger to the Gospel, that when we come to speak of it directly, *you must not disbelieve it on account of its strangeness, for it is clear that many have made a mistake as to what the Gospel is.* The Jews who lived in our Savior’s day heard the best Preacher that ever preached, but they did not understand Him. It was not from lack of a lucid style, for, “never man spoke like this Man,” but yet they mistook all that He said! They thought that they knew His meaning but they did not. And even His own disciples and the Apostles, until they were illuminated by the Spirit of God, mistook the meaning of their Master and knew but little, after all His teaching. Should you feel at all astonished if you should have been mistaken, dear Friend—you who have never found joy and peace in believing?

Is it not possible that you may have been mistaken, after all? The Jews heard the Savior Himself and yet did not understand the Truth of God. Some of them were men of genius and well instructed. There was one, especially, who was a ruler—a doctor among the Jews—who understood not these things. And when the Savior said to him, “You must be born again,” he took it literally—he could not understand the mystic change which the Savior meant to describe. Now, if Nicodemus did not know and, a great many like Nicodemus, may it not happen to be the case that *you*, also, have not found out the secret and are, at this moment, without the possession of it?

Possibly you may be a person of very considerable education and of remarkable gifts and parts. My dear Friend, if any people are liable to miss the true sense of the Gospel, it is such as you are! It is strange, you will say, that I should make such a remark, but the observation is founded upon fact. “Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty are chosen.” Not many of the learned of this world ever learn of Christ! He teaches babes, but leaves wise men to boast in their own folly. The Magi of the East went round about to find the Savior—even with a star to guide them they missed their way. But the humble shepherds from the plains of Bethlehem, without a star, went immediately to the place where Jesus was.

Ah, it was a good and true remark of Augustine, when he said, “While the learned are fumbling to find the latch, the simple and poor have entered into the Kingdom of Heaven.” Simplicity of heart is more helpful to

the understanding of the Gospel than culture of mind. To be ready to be taught is a better faculty than to be able to teach, as far as the reception of the Gospel is concerned. That degree in divinity may stand in your way of understanding the Divine God! And the very position that you have taken in the classical studies may render it the more difficult for you to comprehend that which the wayfaring man, though he is a fool, knows by heart! Since it is certainly so, I am not offering you any insult when I say, perhaps, dear Friend, you may, until this time, have labored under a mistake, and, therefore, if at any time the Gospel should be spoken to you, it would well become you to give it a fair hearing and not to reject it because it appears to be new.

One other remark, and I will go on to the next point, and it is this. The person I am now addressing, and I believe that there are such persons here, if he is the man I mean, must confess *that the religion he now possesses has not done much for him*. You think you know the Gospel? But, say—could you die upon what you know? Could you die *now—now—*happily and contentedly with the hope you have? If you could, I thank God and congratulate you. Has your hope which you possess comforted your heart? Do you feel and know assuredly that your sins are forgiven you? Do you look upon God as your Father? Are you in the habit of speaking with Him as a child speaks with his father, confiding in Him and telling all your cares and troubles to Him? If it is so, my dear Friend, I rejoice with you.

But unless yours is the religion of Jesus Christ, I know you have not found such peace. There are many shapes of what is called, “religion,” many, many shapes. But they amount to this—they put a man in a position in which he feels that he is about as good as other people, and as well to do in spiritual things as the average of others—and if he does his best, and acts up to his knowledge and light, he will get better, no doubt. And, perhaps, when he comes to die, possibly by the assistance of a clergyman or a priest—perhaps by some remarkable experience that he may undergo in the use of sacraments—he may get to Heaven.

It is the general religion of mankind that they are on a road which they have to follow, and by industriously and carefully pursuing it they will possibly save themselves by the gracious help of the Lord Jesus Christ. They generally tack that on, of course, to make their self-righteousness look a little more respectable! Now, I say deliberately, as in the sight of God, that such religion is not worth one solitary halfpenny! The religion of the Lord Jesus Christ gives a man a complete, full, free, irreversible pardon of all his sins at once, together with the changing of his nature, the implantation of a new life and the putting of him into the family of God.

And it gives to him these things so that he knows that he has them, consciously enjoys them and lives in the power and spirit of them—humbly serving the Lord who has done such great things for him. This is the religion of Christ and this is what we are now going to speak of more fully, while we mention some few things which lead men to say, “We never saw it on this fashion.

II. Our second point was to be that THERE ARE VERY SINGULAR AND SURPRISING THINGS IN THE GOSPEL. Let us mention some of them.

One is this—that *the Gospel should come to people whom it regards as incapable*. In the narrative before us the wonder was that the Lord Jesus dealt with a crippled and paralyzed person so far gone that he could not crawl into Christ's Presence, but had to be borne by four friends. Look at him! He is incapable and incurable! All that he can do is lie on that bed on which the kindness of friends has placed him—and there he must remain—he can do nothing.

Now, the Gospel regards every man to whom it comes as unable to do anything good. It addresses you, not merely as paralyzed, but it goes farther and describes you as *dead*. The Gospel speaks to the dead! I have often heard it said that the duty of the Christian minister is to awaken the activities of sinners. I believe the very *reverse*—he should rather labor to kill their self-trusting activities dead and to make them know that all that they can do of themselves is worse than nothing! They can do nothing, for how can the *dead* move in their graves? How can the dead in sin accomplish their own quickening? The power which can save does not lie in the *sinner*—it lies in his God!

And if any of you are unconverted, I do not come to tell you something which you are able to do, by the doing of which you can save yourselves, but I warn you that you are lost, ruined, and undone! You have power to stray like lost sheep, but if ever you come back your Shepherd must bring you back, you will never come back of yourselves. You had power to destroy yourselves and you have exercised that power. But now your help does not lie in you, it lies in your God. It is a strange thing that the Gospel should represent a man to be in such a desperate condition, but it is a fact. And though it is astonishing, let it not be doubted.

An equally remarkable thing is that the Gospel *calls upon men to do what they cannot do*, for Jesus Christ said to this paralyzed man, "I say unto you, Arise, take up your bed and walk." He could *not* rise. He could not take up his bed, and could not walk and yet he was bid to do it. And it is one of the strange things of the way of salvation that—

"The Gospel bids the dead revive!

Sinners obey the voice and live.

Dry bones are raised and clothed afresh,

And hearts of stone are turned to flesh."

We have to say, in the name of Jesus, to the man with the withered arm—whose arm is so withered that we know he has no power in it, "Stretch out your hand." And we say it in God's name. Some of my Brethren of a certain order of doctrine say, "It is ridiculous! If you admit that a man cannot do it, it is ridiculous to tell him to do it."

But we do not mind being ridiculous—we care little for the censure of human judgement. If God gives us a commission, that commission will prevent our suffering very seriously from the ridicule of other people. "Ezekiel, do you not see before you that valley of dry bones?" "Yes," he says, "I see them. They are very many and very dry. Through many a summer the sun has scorched them and through many a winter the fierce winds have dried them till they are as if they had passed through an oven."

“Prophet, what can *you* do with these bones? If God means to raise them to life they will be raised, therefore let them alone. What can *you* do?” Listen to him as he makes solemn proclamation. “Thus says the Lord, You dry bones live!” “Ridiculous, Ezekiel! They cannot live, why speak to them?” He knows they cannot live of themselves, but he also knows that his Master bids him tell them to live, and he does what his Master tells him! So, in the Gospel, the minister is to bid men to believe, and he is to say, “Repent, and believe the Gospel.” For this reason, alone, do we say, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.”

The Gospel bids you believe, albeit that you are dead in trespasses and sins. “I cannot understand it,” says somebody. No, and you never will till God reveals it to you. But, when the Lord comes and dwells with you, you will *perfectly* understand and see how the exercise of faith on the part of the preacher of the Gospel is a part of the Divine operation by which dead souls are raised!

Another and more remarkable thing is this—that while the Gospel comes to men incapable and dead, and bids them do what they cannot of themselves do, *they actually do it*—there is the marvel! In the name of Jesus we say to the paralyzed man, “Take up your bed and walk,” and he takes up his bed and walks! For with the Word of God faithfully spoken, in confidence in God, there comes the eternal *power* into the man who had no power of his own! And God’s elect, called out by the preaching of the Gospel, hear the message from Heaven and the power comes with it at the time they hear the message, so that they obey it and live. Dead as they were, they live!

O, marvelous operation this—that, out of this congregation, while I say, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ”—there will be some who will believe and be saved! Those who will believe have no more power, naturally, to believe, than others have—they are by nature all in an equal state of death! But to God’s own chosen the Word comes with power, attended by the Holy Spirit, and they believe and live!

Here are three singular things. It is a strange thing to have to tell you good Church people and Chapel people who have always done everything so well, that unless you are converted you are dead in trespasses and sins and all your good works are so many grave clothes in which your corpse is wrapped up, and nothing better! And it is strange that we should be bound to call upon you to believe in Jesus when we have already told you that you have no spiritual life. And it is remarkable that we should be commanded to warn you that you are living in great sin if you do not believe in Jesus.

More singular still, you may judge it to be, that we are confident that the telling you these things plainly and honestly in the name of God, will be blessed by the Spirit of God, and will lead you to believe and to trust in Jesus! It seems strange, but so it is. More remarkable, still, to the crowd, no doubt, was this—that this paralyzed man *was healed at once*. If ever a cure of paralysis is worked at any time—and it is very rarely that such thing occurs—I do not think that it is ever cured in an instant.

This man is unable to move hand or foot, but Jesus says, “Take up your bed and walk,” and he rises as if he had never been paralyzed! Every

ligament is in its place. Every muscle is ready for action in a moment. You would have thought it would take a month or two, and a good deal of rubbing and friction to bring the man's blood into healthy action, to get him round and warm him into life again. But it did not—he only heard that strange voice which told him to do what he could not do, and he did what he could not do by a power that went with that message! And so he rose up and was healed at once.

And here is the marvel of the Gospel. A sinner hears the Gospel and all the sins of his whole life are upon him, but he believes that Gospel and all his sins are gone in a moment! And he is as clean before the Throne of God as if never a sin had defiled him. He was, up to the time of his reception of the Gospel, an enemy to God by wicked works. But he accepts the Testimony of God concerning His Son Jesus, he rests in Jesus and his heart becomes as the heart of a little child. In a moment the stone is taken away and the fleshy heart is given—He becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus! The darkness disappears as the primeval darkness fled before the fiat which said, "Let there be light." 'Tis done—done in a moment!

You will not comprehend this, I am sure, till you experience it. Oh how I bless God that years ago when I heard the message of God—"Look unto Me and be you saved all you ends of the earth," I was enabled to look and live! I pined and longed for salvation and labored hard and prayed hard to get it—but I never got one inch the farther. But the message came—"Look!"—how could I look? My eyes were sightless! But I *did* look, for the power to look came with the command to look, and the moment I looked I was as conscious that I was forgiven as I am conscious of my existence!

There was life to me in a look at the Crucified One! Sure pardon, certain and sealed home to my conscience, was given to me in the same moment when I looked to Jesus in the bloody sweat, Jesus on the Cross, Jesus risen from the dead and Jesus gone into Glory! A look at Him and it was all done! You had not thought of that, you say, and even now it startles you. You thought you would have to take the sacrament and keep on attending a place of worship, and gradually work yourself up out of your paralyzed condition. That is *man's* way of salvation! But Christ's way of salvation is an *instantaneous* change of heart and an *instantaneous* forgiveness of sin!

Another thing which they had never seen after that fashion was that *the man was healed without any ceremony*. The proper way to heal a paralyzed person would have been to fetch the priest down and to bring water and oil, or to shed the blood of a bullock and offer it. And then to go through no end of ceremonies—and through the mysterious power of ceremonies, at last the man might be cleansed. But here was not one single ceremony. It was just this—"Take up your bed and walk." The man, though he cannot take up his bed and walk, yet believes that He who told him to do it will give him power to do it—and he takes up his bed and walk!

There is the whole of it in a nutshell. He believes and acts on that belief, and he is restored. And that is the whole plan of salvation. You believe the Gospel and act upon the truth of it, and you are saved—saved the moment you accept the witness of God concerning His Son Jesus

Christ. But is there not Baptism? Yes, for the *saved*—but no Baptism *in order to salvation*. When you are saved—when you are a Believer in Jesus—then the instructive ordinances of God’s house become useful to you—but God forbid that we should ever look to Baptism as a *means* of salvation! God forbid that we should even look to the Lord’s Supper for that purpose! May we be preserved from anything approximating to trust in rites and forms!

When you are saved, *then* the ordinances of the house into which you have come—the ordinances of the family of which you are a member—belong to you. But they do not belong to you and can render to you no service, whatever, until you are a saved man! Salvation from death in sin has nothing to do with ceremonies. Believe and live is the sole Gospel precept. Another remarkable thing was that *this man was perfectly restored*—not merely restored in a moment, but perfectly so. A partial restoration would not have been one-tenth so memorable. I have known dear friends partially paralyzed who, after some time, in the good Providence of God, have somewhat recovered. But a twist of the mouth, a weakness in the eyes, or a feebleness of the hand has remained as a proof that the paralysis had been there.

But this man was perfectly whole and at once. The glory of salvation is that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus is completely pardoned! It is not some of his sin that is put away, but *all* of it. I rejoice to look upon it as dear Kent does when he sings—

**“Here’s pardon for transgressions past,
It matters not how black their cast
And, O my Soul, with wonder view
For sins to come, here’s pardon too!”**

We are plunged into the fountain of redeeming blood and cleansed from every fear of ever being found guilty before the living God. We are accepted in the Beloved through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, justified once and for all, forever, before the Father’s face! Christ said, “It is finished,” and finished it is! And, O, what a bliss is this—one of the things that may well stagger those who have never heard it before, but let them not reject it because it staggers them! But rather let them say—“This wonderful system which saves and saves completely, in an instant, simply by looking out of self to Christ, is a system worthy of Divine Wisdom, for it magnifies the Grace of God and meets man’s deep necessities.”

One other thing, no doubt, astonished them about this man—*that his cure was evidently done*. There was no deception about it, for he rolled up the mattress that he had lain upon, put it upon his back and walked away with it and went home to his house. There was no doubt about his being perfectly restored, for he was carrying a burden on his back. And there is the glory of when a man believes in Jesus Christ—there is no doubt about his conversion—you see it in his actions!

They tell me that a child is born again in Baptism. Very well, let me have a look at the child. Is there any difference in him? Some of you, perhaps, have had children that were born again in the sacramental fashion. Mine were not. I cannot, therefore, speak from experience. I wonder whether yours have turned out any better than mine—whether, indeed,

the watery regeneration made any difference in them. I am persuaded you could not pretend to having seen any result. It is a kind of regeneration that does not show itself in the life and, indeed, produces *no result*—for these precious regenerate babies and regenerate boys and girls are just the same as the unregenerate boys and girls—there is not a pin to choose between them.

Send them to the same school and I will undertake very often to show you that some of those that never were baptismally regenerated are better than those who were, for probably they have had Christian parents who had taken more pains to instruct them than those superstitious parents who merely relied upon the outward ceremony. Now, that regeneration which produces no effect is nothing—*less than nothing*. It would be like saying, “That man is saved from the paralysis.” “Well, but he lies on the bed.” “Yes, he lies on the bed the same as he did before, but,” you say, “he is—he is delivered from the paralysis.” “But how do you know?” “Well, of course, it may not be an actual cure, but it is a *virtual* cure, because he has undergone a ceremony and therefore it must be so. You are to believe it.” This is fine talk. But when the man rose and rolled his bed up, and carried it on his back—that was a deal more convincing!

Now, when God’s Providence brings into this house a man who has been a drunk and he hears the Gospel of Jesus Christ and believes in Jesus, and turns his cups bottom upwards and becomes a sober man, there is something in that! If a man comes here who is proud, haughty, a hater of the Gospel altogether—a man who can swear and who has no regard for the Sabbath—and he believes in Jesus and becomes at home as gentle as a lamb, so that his wife hardly knows that he is the same man. And on the Sabbath he delights to go to the House of God, there is something to be seen in that, is there not?—something real and tangible!

Here is a man that would cheat you as soon as look at you, in his business. But the Grace of God comes to him and he becomes scrupulously honest. Here is a man that used to associate with the lowest of the low and, by the Grace of God, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is received by him and he seeks godly companions. And he loves only those whose talk is sweet and clean and holy. Why, you can see it! You can see it! And *this* is the kind of salvation we need in these days, a salvation that can be seen—which makes the paralyzed sinner roll up his bed and carry it away—makes him a conqueror over depraved habits—delivers him from the thralldom of his sins and shows itself in the outer life to all who care to look upon him.

Yes, Brothers and Sisters, this is what the Gospel has done for us. And if I address any here tonight who have looked upon religion as a kind of salve that they were to use while they continued in their sins, I want them to see what a very different thing it is. Christ has come to save you *from* your sins—not to keep you in the fire and prevent your burning—but to pluck you like a brand out of the burning. He has come to make you new creatures and this He can do at this very moment, while you are sitting in your pews. If, while you hear the sound, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ,” there is found in you a willing mind, given you of His Grace so that you trust Him, you shall be saved as surely as Christ lives!

These are strange things, but do not reject them because they are strange. They are things worthy of a God.

III. So, lastly, IF YOU HAVE EVER FOUND OUT ANY OF THESE THINGS AND HAD TO SAY, “WE NEVER SAW IT ON THIS FASHION,” THEN GO AND GLORIFY GOD! Magnify Him from your inmost soul! If salvation were by works and we could fight our own way to Heaven by our own merits, I for one, when I got up there, would throw up my cap and say, “Well done! I have deserved something, and I have got it!” But since salvation is by Grace from first to last, and not *of* man, neither *by* man, nor of the *will* of the flesh, nor by *blood* or *birth*—since the Lord begins, carries on and ends—let us give Him all the glory!

And if ever He gives us, as He *will* give us, a crown of life that fades not away, we will go and cast it at His feet and say, “Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Your name be praise forever and ever!” Let us live in this spirit, dear Friends. The man who believes in the Doctrines of Grace and yet thinks much of himself is highly inconsistent. A man who believes salvation to be all of Grace and yet does not glorify God continually acts contrary to his own convictions. “O, magnify the Lord with me! Let us exalt His name together!” He took us up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay, and He set our feet upon a rock and established our goings. He put a new song into our mouths, even praise forevermore. Praise be unto Him, for He has done it and He shall be extolled!

O, you cannot praise Him, you who do not know this salvation—and I do not exhort you to attempt to do so! But, first of all, may you know this salvation for yourselves. You *can* know it. Blessed be God, I trust that some of you will know it this very night by ceasing from yourselves, giving up all dependence upon anything you can do or be or feel, and by dropping into the arms of Jesus, resting in His finished work and confiding in Him. He will—he **MUST** save you if you trust Him—and then you shall give Him praise. God bless you, dear Friends, for Christ’s sake.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark 2.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—202, 232.**

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FOR WHOM IS THE GOSPEL MEANT? NO. 1345

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 25, 1877,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick:
I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."
Mark 2:17.*

*"Christ died for the ungodly."
Romans 5:6.*

*"God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were
yet sinners, Christ died for us."
Romans 5:8.*

*"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that
Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."
1 Timothy 1:15.*

LAST Thursday evening, with considerable difficulty, I stood here to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and I handled one of the simplest imaginable texts, full of nothing but the very plainest elements of the Gospel. Within a very few minutes I had a harvest for the sermon. The congregation was slender, for you know how ill a night it was, and how little you expected that your pastor would be able to preach, but three souls came forward uninvited to acknowledge that they had found peace with God. How many more there were I do not know, but these three sought out the Brethren and bore a good and hearty confession to the blessed fact that, for the first time in their lives they, had understood the plan of salvation.

Now, it seemed to me that if a plain Gospel theme was so promptly profitable, I had better keep to the same subject. If a farmer finds that a certain seed has paid him so well that he never had a better crop, then he will keep to that seed and sow more of it. Those processes of farming which have been successful should be persevered in and even used upon a larger scale. So this morning I shall just preach the A B C of the Gospel, the first rudiments of the art of salvation. And I thank God this will be no new thing to me. May God the Holy Spirit, in answer to your prayers, grant us a reward this morning after the same proportion as last Thursday and, if so, our heart will be exceedingly glad.

Out of a very great number I have selected the four texts which I have just read to set forth the Truth of God that the mission of our Lord related to sinners. What did Christ come into the world for? For whom did He come? These are questions of the greatest importance and they are clearly answered in Scripture. When the children of Israel first found manna outside the camp, they said to one another, "Manna?" or, "what is it?" for they knew not what it was. There it lay, a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost upon the ground. No doubt they looked at it and rubbed it

in their hands and smelled it. And how glad they were when Moses said, "This is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat." It was not long before they put the good news to the test, for each man gathered his arms full and took it home and prepared it according to his liking.

Now, concerning the Gospel, there are many who might call out, "Manna?" for they know not what it is. Very frequently, too, they make a mistake as to its bearings and its objectives, dreaming that it is a kind of improved Law, or an easier system of salvation by works and, therefore they err, also, in their idea of the persons for whom it is designed. They imagine that surely the blessings of salvation must be meant for *deserving* persons and Christ must be the Redeemer of the meritorious! On the principle of, "good for the good," they infer that Grace is for the excellent and Christ for the virtuous. Therefore it is a most useful thing for us continually to be reminding men what the Gospel is and for whom it is sent into the world, for, though the great mass of you know full well and do not need to be told, yet there are multitudes around us who persist in grave mistakes and need to be instructed over and over again in the very simplest of the Doctrines of Grace.

There is less need for laborious explanations of profound mysteries than for simple explanations of plain Truths of God. Many men need only a simple latchkey to lift the latch and open the door of faith—and such a key, I hope God's infinite mercy may put into their hands this morning! Our business is to show that the Gospel is intended for *sinner*s—that it has an eye to *guilty* persons—that it is not sent into the world as a reward for the good and for the excellent or for those who think they have any measure of fitness or preparation for the Divine favor. We need to show that it is intended for law breakers, for the undeserving, for the ungodly, for those who have gone astray like lost sheep, or left their father's house like the prodigal.

Christ died to save SINNERS and He justifies the ungodly. This Truth of God is plain enough in the Word, but since the human heart kicks against it, we will the more earnestly insist upon it.

I. First, EVEN A SUPERFICIAL GLANCE AT OUR LORD'S MISSION SUFFICES TO SHOW THAT HIS WORK WAS FOR THE SINFUL. For, dear Brothers and Sisters, the descent of the Son of God into this world as a Savior implied that men needed to be delivered from a great evil by a Divine hand! The coming of a Savior who would, by His death, provide pardon for human sin, supposed men to be greatly guilty and to be incapable of procuring pardon by any works of their own. You would never have seen a Savior if there had not been the Fall. Eden's withering was a necessary preface to Gethsemane's groaning.

You would never have heard of a Cross and a bleeding Savior on it if you had not first heard of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and of a disobedient hand which plucked the forbidden fruit. If the mission of our Lord did not refer to the *guilty*, it was an altogether unnecessary errand as far as we can see. What justifies the Incarnation except man's ruin? What explains our Lord's suffering life but man's guilt? Above all, what explains His death and the cloud under which He died but human sin? "All we like sheep have gone astray, and the Lord has laid on Him the

iniquity of us all”—that is the answer to an otherwise unanswerable riddle. If we give a glance at the Covenant under which our Lord came, we soon perceive that its bearing is towards guilty men.

The blessing of the Covenant of Works has to do with men who are innocent. And to them it promises great blessings. If there had been *salvation* by works, it would have been by the Law, for the Law is upright and just and good. But the new Covenant evidently deals with sinners, for it does not speak of the reward of merit, but it freely promises, “I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” If there had been no sins and iniquities, and no unrighteousness, then there had been no need of the Covenant of Grace of which Christ is the Messenger and the Ambassador.

The slightest glimpse at our Lord’s official Character as the Adam of a new Covenant should suffice to convince us that His errand is to guilty men. Moses comes to show how the holy should behave, but Jesus comes to reveal how the unholy may be cleansed! Whenever we hear the mission of Christ spoken of, it is described as one of mercy and of Grace. In the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, it is always the mercy of God that is extolled—according to His mercy He saved us. He, for Christ’s sake, according to His abundant mercy, forgives us our trespasses. “The Law was given by Moses, but Grace and Truth by Jesus Christ.” “The Grace of God, and the gift by Grace, which is by one Man, Jesus Christ, has abounded unto many.”

The Apostle Paul, who most fully expounds the Gospel, makes Grace to be the one word upon which he rings the changes—“Where sin abounded Grace did much more abound.” “By Grace are you saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.” “Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.” But, Brothers and Sisters, mercy implies sinfulness—there can be no mercy extended to the just, for Justice, itself, secures every good thing to them. Grace, too, can only be for offenders. What Grace is needed by those who have kept the Law and deserved well at Jehovah’s hands? To them eternal life would be a matter of debt, a fairly earned reward! But when you talk of Grace, you at once shut out merit and introduce another principle. Mercy can only be exercised where there is sin and Grace cannot be manifested except to the undeserving.

This is plain enough, and yet the whole tenor of some men’s religion is based on another theory. The fact is, when we begin to study the Gospel of the Grace of God we see that it turns its face always towards sin, even as a physician looks towards disease, or as charity looks towards distress. The Gospel issues its invitations, but what are the invitations? Are they not addressed to those who are burdened with a load of sin and laboring to escape from its consequences? It invites every creature because every creature has its needs, but it especially says, “Let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts.” It invites the man who has no money, or, in other words, no merit. It calls to those who are needy, thirsty, poor, naked—and all these are but used as figures of states produced by sin!

The very gifts of the Gospel imply sin—life is for the dead, sight is for the blind, liberty is for the captives, cleansing is for the filthy, absolution is for the sinful. No Gospel blessing is proposed as a *reward* and no invitation is issued to those who claim the blessings of Grace as a matter of *right*—men are invited to come and receive them freely according to the Grace of God. And what are the commands of the Gospel? Repent. But who repents unless a sinner? Believe. But believing is not according to the Law—the Law speaks only of *doing*. Believing has to do with sinners and with the method of salvation by Grace. The Gospel representations of itself usually look sinner-ward. The great king who makes a feast finds not a guest to sit at the table among those who were naturally expected to come—so from the highways and hedges men are *compelled* to come in.

If the Gospel describes itself as a feast it is a great feast for the blind, the crippled and the lame. If it describes itself as a fountain, it is a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. Everywhere, in all that it does and says and provides to men, the Gospel proves itself to be the *sinner's* friend. The motto of its Founder and Lord still is, “this Man receives sinners.” The Gospel is an hospital for the sick—none but the guilty will ever accept its benefits. It is medicine for the diseased—the whole and the self-righteous will never relish its saving draughts. Those who imagine that they have some excellence before God will never care to be saved by Sovereign Grace. The Gospel, I say, looks *sinner-ward*. That way, and that way only, does it cast its blessings.

And Brothers and Sisters, you know that the Gospel has always found its greatest trophies among the most sinful. It enlists its best soldiers not only from among the guilty but from among the most guilty. “Simon,” said our Lord, “I have something to say unto you—A certain man had two debtors, the one owed him 500 pence and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him more?” The Gospel goes upon the principle that he who has had much forgiven loves much. And so its gracious Lord delights to seek out the most guilty and to manifest Himself to them with abundant and overflowing love, saying “I have blotted out your sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud your transgressions.”

Among great transgressors it finds its warmest lovers. When once it has saved them, it receives from them the heartiest welcome and in them it obtains the most enthusiastic adherents. Great sinners, when saved, crown free Grace with its most illustrious diadems. Well may we be sure that it has its eye towards sinners since it is among the chief of sinners that it finds its highest glory. There is one other reflection which, also, lies very near the surface, namely, that if the Gospel does not look towards sinners, to whom else could it look? There seems to have been a revival, lately, of the old quibbling spirit, so that proud Pharisees constantly tell us that the preaching of justification by faith is overdone and that we are leading people to think less of morality by preaching up the Grace of God.

This often refuted objection is coming forth again because Protestantism is losing its sap and soul. The very force and backbone of the Reformers' teaching was that great Doctrine of Grace, that salvation is not of works but of the Grace of God, alone! And because men are getting away

from the Reformation and drifting into Romanism, they are casting into the background this grand Truth of God of Justification by Faith, alone, and pretending to be afraid of it. Most men are knaves and fools upon this matter! I put to all such, this one question—To whom, Sirs, would the Gospel look, if not towards sinners, for what are *you* but sinners? You who talk about morality being injured, about holiness being ignored—what have *you* to do with either?

The people who usually urge these objections, as a rule, had better be quiet on such topics. In general these fierce defenders of morality and holiness are exceedingly lax, while believers in the Grace of God are frequently charged with Puritanism and rigidity. He who stands out most to speak against the Doctrines of Grace is frequently the man or woman who needs Grace most, while the very man who cries down good works as a ground of trust is just the person whose life is carefully directed by the statutes of the Lord! Know you, O men, that there lives not on the face of the earth a man upon whom God can look with pleasure if He considers that man on the ground of His Law. “They are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no not one.”

Not one heart is sound and right before God by nature! Not one life is pure and clean when the Lord comes to examine it with His all-searching eyes! We are all shut up in the same prison as the guilty—if not alike guilty, yet guilty according to the proportion of our light and knowledge—and each one justly condemned! We have all erred in heart and have not loved the Lord! To whom, then, could the Gospel look if it did not cast its eyes sinner-ward? For whom else could the Savior have died? Who is there in the world for whom the benefits of Grace could be designed?

II. Secondly, THE MORE CLOSELY WE LOOK, THE MORE CLEAR THIS FACT BECOMES, for, Brothers and Sisters, the work of salvation was certainly not performed for any of us, who are saved, on account of any goodness in us! If there is any goodness in us, it was put there by the Grace of God and it certainly was not there when first the heart of Jehovah’s love began to move towards us.

If you take the first sign of salvation that was actually *visible* on earth, namely, the coming of Christ, we are told, concerning it, that, “when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet perhaps for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” So that our redemption, my Brothers and Sisters, was effected before we were born! This was the fruit of the Father’s great love, “wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins.”

There was nothing in us going before which could have merited that redemption, indeed the very idea of meriting the death of Jesus is absurd and blasphemous! Yes, and when we were living in sin and loving it, there were preparations made for our salvation—Divine love was busy on our behalf when we were busy in rebellion. The Gospel was brought near to us. Earnest hearts were set praying for us. The text was written which would convert us and, as I have already said, the blood was spilt which

cleanses us and the Spirit of God was given who should renew us. All this was done while as yet we had no breathings of soul after God!

Is not that a wonderful passage in Ezekiel where the Lord passed by and saw the helpless infant cast out in the open field while it was yet unswaddled and unwashed and was foul and polluted in its own blood? He says that it was a time of love and yet it was a time of pollution and loathing. He did not love the chosen baby because it was well-washed and fitly clad—He loved it when it was foul and naked. Let every believing heart admire the freeness and compassion of Divine love—

***“He saw me ruined in the Fall,
Yet loved me, notwithstanding all.
He saved me from my lost estate,
His loving kindness, oh, how great!”***

When your heart was hard. When your neck was obstinate. When you would not repent nor yield to Him but rebelled yet more and more, He loved you—even *you*—with supreme affection!

Why such Grace? Why, indeed, but because His Nature is full of goodness and He delights in mercy? Is not mercy seen to be evidently extended towards the sinful and not exerted because of some goodness moving thereto? Look a little closer, still. What did our Lord come into the world to do? Here is the answer. “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.” He came that He might be a Sin-Bearer—and do you think He came to bear only the little, trifling sins of the best sort of men, if such sins there are? Do you suppose that He is a little Savior who came to save us from little offenses?

Beloved, it is Jehovah’s darling Son that comes to earth and bears the load of sin, a load which, when He bears it, He finds to be no fictitious burden, for it forces from Him bloody sweat! So heavy is that load that He bows His head to the grave and even unto death beneath it. That stupendous load which lay on Christ was the heap of our sins—and, therefore, as we look into the subject, we perceive that the Gospel must have to do with sinners. No sin? Then the Cross is a mistake! No sin? Then the “Lama Sabachthani” was a just complaint against unnecessary cruelty!

No sin? Then, O Redeemer, what are those glories which we have so eagerly ascribed to You? How can You put away sin which does not exist? The existence of great sin is implied in the coming of Christ and that coming was occasioned and rendered necessary by SIN, against which Jesus comes as our Deliverer! He declares that He has opened a fountain, filled with the blood of His own veins. But what for? A cleansing fountain implies *filth*. It must be, Sinner, that somewhere or other there are filthy people, or else there had not been such an amazing fountain as this, filled from the heart of Christ! If you are guilty, you are one who needs the fountain, and it is opened for you! Come with all your sin and foulness about you and wash this morning, and be clean!—

***“’Twas for sinners that He suffered
Agonies unspeakable!
Can you doubt you are a sinner?
If you can—then hope farewell.
But, believing what is written—
‘All are guilty’—‘dead in sin,’***

***Looking to the Crucified One
Hope shall rise your soul within.***

Brothers and Sisters, all the gifts which Jesus Christ came to give, or at least most of them, imply that there is sin! What is His first gift but pardon? How can He pardon a man who has not transgressed? With all reverence do I speak—there can be no such thing as pardon where there is no offense committed. Propitiation for sin and blotting out of iniquity both require that there must be sin to be blotted out, or what is there real about them? Christ comes to bring justification and this shows that there must be a lack of natural holiness in men, for if not, they would be justified by themselves and by their own works. And why all this outcry about justification by the righteousness of the Son of God if men are already justified by a righteousness of their own? Those two blessings, and others of the same kind, are clearly applicable only to sinful men. To no other men can they be of any use.

Our Lord Jesus Christ came girded, also, with Divine power. He says, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me.” To what end was He girded with Divine power unless it was because sin had taken all power and strength from man, and man was in a condition out of which he could not be lifted except by the energy of the eternal Spirit? And what does this imply but that Christ’s errand bears upon those who, through sin, are without strength and without merit before God? The Holy Spirit is given because man’s spirit has failed—because sin has taken the life out of man and made him dead in trespasses and sins—therefore the Holy Spirit comes to quicken him into newness of life, and that Spirit comes by Jesus Christ. Therefore the errand of Jesus Christ is manifestly to the *guilty*.

I will not omit to say that the great deeds of our Lord, if you look at them carefully, all bear upon sinners. Jesus lives—it is that He may seek and save that which is lost. Jesus dies—it is that He may make a propitiation for the sins of guilty men. Jesus rises—He rises again for our justification and, as I have shown, we would not need justification unless we had been naturally guilty. Jesus ascends on high and He receives gifts for men—but note that special word—“Yes, for the rebellious, also, that the Lord God may dwell among them.” Jesus lives in Heaven, but He lives there to intercede. “Therefore He is able, also, to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.”

So take whatever part of His glorious achievements you please and you will find that there is a distinct bearing towards those who are immersed in guilt. And Beloved, all the gifts and blessings that Jesus Christ has brought to us derive much of their radiance from their bearing upon sinners. It is in Christ Jesus that we are elect and, to my mind, the glory of electing love lies in this—that it pitched upon such undeserving objects. How had there been any election had it been according to *merit*? Then men would have taken rank by right according to their own deeds! But election’s glories are brilliant with Grace and Grace always has for its foil and background the unworthiness of the objects towards whom it is manifested. The election of God is not according to our works, but it is a gracious election of sinners! Adore and wonder!

Turn to effectual calling and see how delightful it is to view that calling as a calling from among the dead, as a calling of the things that are not as though they were, as a calling of condemned ones into forgiveness and favor! Turn next to adoption. What is the glory of adoption, but that God has adopted those who were strangers and rebels to make them His children? What is the peculiar beauty of regeneration but that He has been able to raise up children, from these stones, unto Abraham? What is the beauty of sanctification, but that He has taken such unholy creatures as we are to make us kings and priests unto God and to sanctify us wholly—spirit, soul, and body?

To my mind it is the glory of Heaven to think that yonder white-robed choristers were once foully deified—those happy worshippers were once rebels against God! It is a happy sight to see the unfallen angels who have kept their first estate perfectly pure and forever praising God. But the vision of fallen *men* divinely restored is more full of the Glory of God! Lift, as they may, their joyful voices in perpetual chorales, the angels can never reach the special sweetness of that song—“We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” They cannot experimentally enter into that Truth of God which is of Jehovah’s name its crowning glory—“You were slain and have redeemed us to God by Your blood.”

Thus I have abundantly shown that the further we look, the more clear it is that the Gospel is aimed at sinners and especially intended for their benefit.

III. Now, thirdly, it is evident that IT IS OUR WISDOM TO ACCEPT THE SITUATION. I know that, to many, this is a very unpalatable doctrine. Well, Friend, you had better have your palate altered, for you will never be able to alter the doctrine! It is the Truth of the everlasting God and cannot be changed. The very best thing you can do, since the Gospel looks towards sinners, is to get where the Gospel looks—and I can recommend this to you, not merely on the ground of policy, but on the ground of honesty—because you will be only in your right place when you get there.

I think I hear you raising objections. “I do not admire this system. Am I to be saved in the same way as the dying thief?” Precisely so, Sir, unless there should happen to be even more Grace shown towards you than to him. “But you do not mean to assert that in the matter of salvation I am to be put on a level with the woman that was a sinner? I have been pure and chaste and am I to owe my salvation just as much to the absolute mercy of God as *she* did?” Yes, Sir, I do say that, exactly as it stands. There is but *one* principle upon which the Lord saves men and it is that of pure Grace. I want you to understand this.

Even if it grinds like grit between your teeth and makes you angry, I shall not regret it so long as you know what I mean, for the Truth of God may yet find entrance into your soul and you may yet bow before its power. Oh, you children of godly parents, you young people of excellent morals and delicate consciences, to you I speak, even to you! Rejoice in your privileges, but do not *boast* in them, for you, too, have sinned! You have sinned against light and knowledge. You know you have! If you have not plunged into the grosser sins in act and deed, yet in desire and in imagination you have gone far enough astray—and in many things you

have offended grievously against God. If, with these considerations before you, you take your place as a sinner, you will not be disgraced but be merely standing where you certainly are!

And then, remember, if you get the blessing this way, you will have obtained it in the safest possible way. Suppose there are a number of guest chambers and I have my seat in one of the best of them. I may have no right to be there. I am eating and drinking of what is provided for superior guests, but my ticket does not mark me out as one of these and, therefore, I am ill at ease. Every mouthful that I eat I think to myself, "I do not know whether I shall be allowed to remain here. Perhaps the Lord of the feast will come in and say to me, 'Friend, how came you in here?' and I must begin, with shame, to take the lowest room." Brothers and Sisters, when we begin at the bottom and sit in the lowest room, we feel safe. We are satisfied that what we do get is meant for us and will not be taken away from us.

Perhaps, also, when the king comes, he may take us up to a higher room. There is nothing like beginning in the lowest place. When I lay hold of the promise as a saint, I have my doubts about it. But when I grasp it as a *sinner*, I can have no question! If the Lord bids me feed on His mercy as His child, I do it! The devil may whisper that I am presuming, that I never was really adopted by Grace—but when I come to Jesus as a guilty, undeserving sinner, and take what the Lord freely presents to me upon believing—the devil himself cannot tell me that I am not a sinner, or if he does, the lie is too transparent and causes me no distress! There is nothing like having an indefeasible title—and if the description given to you in the title is that you are a sinner, it is an indisputable one—for depend upon it, you are a sinner! So the sinner's place is your true place and your safest place.

Another blessing is it is a place into which you can get directly, even at this very moment. If the Gospel looks towards men in a certain state of heart in which there are commendable virtues, then how long will it take me to raise my heart to that state? If Jesus Christ comes into the world to save men who have a certain measure of excellence, then how long will it take me to obtain that excellence? I may be taken sick and die within the next 30 minutes and hear the sentence of eternal judgment—it would be poor Gospel to tell me that I might possibly obtain salvation if I attained a state which would take me several months to reach! At this hour I, a dying man, know that I may be gone out of this world and beyond the reach of mercy within an hour—what a comfort it is that the Gospel comes to me and gives itself to me just now, even as it finds me! I am already in that position in which Grace begins with men, for I am a sinner, and I have only to admit that I am so.

Now then, poor Soul, just sit down before the Lord and say, "Lord, does Your Son come to save the guilty? I am such and I trust Him to save me. Did He die for the ungodly? I am such, Lord, I trust in His blood to cleanse me. Was His death for sinners? Lord, I take up the position! I plead guilty! I accept the sentence of Your Law as being just, but save me, Lord, for Jesus died." It is done! You are saved! Go in peace, my Son. Your sins, which are many, are forgiven you! Go, my Daughter, go your way

and rejoice! The Lord has put away your sin—you shall not die, for he that believes is justified from all sin. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputes not iniquity and in whose spirit there is no guile! Get, then, into your true position—accept the situation in which Grace considers you to be. Do not talk of justice and merit, but appeal to pity and love.

A certain man had, several times, plotted against the first Napoleon and eventually, being entirely in the emperor's hands, the sentence of death was pronounced upon him. His daughter earnestly pleaded for his life and at last, having obtained an audience with the Emperor, she fell upon her knees before him. "My girl," said the Emperor, "it is of no use to plead for your father, for I have the clearest evidence of his repeated crimes, and it is but justice that he should die." The girl replied, "Sire, I do not ask for justice, I beg for *mercy*. It is upon the mercifulness of your heart and not upon the justice of the case that I rely." She was heard patiently and her father's life was spared at her request.

Imitate this appeal, and cry, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness." Justice owes you nothing but death—mercy alone can spare you. Have done with every idea of making out a good case—admit it to be a bad one and plead guilty! Cast yourself upon the mercy of the court and ask for mercy, free mercy, undeserved mercy, gratuitous favor! This is what you *must* ask for and as in law they have a form of suing called in *forma pauperis*, that is, in the form of a pauper, adopt the method and as a man full of necessities beg for favor at the hands of God, in *forma pauperis*, and it shall be bestowed upon you.

IV. Now I close this discourse with the next point, which is, THIS DOCTRINE HAS A GREAT SANCTIFYING INFLUENCE. "There," says one, "I do not believe that. Surely you have been holding out a premium to sin by saying that Christ came to save nobody but sinners and does not call anybody to repentance but the sinful." My dear Sirs, I have heard all that sort of talk so many times that I know it by heart—the same objections were raised against this doctrine in Luther's day by the Papists and, since then, by workmongers of all classes! There is nothing substantial in their notion that free Grace is opposed to morality—it is only their fancy.

They dream that the doctrine of justification by faith will lead to sin, but it can be proved by history that whenever this doctrine has been best preached, men have become most holy! And whenever this Truth of God has been darkened, all manner of corruption has abounded. Gracious doctrine and gracious living fitly go together—and legal teaching and unlawful living are generally found associated. Let us show you the sanctifying power of this Gospel. Its first operation in that direction is this—when the Holy Spirit brings the truth of free pardon home to a man, it completely changes his thoughts concerning God.

"What?" he asks, "Has God freely forgiven me all my offenses for Christ's sake? And does He love me notwithstanding all my sin? I did not know He was such an One as this, so gracious and kind! I thought He was hard! I called Him a tyrant, gathering where He had not strewed—but does He feel towards me like this? Then," says the soul, "I love Him in return." There is a complete reversal of feeling—the man is turned right round as soon as he understands redeeming Grace and dying love. Con-

version follows on a sight of Grace. Moreover, this grand Truth of God does more than turn a man, it inspires, melts, enlivens and inflames him. This is a Truth which stirs the deeps of the heart and fills the man with lively emotions.

Before, you talked to him about doing good, about right, justice, reward and punishment—he heard it all and it may have had a measure of influence over him—but he did not deeply feel it. Such teaching is too cold to warm the heart. Then the Truth comes home to the man and appears to him to be new and exciting. It runs like this—God, out of His free mercy, forgives the guilty and He has forgiven me! Why, this awakens him, stirs him up, touches the fountain of his tears and moves his whole being! Perhaps at the first hearing of the Gospel, he does not care for it, and even hates it. But when it comes with power, it obtains a wonderful mastery over him! When he really receives its message as his own, then his cold heart of stone is turned to flesh! Warm emotion, tender love, humble desire and a sacred longing after the Lord are all excited in his bosom.

The quickening power of this Divine Truth, as well as the converting power of it, can never be too much admired. Besides, this Truth, when it enters the heart, deals a deadly blow at the man's self-conceit. Many a man would have become wise, only he thought he was already! And many a man would have been virtuous, only he concluded that he had already attained that, too! Behold, this doctrine smites upon the skull all confidence in your own goodness and makes you feel your guilt! And in so doing, it removes the great evil of pride. A sense of sin is the very threshold of mercy! A consciousness of shortcoming, a grief because of past offenses are necessary preparations for a higher and a nobler life. The Gospel digs out the foundation, makes a great vacuum and so makes room to lay in their places the glorious stones of a noble spiritual character.

Moreover, where this Truth of God is received, there is sure to spring up in the soul a sense of *gratitude*. The man who has had much forgiven will be sure to love much in return. Gratitude to God is a grand mainspring for holy action. Those who do right in order to be rewarded for it are acting selfishly. Selfishness is at the bottom of their character—they abstain from sin only lest self should suffer—and they obey only that self may be safe and happy. The man who does right, not because of Heaven or Hell, but because God has saved him and he loves the God who saved him, is the truly right-loving man. He who loves right because God loves right, has risen out of the fog of selfishness and is capable of the loftiest virtue, yes, he has in him a living spring which will well up and flow forth in holy living so long as he exists.

And, dear Brothers and Sisters, I think you will all see that free forgiveness to sinners is very conducive towards one part of a true character, namely, readiness to forgive others, for he who has been forgiven much himself is the very man who finds it easy to pass by the transgressions of others. If he does not, he may well doubt whether he has been forgiven! If the Lord has blotted out his debt of a thousand talents, he will, readily enough, forgive the hundred pence which his brother owes him.

Last of all, some of us know and we wish that all knew by personal experience, that a sense of undeserved favor and free forgiveness is the very

soul of enthusiasm—and enthusiasm is to Christianity what the lifeblood is to the body! Were you ever made enthusiastic by a cold discourse upon the excellence of morality? Did you ever feel your soul stirred within you by listening to a sermon upon the rewards of virtue? Were you ever made enthusiastic by being told of the punishments of the Law? No, Sirs—but preach up the Doctrines of Grace—let the free favor of God be extolled and mark the consequences! There are people who will walk for many miles and stand without weariness by the hour together to hear this! I have known them labor many a weary mile to listen to this doctrine!

Why? Because the preacher was eloquent, or because he put it well? Not so! It has sometimes been badly spoken and in uncouth language—and yet this doctrine has always awakened the people. There is something in the soul of man that is looking out for the Gospel of Grace! And when it comes, there is a hungering to hear about it! Look at the Reformation times, when death was the penalty of listening to a sermon—how the people crowded at midnight! How they journeyed into the deserts and the caves to listen to the teaching of these grand old Truths of God! There is sweetness about mercy, Divine Mercy freely given, which holds the ear of man and stirs his heart!

When this Truth of God enters the soul, it breeds zealots, martyrs, confessors, missionaries, saints. If any Christians are in earnest and full of love to God and man, they are those who know what Grace has done for them. If any remain faithful under reproaches, joyful under losses and crosses—they are those who are conscious of their indebtedness to Divine Love. If any delight in God while they live and rest in Him as they die—they are the men who know that they are justified by faith in Jesus Christ who justifies the ungodly.

All glory be to the Lord who lifts the beggar from the dunghill and sets him among princes, even the princes of His people! He takes the very cast-offs of the world and adopts them into His family and makes them heirs of God by Jesus Christ! The Lord grant us all to know the power of the Gospel upon our sinful selves! The Lord endear to us the name, work and Person of the Sinner's Friend! May we never forget the hole of the pit from where we were drawn, nor the hand which rescued us, nor the undeserved kindness which moved that hand! From now on let us have more and more to say of Infinite Grace. "Free Grace and dying love." Well does the old song say, "Ring those charming bells." Free Grace and dying love—the sinner's windows of hope! Our hearts exult in the very words! Glory be unto You, O Lord Jesus, ever full of compassion. Amen.

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GOOD CHEER FROM FORGIVEN SIN NO. 3016

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 1906.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And, behold they brought to Him a man sick of the palsy lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.”
Matthew 9:2.*

*“And they come unto Him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. And when they could not come near unto Him for the press, they uncovered the roof where He was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. When Jesus saw their faith, He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, your sins are forgiven you.”
Mark 2:3-5.*

*“And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before Him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus. And when He saw their faith, He said unto Him, Son, your sins are forgiven you.”
Luke 5:18-20.*

[Other sermons upon this miracle are as follows—No. 2,337, Volume 39, THE PHYSICIAN PARDONS HIS PALSIED PATIENT and No. 2,417, Volume 41, FIRST FORGIVENESS, THEN HEALING—
Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

THIS man was paralyzed in body, but he was very far from being paralyzed in mind. From the little we know of him, he would appear to have been earnest, resolute, energetic and persevering. You very seldom find persons attempting more for you than you, yourself, desire—and if the four men who carried this paralytic person were so zealous in getting him under the Lord’s notice, we may be morally certain that he, himself, was even more set upon it. His bearers would never have gone the length of breaking up the roof and letting him down upon the heads of the crowd unless he had urged them to do so. He was something more than passive under such heroic treatment! If he did not suggest the plan, he evidently entered into it most willingly.

Suppose it to be your own case, my dear Hearer. Are you not persuaded that if, broken in spirit, you were to say to your friends, “let me alone, my case is hopeless,” few would dream of exciting themselves to desperate efforts on your behalf, but would let you lie in your apathy, according to your request? It is a rule that you must, yourself, be energetic if you are to make other people energetic on your behalf and, therefore, it seems to me that this man had a resolute and intense

spirit—and had such influence over his friends that he inspired them by his eagerness, having first won them by his importunity. He besought them to aid him in what had become a necessity of life—he must see Jesus. He must be brought before the great Healing One, somehow or other, and because of his personal eagerness and pressing importunity, his friends made up their minds to help him.

We may yet discover a little more about this palsied man and it will not be mere conjecture, for, by certain rules established by observation and experience, we may often learn much of a character from very small circumstances. Our Lord Jesus was accustomed to address the persons who came to Him very much according to their mental condition. When one poor man, half imbecile in spirit, was brought to him, He asked him, “Will you be made whole?” He was so listless as barely to have the will to be restored and Christ’s saying, “Will you be made whole?” is evidence to us that even the poor creature’s wishes had begun to slumber. Take it as a general rule that while Christ regarded the onlookers and spoke with some view to them, yet, in the main, His first thoughts were concerning His patient and He generally spoke with an eye to that patient’s case. I gather, therefore, from the fact that Jesus said to this man, “Son, be of good cheer,” that he was very greatly depressed in spirit and unhappy—and when He added not, “Your palsy shall be removed,” but “Your sins are forgiven you,” we are quite safe in concluding that the cause of the man’s sadness was his sin, for which beyond all things else he desired pardon! Our Lord went straight to the root of the mischief—the man was sad, and so He cheered him. The man was sad about his sin and so He granted him forgiveness. His palsy would, secondarily, be a fountain of bitter grief to the sick man and, therefore, the Savior dealt with it in the second place. But first and foremost, over and above all grief for his infirmity, was his painful sense of unforgiven sin. It is not likely that he told his bearers about that, for they might not have been able to sympathize with such a spiritual necessity—to them he spoke of his affliction, not of his repentance, for while they would pity him for his palsy, they might have ridiculed him for his guilty conscience. The Lord, however, knew the heart’s grief without telling—He read it in the sufferer’s looks. The great Sin-Forgiver knew right well that earnest gaze which meant, “Be merciful to me, a sinner,” and He met that wistful glance with a smile and the cheering words, “Son, your sins are forgiven you.”

I suppose that the patient was a young man, for the word, “Son,” would hardly have been spoken by our Lord to a man older than Himself. I gather that he was a man of childlike faith, for Jesus did not call people His “sons and daughters” unless there was something of the childlike spirit about them. He was evidently a man of simple-hearted faith who fully believed that Christ could forgive his sin and so it happened to him, after the rule of the Kingdom, “According to your faith, be it unto you.”

The case stood thus—The paralyzed man was burdened with sin, weighed down and oppressed in conscience. This urged him to seek the Savior. “I must see the Christ,” he said. His passionate earnestness extracts a promise from the neighbors that they will take him to Jesus.

He begs them to do it now. But the Lord could not be reached, for a dense crowd shut Him in. "I must see Jesus," cries the man. His friends reply, "You cannot rise from your bed." "Carry me upon it," cries he. "But we cannot get in." "Try," he says. They reached the door and they cried, "Make room. Here is a man sick of the palsy who must see Jesus." They are gruffly answered, "Plenty of other poor men want to see Him. Why should everybody give place to you? What is the use of pushing? There is no room for that bed here! What folly to drag a sick man into all this pressure and heat! The Prophet is speaking—you will interrupt Him. Away with you!" The bearers cannot enter. They plead and they push, but all in vain.

"Then," cries the resolute man, "take me up the back stairs. Get me to the top of the verandah and let down the bed through the ceiling. Run any risk for I must get to Jesus." Possibly his friends object and state the difficulties of the procedure suggested. "Why," says one, "you will be hanging over the people's heads, for there will be no room for you when we let you down." "Try it," he cries. "If I am let down from the top, there will be no fear of my not reaching the ground! They cannot push me up again, or keep me on their heads! They must make room for me." His earnestness having been ingenious, now becomes infectious! His bearers smile at his eagerness and enter into it with zest. He will give them no rest till his desire is accomplished—and so they break up the tiling, and let him down before Jesus, with the glad result described in the Gospel, "Jesus said to him, Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you."

We have before us, *first, a doctrine*—the doctrine that it is one of the grandest comforts in the world to have your sins forgiven you! "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you." Secondly, we have before us *a question*. May everyone of you have the honesty to ask it and to answer it in your own case. The question—Have I had my sins forgiven me? For, if so, I have a right to be of good cheer and to be as merry as the birds in spring. But if not, I am destitute of the greatest comfort which Christ, Himself, can speak to a sinner's heart.

I. Dear Hearer, let us give our hearts at once to THE DOCTRINE. It is plainly taught us here that the pardon of sin is one of the richest comforts which the Lord can give to a man.

It is so, first, because *the pardon of sin removes the heaviest sorrow which a man can feel*. Some know little about this grief. May the Lord cause them to mourn with broken hearts or they will perish in their sins! Those of us who have known the burden of sin can tell you that it is a crushing load. Thoughtful persons who have seen things in their true light—honest persons who refuse to be flattered, pure-minded people who long to be right with God—all these will tell you that a sense of sin is, of all miseries, the most sharp and disquieting. To know that you have sinned against light and knowledge with special aggravations is as a hot iron to the flesh and as a serpent's venom in the blood. There is no rest day or night to a soul which carries this Hell within it—

***"Sin, like a venomous disease
Infests our vital blood!
The only balm is Sovereign Grace,***

And the Physician God.”

I speak what I know from personal experience and I only say what many a hearer knows, too, within his own soul. Once let conviction flash in upon the soul and the world loses its fascinations—the music hall, the ballroom and the theater are robbed of their enchantments—even business wearies and domestic joys are deprived of sweetness. A sense of sin spoils all. Guilt on the conscience hangs over everything like a funeral pall. It drowns all music with its prophetic knell and withers every green herb beneath its burning feet.

Sin, sin—what direr ill than you are, can even Satan, himself, beget? A man infected with a deadly disease is never at ease. Whatever garments he may put on, or at whatever tables he may feast, he is still unhappy because he has the arrows of death sticking in him! Such is a man conscious of sin. Nothing can please him. Nothing can ease him till his sin is removed. But when sin is gone—when he knows that he is pardoned, he is as a bird set free from its cage!

A great fire raged one night in a village and a large thatched mansion, in which a man of God resided, caught fire. It blazed furiously, but he and his wife and the most of his children escaped. Judge of their horror when they counted them over, to discover that one little one was missing. Nothing would content them while that dear child was in the burning house. “Mr. Wesley,” his neighbor might say, “we have saved your chest of drawers. We have saved your valuable books from the house.” “Ah, but,” the good man would have said, “my boy is in danger.” What his wife thought of it, when she recollected that little John would be burned to death, I need not tell you. But when, at last, he was lifted out of the window and brought to his parents’ arms—then be sure that the good man would gather his whole family about him and bless the Lord, even though all his substance was consumed. Now, when a sensible man’s soul is in danger, nothing can content him. He prospers in business, his happy children play around him—but what of these while his soul remains in deadly peril? When once, through pardoned sin, his soul becomes like a brand plucked from the burning, then his daily troubles lose all their weight and his heart is full of joyful song! It is clear to every experienced man that the pardon of sin is an immense comfort because it removes the bitterest cause of distress and alarm.

Next, forgiveness of sin is a comfort of the first order, for, indeed, *it is altogether indispensable*. You may possess every luxury, but you cannot be solidly happy until sin is forgiven. “Why!” says one, “I am really happy and yet I am not pardoned.” Yes, but it is a remarkable thing that happy people of your kind are never pleased while they are quiet. They must get up an excitement and dance, or fiddle, or drink, or play the fool in some sort—or they are not happy. I call that real happiness which I can enjoy by the hour together in my room, alone, calmly looking into things and feeling content. I call that real joy which I feel when I wake up at night and, though full of pain, can lie still and bless God for His goodness. It was said of old, “Philosophers can be merry without music” and so can the saints of God! But the ungodly, as a rule, cannot enjoy themselves without external objects to raise their spirits. The truly happy man is

satisfied from himself. A spring within him of Living Water quenches his thirst so that he never feels the drought.

A man cannot be really happy till his sin is pardoned, because sin brings, more or less, a sense of condemnation. Picture a man in the condemned cell. Try to make him comfortable. We provide him with a dainty supper, we sing him gladsome glee, we exhibit fine pictures to him—but he is condemned to die tomorrow and he loathes our feast and our fineries. Bring in a thousand pounds and make him a present of it. He looks at the golden sovereigns and he says, “What is the use of these to me?” Tell him that a rich man has left him heir to a wide estate. “Yes,” he says, “but how can I enjoy it? I am condemned to die.” He is always in his dreams hearing his death-knell and picturing to himself the dreary scene when he is to be launched into eternity. If you could only whisper in his ear, “Her Majesty has granted you a free pardon,” he would say, “You may take away the feast, I feel too happy to eat! All the gold in the world could not make me more delighted than I am now, as a pardoned man.” When men have come out of prison, after they have been shut up for years, everything has been a joy to them. Though they went home, perhaps, and found everybody dead whom they once knew, and saw their own hair turned gray through having lain so long in a moldy den, yet the sweets of liberty made the stones of the streets shine as if they were made of gold and the fields seemed like fairyland to them! Such is the joy of pardon when it comes from our God. A man must have forgiveness, or else everything will be emptiness to him—but when he is absolved, he goes forth with joy and is led forth with peace!

Pardon of sins makes all our sorrows light. If a condemned man is permitted to live, he will not ask whether he is to live like a gentleman or like a peasant. When some kind-hearted men struggle to get the life of a condemned criminal spared, the man’s friends think of nothing but his life. When a judge sentences a man to penal servitude for life, it may be thought a hard sentence, but you never hear of complaints when a condemned criminal has his life spared—if we find that he is to be kept a prisoner as long as he lives. The heaviest punishment seems nothing *if life is spared*. You heave a sigh of relief to think that the gallows will bear one less sad fruit and you forget all about the servitude or the imprisonment which the convict will have to endure. So, depend upon it, if you get sin pardoned and so are saved from the eternal wrath of God, you will make no bargain with God whether you have meat to eat and raiment to put on, or are left hungry and naked! No, Lord, I will shiver in a beggar’s rags with full content if I am but pardoned. I will dwell in prison with a dry crust for my food if I am but delivered from Your wrath! Thus it is clear that the blotting out of sin takes the sting from every other sorrow.

Let me add that it makes death, itself, light! I remember the story of a felon, in those days when they used to hang people for very little, indeed. A poor man, who had committed some offense, was condemned to die. While he lay waiting for the sentence, the Lord sent a choice minister of the Gospel to him and his heart was enlightened so that he found Christ.

As he was on the way to the gallows, what, do you think, was this man's cry? He was overwhelmed with joy and, lifting up his hands, he said many times, "Oh, He is a great Forgiver! He is a great Forgiver!" Death was no terror now that he had found forgiveness through Jesus Christ! Poverty repines not when sin is removed! Sickness frets no longer when conscience is at ease! It may cost you many a pang to feel yourself melting away in consumption, but what does it matter, now that your transgression is forgiven? Every breath may be a labor, every pulse may be a pang, but when sin is forgiven, the Lord has created such a spring of joy within the heart that the soul can never faint!

Yet again, dear Friend, remember that *the pardon of sin is the guarantee of every other blessing*. When Christ said, "Your sins are forgiven you," was there any question at all as to whether that paralytic man would be healed? Certainly not, for the love which had forgiven the sufferer's sin was there to prompt the Savior to say afterwards, "Arise, take up your bed, and go unto your house." So, dear Friend, if your sin is pardoned, it is true concerning you that no good thing will God withhold from you who walk uprightly, and that all things work together for good to you who love God, to you who are the called according to His purpose. Everything between here and Heaven is secured by the Covenant of Grace for your best benefit. And you can sing—

***"If sin is pardoned, I'm secure!
Death has no sting beside—
The Law gives sin its damning power
But Christ, my Ransom, died."***

You shall never have a need but God will assuredly supply it since He has already bestowed on you the major blessing—the all-comprehending blessing of forgiveness! Covenant mercies follow each other like the links of a chain—"Who forgives all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases; who redeems your life from destruction; who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies; who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's." Do you think that God forgives men their sins and then leaves them to perish? Such cruel "mercy" would be more worthy of a demon than of the Deity! Pardon is the pledge of everlasting love and the pledge will never be forfeited!

"Alas," cries one, "perhaps, after the Lord has forgiven me, He may yet turn again and punish me!" Listen—"The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." That is, God never repents of what He does in the way of Grace. If He forgives, He forgives once and for all and forever! It would be blasphemy to represent God as making a transient truce with men instead of an eternal peace! The Lord casts the iniquities of His people into the depths of the sea and their transgressions He remembers against them no more forever. Is not this a blessed act of Grace? It secures the removal of all the evil results of sin and is the guarantee of all that will be needed this side of Heaven, yes, and of Glory, forever! If you do but hear Jesus say, "Your sins are forgiven you," you may also hear Him say, "Be of good cheer," for there is everything in the fact of pardon to make your heart dance for joy!

We will not linger longer upon the doctrine, but make our meditation personally practical by pressing home the work of self-examination.

II. So, now, let us consider THE QUESTION, *Are you forgiven?*

Has God, for Christ's sake, forgiven you? "Ah," cries one, "do not judge us!" I shall not attempt to do so, but I would beg you to judge yourselves. "We cannot be sure of our salvation," answers another. Can you not? Then you ought to never be happy, for a man who is in doubt about a matter so vital as this, which involves his all, ought never to enjoy a moment's peace! How can we rest in fear of Hell, in danger of eternal wrath? Do you not long for certainties? A great novelist began a favorite story with the sentence, "What I need is facts." In that short sentence, he expressed the longing of many a thoughtful soul—many of us feel that we need indisputable facts. Our proverb has it, "Fast bind, fast find." Prudent men will take double care about this weightiest of all concerns and will not be content till they are infallibly cured. I will help you to answer this question by remarking that there is a way by which we may know if we are not forgiven.

We may know that we are not forgiven if we have never felt that we need forgiveness. Where guilt has never been perceived, it has never been removed. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." If I feel that I am as good as most people and, perhaps, a little better. If I try to justify myself and think of gaining Heaven by my own endeavors, then I am under condemnation! God has never healed the man who was never wounded, nor has He made the man alive who was never dead. If you have never been humbled before God so as to acknowledge your sinnership, then you are still abiding under His wrath. Think of that, I pray you, you who are at ease, wrapping yourself about in the garments of your own merits! "Because you say, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," you may be sure that, in God's sight, "you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Dear Friend, I hope it is not so with you.

Again, *he has never been forgiven who does not at this moment hate sin.* Jesus never came to save us *in* our sins, but to save us *from* our sins—and wherever He takes away the guilt of sin, He also kills the love of it. Sin never seems so black as when we see it put away by Jesus' blood. At the sight of the Cross, we grow angry with ourselves for having slain our Lord by our transgressions. Never dream that you can be pardoned and then be allowed to live as you did before—the very wish to do so would show that you were still under condemnation.

Again, *you are not forgiven if you have never sought Christ and His atoning blood.* If you have labored by other means to procure mercy, you have not found it, for no one else can give it but the one appointed Mediator. Can your "priest" grant you pardon? Did you offend the priest? Then the priest can forgive you for offending him, but he cannot forgive you for offending God! None but God in Christ Jesus can blot out sin and you must go to Him—and if you do not, you are not forgiven, whatever you may dream.

Once more, *have you forgiven everybody else?* This is a home question to some minds, but remember how necessary it is to answer it.

If you do not forgive everyone his brother his trespasses, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive you. There it stands, “Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone that is indebted to us.” If you cannot pardon everyone, no matter how grievous the offense, neither has God pardoned you. A malicious heart is an unrenewed heart. A revengeful spirit is clean contrary to the Spirit of God who passes by transgression, iniquity and sin. This Truth of God may be little preached, but Holy Scripture makes it very prominent and you will be most unwise if in any measure you ignore it. You are not forgiven if you cannot forgive!

Let me now help you, by some positive test, to see whether you are forgiven. Only one is needed—*you are pardoned if you are a true Believer in Jesus Christ*. It is written, “Jesus seeing their faith”—that is, the faith of the four bearers, and the faith of the man who lay upon the bed—said unto him, “Your sins are forgiven you.” The poor palsied man so believed in Jesus that his very face beamed with confidence when he came into Christ’s Presence and so Jesus, seeing his faith, said to him, “Your sins are forgiven you. “Do *you* believe in Jesus? I know that you believe that Jesus Christ is God and a great Savior, but is this a mere matter of doctrine to you, or do you really believe in him? You know what it is to believe in a man so that you can trust him and leave your affairs in his hands—do you believe in Jesus in this way? That is the faith which saves. When a man believes in Christ so as to commit himself to Christ for salvation, he believes rightly, for believing is but another word for trusting, relying, depending upon!

Do not trifle with this question. It is my hope that you can answer, “Yes, unless I am awfully deceived, I am trusting the blood and merits of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I am so trusting Him that I endeavor to follow in His footsteps and to copy His example.” Then you are saved, for “there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” Dwell on that word, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” If you really trust Christ, though you have only done so during the last hour, your transgressions are put away and your iniquity is covered, for He *immediately* pardons them who come to Him. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” If you have confessed your sin to Him and trusted in Him, you are most assuredly cleansed by His blood!

Now for my last word. It is this. Jesus said, “Be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.” Come, then, *let us be of good cheer for our sins are forgiven*. Let us be happy. Let us be merry in the Lord. Let us begin to sing for very joy of hearts because our sins are forgiven us for Christ’s sake! We are very poor, but our sin is forgiven us. We are very weak, but our sin is forgiven us. We are, perhaps, getting very old, and near to our end, but our sin is forgiven us. We are full of infirmity and vexed with temptations, but our sin is forgiven us for His name’s sake! “Son, be of good cheer,” said the Savior, and shall we be otherwise? What if our room is a very small one—what does it matter—if our sin is forgiven? “Ah, but there is a sick one at home!” “Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.” You know how the Master, when the disciples found another source of joy, turned them back to this, “Notwithstanding in

this, rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice that your names are written in Heaven.” And so, when you find a multitude of troubles, follow the same good advice!

Does someone say, “I am head over heels in trouble, for I am in great straits”? Let me lay my hand upon your shoulder and say, “Brother, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.” “Oh, but I have very little to live upon!” True, but you have this comforting message, “Your sins are forgiven you.” Be of good cheer—your Lord bids you to be so, for your sins are forgiven you!

If you are not happy, it will be disobedience to Christ, for He commands you to “be of good cheer.” It will look as if you did not value the blessing that cost Him His blood. “Your sins are forgiven you.” It cost Him His life to buy you this redemption—are you going to groan when you get it? No doubt you are pleased to give good things to poor persons and, if so, you like to see their gratitude. I gave something, not many days ago, to a man and he just put it in his pocket and walked off without a word, as if he would say, “I thought you would have given me at least ten times as much.” I thought, “If I had seen the way you would take it, my Man, I would not have been in such a hurry with your gift.” When you give your children a little treat, you like to see them pleased and thankful. But if they sit down and fret over your kindness, you are disappointed and are in no great haste to indulge them again! Our Heavenly Father’s gifts must be valued and delighted in—if He has forgiven us our sins, let us be happy!

“Son, be of good cheer.” Have some regard to the outside world, for, if they are pardoned men and women with gruesome countenances, they will infer that there is not much comfort in the Grace of God, after all. “My wife,” says one, “declares that her sins are forgiven her, yet I am sure when there is a little trouble in the house she is more downhearted than I am.” “There,” cries a woman, “my husband tells me that his sins are washed away, but he grumbles and murmurs till we are all made miserable by him!” Do not let it be so. If you have a cross to carry, let us bear it joyfully for Christ’s sake. If we have work to do for Christ, let us do it with delight. Let us live to music. Let us march to Heaven to a gladsome tune, rejoicing in the Lord because our sins are forgiven! And let each one of us say—

***“All that remains for me
Is but to love and sing
And wait until the angels come
To bear me to the King!”***

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: MARK 2.

Verse 10. *And again He entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was heard that He was in the house. And straightaway many were gathered together, so that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and He preached the word unto them.* It is a very singular fact that although man, in his natural state of heart, is opposed

to the Gospel, yet he is drawn to hear it. Even though he abhors it, yet oftentimes he cannot help listening to it. Wherever Jesus Christ is, whether He is present in Person, or in the preaching of the Word, it will be certain to be heard abroad and multitudes will come to hear. The grandest attraction either in or out of Heaven is still the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ!

3-5. *And they came unto Him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. And then they could not come near unto Him for the press, they uncovered the roof where He was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed whereon the sick of the palsy lay. When Jesus saw their faith, He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, your sins are forgiven you.* In Luke's account of this gathering, we read that "the power of the Lord was present to heal them," and when we ask, "Why was that power so remarkably present?" we think that one reason was because there were persons present who were anxious about the good of others. And, today, wherever four persons come together praying for some poor soul, you may rest assured that the power of the Lord will there be present to heal. I do not think that so much of the success of sermons depends upon the preacher as upon those model hearers who are all the while praying for a blessing and who are making other members of the congregation—those who are converted—the constant subject of their supplication. Christ blessed this man because of the faith of the four who carried him and, possibly, because of his own faith.

Notice that our Lord did not at first say to the sick man, "You are healed of your palsy," but He said, "Your sins are forgiven you." This was laying the axe at the root, because sin is at the bottom of sorrow—and where sin is pardoned, even the effects of sin will be removed.

6-9. *But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts. Why does this Man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only? And immediately when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, He said unto them, Why reason you these things in your hearts? Which is easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Your sins are forgiven you; or to say, Arise, and take up your bed, and walk? Whichever is spoken, Omnipotence is implied. The Presence and Power of God, alone, could give efficacy to either sentence, but to Him, the one is as easy as the other.*

10-14. *But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins, (He said to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto you, Arise, and take up your bed, and go your way into your house. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all, so that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying they never saw anything like this before. And He went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto Him, and He taught them. And as He passed by, He saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the receipt of customs, and said unto him, Follow Me. And he arose and followed him.* There is a change in the method of displaying Christ's power, but His power is always the same. To the palsied man, He said "Arise, and take up your bed, and walk." But to the man engaged in a calling which degraded him, Christ said, "Follow Me" and, "he arose and followed Him." Blessed be God, we still have in

our midst the living Lord who is as able to work miracles of mercy today as when He was upon the earth! And we have not merely to exhort, to persuade and to entreat, though we have to do all that, but we have also to speak with authority in the name of this glorious Son of God and to command men to repent and believe in Him! He is with us, by His Spirit, to make His Word mighty, so that, to this day, palsied men do arise and walk—and sinful men are led to turn from evil and to follow Christ.

15-17. *And it came to pass, that as Jesus sat at meat in Levi's house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and His disciples: for there were many, and they followed Him. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto Jesus' disciples, How is it that He eats and drinks with publicans and sinners? When Jesus heard it, He said unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.* For ordinary Christians to associate with those who are like the publicans and sinners of Christ's day might be dangerous, for, "evil communications corrupt good manners," and Christians should be careful as to the company in which they are found. But for Christians to go among such people to try to do them good is Christlike! The Church of Christ always fails in her duty when she looks upon any class of persons as being beneath her observation, or too far gone for her to reach. Our Lord's mission was to find out and to supply the needs of mankind—and He seems to have paid particular attention to the very worst of men because they needed Him the most. And His Church should always be guided in her choice of work by the necessity of the objects that need her care. And Brothers, you and I who are in the ministry will do well to choose not that sphere in which we may be most happy and comfortable, but that one in which we are most needed. If I were a lamp and had my choice of where I would be hung, I should prefer to be hung up in the darkest place in London where I could be of most service. And I think that everyone of us would make just such a choice if we judged rightly and desired to be where we were needed and to do as the Savior did when He was on the earth.

18-20. *And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and said unto Him, why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.* While Christ was with His people in Person, they could not help having joy and gladness. But when He was gone from them, they must lament His absence.

21, 22. *No one sews a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up takes away from the old and the tear is made worse. And no man puts new wine into old bottles: else the new wine does burst the bottles and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.* The bottles were made of skin and the wine put into them must be of a suitable port. To prescribe

fasting to His disciples while He was making them glad with His personal Presence would have been incongruous and absurd. And there are some things that we ought not to expect from young Christians—and other things that we ought not to expect from old and mature Christians. We should not expect to find new wine in old bottles, nor old wine in new bottles. “A place for everything, and everything in its place,” is not only a rule for the home and the merchant’s counting house, but it is also a rule which should be observed in the Church of Christ, for God, as a God of order, always puts things in their proper places and in due order.

23. *And it came to pass, that He went through the corn fields on the Sabbath; and the disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn. They had offended the Pharisees by not fasting and now they were offending them again in a similar way, though with reference to a different matter!*

24. *And the Pharisees said unto Him, Behold, why do they on the Sabbath that which is not lawful? According to some Rabbis, you might pick an ear of wheat on the Sabbath, but if you rubbed it between your hands, they said that was a sort of thieving which was a kind of labor that must not be performed on the Sabbath. They made all sorts of ingenious restrictions, too ridiculous for us to quote. These disciples were, therefore, according to them, chargeable with sin because they had plucked ears of corn and had performed the operation of threshing them on the Sabbath. And we have some of that sort of folk living now who take the smallest matter, which is altogether insignificant, and in which there is neither good nor harm, and magnify and distort it—and then make a man a grave offender all for next to nothing. We have learned not to be very much troubled by anything that they choose to say.*

25-28. *And He said unto them, have you ever read what David did, when he had fled, and was hungry? He and they that were with him? How he went into the House of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the showbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him? And He said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath: therefore the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath. He has made it to be no longer a day of bondage, but a day of blessed rest and holy service for God! Works of necessity, works of piety and works of mercy are not only allowed to be done, but are *commanded* to be done upon the Sabbath.*

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

CROWDING TO TOUCH THE SAVIOR NO. 841

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 13, 1868,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT BLOOMSBURY CHAPEL.

*“For He had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon Him
for to touch Him, as many as had plagues.”
Mark 3:10.*

OUR Lord had been persecuted and therefore He put forth many proofs of His power. When opposition attends the Gospel it will be the more triumphant. The warnings of the devil predict the success of the Word of God. When our Lord Jesus had done much, He was under a sacred necessity to do more—for everyone who was healed busied himself in spreading abroad the fame of the Beloved Physician—and others laboring under similar infirmities hastened at once to receive the like cure. The more we do for Christ the more we *may* do, and I think usually the more we *must* do. If we hold back from Christian labor we may think that little is required of us, but as soon as we once enter, heart and soul, into the Master's service, we shall feel as if we needed a thousand hands and a hundred lives to overtake the growing demands upon us.

I gather from the case before us in the text, that as it was with the Master so will it always be with the servants. Their pace of usefulness will increase in geometrical proportion, like that of a falling stone. Healed multitudes will act as willing decoys to attract multitudes of their unhealed friends. If there are any here who have received the Grace of God, it will be natural for them to induce others to listen to the Word of Life so they, also, may find salvation in our exalted Savior. Thus it is that the kingdom grows more and more, until the strongholds of sin are overthrown and the gates of Hell are shaken. The little cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, increases till it darkens all the skies and at last deluges the earth with blessings. Let us take care that we prove not an exception to this blessed rule! Never let us, by unholy silence, rob our Master of one of His best weapons, and the Church of her greatest joy. You who are healed should publish abroad in every place the fame of the Friend of Sinners! It is your *privilege* and your *duty*.

In calling your attention to the text, I shall notice the parallel, which actually exists, and the fuller parallel which might be expected between the present times and those of the text. I shall then briefly notice the sins which prevent the parallel being carried out. Thirdly, I shall dwell a little upon Divine Grace which invites us to complete the likeness. And then, lastly, utter some cautions which may be useful.

I. First, the PARALLEL which exists at this moment between these times and the text, and which might be expected more fully to exist. Thus it is in the text Jesus had healed many. These had informed other afflicted ones, and these afflicted ones, anxious to obtain the gift, pressed around the Savior in a mighty throng—everyone striving to touch Him that he might obtain immediate healing.

At this present time, also, Jesus Christ has healed many. *Spiritual* sickness is as rife today as bodily sickness was in the period of our Lord's earthly sojourn. He is, at this hour, graciously occupied in healing all kinds of moral deformity and moral disease. To our knowledge some great sinners have been saved. Some who were diseased with drunkenness, with dishonesty and with lasciviousness have believed in Christ and have been restored to virtue and to holiness! Surely, this ought to encourage others to hope that better things are possible to them through the Savior's healing power!

The Gospel has had free course in the slums of St. Giles! It has worked graciously in the mansions of Bloomsbury! The Gospel has been found mighty in Bethual Green, and it has been victorious in the West End. A few have been saved of the highest in the land, and not *some* only, but many of the poor in these last days have found Jesus mighty to save! Many who were lost to all spiritual things have been saved of late. During this last week many believed and were changed in heart. Every Sunday, by God's Grace, souls are saved! We may not blazon it in the newspapers, nor parade the work of the Lord in magazines, but, for all that, God is allowing us, week after week, to see evil men made good!

We can assure you that those of us who are pastors, and watch for souls, constantly see Jesus at His gracious work with sin-sick souls. He is today healing men of the maladies of their souls. Those whom Jesus has healed have been most thoroughly and effectually restored. The drunkard has not merely been reclaimed for a time, but he has become throughout life a sober, excellent citizen. The depraved and the debased have not been lifted up into a transient hypocritical profession of a religion which they did not understand, but we confidently testify that they have been made new creatures in Christ Jesus and are now among the most honorable members of society!

Looking back upon our own observation during a course of years, those of us who are occupied in preaching the Gospel earnestly bear witness that in these degenerate times, as men usually call them, Jesus Christ, exalted in the highest heavens, is still delivering men from spiritual infirmities, saving them from gross vices and inveterate habits! So far the parallel exists, and it would be natural to expect to see it completed. Since many diseased in soul have been healed, it might be reckoned that great multitudes of men would *desire* to be saved, too. There are crowds of sick folk in every direction. There are many here this morning who are spiritually sick. They have eyes that see not God, hearts that throb not with love to Him, knees that bow not in earnest prayer, hands withered for all holy service, consciences seared, judgments unbalanced, imaginations perverse.

All around us spiritual sicknesses of one kind or another meets our eyes. Even this House of God is crowded with diseased souls like a huge hospital. As for the great outlying population who fear not God, what a scene of plague meets the spiritual eye! What pestilence stalks in public! What disease festers in private! Soul sickness being thus prevalent, and Jesus being still engaged in healing, how is it that the sick folk do not throng to Him? How is it that every house in which Christ is preached is not crowded to the doors? Why do not men struggle and thrust one an-

other to hear the glad tidings of redemption from their sins? How is it that they are not earnestly engaged in prayer?

One would have thought that every house would have had its sighs, its tears, its groans until Christ should reveal Himself and the inhabitants should be healed! One would have expected to find whole families engaged in supplications, even to the neglect of worldly business, for a time, until their souls were healed! Men lie awhile with bodily sickness, why not with soul sickness? We might have imagined that as we walked the streets men would run after us crying, "Brothers and Sisters, what must we do to be saved?" The need of healing is great! The Physician is *present*—how is it that men sleep on and neglect gracious opportunities which concern their eternal destinies?

The parallel is not carried out. Men care nothing about the Word of their salvation. If they hear it, they forget it. If some of them remember it, they do not practice it. If, for awhile, they practice it, their goodness is "as the morning cloud and as the early dew." The mass of mankind are content to be *spiritually* blind, and halt, and maimed, and talk as if their wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores were marks of honor and ensigns of health!

Now, this would not be wondered at if there were reasonable doubts as to whether Jesus did really heal the souls of men. But there is no doubt on the minds of those who have watched the various cases. Some of us have, ourselves, been healed—and therefore speak from assured experience. Here stands a man before you who by the space of five years was secretly bowed down with despondency and depression of spirits of an unusual sort—one whose life was spent at the very gates of Hell through sorrow of heart when but a youth! Yet, in one moment he was lifted into perfect peace—a peace which he would not change with any man beneath the stars! And all that by a simple *looking* to Him who was crucified upon the Cross!

That one form of healing is a type of others, for all other evils are overcome in the same manner. Jesus can heal you of your pride. He can deliver you from anger. He can cure you of sluggishness. He can purge you from envy, from lasciviousness, from malice, from gluttony—from every form of spiritual malady! And this He can do, not by the torturing processes of penance, or the exhausting labors of superstitious performance, or the fiery ordeals of suffering—but the method is simply a word from Him, and a look from you—and all is done. You have but to *trust* in Jesus and you are saved! Saved this morning! Made a new creature in an instant! Set on your feet again to start upon a new life, with a new power within you which shall conquer sin!

We who bear this testimony claim to be believed. We are not liars. Not even for God's honor would we palm a pious fraud upon you. We have felt in ourselves the healing power of Christ! We have seen it, and do see it every day, in the cases of others, in persons of all ranks and of all ages. All who have obeyed the Word of Jesus have been made new creatures by His power! It is not one or two of us who bear this witness—there are hundreds who certify to the same fact! Not of ministers alone, but of other professions and callings. There are tradesmen here! There are gentlemen here! There are working men here! There are persons high and low here,

who could, if this were fitting, rise and say, "We, too, are witnesses that Christ can heal the soul."

Here, then, is the marvel—that those who know this do not immediately throng to Christ to obtain the same blessing! " 'Tis strange, 'tis passing strange, 'tis unbelievable!" The course of those of whom we read in the text was a rational one. They heard that Christ had healed many and the true practical logic was, "Let us be healed, too! Where is He? Let us reach Him. Are there crowds about Him? Let us jostle one another. Let us force our way into the mass until we touch Him, and feel the healing virtue flowing forth from Him." But men seem to have taken leave of their reason now. They know that the blessing is to be had—an eternal blessing not to be weighed with gold, nor compared with diamonds—and yet they turn their backs upon it!

Selfishness usually attracts men to places where good things are to be had, but here is the chief of all good—the possession of a sound soul, the gaining of a new nature which will fit a man to be a partaker with angels of light in glory—to be had, and to be had *freely*, yet man, untrue to himself, not even letting a right-minded selfishness govern him, turns away from the Fountain of all goodness, and goes his way into the wilderness to perish of eternal thirst!

II. Secondly, and very solemnly, WHAT ARE THE SINS WHICH PREVENT THE CARRYING OUT OF THIS PARALLEL? Painful is it to remember that one of the first sins which prevent men from pressing and thronging to touch Christ is ignorance. The sin of willful ignorance, not knowing what they might know, not knowing in very truth what they have learned in theory.

My dear Hearers, many of you, this morning, are unconverted. You are just what you always were—men diseased by sin. You know that Christ is healing souls and yet you have no desire to be healed, or the desire does not lead you practically to press to Him for the blessing. I say one cause of this is your ignorance. You do not *know* your disease. You do not *know* the true meaning of these three letters—S, I, N. If I were to put you through a few questions, you would admit the truth that you are sinners, but you do not know the meaning of your own confession. You would confess that you were born in sin, but then the true meaning of sin has never occurred to you, and the confession is, therefore, good for nothing.

If I were to read the bottom of your soul, I should discover deeply engraved there the belief that you are not very guilty, and that all your sins put together amount to nothing very serious. If you had indulged in some gross external act of iniquity you might, perhaps, have perceived its vileness. But you do not see any particular heinousness in those commonplace transgressions into which you have fallen, and you are quite ignorant of the evil which lies hidden within them. You are at rest, though God is angry with you! You remain at ease though you bear an unclean disease about you which will shut you out of Paradise! If a man were quite sure that he had a cancer in his breast and knew that a medicine was to be found which would heal it, if he did not seek the medicine you would feel confident that he did not know what a cancer meant.

So is it with you. You do not know what sin means. You do not know that the smallest sin is the beginning of Hell, a spark of the infernal fire, the first cause of that unutterable torment, the smoke of which goes up

forever and ever! O poor Souls, to be so ignorant—where not to know is to be forever undone! May God's Eternal Spirit shine like the sun into your dark spirit and reveal yourself to yourself! If I might pray one prevailing prayer for every unconverted one here this morning, it should be this, "Lord, make them to know their present state, and to tremble at it." Oh, if you did but know your danger and knew the sweetness and efficacy of the Remedy! If you did but know the punishment which is coming—and the blessedness of escaping from it—you would be among the first to press and throng about the Savior to obtain healing from Him. But ignorance holds many back.

Akin to ignorance is insensibility. Many men know, but do not feel. The mass of our hearers, the unconverted, I mean, have but very little feeling. Indeed, *spiritually* they have none at all, for they are "dead in trespasses and sins." You may stab a dead man in a thousand places, but he will not cry out. So is it with ungodly men. You may tell them of the love of Christ—the story of which might surely melt a rock and make a stone dissolve, and if they feel any emotion it is but for a moment—a little superficial feeling, no sooner begun than ended and they go their way to forget it all. The love of the bleeding Immanuel is an idle tale to them.

Then the preacher may bid Sinai thunder with all its mighty peals. God Himself may be heard in judgments loud and terrible! But, while the forests bow and the rocks are shivered, the hardened heart remains unmoved! Defiance is hurled by unbelief against Omnipotence itself! In vain we talk of the terrors of God and the judgment to come! In vain we poor preachers endeavor to convey our warning messages in the most affectionate and pathetic terms! Charm we ever so wisely, the deaf adder will not hear! And we go back to our Master and lament, "Who has believed our report? To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" An awful insensibility has stolen over the natural heart of man, and, therefore it is that though poisoned through and through with the venom of sin, with Jesus waiting to heal, men crowd not to find the remedy.

In addition to this insensibility, there grows over unrenewed hearers of the Gospel a sad indifference about it all. I do not hear them speak out this indifference *openly*, but they might as well do it, for they really feel it. There is this kind of indifference—"Well, well, why make so much to do about it? If I am to be saved, I shall be saved. These things will happen in due time. Meanwhile, why make so much fuss about the soul? Our souls do not pay as a present investment, and we do very well with them as they are. We are at the desk from Monday to Saturday. We are in the shop or in the exchange all day long. Really, a man must look to the main chance and mind his business, or else nowadays he will soon go to the wall."

There is a tacit persuasion among men that the soul does not matter, although few men would have the hardihood to say as much. Yet he who soberly calculates cannot but know that the soul is of the utmost consequence, for as the life is more than meat, and the body more than raiment, so must the soul be more precious than the body—especially viewing it in the light of *immortality*. "What can it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?" When that funeral bell begins to toll, what use shall it be to a man that he was learned and famous? That he made so much money and died, as men say, worth so many thousands? How can his wealth serve him if his *soul*, in all its naked deformity, is

bound to stand before its God, its wounds unhealed, its filth unwashed, covered from head to foot with the loathsomeness of its sin?

To hear the Judge say, "Get away from here! You have no portion with the blessed, you are sick unto death! Get you to the abode of the unclean, forever," will be the everlasting death-knell of all hope! O Sirs, you will, then, wish that you had given up all the world to have found Christ! You will, then, curse yourselves that you spent your lives in gaining an infinite loss, and hoarded and scraped up mere smoke and ashes! How you will mourn that you gave your minds to things which are not bread, and your labor for that which profits not while you suffered your soul's weightiest affairs to go by default! Indifferent we may be, now, but it will be hard to be so indifferent on a dying bed! It will be impossible to be so before the bar of God!

Here we may place earth first, but when we come to die we shall find all mortal things recede. After death what a speck will earth appear! Time's fleeting concerns will have vanished from our thoughts except as they linger in our regrets, and add fiercer pangs to our pains. Oh, I pray you give your thoughts to *Heaven*—for your immortal natures demand this of you! Pause awhile! Be sober! Give scope and room to sound judgment! Trifle not with eternity! If you must forget any part of your manhood, let it be the part which shall so soon be worm's meat and melt back to mother earth! But O, rob not your souls! Defraud not your spirits! Be not indifferent to your own best welfare!

Men press not to Christ as we should expect they would because they procrastinate. Delay is Satan's great net. All men *mean* to repent. Alas, they will repent one day that they did not repent at once! Most men *intend* to believe in Jesus, but they put off believing till there will be no Savior in whom to trust. It is always *tomorrow* with men. Archias, the Grecian ruler, was met one night by a friendly messenger who brought a communication informing him that he was to be assassinated at a feast. Archias, being in a merry mood, would not read the letter just then. Why should he, as he was going to a banquet? "But," said the messenger, "it contains serious things." "Well, well," said he, "serious things tomorrow." He died bearing about him the message which would have saved his life if he had read it!

Thousands are saying, "Serious things tomorrow!" and so they die. And what is more, they are damned bearing the warning about them which was meant to arouse them! Why will men thus go blindfolded to destruction? God forgive some of you for having delayed so long, and may you be moved by His eternal love to persevere no longer in such a course! Hear, I beseech you, the Word of God which says, "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." "Today is the accepted time, today is the day of salvation!"

There is another reason men come not to Christ to seek healing for their souls—because they really love the disease! It is a part of the madness of sin and the folly of iniquity that it fascinates men into a love of itself. If men did not love unrighteousness they would not be unrighteous! If men did not love in their hearts disobedience to God and the pleasures of the flesh, they would no longer be disobedient but would yield to God at once. When we have to deal with sinners about their souls, there is this difficulty—that instead of desiring to be saved, with many of them—this is the *last* thing they would wish for. If to be saved meant to be delivered

from going down to Hell, they would like that well enough. But since it means something more, namely, being saved from their *sins*, saved from being any longer slaves to their *lusts*, they care not for such a salvation!

They would rather be spiritually crooked, and blind and lame! They do not desire the holy sanity of spiritual manhood! They would rather bear about them the deformity of sin because their perverted minds have gathered a taste for that which destroys them! They perceive, or think they do, light in that which is darkness and sweetness in that which is bitter! Will not the drunkard take the cup at all hazards? Ah, have I not seen him poison himself willfully with his excess? When year after year he has undermined his constitution and is at death's door, will he not grieve, and even shed tears if from poverty, sent in mercy to him, he is unable to get that drink which is ruining him?

And will not men who have given way to their passions, when they know that mischief will follow—when they have already smarted from it—go on in sin like the sheep which follows the butcher into the very shambles? Oh the madness, the raving madness of men! The basilisk eyes of the old serpent enchant poor foolish humanity so that it sits still to be devoured and has no will to escape! Men hug their chains and kiss their fetters! They talk of happiness when they are standing over the mouth of Hell and in a few short months or days will fall into the devouring fire! Madness reigns in the human heart! O God, remove it! Remove it from each one of my hearers this morning that not one may choose his own delusions, and select for himself a course which must inevitably end in unmeasured misery! Thus I have tried, as best I could, to point out the sins which prevent men from thronging to Christ.

But I feel that I speak too coldly upon a theme which charms my heart. And I fear you listen to this matter, you unconverted ones, as though it were of no great concern to you—when oh, within the next hour or two, it may receive an importance which you have not dreamed of! Poor dying creatures that we are, at our very longest so short-lived and so apt to be caught away in a moment, how is it that we can sport and trifle with the things which more concern us than all else beside? What are houses and lands? What are stocks and exchanges? What are all our belongings? What, even, the body itself—these eyes, and hands, and this tongue—compared with the soul which is our essential self, our very being?

If our souls are unsound. If our spirits are rotting with the disease of sin. If we are therefore as lepers shut out from Heaven and God forever, oh, misery of miseries—what can make up for this if it were but for an hour? But when it is for *eternity*, and the soul is lost forever, what can compensate? Ah, dear Hearers, run not the risk, but crowd to the Savior, today, who is so willing to receive you right now!

III. This brings me, in the third place, to notice THE GRACE WHICH INVITES us, this morning, to complete the parallel of the text. Christ is healing souls. Grace invites us to do as the text says, namely, to press upon Him to touch Him, as many of us as have plagues. Think, now, what facts invite you to come to Christ? In the first place, dear Hearers, you are spared in this world—and with some of you this is no small wonder!

You have passed, it may be, through great perils. You were sick of the fever. You were laid low with cholera. You have been in shipwreck. You have escaped from a calamitous fire. You have been in eminent peril many

and many a time. It is a wonder to all who know you that you are alive, and it is most of all a wonder to yourself! Account that the longsuffering of God is salvation, and is meant to lead you to repentance! He has spared you that you might not die until you have found mercy! Thus His eternal mandate ran—"Spare that man till he has yielded Me his heart, for I have loved him with an everlasting love, and I will not suffer death and Hell to take him. He is Mine and he shall live till he repents."

Is it not so? May not God have sent me here this morning to tell you that it is so? You have been allowed to live where others have perished because God has a special regard for you! I talked with one some years ago who rode in the charge of Balaclava, when the shots were emptying the saddles all around. As in obedience to orders, the troops were galloping on to Death's mouth. I could not but look upon him with awe, hoping that he was one for whom God had a peculiar regard.

Now, you aged men who have been spared till now, your companions have fallen on the right hand and on the left! How Death has emptied the saddles of those around you! Those who kept shop in the same street. Those who went to school with you. Your playmates, your relatives, your brothers, your cousins—they are nearly all gone, and you are here! What are you here for? Why, I think, to say this morning, "I will arise and go unto my Father. I will tell Him I have sinned against Him. I will ask His mercy." Let the fact of your being spared induce you to seek Christ!

There is another encouragement for you in the fact that you are spared to hear the Gospel. You did not always hear it, and you do not, even now, always hear it. But you are brought, this morning, to listen to one who would gladly, by the Holy Spirit's power, bring you to Christ, and who, speak as he may, desires to speak out of love to your soul. It is a great mercy that you have been permitted to hear the Gospel after having so many times repelled its warnings and forgotten its admonitions—

***"Still does His good Spirit strive,
With the chief of sinners dwell."***

I do not believe that the Gospel has been sent into this place, this morning, to be preached for nothing! I will not believe that my Master directed me to stand in this pulpit and address you without intending that some of you should, by His Spirit's power, comply with the Divine request which is so much for your own profit!

The Gospel is preached unto you, and God has not sent it with the intention that after you have heard it you should seek mercy and not find it. Oh no, God does not tantalize! He does not mock the sons of men. He bids you come to Him. Repent and believe, and you shall be saved! If you come with a broken heart, trusting in Christ, there is no fear that He will reject you—else He would not have sent the Gospel to you! Beloved, there is nothing that so delights Jesus Christ as to save sinners. I never find that He was in a huff because they pressed about Him to touch Him. No, but it gave Him Divine pleasure to give forth His healing power.

You who are in trade are never happier than when business is brisk, and my Lord Jesus, who follows the trade of soul-winning, is never happier than when His great business is moving on rapidly. What pleasure it gives a physician when at last he brings a person through a severe illness into health! I think the medical profession must be one of the happiest engagements in the world when a man is skillful in it. Our Lord Jesus

feels a most Divine pleasure as He bends over a broken heart and binds it up! It is the very Heaven of Christ's Soul to be doing good to the sons of men! You misjudge Him if you think He wants to be argued with and persuaded to have mercy! He gives it as freely as the sun pours forth light, as the heavens drop with dew, and as clouds yield their rain.

It is His honor to bless sinners. It makes Him a name and an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off. I know I once belied Him. When I felt my sins to be a great burden, I said within myself, "I will go to Jesus, but perhaps He will reject me." I thought I had much to *feel* and to *do* to make myself ready for Him. and I therefore did this and that—but the more I did, the worse I became! I was like the woman who spent her money on physicians and was nothing better, but rather grew worse. At last I found it was of no use, and when I fully understood that there was life in a *look* at Christ—that all which was needed was for me simply to *trust*, to come as I was and put my case into His dear pierced hands, and leave it there—I could not think it could be so!

It seemed so simple—how could it be true? Was that all? I thought when I came to Him He would say to me, "Sinner, you have rejected Me so long. You have mocked Me by saying prayers which you did not feel. You have been a hypocrite and joined with God's people in singing My praises when you did not praise Me in your heart." I thought He would chide me, and bring 10,000 sins to my remembrance. Instead of that, it was but a word and it was all done! I *looked* to Him and the burden was gone! I could have sung, "Hosanna! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord with pardon in His right hand and acceptance in His left, with abundant blessings to the least deserving of the sons of men."

Now, my dear Hearers, I have to tell you that Jesus Christ abides in the same ability to save as He had in the days of His flesh. He ever lives to make intercession for sinners and is, therefore, able to save to the uttermost them that come unto Him—and it is still true that him that comes He will in no wise cast out. There has never been an instance of a man that trusted Christ and perished! And there never shall be an instance! Murderers have tried it, and blood-red murder has been washed out by the crimson blood of Jesus! Harlots have tried it, and have sat at the feet of Jesus and washed them with their tears for very joy!

Thieves have tried it! The adulterer, the whore-monger, the most debauched and depraved have come to the Cross and have obtained mercy through the precious blood of my Master! None are excluded who desire to come and who sincerely trust in Christ to save them! I pray you, therefore, listen to our tearful invitation and stand not back through shame or fear, for Jesus still is able and willing to save all who trust Him! Do I need to enlarge upon this? Perhaps so, but our time fails. I know if you are insensible to your need of Jesus, and do not care about being made whole, you are not likely to come for any drawings of *mine*.

But if you are awakened in any degree by the Holy Spirit, let me take hold of your hand and say, My dear Friend, do not delay trusting Christ. Do not entertain a hope that it will ever be easier to trust Jesus than it is now. Do not think that you will ever be in a better state for coming than you are in now. The best state in all the world for washing is to be filthy! The best state in all the world to obtain help from a physician is to be sorely sick! The best state for asking alms is to be a beggar! Do not try to

patch up those rags, nor improve your character, nor make yourself better before you come to Christ. Come in all your poverty and vileness, just as you are, and say to Him, “My Lord and my God, You suffered as a Man for all the sins of all those who trust You—I trust You—accept me, give me peace and joy.”

And tell the world, I pray you, whether He accepts you or not! If He casts you away you will be the very first—then let us know of it! But if He receives you, you will be but one among 10,000s who have been thus accepted—then publish it to the confirming of our faith!

IV. Lastly, I have one or two CAUTIONS to mention, which seem to me to be necessary in such a case. “He had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon Him for to touch Him, as many as had plagues.” Our first caution is—never be content with merely *pressing* upon Christ. When there is a gracious season in a Church and persons are converted, many rest satisfied because they have been in the congregation where works of mercy have been performed. It is dreadful to reflect that we have in all our assemblies men and women who are perfectly satisfied with having spent the Sunday in a place of worship.

Now, suppose the case of a man having the leprosy who goes to the place where Jesus is. He sees the people thronging to get near, and he joins in the press. He pushes on for a certain length of time and then he comes back perfectly content because he has joined with the crowd. The next day the great Master is dispensing healing virtue right and left, and this same man joins in the throng. He once more elbows himself tolerably near to the Savior, and then retires. “Well,” he says, “I got into the crowd. I pressed and squeezed, and made my way, and so I was in the way. Perhaps I might have got a blessing.”

Now that would be precisely similar to the condition of hundreds and thousands of people who go to a place of worship on Sunday. There is the Gospel. They come to hear it. They come next Sunday, there is the Gospel again. They listen to it, and they go their way each time. “Fool!” you say to the man with the leprosy, “why, you did nothing! Getting into the crowd was nothing! If you did not *touch* the Lord who dispensed the healing, you wasted your time. And besides, you incurred responsibility because you got *near* to Him, and yet for lack of putting out your hand to touch Him, you lost the opportunity.”

So you, good people, who come to this Chapel, or go to any other place of worship where Jesus Christ is faithfully preached, you come and go, and come and go continually. And what fools you are, what gross fools, to get into the throng and to be satisfied with *that* and never touch Christ! Don’t tell me of your Church goings and your Chapel goings! They are not a morsel of use to you unless you touch the Savior through them! Your occupying that pew for a space of 20 years. Your going to a place of worship twice every Sunday. Your attendance on the weeknight—all this is only so much responsibility, but not a grain of *blessing* to you unless you are really come to Jesus Christ! You are right to come to the services, just as they were right to press into the crowd. But you are wrong if you stop there—just as that leprous man would have been had he been foolishly content to have pressed into the throng without getting near to Christ!

And yet, is not this the conduct of a great many of you? It is getting serious, too. You have been Chapel-goers, perhaps, for 30 or 40 years, and

are you a bit the better? Your mother took you in her arms to the sanctuary. You went to Sunday school. You have always been in the way of the means of Divine Grace—and yet, for the lack of one thing, a real *trusting* in Christ, you are perishing in your sin! Living water flows at your feet, but you do not drink. Living bread is upon the table, but you have not eaten. Divine pardon is before you, and you will not put out your hand to take it. Heaven's gate is set wide open, and you are content to turn your back upon it. I must caution you, again, not to be content with touching those who are *healed*.

There were many in the crowd, who, having touched the Master, clapped their hands and said, "Glory be to God, my withered arm is restored." "My eyes are opened." "My dropsy has vanished." "My palsy is gone." One after another they praised God for His great wonders. And sometimes their friends who were sick would go away with them and say, "What a mercy! Let us go home together." They would hear all about it, and talk about it, and tell it to others—but all the while, though they rejoiced in the good that was done to others, and sympathized in it—they never *touched Jesus* for themselves.

It is very dangerous work for some of you Sunday school teachers, when you are the means of bringing dear children to Christ, and yet do not come yourselves! Noah's carpenters built the ark but were all drowned. Oh, I pray you, be not satisfied with *talking* about revivals and *hearing* about conversions—get an interest in them! Let nothing content any one of us but actual spiritual *contact* with the Lord Jesus Christ! Let us never give sleep to our eyes or slumber to our eyelids till we have really looked to that great Sacrifice which God has lifted up for the sins of men. Let us not think of Christ as *another* man's Savior, but be passionately in earnest till we get Him for our *own*. If He is not ours today, today let us lay hold on Him!

I cannot endure the thought of your going out of this House of Prayer before you are saved! Remember, salvation work does not require months and years. If you look to Christ at this very moment, you shall have your sins as much forgiven as if you were 70 years a Christian, for there is no difference, here, between the new-born babe in Christ, and the most advanced veteran in the Christian army. If you only look now, your sins are forgiven you, and you shall, this day, begin the new life—and God shall be glorified in that new life until He takes you up to dwell with Himself forever!

Do you know what it is to trust Christ? I do not know how to explain it better than by dwelling on the word itself—trust. It is a reliance, a dependence. The old divines used to call it a recumbence. It is a leaning all your weight on Christ, giving up your own power and depending on Him. Dr. Watts puts it thus—

***"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Your kind arms I fall.
Be You my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my All."***

But still, people will not understand us. A young man once said to me, "I want to know what I must do to be saved." I reminded him of that verse. He said, "Sir, I cannot fall." "Oh," said I, "you do not understand me. I do not mean a fall which needs any strength in you—I mean a fall caused by

the absence of all strength.” It is to tumble down into Christ’s arms because you cannot stand upright. Faint into the arms of Christ—that is faith!

Just give up *doing*. Give up depending upon anything that you are, or do, or ever hope to be—and depend upon the complete merits, and finished work and precious blood of Jesus Christ. If you do this you are saved. Anything of your own doing spoils it all. You must not have a jot or a tittle of your own! You must give up relying upon your *prayers*, your *tears*, your *Baptism*, your *repentance*—and even your faith itself! Your reliance is to be on nothing but that which is in Christ Jesus.

Those dear hands, those blessed feet are ensigns of His love—look to them! That bleeding, martyred, murdered Person is the grand display of the heart of the ever-blessed God. Look to Him! Look to the Savior’s pangs, griefs, and groans. These are punishments for human sin. This is God’s wrath spending itself on Christ instead of spending itself on the Believer. Believe in Jesus, and it is certain that He thus suffered for you. Trust in Him to save you, and you are saved!

God grant you the privilege of faith, and the gift of salvation. Amen.

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JESUS ANGRY WITH HARD HEARTS

NO. 1893

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 28, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And when He had looked round about on them with anger,
being grieved for the hardness
of their hearts, He said unto the man,
Stretch forth your hand.”
Mark 3:5.*

MY text will really consist of these words—“He looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts.” It is the Divine Lord, the pitiful Jesus, the meek and lowly in heart, who is here described as being angry! Where else do we meet with such a statement while He was here among men? A poor man was present in the synagogue who had a withered hand—it was his right hand and he who has to earn his daily bread can guess what it must be to have that useful member dried up or paralyzed. In the same synagogue was the Savior, ready to restore to that hand all its known force and cunning. Happy conjunction! The company that had gathered in the synagogue, professedly to worship God—would they not have special cause to do so when they saw a miracle of Divine goodness? I can imagine them whispering one to another, “We shall see our poor neighbor restored, today, for the Son of God has come among us with power to heal, and He will make this a very glorious Sabbath by His work of gracious power.”

But I must not let imagination mislead me—they did nothing of the kind! Instead of this, they sat watching the Lord Jesus, not to be delighted by an act of His power, but to find something for which they might accuse Him! When all came to all, the utmost that they would be able to allege would be that He had healed a withered hand on the Sabbath. Overlooking the commendation due for the miracle of healing, they laid the emphasis upon its being done on the Sabbath and held up their hands with horror that such a secular action should be performed on such a sacred day. Now, the Savior puts very plainly before them the question, “Is it right to do good on the Sabbath?” He put it in a form which only allowed one reply. The question could, no doubt, have been easily answered by these Scribes and Pharisees, but then it would have condemned them and, therefore, they were all as mute as mice! Scribes most skilled in splitting hairs and Pharisees who could measure the border of a garment to the

eighth of an inch declined to answer one of the simplest questions in morals. Mark describes the Savior as looking round upon them all with anger and grief, as well He might.

You know how minute Mark is in his record—his observation is microscopic and his description is graphic to the last degree. By the help of Mark's clear words, you can easily picture the Savior looking round upon them. He stands up boldly, as One who had nothing to conceal; as One who was about to do that which would need no defense. He challenged observation, though He knew that His opposition to ecclesiastical authority would involve His own death and hasten the hour of the Cross. He did not *defy* them, but He did make them feel their insignificance as He stood looking round upon them all. Can you conceive the power of that look? The look of a man who is much given to anger has little force in it—it is the blaze of a wisp of straw, fierce and futile. In many cases we almost smile at the impotent age which looks out from angry eyes. But a gentle spirit, like the Savior's, commands reverence if once moved to indignation. His meek and lowly heart could only have been stirred with anger by some overwhelming cause. We are sure that He did well to be angry.

Even when moved to an indignant look, His anger ended there. He only looked—and spoke no word of upbraiding. And the look, itself, had in it more of pity than of contempt, or, as one puts it, “more of compassion than of passion.” Our Lord's look upon that assembly of opponents deserves our earnest regard. He paused long enough in that survey to gaze upon each person and to let him know what was intended by the glance. Nobody escaped the searching light which those expressive eyes flashed upon each malicious watcher. They saw that, to Him, their base conduct was loathsome! He understood them and was deeply moved by their obstinacy.

Note well that Jesus did not speak a word and yet He said more without words than another man could have said with them. They were not worthy of a word—neither would more words have had the slightest effect upon them. He saved His words for the poor man with the withered hand. But for these people a look was the best reply—they looked on Him—and now He looked on them. This helps me to understand that passage in Revelation where the ungodly are represented as crying to the rocks to cover them and the hills to hide them from the face of Him that sat upon the Throne! The Judge has not spoken so much as a single word! Not yet has He opened the books. Not yet has He pronounced the sentence, “Depart, you cursed,” but they are altogether terrified by the *look* of that august Countenance. Concentrated love dwells in the face of Jesus, the Judge—but in that dread day they will see it set on fire with wrath! The wrath of a lion is great, but it is *nothing* compared with that of the Lamb! I wish I had skill to describe our Lord's look, but I must ask the aid of your understanding and your imagination to make it vivid to your minds.

When Mark has told us of that look, he proceeds to mention the mingled feelings which were revealed by it. In that look there were two things—there were anger and grief—indignation and inward sorrow. “He looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts.” He was angry that they should willingly blind their eyes to a truth so plain, an argument so convincing. He had put to them a question to which there could only be one answer, and they would not give it—He had thrown light on their eyes and they would not see it—He had utterly destroyed their chosen pretext for opposition and yet they would persist in opposing Him! Evidently it is possible to be angry and to be right. Difficult to many is the precept, “Be you angry and sin not,” and this fact renders the Savior’s Character all the more admirable since He so easily accomplished what is so difficult to us. He could be angry with the sin and yet never cease to compassionate the sinner. His was not anger which desired evil to its object—no touch of malevolence was in it—it was simply love on fire, love burning with indignation against that which is unlovely.

Mingled with this anger there was grief. He was heart-broken because their hearts were so hard. As Manton puts it, “He was softened because of their hardness.” His was not the pitiless flame of wrath which burns in a dry eye—He had tears as well as anger. His thunderstorm brought a shower of pity with it! The Greek word is hard to translate. There is what an eminent critic calls a sort of *togetherness* in the word—He grieved with them. He knew that the hardness of their hearts would, one day, bring upon them an awful misery and, foreseeing that coming grief, He grieved with them by anticipation. He was grieved at their hardness because it would injure them. Their blind enmity vexed Him because it was securing their own destruction! He was angry because they were willfully rejecting the Light of God which would have illuminated them with heavenly brightness—the life which could have quickened them into fullness of joy! They were thus determinedly and resolutely destroying their own souls out of hatred to Him and He was angry, more for their sakes, than His own.

There is something very admirable in our Savior even when we see Him in an unusual condition. Even when He grows angry with men, He is angry with them because they will not let Him bless them—because they will persevere in opposing Him for reasons which they cannot, themselves, support, and dare not even acknowledge! If I had been one of the disciples who were with Him in the synagogue, I think I should have burned with indignation to see them all sitting there, refusing to forego their hate and yet unable to say a word in defense of it. I doubt not the loving spirit of John grew warm. What a horrible thing that any creature in the shape of a man should act so unworthily to the blessed Son of God as to blame Him for doing good! What a disgrace to our race, for men to be so inhuman as to wish to see their fellow man remain withered and to dare to blame the gentle Physician who was about to make him perfectly whole!

Man is, indeed, at enmity with God when he finds an argument for hate in a deed of love!

Our first question is, *What was the cause of this anger and this grief?* Then let us enquire, *Does anything of this sort rest in us?* Do we cause our Lord anger and grief? And, thirdly, let us ask, *what should be our feeling when we see that something about us may cause, or does cause Him anger and grief?* Oh that the Holy Spirit may bless this sermon to all who hear me this day!

I. WHAT CAUSED THIS ANGER AND GRIEF? It was their hardness of heart. To use other words, it was the callousness of their conscience, their lack of feeling. Their hearts had, as it were, grown hard as stone and had lost their proper softness. The hand may furnish us with an illustration. Some persons have very delicate hands—the blind who read raised type with their fingers develop special sensitiveness and this sensitiveness is of great value. But when men are put to pick loose hemp, or break stones, or do other rough work, their hands become hard and callous. Even so is it with the heart which ought to be exceedingly tender! Through continuance in sin, it becomes callous and unfeeling. Use is second nature—the traveler's feet get hardened to the way, his face becomes hardened to the cold, his whole constitution is hardened by his mode of life. Persons have taken deadly drugs little by little till they have been hardened against their results. We read in history that Mithridates had used poison till, at last, he was unable to kill himself by it, so hardened had he become.

But hardening is of the worst kind when it takes place in the heart. The heart ought to be all tenderness, but when it is not, the life must be coarse and evil. Yet multitudes are morally smitten with ossification of the heart. Do we not know some men in whom the heart is simply a huge muscle? If they have any hearts, they are made of leather, for they have no pity for anybody, no feeling, even, for their relatives! God save us from a hard heart—it leads to something worse than death! A heart of flesh may be gone out of a man and, instead thereof, he may have a heart of stone—Scripture even calls it “an adamant stone”—unfeeling, unyielding, impenetrable, obstinate. Those enemies of our Lord who sat in the synagogue that Sabbath were incorrigible. They were desperately set on hating Him and they strengthened themselves in the resolve that they would not be convinced and would not cease to oppose Him, let Him say or do whatever He might. Our Lord Jesus became angry, grieved and sorrowful with them.

What was their exact fault?

First, *they would not see*, though the case was clear. He had set the Truth of God so plainly before them that they were obliged to strain their understandings to *avoid* being convinced—they had to draw down the blinds of the soul and put up the shutters of the mind to be able not to see! There are none so blind as those that will not see and these were of that blindest order. They were blind people that had eyes and boasted

that they could see and, therefore, their sin was utterly without excuse. Ah, me, I fear that we still have many around us who know, but do not act on their knowledge—who do not wish to be convinced and converted—but harden themselves against known duty and plain right!

What was more, *what these people were forced to see, they would not acknowledge*. They sullenly held their tongues when they were bound to speak. Does it not happen to many persons that the Gospel forces itself upon their belief? They feel that they could not conjure up an argument against the Divine Truth which is set before them. The Word of God comes with such demonstration that it smites them with sledgehammer force, but they do not intend to admit its power and so they brace themselves up to bear the blow without yielding! They shut their mouths against the Water of Life which is held up to them in the golden cup of the Gospel. No child could shut his teeth more desperately against medicine than they against the Gospel! Any man may take a horse to the water, but 10,000 cannot make him drink and this is proven in many a hearer of the Word of God! There sat these Scribes and Pharisees—they were so doggedly determined not to admit that which they could not deny that it is a wonder that the stones did not cry out against them! Are there any of that breed still among us?

More than that, *while they would not see what was so plain, they were diligently seeking to spy out flaws and faults where there were none, namely, in the Lord Jesus*. So there are many who profess that they cannot understand the Gospel, but they have understanding enough to quibble at it and cast slurs upon it! They have a cruelly keen eye for non-existent errors in Scripture! They find this mistake in Deuteronomy and another in Genesis. What great wisdom, to be diligent in making discoveries against one's own eternal interests! The Gospel of the Lord Jesus is man's only hope of salvation—what a pity to count it the height of cleverness to destroy our only hope! Alas for captious skeptics! They are sharp-sighted as eagles against themselves, but they are blind as bats to those things which make for their peace! These Scribes and Pharisees tried to discover the undiscoverable, namely, some fault in Jesus, and yet they could not or would not see the wickedness of their own opposition to Him.

They dared to sit in judgment upon the Lord, who proved Himself by His miracles to be Divine, and yet all the while they professed great reverence for God and for His Law. Though they were fighting against God, they made the pretense of being very zealous for Him and especially for His Holy Day. This is an old trick of the enemy—to fight true religion with false religion—to battle with godliness in the name of orthodoxy. This is a hollow sham and we do not wonder that our always sincere and truthful Lord felt indignant at it! You will know, yourselves, whether you ever do this. I fear that many do. By their zeal for the *externals* of religion, they try to justify their opposition to the vital possession of it.

Brothers and Sisters, I pray that none of us may be hypocrites, for the Lord Jesus cannot endure such. He cares not for whitewashed sepulchers, but proclaims woe unto all false professors. Here let me give you a parable—In our fine old churches and cathedrals you see monuments raised to the dead. These are rich in costly marble and fine statuary, with, here and there, a touch of gold and a Latin inscription flattering the dead. What a goodly show! Yet what does it all mean? Why, that corpses are underneath! Take down those marble slabs, remove a little earth and you come to corruption and moving loathsomeness! Graves are more fit for cemeteries than for the place which is consecrated to the living God. I do not mean, by this, any censure upon the tombs, which are well enough—I only use them as a parable. What shall I say of those men and women of whom they are the type and emblem? They are dead while they live and have a form of godliness but deny the power of it! They present a fair *outside*, but secretly practice all manner of abominations! What have these to do in the Church of God? What a horror to know that there are such in the assemblies of the saints! O my Hearers, dread the hardness which would permit you to be hypocrites! Shun above all things that deadness of soul which makes a false profession possible, for this is very grievous to the Lord!

A hard heart is insensible, impenetrable, inflexible. You can no more affect it than if you should strike your hand against a stone wall. Satan has fortified it and made its possessor to be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the works of sin. The enmity of such a heart leads it to resist all that is good. Its hardness returns the efforts of love in the form of opposition. Our Savior saw before Him persons who would oppose Him no matter what He did and would not change their minds, however they might be made to see their error! Let this suffice to explain the scene before us of our Lord grieved and angry.

II. I must now come closer home while I enquire, IS THERE ANYTHING OF THIS SORT AMONG US? Oh, for help in the work of self-examination!

Remember, we may grieve the Savior because of the hardness of our hearts, and yet be very respectable people. We may go to the synagogue, as these did. We may be Bible readers, as the Scribes were. We may practice all the outward forms of religion, as the Pharisees did. And yet the Lord Jesus may be grieved with us because of the hardness of our heart!

We may anger the Lord and yet be strictly non-committal. I dare say there are some here who are *not* Christians and yet they never say a word against Christianity. They are strictly neutral. They judge that the less they think or say about this great matter the better. Jesus was angry that men should be silent when honesty and candor demanded speech of them. You must not think you are going to escape by saying, “I am not a professor.” There can be no third party in this case! In the eternal world there is no provision made for neutrals! Those who are not with Jesus are against Him and they that gather not with Him are scattering abroad. You

are either wheat or tares and there is nothing between the two! O Sirs, you grieve Him though you do not openly oppose Him! Some of you are especially guilty, for you ought to be among the foremost of His friends. Shame on you to treat the Lord so badly!

You may be very tender towards other people. In fact, you may have, like the old Jewish king, great tenderness towards everybody but the Lord! Did not Zedekiah say, "The king is not he that can do anything against you"? I know many who are so fond of pleasing others that they cannot be Christians. They have not the moral courage to oppose any one for the Truth of God's sake. O Sirs, this may well make Jesus look upon you with anger and grief, that you should be so self-denying, so kind and so considerate to others—and yet act so cruelly to Him and to yourselves! To yourselves it is a cruel kindness to save yourselves from speaking out. Your fear is driving you to spiritual suicide! To save a little present trouble you are heaping up wrath and judgment.

Alas, this hardness of heart may be in us though we have occasional melting! I think that man has a very hard heart who is, at times, deeply moved, but violently represses his emotions. He hurries home to his chamber, greatly distressed, but in a short time he rallies and shakes off his fears. He goes to a funeral and trembles on the brink of the grave, but joins his merry companions and is soon at his sins again! He likes to hear a stirring sermon, but he is careful not to go beyond his depth while hearing it. He is on the watch against his own welfare and is careful to keep out of the way of a blessing. By a desperate resolve, he holds out against the pressure of the Grace of God as it comes to him in exhortations and entreaties. He is often rebuked, but he hardens his neck. He is occasionally on the verge of yielding, but he recovers his evil firmness and holds on his way with a perseverance worthy of a better cause. How often have we hoped better things for some of you! How often have you blighted those hopes! You must be very hard in heart to hold out so long. It shows a strong constitution when a man has frequently been near death and yet has recovered—and it shows an awful vitality of evil when you have been driven to the verge of repentance—and then have deliberately turned back to the way of evil, sinning against conscience and conviction.

Yes, and we may have this hardness of heart and yet keep quite clear of gross sins. I have wondered at some men, how they have guarded themselves in certain directions and yet have been lax in other matters. While they have gone to excess in sins against *God*, they have been scrupulous in avoiding wrong towards man! Their sins have not been stones, but sand—I hope they do not forget that, "sand is heavy," and that a vessel can as easily be wrecked upon a quicksand as upon a rock. Your outwardly moral man is often a hardened rebel against God. His pride of character helps to harden him against the Gospel of Grace. He condemns others who are really no worse than himself. There is an abominable kind of prudence which keeps some men out of certain sins—they are too mean

to be prodigal, too fond of ease to plunge into risky sins. Many a man is carried off his feet by a sudden flood of temptation and sins grievously—and yet at heart he may be, by no means, so hardened as the cool, calculating transgressor. Woe unto the man who has learned to sin deliberately and to measure out iniquity as if it were a lawful merchandize to be weighed by the ounce and the pound! Why, Sir, on account of the evident strength of your mind, better things are expected of you! You cannot plead violence of passion, or feebleness of judgement—for you there will be reserved the deeper Hell though you escape present condemnation!

This hardness of heart may not overcome you to the fullest at present, but you may have grave cause to dread it. Hardness of heart creeps over men by insensible degrees. The hardest-hearted man in the world was not so once. The flesh of his heart was petrified little by little. He that can now curse and blaspheme, once wept for his boyish faults at his mother's knee and would have shuddered at the bare idea of falling asleep without a prayer! There are those about us who would give worlds to be free from the bondage of habit, so as to feel as once they did. Their soul is as parched as the Sahara—it has forgotten the dew of tears! Their heart is hot as an oven with evil passions and no soft breath of holy penitence ever visits it. Oh that they could weep! Oh that they could feel! Repentance is hidden from their eyes. There remains nothing sensitive about them except the base imitation of it which comes over them when they are in a maudlin state through strong drink. What calamity can be greater? What can be said of sin that is more terrible than that it hardens and deadens? Well did the Apostle say, "Exhort one another daily, while it is called today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

I cannot forbear saying that among the hardened there are some who may be said, especially, to provoke the Lord. Among these we must mention those who, from their birth and education, received an unusually keen moral sense, but have blunted it by repeated crimes. Those sin doubly who have had double light and special tenderness of nature. Judge, O you sons of the godly, whether there are not many such among you! Esau was all the more a "profane person" because he was a son of Isaac, knew something about the Covenant heritage and had certain fine touches of nature which ought to have made him a better man.

This is also true of those who have been indulged by Providence. God has dealt with them with wonderful favor. They have continued long in good health. They have been prosperous in business; their children have grown up around them; they have all that heart can wish—and yet God receives from them no gratitude! Indeed, they hardly give a thought to Him. Ingratitude is sure to bring a curse upon the man who is guilty of it. Alas, the ungrateful are numerous everywhere! Some who are well known to me should have remembered the Lord, for He has granted them a smooth path, a full wallet and sunshine to travel in. If there were an honest heart in you, your hearts would cleave to the Lord in deep and hearty

love! Silken cords of love are stronger with true men than fetters of iron are to thieves.

Let me not forget the obligations of others who have been often chastened, for this side of the question has its force, also. Certain persons have endured many trials. They have often suffered pain of body and have been brought, at times, to the verge of the grave. They have lost the beloved of their eyes with a stroke. They have followed their children to the grave—sorrows have been multiplied to them. Yet, after all, they are hard of heart. The fire of affliction has not softened their iron nature. Why should they be stricken any more? They will revolt more and more. The Lord Himself cries, “O Ephraim, what shall I do unto you?” Long-suffering fails! Mercy is weary. There are no more rods to use upon you—as the bullock kicks out against the goad, so do you resist the chastening of the Lord God! The Savior looks upon all such with that grieving anger of which the text speaks.

Alas, I dare not omit those towards whom the Savior must feel this anger very especially because they have been the subjects of a tender, earnest, faithful ministry. I will not say much of my own personal ministry, which has been spent for years upon many of you, but assuredly if it has not affected you, it is not for lack of strong desire and intense longing to be of service to your souls! God is my witness that I have kept back nothing of His Truth. I have never flattered you, neither have I occupied this pulpit to make it a platform for self-display. I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God. But, apart from this, certain of you have had the tender ministries of a holy mother who is now with God, of a wise father who still lives to pray for you, of affectionate teachers who instructed you aright and loving friends who sought your good. Father, your child has wooed you. Young man, your newly-converted wife has agonized for you and is agonizing even now! Very select have been the agencies used upon you. Choice and musical the voices which have endeavored to charm you. If these do not reach you, neither would you be converted though one rose from the dead! If Jesus, Himself, were here, again, among men, how could even He reach you? If all the means He has already used have failed with you, I know not what is to be done with you! The Savior, Himself, will, I fear, leave you—with a look of grief and anger He will turn from you because of the hardness of your heart! Stay, Lord Jesus, stay a little longer! Perhaps they will be won next time. Bid not Your Spirit take His everlasting flight. Do not swear in Your wrath that they shall not enter into Your rest, but be patient with them yet a little longer, for Your mercy's sake.

III. We must now close. Oh that my poor pleading may not have been lost upon you! In many things which I have spoken there has been a loud voice to many of you. Now hear me while I raise the question, **WHAT SHOULD BE OUR FEELING IN REFERENCE TO THIS SUBJECT?**

First, *let us renounce forever the habit of quibbling.* These Scribes and Pharisees were great word-spinners, critics, fault-finders. They found fault with the Savior for healing on the Sabbath. He had not broken God's Law of the Sabbath—He had only exposed their error upon that point. If the Sabbath had not furnished an opportunity for objection, they would have found another, for they meant to object—one way or another they resolved to contradict! Multitudes of persons in this present day are most effectually hardening their hearts by the habit of quibbling. While others are struck by the beauty of the Gospel which they hear, these people only remember a mispronunciation made by the preacher! Having commenced in this line, they begin to sit in judgment on the Gospel preached and, before long, the Scriptures, themselves, are subjected to their alteration and correction. Reverence is gone, and self-sufficiency reigns supreme. They criticize God's Word! Any fool can do that, but only a fool *will* do it!

They give themselves the airs of literary men. They are not like common hearers—they require something more intellectual! They look down with contempt upon people who enjoy the Gospel and are proving the power of it in their lives. They, themselves, are persons of remarkable mind—men of light and leading—and it gives them distinction to act the part of skeptics. They show their great learning by turning up their noses at the plain teachings of the Bible. It seems to be the great feature of a cultured man, nowadays, to wear a sneer upon his face when he meets with believers in Inspiration. An idiot can attain in five minutes to a high degree of contempt of others—do not exhibit such folly! Pride of this sort ruins those who indulge it. To be unbelieving in order to show one's superiority is an unsatisfactory business.

Let us never imitate that evil spirit who, in the garden of Eden, proved himself to be the patron and exemplar of all skeptics. Remember how he raised the question, "Yes, has God said?" Forget not how he went further and, like a sage philosopher, hinted that there was a larger hope—"You shall not surely die," he said. Then he advanced to lay down a daring radical philosophy and whispered, "God knows that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened and you shall be as gods." This old serpent has left his trail on many minds at the present day and you can see it in the slimy questions and poisonous suggestions of the age. Get away from quibbling—it is, of all labors, the least remunerative.

Next, *let us feel an intense desire to submit ourselves unto the Lord Jesus.* If He is in the synagogue, let us ask Him to heal us and to do it in His own way. Let us become His disciples and follow Him wherever He goes. Yield yourselves unto God! Be as melted wax to the seal. Be as the water of the lake which is moved with every breath of the wind. All He wills is our salvation. Lord Jesus, let Your will be done!

Let us be careful to keep away from all hardening influences, whether of books, or men, or habits, or pleasures. If there is any company which deadens us to spiritual things, which hinders our prayers, shakes our

faith, or dampens our zeal, let us get out of it and stay out of it. If any amusement lessens our hatred of sin, let us never go near it. If any book clouds our view of Jesus, let us never read it. We grow hard soon enough through the necessary contact with the world which arises out of workday life and business pursuits—let us not increase these evils. Shun the idler's talk, the scorner's seat and the way of the ungodly. Shun false doctrine, worldliness and strife. Keep clear of frivolity and trifling. Be in earnest and be pure! Live near to God and stay as far as you can from the throne of iniquity.

Lastly, use all softening influences. Ask to have your heart daily rendered sensitive by the indwelling of the quickening Spirit. Go often to hear the Word of God—it is like a fire and like a hammer breaking the rock in pieces. Dwell at the foot of the Cross—it is there that tenderness is born into human hearts! Jesus makes all hearts soft and then stamps His image on them. Entreat the Holy Spirit to give you a very vivid sense of sin and a very intense dread of it. Pray often according to the tenor of Charles Wesley's hymn in which he cries—

***“Quick as the apple of an eye,
O God, my conscience make!
Awake my soul when sin is near,
And keep it still awake.
Oh, may the least omission pain
My well-instructed soul
And drive me to the blood, again,
Which makes the wounded whole!”***

If such is the condition of our heart, our Lord will not be angry with us. He will look round upon us with joy and take a delight in us.

So far I have kept to the text, bearing, all the while, the burden of the Lord. If it is not heavy hearing to you, it is certainly painful preaching to me. That same love which made the loving Jesus grieve, has driven me to speak after this fashion. Not that I love men as much as He did, but a spark from His fire has kindled in my soul and is burning there according to the measure of Grace given. But now, my dear Hearers, let me indulge myself with a word of Gospel. Surely there are some among you who desire to lose your hardness. You are crying to yourselves—

***“Heart of stone, relent! Relent!
Melt by Jesus' love subdued!”***

To you there is abundant cause of hope. He who made the heart can melt it. Job said, “God makes my heart soft.” It is the peculiar office of the Holy Spirit to renew our nature. Indeed, He makes us to be born again, working on the behalf of our Lord Jesus, whose royal word is, “Behold I make all things new.” The Holy Spirit can work conviction of sin in us, the new birth, faith in the Lord Jesus, deep contrition and holy tenderness! Do you desire that it should be so? Will you join me in a silent prayer that His melting operations may, at this moment, be felt in your soul?

To you is the word of this salvation sent! The Lord God has undertaken to glorify Himself in redeeming His people from all iniquity. He has entered into Covenant with His chosen and all who believe in His Son Jesus are comprehended in that number. The Covenant speaks on this wise—"A new heart, also, will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." (Eze 36:26). Look how this promise exactly meets your case! That kind of heart which you so greatly need shall be given you, though, indeed, it is a miracle of miracles to do it! A new arm or leg would be amazing, but what shall be said of a new *heart*? The spirit which you, also, so greatly require, is to be bestowed—your whole tone, temper and tendency shall be altered in an extraordinary manner. The Lord can drive out the evil spirit and then He can renew your spirit and fill your being with His own Holy Spirit!

As for that nature which refuses to feel or yield, or break or bend, the Lord is able to take this altogether away. What an operation to perform and yet leave the patient alive! "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh." None but He that made the heart could execute such delicate surgery as this. Do you think that it can never be done in your case? Remember that the Lord never speaks beyond His ability—there is no boasting with Him! His arm has not waxed short! He is still able to save unto the uttermost! When the old stony heart is gone, the Lord can fill up the empty space with the most gentle and sensitive affections, even as He says, "I will give you an heart of flesh." By this means we shall be made to stand in awe of God's Word. We shall tremble before Him. We shall also feel a childlike gratitude, a filial love and a holy obedience. Instead of needing to be smitten with a hammer, we shall feel the slightest touch of the Divine finger and shall answer to the faintest call of the Divine voice.

What a change! Now this is a matter of promise. See how the verse glitters with, "I will," and, "I will." The Lord, who is able to perform His Word, has spoken in this fashion, and He will not run back from His promise. But please read the 37th verse of this 36th chapter of Ezekiel and mark it well. "Thus says the Lord God; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." Will you not enquire? Will you not ask the Lord to do this for you? If so, your prayer has begun to be answered! Your *desire* is a token that the stone is softening and flesh is taking its place! O Lord, grant that it may be so! Believe in the Lord Jesus that He is able to do this unto you and it shall be according to your faith.

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

A POWERFUL REASON FOR COMING TO CHRIST NO. 1529

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 21, 1880,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“A great multitude, when they had heard what great things
He did, came unto Him.”
Mark 3:8.*

THE opposition of the great ones of the earth did not, after all, hinder the cause of Christ. The Pharisees, who were the leaders of religious thought, combined with the Herodians, who were the court party, to destroy Jesus, but at the very moment when their wrath had reached its highest pitch the crowd about the Savior's Person was greater than ever. Let us not, therefore, dear Friends, be at all dismayed if great men and learned men and nominally religious men, should oppose the simple Gospel of Christ! All the world is not bound up in a Pharisee's phylactery, nor held in chains by a philosopher's new fancy. If some will not have our Savior, others will—God's eternal purpose will stand and the kingdom of His Anointed shall come.

If our Lord Jesus is rejected by the great, nevertheless the common people hear Him gladly. To the poor, the Gospel is preached and it is His joy and His delight that out of them He still gathers a company who, though poor in this world, are rich in faith and give glory to God. I would have you, Beloved, *count* upon opposition and regard it as a token of coming blessings. Dread not the black cloud, it does but prognosticate a shower. March may howl and bluster and April may dampen all things with its rains, but the May flowers and the autumn's harvest of varied fruits will come and come by this very means. Go on and serve your God in the serenity of holy confidence and you shall live to see that the hand of the Lord is not to be turned back, though the kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together.

Those who came to Christ in such great multitudes did not all come from right motives and I shall not assume that they did. Some came from idle curiosity, no doubt. Others came to listen to what He had to say, but were not prepared to believe in Him. We know that many came to be fed with loaves and fishes, swayed by the most mercenary motives. Still, in the case now under notice, large numbers came to Jesus because they had *heard* of the great things which He did, hoping that He would do something of the same kind for them, for multitudes of those who came were sick folk, plague-smitten, stricken with disease and they came thinking that by touching Him they might be delivered from all their sufferings. This gift they gained and glorified the name of the Lord!

I shall not, therefore, stay to divide out the characters which made up the crowd, but remind you that we must never expect that all who come to hear the Gospel will receive it. Just as Jesus went up into the mountain and there called out to Himself whom He would, so does He form His Church, which is an assembly of called-out ones whom the Sovereign Lord selects from the congregation of hearers that they may become a Church of Believers. The process of selection and separation is always going on and the great heap which lies on the threshing floor is being daily winnowed to divide the golden grain from the worthless chaff.

For our present purpose, only, we shall just now view those who *literally* came to Christ as the *types* of those who come *spiritually*. Many, I trust, who are present at this time will come to Jesus for the same reason that these people came, namely, because they have heard of the great things which have been done by Him. So to our work at once. Three things are before us. The first is the attraction—"They had heard what great things He did." Secondly, the gathering—"They came unto Him." And thirdly, the context furnishes us with this—the result of the attraction and the gathering. We find it written, "He had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon Him for to touch Him, as many as had plagues."

I. Here is the ATTRACTION—"They had heard what great things He did." My dear Hearers, the case of these people is parallel with your own! There must be very few of you here but what have not *heard* of the great things which Jesus Christ has done. Let us note, first, that these people had heard with somewhat of a believing ear. Stories floated about concerning one who had healed blindness, palsy, leprosy and they accepted the statements as *facts*. A lame man told how he had been made to leap like a rabbit and a blind man declared that his eyes had been opened—and as these wonders passed from mouth to mouth these people believed them to be true.

I know that even those of you who are not converted yet, believe what is recorded in these four Gospels concerning the miracles that Jesus worked. You are persuaded that the records are authentic. You believe that the Lord Jesus *did* heal the sick and that He did even *raise the dead* and cast out devils. You also accept the grand Gospel statement that He is able to save unto the uttermost those that come unto God by Him. Believing so much as that, you ought to believe a good deal more and I pray the Holy Spirit, now, to lead you to that farther faith. If you have come as far as that, the most reasonable thing to do is to go to Him with your own case and trust Him to heal *you!*

I am persuaded that I may go very far with many here present in a statement of their beliefs. You believe that Jesus Christ has done great spiritual wonders for multitudes. You have been told of great sinners whose hard hearts have been softened, whose characters have been changed, whose lives have been renewed, whose sins have been forgiven! You have met with such, have you not? The deed of Grace was performed upon your own brother, perhaps, or upon some intimate friend, or some person of public notoriety. You know many such cases and you believe them to be genuine wonders of Divine Grace. You do not think that con-

version is all a delusion—you have not reached that degree of unbelief. Indeed, instead of *unbelief*, you are filled with ardent admiration and feel a measure of desire to be saved yourself—and while sitting in this house you have often said, “Yes, I believe it is so. Oh that the mighty Grace of God would renew me and that I could touch the hem of the Savior’s garment that He might save even me.”

Believing so much as you do, you ought, in all reason, to believe more. I mean you should go on to trust Him who has worked these great things and place your own case in His hands and leave it there. This is the legitimate course to pursue. A man believes a certain medicine to have worked great cures and he knows that he, himself, is sick of the disease which it is meant to heal. Why, it seems as if no one needs to say, “The next step is that you should try that medicine upon yourself.” Yet it grieves me that so many of you do not proceed to this saving point, but linger on the borders of faith. You see the river of the Water of Life and wish to drink, for you are sure that it would quench your thirst and yet you are in danger of perishing in sight of the flowing stream! O, Holy Spirit, remove the madness of sin and teach men true wisdom!

The many who came to Jesus felt themselves drawn because they had heard of the great things which He had done and believed them. They proceeded, however, to the second step which I have already indicated, for they drew from what they had heard, an argument of hope. They said, “Has He done these great things to others? Why should He not work the same gracious miracles upon us?” The palsied man said, “He that was sick as I am has been recovered! Surely, if I could get near to Jesus and could catch His eye, He would restore me.” The blind said, “He healed one like myself—oh, if I could but sit where He passes by I would cry, ‘You Son of David, have mercy on me,’ and He would open *my* eyes, too.”

They could not be, at once, sure that He would heal them, for that He works a cure in one is not, in itself, a proof that He will work upon another—but they were further informed that He delighted in mercy and that He was gentle and gracious and easily entreated and, therefore, they concluded that if such an One had power to work such beneficent miracles and evidently had a will to work them, they had but to come to Him and they would be partakers of His healing power! O that my unconverted hearers would act reasonably at this time and draw the same conclusion!

I pray you, dear Friends, see how sensible these people were that you may imitate them! To me it seems as plain as the working out of a proposition in mathematics. Jesus has saved such as I am, therefore He can save me. To believe in Him is as reasonable an act as to eat that which is good when you know it is good and know that you need it! Or to drink that which quenches thirst, when you perceive that it is suitable for that purpose and that you are in need of drink. O that your hearts would say—Jesus Christ has worked great deeds of Grace! He is evidently willing to work more—let me, then, come to Him and trust myself in His hands! If this is a time of cool, collected thought and the Holy Spirit works in us wisdom, it will again happen that, “A great multitude, when they had heard of the great things which Jesus did, came unto Him.”

One more step should be mentioned. No doubt these persons were partly urged to come to Him by their own sad condition. Some of them were full of pain through bodily plagues and others suffered poverty and wretchedness through being blind, crippled, lame, or withered and they were anxious to be delivered from their infirmity and the poverty which came of it. Being convinced that their cases were similar to those which had been healed by Christ, they felt an eager desire to see what He could do for them. Now, I know that I may call my hearers to Christ till I lose my voice, but none will come but those who feel that they need Him. But, my dear unconverted Hearers, you need Him whether you know it or not!

There is a disease upon you which has already brought you down to spiritual death and will bring you down to Hell before long. The most moral of you; the most amiable of you, unless Jesus shall look upon you in love, is carrying about within himself a plague of the heart which will be your eternal ruin! Jesus must save you, or you are lost! There is no hope for any man among you except it comes from Him. Do you know this? If so, come at once to the Savior! Do you not know it? Then believe it to be so, for so it is and let the conviction lead you to seek His face. But remember, these people did not only come because they were sick, or because they *felt* they were sick, for they had long *known* and felt their sicknesses and had remained at home. Or they had resorted to other physicians, or to Bethesda's pool, or to some other famous fountain. They came to Jesus because, knowing and feeling their need, they also perceived that Jesus was able to meet their case.

Come, then, to Christ, O my sin-stricken Hearers, because, be your condition what it may, He can meet it! Are you troubled with hardness of heart? By His Spirit He can take away the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh! Is your difficulty unbelief? You cannot see the Truth of God, but the Lord Jesus can open the eyes of him that was born blind! Is it a case of lack of power? Is your hand withered? The Lord can bid the withered hand be stretched out and it shall be done! It is not possible that there should be any moral or spiritual disease about any one of you that will baffle the power of my great Lord and Master! If you do but come to Him, He can and will make you every whit whole. He has already dealt with cases like yours, as bad as yours, as desperate as yours—in the record of His cures there are instances parallel to your own and some which even surpass them in difficulty. Depend on it, He is able to do, again, what He has already done, for He is the same yesterday, today and forever!

His arm is not shortened that He cannot save! He can reach as far as sin can go and draw back those whom Satan has driven to the Pit's mouth. Now, be reasonable and act upon this fact. May the Spirit of God lead you in the way of understanding and then you will say, today, "I, also, will join that multitude who, having heard of the great things which Jesus did, came to Him." God grant it may be so! Yes, He *will* grant it, for His Word shall not return unto Him void.

II. Secondly, I shall ask you to think of THE GATHERING. We have seen the attraction, now let us see what it drew together. "They came unto

Him.” Observe, then, that hearing did not content them. I wish I could say this of all my hearers. These people heard the story of what Christ had done and I should not wonder but what they said, “It is good news! Say it in our ears a second time.” They were told that He had opened the eyes of a blind man and a blind man who heard it, cried out, “Gladsome tidings! Tell me that again.” I should not wonder if that blind man went many times to the house of the person who reported the cure and said, “Tell me again of this matter.”

The woman, too, who was sick with internal disease, said, “You told us of one that was healed. Tell us of that marvel again.” Yes, but what would you have thought if they had kept on, week after week, saying, “Tell us that story! Tell us that story!” and then had gone home and said, “We feel so much better! We feel comforted by hearing this good news”? What fools they would have been to have been satisfied with a mere report of other people’s cures without going to the great Physician to obtain healing for themselves! Did you not sing the other day—

***“Tell me the story often,
For I forget so soon,
The early dew of morning
Has passed away at noon?”***

Why should you be told that tale so often? Will you never draw the inference that Jesus is able to save you and will you never go to Him for yourselves? I am afraid that some of you are getting satisfied with coming to the Tabernacle and that you are beginning to think, “There is hope for me. I always hear the Word of God. I am a regular hearer of the Gospel of Jesus.”

Yes, but that is not it. Those who are hearers, only, are not blessed in the deed. A hungry man hears that there is bread given away to the poor and he says, “Tell me where the food is given and on what terms and I will hasten to get it, for I am famished.” Do you think the poor starving wretch will stop here a week and be refreshed by merely hearing about bread? Not he! He will die if he does that. He may, perhaps, ask again for information and say, “Tell me once more! Give me plain directions where to go and I will hasten to be fed as others have been,” but he will not expect to fill his empty stomach with merely *hearing* the news! He is not so stupid as that! I am compelled to feel that some of you are very short of sense when you are dealing with your souls. Why, some of you might almost sing—

***“Tell me the same old story,
Though you have cause to fear
That I shall miss of Glory,
And die with Grace so near.”***

O that this fooling would come to an end! Think me not harsh, I am but honest! It is fooling and nothing better, to go on hearing the Word of God and refusing to obey its call. May God’s Grace lead you to come to Jesus at once. O do not be hearers only! Turn your faces Christward and accept His great salvation!

Observe, next, that these people did not wait until Jesus came to them. That we are to wait till Jesus comes to us is a common error—a sort of or-

thodox wickedness, a rebellious unbelief dressed out as humble submissiveness. I have known this preached—that we are to wait at the pool of the ordinances, in the hope that one of these days the angel may trouble the pool and we shall step in. Those who talk so are not, as a rule, the most successful of soul-winners and that fact reminds me of a story I have heard of a Scotchman who had attended the ministry of an Episcopal minister for some years. At last Donald forsook the Episcopal Church and when he was missed, the pastor came to him. “Why don’t you come to the church, Donald?” “Because I want to be saved and I get no good with you.”

“Ah,” said the bishop, “you should wait at the pool.” “I have been waiting at the pool a long time,” said Donald, “a very long while and no good has come of it.” “But, Donald, you know the man who waited was healed at last.” “Ah, well, Sir, but he had some encouragement, for he saw some step in before him, but all these years that I have waited at your pool I have never seen one step in yet and therefore I will wait no longer.” Donald was right—no man can afford to run so terrible a risk as to remain in disobedience in the bare hope of some unpromised salvation. The Gospel narrative does *not* teach us to wait at the pool! I want to call particular attention to that fact.

See the crowd lying around the pool of Bethesda? What did Jesus do when He came walking along that morning through the five porches? Listen, you sick folk, still waiting at the pool! Does He say, “Wait patiently”? Not a word of it! But, singling out a man who was among the most despairing, He said, “Rise, take up your bed and walk.” That is the Gospel! It is a Divine *command* to believe and live! Our Lord comes here at this moment by His Gospel and He does not say to you, “Wait, wait, wait,” but, “Behold, now is the accepted time! Now is the day of salvation!” Believe in Jesus *now*, for He that believes in Him has everlasting life! Look to Him and be saved! The Gospel which is preached in your ears is a voice from Jesus, Himself, attended by His own Divine power and if you feel it to be such, you will obey it and you shall find salvation *now* and wait no longer! These people did not wait till Jesus journeyed into their own regions, but when they heard what great things He did, they went to Him! May you be led of the Spirit to do the same.

Note, again, that these people did not stop at His disciples. Satan tries to keep men from Christ by pointing them to ministers, evangelists, or other eminent Believers. Persons are impressed under a sermon and they say, “I should like to speak with some Christian man.” That is very good, but after all it is not the thing which is commanded by the Gospel. You are to *believe* in the Master and it will not suffice to speak to the servants. “But I would like to go into the enquiry room,” says one. Very well, I do not condemn that action, but the best enquiry room for a seeking sinner is his own bedchamber, where he seeks the Lord at once, with no one between him and his Redeemer. Why, if you could pick out the most earnest and thoughtful divines that ever lived and you could have 12 of them locked up at home so that you might go and talk to them all day and all

night long, it would not be worth one bad farthing to you and it might even be an injury to you if it kept you from going straight to Jesus Christ!

There is no salvation in *men*! And ministers must not be mistaken for priests. I shake off the thought of being a priest as Paul shook off the viper from his hand! I have often said I would sooner be called devil, than “priest” if by that word is meant that I have any priesthood beyond that which belongs to all my fellow Christians, or any power to forgive sin, or to impart Grace. My ministry is for the extolling of Jesus and not for the magnifying of myself and my Brothers! I dare not say, “Behold the priesthood! Behold the Church! Behold the sacraments!” My one business is to cry, “Behold the Lamb of God!” I point you away from all ministries to Jesus Christ, the Minister of the New Covenant, who alone can save your souls!

These people were wise in not staying with the disciples, for *they* could not meet their varied needs. They did not rest in the society of the virgin mother, nor in that of Peter, or James, or John—they hastened at once to the Lord Jesus Himself to touch His blessed Person for themselves. In this I would have you all imitate them. O that you would—

**“Steal away, steal away to Jesus,
Steal away home
For Jesus waits to save you.”**

Go to no one else but Jesus, for the great things that He did and not the poor things that such worms as we are can ever do, should raise hope in your bosoms! Observe, again, that these people who came to Jesus in such crowds must have left their businesses. I do not know what became of their farms, their olive gardens, their cattle, their shops, but they certainly left them to journey to Jesus. We do not commend any man for neglecting his business and daily calling, but I will say this, that when a man’s soul is not saved he cannot be blamed if he neglects everything till it is!

That woman who came out in the morning with her water pot to draw water from the well was doing a very useful and proper action, for I dare say those at home needed water to drink. But after she had heard Christ speak, it is written, “The woman left her water pot.” Some of those at home may have said, “Where is the water, mistress?” But she would reply, “I have not thought of the poor water pot. Come, see a Man that told me all things that I ever did! Is not this the Christ?” Ah, if you leave your water pots to find Christ, you may very well be excused! O working man in soul trouble, if you are out with a cart and the horse should stand still in the street while you breathe a prayer for salvation, who could blame you? If the engine paused while the stoker cried for mercy, or the shuttle lingered while the weaver begged for pardon, would there not be a justifiable excuse?

If the shop shutters were kept up for an hour later than usual while the tradesman sought the Savior, yes, if the business of the Senate-house stood still and all the commerce of a nation stopped while but *one soul* sought Christ, it were worth while! For what human business can equal the salvation of the souls of men? Elections occupy men’s thoughts just

now, but what are all these compared with making your calling and election sure? You are candidates for Heaven and there is more importance in *eternal* election than in all other elections under Heaven, for when everything else shall have passed away, this must endure! See to the one thing necessary, with Mary, even if you do for a while neglect what Martha thinks to be the urgent demands of the household! Let your first care be for your *soul*, “For what shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and lose his own soul?”

Many of these people, too, came from a great distance. Some came from the south, from Judea. Others came from the north, from Tyre and Sidon. Some from across the river Jordan. Others from the hills of Edom. Rough roads and deep rivers could not keep those back who resolved to come to Christ. O Souls, if you need Christ, let nothing hinder you! If there were seven Hells between a soul and Christ it were worth while for it to force its way through all their fires to get at Him—for when you get at Him there is salvation and eternal life! Rest not, I pray you, till over all impediments you have forced a way. There is a plenitude of mercy about our Lord Jesus which will well reward you for pressing towards Him. Oh, get to my Master, however far off you may be, for the sight of Him will well repay the weary journey!

I delight to see the holy ingenuity of anxious minds when they are eager to find the Savior—they will do anything to obtain salvation! I remember that years ago, when Bibles were not so common as they are now, a very, very poor man who was impressed with his need of Christ, longed to read the Word of God and, therefore, he went to a shop to ask the price of a second-hand Bible—the cheapest, the oldest they had on hand. “Ah,” said he, as he shook his head, “I have not money enough to buy it, but I will take great care of it if you will lend it to me from Saturday night till Monday morning. You won’t miss the sale of it and I may read a part of it.” As soon as He gained the friendly loan he gave himself up to the precious book till the moment he had to return it and so sought to find Christ!

Ah, you have Bibles, some of you half-a-dozen of them, but you never look at them! The dust on the unread books condemns you! You take no trouble to reach the Savior! God save you from this carelessness and may you resolve to come to Jesus whoever may oppose. Be eager to listen to His Gospel, though you may have far to go to hear it and may be roughly squeezed in the crowd. When you hear the Gospel, cry to the Lord God for His blessing upon it! Though dark thoughts may gather and Satan may try to thrust you back, be not removed from your purpose. Make a push for Heaven and holiness! Never does the Lord work in any man a firm resolution to find the Savior and yet allow him to perish.

One thing I want to call very particular attention to is this—these poor people came to Jesus with all their ailments about them. I know they did, because we read that they pressed upon Him to touch Him and He made them whole. Now, suppose they had said, “We will not come till we are recovered,” then, of course, they needed not to come at all and our Lord would have been a superfluity to them! But no—he that was blind came blind, he who was lame hobbled as best he could and he who was palsied

came shaking and trembling—but they came! The poor people who had all sorts of dire complaints, even those who had devils in them, came just as they were! That is the point to which I would bring every man here who has not come to Christ—you are to come just as you are!

Are you a drunk? You have to give up the drink, but you must come to Him as you are to help you to give it up! Have you lived in uncleanness of life? Come and trust in Christ, unclean as you are—trust Him to make you pure! Have you been dishonest? Come to Him as dishonest, that He may make you honest! Do not attempt to make yourself fit for salvation, for it is clear that no one is so fit for saving as the *lost*—no one so fit for washing as the *foul*, no one so fit for healing as the *sick*! Come to the Savior! Come just as you are. Catch the spirit of the hymn—

***“Come needy and guilty,
Come loathsome and bare!
You can’t come too filthy—
Come just as you are.”***

If you think that it is necessary to begin the work yourself, what is that but to insinuate that the Lord Jesus cannot do anything till you have started the work? Would you have it to be supposed that He is not quite up to the mark and needs help from *you*? Is He so poor a Savior that He is nothing till you enable Him to work? Think not so, but come along! You have heard what great things He has done—come, then, to Him even now—that the same great things may be worked in you!

III. I will not say much upon the third point which is THE RESULT. Of all that came to our Lord, multitudes though they were, not one was ever repulsed—no, not one! Since the world began has one soul been driven away from the Savior’s door? Oh, tell it in Gath! Publish it in the streets of Askelon if ever Christ shall be found casting out a sinner, for then may the adversary justly rejoice over the defeat of the Gospel! Let it ring down the corridors of Hell and let every devil dance for joy as he hears that Christ has broken His promise and is untrue to His character whenever you hear of one who comes to Him whom He casts out! I challenge all time! I challenge Heaven and earth and Hell to bring a case in which my Lord and Master ever cast out a soul that put its trust in Him. It cannot be!

As none were repulsed, so all were healed! And even so all who now believe in Christ are healed of sin and its plagues! “Ah,” say objectors, “you preach *faith* as the way of salvation.” We confess the charge and glory in it, since it is most true that it does save men. “But you ought to bid people do good works in order to salvation.” See here, good Sir, if the people who believe in Jesus do not perform good works and if this faith does not make them moral, honest, sober, holy people, then we grant your point! But who shall assert that the doctrine of faith is other than purifying and sanctifying when we can bring multitudes of proofs that this very preaching up of faith and *not* of works is the most effective cause of virtue and holiness?

Those who cry “Works, works, works,” have generally but a scant supply of such wares! Remember the age of Laud and his popish preaching? Who were the followers of that theology but the libidinous cavaliers?

Those who preached salvation by Grace—who were they but the godliest men in the nation, the Puritans, against whom no man could bring any charge except that they were too sternly good and kept the Sabbath too precisely and walked before God with too much gravity? I wish the same fault could be found with us all! If that is vile, we propose to be viler still—

***“Talk we of morals, oh, You bleeding Lamb!
The grand morality is love of You.”***

How can this Divine morality of love be worked in us unless the Lord Jesus, by His Holy Spirit, bestows upon us a heart to trust Him and to take Him and Him, alone, to be our salvation?

One thing I cannot help mentioning and that is, as everyone that came to Christ was healed, it followed that the attraction grew. Say there had been 500 healed—then when the people came and a hundred more were benefited there were 600 to draw. And the next day, if there were a hundred more healed, there were 700 to attract others! Now, there never was a time since the world began when there were so many reasons for a sinner’s coming to Christ as there are this morning! Just think of it. Every soul whom the Lord has saved is another argument that He is able to save *you!* In reasoning philosophically, if we find a fact, we put it down. But we do not dare to draw any inference from it because an isolated fact cannot prove a general rule. When we get two or three dozen facts, we say, “The common inference from all these is such-and-such,” and a rule is proven.

Suppose we could collect two or three hundreds of such facts, then we are really sure! Now, for 1,800 years and more our Lord Jesus Christ has gone on saving sinners! And He has saved more sinners at this moment than ever before. Still they are coming! Still they are coming and still He is saving them and every one of these is an arguments that *you* should come! O my dear Hearer, where are you—the man whom God means to bless under this sermon? Come at once and say, “I, too, will trust Him with my soul, for He has power to save me.” Then shall another be added to the long roll of His wonderful cures! The Lord grant it may be so and His shall be the praise!

I desire now to spend a few minutes in real, hard, earnest work, in which may God the Holy Spirit help me while I plead with those who have never come to Jesus, that they should come to Him at once. My dear Hearer, if you have often heard about what Christ has done and yet have never come to Him, yourself, that He might work a similar work of love in you, I pray you not be hindered any longer. First, come because His very name invites you—Jesus, a Savior! You are sinful, but He has forgiveness. Come to Him! You will be well met—a sinner and a Savior! Can two more congruous things come together?

His name is Christ, too—that is, Anointed. Now, God has anointed Him with power to save and commissioned Him to save and He must and will discharge His high office by saving those who come to Him. It is His business to save and you may be sure that He wears no empty title and makes no vain pretense of being what He is not. Come along, then! Come along to Him who is a real Savior for real sinners. He is a Savior commissioned of God—commit your soul’s business to His care. I say the name He bears

rings out like a silver bell and this is its note, "Come and welcome! Come and welcome to Jesus Christ!" Our Lord's power should also encourage you to come to Him. Of that I have already spoken. Nothing has ever baffled Him yet. Stormy winds and raging waves obey Him! The very devils flee before Him. Come along with you. He is mighty to save. Therefore come and hang the whole weight of your souls upon Him.

Next, let His Character allure you. There was never such a mass of love as Jesus is! He speaks no harsh words to coming sinners—He gives them mercy liberally and upbraids not. Has He not said, "I will receive them graciously and love them freely"? Oh, come to Jesus! I am not calling you to Moses with the broken fragments of the Law at His feet thundering in indignation! I invite you to *Jesus* with His pierced hands and open side entreating souls to come to Him. Come to Jesus because God has made it His Glory to pardon sinners! Constantine had a son whom he much loved and he wished the nation to honor him and so while his son was yet a child he caused him to sign pardons and charters, so that all gracious acts of the king bore the prince's signature. The Prince Emmanuel signs and seals Divine pardons for the chief of sinners! And the great God in Heaven loves that His Son should give pardon to sinners, for it endears Him to men and brings Him honor. Since it will honor Him to save you, come to Him and be not afraid.

Again, let me remind you of the preparations that are made for saving sinners. Christ has died to save them! He shed His blood to save them and do you think He will have these preparations wasted? I smiled last night at a little incident in my own home. Three of our friends had been writing hard for me all day and my wife, expecting them to tea, had spread the table bountifully and adorned it with choice flowers. I came into the room and said, "They cannot stop to tea, for there is a meeting at the Orphanage and they say they must hurry off." I confess I felt sorry as I looked at the table and all its adornments. My own good wife replied, "No, no. They cannot go. They must have their tea. I cannot spread a table like this and nobody come and eat. Go out and fetch in those highwaymen who want to run off! Compel them to come in." I fetched them in and they were by no means loath to sit down and partake!

It would have been a great disappointment to the kind hostess if no one had eaten what she had provided. This is a homely story, but it sets forth the need there is that our Lord's provisions of Grace should be used. He has spread a table and He will have sinners come and feed at it. What did the king say who made a wedding feast for his son? "Go out quickly into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in." Thus the wedding was furnished with guests. Strange guests they were and yet they furnished the feast with guests! They were odd bits of furniture, but they were necessary! A wedding with a feast and nobody to eat it would be a dishonor to the king, so guests were necessary furniture. Oh you that are furthest off from God, my Master's mercy needs your misery that He may relieve it! He needs your emptiness that He may impart His fullness and Grace for Grace!

One thing more I have to say. I cannot tell if it will have power with anybody present, but I hope it may. I wish you would come to Jesus even for His servant's sake. If I were a sculptor fashioning a statue I should feel that every stroke I took made a permanent impression, so that if I only worked a little upon the hard stone I should make some progress and my work would remain. Alas, my labor is not thus abiding in reference to some of you. I do my best each Sunday, but I am not much the gainer, for you seem to be statues of ice and the six weekdays melt away my one day's work! It is weary work to labor thus in vain! A painter takes his brush and though he may be executing a very difficult portrait, yet every stroke and each tint and touch of color denotes progress.

Alas, I seem as if I wrote on the sand with some of you! The week's tide obliterates the Sabbath's marks! Am I always to weave in the pulpit that which is undone at home? You do not know how sadly we sometimes say to our Master, "Who has believed our report and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" We would give anything to see our hearers converted, that our Master might have honor and we are sad when men come not at our call! If we see no souls brought to the Redeemer's feet, we are ready to lie down and die.

I read the other day of an old minister who had been some 20 years without a conversion, as far as he knew and yet he was a really earnest man. At last, having much prayed over it, he announced that he should preach no more in that place, but resign his charge and the reason he gave them with many tears was, "I am doing no good among you. There are no souls saved and perhaps if another minister filled my place you might listen to his appeals. At any rate, I will not stand in the way of one who might be more useful and so I bid you farewell." As he went out an old woman named Sarah said, "O, Sir, you cannot go, for you were the means of leading me to Christ some three or four years ago." "You," he said, "Sarah, I thought you were one who did not care for my ministry." "Oh, Sir," she said, "it has been my meat and my drink." "Woman," he said, "why did you not tell me as much before? My heart has been breaking for you." In the course of the week 20 or 30 came in to testify that they had sought and found the Savior through his ministry. All he could do was to say, "Bless the Lord, I'll not leave my post. But why did you not tell me of it before? O the sleepless nights I might have missed if you had but told me."

Some of you may have been saved and yet you have never confessed the blessed fact! I ask you, whether you do well and kindly by His servant thus to rob him of his wages and keep back comforting news from his burdened heart! However, that may pass. You who have not sought and have not found my Lord—what message shall I take home, this morning, to my Master when I go upstairs to speak with Him alone? Shall I tell Him you will not believe on Him? I set Him before you once again as able to save you—will you again refuse Him? Or shall the message be that you will trust in Him for salvation? God grant that you may give a wise reply for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

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THE SEED UPON STONY GROUND

NO. 1132

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 14, 1873,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth, and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: but when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.”
Mark 4:5, 6.

THE Gospel seed, according to the parable, falls upon all kinds of soil. Some of its precious grains drop upon the hard pathway, some upon the rock, some among the thorns and only a portion, perhaps a smaller proportion than one in four, falls upon good ground in which it finds a congenial abiding place. The preacher, therefore, will not meet with unmixed success in all directions. He may look for a full recompense from his work as a whole, but he must not fondly suppose that everywhere the good Word will become effectual, for in many it will be a savor of death unto death and not of life unto life. Even when Jesus preached, only few received Him, and of Paul's ministry it is recorded that “some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.” It is for the beginner in holy service to go forward with reasonable expectations, lest he should, before long, weary of the work and leave it because of his bitter disappointments.

Mark, with care that the sower in the parable is not blamed for having scattered his seed upon soil which proved to be unproductive. Not a word of censure is recorded against him on that account, from which it is fair to infer that he did no more and no less than his duty, and that the minister of Christ is to scatter the seed of the Gospel broadcast among all mankind. It is *God's* work to direct the saving Word into the chosen hearts which He has prepared to receive it. But as for us, we are to preach the Gospel to every creature—and going out into the streets and lanes of the city—as many as we find we are to bid to the supper. Many are called but few are chosen! It was never intended that the external call should be as narrow as the election, yet there are some ministers whose preaching consists far more of an analysis of soils than of a sowing of seed.

Leaving the analyzing of the soil to God, I take my commission from His hands and desire to fulfill it. Stony-ground Hearer, there is a handful of seed for you. You who are hard like the trodden road, there is a handful for you. And even among the thorns, which are plentiful enough in this age, shall the good seed fall like a heavenly shower. And if God shall graciously direct it to His own chosen, and they, like the good ground, shall receive it, it will be *His* doing! It will never be effected by any skill of mine. It is mine to sow beside all waters and *His* to give the increase. The best

shot that was ever made with bow and arrow was taken at a venture as Ahab the king was pierced between the joints of his harness. So also, while drawing my bow to preach the Gospel to every creature, my faith feels confident that the Lord will direct the arrow and effect His purposes of Divine Grace.

I feel that I have very solemn work on hand. I have always pleasure in preaching upon encouraging topics, but this morning my themes are for sifting and testing. We have to deal with certain apparently good people and to show that they are not what they seem. We have to put corn from the barn floor into the sieve and it may be there will be much chaff to be blown away. This is an operation not pleasant to the flesh and one which needs much of the Spirit of God that we may perform it aright lest the weak ones be sorely troubled, which is far from what we desire. Solemn discourse should have a solemn heart to utter it—and solemn hearts to hear it. May God grant it may be so at this time, that the sermon may be greatly profitable to every one of us, whether professors of the Gospel or not.

First, we shall read the history of stony-ground hearers. Secondly, we shall mark the radical defect of their character. And, thirdly, we shall try to learn a lesson from the whole.

I. First, we have here A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF CERTAIN PROFESSORS OF RELIGION. Let us read it carefully. It is said of them, first, that they heard the Word. “These are they which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the Word, immediately receive it with gladness.” They enjoyed the great privilege of hearing God’s Word. They heard the *real* Gospel—they did not attend upon ritualistic falsehoods, or philosophic speculations—it was the Word of God which they heard. The sower did not sow tares, but he sowed good corn. How happy are those who sit under a downright Gospel ministry! May God be pleased to multiply such ministries everywhere—and the lovers of them!

How can we expect salvation to come to us if we do not hear the soul-saving Gospel? If we are listening merely to opinions and notions and philosophies and superstitions—and not to the very Word of God—we cannot expect to find salvation. The Holy Spirit does not save men by means of *lies*. But if we hear the Truth as it is in Jesus, we may hope that He will make it effectual to our conversion. Remember, next, that hearing is not enough. “Hearers only” will not enter Heaven—there must be a *doing* of the Word as well as a hearing of it. These people were good hearers, capital hearers, for they went further than hearing—they *received* the Word—not in the Divine power or supernatural efficacy of it, but they nevertheless received it. That is to say, they never quibbled at it. They assented to it as they heard it and recognized it as God’s Truth. Receiving it, it produced an effect upon them. They were, in a measure, *impressed* by it.

If the sermon spoke of the wrath of God on account of sin, they were alarmed. If it told them of the love of God in Christ Jesus, they were encouraged. They did not always hear with dry eyes. They were not always

like the seats they sat upon—unmoved and stolid. But they received the Word of God. It stirred their affections and their emotions, they felt its moving effects and were thus led to many changes of life. They went home and swept the chambers which had been full of filthiness. They cleansed, at any rate, the outside of their cups and platters, and took care that the sepulcher, if not cleansed of the dead men's bones, should be decently whitewashed so as to shock no passersby. They were improved and reformed *externally* by what they heard, and so far they received it.

And there is this said about them, in the third place, that they received it *immediately*. In them it excited no questions, doubts, or conflicts. The preacher said, "This is the Word of God," and they were content to believe him, though they knew not why. While other minds were asking for the Authority of the message and then, having recognized the *authority*, were battling hard with a thousand difficulties, these persons saved themselves a world of trouble by never thinking at all. It was their father's religion and their mother's religion, therefore they believed it, they swallowed the pill with their eyes shut, caring nothing whether it was God's Truth or Satan's lie. Anything like spiritual mastication of the doctrine they did not attempt. They endorsed, wholesale, whatever they were taught. Priests, themselves, could not desire more plastic material!

These hearers had no hard struggles to get at the Savior, no sense of sin to hold them back, no horrors of conscience to make them afraid, no alarms lest they should not be the Lord's own people. They had no tests and sifting to see whether they possessed real repentance and acceptable faith. They sprang into religion as a man may leap into a bath, head over heels! They said, "Surely this is the right thing and we will have it." And after a certain sort they *did* have it—not with any depth of consideration or weight of judgment—but they immediately received the Word. It is added they received it with *gladness*. The immediate effect of receiving the Word of God was to make them very happy. And there are not a few who suppose that to be made very happy is a sure sign of being converted. But believe me, it is a very dubious sign, indeed!

No doubt, one grand effect of the reception of the Gospel into the heart is to bring joy and peace through believing, but there are many kinds of joy and many sorts of peace. There is a joy which is not the fruit of Grace, but the growth of Nature. And there is a peace which comes from delusion and not from the Spirit of God. We must take care we do not conclude that we are safe because we are "so happy." The rich man who went to Hell was happy when he fared sumptuously everyday! The farmer, who said he would pull down his barns and build greater, was happy when he surveyed his grain! And so was the prodigal son happy while he was spending his living riotously—but theirs was a very different kind of joy from that which is the fruit of the Spirit!

The characters in our text looked exclusively at the happy side of religion. "There," said the stony-ground hearer, "there is my mother! What a happy Christian she is! I have seen her in deep trial borne up by the Spirit

of God. I have marked her when we have had deaths in the house and seen how peaceful and quiet she has been. I will lay hold on Christ, for then I shall be as happy as she is.” These stony-ground hearers think what a happy thing it must be to be forgiven and so, indeed, it is, but they dwelt upon *that* alone. To be pardoned, to be a child of God, to be accepted in the Beloved, what precious things these must be! And what a delightful thing to be numbered with God’s saints, to go to the Communion Table and to be thought much of in the Church! Are not all these ways of pleasantness? And to go to Heaven at last, to die triumphantly, to be taken up to dwell where Jesus is amidst the Glory—what joyful things! Who doubts it?

But these people dwelt only upon this view of the matter and did not remember that between this and Heaven there are temptations to be combated and to be overcome. There are trials to be endured, stern trials, too, through which we can only be brought by Divine help. Right arms must be cut off and right eyes must be plucked out. There are costs to be counted and reckonings to be made as to whether the future will repay for the labors of the present. Young Hopefuls vow that they will have the brave country of Canaan, but they do not remember the roughness of the road there. Like Pliable, they set out for the Celestial City but they have not reckoned upon the Slough of Despond. And therefore after the first mouthful of mud they are ready to turn back and let those have the brave country who care for it—as for them, if they can keep whole bones in their body—they will be well content to let the future go as it may.

These people, then, immediately received the Word with joy. How hopeful all this must have looked to the sower! Do you not see how easily ministers may be deceived? When you have only to preach and men are *willing* to hear—only to preach and men are willing to receive—to receive the Gospel at once, without causing you any difficulty in arguing with them! When they receive it with gladness and you have not the trouble to cheer them up, and to meet their doubts and anxieties with a thousand promises selected out of the Word of God—is not this splendid work which will richly repay the sower? Alas, we must not reckon our fruit by the buds! All is not gold that glitters and it is not every egg that will be hatched.

We read further that these characters made rapid progress—they sprang up because they had no depth of earth. Because of their shallow soil they were very rapid in their growth. These people heard the Gospel one day, received it, and felt sure that they were saved. At once they were full of joy and transport, and hastened to make a profession! They did not require time to sit down and see whether they could bear out that profession, or seek Grace that they might not run before they were called. No, away they went, just as if a spark had been dropped into so much powder. They made a profession and the next week they were teaching in the Sunday school! They were so sure they were on the right road that they were very vexed with other pilgrims who did not travel so rapidly. When they heard of Christians being anxious as to their condition, they said, “What

nonsense! What reason is there for it?" If they saw a deep-taught Christian tremblingly examining himself, they said, "Oh, you must not look at all at yourself! Never consider what is going on within."

They had received a one-sided Gospel, only, and that quite contented them. And as to anything like the work of the Spirit of God in the soul and the holy jealousy which is one of the best fruits of vital godliness, these they quite dispensed with. They were going to drag the Church behind them and drive the world before them—and very soon they would distance even the ministry which had been the means, as they said, of their conversion! They grew from hyssops on the wall to cedars of Lebanon in about a week! They were THE men, and wisdom would die with them! Grand work to have to deal with these men, is it not? We shall see, by-and-by, and shall have to learn that not every stem that puts forth leaves is a fruit-bearing branch. In due time, according to the parable, came the *trial*.

The seed was up and soon the sun was up, too, and began to scorch it. None will get to Heaven without being tried on the road. Ask, concerning those who stand in their white robes before the Throne of God, who are those, and from where did they come? And the answer will be, "These are they that came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." There is not a fragment of gold in all God's temple but what has passed through the fire. Untried faith is no faith. Untried Grace is no Grace. God will try His people and discern between the precious and the vile. According to the Savior's explanation of the text, the trial came in the form of persecution. Ah, how many there are who have received the Word with gladness, who, if there were a stake in Smithfield, would very soon drop the profession of Christianity, for it would be too hot for them! Or if there were a prison ready for them in which they must lie till the moss grew on their eyelids, they would soon forsake the Truth of God and turn aside to error.

We need not be much afraid of the revival of such tests, but there are other forms of persecution which mere professors are equally unable to bear. A sneer in society. A remark against Christianity from a person whom you are accustomed to respect. A look from someone who is above you in wealth, as he despises you for professing to be a follower of Christ. Unkind remarks from a father. Opposition from a husband. The desertion of some young companion with whom you hoped your life would be linked. Such matters—nothing like the stake or the prison—are yet quite sufficient to overcome flimsy professors so that they are offended and turn their backs upon the religion which they once so quickly espoused!

In many instances, to follow principle would involve a great loss in business. They could not afford to incur such a loss. If Christ could be had at a cheaper rate, they would have Him, but to lose all the treasures in Egypt! No, they could not do that—and so they renounce, again, that Christ whom they once called their All-in-All. With others it has not been such a trial as that, but Providential affliction. I painfully remember a

man and his wife who were members of this Church for some time. And it was certainly true, as they affirmed that from the very hour they made profession of religion they began to be in trouble. And therefore they renounced the consolation because of the affliction, for they drew the conclusion that surely they could not be the people of God, or else God would not have so tried them—a conclusion which is the *reverse* of the teachings of Scripture!

Many will have Christ if He will pat them on the cheek, but not if He flogs them with the rod! They will follow the Lord while He is on the *giving* hand, but they cannot believe in a God who takes away. They can bless Him while He enriches them, but they know nothing of that Job-like faith which exclaims, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” Or, perhaps, it may be that when they first made a profession of religion they did not know much about the temptations of life. But now they have moved from home. They have obtained a situation where there are young men who tell them of haunts of pleasurable vice. Or they have left the circle of godly people in which they once moved and are cast among ungodly ones and, alas, their mouths are watering for the sweets of the world—the serpent of sinful pleasure has cast a spell over them—and now Christ may go for Belial, true religion for worldliness and following God for the indulgence of the flesh.

Ah, how often is this the case! Or, perhaps, another shining of the sun has come upon them. They thought they believed the Gospel, but they have fallen among *debaters*. They are surrounded by a skeptical circle where they have heard arguments they never heard before and never having weighed anything, or considered the reasons why they believed in God and in Christ, they are quite staggered. They have no depth of earth, no root-hold of the Truth of God by conviction and solemn judgment of it. And so as soon as they meet with an atheist or a deist, or a skeptic of *any* form, they are like thistledown before the wind. Having no ballast in their vessel, the first breeze oversets them and they are lost. What a grand thing it is to be established in the faith, rooted, grounded, settled! I remember reading of one who said, “When I read the arguments brought by infidels against the Gospel, I laugh them to scorn because they are nothing like the deep, cunning arguments which my own heart has brought against the Lord in years gone by—which having answered and overcome—I feel myself more than a match for the puny oppositions of ungodly men.”

It is a grand thing not to be moved in these skeptical times, but to know the Lord by secret communion with Him, to know His Truth by inner consciousness and by a devout reading of His Word with eyes opened from above. Alas, many hearers and receivers of the word have been destroyed by carping infidels! They knew nothing thoroughly and so were readily deceived. It is said of the stony-ground people that immediately they were offended. They were just as soon out of love with the Gospel as they were in with it. “Immediately they were offended.” They did not, at

first, stop to enquire why they should *be* Christians and now they do not stop to argue why they should renounce their profession. They took their religion hot from the oven and dropped it before it was cool enough to feed on. Somebody said, “Believe, believe, believe!” And they were excited. And now another speaker says, “Do not believe! Do not believe!” And they are excited the other way. They went in with a crowd of others all of a sudden during a revival—and now they are going out with the crowd during a season of lukewarmness.

The minister took them in at the front door and now he has to let them out at the back door. They have disappointed him. They have brought scandal upon the Church and double responsibility upon themselves. And now they are just as earnest to give up religion as they were to profess it. Unhappy souls, volatile in everything, frivolous about the solemnities of eternity, ready to be right if rightly led and as ready to be wrong if wrongly driven. Having no mind of their own, they are molluscos creatures—without a backbone, mere jellyfish—nothing solid or consistent can be found in them. Their sand-built houses are no sooner up than they are washed down by the tide. They have no rocky foundations, no strong grips of the Truth of God, no principles. Their motive powers are submission to persuasion, admiration of eloquence and desire of approbation. Unhappy! Unhappy! Unhappy! God grant that we may not belong to such a class!

II. I shall show THEIR RADICAL DEFECT. Their radical defect, in the first place, lays in an unbroken heart. The parable does not refer to ground with stones in it, such as we commonly call stony ground, for that will grow corn well enough—but to soil where there was a hard rock underneath—and only a very thin covering of earth. A hard pan of iron rock was at the bottom and it was barely hidden by a little mold created by the lichens and mosses—enough to catch the seed and make it germinate—but not enough to feed its roots for any length of time.

In these people their hearts have never been broken. “Is not My Word like a hammer, says the Lord?” They do not know, for it never hammered them. They got their joy and peace without a blow. What is to be done with a piece of ground which has the rock so close to the surface? Nothing can be done with it by *man*. The only thing that can be done is for God to come in—and when God, in His infinite mercy changes the rock into good soil—then the wheat will grow, but not till then. “A new heart also will I give you, and a right spirit will I put within you. I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.” There must be a work of the *Holy Spirit* by which the natural rock of Nature shall be turned into the good soil of Grace, or else all the sowing in the world will never produce a harvest!

These people skipped over that and, in fact, they did not like to hear of it. They liked preachers who always preached simple faith in the work of Jesus but never mentioned the work of the Holy Spirit—lopsided preachers, messengers whose legs are not equal, who deliver half God’s message and no more—and under such teaching they found peace without soul-

trouble and comfort without the new birth. As for repentance, that old-fashioned Grace, they despised it! Weeping before God on account of sin? Terror under a sense of God's wrath? Or fear lest the sentence of His Law should be executed? They never knew. They passed into the land of Hope without going round by Weeping Cross—and every day I grow more and more suspicious of a man's religion if he has not gone round by that road. A man who was healed before he was wounded, clothed before he was stripped, filled before he was empty, made alive before he was slain, has good reason to suspect whether Sovereign Grace has ever laid its hand upon him!

These people with the unbroken heart had gladsome hopes and joyful confidences, but they all came to an end, as they will do in your case and mine if we are strangers to contrition. Always be it remembered that true as it is that whoever believes in Jesus Christ shall be saved, it is *equally* true, "You must be born again." "Except you are converted and become as little children, you shall in no wise enter the kingdom of Heaven." "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." And "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." It is only the birth of the spirit, the spiritual *nature*, that can enter into spiritual matters and become a possessor of truly spiritual joys. An unbroken heart is a fatal defect!

This led to a second fault, namely, lack of depth. The stony-ground hearer was all surface. Everything about him was superficial. The rock, never having been broken, provided no depth of earth to plow. So in many men who profess to be converted, there has been no real estimate of sin. "Yes, we are sinners," they say. "Oh yes, yes, of course we are all sinners." But to feel *what* it is to be a sinner is quite another thing. To be crushed down to the earth under a sense of having violated the thrice holy Law of God—many have never felt this. And Jesus Christ—yes, He is a Savior, and they will say they take Him for a Savior—but what it is to be *saved*, why it was He suffered, *why* He needed to suffer—what was the tremendous guilt that compelled such a Sacrifice they have never considered. In fact, they have never thought at all and they do not mean to think.

Bees descend into the flowers and suck out the honey, but butterflies alight on the lilies for a moment and are away again—true emblems of flippant pretenders to Grace. Many persons who profess to be Christians seem to have no acquaintance with the plague of their own hearts. They believe that there is something amiss within, but they do not know that their heart is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." Consequently, though they admit they need Divine Grace, they do not know how *much* they need it. They would subscribe to the Truth, "Without Me you can do nothing," but they do not know it *experimentally*. They are strangers to those failures and inward disappointments which lead a man to feel his nothingness. It is surface work—nothing is deep about them. When they became professors of the religion of Christ they never weighed the

Truth, or searched the Scriptures to see whether these things are indeed, so.

They were Calvinists because the preacher was a Calvinist. They would have been Arminians quite as readily if the preacher had been Arminian. In fact, they would have been *anything* they were taught to be—they never judged, weighed and considered for *themselves*. In espousing the Truth as it is in Jesus they never calculated the difficulties of a religious life. It did not strike them that they would have to fight with sin without and sin within. They never looked at that mighty trinity—the world, the flesh and the devil—with which they would have to wage a life-long combat. They took the sweets and thought not of the bitter herbs. They were volatile and are still volatile. They cannot think, neither can you persuade them to attempt it. This is a fault, indeed.

And then there was a third defect—the secret part of their religion was a failure. The seed on the stony ground did not fail in the sprouting, nor in the blade which appeared above—it had no *root*. If you were to trace some professors home, you would find no secret prayer. Let that word go through this congregation if there are any of you living in the neglect of secret prayer! No secret prayer, no secret reading of the Word of God, no chewing of it to get the essence and the juice out of it, no vital contact with Christ in private, no communion of the soul in secret with the living God? This is a deadly sign! They were at the *public* meeting. They were fussy enough about *committees*. They could be first and foremost if there were any singing to be done, or if there were any preaching required! But oh, the *secret* prayer, the *secret* living with God, the soul-searching, the trying of the reins to see whether they were right or wrong—they had given this all up! Taking it for granted that they must be right because they have a sort of faith, they look upon every question as to their safety as so much unbelief and the work of Satan. And so they wrap themselves up in their delusions. They think they must be the people of God because they profess themselves to be such, but they have never looked for the fruit which must be borne by every branch of the true vine.

And fourthly, there was another thing—which I do not think you will find in Mark—but you will see it in one of the other Evangelists—they lacked moisture. Now, a plant must have moisture. Dew, rain, or some sort of watering must come to it. On that little soil with a hard rock at the bottom there was plenty of heat when the sun shone and so the little moisture it had made the seed sprout at once. But it had no further moisture and therefore became parched. So certain hearers get a little moisture, as it were, by contact with an earnest preacher. They come under that Word which drops as the dew and distils as the rain—but they have not the vitalizing Holy Spirit at their root to be the perpetual source of life. They have their lamps, but they have no oil in their vessels to keep them trimmed. They lack the moisture of the Holy Spirit! He it is that comes to His own people secretly, at the roots of their life, so that from *Him* they suck up the life of God and so they live!

But the mere stony-ground convert has not the Holy Spirit. And oh, permit me to say most solemnly to everyone here, if we have no more than Nature gave us under its best conceivable circumstances, we have no more than the Pharisees—and that landed them in Hell! We *must* have the Spirit of God—and from first to last the religion of our hearts must be worked of the Spirit, sustained by the Spirit—and if it is not, the sooner we are rid of such a religion the better, for it will only deceive us! I feel the necessity of preaching such a sermon as this because I perceive Church members going aside into open sin and others turning aside to one or another of the new delusions of the present age. There seems to be a new one every month. Some foolish people stand with their mouths open ready for any novelty to fly down their throats. They are as dry straw, only wanting for some impostor to apply the spark to them—and yet they call themselves Christians!

There are so many, nowadays, who do not know what they believe and so become the prey of Romanists, Ritualists, Atheists, or some other deceivers. There is a little plant in the garden and a thief comes along and takes away root and all—he will not do so with a well-rooted oak, I guarantee you—and if we were well-rooted like the oak, we would believe what we believe and know what we know, and would have principle to keep us steady. The old Nonconformists might have been dragged to prison or to the stake without difficulty—but to get them to yield their nonconformity, or put aside their principles was not possible! Alas for the degenerate sons of such sturdy fathers! If what you believe is not true, fling it away! But if it *is* true, let your faces be like flints and your natures like iron against all the temptations of this wicked, ever-changing age which flies this way and that, but always away from its God! Oh, when shall it be that those who know the Lord shall stand fast and having done all, shall still stand?

III. Thirdly, I must close by trying to teach THE LESSON OF THE TEXT. That lesson is four-fold. It says to each one of us, be deeply in earnest. Do not *play* at religion. Do not think of a religious profession as a garb which you can put on and take off. Pray God to make sure work in your soul, sure work for eternity. You have to die. You have to face the Judgment Seat—have a religion that will bear those ordeals. Pray to have such a work of the Spirit in your soul that neither death nor judgment can alarm you.

Cry to God that repentance may be cut deep into you, making lasting marks in you. Pray that your faith may be no sham faith, but a giving up of your soul entirely into the hands of Christ. That your love to Christ may be no rhapsody, but a matter of real heart-affection. That your religious walk may not be for other people to see, but a walk before God. Pray that all your actions may be the result of principle and that you may not be swayed by company, but rather may sway company and may have a vital force within yourself of God's implanting that will bear you on in the straight road, whichever way others may take. I say again, be awfully in

earnest about everything that concerns religion and pray God to forgive you if in any measure you have been flippant concerning it.

Secondly, watch the effect of your own daily trials. See how they affect you. If a boat is ready to sink in the Thames, it ought never to be trusted at sea. If your religion already begins to fail you, what will it do, by-and-by? You were laughed at and you were half inclined to give it all up—what would you do if you were more sternly persecuted? You have already been willing to go back, your heart has faltered—what will you do if fiercer temptations assail you? You have already been terribly put to it by the arguments of a *fool*—what would you do if some of the deep thinkers were to argue with you? “If you have run with the footmen and they have wearied you, how will you contend with horsemen? And if, in the land of peace wherein you have trusted, they have wearied you, what will you do in the swellings of Jordan?”

I do not object to your growing slowly if you grow *surely*. If my house takes a long time in building, I would rather give the builder his time than tell him to run it up in a week or two and make it so frail that the first wind would blow it away like cardboard. You have to live in this house eternally, pray God to build it surely. As to building fast, that little matters. O you that can hardly go a step towards Heaven without question and dispute, I do not so much tremble concerning you as about some who never have any questions or doubts, because they have never any thought at all, but pass it all by with a heedless carelessness, taking things for granted. See, then, how you stand in your present trials. You have grown richer—do you love the Lord as much as you did? You transact more business—can you still keep the world out of your heart? You have received more praise of late—can you still cling to Christ as you used to do when you had but few friends? You have been in health lately—have you lived as near to God as when you were ill?

Or you have come down in the world and are numbered with the poor? Do you love the Lord as much as you did when He enriched you? You have lately heard the remarks of a cunning hater of the Gospel—were you able to feel that though you could not answer him in words, yet your heart answered him and threw off his falsehood as the roof throws off the rain? If not, look to it! If your vessel is ready to go down in smooth water, what will she do in a storm? If you cannot keep the water out of her, now, what will you do when the hurricane overtakes her? It will be all over with you then, I fear.

Another lesson is constantly examine yourself. A great many persons get into the Bankruptcy Court, but as far as I remember never one came there through too much attendance to his business. I never heard of a farmer losing his crop through being too diligent in husbandry and of all the souls that are lost not one has perished through being too much in earnest as to self-examination. Dear Brothers and Sisters, choose a faithful, testing ministry. Do not look after a smooth-tongued preacher who will always cry, “Comfort You, comfort You, my people.” You need comfort

and should have it, but you need searching as well, and you *must* have it. Pray that you may be faithfully dealt with, that there may be no glazing over matters, no filming of wounds, but that there may be honest dealings between you and the minister, and between you and your God. God grant that we may be willing to be searched, for when we are unwilling to be searched we may reckon it quite certain that there is something amiss with us. When we say, “I am afraid I am a hypocrite,” there is very little fear of it—but presumption is fatal.

Now, lastly, let all this show us how necessary it is that we cast all the stress and burden of our salvation entirely upon the Lord Jesus Christ, because whenever a man does *that*, there is honest and good ground in his soul and the seed has sprung up aright. Whenever a man can truly say—

***“I rest alone in Jesus,
Nothing in my hand I bring:
Simply to Your Cross I cling,”***

that is the great secret of a true hope. Jesus lived and died for us—and if we do entirely depend upon Him, alone, it is well with our souls. It is well to live continually at the foot of the Cross, looking up to Jesus, finding all our hope in Him and none in ourselves. Beloved, it is the work of the Spirit of God to bring us there and keep us there! If we search ourselves in the light of the Cross we shall be willing to judge ourselves that we be not judged. In the presence of those dear wounds from where distils the atoning blood, we shall cry, “Try my reins and my heart.”

But if any man says, “I believe in Jesus, therefore I will not search. I trust in Jesus, therefore I will live as I like,” that man’s religion is vain! He has profaned the Cross by his reckless reasoning! Let him take heed how God shall judge him, for of all judgments, surely that will be the heaviest which shall come upon the man who dared to take the doctrine of the Cross as a reason for careless living and made the mercy and the cleansing power of the Redeemer, Himself, an excuse for walking heedlessly before God, and continuing in vain presumption.

God grant us Grace to receive the seed into good ground, for Jesus’ sake.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark 4:1-34.

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“NO ROOT IN THEMSELVES”

NO. 2846

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 27, 1903.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 23, 1888.**

**“And have no root in themselves.”
Mark 4:17.**

THESE rocky-ground hearers have occupied our thoughts twice recently. [Sermon #2844, Volume 49—*THE SEED UPON A ROCK*, and Sermon #2845, Volume 49—*LACKING MOISTURE*—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] You remember that the first sermon concerning them was upon the text, “They had no deepness of earth” and that, in it, I tried to show the shallowness of some men’s religious character, how the pan of rock below the thin layer of earth had never been broken, so the Seed could not really enter into them, but lay, for a little while, in the soil, rapidly springing up and just as rapidly perishing. The other discourse was upon the words, “It lacked moisture,” a very instructive little sentence full of meaning. Only Luke tells us that the rocky-ground hearers “lacked moisture.” This, you probably remember, I explained as meaning dry doctrine without gracious feeling, experience without humiliation, practice without heart-love, belief without repentance, confidence without self-diffidence, action without spirituality and zeal without communion. I went somewhat deeply into that part of the subject and I think that there must have been some who trembled as they thought that, possibly, they were among the number of those who have no deepness of earth and who lack moisture.

Now, my dear Hearers, I do feel intensely concerned that every work of Grace supposed to be worked in this house should be real and, therefore, permanent. We are thankful that we are constantly having conversions, but we are very grieved that we also have some perversions. It is a comparatively easy thing to increase the Church roll, but it is only God’s almighty Grace that can preserve to the end those whose names are written in our Church records. Oh, for sure work! It is better to have only one convert who will endure to the end than 20 who only endure for a while and in time of trial fall away. We have so much of the superficial, the merely topsoil work, in these days, that I feel that I am not laying too much stress upon one point if, three times in succession, I preach on this same subject, taking these three forms of expression indicating different phases of the same evil—no depth of earth, no moisture and no root in themselves. According to our Savior’s interpretation, this is what

happens to people of this sort—“Afterward, when affliction or persecution arises for the Word’s sake, immediately they are offended.”

I. Notice, first, that THEY WERE DEPENDENT UPON EXTERNALS. They had “no root in themselves.” Their religion did not spring from within and was not fostered from within.

This reminds us of a class of persons who cause us much grief of heart, though at the first they give us cause for much hope. I mean *those whose religion depends upon their parents*. What a fearful calamity it often seems to a family when the father is taken away just when the boys are growing up! We have seen, in our own royal family, an example of it. Wherever it happens, it is always a cause of very terrible danger to the children. But do you not also think that there are many lads and lasses who are, in the main, favorable to the things of God simply because their father is an eminently devout man? Where that is the case and where there is no true work of Grace in their hearts, the death of their father will give them such a measure of liberty and release from restraint as will afford them an opportunity of showing that their religion was not real.

In another case it may be the influence the almost boundless influence of a godly mother over her sons and daughters. Some women are queens at home—they reign with a kind of imperial sway over their children and those gracious matrons, by God’s Grace, often lead their sons and daughters in the way of Truth and righteousness. Yet sometimes it is not so much a work of Grace within, as the work of the mother upon the surface—and so, if the dear mother falls asleep—the family is never again quite what it used to be. There is no longer that deep devotion, that intense earnestness that there used to be in the religion of the household, and one reason is that its members have no root in themselves. Their root was in their mother, or their father.

Now, dear young Friends, any of you who are making a profession of religion, I say nothing against the gracious influence of your parents. God forbid that I should do so! I say everything in praise of it, but I pray you not to let the influence of your parents be substituted for the work of the Holy Spirit upon your own heart. The message to you, as to all others, is, “You must be born-again.” He only is the true Christian who can say, “If my father and my mother were gone, it would greatly grieve me and I would feel it to be a serious loss. Yet, if it should happen, I would, by God’s Grace, hold on to Christ with no less intensity, but rather with even more, for I should feel it to be my duty to help fill the great void which the loss of my parents had occasioned. I should think that I heard them speaking to me from the skies and bidding their son, their daughter, follow them even as they followed Christ.”

So, dear Friends, there are other cases in which the *religious life is very much dependent upon Christian association*. That young lady was governess in a pious family and she seemed to be everything that we could wish and declared herself a Christian. But is she the same, now that she has taken a position in a worldly household, perhaps in a distant land where she never gets to hear the Word of God at all? If she has root in herself, she will grow and be fruitful even in that unkindly soil.

That working man, when he was apprenticed, and when he was a journeyman, had a godly employer and he worked with those who feared the Lord and he became, confessedly, a Christian. I am not speaking against the gracious influence of masters and of workmates. God grant that it may always be exercised in the right way! But, still, if any of you have a form of religion which is dependent upon the position in which you live, you are without root in yourselves and it will soon wither away. You must so know Christ, trust Him and love Him, that you would be true to Him even if you were carried off into a Muslim country, or if you were called to live in the midst of blasphemy and infidelity! Do not rely upon somebody else's example! Be not dependent upon external associations, but have root in yourselves.

I fear that in the case of a great many, their religion *is dependent upon externals in respect of a faithful and earnest ministry*. I have noticed, several times, that God has raised up different men to carry on His cause in the earth. Just now, it appears to me to be the age of the Judges, for God appears to call, first one Judge and then another to deliver Israel. But we long for the time when King David will reign on His Throne. It may be that we shall have antichrist first and Saul will rule before David comes. But when Samuel is gone, where will the people go? In many a place I have seen a good man raised up and he has gathered a large congregation around him. Many of them seemed to be truly converted and while he lived, their lives seemed to be all that one could desire. But he died and then where were they? At this present moment, I could put my finger upon many of the followers of dear Joseph Irons. They are very aged people, but the Lord has preserved them faithful until now. I could pick out, here and there, those who were educated in Divine things under Harrington Evans. What a gracious man of God he was! What sweet Christian people were fed at his table! If I were to make further enquiry, I could find a very large number of those who used to hear William Carey at the Victoria Theatre, but where are they now? A large number of them had no root in themselves while, happily, still a large number of them had root in themselves and are here with us, or in other Churches of Christ to this very day.

I could name other equally good men who used to labor in London and of whom I could say that when they were taken away, a considerable part of their work seemed to go with them. It was no fault of theirs that their hearers seemed to depend upon them and that their influence over them was very great. I do not doubt that it is the same in my own case and that, when I sleep with my fathers, there are some here who have been unwise enough to hang upon me, who will go back again to the world which they have never really left! And if so, when the man goes, their religion will go, too. But, dear Friends, if you are vitally united to the Lord, then, even if the scythe of death should cut off every minister who now preaches in God's name—if every candle in the Lord's house were put out—you would still cleave to your God with full purpose of heart and cry to Him in the cloudy and dark day, to return to bless His Beloved Zion. But, alas, there are many professors who have no root in themselves—

parents, associates, and ministers supply them with all the root they have.

Then there are many more *whose religion must be sustained by enthusiastic surroundings*. They seem to have been baptized in boiling water and unless the temperature around them is kept up to that point, they wither away. There are some persons, who, when they get thoroughly excited so that they do not know what they are doing, generally do right, but that is a poor kind of religion which always needs to have the drums beating and the trumpets sounding—for the religion that is born of mere excitement will die when the excitement is over. I am not saying a word against genuine revivals, or even against excitement—and I do not think that it is any argument against revivals that some of those who profess to be converted at them go back to the world.

I am reminded of that very good story—a somewhat amusing one, which Mr. Fullerton told us. He said that some persons find fault with revivals because all the converts do not stay. "Why," he said, "they remind me of the tale that is told of a countryman of mine who picked up a sovereign. When he went to change it, they said that it was light weight, and he only got 18 shillings for it. Still, you see, that was all clear gain to him. However, another day, seeing a sovereign lying on the ground, he said, 'No, I will not pick up another sovereign, for I lost two shillings by the last one.'" That was very unwise, if it ever happened. So, suppose that we do lose some of the converts of a revival, suppose that we even lose two out of twenty, a very large percentage, yet, still, the rest are all clear gain! Let us pick up another sovereign, even though there may be a discount upon its value. Yet I am sorry for those lost two shillings. I grudge the sovereign being light weight—I would like to have the whole twenty shillings and to have all those who profess to be converted—really converted to the living God. So I speak to those of you who, after a while, go back. When the cyclone of the revival is over, you drop to the earth like dead things. May God renew you, by His Grace, and work a work in your heart that will not be dependent upon any surroundings! May you have root in yourselves!

For you see that this class of persons who were dependent upon their surroundings, changed when their surroundings changed. Their parents were gone, they were placed in ungodly families and they became ungodly. They simply floated with the tide. It was said, a long while ago, that someone was asking whether such-and-such a person, who was a Quaker, was bathing in the Thames and the reply was, "How am I to know a Quaker when he is in the river? He would not have his broad-brimmed hat on, would he?" "No," said the other, "but you can distinguish him without that, for he is sure to be swimming against the stream." That is the way that we know a Christian—he is sure to be swimming against the stream. Live fish always do that, but dead fish go floating down the stream and are carried away with it. Dead fish just drift with the tide. If the tide goes up, they go up, but if the tide goes out, they go out. Whatever others do, they do. "Anything for an easy life," is their motto. They

profess to be Christians while they are with Christians, but they are ungodly as soon as they are with the ungodly. This will never do.

According to our Lord's parable, this is especially the case when they have to endure affliction or persecution because of the Word. They fear that they will be losers if they are Christians and they cannot afford to suffer so. Somebody points the finger of scorn at them and laughs at them, and they cannot stand that. They do not mind being thought respectable for going to Chapel and taking a seat, but to be shouted at in the streets, and to be made the subject of jest at private parties—they cannot endure that, so away they go! Poor things, dependent upon externals! God deliver you from that evil, that it may be no more said of you, "They have no root in themselves"! May you be straight, distinct, direct, thorough, true, solid, substantial, enduring, rooted, grounded, settled, by the Grace of God!

II. Notice, next, that THEY WERE DEFICIENT IN ESSENTIALS. These grains of wheat, when they fell upon the loose soil lying upon that pan of rock, grew very fast. They grew all the faster because the soil was so shallow and the sun so soon caused the seed to sprout—but it was only, "for a time." Listen to the sad note in my text—"They have no root in themselves, and so *endure but for a time.*" They joined the Church "but for a time." They taught in the Sunday school "but for a time." They were zealous about religious matters "but for a time." These words seem to me to sound like the tolling of a knell, the knell of all our hope concerning them and of all their hope, too. Oh, what sorrow is hidden in those words! How terrible it is to be converted "but for a time"—to make a profession of religion "but for a time"! What innumerable curses seem to hiss out of every syllable, "but for a time"!

The pity is that they were deficient in the essentials of vitality. They were not deficient in blade, for they sprang up, but they were deficient in root—and that was a fatal deficiency. For a plant to have no root is much the same as for a man to have no heart. There cannot be life in a plant, for any length of time, at any rate, where such an essential thing as a root is lacking.

What is meant by a root in such a case as this? First, it means *hidden Graces*. You cannot see the roots, for they are underground. The best part of the plant is out of sight. It does not strike every casual observer, but I suppose that, as a rule, there is as much of a tree underground as there is aboveground and that, in many cases, it needs to be so in order that it may keep its hold upon the earth. Now, mark this, with a genuine Christian, there is always as much underground as there is aboveground. That underground work is often very much neglected, but it is exceedingly important. Indeed, it is essential. One of the roots of a true Christian is secret repentance—and secret prayer is another—those are roots that run down far into the soil. He who has not got them has no root. Secret communion with God, the talking of the heart with the great Father. Secret love pouring itself out in fervent fellowship and praise. The inside life, of which none of our neighbors can see anything—all that is the most important part of us. If you are a tradesman and have all your

goods in your shop window, you will fail before long. If you can show all your piety to anybody, you have not much to show. Underground work is, however, absolutely necessary. How many builders have had to prove this? They have “run up” houses in a hurry without a good foundation and, by-and-by, down they have come! Foundation-work is all-important, though nobody can see it and, therefore, nobody will praise it and, perhaps, for a long time nobody may discover that it is not there. O my dear Hearers, let us lay a good foundation! Let our souls be really built in secret upon the living Christ by a true and genuine faith, the faith of God’s elect. That is what a root is, then, a hidden thing. These rocky-ground hearers had no root, that is, no hidden Graces.

In the next place, *a root is a holdfast*. When the winds of March come tearing through the woods, the trees will fall if they have no roots. Even the mighty oaks will be torn away from their places in the forest if they have no roots. These are the anchors of those great vegetable ships by which they are held fast in the earth! And it is essential to a Christian to have a holdfast, to have hold of something that he is sure of, something that he no longer questions, or, if he does question it, he battles with the question and holds fast by the Truth! A religion that may be true, or may not be true, is irreligion! The only real religion is that of which you are absolutely sure, that which you have tried, tested and proved in your very soul and know to be as true as your own existence. Doubts yield nothing to you but continual fear and trembling, starvation to your strength and restlessness to your soul. Christ bids you come and believe in Him with a child-like faith, for so will He give you rest.

Oh, how many Christians lack roots! Just look at them. They hear a certain form of doctrine taught one day; and they say, “That is not quite what I have been accustomed to hear, but still, it was prettily put.” They go and hear another kind of doctrine and the preacher is such a clever man, as he had need to be to make that sort of stuff go down, that they take in all he says just because he is so clever! I believe that the devil is clever and if these people could only hear him preach, I expect they would receive all he said, for they do not know anything, they do not understand anything, they have no holdfast of anything! They are like ships drifting at sea with no chart, no compass, no captain, no rudder. They will probably end as derelicts—a menace to all ships that sail over the seas—or they will strike on a rock, or founder at sea. Only God knows what their end will be, but a bad end it must be, for certain. O dear Friends, I want all of you to have roots!

Truth understood is a grand holdfast. Resolution deliberately formed—that is another root, another holdfast. Communion with God continually enjoyed—that is another holdfast. A lady was once asked why she was so sure that the Bible was true and she replied, “Because I know the Author of it.” And when you, Beloved, know the Author and know how true He is, then your doubts concerning His Truth will fly away. Confirmations continually experienced, such as answers to your prayers, Providential deliverances and the like—these things become Infallible proofs to you till you are as sure of your position as a mathematician is about the rules of

geometry. He cannot be convinced that they are false, for he has tested, tried and proved them. When anybody says to me, "God does not hear prayer," I never answer him. I laugh! The remark is as false and as foolish as if he had said that I did not hear! Do you say that God does not hear prayer, or that there is no God? Of course there is no God to you who have no God and who never go to Him! If He does not hear your prayers, how can you expect Him to hear such prayers as yours, seeing that you do not "believe that He is, and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him"? He never said that He would hear such prayers as yours! But if you believe in Him and know Him, and come to Him as a child comes to his father, He will as certainly hear your prayers as that you, being evil, give good gifts unto your children! This is not a matter of supposition with us. It has become a matter of fact because we have these holdfasts, these roots in ourselves. If you do not have these, you will certainly wither.

A root, again, implies *a means of continuance*. The child who plucks the flowers from his father's garden and sticks them in his own little flowerbed, says, "Father, see how the dahlias have come up? My garden is pretty." Yes, but in a couple of days they are all gone because they had no roots in themselves. So, if you want to continue to be a Christian, there is a secret something which only God can put into the soul which ensures continuance—and where it once is, it will abide forever! You remember how our Lord said to the woman of Samaria, "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life"? He also said to the Jews, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." That is what is meant by the root—the root implies continuance.

And, once more, a root means *living assimilation*. A plant might be tied to a stick that was stuck in the soil and it might continue there and yet wither. But you know what a root does, it goes travelling about until it finds the nourishment it needs. It is beautiful to take the case of a fir tree, to see it growing high up upon a bare rock. I have often seen, among the Alps, a huge rock standing all by itself with a fine pine growing right up the rock—one root comes down this side and another down the other side—till it looks as if it were a colossal eagle's claws that had grasped the big rock! What are these great roots doing? Why, there is some good soil down there and the roots have gone travelling down that great rock till they have reached the earth! By-and-by, these roots go to another rock, but, as there is nothing to be got out of it, they turn deliberately to the right, and to the left, and go in search of good soil and water just as if they had a kind of intelligence, as I suppose they really have! It is wonderful how they will wind and twist about for long distances. I have seen the roots of some trees in the South of France, running along almost as far as the entire length of the Tabernacle galleries—perhaps even further—right on until they have found water and then they have

brought it up to an insignificant-looking tree, which was thus nourished. Such is the power of a root.

For what purpose do we need roots? To be able to go after spiritual food, to be feeling after it all through the Word of God, sending roots into every text of Scripture that is likely to afford us spiritual nutriment! What do the roots do for the trees and plants to which they belong? They begin to suck up the materials by some strange living chemistry which I cannot explain—and they convert it into the life-blood of the plant or tree, selecting out of the soil this or that, and rejecting the other and enabling the plant or tree to make its leaves and its fruits with wondrous skill. No chemist could perform this feat, but the chemistry of God accomplishes it by means of these little roots. What you need is to have roots in yourselves, to be constantly going after spiritual food and especially laying hold of Christ to whom you are rooted, seeking from Him the nourishment of the spiritual life that He has imparted to you—living because He lives, feeding on Him and understanding these words of His, which, if you do truly understand them, will assure you that you shall live forever—“Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you have no life in you. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.”

III. My time has gone, yet I must briefly tell you HOW THESE PEOPLE WERE DESTROYED BY UNAVOIDABLE INFLUENCES. The sun shone—they could not help that, the sun was made to shine. The sun was hot. It could not help that, it was made to be hot. And this was quite sufficient to put an end to all the greenness of these poor dwindling things. So the common trials of life, the afflictions, the persecutions which are inevitable to the Christian life, scorch those who are mere professors and they, having no root in themselves, wither away.

First, *they lost their original stamina*. A seed, unless it is absolutely dead, has some nutriment within itself. Almost every seed contains a measure of nourishment for the life-germ. So, at first, this seed that was sown sprang up by itself through the influence of the heat. Thus do some people seem to begin to be religious with a few right notions and a little good feeling—but they soon use all this up.

Next, when that stamina was all used up, *they had no means of taking in a fresh supply*. A plant cannot live without roots, any more than you and I can live without mouths with which to eat. These people, having no root, could not go for anything more—they already had all they could get. They had no Christ to go to, they had no eternal life, no covenant purpose, no principle of the Holy Spirit to fall back upon. And when their little was all gone, they could not come to the great All-in-All for more—they had no connection with Him.

To drop the figure and speak plainly, what does actually happen in the case of such people? *Sometimes there is holy conduct*. At other times there is *a departure from sound doctrine*, which is just as great an evil in the sight of God. In others, there is *the losing of all their former zeal* and, by-and-by, there comes *the perishing altogether*.

I have upon my memory many cases of this sort, but some of the friends of those persons are still alive—perhaps some of the persons, themselves, are living, so that if I were to tell you about them, I might do harm instead of good. I remember, however, a man who was the terror of the village in which I preached in my early days. If ever there was a bad fellow on the earth, it was Tom _____. One afternoon, after I had been preaching, I was told that he was in the right-hand gallery of the Chapel. It was more than I could believe till my friends described to me a man whom I had noticed during the service—and then I was obliged to believe the evidence of my own eyes. He was a big rough navy and oh, such a terribly bad fellow! He came to hear me preach again and again—and he became to me very much what a faithful dog is to his master. There was nothing that he would not have done to please me if he could. He was broken down with deep repentance, as it seemed, for just a very short time, indeed. And then he became boisterously happy.

I often wished that his sorrow had lasted longer. Whenever I went out to preach, no matter how far off it might be, he was always there. I have seen him pull a barge, loaded with people, up the river Cam, that they might go to hear me at an open-air service. He was full of zeal and earnestness for a while, but, by-and-by, information reached me that Tom was drunk—and when he was drunk, he was capable of any evil. He remained drunk for months and we never saw anything of him all that time. Then he came slinking back and professed repentance. We hoped it was really so, but I never could make anything out of him. I think that he was just one of those who have "no root in themselves." If I could have lived with him in the house, always, he might have been as right as possible, but when he went out into the field to work, and met with other men, he was as wrong as possible, for he had no root in himself.

Strong as Samson, he was also as weak as Samson. I wonder if I am addressing anyone here who is like he? Dear Friends, do not be satisfied with following a minister and being earnestly in love with any Christian man, but get to God and ask Him to give you a new heart and a right spirit, or else it will only be a temporary reformation and, good as that may be, it will never land you in Heaven!

There came to this House of Prayer a working-man whose father had induced him to come. I will not indicate where he sat. He was in the habit of wasting his week's wages on a Saturday night and his family was, in consequence, miserable and poor. But he was brought here and the change in him was very amazing. He had not been attending with us long before there was an alteration, even in the rooms in which he lived, and in the appearance of his wife and children. We all felt glad, and his good old father, whom I know right well, was very happy about his boy. He said, "Surely, he will be converted." He was such a hopeful character that it was even arranged for him to come to see me about joining the Church.

But, alas, he never comes now! Saturday night is just the same as it used to be in his worst days and his family is just as unhappy. He had no root in himself—and he is just a picture of so many who come in here

and get impressed—and are only benefited “for a time.” They take the pledge, but only to break it. God grant that they may not go so far as to be baptized and yet go back to their sin, as the sow that was washed goes again to wallow in the mire! Not long ago I was asked for alms by one who begged me to help him to get a meal. I looked at him and wanted to know who he was. And he said, at last, “Don’t you know me?” “No, I do not know you.” He mentioned his name, but I did not remember him. Then he told me some things about himself that brought him to my recollection, how he had sat among us here and we had esteemed and respected him, and he had been very zealous in all good things, but, after a while, that “sipping and nipping,” which is so common among businessmen nowadays, led him astray—till he lost his position and could not get another situation. He has gone down, down, down, till, as he spoke to me and his breath reeked with spirits, I could only say, “I could not recommend you to a situation. Nobody could take you, you are not fit for it.”

I gave him a little something to eat, but I could do no more for him. It is an awful thing to think of the many of that sort, who have no root in themselves and so, presently, wither away. Bad company in one case, a wicked woman in another case, the wine cup in a third case—all these things help to spoil the work which we had hoped had been a true work of Grace. What, then, is to be done? Why, come along to Jesus Christ and really trust Him! If you give yourselves to Him, He will change you and you shall be truly changed. If you commit your souls into His keeping, He will keep you forever and ever. Try to save yourselves and you will surely be lost—but come to Christ that He may save you, and you will be certainly and eternally saved! Oh, that His Grace might lead you thoroughly to quit yourselves and wholly to rest in Him, now and forevermore! And unto His name shall be all the praise and glory. Amen and Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 TIMOTHY 1:1-8; 3; 4:1-6**

2 Timothy 1:1, 2. *Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, my dearly beloved son.* There is the greatest possible affection between the preacher and his convert. This is a relationship which even death will not destroy. They neither marry nor are given in marriage in the Heavenly Kingdom, but this fatherhood and sonship shall endure forever.

2. *Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.* Is it not a little remarkable that when the Apostle writes to Churches, he usually wishes them, “Grace and peace,” but when he writes to ministers, he generally prays for “Grace, mercy, and peace,” as if we needed more mercy than other Christians? Having so great a work to do, and falling into such great sin if we are unfaithful in it, we may well ask that we may have special mercy showed unto us by the God of mercy.

3. *I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of you in my prayers night and day.* At that time Timothy was very specially laid upon the Apostle's heart and he did not seem to think of anything without young Timothy's image rising up before him "night and day."

4. *Greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy.* Paul had seen Timothy's tears when he parted from him. He remembered, perhaps, his tears when under conviction of sin, his tears of joy when he found the Savior and the tears he shed in his early preaching when the gracious youth touched the hearts of others because he so evidently spoke out of his own heart.

5. *When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that is in you also.* There is no transmigration of souls, but there is a kind of transmigration of faith, as if the very form and shape of faith, which was in Lois and Eunice, afterwards appeared in Timothy. Truly, there are certain idiosyncrasies which may pass from some Christian people to others. And when those idiosyncrasies are of a high and noble kind, it is a great mercy to see them reproduced in children and children's children. "I thought I heard your mother speak," said one, when she heard a Christian woman talking of the Savior, "you speak in just the way in which she used to tell of her experience, and describe the love of Christ."

6. *Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God, which is in you by the putting on of my hands.* The fire needs stirring every now and then—it is apt to die out if it is not stirred.

7, 8. *For God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not you, therefore, ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me, His prisoner: but be you partaker of the affliction of the Gospel according to the power of God.* Timothy, never be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, and never be ashamed of Paul when he is put in prison for the sake of the Gospel—but ask to partake, not only of the Gospel, and of the power of it, but even of the afflictions which come for its sake—for this is one of the highest honors that can be put upon us, that we may suffer with God's saints for the Truth's sake. Paul, in the 3rd Chapter, goes on to tell Timothy of the danger of his times.

2 Timothy 3:1-7. *This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses and lead captive silly women laden with sin, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the Truth.* This is the photograph of the present age and I do not doubt that Paul spoke of it when thus the Spirit of Prophecy was upon him. This is the very motto of the present age, "Ever learning and never able to come

to the knowledge of the Truth.” It glories in knowing nothing and its great boast is in its continual progress, “never able to come to the knowledge of the Truth.”

8, 9. *Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the Truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was.* For, when God was with Moses and Aaron, Jannes and Jambres were soon, by the power and wisdom of God, proved to be fools.

10-12. *But you have fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecution I endured: but out of them all, the Lord delivered me. Yes, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.* The world does not love Christ or His Gospel an atom more, today, than it did in Paul’s day. “The carnal mind is” still “enmity against God.”

13. *But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.* We may look for even worse days and darker days than we have at present.

14-17. *But continue you in the things which you have learned and have been assured of, knowing of whom you have learned them; and that from a child you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

2 Timothy 4:1-6. *I charge you therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His Kingdom, preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the Truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch you in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of your ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—84 (SONG2), 375, 588.

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

HEARING WITH HEED

NO. 2512

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 11, 1897.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 9, 1885.

“And He said unto them, Take heed what you hear: with what measure you use, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given.”
Mark 4:24.

In these days we have many instructions as to preaching, but our Lord principally gave directions as to *hearing*. The first part of our text, “Take heed what you hear,” may be viewed as a note of discrimination. Be careful what you hear—hear the Truth of God and only the Truth of God! It does seem to me as if some people say, “Here is a place of worship. There is sure to be a sermon, let us go in and hear it.” Ah, but all that is preached is not Gospel and it is not all hearing that will be valuable to your souls! Especially at this present time it is incumbent upon Christians to learn how to use the discerning faculty with regard to what is and what is not the Truth of God. Would you eat all meat indiscriminately without tasting and testing its quality? If so, would you not soon be ill? Does a man take any drug that may happen to be upon the chemist’s shelves? Does he not expect great care to be exercised in the doctor’s dispensary, lest he should be taking poison where he hoped for a salutary medicine? Remember what the Apostle John says, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God.” And when you know what the Truth of God is, be not ready to listen to that which is contrary to it, or you will rue the day in which you lent your ears to the deceiver! Ulysses was not unwise when he sealed the ears of his sailors while they passed by the rocks of the sirens, for they sang so sweetly that they tempted mariners to run their ships upon the rocks where they would be wrecked. So dear Friends, with sealed ears, pass by those who have nothing to communicate that can tend to your spiritual edification—and thus carry out our Savior’s words, “Take heed what you hear.”

This command is also a very clear note of warning. We take heed what we eat and what we drink. Every person who desires to have health does that. And shall we be careless of what we hear? May we not, by hearing error and falsehood, engender disease in our spirit and bring our soul into sin, sorrow and eternal ruin? Time is too short for us to be listening to every babbler! Heaven and earth are too important for us to be running any risk concerning our eternal state by giving heed to the speculations of evil men!

But I am going to use the text in another sense, namely, as a word of awakening to you who are hearers. I do not think that I need to say to

the most of you, "Hear the Word," for, if ever there were people who loved to hear the Word of God, they are to be found in this congregation, willing to come not only on the Sabbath, but on week-nights, too, to hear the preaching of the Word! May you, as well as the city of Glasgow, flourish by the preaching of the Word! May your souls be fat and flourishing as you are willing to hear the Word! But, alas, there are many to whom it is necessary to give an exhortation even to come and hear the Gospel! It is getting far too commonly so in London—the vast proportion of our population does not care about hearing preaching. There is a good deal of the preaching that they need not care much to hear, especially poor people who cannot understand the Latinized English, whereas, if our glorious old Anglo-Saxon mother tongue were used, I guarantee you that we would find people coming to hear much more numerously than they do!

Notice, dear Friends, that there is in our text, first, a *precept*—"Take heed what you hear." There is, secondly, a *proverb*—"With what measure you use, it shall be measured to you." And there is, thirdly, a *promise*—"And unto you that hear shall more be given."

I. First, here is a PRECCEPT which ought to be dear to our souls. If God commands anything, we ought to wish to know what it is that He commands.

Take heed, then, what you hear. That is, *hear with attention*. Do not hear heedlessly, for that is not really to hear. There is a mode of attending a place of worship which cannot be of much service because the person attending is three parts asleep. He is not sufficiently asleep for his neighbor to nudge him, but he is quite sufficiently asleep to require to nudge himself and wake himself up! A great many persons, when they come to a place of worship, are like what I sometimes find upon my garden wall. It looks like a chrysalis, but when I take it up, I find that the living thing has flown away. Here is the chrysalis of a man, but where is the man, himself? Oh, he is at home! He is planning what he is going to do tomorrow, or he is thinking about what he did not do on Saturday! How often is it that a hearer's ears are nothing better than a mere trumpet—what is said goes in and goes out, again—and nothing remains. I like that kind of hearing of which I heard concerning a boy who was noticed always to be drinking in what the preacher said. He would lean forward, and listen with eyes, and ears and mouth all open! His mother said, "John, what makes you so attentive?" "Why, Mother," he answered, "I heard that if there was any part of the sermon that was likely to be blessed to our souls, it was just then that the devil would try to make us inattentive. So I made up my mind that I would hear every bit of it so that God might bless me by it." If we always had such hearers as that boy, we would be sure to have faith worked in them and God would be glorified in their salvation!

"Take heed what you hear," so as to *hear for yourselves* with a personal application of the Truth of God. "Friends, Romans, countrymen," said the orator, "lend me your ears." If anyone makes the same request to you, tell him that you cannot lend your ears, for you need them yourselves! A man said once, "While I was at the service this morning, I was hearing for a man whom I saw in the aisle. I wondered what he was

thinking of the sermon.” Never you mind the man in the aisle—breathe a prayer to God for a blessing on him, but hear the Word of the Lord for yourself! Hear it personally! Look, there is a group of ten or 12 people met in a parlor and there is a legal-looking gentleman with a document in front of him. He is reading somebody’s “last will and testament.” It is very dry reading. If you could listen through the keyhole, I do not think you would stay long to hear it. It is about freeholds, leaseholds, properties and I know not what—but just look at the attention of the hearers!. Do you see that brother of the testator? The lawyer has just read the clause about one hundred pounds that is left to him. The old man has his ear-trumpet up to his ear till he hears that piece! And now that the will passes on to, “my nephew Thomas,” down goes the ear-trumpet, for the old man does not care what is left to Thomas!

There are two young people in the corner who have been expecting something and they are getting very eager, for the will has gone through a number of items and it has not mentioned them. Now see their attention, how they brighten up, and look at one another as the lawyer reads, “To my dear grandchild Jane and her husband, I leave ____.” Now they will catch every syllable! I am sure they will and when it is done, they will say, “Would you mind reading that piece again?” It is so deeply interesting to them because it concerns them *personally*. I want that illustration to live with you, for that is the way to hear the Gospel preached—waiting till it comes to the piece that especially concerns yourself and till that comes, saying, “I dare not claim that promise, I must not take that comfort, for I am not the character described.” When, at last, there comes the portion that is your own, then just drink it in and say to yourself, “I would like to hear that again, for it means *me*—there is something in that just suitable for me.” O men and women, you have not heard the Gospel aright unless you have heard it as your own Gospel—unless you have discovered in it a finger pointing to yourself—your own name, your own character, written there!

Then, dear Friends, if you would take heed what you hear, *hear retentively*, endeavoring to *remember* the Truth. It is a good thing to carry home as much as you can from the preaching of the Gospel. Eat it on the spot! Probably that is the best way to carry it away with a certainty! What a man eats at the table will not be stolen from him by a thief on the road home! And if you take in every Word, as you hear it, into your very soul, saying, “O God, bless it to me now!” you will retain it to a certainty! But do take heed that the sermon shall not be finished when the last word is spoken. Let not our *finis* be *your finis*, but let our ending be your beginning! Ministers ought to finish up with the practical application—and that is where the hearer ought to begin. And he should continue to make the practical application to himself through all his life.

Then, dear Friends, hear *desiringly*. What a blessed kind of hearing that is when a man hears with longing, wishing, hungering all the way through the sermon! When the fish are hungry, then is the time for fishing, and when souls hunger and thirst after righteousness, *then* is the time for preaching! Over there is a broken-hearted sinner and he is saying, “Oh, that I could hear something about a Savior!” Yonder is another

soul that has been crying and praying for mercy and has not found it—and he is saying, “Oh, that I might discover the way of mercy!” I try with all my might so to preach that souls may not miss the way of salvation! When I was here, last week, and saw some eight friends who came to confess their faith, I was a little disappointed that out of that number there were only two who had been blessed under my ministry. But a Brother to whom I mentioned it said, “Well, Sir, I can bear witness that I have heard sermons from you of late of which I have said that if I had been unconverted, I must have been brought to the Lord through hearing those sermons, for they did so earnestly press sinners to come to Christ, and they did set the Gospel so plainly before the hearers.” I felt that I could conscientiously agree with what that good Brother said, for, if I have not preached the Gospel, I have meant to do it. And if I have not made you understand it, I have tried to make it as plain as ever I could.

If I liked to do so, I fancy that I could preach a very fine sermon—one that would please gentlemen who are fond of oratory—but that high-flown style of preaching seems to me to be wicked so long as souls are perishing! And I am determined, as far as ever I can, to preach the Gospel plainly and simply so that everybody may understand it. If occasionally I make you smile, I do not mind, because sometimes I can get the Truth of God into your heart that way when I cannot get it in any other way. If you only get to Christ, it does not matter to me whether you come laughing or crying so long as you are really brought to Him. We long to bring our hearers to the Savior and, therefore, we need them to so hear that they shall hunger and thirst after the living God! And when they do that, they will be sure to find Him before long.

One thing more. Take heed that you *hear obediently*. That is to say, put in practice what you hear, for it is no use to hear unless you do so. You say to a man, “You have need of such-and-such a diet in order that you may be restored to health,” and he says, “I thank you,” but he never uses that diet—and then complains that he is not any better. Another says, “I have been to such-and-such a doctor, and I have paid him a guinea for his advice, but I am no better.” The doctor sees the man, and he says, “Did you take the medicine that I prescribed for you?” “Well, no, Sir, I am not partial to medicine.” “And what have you been eating?” When he tells him, the doctor says, “Why, those are the very things that I said you were *not* to touch! Have you taken so-and-so?” “No, I did not like the taste of it, so I have not gone on with it.” If he is a sensible doctor, he says, “Why did you come to me? If you are no better, can you blame me?” “But I had your prescription, Sir! I took it home with me and put it in a cupboard. I would have been greatly distressed if I had lost it on the way home.” “But you have not taken the medicine?” “No, Sir, no, I have not, but I have your prescription all right.”

So people say, “I hear the Gospel regularly. I would not be absent on the Sabbath and I go out on a Thursday evening and listen to the preacher.” “But they have not all obeyed the Gospel,” wrote Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, and that is what we still have sorrowfully to say—so many remain *hearers* only, but not *doers* of the Word.

II. Now I am going to turn to the second part of the subject, which is, A PROVERB. The text says, “With what measure you use, it shall be measured to you.” You shall have your corn measured back to you with your own bushel.

What does this mean in reference to this subject? Just this—the Hearer of the Gospel will get measure for measure, and the measure shall be his own measure. For instance, *those who have no interest in the Word find it uninteresting*. A man comes to listen to the Gospel without any interest in the Gospel—he does not care an atom what it is or what it is not and, consequently, he finds nothing interesting in the Gospel. If he reads the Bible with no concern at all in it, he finds nothing in it that strikes him. He may read it as a blind man passes through a picture gallery and he may hear the voice of the minister as a deaf man hears music. That is to say, there will be no true seeing or hearing—seeing, he shall not perceive—and hearing, he shall not understand. Come to a service without any interest in it and there shall be nothing interesting to you in it. You have no longing to be saved, no wish to escape from the guilt of sin, no desire for Heaven, no care about God. So, of course, the dullest thing to you in all the world will be a service where Christ is preached! You shall get it measured back to you with your own measure.

Next, *those who desire to find fault, find faults enough*. There are some persons who attend even the House of God with a view simply of finding fault. I have great pleasure, generally, in obliging people who wish to find fault—they shall always have faults enough to find if they want them. There shall be a fault in style, a fault in this, a fault in that and a fault in the other. If you want to find fault—if it is any source of pleasure to you, well, it is no trouble to us, so you can proceed! The critic of the Gospel will find so much to object to in it that he will almost think it was meant for him to object to—and so it *was*, in a measure. The offense of the Cross has not ceased. It is still a stumbling block to you that believe not, and you shall stumble and fall and be broken to pieces by it. Therefore, deceive not your own souls over that matter—with your own measure it shall be measured back to you. What you fish for, you shall catch.

On the other hand, *those who seek the solid Truth of God learn it from any faithful ministry*. Here is a person who comes to hear the Gospel with attention. He says, “I would like to know all about this Gospel. I want to be taught the truth concerning sin and its remedy. I want to know the truth concerning the Holy Spirit and the work that He performs in the heart. I want to hear about the Lord Jesus Christ and His atoning Sacrifice, I want to know about the life of a Christian, his comforts, his trials, his joys, his duties.” Well, if you hear attentively, desiring to know and to be taught, you shall find much that is worth knowing, much that will attract you, much that will call you to a yet closer attention, much that will make you want to know still more, much that will make you eager to be taken behind the scenes that you may wonder what the parables mean and what the Holy Spirit intends to teach you! I am sure there never was a person who attentively considered the great plan of salvation in its details who did not find much that was well worth his most careful consideration!

Further, *those who hunger find food*. Here is another man who comes, not merely with attention to know, but with a hungry desire to receive the benefit of the Gospel into his own soul and, dear Friends, if you come hungering, you shall be filled, for this is our Savior's declaration—"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." What a blessed thing the Gospel is to the man who really wants it! It is a blessed thing to be empty, because then you understand the fullness of Christ! I was standing, one day, under one of the great beech trees in the New Forest, marking with delight the various twists of the branches. The beech tree always has a special charm to me and I thought to myself, "This beech tree greatly interests me." But there was a squirrel running along one of the branches and he stopped and looked at me—and as I was quite still, he looked till he did not want to see any more—and he passed round the trunk, and then came in sight again as he worked his spiral way right up to the top! And I said, "Ah, little squirrel, this beech tree is more to you than it is to me. To me, it is only a thing that I look at with curiosity and interest. But to you, it is your home, it is your granary—you get your beech nuts and hoard them away. And here you live and here you have your young. Winter and summer this is your place of abode. In the summer to sport in and in the winter to hide in. This beech tree is everything to you."

Now, to the mere hearer, the Lord Jesus Christ is just like what that tree was to me. The mere hearer looks at Him with some interest, but to a poor hungry sinner, Jesus Christ is everything! He is a home for his desolation, raiment for his nakedness, food for his hunger, light for his darkness, liberty for his bondage, joy for his despair. He is his Heaven upon earth and his Heaven in Heaven! Dear Friends, this is the way to hear the Gospel—with a great craving hunger of soul, for as much as you really want, that you shall have. If you bring a great measure of need to the sanctuary, the Truth of God shall be measured out to you so as to fill it! Your utmost desires shall be exceeded, for God is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above what we ask or even think!

Then, next, *those who bring faith receive assurance*. I will suppose that there is a poor soul here that comes to Christ and says, "I heard the Gospel and I believe it." Very well, then, you shall have more faith given you and, when you have twice as much faith, if you come with that and say, "Lord, I believe more firmly and truly than ever," you shall have as much faith again given you. And then when you come and say, "Lord, I feel confident of it," you shall have twice as much confidence given to you! And when you get that double quantity of confidence and then come and say, "Lord, I am assured, I do believe. I am saved, I am sure of it," you shall have a double quantity of assurance given to you, till you get to "full assurance of faith," for, "with what measure you use, it shall be measured to you." If you measure out an immense amount of faith in Christ, you shall have an immense quantity measured back to your faith!

Is not this a delightful proverb of the Kingdom of Heaven, that every hearer shall receive according to what he brings? If he brings great desire, great attention, great faith—he shall receive just in the same measure, according to the abundant Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. But re-

member that no man gets saved by an inattentive hearing of the Gospel. No man gets saved by a careless hearing. No man gets saved by a forgetful hearing. No man gets saved by a fitful, occasional hearing of the Gospel—it is God’s usual way to save men by their using the means of Grace, by their constantly, attentively, intensely, earnestly hearing the Word of God! There is no merit in merely hearing. There is no merit, even, in faith in and of itself. God has appended the blessing of faith to hearing and the blessing of salvation to faith. Therefore, give a large measure to God in your hearing that He may give a large measure back to you according to the proverb, “With what measure you use, it shall be measured to you.”

III. Now I have to finish with A PROMISE—“Unto you that hear shall more be given.”

This is a very great and very gracious word, but I will not speak long upon it. “Unto you that hear, shall more be given.” More what? Why, first, more *desire to hear*! It is the man who has heard the Gospel who loves to hear it. I think that the best preaching of the Gospel is when the preacher, himself, enjoys it—when he himself is heartily in love with it—that is a part of the unction that God gives to go with it. When a cook is preparing a dainty dish, I think he smiles as he sends it up to his lord’s table. And he has some enjoyment of it himself. I love to preach a Gospel of which I feel the sweetness in my own soul. So, dear Hearer, if you begin to feel the sweetness of hearing the Gospel, you shall feel more of it! Those who are tired of preaching are those who do not often hear it. If it is the Gospel of Jesus Christ and you have often heard it, you want to hear it again. You will be like the Duke of Argyll in Rutherford’s day, when Rutherford preached about Jesus. The Duke stood up and said, “Ring that bell again, for I love to hear the music of that sweet name.” That bell can never be rung too often in the ear that knows its melody, “Unto you that hear shall more be given”—more desire to hear, more delight in hearing will God bestow upon you.

“Unto you that hear shall more be given.” That is, *more understanding of what you hear*. At first a man does not understand much of the Gospel. He gets as far as the A B C of it and that saves him. But “unto you that hear shall more be given.” There are certain parts of God’s Word that we do not yet fully understand. I am speaking for myself and most people. Ought we, then, to read them? Yes, certainly! If you do not understand them, keep on reading them. Why? Because if you were a child and your father wrote you a letter, and there was a part of it that was beyond your comprehension, if you were a sensible child, you would say, “Well, I do not catch my father’s meaning, but I shall read his letter again.” So, Beloved, say to yourself, “I cannot fully comprehend this Scripture, but I know that my Heavenly Father meant something by it. And I love Him so much that I like to read His very Words, even if I do not catch His meaning.”

As you keep on reading, you will say to yourself, “I understand that sentence, which was not plain before. I have not learned the meaning of all the letter yet, but I shall read it again.” You read, and read, and read and, at last, by the reading you read yourself into the understanding of

it! I am sure it is so with the study of God's Word. If the Lord had written the Bible all so very plainly, it would have been meant for us when we were merely babes in Grace and there would have been nothing for us as we advanced! Therefore He has written some part of it a little less simply and some way farther on there are greater difficulties, still, on purpose, that when our senses have been exercised by being used, we may come to the fullness of the stature of men in Christ Jesus. If you do not understand the Word that you hear, then hear it again and again till, at last, the Light of God breaks in upon your soul, for, "unto you that hear shall more be given"—more *understanding* of what you hear.

So also, with hearing, shall be given more assurance of the truth of what you hear. Those who reject the Bible are generally people who have never read it. Those who read it, usually receive it, and those who read it more, receive it yet more firmly. Those who hear the Gospel again and again, and again, get more and more sure that it is true. At first they *hope* it is true. Then they *think* it is true. Soon, they *believe* it is true and, farther on, they *know* it is true. And yet farther on they are so delighted because it *is* true that they feel that they could die in the defense of it! "Unto you that hear shall more be given"—you shall become more and more sure of the truth of what you hear.

"Unto you that hear shall more be given." That is, more personal possession of the blessings of which you hear. You shall get a firmer grip of it for yourselves. You shall get a clearer view as to your own interest in it. Once, when Jesus passed by, I touched the hem of His garment with my finger and I was made whole. But when Jesus came nearer, he that had touched His garment's hem came nearer, still, and laid hold upon His hand, bowed at His feet and held Him and said, "I implore You to abide with me." As he went further, he came to lean his head upon the bosom of his Lord. The more you know of Christ and the more you hear about Him, the more shall you feel sure that He is yours and the more shall you abide in Him, trust in Him and find joy and peace through believing in Him.

"Unto you that hear shall more be given." That is, more *delight while hearing the glorious Gospel*. No one of us knows how much God can give to a man. There is a cornucopia, in the hand of God, that is infinitely full of delights to the man who is willing to receive them. He who is a little Christian has little joy. He who gets but little of Christ and hears but little of Christ, has but little comfort. But he who will go into this business, heart and soul, and invest his whole capital of body, soul and spirit in it—he is the man who shall be rich to all the intents of bliss.

"Unto you that hear shall more be given," and yet more, and yet more, and yet more—you shall become holier, stronger, more useful, more happy, more heavenly! That word, "more," is so big that when you have thought about it as much as you like, it is still, "more." And then, when you have expanded your conceptions of it, it is still "more." And when you seem to have gone to your utmost imagination, it is still "more." And when you fancy that you have exaggerated, yet still it is "more," for, "more" must be always more than he who has the largest powers of thought shall ever be able to compass!

Therefore, Beloved, I say to you, in conclusion, let us give to the Gospel that earnest kind of hearing which I have tried to describe. And let us so give it that we get a blessing from the Master as the result. And, first, *hear the Gospel*. You who do not often hear it, I pray you, hear it! It must be wisdom to hear what God has to say. It is so sweet to *our* souls that we want you, also, to hear it. It has done us so much good that we entreat you to hear it. Do not waste your Sabbaths—there are few enough of them in any lifetime—and you will soon be in the place where the tolling of a Sabbath bell will never be heard! Do, dear Friends, you who do not often go to the House of God, do hear the Word. It is the happiest, the wisest, the most profitable way of spending the Sabbath.

And you who do hear, *hear well*. The Word deserves good hearing. It comes from God. It is about your immortal soul. It is about Heaven and Hell. It is about Him who died for sinners. Do not count that a trifle which cost His life's blood! The story deserves most solemn hearing. Remember, if you are an unconverted person, the Gospel is your only hope—you cannot expect to find salvation by going anywhere else than by going to hear the Word of God! The way of salvation is by faith in Christ, but "*faith comes by hearing*." It is while you are hearing the Gospel that you are led to believe it! Its evidence lies in itself. The Cross enlightens men by its own light! Therefore, do hear all you can about it.

Let me further say to you, dear Friends, *hear often*. I find that when any of those who have regularly come to this place of worship begin to stay away, they do not improve spiritually. A dear Brother who came to see me this week, had been absent for a year and a half. I should have liked you to have seen the joy with which he told me that, though he had been obliged to be away through poverty, he could not longer endure what he had been doing to try to make a living. He had given it up, cost what it might, because he felt that if he did not come to hear the Gospel, he would starve! And he was quite right. I am sure that you cannot absent yourself from the frequent hearing of the Word if you are a Christian, without being like a man who goes without his meals.

If you miss your regular meals, you cannot stay well. You may say, "I ran into such-and-such a place and had something to eat." But it does not do, either for the body or the soul, to have just a little mite of meat here and there. You must especially get your spiritual meals regularly and have them where your soul is really fed. Do not go where it is all fine music and grand talk and beautiful architecture—those things will neither fill anybody's stomach, nor feed his soul. Go where the Gospel is preached, the Gospel that really feeds your soul, and go often!

Lastly, if you have heard well, and heard often, try to *hear still better*. Expect more out of the Gospel. No, more than that, *come to Christ Himself* and get, at one stroke, the choicest blessing you can ever have, namely, immediate and full salvation by faith in Jesus! Then go on to know more and more of what that treasure is and glorify your God, world without end!

May the Lord's blessing rest upon you all, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

MARK 4:1-25.

Verse 1. *And He began again to teach by the seaside: and there was gathered unto Him a great multitude, so that He entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land.* You can easily picture that scene—the Master sitting down in the vessel with a little breathing space of water between Himself and the crowd. And then the multitude on the rising bank, standing one above another, and all gazing upon the Teacher who sat down and taught them. It ought to reconcile any of you who have to stand in the crowd here when you remember that the hearers all stood in those days—and only the preacher sat down!

2, 3. *And He taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in His doctrine, Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow.* He did not go out to show himself, to let people see how dexterous he was at the art of sowing seed. But he “went out to sow.” And every true preacher should go out with this one design—to scatter broadcast the good Seed of the Kingdom, and to try to obtain for it an entrance into the hearts of their hearers.

4. *And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.* He could not help that. It was not his fault, but the fault of the wayside and of the fowls. So, when the Word of God is denied entrance into men’s hearts, if it is faithfully preached, the preacher shall not be blamed by his Master—the fault shall lie between the hard heart that will not let the Seed enter in, and the devil who came and took it away.

5. *And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth.* Persons with shallow characters are often very quick in receiving religious impressions, but they also lose them just as quickly. Those who are hasty and impulsive are as easily turned the wrong way as the right way.

6-8. *But when the sun was up, it was scorched and because it had no root, it withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred.* Thank God for that! There were three failures, but there was one success, or, perhaps we might more correctly say, three successes. There were three sorts of ground that yielded nothing, but at last the sower came to a piece of soil that had been well prepared and, therefore, was good ground which yielded fruit, though the quantity varied even there—“some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred.”

9. *And He said unto them, He that has ears to hear, let him hear.* Some people have ears, but they have not “ears to hear.” They have ears, but they close them to that which they ought to hear. When a man is really willing to listen to the Truth of God, then may God help him to listen with all his heart—spiritually!

10-12. *And when He was alone, they that were about Him with the twelve asked of Him the parable. And He said unto them, Unto you it is*

given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them. This judicial blindness had happened to the Jews—they had so long closed their eyes to the Light of God that, at last, God closed them and they were blinded. They had refused to heed so many messages sent to them from the great God that, at last, this sentence was pronounced as the punishment of their sin—that they should die in their sins and that even the preaching of the Word by the mouth of the Lord Jesus, Himself, should be of no use to them! That is one of the most awful judgments that can ever happen to anyone, when God puts a curse even on a man's blessings—and when the Gospel, which should be a savor of life unto life, becomes a savor of death unto death.

13. *And He said unto them, Know you not this parable? And how, then, will you know all parables? “For this is one of the simplest of them all. If you do not understand this parable, what will you understand?”*

14, 15. *The sower sows the Word. And these are they by the wayside, where the Word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan comes immediately and takes away the Word that was sown in their hearts.* There is always a bird where there is a seed lying on the road. And there is always a devil where there is a sermon heard but not received into the heart. “Satan comes immediately.” He is very prompt. We may delay, but the devil never does. “When they have heard, Satan comes immediately and takes away the Word that was sown in their hearts.”

16, 17. *And these are they, likewise, which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the Word, immediately receive it with gladness; and have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution arise for the Word's sake, immediately they are offended.* These are the people that trouble and grieve the hearts of earnest ministers. And there are some revivalists who never go to a place without getting quite a lot of persons to come forward and say that they are converted. Why, I know a town where, according to the accounts that were put forth by certain preachers, there were so many professed converts every night that all the people in the town must have been converted—and a good many more from the surrounding villages! But nobody can find them now. Were they converted, then? I think not. But that is the style in which much has been done by some whom I might name.

Yet there is some good even in their work! The sower in the parable is not blamed because his work was so evanescent—how could he prevent it? As the soil was so shallow, the apparent result was very quick and the disappointment was equally quick. I do trust, dear Friends, that you will never be satisfied with temporary godliness, with slight impressions soon received and soon lost. Beware of all that is not the work of the Holy Spirit! There must be a breaking up of the iron pan of the heart! There must be a tearing out of the rocks that lie under the soil or else there will be no harvest unto God.

18, 19. *And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the Word, and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the Word, and it becomes unfruitful.* The seed cannot grow in such soil as that. The man is too busy, or he is wholly taken up with pleasure. The women are too proud of themselves, or even of the clothes that cover them. How can there be room for Christ in the inn when it is crowded with other guests?

20. *And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the Word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirty fold, some sixty, and some an hundred.* All converts are not equally good. I am afraid that in our churches there is a large number of the thirty-fold people. We are glad to have them, but they are not very brilliant Christians. Oh, for some sixty-fold converts—some who are fit to be very leaders in the Church of God! And when we get up to a hundred-fold—when it is not merely one hundred per cent, but one hundred gathered for every one sown—then are we indeed rejoiced! When everything that is good is multiplied over, and over, and over, and over, and over again, a hundred for one, and when each one of that hundred bears another hundred—that is the blessing we long to see! This hundred-fold Seed has in it the capacity for almost boundless multiplication! At the first sowing, we get a hundred-fold return. But what comes of the next sowing, and the next, and the next? God send us this style of wheat! May we have a great quantity of it!

21. *And He said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? And not to be set on a candlestick?* So this wheat, then, is meant to be sown! The Word of God is intended to be spread. “Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed?” If it were put under a bed, it would set the bed on fire and so, if you have true Grace in your heart, there is nothing that can smother its light—the fire and the light, together, will force their way out.

22, 23, *For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither anything kept secret, but that it should come abroad. If any man has ears to hear, let him hear.* Tell out, then, what God has told you—and let everybody hear from you the Truth of God as you, yourself, have heard it. See the compound interest that there is to be in this blessed trading for Christ?

24, 25. *And He said unto them, Take heed what you hear: with what measure you use, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. For he that has, to him shall be given: and he that has not, from him shall be taken even that which he has.* When the Gospel is not received, when a man refuses it, it becomes a positive loss to him. There is a way by which it so works that what a man thought he had, disappears. Some have been made worse by the preaching of that Word which ought to have made them better. May it not be so with any one of us!

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY
TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

WHAT THE FARM LABORERS CAN DO AND WHAT THEY CANNOT DO NO. 1603

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 12, 1881,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And He said, The kingdom of God is as if a man should cast seed into the ground and should sleep and rise night and day and the seed should spring and grow up, he knows not how. For the earth brings forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest is come.”
Mark 4:26-29.

LAST Lord's-Day morning our subject was the laborers upon God's farm and their great Master. And then we tried to show how far human agency was necessary in the work of the Gospel. We also saw how thoroughly all holy results depend upon God, for neither he that sows nor he that waters is anything, but God who gives the increase. We have much the same subject this morning, only it goes a little deeper and yet more fully shows how far the laborer can go and how far he cannot go—where man may enter with holy industry—and where no human work can possibly intrude. Our subject on this occasion will mainly be the measure and limit of human instrumentality in the Kingdom of Grace. If we shall be taught of the Spirit of God, we shall find this Scripture to be full of instruction upon the matter.

It is remarkable that the parable before us is peculiar to Mark. No other Evangelist has recorded it, but we do not think any the less of it on that account. If it had been told to us four times, we should have been glad to hear the repetition and would have given it fourfold attention. As it is told us but once, we will give the more earnest heed to a voice which speaks once and for all. We are glad that the Holy Spirit led Mark to reserve this pearl out of the many excellent things which our Lord said which have been lost. John tells us that if a record of all the works which Jesus did could have been preserved, they would have made a library so large that scarcely the world, itself, could have contained all the books.

Many of the things that Jesus said floated about, no doubt, for a time and were gradually forgotten. We have to be thankful to the Spirit of God for perpetuating this choice similitude by the hand of His servant Mark. Preserved in the amber of Inspiration, this choice instruction is of priceless value. Here is a lesson for sowers—for the laborers upon the farm of God. It is a parable for all who are concerned in the Kingdom of God. It will be of little value to those who are in the Kingdom of Darkness, for they are not bid to sow the good Seed. “Unto the wicked God says, what

have you to do to declare My statutes?" But all who are loyal subjects to King Jesus—all who are commissioned to scatter Seed for the Royal Husbandman—will be glad to know how the Kingdom advances—glad to know how the harvest is preparing for Him whom they serve.

Listen, then, you that sow beside all waters—you that with holy diligence seek to fill the garner of your God—listen and may the Spirit of God speak into your ears as you are able to hear it!

I. We shall, first, learn from our text WHAT WE CAN DO AND WHAT WE CANNOT DO. Let this stand as our first head. "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground." This, the gracious worker can do. "And the seed should spring and grow up, he knows not how." This is what he cannot do—it belongs to a higher power. Man can neither make the Seed of God spring nor grow—he is out of the field in that respect and may go home—"to sleep, and rise night and day." Seed once sown is beyond human jurisdiction and is under Divine care.

Yet before long the worker comes in again—"When the fruit is brought forth, immediately he puts in the sickle." We can reap in due season and it is both our duty and privilege to do so. You see, then, that there is a place for the worker at the beginning and although there is no room for him in the middle passage, yet another opportunity is given him farther on when that which he sowed has actually yielded fruit. Notice, then, that we can sow. Any man who has received the knowledge of the Grace of God in his heart can teach others. I include under the term, "man," all who know the Lord, be they male or female.

We cannot all teach alike, for all have not the same gifts—to one is given one talent, and to another ten. Neither have we all the same opportunities, for one lives in obscurity and another has far-reaching influence. Yet there is not within the family of God an infant hand which may not drop its own tiny Seed into the ground! There is not a man among us who needs to stand idle in the marketplace, for work suitable to his strength is waiting for him. There is not a saved woman who is not left a holy task. Let her do it and win the approving word. "She has done what she could." Something of sacred service is within the reach of everyone's capacity, whether it be the mother in the family, the nurse-girl with the infant, the boy in the school, the workman at the bench, or the nurse at the bedside.

Those with the smallest range of opportunities can, nevertheless, do something for Christ and His cause. The precious Seed of the Word of God is small as a grain of mustard seed and may be carried by the feeblest hand where it shall multiply a hundred-fold! We need never quarrel with God because we cannot do everything if He only permits us to do this one thing, for sowing the good Seed is a work which will need all our wit, our strength, our love, our care. Holy Seed sowing may well be adopted as our highest pursuit and is no inferior objective for the noblest life that can be led! You will need heavenly teaching that you may carefully select the Wheat and keep it free from the darnel of error. We must even winnow out of it our own thoughts and opinions, for these may not be according to the mind of God.

Men are not saved by *our* word, but by God's Word. We are bound to see that we know the Gospel and teach the whole of it. To different men we must, with discretion, bring forward that part of the Word of God which will best bear upon their consciences—for much may depend upon

the Word being in season and not a chance sentence thrown out at random. We shall have enough to do if we look well to the seed basket, lest, perhaps, we should sow tares as well as wheat, or should cast good Seed wantonly, where it can only feed evil birds. Having selected the Seed, we shall have plenty of work if we go forth and sow it broadcast everywhere, for every day brings its opportunity and every company furnishes its occasion.

“In the morning sow your seed, in the evening withhold not your hand.” “Sow beside all waters.” Imitate the sower in the parable, who was not so penny-wise that he would only cast the seed where, according to his judgment, all was good soil, but who, feeling that he had other work for his judgment besides the selecting of the soil, threw the seed right and left as he went on his way, and denied not a handful even to thorny and rocky soils! You, dear fellow workers, will have enough to do if at all times and in all places, as prudence and zeal suggest, you spread abroad the living Word of the living Lord! Still, wise sowers discover favorable opportunities for sowing and gladly seize upon them.

There are times when it would clearly be a waste to sow, for the soil could not receive it—it is not in a fit condition. After a shower, or before a shower, or at some such time as he that has studied husbandry knows, is the time to be up and doing. So while we are always to work for God, yet there are seasons when it were casting pearls before swine to talk of holy things. And there are other times when, if we were slothful, it would be a shameful waste of propitious seasons. Sluggards in the time for plowing and sowing are sluggards, indeed, for they not only waste the day, but throw away the year.

If you watch for souls and use hours of happy vantage and moments of sacred softening, you will not complain of the scanty space allowed for agency. Even should you never be called to water, or to reap, your office is wide enough if you fulfill the work of the sower. For little though it seems to teach the simple Truth of the Gospel, yet it is essential. How shall men hear without a teacher? The farm never brings forth a harvest without sowing! Weeds will grow without our help, but not so wheat and barley! The human heart is so depraved that it will naturally bring forth evil in abundance and Satan is quite sure not to let it lie without a sowing of *evil* seed, but if ever a man's soul is to yield fruit unto God, the Seed of the Truth of God must be cast into it from without.

Servants of God, the Seed of the Word of God is not like thistle-down which is borne by every wind, nor like certain seeds blown by their own parachutes here, there and everywhere! No, but the Wheat of the Kingdom needs a human hand to sow it and without such agency it will not enter into men's hearts and neither can it bring forth fruit to the Glory of God. The preaching of the Gospel is the necessity of every age—God grant that our country may never be deprived of it! Even if the Lord should send us a famine of bread and a famine of water, may He never send us a famine of the Word of God! Faith comes by hearing and how can there be hearing if there is no teaching? Scatter! Scatter, then, the Seed of the Kingdom, for this is essential to the harvest.

The spreading of the Gospel is not a thing that you may do or may not do, according to your pleasure, but it is a duty urgently necessary—to be neglected at your peril! You *can* sow the Seed of God and the Seed *must* be

sown. This Seed should be sown often, for the times are such that one sowing may not suffice. Sow again and again, for many are the foes of the Wheat and if you repeat not your sowing, you may never see a harvest. The Seed of God must be sown everywhere, too, for there are no choice corners of the world that you can afford to leave alone in the hope that they will be self-productive.

You may not leave the rich and intelligent under the notion that surely the Gospel will be found among *them*, for it is not so—the pride of life leads them away from God. You may not leave the poor and illiterate and say, “Surely *they* will, of themselves, feel their need of Christ.” Not so—they will sink from degradation to degradation unless you lift them up with the Gospel! No tribe of man or no peculiar constitution of the human mind may be neglected by us, but everywhere we must preach the Word of God, in season and out of season! I have heard that Captain Cook, the celebrated circumnavigator, was, in one respect, an admirable example to us. Wherever he landed—in whatever part of the earth it might be—he took with him a little packet of different English seeds and he was often observed to scatter them in suitable places.

He would leave the boat and wander up from the shore. He said nothing to anybody, but quietly scattered English seeds wherever he went so that he belted the world with the flowers and herbs of his native land! Imitate him wherever you go! Sow *spiritual* seeds in every place that your foot shall tread! Some of you will, before long, be at the seaside or amidst the mountains of Switzerland, or in some other regions of the earth in the search of variety and beauty—carry the heavenly Seeds with you and be not satisfied unless in every place you let fall a grain or two that may bring forth fruit unto your God! This is what you *can* do—mind that you do it!

Let us now think of what you *cannot* do. You cannot, after the Seed has left your hands, cause it to put forth life. I am sure you cannot make it grow, for you do not know how it grows. The text says, “And the seed should spring and grow up, he knows not how.” That which is beyond the range of our knowledge is certainly beyond the reach of our power! Can you make a seed germinate? You may place it under circumstances of damp and heat which will cause it to swell and break forth with a shoot, but the germination, itself, is beyond you. How is it done? We know not. After the germ has been put forth, can you make it further grow and develop its life into leaf and stem? No, that, too, is out of your power.

And when the green, grassy blade has been succeeded by the ear, can you ripen it? It will be ripened, but can *you* do it? You know you cannot! You can have no finger in the actual process, though you may promote the conditions under which it is produced. Life is a mystery; growth is a mystery; ripening is a mystery—and these three mysteries are as fountains sealed against all intrusion. How is it that there is within the ripe seed the preparations for another sowing and another growth? What is this vital principle, this secret reproducing energy? Do you know you anything about this?

The philosopher may say that he can explain life and growth. And straightway he will, according to the ordinary process of philosophy, bamboozle you with terms which are less understandable than the ordinary talk of infants! And then he will say, “There is the whole matter! It is as

clear as possible.” He cloaks his ignorance with learned jargon and then calls it wisdom! To this day it still remains true of the growth of the most common seeds—“He knows not how.” The scientific man may talk about chemical combinations and physical permutations and he may proceed to quote analogies from this and that—but still, the growth of the seed remains a secret—it springs, “He knows not how.”

Certainly this is true of the rise and progress of the Word of God in the heart. It enters the soul and roots itself you know not how. Naturally men hate the Word, but it enters and it changes the heart so that they come to *love* it, but we know not how. Their whole nature is renewed, so that instead of producing sin, it yields repentance, faith and love—but we know not how! How it is that the Spirit of God deals with the mind of man. How He creates the new heart and the right spirit. How we are begotten, again, unto a lively hope. How we are born of the Spirit, we cannot tell!

The Holy Spirit enters into us. We hear not His voice, we see not His light, we feel not His touch—yet He works an effectual work upon us which we are not long in perceiving. We know that the work of the Spirit is a new creation, a resurrection, a quickening from the dead—but all these words are only covers to our utter ignorance of the mode of His work with which it is not in our power to meddle. We do not know how He performs His miracles of love and, not knowing how He works, we may be quite sure that we cannot take the work out of His hands! We cannot create, we cannot quicken, we cannot transform, we cannot regenerate, we cannot save!

This work of God having proceeded in the growth of the Seed of God, what next? We can reap the ripe ears. After a season, God the Holy Spirit uses His servants again. As soon as the living Seed has produced, first of all, the blade of thought and afterwards the green ear of conviction—and then faith which is as the full corn in the ear—then the Christian worker comes in for farther service, for He can reap. “When the fruit is brought forth, immediately he puts in the sickle.” This is not the reaping of the Last Great Day, for that does not come within the scope of the parable, which evidently relates to a *human* sower and reaper.

The kind of reaping which the Savior, here, intends, is that which He referred to when He said to His disciples, “Lift up now your eyes, for behold the fields are white already to the harvest.” After He had been sowing the Seed in the hearts of the Samaritans and it had sprung up so that they began to evince faith in Him, the Lord Jesus cried, “The fields are white unto the harvest.” The Apostle says, “One sows, and another reaps.” Our Lord said to the disciples, “I sent you to reap that whereon you bestowed no labor.” Is there not a promise, “in due season you shall reap if you faint not”? Christian workers begin their harvest work by watching carefully to see when men show signs of faith in Christ! They are eager to see the blade and delight to mark the ripening ear.

They often hope that men are Believers, but they long to be sure of it—and when they judge, at last, the fruit of faith is put forth, they begin to encourage, to congratulate and to comfort! They know that the young Believer needs to be housed in the barn of Christian fellowship so that he may be saved from a thousand perils. No wise farmer leaves the fruit of the field long exposed to the hail which might beat it out, or the mildew which might destroy it, or the birds which might spoil it. Evidently no be-

lieving man should be left outside of the garner of holy fellowship—he should be carried into the midst of the Church with all the joy which attends the bringing home of sheaves!

The worker for Christ watches carefully and when he discerns that his time is come, he begins at once to fetch in the converts that they may be cared for by the brotherhood, separated from the world, screened from temptation and laid up for the Lord. He is diligent to do it at once, because the text says, “immediately he puts in the sickle.” He does not wait for months in cold suspicion—he is not afraid that he shall encourage too soon when faith is really present. He comes with the Word of promise and the smile of brotherly love at once, and he says to the new Believer, “Have you confessed your faith? Is not the time come for an open confession? Has not Jesus bid the Believer to be baptized? If you love Him, keep His commandments.”

He does not rest till he has introduced the convert to the communion of the faithful. For our work, Beloved, is but half done when men are made disciples and baptized. We have, then, to encourage, to instruct, to strengthen, to console and succor in all times of difficulty and danger. What says the Savior? “Go you, therefore, and make *disciples* of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things—whatever I commanded you.” The *reaper* is the man who gathers in the converts and he fulfils an honorable and useful office. If I preach the Gospel today and some shall be converted, I shall be the sower—but if going home to the respective towns in which you live, you who have dropped in here as strangers shall be received into the Churches by your own pastors—they will be reaping what I have sown.

I envy not my Brother minister his success in gathering in the converts, but I rejoice with him. The sower and the reaper may well rejoice together, for our work is one and we labor for one Lord! Observe, then, the sphere of agency. We can introduce the Truth of God to men, but that Truth, the Lord, Himself, must bless. The living and growing of the Word within the soul is the operation of God, alone. When the mystic work of growth is done, we are able to introduce the saved ones into the Church. To bring them into the fellowship of the faithful is our work and we must not fail to do it. For Christ to be formed in men, the hope of Glory, is not of our working—that remains with God—but when Jesus Christ is formed in them—to discern the image of the Savior and to say, “Come in, you blessed of the Lord, why do you stand outside?” is our duty and delight!

To create the Divine life is God’s, to cherish it is ours! To cause the hidden life to grow in secret is the work of the Lord. To see the rising up and perfecting of that life and to rejoice in it, is the work of the faithful, even as it is written, “when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest is come.” This, then, is our first lesson—we see what we CAN do and what we CANNOT do.

II. Our second head is like the first and consists of WHAT WE CAN KNOW AND WHAT WE CANNOT KNOW. First, what we can know. We can know when we have sown the good Seed of the Word of God that it will grow, for God has promised that it shall do so. Not every grain in every place, for some will go to the birds and some to the worms and some to be scorched by the sun. But, as a general rule, God’s Word shall not return

unto Him void—it shall prosper in the thing whereto He has sent it. This we can know.

And we can know that the Seed of God, when once it takes root, will continue to grow. We can know that it is not a dream or a picture that will disappear, but a thing of force and energy which will advance from a grassy blade to corn in the ear—and under God's blessing will develop to actual salvation and be as the "full corn in the ear." God helping and blessing it, our work of teaching will not only lead men to thought and conviction, but to conversion and eternal life! We also can know, because we are told so, that the reason for this is mainly because there is Life in the Word. In the Word of God itself there is Life, for it is written—"The Word of God is quick and powerful"—that is, "living and powerful." It is "the incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever."

It is the nature of living seeds to grow and the reason why the Word of God grows in men's hearts is because it is the Living Word of the Living God and where the word of a king is, there is power! We know this, because the Scriptures teach us so. Is it not written, "Of His own will begat He us by the Word of Truth"? Moreover, the earth, which is here the type of the man, "brings forth fruit of herself." We must mind what we are doing in expounding this, for human hearts do *not* produce *faith* of themselves—they are as hard rock on which the Seed of God perishes. But it means this—that as the earth, under the blessing of the dew and the rain is, by Gods secret working upon it, made to take up and embrace the Seed, so the heart of man is made ready to receive and enfold the Gospel of Jesus Christ within itself.

There is a something congruous in the earth to the seed which is sown in it, so that the seed is adopted and nourished by the soil. Just so is it by the heart of man when God makes it honest ground. Man's awakened heart knows exactly what the Word of God supplies. Moved by a Divine influence, the soul embraces the Truth of God and is embraced by it so that the Truth of God lives in the heart and is quickened by it. The man's love accepts the love of God—man's faith worked in him by the Spirit of God *believes* the Truth of God; man's hope worked in Him by the Spirit of God lays hold upon the things revealed and so the heavenly Seed grows in the soil of the soul.

The life comes not from you who preach the Word of God, but it is placed *within* the Word which you preach by the Holy Spirit. The life is not in your hands, but in the man himself who is led to take hold upon the Truth of God by the Spirit of God. Salvation comes not from the personal authority of the preacher, but through the personal *conviction*, personal *faith*, and personal *love* of the hearer. You, the sower, are thus taught by the parable that spiritual life and growth are of God and come by the Seed and the soil far more than by you. So far as the Truth of God is concerned, its intrinsic power is the same, whoever preaches it. It is not because such-and-such a preacher, whom God has blessed, preaches the Gospel that, therefore, it lives in men's hearts. Oh, no! It is because of the Truth of God, itself, and because of the hearts, themselves, which receive the Truth by the secret working of God's blessed Spirit! So much as this we may know and is it not enough for all practical purposes?

Still, there is a something which we *cannot* know—a secret into which we cannot pry. I repeat what I have said before—you cannot look into

men's inward parts and see exactly how the Truth takes hold upon the heart, or the heart takes hold upon the Truth. Many have watched their own feelings till they have become blind with despondency and others have watched the feelings of the young till they have done them more harm than good by their rigorous supervision. In God's work there is more room for faith than for sight. The heavenly Seed grows secretly. You must bury it out of sight, or there will be no harvest. Even if you keep the seed above ground and it sprouts, you cannot discover how it grows! Even though you microscopically watched its swelling and bursting, you could not see the inward vital force which moves it.

Behind the veil which conceals the secret working of God in the mysteries of natural life and growth, you cannot pry. And as for the Divine life in man, it must forever be hidden from all mortal eyes. The *result* of it you shall be able to see and something about the way of its development you shall be able to know—but the actual *modus operandi*, the secret and innermost mystery of the new birth—it shall not be given to you to perceive. You know not the way of the Spirit. His work is worked in secret and you cannot tell from where He comes or where He goes. "Explain the new birth," says somebody. "My answer is, "*Experience* the new birth and you shall know what it is!" There are secrets into which we cannot enter, for their light is too bright for mortal eyes to endure.

O Man, you cannot become Omniscient, for you are a creature and not the Creator. For you there must always be a region not only unknown but unknowable. So far shall your knowledge go, but no farther—and you may thank God it is so, for thus He leaves room for *faith* and gives cause for *prayer*. Cry mightily unto the Great Worker to do what you can not attempt to perform so that when you see the salvation of men, you may always give Him all the Glory!

III. Thirdly, our text tells us WHAT WE MAY EXPECT IF WE WORK FOR GOD AND WHAT WE MAY NOT EXPECT. According to this parable we may expect to see fruit. The husbandman casts his seed into the ground and the seed springs and grows and he may expect a harvest. I wish I could say a word to stir up the expectations of Christian workers, for I fear that many work without faith. If you have a garden or a field and you sow seed in it, you would be very greatly surprised and grieved if it did not come up at all. But many Christian people seem quite content to work on and on and they never reckon upon results so much as to look expectantly for them.

This is a pitiful kind of working—pulling up empty buckets by the years together. Surely I must either see a result for my labor and be glad, or else, failing to see it, I must be ready to break my heart if I am a true servant of the great Master. We ought to expect results! If we had expected more, we should have seen more, but a lack of expectation has been a great cause of failure in God's workers. But we may not expect to see *all* the Seed of God which we sow spring up the moment we sow it. Sometimes, glory be to God, we have but to deliver the Word and straightway men are converted—the reaper overtakes the sower, in such instances—but it is not always so.

Some sowers have been diligent for years upon certain plots of ground and apparently all has been in vain, till at the last the harvest has come, a harvest which, speaking after the manner of men, had never been reaped

if they had not persevered to the end! This world, as I believe, is to be converted to Christ—but not today, nor tomorrow—perhaps not for many an age. But the sowing of the centuries is not being lost, it is all working on towards the grand ultimatum. A crop of mushrooms may soon be produced, but a forest of oaks will not reward the planter till generations of his children have molded into the dust. It is ours to sow and to hope for quick reaping—but still we ought to remember, “the husbandman waits for the precious fruit of the earth and has long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain,” and so must we.

We are to expect results, but not to be dispirited if we see them not today or on the morrow. We are also to expect to see the good Seed grow, but not always after our fashion. We are, nearly all of us, like children, for there are still not many fathers and, like children, we are apt to be impatient. Your little boy sowed mustard and cress yesterday in his little garden. This afternoon Master Johnny will be turning over the ground to see if the seed is growing! There is no probability that his mustard and cress will come to anything, for he will not leave it alone long enough for it to grow! So is it with hasty workers—they must see the result of the Gospel directly, or else they will leave off and distrust the blessed Word of God! Although the people may have taken the Word into their minds and may be considering it, certain preachers are in such a hurry that they will allow no time for thought, no space for counting the cost, no opportunity for men to consider their ways and turn to the Lord with full purpose of heart.

All other seeds take time to grow but the Seed of the Word must grow before the speaker's eyes like magic, or he thinks nothing has been done! Such good Brothers are so eager to produce blades and ears, then and there, that they roast their Seed in the fire of fanaticism and it never lives at all! They make men think that they are converted and thus effectually hinder them from coming to a saving knowledge of the Truth of God! I am solemnly convinced that some men are prevented from being saved by being told that they are *already* saved and by being puffed up with a notion of perfection when they are not even broken in heart! Perhaps if such people had been taught to look for something deeper, they might not have been satisfied with receiving the Seed of God on stony ground. But now they are content with that which comes of Seed sown on unbroken rocks—they exhibit a rapid development—and an equally rapid decline and fall.

Let us believingly expect to see the Seed of God grow, but let us look to see it advance after the manner of the Preacher—firstly, secondly, thirdly—first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. You are in a hurry, my Brother, but it were better to exhibit the patience of principle than the heat of passion. Let all men be in a hurry to be saved, but let those who are preaching the Truth of God be content to see men convicted of sin, delivered from self-confidence, enlightened as to the Grace of God and thus led by sure steps to faith. Some of the best of Christians do not know the exact point at which they were converted—it was a gradual process, from green blade to ripe ear and they cannot tell exactly when the actual fruit of faith was formed in them.

Some of the most thoughtful minds are not jerked, all of a sudden into religion, but are brought gradually into the Light of God even as the noon

of day draws on by degrees. With many there is at first nothing but a little blade. You cannot tell whether it is grass and grass only. Their feeling looks like a natural emotion caused by the fear of Hell and this might lead to nothing effectual. Then follows a little belief, so formed as to be like the wheat-ear of faith and yet it may only be a notion. It takes time, with such persons, before they show the full corn of assured faith in Jesus. Growth is often, if not generally, gradual and shall we wish to alter God's method of working? We may expect the Seed to grow, but every soil is not equally sharp and speedy and we must not demand of God that He shall work uniformly after the same rate of speed.

We may expect, also, to see the Seed of God *ripen*. Our work will lead up, by God's Grace, to real faith in those He has worked upon by His Word and Spirit, but we must not expect to see it perfect at the first. How many mistakes have been made here! Here is a young person under impression and some good sound Brother talks with that young person and asks profound questions. He shakes his experienced head and knits his furrowed brows. He goes into the corn field to see how the crops are prospering and though it is early in the year, he laments that he cannot see one ear of corn! Indeed, he perceives nothing but grass. "I cannot see a trace of corn," he says. No, Brother, of course you cannot, for you will not be satisfied with the blade as an evidence of life, but must insist upon seeing everything at full growth at once!

If you had looked for the *blade* you would have found it and it would have encouraged you. For my own part, I am glad, even, to perceive a faint *desire*, a feeble *longing*, a degree of *uneasiness*, or a measure of weariness of sin, or a craving after mercy. Will it not be wise for you, also, to allow things to begin at the beginning and to be satisfied with their being small at first? See the blade of desire and then watch for more! Soon you shall see a little more than desire, for there shall be conviction and resolve—and after that a feeble faith, small as a mustard seed, but bound to grow! Do not despise the day of small things! Do not examine the new-born babe about Calvinism in its different shades to see whether he is sound after *your* idea of soundness!

Ten to one he is a long way off sound and you will only worry the dear heart by introducing difficult questions. Speak to him about his being a *sinner*, and Christ a *Savior* and you will, in this way, water him, so that his Grace in the ear will become the full corn. It may be that there is not much that looks like wheat about him, yet, but by-and-by you will say, "Wheat! Ah, that it is, if I know wheat! This man is a true ear of corn and gladly will I place him among my Master's sheaves." If you crush the blades, where will the ears come from? If you cut off the green ears, where will the ripe ones be? Expect Grace in your converts, but do not look to see Heaven in them just yet. It is enough if you see Heaven *begun*—do not look to see it complete in those here below! Expect, then, Brothers—for you may expect it—to see a harvest, but do not expect to find every Seed springing up.

"There," says one, "that is a discouraging word." It may be so, but it is a true word. There is an old worldly proverb which says, "Blessed are those who expect nothing, for they shall never be disappointed." I do not believe in that proverb, but I believe in a moderate form of it—"Blessed are those who do not expect what is unreasonable, for they will not get it." If you

young people who begin to work for God expect that every word you speak will be useful to all who hear them, it will not happen and you will grow discouraged. Therefore I would raise your expectation as high as truth permits and no higher. I would have you climb to the top of the ladder, but if I encourage you to go any higher, you will soon be going down the other side under the notion that you are ascending! I never like to see a man expecting what he will not obtain.

Now, I know that some of our Seed will fall among thorns and some in stony places and I do not despair when it happens to be so. I do not expect, when I preach the Gospel, that everybody who hears it will receive it because I know it will be a savor of life unto life to some and of death unto death to others. I pull the net in, hauling away with all my might—but I know that when it comes to shore it will contain some strange things that are not fish which will have to be thrown away. And I am heartily glad that there will also be in it a cheering number of good fish! The results of our ministry in these days will be mixed, even as they were when Paul preached and some believed and some believed not. We must be prepared for that and yet I bid you let your expectations be very large, for you may have 60 or a hundred-fold of fruit from the Seed if God is with you. And that will abundantly repay you, even if the crows and the worms should eat their share of the grain!

IV. The last head is this—WHAT SLEEP WORKERS MAY TAKE AND WHAT THEY MAY NOT TAKE, for it is said of this sowing man that he sleeps and rises night and day and the seed springs and grows up he knows not how. They say a farmer's trade is a good one because it is going on while he is in bed and asleep. And surely ours is a good trade, too, when we serve our Master by sowing good Seed, for it is growing even while we are asleep! But how may a good workman for Christ lawfully go to sleep? I answer, first, he may sleep the sleep of restfulness born of confidence. You are afraid the kingdom of Christ will not come, are you? Who asked *you* to tremble for the Ark of the Lord? Afraid for the Infinite Jehovah that His purposes will fail?

Shame on you! Your anxiety dishonors your God! You degrade Him by a suspicion of His failing. Shall Omnipotence be defeated? You had better sleep than wake to play the part of Uzzah. Rest patiently, God's will *will* be done and His Kingdom *will* come and His chosen *will* be saved and Christ *shall* see of the travail of His soul! Take the sweet sleep which God gives to His beloved, the sleep of perfect confidence such as Jesus slept in the back part of the boat when it was tossed with tempest. The cause of God never was in jeopardy and never will be! The Seed sown is insured by Omnipotence and *must* produce its harvest. In patience possess your soul and wait till the harvest comes, for the pleasure of the Lord must prosper in the hands of Jesus.

Also take that sleep which leads to a happy waking of joyful expectancy. Get up in the morning and feel that the Lord is ruling all things for the accomplishment of His own purpose. Look for it! If you do not sleep, you certainly will not wake up in the morning refreshed and ready for more work! If it were possible for you to sit up all night and eat the bread of carefulness, you would be unfit to attend to the service which your Master appoints for the morning! Therefore take your rest and be at peace and work with calm dignity, for the matter is safe in the Lord's hands.

Take your rest because you have consciously resigned the work into God's hands. After you have spoken the Word, resort to God in prayer and commit it into God's hands—and then do not fret about it. It cannot be in better keeping—leave it there.

But do not sleep the sleep of unwatchfulness. The farmer sows his seed, but he does not, therefore, forget it! He has to mend his fences to keep the cattle out. It may be he has to drive away birds, to remove weeds, or to prevent floods. While he is not sitting down to watch the growth, he has plenty else to do. He never sleeps the sleep of indifference or even of inaction, for each season has its demand upon him. He has sown one field, but he has another to sow. He has sown, but he has, also, by God's Grace, to reap. And when reaping is done, he has something else to do. He is never done, for in one part or other of the farm, he is needed! His sleep is but an interlude that gives him strength to continue in his occupations.

Consider that the parable teaches us that we have not to intrude into the domain of God, but with regard to the secret working of the Truth of God upon man's mind we are to take our rest and go on our way, serving our day and generation according to the will of God. I want you, dear Brothers and Sisters, to come to that point this morning. "Lord, this is *Your* work. Lord, You can do *Your* own work. Lord, do *Your* own work—we entreat and beseech You to do it. Lord, help us to do *our* work, both at the beginning of the chapter and at the end of the chapter, confident that You will not fail in the middle of the chapter, but that You will do *Your* work. Help us to exercise faith in You and to go about our labor in the confidence that You are with us and we are workers together with You."

Up, Brothers and Sisters, to the mountain, to the brow of Carmel, this afternoon! Get up there and pray that God will send a shower of heavenly rain by His Spirit. Up, Elijah! Put your head between your knees and cry till you are certain that the cloud, though it is little at first, as a man's hand, will cover all the earth and water the land with blessing! Up and pray that God would sweep away all the doubts which, like locusts, devour the Church today. Pray that He will keep away all love of sin and all rejection of Christ, that at this hour, even at this hour, God may glorify Himself by the feeble hands of His sower while he scatters the Seed of God!

I beg your prayers, my dear and faithful Friends, this afternoon and this evening, that the Words of the Lord may be divinely victorious! I stand back that God may work and then come forward that God may work *through* me—and to Him be praise forever! Amen.

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TEACHING FOR THE OUTER AND INNER CIRCLES NO. 1669

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 16, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And with many such parables spoke He the Word unto them, as they were able to hear it. But without a parable He did not speak to them: and when they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples.”
Mark 4:33, 34.

OUR blessed Lord had two great objectives before Him in His ministry. The first was to preach the Word to the outlying masses, that out of them He might gather a people to Himself who should be His disciples. This part of His work He carried on with great diligence and perseverance, traversing the Holy Land from end to end and finding here, one, and there, another, but never ceasing to preach the Gospel to the crowds that flocked to Him. His second objective was to train those who became His disciples, that having gathered them to Himself, He might educate them in the Truth of God. He taught them concerning the Father and His love. He taught them concerning Himself, His work, His death and His Resurrection. And He taught them concerning the Divine Comforter and His indwelling and all else that would make for their progress and profit.

While our Lord was here, He gathered the men together who should carry on the work after He was gone. He did not think it enough to make *converts*—He wished to make disciples! He did not think it enough, even, to make beginners in discipleship, but He would have them advance in knowledge and in holiness, learning till they were able to teach others. To this day this same double work is carried on by the Divine Spirit through the ministers and servants of God. We are to preach to the multitude who make up the *outer* ring, for our Lord has said, “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.” We are bound to evangelize all, making no distinction of rank or character. To every person with whom we may come in contact, we are to proclaim the Kingdom of God. That being done, however, the minister’s work is only begun, for He is now to go on to expound the mystery, to open up the higher doctrine, to lead the disciplined ones into the deep things of God that there may be fathers, instructors, and leaders in the Church. And that the Church may, in all the generations yet to come, until the Lord Himself appears, carry out the glorious purposes of God for the building up of a spiritual house and the conquest of the world.

I want, this morning, to call your special attention to the way in which the Lord spoke to the outside gathering and, then, afterwards, to the way in which He spoke to the inner circle of His own disciples. From His conduct we may learn our own. Soul-winners and soul-helpers may here see their double work set before them in pattern. We shall see how Jesus first fetched home the prodigal sons and then made music and dancing inside

the house for them—how He went after the lost sheep and brought them back upon His shoulders—and how He, afterwards, folded and fed the sheep which He had saved. There must be much in all this to instruct those of us who work for Jesus.

I. First, let us study our Lord's conduct towards THE OUTSIDE GATHERINGS. Kindly read these verses—"And with many such parables spoke He the Word unto them, as they were able to hear it. But without a parable spoke He not unto them." First, when our Divine Lord preached to the outside multitude, He always spoke "the Word" to them. You see here what He preached—He spoke "the Word" unto them. This is a very short description, but it is intensely full of meaning. It has much more of fullness in it than I can show you just now. He always spoke "the Word"—that is to say, whatever sort of congregation gathered to Jesus, He had only one grand system of Truth to set before them. He preached "the Word," which of old was prophesied by men of God and was written upon the roll of Inspiration.

The term, "the Word," shuts up into a small compass the glorious Revelation of God which He has shown to us by Christ Jesus. "The Word"—here is unity—He preached not two gospels, but one. His Word was not yes and no. It was a special message—not *a* word, but *the* Word—the special speech of the Father. Jesus had received one weighty, all-important message from God and this He delivered whenever He had opportunity. It was never His objective, when He was addressing the people, to speak to them upon subjects of merely temporal interest—He preached the eternal Word of God. He did not come to instruct them in geology, or astronomy, or jurisprudence, or politics—His one business was to win their souls by proclaiming the love and mercy of the Father.

He did not even come to open up a fresh system of morals, though of necessity a system of morals grew out of His central teaching. He came to preach the Gospel and He preached nothing else! He spoke it in various ways, yet He always spoke the one thing—"the Word." "He spoke the Word unto them"—to publicans and harlots, or to Pharisees and Sadducees. He declares to the blinded Jews, "I speak that which I have seen with My Father." "He whom God has sent speaks the Words of God." What a lesson this is to all of us who try to do good in the world by teaching! We have only to preach "the Word!" Some fancy that they have to preach the thought, the *deep* thought, the *wonderful* thought of modern times. I have heard that expression, "modern thought," till I am sick of it! It is a cant phrase smelling strongly of self-conceit!

There is no command given in Scripture for us to go and preach our own thoughts! We are always commanded to preach "Christ" and to publish His Word. "The Word" is the summary of God's thoughts, or rather of such of God's thoughts as He chooses to reveal to men—such as He regards it important for them to know. The Lord has spoken already all that we have to speak. Our message is prescribed, our testimony is written. As to the saving Truth of God, we have no room for invention. We have no scope for discovery—our range is specified, our course is mapped out. We have to go and preach "the Word" which is laid down by the Holy Spirit in this Book and has been taught to us, personally, by the Holy Spirit sent

down from Heaven. Our Lord's mind was thoughtful, His genius profound and yet He kept to "the Word," even as He said, "He that sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of Him."

If He had pleased, He might have told us many things hidden from before the foundation of the world. He might have opened up deep mysteries and profound secrets which He knew as the Son of God, for He is the Wisdom of God. But instead of that, He concentrated His ministry upon that which God had revealed and He preached only "the Word." "The Word" is an utterance from the mouth of God and Jesus was God's mouth to men—all His teaching was the Father's Word in one way or other. He confessed, "The Words that I speak unto you, I speak not of Myself." He said, also, "As My Father has taught Me, I speak these things." "The Word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's which sent Me." Originality of doctrine finds no sanction in the Savior's ministry—true ministers repeat what they are told, they do not fabricate for themselves—they are not spiders to spin a web out of their own insides.

Now, beloved Brothers and Sisters, let us remember this whenever we are trying to win a soul for Christ. Souls are won by "the Word." It is the Word of God that is "quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword." It is "the Word" which is "the living and incorruptible Seed which lives and abides forever." Therefore we must stick to "the Word." "Oh," say some, "there are many that have been sitting under the old-fashioned Gospel for years and they are not converted." What do you propose to do? Do you propose to preach *another* Gospel? Look, Sir, if they were not saved by the Truth of God, they will not be saved by a lie!

It seems, practically, to be conceded that during revivals you may get a little beyond the Gospel. When there is an excitement upon the people, you may say things which are not strictly accurate and you may set yourself right, afterwards, when the desirable effect has been produced. This will never do! Not so the Savior—He spoke "the Word" unto them, whoever they might be, and He never altered that Word of God! I know of no condition of the human mind which can justify me in stirring, by the breadth of a hair, from what God has revealed! The Gospel is good at all times, in lukewarm times, or in fanatical times—and, blessed is he that moors himself to it, or rather is held fast by it and has no wish to go beyond it.

To deliver "the Word" is a plain, simple and easy process, for when we have a soul to deal with, the medicine is prescribed and we have only to hand it out. The meat, drink and medicine of souls is before us. We have not to consider from our own brain a salvation that will fit this sinner or that—God has already given us the salvation, the doctrine and the Truth which will suit all sinners who will accept it. Your judgment and your careful thought will be needed to select the fitting portion of the Truth. Your heart will be needed to pray over that portion that God may bless it. Your responsibilities are still great, but happily you are delivered from the more tremendous task of manufacturing a Gospel!

I see the modern-thought workmen with their bellows full of wind and their fire of very small coal. They are puffing away at a great rate. And now they take to hammering! See how the sparks fly! They are fashioning they know not what! Neither do their people know what they may next forge

upon the anvil. As for us, we invent nothing, but testify what we have seen and tasted and handled of the good Word of God! God has promised that His Word shall not return unto Him void and, therefore, we feel sure of a happy issue. We stand upon blessed ground when we determine to speak to the outside world the revealed Word and nothing else. Within the circle of “the Word” lies life, healing, peace, joy, holiness, Heaven—what more do sinners need? Oh that they would “receive with meekness the engrafted Word which is able to save their souls.”

Notice next, that our Savior, having no difficulty about His matter, but always speaking “the Word,” spoke it simply. He never affected profundity or obscurity. Our Lord has said many things so deep that they are lower than the abyss and He has spoken Truths so high that they are higher than the highest Heaven. But still He aimed at being understood. Some divines are like the cuttlefish, which, when it descends into the sea, often opens its ink bags, darkens the water, and hides itself from all observers. It cannot see itself amid the clouds which it purposely creates! Too many preachers are endowed with these darkening ink bags! When they have simple Truth to preach, they surround it with an atmosphere of blackness, darkening counsel and involving simplicity in mystery! They are as the west wind, which brings clouds. They must be profound if they are anything.

Now, the Lord Jesus Christ had it in His power to be more profound than any man, for He knew all things. Yet He never veiled the Truth, but set it forth before the people with clear light and overcoming evidence. His speech was always plain as the sun at noon. See how your children will read the parables of Jesus and remember them. What is the best book to put before a child when it is learning to read? Why, the New Testament, for if there are difficulties in the sense, there are none in the words! What a multitude of monosyllables we have in John’s Gospel! The Lord Jesus did not carry a gold pencil case with Him, that whenever He met with a word of 12 syllables He might write it down and say, “That goes into next Sunday’s sermon, and so the people will know what a superior Person I am.”

No, but He looked about to find homely similes and instructive emblems by which to make the Truth of God plain as a pikestaff to those who wished to understand it. Of course the brightest light is lost on blind eyes, but Jesus never withheld that light. He was all simplicity, so that the children gathered around Him, clambered to His knees and loved to listen to the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth! The parable was the most effectual way of conveying the Truth of God and, therefore, He used it often. And though it did hide the Truth from those who were hardened, yet that was *their* fault, and could not be laid at the door of the parable, which, in itself, is a right royal method of instruction—a method which throws the labor upon the teacher and makes it easy to the learner. Let us learn from our Lord’s example and remember that we must do the work for those whom we would bless. We must make attention an easy matter for them by clearly setting forth the Truths of God which we teach.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, when you are teaching others, take care that you, yourself, understand that which you would communicate!

Whenever a man preaches so that you cannot understand him, the secret of it is that he does not understand himself, for if he knew what he meant to say, he would, probably, be able to say it and you would know what he meant by it. But he who is not clear in teaching, in all probability does not know what he means. Therein, full often, lies his pretended wisdom—you, perhaps, look up and wonder at this superior man, when, in fact, he is an *inferior* man swollen with pretense! It must be so. If he were better taught, he would teach better. When a man has studied the subject so that he gets a grip of it, he is able to set it out to others. But when it passes over *his* head like a bird of the air, he has not seen it and cannot describe it—and neither can any others learn from his language. Our Lord and Master taught in the plainest words and if His Gospel was hid, it was hidden only to the blind in heart.

Our Lord also spoke very suitably. He adapted His language to the ignorance or knowledge of His audiences. He knew that they would not receive abstract truth and, therefore, He seldom dispensed it. He wished to *instruct* rather than to amaze. On the occasion which Mark, here, records, “But without a parable spoke He not unto them,” it would have been unsuitable to have spoken in any other fashion. Do you notice Mark’s expression, “With many such parables”? “Parables” and many “of them”—priceless illustrations were abundant with Him. But Mark says, “*such*” parables—that is, simple ones, full of the Light of God, for the parables in this chapter are particularly plain. The Truth of God seems to lie upon the surface of them and, “with many such parables spoke He the Word unto them.”

He saw that, just then, the minds of the people were feeble by reason of ignorance—they were as sheep not having a shepherd and needed careful tending. Though He did, sometimes, deliver the Truth of God without a parable, so that they cried, “Now speak You plainly, and speak no parable”—yet for the general, when dealing with the mass of those whose minds were darkened by the Rabbinical teachers of the period, and by their own indifference to the Truth—He did continually use the simplest parable that could be found. Let us try to do the same. I heard a gentleman once say that he found it very difficult to bring his mind down to the capacity of children. But the fact was that he had no mind of any consequence! He thought himself great, but this was a clear sign of littleness! He had something which he mistook for a mind, but it was an error on his part to talk of bringing it down—it needed raising up!

Those who clearly know the Truth of God will find children to be a congenial auditory. They will pick up similes as pigeons pick up seeds and their little eyes sparkle as they catch your meaning. Therefore, “many such parables” let us speak to them! If they do not always care for the moral, they are, in this, like the people to whom our Lord addressed Himself, but He put the Truth in such a form that even if they did not care for it, they cared for the picture in which He set it forth and listened earnestly to His Words—and so the Truth of God was introduced to their minds.

Dear Friends, notice, again that our Lord spoke considerately. “With many such parables spoke He the Word unto them, as they were able to hear it.” What wisdom there is here—“As they were able to hear it.” Some

of us are not so considerate as we ought to be and drench those to whom we would give drink. Our Lord was not too long in His discourses—He never wearied the people by a sermon till midnight, as Paul did. It is always better to send a congregation away longing than loathing! Our Lord knew that earnest attention involves effort and tends to exhaustion. True hearing lays a strain upon the mind which cannot be overly long endured. None of us have more than a certain quantity of attention and when we have used up that certain quantity it becomes tiresome for us to hear more.

We are like narrow-necked vessels and he who tries to fill such a vessel all in a moment will spill the most of the fluid. The filling must be done gently; the water must be poured in as the vessel is able to receive it. So did the Savior, with short parables and sententious utterances, pass on from Truth to Truth, as the people were prepared to receive His instruction. He moderated the quantity, so that they might not be oppressed with too much. He taught “as they were able to hear it”—that is to say, He did not puzzle them with deep doctrine when He wished to save them—for it is poor work to confuse a man when you want to convert him. This Master Teacher gave forth such a quantity of Truth as His hearers’ hearts could take in and the matter was so chosen as to be on the level of their comprehension.

As for His style, it was so pleasing that they who did not believe in Him, nevertheless confessed that, “Never man spoke like this Man.” They were held as with golden chains by His enchanting manner, for He spoke with an evident love to them and with an anxious desire that they should receive the Truth of God and should be saved by it. Oh, dear Friends, if you want to be useful, be careful to speak considerately! If you go into a sick chamber and the person says, “Would you read me the 23rd Psalm?” do not bawl it out, but read in gentle tones suitable to the poor pained ears and weary brain. If you have to speak a word for Christ, let it drop like the gentle dew from Heaven and do not hurl it out like a hard driving hail-storm! You cannot bully a man to Christ—you will be wise never to attempt it.

Load the camel as he is able to carry and the mind as it is able to bear. Hearts are drawn, not driven. We are not to teach as we are able to *speak*, but as the people are able to *hear*. We must not exhaust the hearer by our attempt to exhaust the subject. Never overdo a good thing, lest it be spoiled and rendered of no effect. To conclude this matter, our Lord’s address to the outside world was such that if they did not receive the Truth, the fault lay with themselves. It is true the mass of His hearers never saw beneath the surface, for they had no heart towards the Truth of God and so the parable did tend to their blindness—yet this was not the *natural* effect of His parable, but the misuse of it by slothful and carnal minds. Their foolish hearts were darkened.

Jesus made the Truth of God so clear that their bleary eyes could not bear the light! The difficulty with them was that there were so few difficulties—the Truth was hard because they were proud! Had they been taught of the Father, they would have come to Jesus and delighted in the plainness of the Word—but their pride blinded them, even as He said, “How

can you believe that receive honor, one of another?" They rebelled against the Light of God and this was their condemnation! They were indignant at being forced to see what they did not wish to see and so they resolved to stop in the outward letter of the parable and go no further! Let us imitate the Lord Jesus in His endeavor to win souls by speaking in such a style that if they are lost, it shall be no fault of ours.

Dear Mr. Whitefield sometimes cried out, "O Sinners, if you are lost, it is not for lack of being prayed for, nor for lack of being wept over, nor for lack of an earnest anxiety on my part to bring you to the feet of Jesus." Make a point of being able to say the same! In your class teaching, in your private talks with individuals, so speak that you can say, "I am clear of your blood. if you do not receive 'the Word' it is because you willfully refuse it. I have not concealed the Word of God, neither have I embellished it so as to confuse your mind." Oh that every worker here might say, "I have strived to commend the Truth of God to every man's conscience in the sight of God." Let it be so plain that he may run that reads it.

It is better to speak five words which are understood than a thousand which merely dazzle the eye of the mind. Use earnest, hearty, entreating words. You cannot chill a man into Grace. I do not believe that anybody ever rode to Christ on an iceberg—frost and winter play but little part in opening the flowers in the King's garden. If icicles hang from our lips, we shall not melt men's hearts. Cold hearts must be thawed by the warm, genial influence of a sunlit soul. May Heaven's light of love rest upon us. It will if we are truly taught of the Savior. And now, you that are outsiders, see what trouble the Savior takes with you, for what He did for men of His age, He does for men of *every* age—He longs that you should come to Him! He puts the Truth of God so that you may see it and He preaches it persuasively and affectionately.

Alas, that men should require such trouble to be taken with them! If anyone were giving away gold and silver, he would not need to go down on his knees and entreat men to accept the precious metals. But when we have to preach "the Word," how must we entreat, implore, beseech men to come, or else they will not come at all! Nor even when we have implored and besought will they lend a listening ear and a believing heart unless the arm of the Lord is revealed. See you to this, you outsiders—let the reflection of this make you ashamed and cause you to resolve that from now on, having ears to hear, you will hear—and when Jesus pleads, you will bow to Him! May God the Holy Spirit make it so! Thus have we set forth the manner in which our Lord spoke with the outer circle.

II. Secondly, let us see how Jesus dealt with THE INNER CIRCLE when He addressed Himself to His own disciples—"And when they were alone, He expounded all things to His disciples." A most precious text! I wish I had the whole time for a sermon upon it. Notice, first, then, that the Lord Jesus Christ opened up to them the inner meaning of the Word of God. Never yet did a man desire to learn of Jesus whom Jesus refused to teach. When men did not want to learn, He drew back and did not force Himself on them. He kept the exposition of His own teaching for those who were prepared to receive it and who really thirsted to obtain it—"When they were alone, He expounded all things to His disciples."

Come now, dear Friends, do we not wish to learn? Shall the Word be to us a mere husk with its kernel gone? Are we not anxious to know the inner meaning of the doctrine? Shall we be content to observe the outside structure of the Truth of God, in the parabolic form, and not to enter into its secret chambers and live and dwell in the Truth of God, itself? If you desire to have all things expounded, note well that those to whom Christ expounded all things were His own disciples! You must become a disciple of Christ if you are to know Christ's Truth. A disciple of Christ is one who accepts Christ as his teacher and himself becomes a learner. A disciple, however, is more than that—he is one who receives Christ as his leader and Lord.

“You call Me Master and Lord, and you say well,” said Jesus. Christ the Rabbi, the Master, is also Christ the Lord—the Teacher and Leader are one. If we are to be His disciples, we must do what He bids us, as well as believe what He tells us. Unless we are willing to tread in His footsteps and follow His example, we cannot be His disciples. And until we are such, He will not expound all things to us. Do you want to understand the Scriptures? Do you long to understand the deep things of God and the high mysteries of the Word? Then, first, become Christ's disciples! “If any man shall do His will, he shall know of the doctrine.” The teaching of Christ is spirit and life. The rabbis taught the letter, but Christ teaches the *life* and if we submit ourselves to Him, to receive His life and to make Him our way, He will, only then, be to us the Truth of God!

But if we refuse Him; if we will not yield to Him; we shall remain in darkness with all the rest of the outer circle—hearing, we shall hear and not understand—seeing, we shall see and not perceive. Oh, my Hearer, instead of trying to untie all knots and unravel all difficulties, first of all yield yourself to Christ! If you would know, believe and obey! You must trust Christ, first, and yield yourself up wholly to Him and then shall the Divine Light of the Holy Spirit come streaming into your soul to open up to you the things hidden from the carnally wise! First, we must be, in very deed, the Lord's disciples.

Some versions have, here, the word, “own.” Tischendorf reads it, “To His own disciples”—to those whom He acknowledged as truly belonging to Him. Our Lord will surely teach His own. “When they were alone, He expounded all things to His own disciples.” If we claim to be His disciples, we must cultivate a desire to learn. No man in holy lore learns more than he is willing to be taught. Certain ones who call themselves disciples of Christ have no wish to learn, but they have a great wish to *teach* before they have learned anything. See the many who run away half-hatched, with the shell on their heads and yet they try to crow! They cannot teach and they will not learn. If they would wait a little while and be instructed, their time might come—but they are so anxious to fight that they will neither put on armor nor gird on a sword!

They are eager to give drink to the thirsty but they cannot spare time to fill the cup. How can they sow if they have no seed in the basket? Can a man have anything which he has not received? And if he has not learned it of the Father, how can he go with any power to tell it unto others? We must be anxious to learn. Observe how our Lord Jesus prompts His disci-

ples to learn. When He has given them a parable, He says, "Have you understood all these things?" He comes near to them when the crowd has dispersed and He says to them privately, "Have you understood all these things? The crowd knows nothing, but they are gone. They have been pleased with My parables, but they have not entered into the soul of My teaching. Have you understood all these things?"

Now, at the end of a discourse that is full of Christ, this is exactly what Jesus says to you and to me—"Have you understood all these things?" Have you entered into the essential Truth of God and not been content to lie sleeping on the doorstep of the mere letter of it? The Savior wishes us to be inquisitive, searching into the meaning of "the Word." "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst" to know the meaning of His Words, for they shall be instructed, for, as I have said before, never did a heart hunger to learn and find the Lord unwilling to teach. We are to be His disciples and anxious to learn—it follows, in consequence, that we must confess that we do not know.

Many a man might have known if he had but been aware that he did not know. A sense of ignorance is the doorstep of the palace of wisdom. These men that needed to be instructed by Christ and to have all things to be expounded to them were the very pick of the saints—out of them came the Apostles and the 70 disciples—and these formed the first row of living stones laid upon the foundation to build up a spiritual house! And yet these admirable persons needed that they should be alone with Jesus to have all things expounded to them! Oh, Brothers and Sisters, let us not be so wickedly self-conceited as to fancy that we know everything!

Are there not some who think that they carry the Gospel and all the doctrines of it in their pockets as if it were a five-sided lozenge? They have condensed the infinite into a pentagon! If anyone knows more than they know, he is denounced as a heretic, hopelessly unsound! Let it not be so with us, for we dare not boast of such perfect knowledge. What do we know, my Brethren? If what we *do* know and what we do *not* know were put together there would be such a difference in the size of the volumes that they could not be bound to match! What we know is so little compared with what we do *not* know that we might safely take up the language of Isaac Newton, probably the greatest of human intellects, when he said that he had been like a child playing on the beach who had picked up, here and there, a beautiful shell, while all the great deep of the ocean still remained unexplored.

We are of yesterday and know nothing. Like children, we need teaching! Therefore let us be constantly coming to Christ. I do not mean you youngsters, only, but the graybeards, the most experienced and most advanced among us! Let us be sitting at His feet with Mary, listening to that heavenly voice which alone can expound all things to us! I beg you to observe carefully that these folk, whom Christ instructed in the inner sense, had to be separated from the multitude. "When they were alone." When they had got together as birds of a feather should. When, like sheep, they were penned in the fold—*then* the Great Shepherd fed them and not till then. Come you out from the world if you would learn the deep things of God! The more conformity to the world, the more shall we abide in darkness!

It is amazing what Light of God will come to a man when he learns to walk the separated path. There is a way which is narrow as a razor's edge—along which none can walk but those whom Christ upholds—but if they are willing to walk there in strict integrity, keeping themselves from the temptations of the world and rising above the customs of society, they *shall* know the mind of God! “When they were alone.” When they formed themselves, as it were, into a Church and the rest of the congregation went to their own homes—when they distinctly acknowledged themselves to be Christ's own disciples—*then* He expounded the Truth of God to them.

More than this, I will go beyond my text—if you and I wish to know the heart of our holy religion, we must get alone—even from the Church, with Christ. This is the pith of it—they were alone with Christ. If they had been alone and Jesus had not been there, they would have learned nothing. But they were alone with *Him*. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, let us practice more meditation! We are, none of us, as much alone as we ought to be in these busy days. I do not mean merely to pray and read, but to sit still and ponder and consider. More of that blessed silence, “frost of the mouth and thaw of the soul,” is what we greatly need! I find it good, in devotion, occasionally to cease praying and look up, gazing into the invisible. The heart kindles into admiration of the Person of Christ and the soul begins to speak to Him as to a friend, while all the inner man is still.

Do you know what it is to say, “I sleep, but my heart wakes”? Then it is that the Lord expounds unto us the Scripture! A good commentary is a great help, but communion with the Lord is better! If you want to understand a book, there is nothing like asking the author, “Pray, Sir, what do you mean by this?” And if you will hasten away to the Author of Scripture, how often you will understand what He meant, though the words perplex you! I believe you might go the round of all the ministers and divines now alive and say to them, “What does this mean?” and they could tell you what the *letter* meant—but after having done that, or without doing it—if you would ask the Lord Jesus, He would more clearly show you the sense of it.

Scripture is often like Gideon's fleece, wet through with the heavenly dew, but you need to know how to press out the moisture and preserve it. The Lord Jesus can show you how to wring it till your bucket is filled! We get a precious text, sometimes, and hammer away at it, and it does not break up at all. But when we ask the Lord Jesus about it, He puts power into our arm of thought and the stone flies to shivers the next time we tap it, and we say, “Here is something I never thought to find! Here is a mass of gold within this quartz! Here is a diamond concealed within this common pebble—how came it there?” Lord, enlighten our darkness! Put Your fingers on these eyes, that they may behold wondrous things out of Your Law.

You know the old Arab story of the Muslim who crossed his eyes with a magic ointment and straightway, instead of the common house in which he lived, he saw a palace sparkling with diamonds, radiant with rubies, adorned with emeralds and gold! After such manner the Lord opens up to us a passage of Scripture, by anointing our eyes with eye-salve that we

may see! What sights have we beheld in the Word of God! We have been lost in wonder, love and praise! But the Lord does this to us when we are *alone* with Him. “When they were alone, He expounded all things unto His disciples.”

Now, Brothers and Sisters, I leave this part of the subject and conclude when I notice that, in order to get this precious exposition from Christ, we must regard Him as being the ultimate and final Interpreter. “He expounded all things to His disciples.” Those men had settled it in their hearts that they would believe whatever He said. His *ipse dixit* was to stand to them instead of argument—He, Himself, *was* to them the Word of God, the Revelation of the Most High, the mystic glass into which they looked and saw the Truth of God in all its Glory! When they were willing to have it so, they were instructed. The key of Scripture is Christ! The only Infallible Interpreter of “the Word “is Jesus, the Word! Him we may follow in every case with the utmost safety. There is more Truth of God in the Person of Christ than there is in all the books that have been written! We hear and read of this and that, “body of divinity”—but there is only one body of divinity—and that is the body of Jesus Christ!

Christ Jesus is our divinity. We hear of theology, sometimes. What is it? Theology, that is the Word of God, and what is that but Christ? Get, then, to be familiar with Him as with a friend, and you shall know what He means. I have heard of a wise man of whom they said in his biography, that to be acquainted with him was a liberal education. That if you went and stayed with him, you might put all your books away, for he was a walking encyclopedia. I can hardly think that of any mere man, but I am sure it is true of Jesus! Communion with Him is illumination! He is that choicest book in the Christian’s library which has more teaching in it than all besides! The hem of Christ’s garment is better than all the robes of philosophy!

There is more to be learned from His footprints than from the most profound reasoning of the most learned men. I commend to you, Brothers and Sisters, and to myself, also, that we continually sit at Jesus’ feet. Remember, it was of this that Jesus said, “Mary has chosen the good part.” She chose to be a learner. She chose to learn from the lips of Christ, Himself. May this good part fall to our lot, for if we are such learners as this, then our salvation is sure. He that is taught of God is taught aright and taught savingly! By such teaching our joy and pleasure will be greatly increased. There is little joy in the bare externals of the Truth of God—the joy lies *within*.

Many a man has come to the Truth as poor children in the street on a Christmas night. They come to a house and look through the window and see the fire blazing merrily upon the hearth, but the snow is deep and their little feet are pinched with cold. If they could enter that cozy parlor, they would have warmth and comfort, but in the street all is miserable. O you that are outside the Truth of God, peering through its windows, you get none of the joy of it! Pass through the Door, which is Christ, by a loving faith, and then its entrance shall give you light! The joy and mirth of the Truth of God are with the family of God who bask in the light of His Countenance! It is for your salvation! It is for your delight!

It is for your security, too, for He that knows the Truth will triumph over temptation. He who has been taught of Christ can meet the objections of the ungodly. There is more argument for the Gospel in Christ, Himself, than in all Apologies and Evidences that were ever written. Many defenses of the Gospel have now been prepared and we are thankful for them—but if you get to Christ, Himself, you do not need such protections! It is to me an unnecessary work when I read defenses of Inspiration and of the Gospel. Confirmed Believers do not require them! I know the Gospel to be true! I am assured of it in my inmost soul! If anybody were to write a book about the excellences of my mother and ask me to be a subscriber, I should say, “I know more about it than you do. I do not need to read, or listen to arguments. I am quite beyond it, for I know her loving care for me.” The love of Christ shed abroad in the heart is its own evidence! Do they tell us there is no Christ? No Christ? Then all life must be a dream, for we know Him and have seen Him with the mind’s eye!

Sometimes they say there is no Heaven, as Atheist did in Bunyan’s, “Pilgrim’s Progress.” “What?” says Christian to his companion, “Did not we see it from the top of Mount Clear when the shepherds lent us their optic glass?” Thus the Lord brings eternal things and especially His dear Son so vividly before our consciousness that we laugh to scorn the wisdom of the skeptic, which is but folly! Let us be earnest to get heavenly instruction from Christ, for then we shall be useful—and that is the end we aim at. If you do not know the inner Truth of God, what good can you do? Here you live in this world among blind men and they say, “Lead us!” But if the blind lead the blind, they shall both fall into the ditch.

No! No! You must get your own eyes opened and must know Christ and be known of Him—then you can help the poor blind sinner and you can guide Him to Jesus! No one knows of what usefulness you will be capable of when you have been taught of the Lord! God do so unto you, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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CHRIST ASLEEP IN THE VESSEL

NO. 1121

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 13, 1873,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Master, care You not that we perish?”
Mark 4:38.

THE day had been a very illustrious one. Our Lord had remarkably displayed His teaching and healing powers. Great crowds had been attracted and He had both delivered to them most precious parables and worked among them most marvelous cures. Grand as the day was, it could not come to a close without a storm. After the same manner you will find it in the history of the Church of God, that intermingled with great successes will be great afflictions. Pentecost is followed by persecution—Peter's sermon by Peter's imprisonment. Though today a Church may flourish abundantly, in a very short time it may be visited with stern adversities. It may be tried, none the less, but all the more, because God is in its midst and is blessing it.

When our Lord took ship the weather appears to have been very fair and many little boats which scarcely would have tempted the sea had its surface been ruffled, put out upon the lake under the convoy of the great Teacher's vessel. His was the admiral's flag ship and they were the happy fleet. They made a gay flotilla sailing softly like sea birds when the ocean is in a gentle mood. All hearts were happy, all spirits were serene and the sleep of the disaster was but a type of the general peace. Nature reposed. The lake was as a molten looking glass, everything was quiet. And yet all of a sudden, as is the custom with these deep-lying inland seas, the Storm-Fiend rushed from his haunt among the mountains, sweeping everything before it. The little vessel was hard put to it, she was well-near filled with water and ready to sink through the force of the driving hurricane.

Thus may our loveliest calms be succeeded by overwhelming storms. A Christian man is seldom long at ease. Our life, like April weather, is made up of sunshine and showers—

*“We should suspect some danger near
When we perceive too much delight.”*

Nothing beneath the moon can be depended upon. All things are invariably variable. “Boast not yourself of to-morrow,” says the wise man. And he might have added, “Boast not yourself of today, for you know not how the evening may close, however brightly the morning may have opened.” Let us learn this lesson at the outset. Let us not reckon upon the continuance of present ease, nor fix our happiness upon the fickle weather of this

world. Let us be ready for changes, so that, come when they may, we shall not be afraid of evil tidings—our heart being fixed—trusting in the Lord.

It would seem that when the storm began the disciples did not at first arouse the Master. They had some consideration for His extreme weariness, for He had spent the whole day in very severe toil and His human strength was exhausted. They thought, perhaps, that the hurry-burly of the storm would wake Him. How could He sleep amid the howling winds and roaring waves? They little knew how deeply calm His heart was, so that amid the tempest He could sleep right well, for the tempest came not near His soul. When at last they found that they were in great jeopardy, for their boat would surely sink, they began to judge their Lord and to think of Him unbelievably and unkindly. They thought they should perish and they wondered how He could allow them to do so.

Therefore they went to Him, crying, as Luke says, “Master, Master, we perish!” Or as Mark gives it, “Master, care You not that we perish?” Many of them cried out. One said one thing and one another, but their general spirit was one of complaint to their Lord. They knew He loved them and yet half-thought Him cruel. They trusted Him and yet had grievous doubts. They called Him Master and yet they were in a sort of semi-rebellion against Him. They owned His sway, but were ready to mutiny against Him because He did not exercise His power for their rescue.

We shall take the text as the keynote of our subject. And first we shall think upon the apparent indifference of the Lord to His people. But we shall note, secondly, that it is only *apparent*. Thirdly, that He has a real care for them at times when He seems indifferent. And, fourthly, they shall see this to be the case by-and-by.

I. First, then, we, as well as the disciples on the Galilean lake, sometimes complain of THE INDIFFERENCE OF THE LORD TO US. It is but an apparent indifference. Sometimes the complaint takes this shape. God suffers natural laws to proceed in their prescribed course, even when His own children will be crushed by them. There is a vessel out at sea. It is enveloped in dense fog. Prayers are offered up by godly men on board for the right guidance of the vessel, but if it continue to be steered as it now is, it will come upon a rock and on a rock it does come, notwithstanding the prayers. Does not God care that a vessel should perish with people on board it who pray for direction and deliverance?

At another time the rough winds are out and the vessel flies before them. She will soon sink, she cannot long live in the storm. Many supplications and entreaties are sent up to God, yet the tempest does not abate one jot of its fury. The laws of Nature at such times appear to be as grim and heartless as if they were managed by the Prince of the power of the air! As God has ordained, so does Nature move. For us the floods do not stand upright as an heap, neither do the waters refuse to drown. Whether it is martyr or murderer, the fire devours with equal fury and the sword falls with an equally deadly blow. “One event happens to the righteous

and to the wicked.” From this fact arises many a complaint and we cry, “Care You not that we perish?”

Our dear one, whom Jesus loves, is sick. Day and night we plead for his recovery, but the fever takes its course, or the broken limb requires its full time to heal. God does not alter the physical laws of the body for the convenience of His chosen. To them poison is poison and disease is disease. Full often the Lord permits those whom we love to suffer long and He does not seem to pay attention to our prayers and entreaties. No, rather the case grows worse and worse. We are very apt, when we are under a trying dispensation, to judge the laws of Nature to be very pitiless ordinances without hearts of mercy, and we say, “Master, care You not that we perish?” It is well to remember, however, what we may all too easily forget that the present complaint is based upon an error, for the laws of Nature do nothing whatever and are no more to be blamed than the Commandments on the Church wall.

There is no such power as a law of Nature acting by itself. All power lies in God and a law of Nature is neither more nor less than a description of the way in which the Lord usually works. The vessel, badly steered, strikes upon the rock because usually God causes ships to obey their helms, and rocks to retain their hardness. And the man who dies of sickness does not die because of some unforgivable force in Nature, but because God continues to give energy to destructive agencies. The ways of Nature are but a powerless letter—*God* works all things. What has He, Himself, said—“I create the light, and I create darkness.” Not a seed swells beneath the soil. Not a bud bursts into beauty. Not an ear of corn ripens for the harvest without God. He is in the dew and the sunshine, the light and the warmth which nourish and perfect the plant.

Happy is he who in all things beholds a present Deity. I see laws of Nature and I know that God acts according to them, but I see best the God who is behind the law. Law, what force has that? It is God working by the law. He does it all. This Truth of God sets matters in another light, for if the Lord brings the trial upon us we open not our mouths, but yield to His will. His days of action must be right and if they cause us grief, we nevertheless feel that He is not afflicting us willingly, or grieving us without design. When we perceive His hand we kiss the rod. Instead of asking, “Master, care You not that we perish?” we cry out in resignation, “It is the Lord, let Him do what seems Him good.”

Sometimes our lament assumes another shape. We view the troubles which come upon us as the result of the stern decrees of fate and shudder because it seems to our unbelief that God has made small account of us and arranged affairs with slight reference to the weakness, sorrow and infirmity of His people. Brethren, the most of us now present believe in predestination and are persuaded that the Lord works everything according to the counsel of His will. We believe that all things, great and small, are fixed in the eternal purpose and will surely be as they are ordained. This doctrine becomes the lurking place of a temptation. We gaze upon the

ponderous wheels of predestination in their awful revolutions and fear that they will grind us to powder. In the forebodings of our trouble, we fear that we may be entangled in the terrible machinery and that as it will not pause for our crying, it will tear us to pieces.

Like the Prophet, only with far greater dread, we cry—"O wheel!" But we ought to reflect that there is no such thing as blind fate—predestination is a far different thing. Fate is a blind man who rushes madly on because he must. Predestination is foil of eyes and proceeds in one line, because it is the best path which could be taken. Fate is a tyrant declaring that such a thing shall be because he wills it. Predestination is a father ordering all things for the good of his household. God has His purpose and His way—and His purposes are both for His own Glory and for the good of His people. Who among us would wish the Lord to turn aside from His holy and gracious designs? He has ordained the best, would we have Him vary? He has determined all things wisely, would we have Him determine otherwise?

That which happens to us occurs because in the judgment of Infinite Wisdom and Goodness it is on the whole best that it should be so. Would we wish the Lord to arrange otherwise? Will you tempt the Holy One of Israel? Will you ask Him to do other than that which is wise and just, and good and holy, and for His own Glory? Instead of crying out against destiny, let us cheerfully accept it because the Lord is in it! Do not say—"Care You not that we perish?" but believe that instead of perishing, your complete salvation will be promoted by all the events of Providence. It may be that we are in a different state of heart and are worrying ourselves today because it seems to us that affliction is sent upon men altogether irrespective of their character—and the godly are made to suffer even more than the wicked.

If you read the Apostles' question with an emphasis, "Care You not that *we* perish?" it will show you my meaning. They did as much as say, "We are Your Apostles. We love You. We spend our lives for You—care You not that *we* perish? We could understand that the vessel which carries a load of publicans and sinners should go to the bottom. But care You not that *we* perish?" Sometimes, under trouble, we have wondered why we are so afflicted, for we have felt that the Lord has kept us from known sin and led us in the way of holiness. And therefore we have seen no special cause for His scourging. Our cry has been, "Show me why You contend with me!" And if any have been cruel enough, like Job's comforters, to say that we were suffering because of special sin, we have held fast our integrity and declared that we were not wicked in the sense in which they accused us.

Now let us look one minute at this and we shall discover that God does send affliction according to character, after all, but not after the rule which flesh and blood would prescribe. It is not written, "As many as I hate I chasten," far from it! He permits the wicked to spring as the grass and allows them to flourish like a green bay tree. As oxen they are well fed

that they may be prepared for the slaughter! They are pampered, but their end is near. No, it is written, "As many as I *love* I rebuke and chasten." The *favorites* of Heaven are inheritors of the rod! It is not said, "The branches which bring forth no fruit shall be pruned." No, they shall be utterly taken away in due season—and cast into the fire. But it is written, "Every branch that bears fruit, He purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit."

And, therefore, when affliction comes upon our beloved relative who has lived a most exemplary life, or when a painful death happens to an unusually gracious man, we must not judge the Lord unkindly, as though He were unjust, but see His loving hand in it all and bless Him that He deals with our beloved ones as He is known to deal with *sons*—for what son is there whom the Father chastens not? He scourges every son whom He receives! The gold is put into the furnace because it is gold—it would have been of no use to put mere stones and rubbish there. The corn is threshed because it is corn—had it been weeds it would have been untouched by the flail. The great Owner of Heaven's jewels thinks it worth His while to use a more elaborate and sharp cutting machine upon the most valuable stones. A diamond of the first water is sure to undergo more cutting than an inferior one, because the King desires that it may have many facets which may, throughout eternity, with greater splendor, reflect the light of the Glory of His name!

Perhaps, dear Brothers and Sisters, we have thought that Jesus did not care for us because He has not worked a miracle for our deliverance and has not interposed in any remarkable way to help us. You are at this time in such sore distress that you would almost cry, "O that He would part the heavens and descend for my deliverance!" But He has not opened the heavens. You have read in biographies of holy men the details of very extraordinary Providences, but no extraordinary Providence has come to your rescue. You are getting gradually poorer and poorer, or you are becoming more and more afflicted in body—and you had hoped that God would have taken some extraordinary method with you—but He has done nothing of the sort.

My dear Brothers and Sisters, do you know that sometimes God works a greater wonder when He sustains His people in trouble than He would if He brought them out of it? For Him to let the bush burn on and yet not to be consumed is a grander thing than for Him to quench the flame and so save the bush. God is being glorified in your troubles and if you realize this you will be ready to say, "Lord, heap on the loads if it is for Your Glory! Give me but strength equal to my day, and then pile on the burdens! I shall not be crushed beneath them, but I shall be made to illustrate Your power. My weakness shall glorify Your might."

Possibly the hard suspicion that Jesus does not care for you takes another form. "I do not ask the Lord to work a miracle, but I do ask Him to cheer my heart. I need Him to apply the promises to my soul. I need His Spirit to visit me, as I know He does some good people, so that my pain

may be forgotten in the delight of the Lord's Presence. I need to feel such a full assurance of the Savior's Presence that the present trial shall, as it were, be swallowed up in a far more exceeding weight of joy. But, alas, the Lord hides His face from me and this makes my trial all the heavier." Beloved, can you not believe in a silent God? Do you always need tokens from God? Must you be petted like a spoiled child? Is your God of such a Character that you must mistrust Him if His face is veiled? Can you trust Him no further than you can see Him?

Besides, you are losing what you have while pining for what you have not. You say, "I need promises," and I ask you—

***"What more can He say to you than He has said,
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?"***

You say you need a token for good—what greater tokens do you require than He has already given you in your past experience, or that He has presented to you in the flowing wounds of a dying Savior? The tokens for good which Jesus gave on the Cross ought to be enough and to spare. Still, says one, "If He does not come to me and break the darkness with some light from His Presence, I wish He would lessen the pain I bear. If He will not take it away altogether, yet surely He will not let me utterly perish through its severity."

Ah, "perish"—that is the point and I pray you observe the distinction—"That He may try us we can understand. But that He should let us perish, we cannot comprehend." No, my dear Brothers and Sisters, you are not asked to understand it, for you have not perished yet. Bad as your case is, it might be worse. You are brought very low, but you might be lower—you might be in the dungeons of Hell! What a mercy it is that you never can sink lower than the grave! You shall never make your bed in Hell—thank God for that. When you come to the lowest, God interposes. The tide turns when you reach the full point of ebb and the darkest part of the night is that which preludes the rising of the sun. Be of good courage! You have not perished yet, and let this be a wonder to you—

***"Lord, and yet I am alive,
Not in torment, not in Hell!"***

Why should a living man complain? Should he not still have hope and expect that in his extremity God will appear for him? Thus we have mentioned various forms in which the temptation to charge the Lord foolishly presents itself to the soul.

II. But now, secondly, THE INDIFFERENCE OF GOD TO HIS PEOPLE AT ANY TIME MUST BE APPARENT, IT CANNOT BE REAL. Meditate a little. Consider the Character of the Triune God of whom we are speaking. The Father—can He be unkind? "His mercy endures forever." His name, His Essence, is Love. It is said of Him that He "delights in mercy," and we know that He is an unchangeable God and therefore we are not consumed. Can you, O Heir of Heaven, believe that He is indifferent to you, His child? You being evil, are careful for your children, how much more shall your Father who is in Heaven pity His own? Can you stand by and

see your child tortured with pain and not wish to relieve him? Have you not sometimes felt, O Mothers, that you would take your children's pangs upon yourselves right joyfully if you could set your dear ones free?

And have you, poor fallen creatures, such hearts of compassion and has your heavenly Father none? O judge Him not so! Say not to Him, "Care You not that we perish?" Think of the Second Person of the blessed Trinity in Unity, Jesus, the Son of God, your Brother as well as God's dear Son—can He forget His people? Has He not taken upon Himself your nature? Was He not tempted in all points like as you are? Has He not engraved your name upon the palms of His hands and written the dear memorials of His love on His side nearest to His heart? Can you look into the face of the Crucified and believe that He is indifferent to you? O, there was a time in the love of your espousals when His left hand was under your head and His right hand did embrace you, when you would not have thought so harshly of Him!

When He has kissed you with the kisses of His mouth and you have known His love to be better than wine, you could not have said such a barbarous thing concerning your Well-Beloved! No, it cannot be that Jesus should ever be indifferent to His people's woes. And the Spirit, the dear and ever-blessed Holy Spirit, who dwells in us—can He be without pity? He condescends to dwell in us and to take upon Himself the peculiar office of the Comforter—this is matchless condescension! Do you think that He is the Comforter and yet does not sympathize? A Comforter without sympathy would be a strange Being, indeed—He would be a mocker of human woes! But He is full of tender pity. Think of the love of the Spirit and never, for a moment, suspect that He is careless as to whether you shall perish or not! The Triune God is Love. "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." He cannot be indifferent to the condition of His own.

Consider next, Beloved, the ancient deeds of Divine love, of which the Scriptures speak expressly, and you will see that the Lord cannot be careless as to your welfare. Know you not that the eternal Jehovah loved you before the earth was? Have you forgotten that the mountains, with their hoary heads, are but newborn babes compared with His love to you? He chose you! He might have passed you by, but He chose you to be His own. "The Lord has appeared of old unto me," says the Prophet, "saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you." And has He loved you these myriads of ages to be indifferent to your groans, now? Can it be? If He had meant to cast you away He would have done so long ago! If He needed reasons for rejecting you He had reasons from all eternity, for He knew what you would be! No sin in you has been a surprise to Him. He foresaw the hardness of your heart and the waywardness of your disposition and if He could now reject, He would never have chosen you—He would never have taken you to Himself at all! O, then, let eternal love forbid you to dream that He can ever be careless as to whether you perish or not!

Next, I pray you think of what He has done for you. I will only put it in brief. Do you think that Christ came from Heaven to earth to save you and now is indifferent about you? Do you think that He lived here 30 years of toil and weariness for your redemption and will now cast you away? And do you believe that He went up to the Cross for you, having endured Gethsemane's terrible garden and its bloody sweat for you, and yet has no concern about you? Do you think He bore all the wrath of God on your behalf and now thinks your salvation such a trifling thing that He cares not whether you perish or not? Do you believe that He slept in the grave for you and rose again for you, and is gone within the veil for you, and pleads before God for you, and is, after all, a hypocrite, and has no real love to you? Man, if what Christ has done does not convince you, what can?

Many waters could not quench His love, neither could the floods drown it. Will you not confide in Him for the present and the future, after what He has done for you? Consider, yet again, what He has worked upon you personally and what you have known and felt within yourself. Years ago you were His enemy and He saved you and made you His friend. Do you remember when, in the agony of your soul, you did cry to Him as from the lowest pit and He came to your rescue? Will He leave you now? Remember how our poet makes a plea out of his past history and urges it with God—do you the same—

***“Once a sinner near despair
Sought your Mercy Seat by prayer.
Mercy heard and set him free—
Lord, that mercy came to me.
Many days have passed since then,
Many changes I have seen.
Yet have been upheld till now—
Who could hold me up but You?
You have helped in every need,
This emboldens me to plead,
After so much goodness past
Will you let me sink at last?”***

There is the point! If God had not done so much for us already we might question His intentions concerning us. But after the goodness and the mercy He has manifested, surely He will go through with it and perfect the work which He has begun. He has spent too much upon His work to relinquish it now. Remember, too, Beloved—and this is a sweet refreshment to the spirit—remember the relationship which exists between you and your God. Fatherhood and sonship are full of comfort. Can the Lord be an untender Father? Will the Lord cast away His own children? “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you.” Remember, also, that between you and Christ, O Believer, there is the relationship of Husband and of spouse. “I am married unto you says the

Lord.” And the Prophet tells us that the Lord, the God of Israel, says, “He hates putting away.”

“Where is the bill of your mother’s divorcement?” says He, as if He defied any to prove that He had ever put away His Beloved. “I will betroth you unto Me forever,” is the language of our Immutable God. The Lord has not cast away His people whom He did foreknow. Why, then, mistrust Him? Oh, by the fond relationship which exists between our hearts and God, let us not suspect Him of indifference! Remember, also, the Divine promises. Will He be a liar and let you perish? Remember His oath! It is base profanity to think that He can ever forego His oath! Remember the solemn seal of the blood of reconciliation—how can the Lord treat the blood of Jesus with indifference—or renounce the Covenant which was made sure and ratified by the death of His own Son? Let a Believer perish? Be indifferent to whether His redeemed is saved or not? Impossible! It cannot be! Far from it! Horrible thought! Let the storm rage as it may and let Christ sleep as He may, He must feel for His people! His indifference is but *imaginary*.

III. Thirdly and briefly. THERE IS IN OUR LORD A REAL CARE FOR HIS PEOPLE IN THE MIDST OF HIS APPARENT INDIFFERENCE. It was certainly so on the Galilean sea. Observe in the narrative that though Christ was asleep He was in the ship. He had not left His disciples—and however God may seem to deal with His people He is still with them. “Fear you not,” He says, “for I am with you.” If there is nothing more, the Presence of the Lord ought to be enough to cheer us. Our heavenly Father knows our needs. To be banished from the Presence of God would be Hell. But however tossed with tempest our vessel may be, we cannot despair so long as the Lord is our Companion.

Remember, again, that although Christ was asleep, He was tossed about as much as the disciples were and in the same peril. They might well say, “Care You not that we perish?” putting Him with themselves, for they would have gone down together, both He and they. If we are persecuted, Jesus is persecuted. If we suffer, the Head suffers in the members. Our cause is His cause. This should encourage us. When Caesar said to the frightened captain, “Fear not, you carry Caesar and all his fortunes,” he did but afford us an earthly type of the great heavenly Truth that the vessel of salvation carries Christ and His honor in it, as well as His people.

Remember, too, that our Lord was benefiting His people when He was asleep, for He was setting them a good example, an example of sacred restfulness in times of trouble. He slept not merely because of His fatigue as a Man, but because He felt safe in His Father’s hands. When the Master put His foot on board that vessel He knew there would be a storm. The tossing did not take Him by surprise and yet He went to sleep because He knew that all was right. No one could have slept with such foreknowledge but one whose heart was full of confidence in God. The Lord would have His people restful and not fretful, “So He gives His Beloved sleep.” We

have never read of our Lord's sleeping except on this occasion, this majestic occasion, when He was asleep in a storm-tossed boat, with His head on a pillow, because His heart was on the bosom of God!

He did as good as say to all His servants, "Rest in troublous times and leave all in the hands of Him who cares for you." His sleeping was an acted sermon upon, "let not your hearts be troubled." Moreover, He was testing them and revealing themselves to themselves. Perhaps many of them were in the same state as Peter and thought they could bear anything, and they would never mistrust the Lord. He let the storm blow till they got into a doubting frame of mind, that they might see the evil heart of unbelief which lurked within them, still. By this trial He was strengthening them. They were to be fishers of men all their lives and fishermen must encounter storms—this was one of the storms of their apprenticeship, when their Captain was with them—that when they came to be captains, themselves, no strange thing might happen to them if a tempest overtook them.

If they had enjoyed all fair weather when Christ was with them, hurricanes would have startled them afterwards when He was gone. But now they will say, one to the other in the time of persecution and trial, "Did He not aforetime show us this, on that very day when He took us to Genesaret? He was in the vessel with us and yet we were in a storm." Best of all, Christ was caring for them because He was making their danger an opportunity for the display of Himself. He wanted to show them His Omnipotence, but how could He do so if there were no difficulties for His Divine power to encounter? He had shown them how He could baffle devils and overcome disease—but now He desires them to see how winds and waves are subservient to His will and so He lets loose the raging tempests.

For a man to beard a chained lion is little, but let the monster loose, and then only a hero will encounter him. The hurricane is loosed, the waves are raging, they devour the boat—now shall you see how great the Master is as He stands at the bow, and cries, "Peace, be still," and all is hushed beneath Him! Without the storm they could not have seen the glory of the Peacemaker and so the trial was absolutely necessary that they might learn His Deity to the fullest.

IV. We come now to our last thought, which is this. IN DUE TIME ALL THOSE WHO TRUST SHALL SEE THAT GOD DOES CARE ABOUT THEM. When Jesus was awakened He was not angry. He might have walked away from His disciples if He had pleased. It was quite in His power to traverse the billows and to have left them in disgust. And after the hard things we have said and thought of God, He might leave us to perish if He would, but He will do no such thing. Jesus did not reject the unworthy prayers of His feeble followers. He might have taken offense and have said, "Is that what you think of Me? Is this the way in which you speak of Me?"

But not thus did He upbraid them. He did check them gently, out of very love to them, but there was no anger. He accepted their prayers and He awoke—and what an awaking it was! How mighty were His works!

There was no trace of storm another moment after He had been awakened. The most blustering of the conflicting winds slept like a babe in its mother's bosom. The waves were as marble. Troubled one, you will enjoy calm, yet. Poor tried and tempted child of God, you will see days in which you will wonder where your troubles are! You will say to yourself, "They are quite gone. I have nothing left to be troubled with. Christ has chased my griefs away." Perhaps you will enjoy a long, unbroken calm—not an ordinary one, but such a calm, so deep, so profound, that you will say to yourself—"It is worthwhile to have gone through a storm to enter upon a peace like this."

After traversing the wilderness you will enter Canaan. The angels will visit you when the devils have ended their temptation. You will leave the battlefield for the land of Beulah where you shall hear the choirs of Heaven sing and the angels will bring you spices from the gardens of the blessed. Only have courage! Stand to your post! Trust in your Lord! Think well of Him and rest in Him, for as the Lord lives, no vessel that has Christ on board shall suffer shipwreck! He who has faith is insured against destruction. Wait on the Lord, even if the vision tarries, and fair sunlight and smooth sailing shall be your reward.

I shall leave the subject when I have hinted at its application in two ways. The first is this. I think this is very applicable to the state of the Church at this present time. There is great trouble in some minds about the Church, for everything is going badly, all things are in commotion. The signs of the times are dark. To me the worst trouble is that Jesus seems to be asleep. There is nothing doing, no great revival of religion and but little power with the ministry. I am, however, comforted by the reflection that Jesus sleeps, but He never *oversleeps*. When we fall asleep we do not know how to awake, but Jesus Christ does—He sleeps, but He does not oversleep. Glory be to His name, He sleeps, but He is not dead! And as long as He is alive our joy is alive! While there is a living Christ there will always be a living Church. There may be both a sleeping Christ and a sleeping Church, but neither Christ nor His Church can perish. If our Lord is asleep, He is asleep near the helm—He has only to put His hand out and steer the vessel at once. He is asleep, but He only sleeps until we cry more loudly to Him.

When we get into such trouble that we cannot help ourselves and feel our entire dependence on Him, then He will reveal His power. Perhaps during the next 20 years the state of religion in England will grow worse, and worse, and worse. Very possibly for another 10 years infidelity will abound and superstition will abound, and then His Church will be in a desperate state and she will cry, "O God, the candle is all but quenched! The light is nearly withdrawn!" And then there will go up such an exceedingly great and bitter cry that Christ will hear it and come and revive His work right gloriously! It may be He will let the battle go against us for many a day, yet, and our slender strength will be broken into utter weakness—and we shall almost despair of the fight. Then will He send His

trumpeter to us! Then will His Spirit come and the loud and clear Voice shall be heard, “Be of good courage! When you are weak then are you strong!”

Then, on a sudden, in our utter impotence, we shall rush upon the foe once more, and, like Gideon’s barley cake, which smote the tents of Midian and made them lie along, so shall the Lord’s people do great exploits, because the Lord has awaked as a mighty Man out of His sleep. A sudden and glorious victory shall make Heaven and earth ring with His praise. Be not discouraged nor discomfited! The storm is not at its worst yet. The vessel is not filled with the waves yet. The water is not up to her bulwarks yet—she still floats. When she can scarcely keep from sinking and is almost going down by the head, then the Captain will stand in the front of the vessel and calm the seas. When the roaring waves nearly overwhelm her, He will say to them, “Peace, be still!” The calm, the long millennial calm, it may be, is close ahead—we know not how near it may be, but let us hope on.

The other application is to the sinner. It may be that there is someone here who is in a desperate plight. He feels his sins, like hungry waves, ready to devour him and he does not know how to escape. But he has been praying and I am glad of it. Dear Friend, never give up praying! The poor soul has been crying, “Lord help me!” It is the right prayer. Brother, keep on at it. But it seems to him that Jesus is asleep and he says, “Does He not care for a poor sinner? Will He let me go down to Hell and think nothing of it?” What do *you* say, Friend? Would *you* let a praying sinner go to Hell if you could save him? “Oh, no!” you say, “If he cried to me I would help him.”

Do you think you are kinder than Christ? I tell you that—

***“His heart is made of tenderness,
His heart melts with love.”***

Believe in His love. Cast yourself upon His Grace. And when you believe in Him you are saved. Do not think hard thoughts of Him. Touch the hem of His garment and you shall be made whole! Trust your guilty soul with Him and it is well with you now and forever! May God give you His blessing, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark 4.

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WHY IS FAITH SO FEEBLE?

NO. 1964

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 22, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And He said unto them, Why are you so fearful?
How is it that you have no faith?”
Mark 4:40.***

LAST Lord's-Day morning our music was pitched upon a high key. We sought after great faith in the Master's name [Sermon #1963, Volume 33—*The Search for Faith.*] It struck me that I might, perhaps, have discouraged some of the feebler sort and that, therefore, it would be right, this morning, to follow up that sermon by endeavoring to encourage those of weak faith to exercise it until it becomes stronger—and also to invite those who, as *yet* have *no faith*, to venture in the direction of childlike trust.

With this brief introduction, let us come at once to our subject.

I should not wonder if the disciples considered that they had much faith in Jesus, their Master and Lord. They had been with Him all day, listening to His teaching, believing it even when they did not understand it. They had afterwards gathered about Him in private to listen to His fuller explanations and they were thankful to be favored with those expositions in which their Lord became their private Tutor. I do not question that they, each one of them, esteemed himself a firm believer in Jesus. How could he tolerate a doubt? But, my Brothers and Sisters, we have, none of us, any idea how scanty our faith really is. When trial comes, the heap from the threshing floor becomes very small beneath the influence of the winnowing fan. After a day of calm service with Jesus, a storm came on and that storm tested their faith and left so little of it that Jesus said to them, “Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?” Remember that we have no more faith at any time than we have in the hour of trial. All that which will not bear to be tested is mere carnal confidence. Fair-weather faith is no faith—the only real faith in Jesus Christ is that which can trust Him when it cannot trace Him—and believe Him when it cannot see Him.

This storm was a special trial to the disciples because it was so exceedingly severe. They had often been tossed upon that lake, but this time the elements were moved to an excessive tumult—the winds poured down in all their force and fury. The war of Nature raged around their devoted boat. When tribulation is heavier than usual, it is a serious test to faith. When we appear to be tried above the common measure of men, the weak

ones are full of trembling and even the strong fall upon their knees and cry, "Lord, I believe! Help You my unbelief."

The storm was the more trying because it came upon them when they were in the path of duty. Their Master had bid them cross the sea—they were not upon a holiday trip. They had not even followed the suggestion of a Brother who had said, "I go a-fishing," but they were steering under their great Captain's orders. They were doing right and suffering trouble in consequence. This has often perplexed good men. I have heard a Believer say, "I prospered more before I was a Christian than I have since. Things went smoothly with me before I knew the Lord. How can these things be? The very fact of my endeavoring to do what is right and laboring to maintain my integrity has become the cause of my severest trial." This is no new thing upon the earth! The living child of God will have to swim against the stream. Not without fighting will he win his crown!

Moreover, it was an item which helped to try their faith, that the storm assailed them when Jesus was in the ship. Had the Lord been absent, they could have understood it—but He was in the vessel with them! How could the sea be so boisterous with Christ in the vessel? If I am out of communion with Christ, I can understand why I am chastened. But if I am walking in conscious nearness and fellowship with Him and I am even *then* tried and perplexed, how can I account for it? Herein is the test of faith! "Whom the Lord loves, He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." This we forget and fancy that trials must mean anger, when, indeed, they may be tokens and tests of *love*!

It may have seemed to them, also, that the storm was very untimely since there were with Jesus many other little ships—and all those boats were caught in the same storm. We are always anxious for those who come to hear the Gospel, lest anything should prejudice them against it. The disciples may have feared that such ill weather would drive away from Christ those hearers who might otherwise have become converts. If they met with a storm so soon after rowing close to Jesus, they might judge Him to be another Jonah and resolve to give the Galilean Preacher a wide berth next time. I know how I like to see fine weather at an open-air service and a continuance of it till the country people can get home. And I suspect that the disciples felt much the same. They did not wish their Lord to be looked upon as a stormy sea bird, or a man of evil omen—and you know that superstition was strong in those days. Had you and I been there, we would have said, "Gracious Lord, let us have a calm, that those who have come to You in their boats may get home in comfort. Cause this wonderful service by the sea to end pleasantly, that the next time You come this way, the people may gather in still larger numbers to hear You." Sometimes the strange occasion of the trial makes it harder to bear. Trial is never welcome and sometimes it is peculiarly disagreeable.

See, my Brothers and Sisters, how these disciples came out of the tempest! They went into the trial well enough, but they were in an evil plight before long. We have seen a bird of glossy plumage, bearing half the colors of the rainbow on its breast, glorifying itself in the sunlight—and we have

admired its beauty. But soon the heavens have poured down pitiless showers and we have seen our brave bird in quite another form. Dripping and draggled, he has sought ignominious shelter. You would hardly have known him to be the same creature, whose crowing challenged all his fellows! Truly his glory had departed. Such are we, as a rule, after severe trial. We make a fair show in the flesh till we are tried—and then our feathers cling around us and we droop and hide till our Master has to say to us—“Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?”

These two questions of the Master we will use, this morning, with a view to spiritual profit—may the Spirit of God make it so! First, we shall view the text as *the exclamation of pity*—“Why are you so fearful?” Secondly, we shall regard it as *the censure of love*—“How is it that you have no faith?” And, thirdly, we shall consider it as *the enquiry of wisdom*—“Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?” May our three-fold meditation richly profit us all!

I. We will first use the questions as THE EXCLAMATION OF PITY. The dear Master waking up from His sleep, calm as if it were a bright summer’s morning, though it was the dead of night and the midst of a storm, looks upon them with wonder, finding them so strangely different from Himself. He asks, in all the calmness of His own brave spirit, “Why are you so fearful?” He pitied them and He pitied them, I think, for several reasons.

First, that *their fears had made them so unlike Himself*. They were His servants and they should have been as their Master. They were learning of Him and they should have put in practice the lessons of His example. He was delightfully quiet and the contagion of His peace ought to have affected them. He was always restful in Himself and, therefore, He gave rest to those who came to Him—yet these were missing the blessing—and so He compassionately cried, “Why are you so fearful?” He marveled not that they were fearful in such a hurricane, but He was sorry that they were so fearful as to act as if they had no faith. They were little like Him as yet, although the great design of all His teaching was to make them like Himself. Our blessed Master must often look upon us, dear Friends, with much pity and grieve over us, that after being with Him so long—for some of us are getting gray in His service—we still fall so far short of His Glory! We are predestinated to be conformed to His image, but the process is a slow one. After copying His handwriting, our own writing is still greatly marred with crooks and turns. Each page of the copybook of life is marred with errors and blots and, therefore, the great Teacher pities His poor scholars. How is it that we are so fearful when Christ is so calm? Is this our imitation of Jesus? Our doubts, fears, alarms and mistrusts of God—are these such as a *follower of Jesus* should exhibit?

He pitied them, next, because *it made them so unlike themselves*. They were men, but their fears unmanned them. They were fishermen, but you would have thought them mere landmen if you observed their fears. Like frightened children, they cried, “Master, care You not that we perish?” They were by no means overly wise, but now they were at their wits’ end.

When you and I get fearful, how foolishly we think and speak and act! We could have done well enough if faith had steadied us, but unbelief makes us stagger and reel to and fro. We could have weathered the storm had we not given way upon the point of confidence in God. But, failing there, we became weak as water. How are the mighty fallen! Alas, the children of Ephraim, being armed and carrying bows, turn back in the day of battle! Those who once were patterns of courage become cowards when faith fails. Fathers in Israel act like babes in Grace when faith ebbs out! Our Lord is grieved for us when He sees us fall so low that instead of being like He, we are not even like ourselves!

Jesus pitied them, again, because *their fears made them so unhappy*. Terror was depicted on their countenances. They were white as a sheet when they saw that the boat could not be baled, but was evidently filling and sinking. What caused their terror? Were they afraid of *death*? Their fears were causing them more pain than death, itself, could have cost them! We “feel a thousand deaths in fearing one.” To die is *nothing* compared with *fearing to die*. All the agony of death lies in the foresight of it—death itself is the end of all agony! Death is not the storm, but the *quietus* of the disturbing elements! Through death souls enter into *rest*. The Apostles were made wretched by their fears. I know some Christian people who suffer greatly from the same cause. I know a man who lives where I live and stands in this pulpit where I stand, who has to confess his own faults this day, for he might enjoy unbroken peace were it not that in the care and labor of this great Church and all its various agencies, he looks to the difficulties and the necessities of the case—and to his own weakness—and then *fears* rush in. Beloved, we must not forever be thus childishly timorous. Let us strive after a courageous bearing. Let us crush the eggs of our woes while they lie in the nest of our unbelief. Our sorrows are mostly manufactured at home, beaten out upon the anvil of unbelief with the hammer of our foreboding. May the Lord pardon us! Jesus pities us that we should lacerate ourselves by our needless fears and miss the joy of a restful faith.

Again, the Master felt pity for them because *their fears made them so unkind*. Does unbelief make the timid unkind? I am sure it does. The disciples were ungenerous to their sleeping Master. If they had only considered a little, they would have said, “No, do not wake Him! He has had so weary a day. The cares of the world rest on Him. He is a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. If He can sleep, let Him sleep. Let us sooner suffer than disturb Him.” If they must wake Him, might they not have addressed Him in fitter words? To say, “Master, care You not that we perish?” was fretful and wicked. It was enough to wound their Lord’s tender heart to be thus spoken to. Our unbelief also has a tendency to make *us* unkind. We are not tender of others when we are disturbed about ourselves.

Here let me digress to teach a lesson of pitying love. It is well to recognize that sour speeches often proceed from a sad heart. It is wise to view ungenerous language as one of the symptoms of disease and rather pity

the sufferer than become irritated with the offensive speech. It is a pity to take much notice of what some sufferers say, for they will be sorry for it soon enough. If we knew the real reason for many a harsh word, our sympathy would prevent even momentary anger. Our Lord overlooked the petulance of the Apostles, for He did *not* say, "Why are you so unkind?" No, He enquired, "Why are you so *fearful*?" In every case let us cure unkindness with double love. I heard, yesterday, of a wise old Welsh minister of a generous spirit who was afflicted with a horrible deacon—and if a deacon is unkind, he can wound terribly. This deacon was most perverse and cruel—and tormented the old gentleman in all sorts of ways.

At last the deacon fell sick, after having said certain dreadful things which were more bitter than even his usual gall and wormwood. The patient pastor soon went to see him and on the road he bought some of the best oranges and took them with him. "Brother Jones," he said, "I am sorry you are so ill. I have come to see you and I have brought you a few oranges." Brother Jones was very much astonished at this kind act and had not much to say on the matter. The minister gently talked on and said, "I think it would refresh you to eat one of these. I will peel you one." So he went on with peeling the orange and talked pleasantly with him. Then he divided the fruit very neatly and handed the sick man a nice tempting piece in the gentlest possible manner.

The bitter-spirited man ate it and began to melt a little—the conversation became hearty and the prayer was pleasant. Brother Jones was getting better in more ways than one! An outsider, who knew all about Brother Jones and his ill-humor, could hardly believe that the minister had acted thus to one who had constantly opposed and slandered him so foully. And so he asked, "Did you *really* go and see that cruel old Jones?" "Oh yes," he said, "I went to see him. I was bound to do so." "And did you take him some oranges?" "Oh yes, I took him some oranges. I was glad to do so." "And did you sit down by his bedside and peel him an orange?" "Yes, I peeled him an orange and I was pleased to see him enjoy it, for I have learned, Brother, that when a man is afflicted with a very bad temper, an orange is a good thing for him to take. At any rate, it is a good thing for me to give."

The lesson is—if you wish to cure a man of ill-feeling, be very kind to him. View unkind and petulant speeches as symptoms of a disease for which the best medicine is not a dose of bitters, but an orange! Yet, Beloved, if you have used such speeches, yourself, do not repeat them. Cease from being so fearful—that you may cease from being so ill-humored. Our blessed Master did not find fault with the unkindness of His disciples, but He went to the root of the evil by silencing their *fears*. He said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?"

Here you perceive our Lord's pity. I wish I could speak the words as He spoke them—then you would wonder at their surprising tenderness!

II. But now, secondly, these words were spoken, also, as THE CENSURE OF LOVE. They were intended to convey a measure of gentle rebuke to their mistrustful hearts.

Their unbelief was grievous to the Lord Jesus. They ought to have believed Him and it was an injury to His perfect love that they should so readily mistrust Him, or even mistrust Him at all. How could they think that He would let them sink? He was in the vessel with them—did they suppose that, after all, He was a mere pretender to Deity and that the ship would go down with Him on board? Beloved, let us smite upon our breasts to think that we should ever have caused a pang of heart to that dear Lord who yielded up His life for our salvation! He must not be doubted any more—it is wanton cruelty! What if I call it “a superfluity of naughtiness” to doubt Him whose life and death are crowded with Infallible proofs of His unchanging love to us?

Our Lord questioned His Apostles thus, not only because their unbelief grieved Him, but because *it was most unreasonable*. The most unreasonable thing in the world is to doubt God! Faith is pure reason. That may seem a strange paradox, but it is literally true—nothing is so reasonable as to believe the Word of God—who cannot err or lie.

The fears of the tempest-tossed disciples were unreasonable because they were contrary to their own belief. They believed that Jesus was sent of God upon a glorious mission—how could that mission be accomplished if He was drowned? If they sank in the sea, He must sink, too, for they were embarked in the same boat. Ought not the faith they had in His Divine mission to have kept them hopeful even in the worst moment of the storm? My Brothers and Sisters, be not inconsistent with what you believe. Do not deny your own creed, however slender it may be, for that is irrational!

Moreover, their fears were opposed to their own experience—they had seen their Lord work miracles—and miracles for them, too. They had already beheld abundant proofs of His power, Godhead and of His care on their behalf. Is not this true of us, also? Has the Lord ever failed us? Has He not helped us to this day? Are you going to fly in the teeth of all your past experience? Is all that you have ever believed of God a fiction? Have you been under a gross delusion up to this day? You that are advanced in years, how can you doubt? With so many Ebenezers to look back upon, you ought to rise above all fear.

Their fears were altogether inconsistent with their observation. They had seen Jesus heal the sick and feed the multitudes. I am not quite sure how many of His miracles had already been worked before them, but certainly enough for their observation to compel them to believe that He was able to save them from death. How, then, could they doubt? But have not we, also, seen enough of the finger of God to be confident in the day of trouble? If we believe not, we dare not lay the blame upon the lack of evidence. To mistrust is irrational because it is contrary to all the experience of our hearts and the observation of our eyes.

Moreover, their unbelief was contrary to their common sense. Some people make a great deal of common sense and well they may, for it is the most uncommon of all the senses! Was it reasonable for these men to think that He, who could foresee the future, would take them on board a ship when He foreknew that a storm would wreck them? Would so kind a Leader have taken them to sea to drown them? Was it reasonable to think that He who was so favored of God would be left to perish? Would He have gone to sleep if they had really been in danger? Was it reasonable to believe that the King of Israel was about to be drowned, even He whom they knew to be the Light of the world? Our unbelief, my Brethren, seldom deserves to be reasoned with! Our fears are often intensely silly and when we get over them and look back upon them, we are full of shame that we should have been so foolish. Our Lord kindly censured their unbelief because it was unreasonable.

In very truth their unbelief deserved censure because *it sprang from low views of the Lord Jesus*. When they, afterwards, saw what wonders He worked upon the deep, they said one to another, "What manner of Man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him!" Should they not have known that beforehand? If they had remembered it, would they have been so overwhelmed with fear? Oh that we thought more of Jesus! We cannot think too much of Him. If we took Him to be what He really is—if we regarded Him as most truly *God*—we would rest in Him and say farewell to suspicions and complaints. If Jesus were greater in our esteem, our lives would be far grander!

Jesus censured His friends because *He foresaw that such unbelief as theirs would make them unfit for their future lives*. That ship was the symbol of the Church of Christ and the crew of the ship were the Apostles of Christ. The storm represented, in parable, the persecutions which the Church would have to endure, and they, if they were cast down as cowards in a storm on the paltry lake of Galilee, would be proving themselves altogether unfit for those more tremendous spiritual storms which, in later years, tossed the Church and mingled earth and Hell in dire confusion. Peter and James and John and the rest of them were to steer the ship of the Church of God through seas of blood and to stand at the helm in the midst of hurricanes of error. And, therefore, fearfulness was a sad evil because it would render them unfit for their solemn task. Jesus might have said to them, "If you have run with the footmen and they have wearied you, what will you do when you contend with horses? If these winds and waves have been too much for you, what will you do when you wrestle with principalities and powers and spiritual wickednesses in high places? If natural causes destroy your peace, how will spiritual influences distract you?"

Brothers and Sisters, our present trials may be a training ground for more serious conflicts. We do not know what we have yet to endure! The adversities of today are a preparatory school for the higher learning. If we do not play the man now, what shall we do, by-and-by? If because of some little domestic discomfort we are ready to give up, what shall we do in the

swellings of Jordan? If a little toil oppresses us, what shall we do when the death sweat trickles from our brow? My Christian Brothers, let us attentively hear our Lord as He lovingly rebukes us! Let us shake off our fears and resolve that by His Grace we will have no more of them, but will trust and not be afraid. Oh, for calm hope and a childlike repose on the love which cannot fail! I have hurried over ground where I might profitably have tarried because I want to have an earnest word with you upon the third point.

III. We may now regard these words as ENQUIRY OF WISDOM. It is always good to probe a sorrow to the bottom if there is any hope of finding out its cause and putting it away. If you are in fear, you may rise above it by removing its cause. If there is clearly no reason for fear, you will cease to fear—but if there is a cause for fearfulness, you can deal with it. My utterances will be as short as telegrams—please enlarge on them at your leisure.

“How is it that you have no faith?” This is the enquiry. *Is it lack of knowledge?* If the disciples had known Jesus better, they would have had no fear, but would have exhibited firm faith. Is it so with any of you? Are you badly taught in the Gospel? Do you as yet know only half the doctrines? Have you a cloudy view of the Covenant of Grace and of the great salvation which is wrapped up in the Person of your Lord? If it is so, your quickest way to faith will be to read your Bible more, to study it with greater attention and to hear the Gospel more often. Come out to week-night services and commune more with Christ in private. Spend three, four, five times the amount of time you now do in devotions and so draw nearer to your Lord, entreating the Holy Spirit to lead you into all the Truths of God. If you kill your fears and strengthen your faith, you will have invested your time admirably in acquiring more knowledge. Remember the words—“Acquaint yourself with God and be at peace: for thereby good shall come unto you.” Learn more of Jesus and when you know Him better, the main causes of your fear will be removed.

Next, *is it lack of thought?* Did these good people know and yet forget? Did they fail to consider? Were they superficial in their thinking? Is that the reason why you, also, are so fearful and have so little faith? Are you a skimmer and not a digger? Are you content with the surface soil when nuggets of gold lie just below? Is it so? Do you think too little of the invisible and the eternal? Are your thoughts incessantly occupied with business—and is God thus shut out? Are you always using the muckrake of greed and never using the telescope of faith? Are the abiding treasures covered up and buried amidst the seeming and shadowy things of time and sense? If so, mend your ways, my Brothers and Sisters! Mend them at once! Have more thought, more prayer—much more prayer, more praise—much more praise, more meditation, more calm investigation of your own heart and more acquaintance with the things of God. Do you not think that you often might find the remedy for your fears in the direction of holy intimacy with unseen realities? Be these more true to you and the trou-

bles of this life will sink into their proper places as light afflictions which are but for a moment!

The enquiry as to why we are so fearful may be helped by another question—*is it that our trials take us by surprise?* Perhaps the disciples reckoned that everything must be right since they had Christ on board. Let us not indulge such a notion! Never let *any* affliction surprise you, for your Lord has told you, “In the world you shall have tribulation.” If your children die, do not be surprised—shall mortal parents bring forth immortal offspring? If your riches disappear, do not be surprised—they always had wings—what wonder if they fly! If any other adversity happens to you, be not surprised, for, “man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.” The Lord has told you before it comes to pass, so that when it is come to pass, you may believe. Reckon upon tribulation and then you will not be overtaken by surprise, nor fret as though some strange thing had happened to you!

Why were they so full of fear? *Was it lack of simplicity of confidence?* Did they trust in their good boat, or feel that they were safe because of their seamanship? Perhaps not, but I am sure that we, too, often mingle reliance upon self, or upon some other arm of flesh *with* our reliance upon our Lord. Good, easy men, we whisper to ourselves, “We can manage.” Oh, yes, we have had trouble before and we are persons of experience and shrewdness and, therefore, we can see our way. Brethren, we are never so weak as when we feel strongest—and never so foolish as when we dream that we are wise! When you are “up to the mark,” you will soon be down to the mark. When our confidence is partly in God and partly in ourselves, our overthrow is not far off! That angel who stood with one foot upon the sea and the other upon the earth would have been drowned if he had not been an angel! As you are not an angel, take care that you put both feet upon the *terra firma* of Divine Strength and Truth! If you trust in yourself in the least degree, one link of the chain is too weak to bear you and it is of no avail that the other links are strong. Is this the reason why you are so fearful, that your faith is alloyed with self-confidence?

Again, *was it absorption in their trial* which led to their excessive fearfulness? If *they* had described their case, they would, no doubt, have dwelt upon the darkness, the hideous “darkness which might be felt.” They would have bid us listen to the howling of the winds and their terrific screams, like the neighing of wild horses maddened in fight! Mark how the wind descends in cataracts from the hills and forces the boat under water! And this, again, is resented by the sea which hurls the frail vessel aloft and tosses it to and fro with watery hands, as though it were a juggler’s ball. The storm was very fierce and the boat was very frail. Look how it is spun round and round in the whirlwind! Suppose we had urged them to be trustful and quiet—might they not have answered that we were not in their predicament, or we would not find it quite so easy to be calm?

“Ah!” says one, “I have a wife and family at home who depend upon my fishing. How can I be calm when I think of them as widow and orphans? A man cannot afford to be drowned who has a household depending on him!

It is all very well for you to talk, but you do not know what it is to be drenched to the skin and near to death." Well, Brother, perhaps we do not. But *this* we do know, that when we fix our thoughts solely and alone on the winds and the waves and the wives and all that, it is *then* that we are troubled! If we could put the most important thought *first*, it would be different. The thought which covers all is that Jesus is with us! The winds blow, but Jesus is on board! The waves rage, but Jesus is on board! These poor sailors will not perish, for Jesus is on board! If they could have kept this cheering fact to the front, they would have banished their alarms and, like their Lord, they would have been grandly calm! Instead of that, their brooding upon the present trial was too much for their faith and they became childishly fearful.

Have I yet hit the nail on the head? If you have not found out the cause of your fearfulness I must leave you to look for it yourselves—and I trust you may discover it and destroy it at once. We must not continue to be of little faith! We must glorify our Lord by a believing confidence in Him, such as neither storm of sorrow nor tempest of temptation can shake.

I shall conclude by carrying this enquiry into another region for another purpose. In this congregation there are a considerable number of friends who are not yet Believers in Jesus Christ and I want to know from *them*, this morning, why they have no faith? I entreat them to help me in the enquiry, Why it is that they are still so fearful, still so undecided? My dear Friend, you will soon need faith, for you will have to die. Whether you live in Christ or not, you will have to die—and dying is hard work to those who have no Savior! Perhaps before another Sabbath you may be in the swellings of Jordan—and what will you do if you have no faith in Christ? Do you say that you *desire* to have faith? I am glad to hear it, but I should like to press this matter home and to ascertain whether this desire is earnest, thorough, and hearty.

Do you know what it is that you desire? Are you in earnest to be saved? I do not mean, are you in earnest to escape from Hell? That I should think is very likely if you are in your senses—but are you in earnest to escape from *sin*? Do you want to be saved from the power of evil? Do you desire to be made good, obedient, true and pure in life? If you do, then I would remind you that faith in Jesus is the only way of salvation and I would eagerly press upon you to desire immediate faith. Yes, I would urge you to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart, now!

"I want to believe," you say. Well, then, what is to hinder you? If you cannot sit still in your seat and make yourself believe all at once, yet there are ways to that end. If I were told that the King of Tartary was dead and it was a matter of interest to me, I do not know whether I would be able to believe it or not because I do not know anything about the King of Tartary, nor even whether there is such a person! If I wanted to believe the news, I would get the newspaper and read about it and I dare say I should either believe it or disbelieve it within the next ten minutes. Knowledge and *evidence* lead up to faith! It is just the same with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith is the gift of God and the work of the Holy Spirit, but it

comes to us in a certain manner. Consider a minute. *Consider who the Savior is.* He is God and Man. He came down to earth on purpose to save sinners. Do you not think that this Divine Person can save you? Is He not able? Do you not think that this loving Man will receive you? Is He not willing to save? Well, then, trust Him!

Next, consider what Jesus did. He lived a life of labor and sorrow on earth—and He died on the Cross to make atonement for sin. Stand and look at Him as crucified for men. “He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree.” The greatest source of faith is the contemplation of the Cross of Christ! Look to His agonies and say to yourself, “I can believe that by the merit of such a wondrous death, endured by such a Person as this, God can justly forgive sin.” Believe, then, for yourself, and see your own sins put away by the death of Christ!

Will you also *consider what Jesus Christ is doing now?* He has risen from the dead! He has gone up into Heaven! He is making intercession for transgressors—even for such persons as you are! Trust Him, then! Trust Jesus because of what He is, what He has done and what He is doing for sinners. Remember that this is the whole of the business, as far as you are concerned. You are to accept what the Lord Jesus presents to you. Accept Him. Yes, take Him to be your own! Look here. I turn to this friend behind me and I say, “Will you take my hand?” [The preacher suited the action to the word and his hand was readily grasped by one of the deacons.] Look! He takes it freely. Jesus Christ is as free to every sinner that feels his need of Him as my hand was to my friend. He took my hand at once without question—will you not take Jesus? Take Him now! If you take Him, He is yours forever. Take His hand and He will not withdraw it from your grasp! Oh that you would cry out, Lord I accept You!

Have you any doubts about the truth of the Gospel? If so, I want to know what you think of us who preach to you. Do we deceive you? What do you think of your mother’s confidence in Christ—is she also deceived? Those dear friends of yours who died so happy in the Lord—were they all deceivers or deceived? No. You know that the Word of God is true! Then believe it! Believe it for yourselves and it will be as true to you as it has been true to us. You cannot, I am sure, deny the Scriptures. You dare not say that the Gospel is a forgery—it bears its own proof upon its forefront! Salvation by the Substitution of our Lord is so grand an idea that no one could have invented it! It is self-evidently a Divine fact. That God can be just and yet pass by our sins is a marvel past the conception of men—it could only have come from the heart of God! Believe it, then! Accept it as being free and trust yourself to it. May the Spirit of God lead you so to do!

If you are not believing in Christ, I would like to know why not! Is it that you are believing in *yourself*? If so, give up such folly! You cannot trust yourself *and* trust Christ, too—away with all notion of such a conjunction! Hang up self-confidence on a gallows high as that whereon Haman was suspended, for it is an abominable thing!

Perhaps it is your great sin that leads you to despair of pardon. There is no occasion for such unbelief, for God is abundant in mercy and the blood

of Jesus cleanses us from all sin! If you have great sin, remember that there is a great Savior. He that came to save us is the Son of God and He laid down His life for us! And, therefore, He can save to the uttermost! Instead of doubting, I pray you to glorify God by believing in the greatness of His salvation.

It was a pleasure to me, in years past, to enjoy the friendship of Mr. Brownlow North. Before conversion, he was a thorough man of the world and, I suppose, about as frivolous and dissipated as men of his station and character often are. After his conversion, he began to preach the Gospel with great fervor—and certain of his old companions were full of spite against him—probably considering him to be a hypocrite. One day when he was about to address a large congregation, a stranger passed him a letter, saying, “Read this before you preach.” The letter contained a statement of certain irregularities of conduct committed by Brownlow North and it ended with words to this effect, “How dare you, being conscious of the truth of all the above, pray and speak to the people, this evening, when you are such a vile sinner?”

The preacher put the letter into his pocket, entered the pulpit and, after prayer and praise, commenced his address to a very crowded congregation. But before speaking on his text, he produced the letter and informed the people of its contents. And then he added, “All that is here said is true and it is a correct picture of the degraded sinner that I once was. And oh, how wonderful must the Grace of God be that could quicken and raise me up from such a death in trespasses and sins and make me what I appear before you tonight—a vessel of mercy—one who knows that all his past sins have been cleansed away through the atoning blood of the Lamb of God! It is of His redeeming love that I have now to tell you and to entreat any here who are not yet reconciled to God, to come this night in faith to Jesus, that He may take their sins away and heal them.”

Thus, instead of closing the preacher’s mouth by this letter, the enemy’s attempt only opened the hearts of the people and the Word of God was preached and heard with power! Oh that you, my dear Hearers, would believe the Lord Jesus to be a real Savior of real sinners and come to Him with all your sins about you! Do not hope because you think yourselves pure, but come to Jesus because you are *impure* and need to be cleansed by Him! Cast yourselves at His dear feet at once! Take The Sinner’s Friend to be your Friend because you are a sinner! Let the Savior be your Savior because you need saving! God bless you, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark 4:21-41
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—917, 683, 555.**

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A PAINFUL AND PUZZLING QUESTION

NO. 3241

[This sermon is the 1000th issued since the beloved preacher was “called Home” at Mentone on January 31st, 1892. Regular readers of the Sermons will praise the Lord that the publication of them has been continued through all the intervening years, and they will rejoice to know that sufficient unpublished manuscripts still remain to continue the weekly publication of the Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit for several years.]

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 16, 1911.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“How is it that you have no faith?”
Mark 4:40.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text is #1964—Volume 33—**WHY IS FAITH SO FEEBLE?**—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

This question may be very properly put to those who have no faith at all—and we intend to so put it in the second part of our discourse. But it was originally put to men who had some faith, men who had faith enough to make them disciples of Christ, faith which brought them to sail in the same vessel with Him. Even when they reproached Him and said, “Care you not that we perish?” they had faith enough to make them call Him, “Master.” Yet, in comparison with the faith which they ought to have had, Christ calls their faith no faith at all! They were so wavering, so tossed about with unbelief, that though they were His hearty, honest and sincere followers, He yet speaks to them as if they were unbelievers and says to them, “How is it that you have no faith?”

I shall address this question, then, first of all, *to God’s people*. And in the next place, *to the unconverted*.

I. First, LET US SPEAK TO GOD’S PEOPLE.

Let me say to begin with, that *this is a question which must have been peculiarly painful to Him who asked it*. The faith in which they were lacking was faith in Him—their Master, their Lord who had loved them from before the foundation of the world and who intended to shed His precious blood for them—and to make them His companions in Glory, world without end! Yet they had no faith in Him! Let the Lord Jesus come to you, my Brothers and Sisters, and I think you will detect much sorrow in the tone of His voice when He asks, “How is it that you have no faith, or so little faith in Me? I have loved you. I have loved you to the death—remember Gethsemane and Golgotha—remember all that I did and am

still doing for you. How is it that you doubt Me?” Beloved, if we doubt our fellow men, it is not strange, for Judas is one of a large family. But to doubt the Savior, the faithful and true Friend that sticks closer than a brother—this is a cut as unkind as any of the lashes which fell upon His shoulders when He was chastised in Pilate’s Hall!

You will see that the question must have pained Him if you notice to whom He addressed it. “How is it that *you* have no faith?” You chosen twelve, you who have been with Me from the beginning, you to whom I have expounded the mysteries which have been left dark sayings to the multitudes—how is it that My choicest friends, the picked ones of My band, have no faith in Me? And the Lord seems sorrowfully to put this question to some of us—“How is it that *you* have no faith, you whose names are written in My Book of Life, no, written on My hands, and engraved on My heart—you who have been bought with My precious blood, snatched out of the claws of the lion by My almighty power and restored from all your wanderings by My loving care? How is it that you, My favorites—the King’s own chosen companions—how is it that *you* have no faith?”

And the question was painful to Him for yet a third reason—namely, that they had no faith upon a matter in which one would have thought they might have believed. They were in the vessel with Him and if the ship went to the bottom, they would go to the bottom in good company, for their Lord was with them! And yet they had not enough faith in Him to believe that He would save their lives! Perhaps they knew His ability—if so, they questioned His willingness. Perhaps they knew His willingness—if so, they questioned His ability! In either case, it was very painful that they should think their own dear Friend, their Lord and Master, would let them sink when the glance of His eyes could save them, or the will of His heart could deliver them!

And now, this question, as Jesus Christ puts it to us, must be very painful to Him. “Do not *you*, O My children, do not *you* believe Me? Mine is an unchangeable love, a love that is stronger than death, a love which led Me down into the grave for you—do you not believe Me? If others, who do not know Me, doubt Me, I can endure their unbelief—but unbelief from *you*, My close personal acquaintances, My own familiar friends—oh, this is hard, indeed! You have sat under My shadow with great delight and do you doubt Me? You have eaten of My fruit and it has been sweet to your taste, and do you doubt Me? My left hand has been under your head and my right hand has embraced you—I have brought you into My banqueting house—I have fed you with food such as angels never tasted, I have filled your mouths with songs such as seraphs never sang, I have promised you a heritage such as princes upon earth might well envy—and do you doubt Me? Do *you* doubt Me and do you doubt Me about such a matter as whether you shall have food to eat and raiment to put

on? Do the lilies doubt Me? Do the ravens doubt Me? And will you doubt Me about a matter concerning which lilies have no care and the ravens have no thought? Do your doubts relate to your eternal salvation? But have I not guaranteed to save you? Have I not sworn that I will surely deliver every soul that trusts in Me? What have I done to make you doubt Me thus? Wherein have I failed you? Show Me which promise I have broken, to which of My oaths I have been a traitor, or in what case I have turned My back upon My friends? Oh, doubt me no longer!”—

**“O fearful! O faithless! in mercy He cries,
My promise, My Truth, are they light in your eyes?
Still, still I am with you, My promise shall stand,
Through tempest and tossing I’ll bring you to land.”**

I wish I could speak in a way that would give some idea of the tenderness of the way in which my Master would put these questions to you. I think if He were here in bodily Presence and showed you His wounds, He would then say to you, “can you distrust Me with these tokens of love in My hands, My feet and My side? Can you doubt Me now?” And as He put the question, He would make you feel that it stirred intense anguish in His soul if it did not in yours. So you see that this was a painful question to Him who asked it.

But in the second place, *it was a necessary question for them to hear, and it is a necessary question for us to hear, too.* I should like to individualize a little, to hold the mirror up before some of you that you may see yourselves.

There are some here who are doubting Christ because they are in temporal trial. You never were in such a sad position as you are in just now. Business seems to go all contrary to your designs. Your flood tide has suddenly ebbed and your vessel threatens to be high and dry on a shoal. You have a promise from God that it shall not be so, for He has said, “Trust in the Lord and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed.” He has said, “Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain you: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.” Yet for all that, you are still doubting. There is a trouble coming upon you tomorrow, or there is a season of trial coming in a week’s time. You have taken it before God in prayer and yet, even after you had prayed over it, and asked God’s help, you said to a friend, “I do not know how I shall ever get through it.” Now, was that right? Was that trusting your heavenly Friend? Has He not helped you before? Has He not delivered you in six troubles, and in seven shall any evil touch you? Come, dear Sister, come, dear Brother, come at once to the Mercy Seat with your burdens and may God give you faith enough to lay your case before Him, and you shall then hear Him say, “As your days, so shall your strength be.”—

**“In every condition—in sickness, in health,
In poverty’s vale, or abounding in wealth.**

***At home and abroad, on the land, on the sea,
As your days may demand, shall your strength always be.”***

Another person is here whose trouble is not about gold and silver, food and raiment—it is much worse—it is a trouble about his soul. He has lately been overwhelmed with a very terrible temptation and wherever he goes, it haunts him. He tries to run away from it, but he thinks he might as well try to run away from his own shadow! It clings to him. It seems to have fastened upon his hand as the viper did upon Paul, and he cannot shake it off. He is afraid, indeed, that he will never be able to overcome this strong temptation. Have you never read this Inspired verse, “There has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it”? Then, “how is it that you have no faith?” Did not the Lord Jesus teach you to pray, “Lead us not into temptation”? You have prayed that and did He not tell you to add, “but deliver us from evil,” as though, if the first petition were not answered, the second one might come in? You have prayed that and you believe that God hears prayer—how is it, then, that you have no faith to believe that He will hear you in this particular case? Beloved, Christ is not a Savior merely for some things, but for *all things*. And He does not come in to help His people simply on some days under certain assaults—but under all temptations and under all trials, He comes to their rescue! Weak as you are, He can strengthen you—and fierce though the temptation may be—He can cover you from head to foot with a panoply of proof in which you shall stand right gloriously clad and be forever safe!

The question of the text might just as properly be asked of some Christians in view of service which they might render to Christ. You do not preach in the street, though you have the ability to do so—you say you never could stand up to face the crowd. “How is it that you have no faith?” You do not teach in the Sabbath school, though you sometimes *do* think you ought to try it, but you can hardly get enough courage. “How is it that you have no faith?” You would like to say a word or two to an ungodly companion, but you are afraid that it would be of no use and that you would be laughed at. “How is it that you have no faith?” Can you not say as Nehemiah did, “Should such a man as I flee?” Who are you that you should be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man that is crushed as easily as a moth? Be of good courage and do your Master’s will! Has He not most certainly said, “Fear not, you worm, Jacob, and you men of Israel; I will help you, says the Lord, and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel”? You know that these are His words—then “how is it that you have no faith?” If we had more faith, dear Friends, we would be doing a great deal more for our Lord and we would succeed in it—but for lack of faith we do not try, and for lack of trying we

do not perform—and we are little nobodies when we might serve the Master and do much if we had but more faith in Him!

There is another man here who is afraid to die. He has been a Christian for many years, but whenever the thought of death crosses his mind, he tries to shake it off. He is a Believer in Christ, but he is afraid that he shall not be able to endure the last trying hour. I recollect a sermon which my grandfather once preached and which was a rather curious one. His text was, “The God of all Grace,” and he said that God would give His people all Grace, “but,” he said, at the close of each point, “there is one kind of Grace you do not need.” The refrain came several times over, “There is one kind of Grace you do not need.” I think his hearers were all puzzled, but they learned what he meant when he closed by saying, “and the kind of Grace that you do not need is *dying* Grace in living moments, for you only need that when dying time comes.” It may be that as we are at this moment, we could not play the man in death, yet I am persuaded that the most timorous women here, the most desponding man, if they are but resting upon Jesus, will be able to *sing* in death’s tremendous hour! Do not be afraid, Beloved—there will be extraordinary courage given you when you come into extraordinary trial. Like Hopeful in the river, you will be able to say to your brother, Christian, “I feel the bottom and it is good.” There is a good foothold through the River of Death since Jesus Christ has died! Do not trouble yourself about dying if you are already dead with Christ, for His Word is sure, “He that believe in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.” Be of good courage, or else the next time you are in bondage through fear of death, I shall venture to put to you the question of the text, “How is it that you have no faith?”

So might I run through the whole congregation, but perhaps it would be best to conclude the list by saying that this question might often meet us at our closet doors. I hope all of us who profess to be Believers in Christ know the power of prayer, for if we do not, we are fearful hypocrites! But, Brothers and Sisters, is it not very possible that after you have been praying, you come down from your closet doubting whether you have been heard? You have asked for a certain mercy, but you do not really expect to receive it—and so the Lord might as well say to you, “How is it that you have no faith?” You often do not get the blessing because you do not believe that God will give you what you ask for! But remember that “all things are possible to him that believes.” God denies nothing to a fervent heart when it can plead His promise and lay hold upon Him by the hand of faith. I would that we had in all our churches a growing band of men who could really pray. One of the Cæsars had what he called, “a thundering legion”—they were men who were Christians and could pray! It is truly said that the man who is mighty on his knees is mighty everywhere. If you can conquer God in prayer—and that *can* be done—you can

certainly conquer your fellow creatures. If, when wrestling with the Angel as Jacob did, you can come off victor, you need not be afraid to wrestle with the very devil, himself, for you will be more than a match for him through the Lord Jesus Christ!

And now, thirdly, dear Friends, I think that *this is a very humiliating question for us to answer*. I do not wish to answer it for you, but I want to propose it to every Christian so that he may answer it himself. But I will help you to answer it.

Can you make a good excuse for your unbelief? I will stand and frankly confess that I cannot find any excuse for mine. This is my history—I will tell it because I should not wonder if it is very much like yours. I was a stranger to God and to hope, but Jesus sought me. His Spirit taught me my need of Him and I began to cry to Him. No sooner did I cry than He heard me and, at length He said to me, “Look, poor Trembler, look to Me, and I will give you peace.” I did look and I had peace—a peace which I bless God I have never wholly lost these many years. I looked to Him and was lightened and my face was not ashamed!

Since then, He has led me in a very singular path in Providence. My trials have been not as many as I deserved, but enough—and as my days, my strength has been. There has been in temporals an abundant supply. And in spirituals the fountain has never dried up. In my darkest nights He has been my star. In my brightest days He has been my sun. When my enemies have been too many for me, I have left them with Him and He has put them to the rout. When my burdens have been too heavy for me to carry, I have cast them upon Him and He never seemed to make much of them, but carried them as some great creature might carry a grain of sand! I have not a word to say against Him and if He acts to me as He has done, if I could live to be as old as Polycarp and were asked to curse Him, I would have to say with him, as I say now, “How can I curse Him? What have I to say against Him? He never broke His promise. He never failed in His Word. He has been to me the best Master that ever a man had, though I have been one of the worst of His servants. He has been true and faithful to every jot and tittle, blessed be His name!” If He were to say to me, “How is it that you have no faith?” I am sure I do not know what I could answer—I could only hide my face, and say, “My Master, I seem to be almost a devil to think that I cannot believe more firmly in such an One as You are—so good, so true, so kind.” No, I cannot make any excuse for myself and I do not suppose that you can make any excuse for yourselves, either!

I suppose, however, that the real reason of our lack of faith lies in this—that we have low thoughts of God compared with the thoughts of Him we ought to have. We do not think Him to be so mighty, so good or so tender as He is. Then, again, we have very leaky memories—we forget His mighty arm, we forget what He did in days past. Hermon’s Mount

and Mizar's Hill we pass by and we let His loving kindness be forgotten. I am afraid, too, that we rely too much upon ourselves. Was it not Dr. Gordon who, when he lay dying, said that the secret of strength in faith in Christ was having no faith in ourselves? I am inclined to think that the problem of weak faith in God is our having too much self-reliance. But when you cannot trust to yourselves, then you hang upon Christ and cling to Him as your only hope—then you give the grip of a sinking man and there is no hold like that! There is no hold like that of one who feels, "If I do not grip this, there is nothing else for me to cling to in all the world—

***'Other refuge have I none
Hangs my helpless soul on You.'***

I am afraid it is our self-confidence that comes in to mar our trust in God. And besides that, there is our "evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." I said, the other day, speaking of some sad, sad temptation into which a Brother had fallen, that I wished the devil were dead. But after a while, I corrected myself and said I wished that I were dead, for if I were dead and gone, and Christ lived in me, I would not mind the devil—but when the devil and myself get to working together, we make a sorry mess of it. He might harmlessly bring the sparks if I had not any tinder, but it is the tinder in me that does the mischief! He might try his hardest to break into my house if my house were not such a poor clay tenement. O Lord Jesus, come and live in my heart! Fill it with Yourself and then there will be no room for Satan! Hold me fast even unto the end—

***"May Your rich Grace impart
Strength to my fainting heart!
My zeal inspire!
As You have died for me
Oh may my love to Thee
Pure, warm, and changeless be,
A living fire!"***

So here I leave this point with you Christians, only I shall beg to come round in spirit and say to all doubting Christians here, "How is it that you have no faith?" I will set you the question of my text for you to answer between now and next Sunday. Give an account of your unbelief—and if you can give a good account of it, pray let us hear it! I never heard any good excuse made for that wicked sinner, Mr. No-Belief. He cannot be put to death, I fear, but I often wish that he could be blown to pieces from the muzzles of the guns of the promises! Oh, that the last rag of him and the last remnant of him were clean destroyed! John Bunyan, in his *Holy War*, pictures the citizens of Mansoul going round to pick up the bones of the traitors and burying them all, "till," he says, "there was not the least bone, or piece of a bone of a traitor left." I wish we could get to

that state—that there might not be the least bone, or piece of a bone of a doubter left, so that we might sing confidently concerning our God.

II. Now, solemnly and most affectionately, I WOULD SPEAK TO THOSE WHO HAVE NEVER BELIEVED IN CHRIST.

To some of you, that head that once was crowned with thorns is no object of reverence. You have never looked up to “the Man of Sorrows,” and felt that “surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.” It is nothing to you that Jesus should die. Up to this moment you have been a stranger to Him, so I beg to ask you the question, “How is it that you have no faith?” The question is not an impertinent one, but a very natural one—allow one who would do you good to press it upon your minds.

Do you not know that *faith makes the Christian happy*? There are Christians here with very small incomes—a very few shillings a week. They are living in the depths of poverty and yet they would not change places with kings, for they are so happy because faith makes them rich! There are others of us who have an abundance of this world’s goods and yet we can truly say that we would give them all up if God so willed it, for they are not our gods. Our well-springs of joy come from Christ! Faith makes men happy. “How is it that you have no faith?” You squander your substance to get a day’s amusement. You spend your money for that which is not bread and you labor for that which satisfies not—but here is something that is really bread and that would satisfy—how is it that you have it not? You workingmen, you sons of toil, with little here to make you blessed, “how is it that you have no faith?” Faith would make your cottage into a palace, and a scanty loaf to be better than a stalled ox!

You, know, too, that *it is faith which enables the Christian to die well*. You expect to die soon—then “how is it that you have no faith?” You are like the man who has to cross a river, but has made no provision for it! Or like one who is going a long journey, but takes no money with him, no shoes, no staff, no scrip. How is it that you have nothing to help you to die? It is faith which conducts the Christian into Heaven. We sing of “the realms of the blest,” and of Canaan’s “happy land,” but faith is the only passport to the skies, so, “how is it that you have no faith?” Do you not desire a blessed future? Have you no wish for immortal joys? Does your heart never leap at the thought of the joys that the saints have before the Throne of God? How is it that you let these things slip by, having no faith? “Without faith it is impossible to please God,” and the faithless will have their portion in the lake that burns with fire! “How is it that you have no faith?” Do you mean to venture into that state of misery? Do you intend to dare the Day of Judgment without an Advocate and a Friend? You will have to rise, again, from the grave though the worms destroy your body, yet in your flesh you will have to see God! The trumpet will be sounding, the angels will be gathering, the Judgment Seat will be set and

you will be called to account—and without faith you must be driven from God's Presence into black despair! Then, "how is it that you have no faith?" When I think over these things, it seems to me to be strange that men should be living in utter indifference to Christ and in neglect of Divine things! "How is it," can any of you tell us, "How is it that you have no faith?"

Is it that there are a great many difficult things that you cannot understand? Now, what is it that you are asked to believe? Simply this—that sin was so evil and bitter a thing that God must punish it, and that His own dear Son became a Man and suffered for the sins of all those who trust Him—so that those sins may readily be pardoned because Christ suffered the punishment of them. Really, that does not strike me as being a very difficult thing to believe! To trust my soul with the Son of God, bleeding and dying upon Calvary, does not strike me as being, in itself, a very difficult thing. And if it *is* difficult, it surely must be the hardness of our hearts that makes it so, for there is not beneath the cope of Heaven a Doctrine more reasonable, which more deserves to be received than this—that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," even the chief.

I do not think that the most of you, when you are asked why you have no faith, can reply that it is because you do not know *what you have to believe*. I know that I have tried to make it plain enough as far as my preaching is concerned. If I knew of any words in the English language that would be plainer than those I have used, though they should be so outrageously vulgar that I would be overhauled for using them by all the gentlemen in England, yet I would use them before I left this platform if I thought I could win one soul by them! The simple Truth of God is that whoever trusts Christ is saved—and we have tried to put this to you in every shape and form and way that we could think of, so that *lack of knowledge* is not the reason why you have no faith!

I am afraid that in many of you, *lack of faith is from a lack of thought*. Oh, how many of you are mere butterflies! You think about your work, or about your pleasures, but not about your souls! It is not always a bad sign when a man begins to be skeptical. I would sooner he were that than that he were thoughtless, for even to *think* about spiritual things is good! Men are often like some bats which, when they get on the ground, cannot fly—they must get on a stone and then, when they are a little elevated, they can move their wings. So, thoughtless men are on the ground and cannot fly—but when God sets them thinking, they seem as if they were moving their wings. I pray you, think about these matters, for certainly it must commend itself to every reasonable person that the better part of men ought to be the most thought of. This poor mortal rag, which is to drop into the grave, ought not to command my highest and most continuous thought—but the immortal principle within me which will

outlive the stars and be a thing of life and vigor when the sun has shut his burning eye from dim old age—this immortal part of my nature ought certainly to have my most serious and my best regard! If you have been obliged to say that you have no faith because you have not thought, I pray you think—and may God help you that this thinking may lead you to faith!

But to close—for our time is gone—the question I have put to you is a question which I hope will never need to be asked of you anymore. May this be the last time that any man shall have to look you in the face and say, “How is it that you have no faith?” In order to make this wish true, however, you must believe now! To believe is to trust Christ Jesus. The Son of the Everlasting God takes upon Himself the form of Man and suffers. And He tells us that if we rest on Him, just as I now lean here on this rail with all my weight, He will be better to us than our faith! There never yet was a man who trusted in Christ and found Him a liar. If you trust Christ, you shall be saved—no, you *are* saved! And the proof of your being saved will be this—that you will not be the same man any longer. All things will become new with you. You will be saved from sinning as well as from the guilt of sin. The drunk shall become sober, the unchaste shall become pure, the mere moralist shall become spiritual and the enemy of God shall become His friend as soon as He trusts Christ!—

**“Loved of my God, for Him again
With love intense I burn!
Chosen of Him ere time began,
I choose Him in return.”**

I cannot but love Him who has saved me from my sins!

May God bless this question to you. But if it has not yet been of use to you, I hope that it will follow you. I should like to pin it to your backs, but it would be better if we could put it in your hearts. I hope that it will wake you up at night—I trust it may be with you at breakfast tomorrow. And between the intervals of business I hope there will come up a voice from under the counter, or from the back of the workshop, “How is it that you have no faith?” And at night-fall, when you walk alone in the street a while, may it be almost as though someone had touched you on the shoulder and said, “How is it that you have no faith?”

But mark you, if this question does not haunt you, now, the day will come when stretched on that lonely bed, when you must bid the world adieu, there may seem, perhaps, to be the form of the preacher who now stands before you—or the ghastly form of Death, who with bony finger uplifted, shall preach such a sermon to you as your very heart and the marrow of your bones shall feel, while He says to you—“*How is it that you hate no faith?*”

Oh, may you never need to be asked that question again, but may you now believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 4:35-41.**

Verses 30, 36 *And the same day, when the evening was come, He said unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude*—Telling them that Christ would give them no more instruction that day, and that they had better go back to their homes. There are some preachers who have great gifts of dispersion, it does not take them long to scatter a congregation—but I expect that Christ’s disciples found it to be no easy task to send away the crowds that had been listening to their Master’s wondrous words. But, “when they had sent away the multitude”—

36. *They took Him even as He was in the boat. And there were also with Him other little boats.* Christ was Lord High Admiral of the Galilean Lake that night and He had quite a little fleet of vessels around His flagship!

37. *And there arose a great windstorm*—Our friend, John Macgregor, “Rob Roy,” tells us that the lake is subject to very sudden and severe storms. It lies in a deep hollow and down from the surrounding ravines and valleys the air comes with a tremendous rush seldom experienced even upon a real ocean, for this was, of course, only a little lake though sometimes called a sea. I have been told that, on some Scotch lochs, the wind will occasionally come from three or four quarters at once, lifting the boat bodily out of the water—and sometimes seeming to lift the water up towards Heaven with the boat and all in it! So it was that night, when “there arose a great windstorm”—

37. *And the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full of water.* No doubt they baled out the boat with all their might, and did their best to prevent it from sinking, yet, “it was now full of water.” But where was their Lord and Master, and what was He doing while the storm was raging?

38. *And He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow.* [See Sermon #1121, Volume 19—CHRIST ASLEEP IN THE VESSEL—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] He was quite at home upon the wild waves—

“Rocked in the cradle of the deep”—

for winds and waves were but His Father’s servants, obeying His commands. “He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow”—doubtless weary and worn with the labors of the day. We do not always think enough of the weariness of Christ’s Human body. There was not only the effort of preaching, but His preaching was so full of high thought, and the expressions He used were so pregnant with meaning, that it must have taken much out of Him to preach thus from the heart, with intense agony of spirit, and with His brain actively at work all the while! Remember

that He was truly Man as well as the Son of God and that what He did was of so high an order, not to be reached by any of us, that it must have exhausted Him and, therefore, He needed sleep to refresh Him. And there He was, wisely taking it, and serving God by sleeping soundly and thus preparing Himself for the toil of the following day.

38, 39. *And they awoke Him, and said unto Him, Master, care You not that we perish? And He arose and rebuked the wind—It was boisterous and noisy and He bade it obey its Master’s will!*

39. *And said unto the sea, Peace, be still! Can you not almost fancy that you can hear that commanding Voice addressing the raging, roaring, tumultuous winds and waves?*

39. *And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.* Not only was the wind quieted and the sea hushed to slumber, but a deep, dead, mysterious calm transformed the lake into a molten mirror! When Christ stills winds and waves, it is “a great calm.” Did you ever feel “a great calm?” It is much more than ordinary peace of mind—it is to your heart as if there were no further possibilities of fear! Your troubles have so completely gone that you can scarcely remember them. There is no one but the Lord, Himself, who can speak so to produce “a great calm.” Master, we entreat You to speak such a calm as that for those of us who need it!

40. *And He said unto them—When He had calmed the winds and the waves, He had to speak to another fickle set—more fickle than either winds or waves! “And He said unto them”—*

40, 41. *Why are you so fearful?* [See Sermon #2852, Volume 49—COMFORT FOR THE FEARFUL—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *How is it that you have no faith? And they feared exceedingly.—They went from one fear to another, but this time it was the fear of awe—a hallowed dread of what might happen to a ship which had such a mysterious Person on board. Though there was probably in their minds no fear of death, it seemed to them a fearsome thing to be in the Presence of One who had such power over the raging elements. “They feared exceedingly”—*

41. *And said one to another, What manner of Man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?* [See Sermon #1686, Volume 28—WITH THE DISCIPLES ON THE LAKE OF GALILEE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Blessed God-Man, we worship and adore You!

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

WITH THE DISCIPLES ON THE LAKE OF GALILEE NO. 1686

**DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 6, 1881,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“The men marveled, saying, What manner of Man is this,
that even the winds and the sea obey Him!”
Matthew 8:27.*

*“And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another,
What manner of Man is this, that even the wind
and the sea obey Him?”
Mark 4:41.*

THIS story of the storm upon the lake is wonderfully full of spiritual interest. Not only does it, literally, show to us the Divine power of our blessed Master in lulling the storm, rendered the more conspicuous by being placed, side by side, with the human weakness which made Him sleep in the ship upon a pillow, but, spiritually, it is a kind of ecclesiastical history, a miniature outline of the story of the Church in all ages. No, the teaching ends not when you have read the incident in that light—it also contains a suggestive forecast of the story of every man who is making the spiritual voyage in company with Jesus.

Notice, first, how it is a kind of ecclesiastical history. There is Christ in the vessel with His disciples. What is that but a Church with its pastor? We see in the Church a vessel bearing a rich cargo, steering for a desired haven and fitted out for fishing on the road, should fair opportunity occur. Her being upon a sea shows her to be here below, subject to trial, suffering, labor and peril. I scarcely know of any more apt picture of a Church than a ship upon the treacherous Galilean sea with Jesus and His disciples sailing in it.

After a while a storm comes—this we may safely reckon upon. Whatever ship makes a fair voyage, with a favoring wind, the ship of the Church of Jesus Christ never will. She has her calms, but these last not forever—her sail is sure to be weather-beaten at one time or another—and the occasions are seldom far apart. The vessel which has Jesus for its Captain is destined to feel the tempest. Christ has not come to send peace on earth, but a sword. This is His own declaration and He knows His own intent. Every sail of the good ship which bears the flag of the Lord High Admiral of our fleet must be beaten with the wind and every plank in her must be tried by the waves.

To Christ’s Church there are many storms and some of them of the most terrible character. Of heresy—ah, how near to wrecking has she been with the false doctrines of Gnosticism, Arianism, Popery and Rationalism! Of persecution she has constant experience, but sometimes exceedingly vehement has the hurricane been. In the early stages of Church his-

tory, the pagan persecutions of Rome followed thick and fast upon each other and when Giant Pagan had emptied out all his fury, there came a worse tyrant whose magical arts raised hurricanes of wind against the good ship—there sat, at Rome, a harlot who persecuted the saints exceedingly—being drunk with their blood.

Then there raged a cyclone which almost drove the boat out of the water and drenched and well-near drowned her crew—a fierce cyclone beat upon the royal vessel, so that the waves threatened to swallow her up! Tears and blood covered the saints as with a salt and crimson spray! Hers was no pleasure trip—she went forth like the lifeboat, fashioned for the purpose of riding out the storm. The true ship of the Lord was, and is, and will be in a storm until the Lord shall come—and then there shall be for it no further wave of trial, but the sea of glass forever!

Note, again, that while this storm was roaring worse and worse, the Lord was in the ship, but He seemed to be asleep. So has it often been. No Providence delivered the persecuted. No marvelous manifestations of the Spirit scattered the heresy. The Christ was in the Church, but He was in the back part, with His head upon a pillow, asleep. You all know the portions of Church history which this illustrates.

Then came distress. The people in the vessel began to be alarmed. They were afraid that they should utterly perish. And do you wonder at it when the peril was so great? That distress led to prayer. Mighty prayer has often been produced by mighty trial. Oh, how slack has the Church been in the presentation of her spiritual offering until the Lord has sent fire upon her and that fire has seemed to kindle her frankincense so that it has begun to smoke towards Heaven! Prayer was produced by distress and prayer brought distress to an end!

Then the Master rose up and displayed His power and Godhead. You know how He has done so in reformations and revivals time after time. He has chided the unbelief of His trembling saints and then He has hushed the winds and the waves—and there has been a time of peace for His poor, weather-beaten Church—a period free from bloodshed and heresy, an era of progress and peace. The Church has a history which has many a time repeated itself. If you take an interest in the navigation of that wondrous vessel which carries Christ and all His chosen, you will never have to complain of lack of incidents!

But I think I said that the story of the storm upon the lake is an admirable emblem of the spiritual voyage of every man who is bound for the fair havens in company with Jesus. We are with Christ, happy with Him and sailing pleasantly—will this last? Right speedily comes a storm. The ship rocks and reels. She is covered with the waves. It looks as if our poor rowboat will sink to the bottom! Yet Jesus is in our hearts and that is our safety. We are not saved by seamanship, but by having on board the Lord Paramount who rules all winds and waves—and never yet lost a vessel that bore the Cross at its masthead!

Sometimes within our hearts He seems to be asleep. We hear not His voice; we see but little of His face—His eyes are closed and He, Himself, is hidden out of sight. He has not altogether left us, blessed be His name, but He appears to be asleep. Ah, then the ship rocks, again, and we reel,

again, and we wonder that He can still sleep! Then are we driven in awe at alarm to prayer, to which we ought to have betaken ourselves long before! It may be that we have been busy with ropes and tackle, strengthening the mast, furling the sail, doing all kinds necessary work and, therefore, leaving undone the most necessary work of all, namely, seeking out the Master and telling Him the story of our peril.

We pray not till we are forced to our knees, sad sinners that we are! The boat will go down! She will go down! And now it is that we, also, go down to the cabin and begin to wake Him up with, “Master, save us! We perish!” Then you know what happens—how the gentle rebuke passes over our spirit and we are humbled. But the grander rebuke is heard by the winds and waves—and they are quieted and sleep at the Master’s feet—and in us and around us there is a great calm. Oh, how profound the peace! How blessed the stillness!

We were about to say, “Would God it would last on forever,” but as yet tranquility cannot be perpetual. Our perils of waters will be sure to repeat themselves. Often we go down to the sea in ships and do business in great waters, so that we see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep. Hear how a poet sings the story—

***“Fierce was the wild billow
Dark was the night!
Oars labored heavily
Foam glimmered white!
Trembled the mariners
Peril was near
Then said the God of God—
‘Peace! It is I!’
Ridge of the mountain wave,
Lower your crest!
Wail of Euroclydon,
Be you at rest!
Sorrow can never be—
Darkness must fly—
Where says the Light of Light—
‘Peace! It is I!’
Jesus, Deliverer!
Come You to me!
Soothe You my voyaging
Over life’s sea!
You, when the storm of death
Roars sweeping by,
Whisper, O Truth of Truth!—
‘Peace! It is I!’”***

On this occasion I will not further call your attention to the storm, or to the calm, but I beg you to observe the feelings of the disciples about the whole matter. The text says that, “The men marveled, saying, What manner of Man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him!” God evidently thinks much of His people’s inward feelings, for they are recorded here and in many other cases. The report of what these poor fishermen *felt* is as carefully made as the record of what their Lord and Master *said*, since this was necessary to set forth the intent and purpose of their Lord’s utterances. God often regards the external action as a mere husk, but the

feeling of His people is the innermost kernel of their life-story and He prizes it.

Some men practice introspection so much that they grow, at last, to make a kind of fetish of their inward feeling. This is wrong. Yet there is an error on the other side in which we cease to make conscience of our feelings and think them to be a matter of no consequence, as if there could be real life without feeling. I will cry up faith as much as anyone—but there is no need to depreciate all the other Graces, and especially all the emotions, in order to do honor to faith! We may honor the heir and yet see no reason for slaying all the rest of the royal seed. We must both feel aright and believe aright—and it is sometimes good for us to have a lesson about how to feel towards our Lord Jesus Christ.

Though feeling must be *secondary* to faith, yet it is far from being unimportant. At this time I shall principally talk about three feelings towards Christ. First, the men marveled. We will dwell upon that—marveling at Christ's work. Secondly, if you will turn to Mark, the fourth chapter and the 41st verse, you will see that Mark describes the feeling of the men as, fearing “exceedingly.” That shall be our second head—awe-stricken at His Presence. Thirdly, we see them, in our text, admiring His Person, for they said, “What manner of Man,” or, more correctly, “What kind of Person is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him!”

I. First, then, MARVELING AT HIS WORK. May I ask you to indulge, for a little while, the feeling of wonder? You believe in Jesus Christ and you are saved. Salvation comes not by wondering, but by *believing*. But now, having been saved, having passed from death unto life—and having been preserved for years upon the sea of life in the midst of many storms and, at this moment enjoying a great calm and restfulness of spirit, I invite you to marvel. What wonderful things Jesus has done for me! It is in my power, if I choose, to waste my time in reading romances, but I care nothing for them, for my own life is to me more romantic than romance!

The story of God's goodness to me is more thrilling than any work of fiction could possibly be! I am speaking to some here who I am sure will join with me in acknowledging that there is a freshness, a novelty, a surprise power about the dealings of God with us which we do not meet with anywhere else! Well do we sing in our hymn—

***“I need not go abroad for joys—
I have a feast at home,”***

and we can also add that we need not go abroad for *wonders*, for we have a perfect museum at home in our own experience! John Bunyan, when he was describing the experience of his pilgrim, said, “Oh, world of wonders! I can say no less.” And so it is. The life of the godly man, on the God side of it, as he receives Grace from Jesus, is a gallery of heavenly art! He is an exhibition of Divine skill and power, a wonderland of mercy—

***“Still has my life new wonders seen
Of loving kindness rare!
A monument of Grace I stand,
Your goodness to declare.”***

Let us think for a minute or two of the parallel between us and these disciples as to wonderment. Consider, first, that the instantaneous and profound calm was contrary to Nature. The Galilean Lake lies in a deep

hollow, much below the level of the ocean, and in the sides of the cliffs and hills which shut it in, there are valleys and openings which act as funnels, down which, blasts of cold air from the mountains often rush upon a sudden. When the time of storm is really on, the Lake of Galilee is not tossed about like an ordinary open sea, but is rent, torn, heaved up and almost hurled out of its bed by down-driving hurricanes and twisting whirlwinds! No sailor knows which way the wind will blow except that it blows all ways at once and particularly downwards—as if, with a direct downdraft from Heaven, it blows vessels into the water—and soon, changing its course, lifts them into the air!

Any mariner who is not used to that strange, wild sea, would soon lose his head and despair of life. It is like a boiling cauldron—the spirits of the vast deep stir it to its bottom! Yet this billowy lake, in a moment, was turned to glass by the words of Jesus—a fact far more wonderful to witness than to read about! Such a change in the uproarious elements was altogether contrary to Nature and, therefore, “the men marveled.” Now, Beloved, look back upon what your life has been. I do not know exactly where you begin your life story. Some commence in the slime pits of Sodom—in vice and drunkenness. Others begin with wandering on the dark mountains of infidelity, or among the hogs and sloughs of Phariseism and formality.

However it may have been, it is a miracle that you should have been made to fall at Jesus’ feet and cry out for mercy through His precious blood! That you should give up all trust and confidence in self and, at the same time, should turn away from favorite lusts which you once reveled in, is such a wonder that nobody would have believed it, had it been prophesied to them! Certainly you never would have believed it, yourself—and yet it has taken place—and other unlooked-for changes have followed it. Why, you have lived, since then, in a way that would have been once condemned by yourself as utterly absurd! Had an Oracle informed you of it, you would have ridiculed its forecast. “No,” you would have said, “I shall never be *that!* I shall never feel *that!* I shall never do *that!*”

And yet, it has been so with you. The boiling cauldron of your nature has been cooled down and quieted—and an obedient calm has succeeded rebellious rage. Is it not so? I can only say that if your religion has never produced a wonder, I wonder that you believe in it! If there is not something about you, through Divine Grace, which quite surprises yourself, I should not be amazed if, one of these days, you wake up and find that you have been self-deceived! Far above Nature are the ways of Grace in men! And if you know them, they have produced in you what your natural temperament and your worldly surroundings never could have produced.

There has been fire where you looked for snow, and cool streams where you expected flames. A growth of good wheat has been seen where Nature would have produced nothing but thorns and briars. Where sin abounded, Grace has much more abounded, and your life has become the theater of miracles and the home of wonders!

These men marveled, next, because the calm was so unexpected by reason. The ship was near going to pieces! A gust of wind threatened to lift her right out of the water and the next threatened to plunge her to the

bottom of the sea! The weary fishermen certainly did not look for a *calm*—there were no signs of such a gift! When they said, “Master, we perish,” I do not know what they thought their Lord would do, but they assuredly never dreamed that He would stand up in the back part of the ship, and say, “Winds and waves, what are you doing? Your Master is here. Be still.” That was beyond their nautical experience and their fathers had never seen such wonders in *their* day. They could not hope that in a moment they should be in a profound calm!

Now, may I ask you to wonder a little at what the Lord has done for *you*? Has He not done for you what you never expected? To speak for myself, I never reckoned upon standing here to preach to thousands of God’s people. When I was first brought to Jesus I had no such hope. Why should I be taken from the school and from the desk to lead a part of His flock? I wonder more and more that by His Grace I am what I am! Some of you, when you sit at the Communion Table, may well feel that the most wonderful thing about it is that you should find a welcome place at the Lord’s own festival. Did some of you expect, a year ago, that you would be here, now, on a Thursday night, listening to a talk about Jesus Christ?

Why, you hardly know how you got here! You can scarcely tell the way by which the Lord has led you to be a lover of the Gospel. Look at your inner feelings, as well as your outward position—are you not often made the subject of desires, of longings, of groanings and, on the other hand, of enjoyments, of sweet and precious endearments, of high and gracious expectations which utterly surprise you as you remember what you used to be? Are you not “like them that dream” when you think over the Lord’s loving kindness? And if others say, “the Lord has done great things for you,” does not your heart chime in with all its bells and ring out notes of joy, “The Lord has done great things for us, of which we are glad”? Come, indulge your wonder! Admire and marvel at the exceeding Grace of God towards you in working contrary to Nature, contrary to all reasonable expectations and bringing you to be His dear and favored child! Marvels of mercy, wonders of Grace belong unto God Most High!

Besides this, the idea of a storm which should immediately be followed by a great calm was a strikingly new experience. These fishermen of the Galilean Lake had never seen it after this fashion before. We read in the Old Testament of some, to whom it was said, “You have not gone this way before,” and certainly the same might have been said to these disciples. “You have been in storms, but you never before, in your lives, were one minute in a storm and the next in a calm.” It must have been enough to make them weep for joy, or, at least, it must have led them to hold up their hands in glad astonishment! The deliverance worked by their Lord was so fresh, so altogether new that marveling was natural!

Well, now, Brothers and Sisters, to come back to ourselves, again—have you not often experienced that which has astounded you by its novelty? Are not God’s mercies new every morning? I address some of you who have been 40 or 50 years in the ways of God—do you not find a continual freshness in the manifestations of God’s goodness to you, both in Providence and Grace? Let me ask you, has religious life been to you like mounting a treadmill, monotonous, wearisome, uniform? If so, there is

something wrong about you, for while we live near to God, we dwell under new heavens and walk upon a new earth! When a man travels through the Alps on a bright sunshiny day, all things are as new, as though born that morning—that drop of dew on the grass—he never saw before! That drifting cloud has newly arrived upon the scene. Never before has the traveler seen the face of Nature radiant with the same smile as that which now delights him.

Has it not been so with you in the journey of life? Have not all things become new and remained new since you were born anew? Has not Grace been heaped upon Grace, so that each new experience has excelled its predecessor? Still have I beheld fresh beauties in my Master's face, fresh glories in my Master's Words, fresh assurance of His faithfulness in His Providence, fresh joy in my Master's Spirit as He has dealt graciously with my soul! I know that it is so with you and I want you to marvel at it, that God should take so much trouble to manifest Himself to poor creatures that are not worth His treading on—that He should devise a thousand things most rare and new for such insignificant insects of a day as we are. Glory be to His blessed name, it may well be said of us, "The men marveled and said, What manner of Person is this who deals so with His people?" "Who is a God like unto You? What is man that You are mindful of Him? And the son of man that you visit him?" These three things made the disciples wonder.

There was another. I should think that it was a great marvel to them that a calm was sent so soon after the storm. Man needs time, but God's Word runs very quickly. Man travels with weary feet—the Lord rides upon a cherub and does fly, yes, He flies upon the wings of the wind! The particles of air and the drops of water were all in confusion through the storm, rushing as if chaos had come, again, rising in whirlwinds and falling in cataracts! Yet they did but see the face of their Maker and they were still! In one single instant there was a calm! Have not you and I experienced instantaneous workings of Divine Grace upon our spirits? It may not be so with all, but some of us, at the first instant of our faith, lost the burden of sin in a moment! Our load was all gone before we knew where we were. The change from sorrow to joy was not worked in us by degrees, but in a moment the sun leaped above the horizon and the night of our soul was over.

Has it not been so since? We have been, in the midst of God's people, as heavy as lead and without power to enjoy a Truth of God, or to perform a holy act. The hymns seemed a mockery and the prayer an empty form—and yet, in a single moment, the rod of the Lord has touched the rock and the waters have flowed forth—and by the very means of Grace which seemed so dull and powerless, we have been enlivened and comforted! We have blessed the Lord that we ever came to the place. I do not know how it is that we undergo such sudden changes. Yes I do—it is because God works all good things in us and He is able to accomplish, in an instant, that which we could not effect in a year! He can, in a moment, change our prison into a palace and our ashes into beauty. He can bid us put off our sackcloth and put on the wedding garments of delight. As in the twinkling of an eye, this corruptible shall put on incorruption, so in an instant our

spiritual death can blossom into heavenly life! This is a great wonder. Go and marvel at what the Lord has so speedily done for you.

And then, to think that it should have been so perfect! When a storm subsides, the sea is generally angry for hours, if not for days. A great wind at Dover, yesterday, would make the Channel rough for some time. But when our Lord Jesus makes a calm, the sea forgets her raging and smiles at once! In fact, "He makes the storm a calm, so that the waves are still." The winds hush all their fury and are quiet in an instant when He bids them rest. And oh, when the Lord gives joy and peace and blessedness to His people, He does not do it by halves! "When He gives quietness, who, then, can make trouble?" There is no such thing as a half-blessing for a child of God. The Lord gives Him fullness of peace—"the peace of God which passes all understanding." He causes him to enjoy quiet, through believing, and He enables him to rejoice in tribulation, also, for tribulation works blessing to the souls of men.

I feel that I cannot speak as I could wish, but I shall finish this division of the discourse by saying that one point of wonder was that the calm was worked so evidently by the Master's Words. He *spoke* and it was done. He poured no oil upon the waters. His will was revealed in a Word and that will was Law. Not an atom of matter dares to move if the Divine fiat forbids—the sovereignty of Jesus is supreme—and His Word is with power. Now, dear Friend, I know that there must have been very much that is wonderful in your life as a Christian, but do not think yourself the only partaker of such wonderment! Let us all sit down and enquire, each one, "Why is this to *me*? Why *me*, Lord? How can such great Grace be shown to *me*? And how can the Son of God stoop to look at me and take me into marriage union with Himself and promise that I shall live because He lives—that I shall reign because He reigns?"

Sit down, I say, and believingly marvel, and marvel, and marvel, and never leave off marveling! And let me drop one little word into your ear. Is there something that you need of God concerning which unbelief has said that it is too wonderful to be expected? Let that be the reason why you *shall* expect it! There is nothing to a Christian so probable as the unexpected—and there is nothing which God is so likely to do for us as that which is above all we ask or even think! God is at home in wonderland! If what you need is a commonplace thing, perhaps it may not come. But if it strikes you as a marvel, you are in a fit state of heart to honor God for it and you are likely to receive it!

Do not think that because between you and Heaven, if you reach it, there will be a giant causeway of marvels, therefore you will never get there! But, on the contrary, conclude that the God who began to save you by so great a miracle as the gift and death of His own dear Son, will go on to perfect your salvation even if He has to fling into the sea a thousand heavens to make stepping stones for you to tread upon so you can reach His Presence. "He that spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all things?" Therefore expect wonders!

These men marveled—expect to keep on marveling till you get to Heaven—and to keep on marveling when you are in Heaven and through-

out eternity! Wonder will be a principal ingredient of our adoration in Heaven! We—

***“Shall sing with wonder and surprise
His loving kindness in the skies.”***

I have been somewhat long on this first head. I will therefore give you a little, and only a little, upon the second.

II. Let us now see how the disciples were AWE-STRICKEN AT OUR LORD'S PRESENCE. Mark says that “the men feared greatly.” They feared greatly because they found themselves in the Presence of One who had stilled the winds and the waves! Brothers and Sisters, it is well to cultivate that holy familiarity which comes from nearness to Jesus and yet we ought always to be humbled by a sense of that nearness. Permit me to remind the boldest Believer that our loving Lord is still God over all! He is to be honored and revered, worshipped and adored by all who draw near to Him. However much He is our Brother, He says, “You call me Master and Lord, and you do well, for so I am.”

He is all the greater because of His condescension to us and we are bound to recognize this. Whenever Jesus is near, the feeling of holy awe and solemn dread will steal over true disciples. I am afraid of that way of being so familiar with Christ as to talk of Him as, “dear Jesus” and, “dear Lord,” as if He were some Jack or Harry that we might pat on the back whenever we liked. No, no. This will never do! It is not such language as men would use to their prince—let them not, thus, address the King of kings! However favored we may be, we are but dust and ashes—and our spirit must be chastened with reverence.

When Jesus is near us, we ought to exceedingly fear because we have doubted Him. If you had been suspicious of a dear friend and had indulged hard thoughts about him and, all of a sudden you found yourself sitting in the same room with him, you would feel awkward, especially if you understood that he knew what you had said and thought. Oh, you will feel ashamed of yourself, my Brothers and Sisters, if Jesus shall draw near to you! The wisest thing you can do in such a case is to say, “My Master, my Lord, since You favor me with Your Presence, I will first fall at Your feet and confess that I doubted You; that I thought that the stormy wind would swallow up the vessel and that the waves would devour both You and me. Forgive me, Master, forgive me for having thought so evil of You.”

Whenever we are near to Christ, one of the first feelings should be that of great humiliation. Let us fall at His feet and confess how ill we have thought of Him. Brethren, we have been so foolish as to fear His creatures, paying to them a sort of worship of fear, as if they had more power to harm than Jesus had to help! We clothe wind and sea with attributes which belong only to God—and look upon our trials as if they tried the Lord, too—and vanquished Him because they vanquish us. Are we not, because of this, smitten with dread in the Presence of the Christ? And then the next feeling should be—since He has come to me, this Mighty One who has worked such marvels for me, let me try to order myself aright in His Presence.

I notice whenever the Lord Jesus Christ is very present in this congregation how carefully everybody sings. I notice about tune, time and tone a difference from the singing which is usual and even from that singing which comes of having an acquired skill in music. Though it may seem a trifle, yet I cannot help observing that when people come to the Communion Table, as a matter of routine they frequently behave roughly, walking noisily and looking about, or else they sit like statues, with a chill propriety of posture and vacancy of countenance. But you will notice that fellowship with Jesus affects the glance of the eyes, the thoughts of the soul and, consequently, the movements of the body. When a man is truly conscious that Jesus, the Wonder-Worker is near, he fears exceedingly.

If ever you say to Jesus, "You know that I love You," mind you, put, "Lord," before it—"Lord, You know all things"—for He is still your Lord. Where Jesus is, there is godly fear, which is, by no means, the same as slavish fear. Every true child has a reverence for his father. Every true daughter has a loving respect for her mother. So is it with us towards our Lord Jesus. We owe so much to Him and He is so great and so good—and we are so little and so sinful—that there must be a blessed sense of holy awe whenever we come before Him. Indulge it. Indulge it now! You know how John puts it—"When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead."

Why, that is the man who leaned His head on the bosom of Christ! Yes, that is the man who fell at His feet as dead. If your head has never leaned upon the bosom of the Lord, I should not wonder if you can hold it up in His Presence! But when it has once lain there, in confiding love, reposing upon boundless Mercy, then that head of yours will lie in the dust uncrowned if God has honored it—for it will be your delight to cast your crown at His feet and give Him all the Glory! O, reign forever, King of Kings and Lord of Lords! Conquer me, my Lord! Subdue me perfectly! Make dust of me beneath Your feet! If You shall be but the tenth of an inch the higher for my downcasting, Oh, my Master, and my Lord, with joy I would shrink to nothing before You, that You may be All in All! May this be your feeling and mine. The men feared exceedingly—let us fear, also, after a believing sort.

III. Now to close. The third thing is ADMIRING THE PERSON OF Jesus, for these men who marveled, and who feared exceedingly, admired the Person of Him who had set them free from the storm, saying, "What manner of Person is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" Come, let us admire and adore the Nature of Christ which is altogether beyond our comprehension! The winds and the sea obeyed Him though He had slept like other *men*. When His head was that of an infant, the crown of the universe was about His brow! When He was in the carpenter's shop, He was still the Creator of all worlds! When He went to die upon the Cross, a myriad of angels would have come to rescue Him if He had but willed it. Even in His humiliation He was still the Son of the Highest, God over all, blessed forever!

Now that He is exalted in Heaven, do not forget the other side of the question—believe that He is just as much Man, now, as when He was here—as truly a Brother of our race as He is God over all, blessed forevermore. Let us now give our hearts to admiration of Him in His complex

Nature which is beyond comprehension. He is my next of kin and yet my God—at once my Redeemer and my Lord! We may each one cry with Job, “I know that my next of kin lives, and that He shall stand in the latter day upon the earth. And though, after my skin, worms devour this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.”

Because He lives as my Kinsman—there is the sweetness of it and because He is my God—there is the Glory of it! He is both tenderly compassionate for my infirmities and gloriously able to overcome them. He is a complete Savior because He is both Human and Divine. Come, my Soul, bow down in wonder that God should send such a Savior as this to you! A person asked me the other day whether I had seen a book entitled, “Sixteen Saviors.” I answered—“No, I have not and I do not want to know of 16 saviors. I am perfectly satisfied with One.” If all who dwell in Heaven and earth could be made into saviors and the whole were put together, you might blow them away as a child blows away thistle-down! There is this one Savior, the Son of Man, and yet the mighty God—and He cannot be moved! Joy then, my Brothers and Sisters, and rejoice in the Nature of your blessed Lord!

Next, rejoice in His power which has no limit, so that even the winds and the waves obey Him. The winds—can they have a master? The waves that cast their spray upon the face of princes—can they acknowledge a sovereign? Yes, the most fickle of elements and the most unruly of forces are all under the power of Jesus! Joy and rejoice in this. Little, as well as great, yon Atlantic that divides the world and that little drop in the basin of Gennesaret are alike in the hands of Jesus! The power of God is seen in a falling mountain when it crashes village, but it is as truly present when the seeds are scattered from the pod of the gorse, or a rose leaf falls upon the garden walk. God is seen when an angel flashes from Heaven to earth and is He not seen when a bee flits from flower to flower?

Jesus is the Master of the little as well as of the great! Yes, He is King of all things and I joy, this moment, to think that even the wicked actions of ungodly men, though they are not deprived of their sinfulness, so as to make the men the less responsible, are, nevertheless, overruled by that great Lord of ours who works all things according to the counsel of His will! In the front I see Jesus leading the van of Providence. Behind He guards the rear. On the heights I see Jesus reigning King of Kings and Lord of Lords. In the deeps I mark the terror of His justice as He binds the dragon with His chain. Let the universal cry of “Hallelujah” rise unto the Son of God, world without end!

Sit down and admire and adore His unlimited power—and then conclude by paying homage to that sovereignty of His which brooks no question, for the winds and waves did not only perform His will, but, as if they were waking into life and rising into intelligent knowledge of Him, they are said to *obey* Him—from which I gather that Christ is not only the forceful Master of unintelligent agencies, but that He is the Sovereign Master of things that can obey Him—and He will be obeyed. Ah, you may bite at Him and hiss at Him, but as the viper broke his teeth against the file, yet hurt it not, so shall the ungodly exercise all their craft and all their strength—and the result shall be shame and confusion of face to them.

The kingdom of our Lord and Master is, by some, thought to be a long way off, and His cause is despaired of by faint-hearted men. But He that sits in the heavens laughs at the impatience of saints as well as at the impiety of sinners, for He knows that all is well! Out of seeming evil He produces good and from that good a better, still, and better still in infinite progression! All things move towards His eternal coronation! As once every atom of history converged to His Cross, so does it today project itself towards His crown—the Lord Jesus comes to His well-earned Throne as surely as He came to the shameful Cross! He comes and when He comes, it shall be as when He rose in the ship and rebuked the winds, and the men marveled—for all storms of raging passion, conflicting opinion and fierce warfare shall be hushed—and He shall be admired in His saints and glorified in all them that believe! Even unbelievers shall marvel at Him and say, “What manner of Person is this, that even earth and Hell obey Him and all things are subject to His sovereign power!”

Happy are the eyes that shall see Him in that day with joy! Happy are the men who shall sit at the right hand of the Coming One! Oh, Beloved, your eyes and mine shall see it if we have first looked to the Redeemer upon the Cross and found salvation in Him! Courage, Brothers and Sisters, let the waves dash and the winds howl—the Lord of Hosts is with us—the God of Jacob is our refuge! All is safe because of His Presence and all shall end gloriously because of His manifestation! The Lord bless you, in tempest and in calm, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew 8.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—243, 222.**

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HE RAN, AND HE RAN NO 2507

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 7, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 2, 1885.**

*“But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped Him.”
Mark 5:6.*

*“But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had
compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.”
Luke 15:20.*

THESE two texts have a measure of apparent likeness—the man runs to Jesus from afar and the father runs to the prodigal from afar. They both run—and when two run to meet each other, they soon meet. When a sinner is running to Christ and the Father is running to the sinner, there shall be a happy meeting before very long, and there shall be joy in Heaven and joy on earth, too! I shall begin my discourse by noticing the case of the demoniac, whose story we read—“When he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped Him.”

I. Using that narrative as a kind of parable, I would remark, in the first place, that we have, here, an emblem OF THE SINNER'S PLACE.

He is “afar off” from Christ and when, first of all, the Spirit of God begins to open his eyes to his own true condition, one of the chief difficulties in his way is the realization of his distance from the Savior. He begins to cry, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him! That I might come even to His seat!” The poor man feels as if there were a great and dreadful distance between him and the great Mediator—he can only see “Jesus afar off,” as the demoniac did. He has not yet come to Christ, nor proved His wondrous power to bless.

I daresay there are some in this congregation who feel that they are “afar off” from the Lord Jesus Christ and, “afar off” from the great Father. You are “*afar off*” as to character. I am not going to bring an accusation against you, for your own heart and conscience accuse you. It is not necessary for me to describe your past life—if you are the person whom Christ has come to bless, then I know that your sin is always before you. You cannot hide it from yourself, it seems to be painted on your very eyeballs! You have to look at everything through the mist and haze of your past guilt and, consequently, everything looks dark and dreary to you. The very mercies which God gives you seem to accuse you of your ingratitude to your Benefactor and any denials of mercy, any chastisements that you are enduring, seem to you to be but premonitions of a coming doom, for you feel yourself to be, by your past life, very far off from Christ. He is perfect and you are full of sin! He is just and you are unjust! He is meek and lowly—you confess that you have been proud and

wayward! He is beloved of His Father, the beloved Servant of God, but you have derided God's Gospel and you have refused to obey Him. You are, indeed, far off from Christ! It seems to you that if Christ and the penitent thief made a pair, then you, also, might make a pair with your dying Savior, but not otherwise. You feel yourself to be unworthy to be in the same world with Him, much less to be in the same Heaven with Him.

Well, now, when our Lord went to Gadara, as far as I can see, He crossed the Sea of Galilee and endured that storm at night in order that He might heal *one man*—and He went back, again, well content when He had worked that one miracle! It may be that you are a man of that kind, as far off from any likeness to Christ as that poor lunatic was, and He may have come here at this good hour with the intent to save *you*. At any rate, His servant will go home as grateful as a man can be, if he is but made the means of saving one such sinner as you are. But, first of all, you must realize that this is your position—"afar off" from Christ as to character.

But what, perhaps, may appear to you to be even worse is that you seem to be "*afar off*" as to *any hope of salvation by Christ*. It may be that you have long been a hearer of the Gospel. When you were younger, it seemed as if the Kingdom of God had come near to you, but now, the older you grow, the less susceptible you are to holy influences. You used to weep under sermons—you can more easily sleep under them now! Time was when your rest was broken after some kindly admonition from a Christian friend. But now, perhaps, Christian friends scarcely ever admonish you because you have a sarcastic way of repelling what they say. And even while you are sitting here, you are moaning to yourself, "Some in this congregation may be converted, but I shall not be. The Lord Jesus Christ may come here and deliver some poor soul, but assuredly He will not deliver me. I am an off cast and an outcast—not, perhaps, by open sin—but by an inward hardening of my spirit till my soul has become like the northern iron and steel, and nothing can move me. I am far off from any hope that the Savior will ever bless me."

Well, now, let me say to you, dear Friend, that I am very sorry that it should be so with you, yet am I glad you are here when such a subject as this is being handled, for that Gadarene demoniac seemed to be about as hopeless a man as there was in all the country round about! Apart from Christ, his case was absolutely hopeless. They had, doubtless, used all the arts for the management of lunatics which they understood in those barbarous days, but no chains of iron, nor bands of brass could hold him—he could not be tamed, or kept in check. And yet, O blessed Christ, You could cross the stormy sea at midnight to save this one man! It may be that it is so with you, also, dear Friends, who are so far away from Christ in the misapprehensions of your lack of hope. Yet it may be that this very hour is the time when you are to be set free from the power of the devil and brought to sit at Jesus' feet, clothed, and in your right mind!

Some are also "*afar off*" from Christ as to *knowledge of Him*. They know but little of the Christ of God. They have heard His name. They have some dim notions about Him, but as yet they only see Him "afar off." In these days, when the Gospel is preached at so many street corners, and

when there is a sanctuary in almost every street, it is astonishing what gross ignorance there is about Him whom to know is life eternal—by knowledge of whom many are justified and without knowledge of whom men must perish eternally! O Friends, it is terrible to think that there are persons, well instructed in everything else, who know nothing about this salvation which God has provided for the sons of men! You hear them railing against the Bible and in almost every case the railer has never read the Book! You hear them speak against Christ and it is almost a proverb that those who speak most against Him are ignorant of the common facts of His life. They have not studied His Character, nor have they examined His teaching, yet they cast it all aside as if *they* were infallible and as if *they* were qualified to judge and to decide without hearing the case at all! This is a wretched mode of action, yet, if any of you who are here know but little of Christ, for all that I am glad you are here and I only trust that you may be led to do what this poor ignorant demoniac did! Though he must have known very little about Christ, yet he ran to Him and worshipped Him! A little knowledge, like the star of Bethlehem, may suffice to guide to Christ those who are willing to follow its light. A faint gleaming of what Christ is may burn and glow into a more complete and perfect knowledge of Him and by that knowledge you may be brought into the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free.

I will not keep you longer in describing the sad state of the sinner in being thus far from Christ, except to say that it may be possible that you feel far from Christ *because you do not feel as if you could get at Him*. You are so unspiritual that you say to yourself, “If Christ were on earth, I would walk till I dropped, but I would get to Him. And if I could speak with Him, so that He could hear my words and could answer me with actual vocal sounds—if I could see Him and He would look at me, I would spend the last penny I am worth and pass over any length of sea and land if I could but get at Him—but somehow I cannot.

“If it were a matter of touching the hem of His garment with my finger, I would push through the press to do it. If it were a matter of taking Him up in my arms, as Simeon took the young Child Jesus, I would do it, and do it with joy. But I do not know how to get to Him—it seems to be all mist and all cloud to me.” I know what you mean, dear Friend, for I was in that state, once, and then, indeed, I also “saw Jesus afar off,” and for a long while I could not get to realize that He was mine. Well, notwithstanding that feeling which possesses you, I shall speak to you, yet further, in the fond hope that you may imitate this poor man who must have been very much like you, only in a worse plight than yours, and it will be my prayer and desire that you may come running to Christ, as he did—and that you, also, may worship Him!

II. Now notice, secondly, THE SINNER’S PRIVILEGE—“He saw Jesus,” though he only saw Him, “afar off.”

Those of you who only see Christ in the distance, who do not know much about Him and cannot get at Him, do at least *know that there is such a Person!* You have heard and it is the best news you ever did hear, that the Son of God came down to live among men and took our flesh, and became Man of the substance of His mother, and though He died upon the Cross, yet He has risen from the dead and He still lives. You

have heard tell of all that. You have not thought of it as you ought to have done—you have not let it weigh upon your heart, or sought to understand all its holy lessons—but still, you have such a knowledge of Him that you have seen Him “afar off.”

More than that, you have heard, and you believe that *Jesus has done great things for men*. You do not think much about what He has done, but still, it has come to your knowledge that He lived, loved and died that He might save men. You have often heard that on the Cross He made an expiation for human sin. And let me tell you that this is the choicest news you ever heard, or ever will hear! And the day may come when you will look at this Truth of God as the only star of hope in a night which otherwise must be eternal. I hope you will yet clasp that Truth of God to your heart as the brightest jewel and the rarest treasure you have ever met with.

And I believe, further, that some of you have caught the idea that *the Lord Jesus Christ is saving other people*. You have met with some whom you observe to be very much changed, greatly altered from what they used to be and, though you sometimes laugh at them, yet deep down in your heart you do not really mock them—you wish it were yourself! You have, after all, a respect for any one of these wonderful changes, called conversions, when you see them to be real and genuine—and you, perhaps, know some fellows with whom you work and, although you ridicule them, you know that they are better men than they used to be—and you admire the change. And there is a feeling in your inmost heart that though you cannot make out the mystery, there is still something in it. Yes, you can see Jesus, though I still grieve to say that you do but see Him afar off. You have, in your heart, some sort of belief that it may be possible that He will yet save you and there is some sort of humble desire in your soul that He will look your way and cast the devils out of you—and make you to be His happy servant.

But, once more, concerning the sinner’s privilege, *Christ has come to the district where he is*. It is a horrible country, full of tombs and full of pollution—and the man has made it more horrible by his wildness and his madness—yet there is the Christ, Himself, treading that same Gadarene shore! He who is “mighty to save” has come into the land of death-shade! He who could cast out devils has come into the devil’s own territory! He has come to beard the lion in his den. Herein, also, is the privilege of men today—the Lord Jesus Christ, who made Heaven and earth, is still among us—and will be with us to the end of this dispensation. He who could raise the dead and heal the lepers and cast out demons, is still here working by His Spirit! Though corporeally He is gone, yet in efficacious power to save He still lingers among us and His lingering means salvation to all who trust Him! Hear it, O sons of men, and as you hear it, may God bless the message to your souls!

III. What did this demoniac do when he saw Jesus afar off? That is the point to which we are coming and that will teach us THE SINNER’S WISEST COURSE—“He ran and worshipped Him.”

I do not know that he did intelligently and after the right manner, worship Christ as the disciples worshipped Him. Perhaps at first, when he was up a hill, howling and cutting himself with stones, he spied a

boat come near the shore and he saw a single Stranger coming up from the boat, much as the natives of Erromanga saw John Williams landing on that cannibal shore—and his horrible instinct moved him to fly down at once to the beach, perhaps to attack the Man who dared, in open daylight, intrude on the wild man's domain. But as he approached nearer and nearer to this mysterious Stranger, quite a new feeling came over him. His steps grew slower, his fierce eyes beamed with a duller fire, the beast-like instinct became calm. The ravening wolf, the roaring lion within him began to tremble, for it perceived its Master—and when he had come near enough to get a fuller view of Christ, who stood there in simple majesty, calm and serene—the very opposite of the poor creature's mad fury—the man fell down at Jesus' feet and worshipped Him.

Then the devils within him spoke out and, using the man's voice, said, "What have I to do with you, Jesus, you Son of the most high God?" But for the moment it was the man, and not the devil, who prevailed! For an instant, what little relics there were of manhood made themselves felt and the man fell down and worshipped under the influence of the mysterious Presence of Christ. What I hope and trust may come of our consideration of this subject is that some big sinner here may have a lucid interval—that some mad sinner here, before the devil can speak, again, may have just a little quiet time, so that, though he may have come in here fresh from all manner of evil, yet for the moment he may feel a solemn calm steal over his spirit, a sacred hush that shall make him quiet as he has not been for many a day. I pray that some strange influence—strange to him up to this time—may draw him so that he shall run to Christ and fall at His feet and worship Him!

I am not, just now, saying anything about faith in Christ except that I do not believe any man worships Christ without having some faith in Him. I am just going to take this very low standard and say that this man, with all his madness, was wise in what he did—and the Spirit of God was leading him in the right direction when, breaking loose, as it were, from the devil's power for a moment or two, he ran to Christ and worshipped Him. And to any poor soul in like case, I would say—"I beseech you, for a minute or two, at any rate, worship the Christ of God whom I preach to you."

For consider that, first, *Christ is God as well as Man*, and, therefore, worthy to be worshipped. This poor demoniac was wiser than the Socinians or Unitarians of our day—he felt that there was more in Christ than in any mere man. Devil-possessed though he was, yet he fell down and worshipped Christ. And you, my Friend—you also know that Christ is God. Well, then, for a few minutes do yourself the justice to worship Him as God over all, blessed forever. If He shall never save you, yet He is worthy to be worshipped, for He is so great and so gracious. Therefore, let your mind be still for a moment and pay your homage before His feet. And from your very heart call Him, "Lord," and "God."

Besides, *Christ died to save sinners* and, being God, and having died to save sinners, I say to you, "Worship Him." I recollect the time when I was afraid that Jesus would never save me, but I used to feel in my heart that even if He did not, I must love Him for what He had done for poor sinners. It seemed to me, as I read the wondrous story of His life and

death, that if He spurned me I would still lie at His feet and say, "You may spurn me, but You are a blessed Christ, for all that and, if You curse me, yet I can only say to You that I well deserve it at Your hands. Do what You will with me, but You saved the dying thief and You saved her out of whom You did cast seven devils, but if You do not deign to save me, yet You are a blessed Christ, and I cannot rail at You, or find fault with You, but I lie down at Your feet and worship You."

Can you speak and act like that? Can you look up at Him through your tears and, as you see the nail prints in His hands and feet, and that great gash in His side, which reached His heart, can you not feel that you must lie at His feet and worship Him? Just waive all questions about yourself for a minute and think only of Him! Forget even your own sin for the time being and think of what He deserves, and now, at least, for the next few minutes, bow your soul reverently before the Christ of God and worship Him!

I think I may add that you may well worship Him because there is in that poor, flurried soul of yours, worried and confused and devil-ridden though it is, this thought—*that Christ alone can save you!* You do know *that*. Where else can you go but to Him? What other door is open to you? What other hand was ever pierced for you? What other side ever bled that it might give cleansing for your sin? Where lives there another person who loves as Christ has loved? Therefore, realize that He is unique, One altogether by Himself and while you cannot and will not worship others, yet, poor devil-possessed soul that you are, fall down and worship Him! Say to Him, "Lord, if my night never ends, yet will I look eastward, for there the sun will rise, if not for me. Lord, if I die of thirst, yet will I linger by the lone well in the desert, for if I ever drink at all, I must drink there. I can but perish if I linger at the Cross—and I am resolved to linger there. And if my blood shall stain that blessed tree, then even so it must be, for I am resolved—and it is my last resource—if I must perish, I will die here." O Soul, I am not telling you to do any great thing now, am I? I am not urging you to exercise any unreasonable confidence, but I do advise you to fall down and worship at my Lord's dear feet! Mad though you are, and your mad worship so poor and imperfect, yet, nevertheless, He will accept you and do great things for you!

For remember, next, that *Christ can save you*. Christ can save you! You have gone to the end of your tether, but you have not gone beyond the reach of His power! You have cut yourself and howled through many a dreary night, and snapped your chains and cursed the men that bound you. You have driven away friend and helper—and you are altogether undone—but, all the same, Christ can save you! What if the devil is in you? There is no devil in Hell, or out of Hell who does not tremble at Christ's Presence! Oh, that He would come and lay His cool hands upon your fevered brow and put His own life into your poor withered heart and make you live! He can save you—of that I am sure. I cannot speak as my Master can, but yet my Master can make these poor words of mine to bless and comfort you. And I pray that He may. This is the one thing that I bid you do—run to Him and worship Him!

IV. Now, turning to my second text, I must briefly remind you of THE SECRET HOPE FOR SINNERS—that while you are yet a great way off,

the Father, Himself, will see you, and will run to you! While you are running to His Son, the Father will run to you—and you and He shall meet in Christ—the only safe meeting place for God and man.

Turn your thoughts for a minute or two from that Gadarene demoniac to the prodigal son. He was coming back, you remember, and when he was a great way off, I should not wonder that his heart began to misgive him. “Oh,” he seemed to say, “there is the old house!” He has reached the top of the hill and he can see it. He recollects those old trees under which he used to play with his brother and he thinks that he can spy out the very spot where he left his father and went that reckless journey into the far country. “I wonder what Father will say to me,” he says. “I do not know how I can ever face him. I have treated him so badly that I must have broken his heart. I fear he is angry with me, and I do not think I can bear his wrath. I am ready to humble myself and say, ‘Father, I have sinned,’ but, oh, what a wretch I am! He will hardly know me. I do not look like the person I was when I left. What awful times I have been through since last I saw his dear face! I think I must run back again. Bad as it is to perish out in the far country, I do not think I can really face him.” He is just turning back when, to his surprise, his father clasps him in his arms, for, “when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.”

O dear Hearts, if I knew there was a poor soul here beginning to seek the Lord, how glad I should be to speak with him! And there are some of my dear Brothers and Sisters here who are always on the lookout for any in whom there is the faintest beginning of a work of Grace! But, you see, we cannot see the germs of Grace as God can—we cannot spy out returning sinners as He can, for *God has far-reaching eyes* and if there is only half a wish to repent in any of your hearts, the Father sees it! If you only know that there is a Christ and that you would gladly worship Him, but you have not gone the length of really trusting Him and casting your souls upon Him, yet remember that when the prodigal was yet a great way off, his father saw him!

When God sees anything, His is a very different sight from yours or mine. We see a thing with our eyes and then we get a microscope and look through that, and see it very differently. But God, as it were, always sees everything microscopically and telescopically! He sees the whole of it, sees the very heart and soul of it. God at this moment sees all the sin of the whole of your life. He sees all your brokenness of spirit, all your doubts, all your fears, all the struggles against sin and all the strivings of His Spirit. He takes it all in with a single glance and comprehends and understands it all! And though you are a great way off, the Father sees you and He sees you with a father’s eyes, too. How quick a father’s eyes are when he looks at his boy who is ill! He spies out that hectic flush before the boy believes there is any trace of consumption in his countenance, for a loving father has a physician’s eyes—and a mother’s eyes are still more quick to perceive anything wrong.

Moreover, *God sees with compassionate eyes*—“His father saw him and had compassion” on him. The two things went together. I know a Sister in Christ who did me great good one day. I had helped a man many times, poor wretch that he was. I never clothed him but he sold the

garments in a day or two! I never helped him but he sank into deeper degradation than before and, at last, after he had been rigged out afresh from top to toe and a job found for him—and he was put into a position for getting on in life—he came here again. And when I saw him, I shrank back from him. I felt indignant with him, but our Sister—a better Christian than I—lifted up both hands and began to cry! The man was covered with vermin and he had evidently been drinking hard. As she lifted up her hands, she cried, “O poor creature, we have done all we can to save you, and you will go to Hell.” And she stood and cried as if he had been her own child!

And I believe that is how God feels for poor sinners, for He cannot bear to see them act as they do. If you are coming back to Him, that is the compassionate way in which He is looking at you. He spies you out and, as Jesus wept over Jerusalem, so does the great Father weep over sinners, grieving that they will be so desperately wicked and foolish as to destroy their own souls! **V.** Now I must close, for our time has gone. The last point to be noticed is, **THE ACTION OF THE SINNER’S FATHER.**

No sooner did the Father see His son coming back than, “He ran.” When God runs, it is quick running. “He ran, and fell on his neck.” And when God stoops to fall on a sinner’s neck, it is wondrous condescension! This is compassion like a God. “And kissed him.” God’s kiss is the essence of a million kisses all in one. One kiss from God is the soul of Heaven laid to the heart of a burdened sinner. “He ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him,” and so the prodigal was received back into his father’s family!

What I am longing for is that God’s blessed Spirit may move some of you to run to Christ, if only in the poor way that I have set forth. Just for a few minutes, quietly worship Him, and while you are doing that, may the great Father come in with all His Omnipotent Love and put away your sin, and change your nature, and receive you into eternal union with Himself to the praise of the glory of His Grace! If I were to say ten thousand things, but God did not bless what I had said, all would be in vain. I hope that you do not need more words, but that you will come at once to Christ. Do not perish, I pray you, do not damn your own souls! There is enough misery in this world without incurring the miseries of the world to come! The Lord Himself says, “Turn you, turn you from your evil ways; for why will you die?” In the name of the bleeding Christ, seek His mercy even now! By His bloody sweat and crown of thorns, seek Him now! I know no better argument except it be by His death cry, “It is finished.” Come to Christ! Look to Him and live, even now, and to Him shall be the praise forever and ever. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGON:
MARK 5:1-24; 35-43.

Verse 1. *And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes.* They had had a very eventful passage across that small but stormy sea, and Christ had proved Himself to be the Lord High Admiral of the seas. But now that He steps ashore, they are to see His power quite as distinctly displayed as upon the stormy waves.

2, 3. *And when He was come out of the ship, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains.* Those ancient graveyards were in remote places, for the people were too wise to bury their dead inside their cities. Very often the tombs were hewn in caverns in the sides of hills and rocks where the dead were laid. Of course, every man who touched a tomb was thereby ceremonially defiled, so that the tombs were fit places for an unclean person possessed by an unclean spirit. What a ghastly dwelling place! What a grim abode for the man and yet most fitting, for he was dangerous to all who passed by—a raving lunatic who could not be restrained by any bonds or chains that could be put upon him!

4, 5. *Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.* Poor creature! His howling must have been right hideous, indeed. Those who passed that way were startled by his unearthly cries, He was a terror to the whole district. Persons could not bear to live anywhere near the places where he resorted. “Night and day” he was a misery to himself and a terror to all around him—sad type of some whom we know, to our sorrow, who have gone madly into sin. It certainly is madness, whatever else it may be, and when madness and badness go together, what a terror such a man becomes!

6. *But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped Him.*—There is a wondrous attraction in the Person of our Divine Lord and Master. Though He was a long way off, yet a gracious magnetic influence proceeded from Him by which He drew this poor object of pity to Him. “When he saw Jesus afar off, He ran and worshipped Him.”

7. *And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with You, Jesus, You Son of the most high God? I adjure You by God, that You torment me not.* Who was speaking then—the man, himself, or the devil within him? It is very hard to tell. The man and the devil were two personalities, but they were so effectually blended into one that it is scarcely possible to tell when it was the man speaking and when it was the devil. So, when sin enters into a man, it gets so completely into his very nature that, sometimes, we feel it must be the evil spirit speaking in the man—and yet it is not easy to be quite sure that it is so—and we cannot free the man, himself, from the guilt of his words and actions.

8. *For He said unto him, Come out of the man, you unclean spirit.* Whenever Christ speaks to the devil, His message is a very short and very sharp one. The Lord treats Him like the dog that Me is! “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit.” Christ has no compliment for devils and it is a pity that some of His servants have such soft words when they are dealing with unbelief, which is but a devil, or one of the devil’s demons.

9. *And He asked him, What is your name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.* The devil is obliged to tell his name when Christ treats him like a catechized child. And he is compelled to crouch before Christ like a whipped cur at his master’s feet.

10. *And he besought Him much that He would not send them away out of the country.* Satan clings to this world and to any place where he has had a signal triumph, as he had among those tombs and those rocky ravines.

11, 12. *Now there was near unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. And all the devils besought Him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.* Such is the malice of these evil spirits, that they would rather do mischief among swine than nowhere! But notice their unanimity—with all the faults that can be laid at the door of demons, you cannot find them divided and quarrelling! They are unanimous in evil and it is a shame that those who are the followers of Christ should often be divided, whereas the kingdom of Satan is not divided against itself. Let us learn from our great enemy at least this one lesson.

13. *And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out and entered into the swine, and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand).* It was strange that there should be so many swine in the country where lived God's people, Israel. And as they had no right to be there, and were there contrary to Jewish Law, it was well that they should be destroyed.

13-15. *And were choked in the sea. And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done. And they come to Jesus and saw him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.* Ah, me! How variously different people look upon the same thing! If you and I, who are Christ's disciples, had gone there and seen this poor lunatic fully restored, we would have been filled with holy joy! And we would have composed new hymns of praise in honor of the Great Physician who had cured him! But these people, in their alienation of heart from the Lord Jesus Christ, "were afraid." They feared and trembled in the Presence of Almighty Mercy! Omnipotent Love awoke no joy in their hearts, but the spirit of bondage was upon them.

16. *And they that saw it, told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine.* You may be sure that they dwelt upon the latter part of the story, for the loss of the swine touched them more than the healing of the demoniac!

17. *And they began to pray Him to depart out of their coasts.* O dear Friends, let none of us ever get into such a state of mind and heart as to pray Christ to go away from us! Yet we have known people act in such a dreadful way as that—a person troubled in conscience has said, "I will never go and hear that preacher again! I cannot sleep at night after listening to him. I will never read such-and-such a book again, it disturbs me so that I cannot enjoy myself." This is, in effect, to pray Christ to depart out of your coasts! What? Is salvation worth so little that you have no care to possess it? Is Christ Himself so small a blessing that you even tremble lest He should change your nature and save you? I think there were more lunatics than one on that Gadarene shore—the people were all as mad at heart as that one poor man was mad in brain!

18. *And when He was come into the ship—*Christ will go from you if you want Him to go. He forces Himself upon no man—the Grace of God does not violate the will of man—it acts in accordance with man's nature

and achieves the Divine purpose without disturbing the individuality of the man. So Christ went from Gadara. “And when He was come into the ship.”—

18. *He that had been possessed with the devil prayed Him that he might be with Him.* Was not that a proper prayer? I think, dear Friends, that not only nature, but the man’s new nature must have suggested this petition. He prayed Christ that he might be with Him. In our day it is very natural that as soon as we are converted, we should wish to go Home to Heaven. But what is the reason why we should not do so? It is in order that we may *bear witness* for Christ here on earth and gather in others unto Him!

19. *Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but said unto him, Go home to your friends, and tell them how great things the Lord has done for you, and has had compassion on you.* That is one of the chief points on which we ought always to speak—not only to tell of the greatness of the change which the Grace of God has worked in us, but especially to testify to the tenderness of God to us! Oh, how gently did He handle our broken bones! That good Physician of ours has a lion’s heart, but He has a lady’s hand! He does not spare us necessary pain, but He never inflicts even a twinge that is unnecessary. And, oh, the pity of His heart toward us when He sees the sorrow which our sin has brought upon us!

20. *And he departed and began to publish in Decapolis.*—In the ten little cities that were in that region. “He departed and began to publish in Decapolis.”—

20. *How great things Jesus had done for Him: and all men did marvel.* This is the kind of ready-made preacher whose service for his Lord is usually most effectual. The man who, though he has studied little on many points, yet knows *by experience* what the Grace of God has done for him, and keeps to that one theme, and tells out the story with simple untrained eloquence, is the man who will do much for his Master! As we read here, “all men did marvel.” If he had plunged into deep doctrinal subjects, it may be that men would have ridiculed him, but inasmuch as he spoke of what he knew and told of the greatness and graciousness of God, “all men did marvel.”

21, 22. *And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto Him: and He was near unto the sea. And, behold.*—Wherever we see that word, “behold,” it is like our nota bene, saying to us, “Mark well what is coming.” “Behold”—

22-24. *There came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jarius by name; and when he saw Him, he fell at His feet, and besought Him greatly, saying, My little daughter lies at the point of death: I pray You, come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live. And Jesus went with him; and much people followed Him and thronged Him.*

35, 36. *While He yet spoke, there came from the ruler of the synagogue’s house certain which said, Your daughter is dead: why trouble you the Master any further? As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe.* I can imagine that if Jarius had not been a man of much faith, he would have looked at the Savior with a meaning glance, as much as to say, “‘Only believe?’ Could You ask more of me when my child is dead? Yet

You bid me, ‘Only believe.’” But, Brothers and Sisters, here is the very sphere of faith! Where there is no wading, there must be swimming—and where there is no hope in the creature, then we must throw ourselves upon the Creator. So, the child’s death made room for the father’s faith.

37-39. *And He suffered no man to follow Him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James. And He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. And when He was come in, He said unto them, Why make you this ado, and weep? The damsel is not dead, but sleeps. She was dead, but not dead as far as Christ’s intention was concerned. She was not so dead as to remain dead. He meant, soon, to bring her back again to life and, therefore, to Him it was as if she were but sleeping.*

40. *And they laughed Him to scorn.* What a wonderful picture this must have been—The Lord of Glory in the center of a ribald crew who laughed Him to scorn! But it is not the man who is laughed at who is necessarily contemptible, it is often the *laughers* who are the most deserving of scorn. It was so, here, in Christ’s day, and it has often been so since.

40. *But when He had put them all out.* They were not worthy to be answered in any other fashion.

40-42. *He took the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with Him, and entered in where the damsel was lying. And He took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi, which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto you, arise. And straightway the damsel arose and walked, for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment.* How very often persons were “astonished” in Christ’s day! Sometimes it is put, “they marveled.” At other times, “they were amazed,” or, “they wondered.” It would have been well if wonder had always turned to faith—but sometimes it corrupted into hate! God grant that our wonder at Christ may always be of that kind which crystallizes into love!

43. *And He charged them strictly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.* Life must be nourished. Young life, especially, needs frequent food. If Christ has spiritually quickened your child, see that you feed the child with convenient food. If you have won a convert to Christ in the Sunday school, take care that the unadulterated milk of the Word is brought forth, that the new-born child may be fed and nourished till it comes unto the perfect stature of a man in Christ Jesus!

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY
TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

RESISTANCE TO SALVATION

NO. 2966

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14, 1905.

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“What have I to do with You, Jesus, You Son of the Most High God?”
Mark 5:7.

WHEREVER Jesus comes, there is a commotion. No sooner does He set His foot on the shore at Gadara than He is at once assailed by the powers of darkness! And it is not long before the whole population of the district is affected by His Presence. However uninfluential other people may be, Jesus is never so. He is always either, “the savor of death unto death” or, “the savor of life unto life.” He is never a savorless Christ! Virtue is always going out of Him and that virtue stirs up the opposition of evildoers so that, straightaway, they come forth to fight against Him.

You remember that when Paul and Silas preached at Thessalonica, the unbelieving Jews cried out, “These that have turned the world upside down are come here also!” Was that an amazing thing? No, rather was it not exactly what the Lord Jesus Christ had prophesied when He said, “I came not to send peace, but a sword”? He said that because of Him, there would be division even in families, so that a man would be at variance against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a man’s foes would be those of his own household! Christ must make a stir wherever He comes and His Gospel must cause a commotion wherever it is preached. Stagnation is inconsistent with life. Death-like slumber is the condition of those who are dead in sin, but to be awakened to action is the sure consequence of the Gospel coming with power to anyone!

Yet Jesus Christ’s actions were, as a rule, very quiet and, on this occasion, He merely landed at Gadara. He had no trumpeters to herald His arrival and no squadron of cavalry to escort Him. In fulfillment of the ancient prophecy, He did not strive, nor cry, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. He was so gentle that a bruised reed He did not break, and the smoking flax He did not quench. Yet, wherever He went, there was always a stir. Well, we might have expected that it would be so—the analogies of Nature would teach us to look for that. When the morning sun arises, without sound of drum, or tramp of armed men, straightway it causes confusion among the doers of darkness! With a roar the lion goes back to his den and the wolf and the hyena flee before the eyes of light. I daresay, too, that the owl and the bat have a very strong aversion to the rising of the sun. If they could speak their minds, they would hoot or hiss out their opinions which would probably be

found to be very much opposed to anything like daylight and noontide glory! “Oh, if all the passing hours could be one long night,” says the owl, “then I could continually seek my prey. But these long summer days are obnoxious to me.” And the bat would gladly pursue his tireless flight, but the light of the sun is too much for him, so he must get back to his hiding place till again the evening shades prevail. But the sunlight is only objectionable to creatures that delight in darkness—and so it happened that Christ’s landing at Gadara was like the sun rising upon the thick darkness in which that poor tortured demoniac was dwelling—and like the sun rising upon the dense darkness of ignorance and sin in which the swine-keeping Gadarenes were dwelling! So there was quite certain to be a stir, and a commotion, and an opposition!

I trust that the Lord Jesus Christ will be with us here in the preaching of His Gospel. And if so, there will be a stir here! And if some opposition should be awakened, we shall not wonder at it. And if others should find their opposition to the Truth of God disarmed by the power and Grace of the Holy Spirit, we shall not marvel at that, for it is God’s habit thus to overcome His adversaries!

I. The first point that I shall speak upon in connection with the demoniac’s question is this—THE DEVIL DREADS ALL CONTACT WITH CHRIST, for he moved the poor man to cry out, with a loud voice, “What have I to do with You, Jesus, You Son of the Most High God?”

The devil dreads all contact with Christ and he does so because, first, *Christ’s Nature is so contrary to his own.* “Can two walk together, except they are agreed?” And these two, so far from being agreed, are absolutely opposed to each other in every respect. There is a very ancient warfare between them—a warfare which, as far as this world is concerned, was proclaimed in the Garden of Eden when God said to the serpent, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; it shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.” Christ loves light, Satan loves darkness. Christ works life, Satan works death. Christ is Love, Satan is hate. Christ is Goodness, Satan is evil. Christ is Truth, Satan is falsehood. Christ is God and Satan labors to supplant God—to set himself up for an antichrist, exalting himself above all that is called God. It is not possible that those two should dwell together in the same universe without continually coming to hand-to-hand conflicts. They are as much opposed to each other as water is to fire and, therefore, Satan cannot endure the Presence of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Moreover, in the next place, *Satan is well aware that the mission of our Lord Jesus Christ in this world is not for his good.* He has no share in Christ’s Incarnation, nor in His atoning Sacrifice. This is one of the amazing results of the Election of Grace. Those persons who stumble at the election of some men rather than others ought equally to stumble at the fact that Christ did not redeem the fallen angels, but only fallen men—for why God chose to save men and not to save angels, who among us can tell? The only answer I know to that question is this, “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.” It appears to me to be an

instance of pure Sovereignty in harmony with the Lord's own declaration, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Paul tells us that Christ took not up angels, but He took up the seed of Abraham. He passed by the seraph when he had fallen into sin. He passed by that mighty spirit, Satan, when he had fallen—and took up men. One naturally thinks that if any ruin should be restored, it should be the choicest of buildings and that if any fallen being is to be restored, it should be the one with the most colossal intellect that God ever made—but it was not so. The great and mighty angels were passed by and we, who are but worms of the dust, were looked upon with eyes of favor and love! And Satan, knowing this, and being jealous of the love which lights upon men, cannot endure the Presence of Christ.

Moreover, Satan knows that not only is there nothing for his good in the mission of Christ, but *he understands that the whole drift of Christ's mission is against him*. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." What horrible work the devil has already done in the world! Behold how the Garden of Eden is withered, blighted and burned into a desert. See the fertile earth bringing forth thorns and thistles and see man, who was made in the image of God, reduced to the position of a toiling sinner, earning his bread by the sweat of his face! See war, famine, pestilence and all kinds of evil and woe thickly spread over the whole earth! And remember that all this has come as the result of that one disobedience into which man was led by the temptation of the Evil One. But the Evil One has little room to glory in the mischief that he has worked, for Christ has come to undo it! He has come to lift man up and, in His own Person, He has lifted him up and made him to "have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth." In the Person of the Second Adam, the Lord from Heaven, man is lifted up from all the sin into which he fell through the first Adam. And, as to this poor world, itself, sin-blighted as it now is, it travails in anticipation of the new birth which yet awaits it. And the day shall yet dawn when new heavens and a new earth shall prove how completely Christ has cancelled the curse and made the earth fragrant with blessings! It is for this reason that Satan hates the Presence of Christ because Christ is to destroy his evil work and, therefore, he dreads that Christ should come near to him.

The whole wish of this particular legion of devils was concentrated into the one request that they might be left alone—and Satan wishes to be left alone—to be allowed to work his evil will and to do whatever he pleases. He did not, at that time, want to come into conflict with Christ. He did not wish that Christ should be assailed, nor did he have any hope that Christ might be caused to suffer any sort of defeat—he was too cowardly to aspire to any such thing as that! That had been his dream, in earlier days, when he had met Him in the wildness, but now he only asked to be left alone—just to be allowed to skulk off and hide and keep himself out

of Christ's notice. That is very much what the devil wants nowadays when Christ's power is manifestly working in His Church! In past times the devil has moved his minions to say, "We will overthrow the Gospel! With sword and stake, and rack, and dungeon we will destroy the people of God!" But when the Lord has, in His gracious Providence, given peace to the persecuted and, by His Spirit has given power to the preaching of the Gospel, then the devil whines out that he only wants to be left alone! Just leave him alone and all things will go on comfortably and pleasantly. He would have a kind of truce proclaimed between himself and Christ—he wants a little respite and desires to be left alone.

One reason for this is that *he knows his own powerlessness in the Presence of Christ*. In the presence of man, Satan is great and strong, and crafty. But in the Presence of the Christ of God, he shrinks into utter insignificance. He knows that he cannot resist even a word from Christ's lips, or a glance from His eyes, so he says, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, You Son of the Most High God?" The question appears as if Satan pleaded with Christ not to put forth His power—not to touch him, but just to leave him alone as too insignificant to be noticed! Such is the craft of Satan, that he will whine like a whipped cur and crouch at the great Master's feet, and look up to His face, and entreat to be left alone, for he knows well enough the power of the Son of God! On a later occasion, one of Satan's imps said, "Jesus I know," and there was such power in that name that the evil spirit added, "and Paul I know." Paul was only a humble servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, yet the devil knew him and linked his name with his Master's! Yes, the name of Jesus has wondrous power over all the hosts of Hell! So, Brothers and Sisters, let us not be discomfited nor dismayed by all the armies of Satan, but let us with holy courage contend against all the powers of evil, for we shall be more than conquerors over them through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior!

Satan also fears the Presence of Christ *because he dreads the doom which awaits him*. Those fallen spirits at Gadara were afraid that they were about to begin to endure the dismal fate which, certainly, will be theirs, by-and-by. There will come a day when the arch-traitor and all the multitudes of fallen spirits whom he dragged down with him from Heaven shall have to appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ. The saints of God will take part in that judgment, for Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "Know you not that we shall judge angels?" And then the devil shall receive his final sentence and be forever banished to Hell. There he will be bound, no more to wander through dry places, seeking rest and finding none—no more to tempt and beguile the sons of men by putting on the garb of an angel of light—no more to intrude into the assemblies where the sons of God come before the Lord—no more to dare to accuse the brethren—no more to be able to molest the children of God and disturb their devotions—no more to be able to lay traps for the ensnaring of the feet of God's elect—no more to dress out his antichrists and to work with his puppets, the Pope of Rome and the false prophet, Mohammed—no longer able to beguile the multitude and lead them

astray—no longer able to go through Christ's fields by night and to sow his tares in the midst of the good wheat—but kept in prison, forever bound in chains, to continue as an eternal and awful evidence of the wrath of God against transgression! It is no wonder that in anticipation of his ultimate fate, in Hell, the very shadow of the Lord Jesus, as it falls upon him, makes him tremble! And, although he cannot repent and cannot turn from the evil in which his heart indulges, yet is he cowed as he feels how awful goodness is and how majestic is the supremacy of Christ over all who oppose His almighty will! It is for this reason that Satan so dreads to have Christ come near to him, that he says, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, You Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God, that You torment me not."

II. There will, perhaps, be more practical teaching in the second part of my subject which is this—WHEN SATAN GETS MEN INTO HIS POWER, HE ALSO LEADS THEM TO OPPOSE THE COMING OF CHRIST TO THEM.

When they submit to Satan's sway, they cry out, in various ways, "What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of the Most High God?" I wonder whether there are any now in this house who are saying that in their hearts, if not with their voices. They do not oppose Christ *actively*. They do not persecute His followers. They would let everybody do and think just what he pleases, but they do not want religion for themselves and, above all, they do not want the religion of Jesus Christ. All they want is to be left alone, and the reasons for that desire—which, perhaps, they would not state in words, but which are really in their hearts—are such as I will try to set before you.

First, *conscience is feared by them*. They have not quite lost all knowledge of right and wrong and, sometimes, Mr. Conscience, though drugged with Satanic opiates and very hoarse with the cold that he has taken in this sinful world, does cry out at such a rate that they cannot sleep at night and they cannot feel comfortable by day. So they say to themselves, "If we begin to think of Jesus and His Gospel, this conscience of ours will grow still more troublesome and we shall not have any peace or enjoyment at all. Even now we cannot indulge in our cups and our merry dances as we used to do. And we cannot go with our former jolly companions. If our conscience should once become thoroughly alive and active, it would follow us at our heels like a dog and we should not know how to get away from it. We do not want to have that state of things—we just want to be left alone." So they carefully avoid attending a place of worship where there is likely to be anything to trouble and alarm their conscience. They do not object to go to a sort of Sunday music hall, or to a place where there is very fine oratorical preaching where they can get an intellectual treat. But they do not want Jesus Christ and His Gospel. They try to keep clear of preaching that is plain and outspoken against sin and if, perchance, they happen to hear a sermon which might come home to their conscience, they are all the

while planning how they can keep out of its way! They even think how applicable it may be to other people, but they avoid, as much as they can, any idea that it is applicable to themselves, for they do not want conscience to be disturbed. They say, "Hush, Conscience, hush! Lie still and slumber. Do not cry out at such a rate—we shall get all right, by-and-by, and no doubt everything will be squared up at the last. But, for the present, keep quiet, Conscience, and do not trouble me, for I do not want to think." There are some men who seem as if they would not mind six months imprisonment if, thereby, they could escape six months thinking about their character and their state before God! May the Holy Spirit graciously save all of us from getting into that terrible condition! That is one reason why men cry out, as this demoniac did, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, You Son of the Most High God?"—because conscience is feared by them.

Then, next, *change is dreaded by them*. They are content to remain as they are. In certain stages of a sinner's life he feels as if he does not want to be anything but just what he is. He has succeeded in business, he is merry of heart, he is enjoying himself. No doubt there is a worm at the root of all his self-satisfaction, but he does not want to think about that worm. The tree looks all right—why do you want to interfere with it? The apple is beautiful, look at its fair rosy cheeks—suppose there is a maggot in the very core that will destroy it—why do you not let us look at the apple as long as we can be pleased with it? People who talk like that have built a very pretty house, but it is all cardboard—nothing more! But then, see how nicely it is painted and how very beautiful it looks! It is true that the first storm that arises will destroy it, but, possibly, there will not come a storm just yet, so why not let us be easy while we can? There are, alas, many of those easy-going souls. I pity the man who never has any troubles. I believe that there are some people who never will have the heartache till they have known what it is to be hungry almost to starvation. It was so with that poor prodigal—he never thought of going back to his father till, "he would gladly have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: but no man gave any unto him." Poverty, sickness, bereavement and sorrow of heart are often God's angels that come to smite men on the side and wake them up, as the angel awoke sleeping Peter and delivered him from prison, where he was to have been led forth to die on the morrow! Some of you ought to thank God that He does not let you have a very easy or merry time. He does not let you settle on your lees, but keeps on emptying you from vessel to vessel. The reason for this is that He has designs of love for you and He means that you never should rest till you rest in Him! But it is often because of the pride which comes of fullness of bread and the fatness of heart which grows out of worldly prosperity that many a man says to the Lord Jesus Christ, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, You Son of the Most High God?"

And then, if you try to probe such people a little deeper and begin to talk to them about death and judgment, they probably turn upon you

with great indignation, for *they claim the right to be left alone*. “Surely,” they say, “this is a free country, so we ought to be left alone and not to interfered with.” You will hear them say concerning a certain preacher, “Why does not that man preach his own religion and leave other people alone?” Perhaps one of them says, “I liked that sermon very well, on the whole, but I did not like that part of it in which the minister attacked such-and-such an error, as he called it. Why cannot he leave other people alone?” Yes, that is the old cry, “Leave us alone! Leave us alone!” If you will only let the devil alone, the devil will let you alone—but if you once attack him, he will be certain to attack you! But just think for a moment what this foolish sinner claims—he claims the right to live in blindness! You who can see must not tell him that he is blind! If you do so, he says you are infringing his rights. He says that he has a right to lie in prison if he chooses to do so! And if you come and hammer at the door, or shout to him through the iron bars that there has come One who can let loose the captives, he complains that you are disturbing him!

Here is a man on the verge of destruction, asleep on the edge of a precipice! If you wake him, he tells you that he has a right to sleep there if he likes and that he does not want you to awaken him in that rough way and talk to him about his imminent danger! Here is another man lying down on the railway track and the engine and train are coming along that line. If you try to move him, he says that he has a right to lie there if he likes. What is it to you if the engine goes right over his body and cuts him in pieces? You cry to him, “Madman, escape for your life! The engine will be on you directly.” If he does get up, he abuses you and says, “Mind your own business! You go your way and leave me alone.” That is the style in which sinners talk when they claim the right to be left alone. But everybody who has any sense knows that such talk is the language of a fool, for a man has not the right to be damned! He has not the right to destroy himself eternally. Our law very properly withholds from a man the right to commit suicide—if he is caught in the act of attempting to take his own life, he is punishable as a criminal. The act of suicide is a grave offense against the Laws of God and man, and no man has the right to damn his own soul and so to commit spiritual suicide. So we mean to interfere, by God’s help, with such a foolish and wicked man—and cry to him to escape from the wrath to come and, in doing so, we are only obeying the highest instinct of Nature—and the Law of Love, which is the Law of God.

What a blessing it is, dear Friends, that although some of us were once of that way of thinking, our Lord Jesus Christ would not leave us alone! We were sheep away on the mountains and we did not want the Good Shepherd, but He came after us! And even when we saw Him coming, we wandered further and further away from Him, yet He would not let us wander away from Him altogether. He followed us in all our devious tracks and, at last He found us and laid us on His shoulders, rejoicing—and carried us back to the fold where He still watches over us!

Once again, some of these people who entreat Christ to leave them alone *do so because they fear that He will torment them*. The demoniac at Gadara said to Christ, “I implore You by God that You torment me not.” Many people seem to think that it is a very sorrowful thing to be a Christian, that believers in Christ are a miserable, unhappy lot of folk who never enjoy themselves. Well, I must admit that I do know some little communities of people who reckon themselves the very pick of Christians and who meet together on a Sunday to have a comfortable groan together, but I do not think that the bulk of us who worship in this place could be truthfully charged with anything like that! We serve a happy God and we believe in a joyous Gospel—and the love of Christ in our hearts has made us anticipate many of the joys of Heaven even while we are here on earth! “The peace of God, which passes all understanding,” keeps our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. And “the joy of the Lord is our strength.” Perhaps if we were to let the ungodly know more about this joy and peace, they would throw down the weapons of their rebellion and say, “We did not know that the religion of Jesus Christ was so blessed as this! We did not know that there was such music as this in the great Father’s House. We did not know that there was a fatted calf waiting to be killed for us and that the whole household would begin to be merry over us! Now that we know what joy there is, we will enter and go no more out forever.” O beloved Friends, if you have never believed that there is joy in coming near to God through Jesus Christ, His Son, believe it now! May the Holy Spirit graciously draw you to Him, so that you may no longer ask, “What have I to do with You, Jesus, You Son of the Most High God?”

III. Now I turn to the third part of the subject. We have seen what the devil’s views concerning Christ’s Presence are and how he makes sinners share those views. Now, thirdly, I want to show you that SANE MEN MAY TAKE THE DEMONIAK’S QUESTION AND ANSWER IT. “What have I to do with You, Jesus, You Son of the Most High God?”

First, *what have I, whoever I may be, inevitably to do with You?* This is a question which concerns every person here. Suppose, my dear Hearer, that you are a stranger to these things of which I have been speaking and that you only came in here tonight by what you call, “chance”? I beg you to give me your earnest attention, for, whether you believe in Jesus Christ or not, you cannot escape from having some connection with Him, because, first of all, He has come into the world to save sinners and that good news has been made known to you! And everyone who hears that Gospel message and refuses to believe it, is responsible to God for that rejection!

Remember how the Lord Jesus Christ said concerning those cities in which His mighty works had been worked, that it would be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment than it would be for Capernaum and Bethsaida where He had so often been. Christ has been near to you and you have heard His Gospel which many poor heathens have not heard. Now that you have heard the Gospel—the

Gospel of the atoning Sacrifice of Christ—His blood will cry out against you, as the blood of Abel cried out against Cain, if it is not applied to you to cleanse you from sin! You cannot escape from the Lord Jesus Christ! You are caught in the meshes of the great net which He has cast over all those who have heard the Gospel! “He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.” If you do not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, you resolve not to be saved by Him, but to remain in the condition in which you now are, that is, “condemned already.” If you believe not in Christ you do despite to Him! You bring dishonor upon His love and His blood! You cannot get away from that connection with Christ.

There is another connection between you and Christ which you cannot get away from, for there is a sense in which you belong to Christ whether you believe in Him or not. In one of the last prayers He offered before His death, He said, “Father, the hour is come; glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You: as You have given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.” For the special purposes of His Grace to His own elect, Christ has received from His Father power over the whole human race! And it is in this sense that it is said “that He, by the Grace of God, should taste death for every man,” for, although the full saving results of His death will come only to His chosen and redeemed people, “even to them that believe on His name,” yet that wondrous work of His upon the Cross has a relation to all the sons of men! All mankind is put under His mediatorial government, “for the Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment unto the Son.” You cannot, therefore, get away from some connection with Christ even though you refuse to believe in Him. So I put the definite question to you—Will you receive Him, or will you reject Him? Will you be His subject, or will you be His foe? The marriage supper is spread and you are bid to come to it! You are not in the position of those who never were bid, so beware lest this sentence should be applied to you, “I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of My supper.” If you refuse to accept the great King’s invitation, He will declare that you insulted Him by doing so—and on your own head shall rest all the consequences of your refusal!

Remember, too, that all here, whether they receive Christ or reject Him, will have to stand before His Judgment Seat. The day comes when not only the sheep, but the goats shall be gathered before Him, so you must all be there. There is no way of escape for any of you! It used to be said of the whole world, under the Roman Empire, that it was one great prison for any man who had offended Caesar, for, wherever he might go, the officers of Caesar could follow him and arrest him. And, in a similar sense, the whole universe is, to an ungodly spirit, but one great house of detention where that spirit is awaiting the Last Dread Assize. In that day

the ungodly shall know that they cannot escape from Christ! Oh, that they would be wise enough not to want to escape from Him, but would rather run to His open arms and find salvation there!

It is much more sweet to turn to the other form of the question, *What connection is there between me and Christ by way of Grace?* I believe my text might be read in two ways and that in either sense it would be equally true to the original, for the Greek runs something like this, “What to me, to You?” And that may mean, “What have You to do with me?” Or, “What have I to do with You?”

Put it the first way, “What have You to do with me?” O my blessed Savior, what have You to do with me? Why, since I have believed on You, You have had everything to do with me! And I now know that even before I believed in You, You had everything to do with me! Did You not choose me before the earth was created? Did not Your Father give me to You? Did You not enter into Covenant with Him on my behalf? Did You not, in the fullness of time, redeem me with Your precious blood? Did You not call me by Your Grace and renew me by Your Holy Spirit, and intercede for me in my times of temptation and upheld me in my hours of trials? What have You to do with me, dear Savior? If there is anything good in me, You have put it there! If anything evil has been eradicated or weakened, You have done it! What have You to do with me? Why, You have had everything to do with me!

And, then, what have I to do with You? Why, I have everything to do with You! I have to receive my life from You, my food from You, my drink from You! I have to receive my cleansing from You, my keeping from You and everything else that I need in time or in eternity! You are now my Example and You are forever to be my exceedingly great Reward. What have I to do with You? I find in You my All-in-All. I am to sit at Your feet and learn of You. Or I am to wash Your feet with my tears. What have I to do with You? I am to serve You all my days, glad to be Your servant, and then I am to be forever with You where You are, that I may behold Your Glory! “What have I to do with You, Jesus, You Son of the Most High God?” You have taken me to be Your spouse, for You are married to me and You will bring me to the wedding feast before long!

Brothers and Sisters in Christ I am tempted to go on with this wondrous theme. What a subject it is! Yet I think you can work it out better in your private meditations than I can in this public assembly. The connection between us and Christ is very near, and very dear, and very strong—blessed be His holy name! We do not want to snap that connection, nor will it ever be snapped, for nothing in the whole universe “shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

IV. I can only refer very briefly to my last point which is this. **WHEN MEN ARE BLESSED BY JESUS, THEY CHANGE THEIR MINDS WONDERFULLY WITH REGARD TO HIM.**

Can you picture to yourself the change between that poor demoniac, as he was when he first spoke to Christ and the same man when he was

clothed and in his right mind, sitting at the feet of Jesus? If I were able to give you a graphic sketch of that man in all the agony of his delirium, you would be sick at heart as you looked upon the picture. See him there, with unkempt locks, beard all matted and grimy, face covered with filth, eyes starting out of their sockets, limbs twisted with hideous contortions and the whole man a picture of horror! If you have ever had the misery of looking into the face of a man when he was in a delirium, you know what an awful sight it is! How glad you were to get away from that fearful spectacle! But this man had a whole legion of devils within him and must have looked a frightful object! He fell down before Jesus, crying, “What have I to do with You, Jesus, You Son of the Most High God?”—speaking with all his might in horrible tones which must have seemed terribly sad to all who were near.

But Jesus has said, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit.” And now look at him! He has been washed, he has put on some garments, though he has not worn any for years, and he sits down at the feet of Jesus, calmly, collectedly. And when he gets up, he falls on his knees to pray! And what is his petition? “Lord, let me be with You. Do not send me away from You. You have done so much for me, let me always abide with You. Let me loose the laces of Your shoes. Let me wash Your feet. Let me be the servant of the servants of my Lord. Let me do what You will, only let me stay with You.” Is not that a wonderful change? It is just the same with us who have come to Christ! Once we wanted to get away from Him, but now that we know Him, we cannot get near enough to Him! And, sometimes, we even carry that prayer of ours too far, as this man did, because he wanted to be near to the Person of Christ as to the flesh. And, at times I am afraid that our desires concerning going to Heaven savor a little of that spirit. When we are saying—

***“Let me be with You, where You are
Your unveiled glory to behold”—***

we must remember that, possibly, it is not the right thing for us, or for the Kingdom of God at large, that we should go to Heaven just yet. There is something more to be done by us down here and we ought to be just as happy to have Christ with us in spirit as we would be if we were actually with Him in Heaven. However, this man’s petition marks the change which had been worked in him, for, instead of begging Christ to leave him alone, he pleaded that he might always be with Him.

Notice, also, that this man promptly obeys the Lord Jesus Christ in something which must have been very unpleasant to him. In answer to his petition, Christ said, “No, you must not stay with Me. Go home to your friends.” That looked, on the face of it—did it not—rather a harsh answer? It seemed such a beautiful desire on the man’s part, “Let me abide with You.” And it seemed in opposition to the finest instincts of his newly-created nature to send him away. But it was not for this man to judge what was best for him and nor is it for us to judge what is best for us—

“Ours not to reason why,

***Ours not to make reply,
Ours but to do and die***—

if so our Lord ordains! We are to do *what* Jesus tells us, *as* Jesus tells us, *because* Jesus tells us! That is what this man did.

And that led, in the last place, to this man's glorifying Christ, for he went home to his friends and told them what great things the Lord had done for him! And then he went throughout all Decapolis—the ten cities—and told, wherever he went, the story of the Savior's power and love! That is just what we will all try to do—and what we *must* do if the love of Christ has been shed abroad within us! We shall begin by telling the story to our friends, the members of our own family. We shall interest them in our account of what we have heard and seen and handled of the Word of Life. And when we have done that, we shall need a wider sphere, and our sphere of service will widen continually, for we shall keep on seeking fresh opportunities to publish the name, fame and Gospel of Jesus to others! "Ah," we shall each one say, "this was not a pleasant theme to me, once, any more than it is to you now. You will think I am intruding upon your privacy now that I begin to talk to you about Christ, but the fact is, I once thought Christ was intruding Himself upon me and I actually said to Him, 'Leave me alone.' But He would not leave me alone. He cast sin out of me and now I cannot leave you poor sinners alone! I must win you to Christ if I can! I must pray you to Christ or I must pray to God for you until you are saved! As though God did beseech you by me, I pray you, in Christ's stead, be you reconciled to God!"

Thus have I set before you the teaching that I find in this text. May God bless it to you, dear Friends! May His gracious Spirit put into the hearts of His people the prayer that if any sinners want to be left alone, Christ would, in His great mercy, come and deal with them this very hour, casting out the spirit of unbelief and bringing them to trust in Him!" "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." Amen, and Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—385, 611.

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

SATAN, SELF, SIN AND THE SAVIOR

NO. 3306

A SERMON
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*“And He asked him, What is your name? And he answered, saying,
My name is Legion: for we are many.”
Mark 5:9.*

I THINK the text suggests to us *something about Satan, something about self* and also *something about sin and the Savior*.

I. Without any preface, let us at once seek to find in the text SOMETHING ABOUT SATAN.

Although an unclean spirit, Legion, like his master, Satan, is very apt to lie. There is no doubt that here, in the Presence of Christ, he spoke the truth when he said, “My name is Legion: for we are many.” So the first thought suggested by the name, “Legion,” is that *there are many demons* against whom we have to be on the watch in this world. There is one great master power of evil who is called, “your adversary the devil,” but there are also multitudes of demons under his control who are all, like himself, full of hatred to God and to goodness and bent upon doing as much harm as they can to the Kingdom of Christ among men. We do not know how numerous these evil spirits are, but there is reason to believe that there are very many of them, so that it will be no easy task to overcome them—and it is no wonder that there is so much evil in the world when there are so many evil spirits constantly seeking to lead men astray.

The next idea connected with the name, “Legion,” is that of *organization*, for a Roman legion was not merely a large band of soldiers, but it was a thoroughly organized band of several thousands of men who had taken the oath of allegiance to the Roman emperor and who yielded implicit obedience to the centurions and other officers who were placed in authority over them. In like manner we have reason to believe that the vast multitudes of evil spirits are not an undisciplined mob, but that they are organized and controlled even as they were when the devil and his angels fought against Michael and his angels. No doubt they are able to consult and conspire together, and to work unitedly for the attainment of some common end. Satan is called the Prince of the power of the air, and the name, Prince, implies followers who come and go at his command and do his bidding. We who have most to do with fighting against this demoniacal legion know that we have no easy task, and we can say, as Paul did, “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities—

ties, against powers, against the ruler of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” It would be impossible for us to be victors in this dread conflict had we not on our side One who is more mighty than all who can be against us!

But the name, “Legion,” not only suggests the idea of many who are thoroughly organized for fighting, it also conveys the idea of *unity*. The unclean spirit said, “My name is Legion,” as if the legion were himself and he were the legion. It is a great art in war when a whole battalion can be made to move as one man. The Roman phalanx was so often victorious because the men composing it were compacted into one solid body—and that seems to be one of the characteristics of the powers of darkness. It is a sickening thought that while Christians frequently quarrel, we never hear of devils doing so. The Church of God is divided but the kingdom of darkness appears to be one. Whatever internal strife there may be between evil spirits, we have no hint of it here—they all seemed to act in complete unison. Whether hate is a more compacting principle than love, I will not venture to say, but certainly these haters of God and of His Truth appear to be knit together as though they were one devil rather than a multitude of evil spirits! Yet the lovers of the Lord Jesus Christ are not knit together as one man under His blessed rule. Herein lies the force of the Evil One—that his host is so united as to be called a legion, moving forward in absolute union as one great evil power! As you, Beloved, think of this great host all banded together for one purpose—and that purpose your destruction—flying like vast hordes of locusts bent on devastating every place they visit, you must realize that *you* can never overcome the numerous, organized, united forces of evil by your own unaided strength!

The name, “Legion,” also suggest a great band of soldiers *marshaled for war*—not a company of people engaged in peaceful avocations, but an armed host marching to battle at their commander’s orders! The Roman legionnaires were protected with heavy armor and they carried short sharp swords with which they did terrible execution. When they went forth to war, it was as when a tornado sweeps away the stubble or a fire sets a forest ablaze until it is utterly consumed. They were mighty men, trained and disciplined for war from their youth up! And Satan and his myrmidons have been for these six thousand years familiar with the art of injuring and ruining men! They are expert in the use of their deadly weapons—they know what arrows in their quiver will find the joints in your harness, my Brother, and what fiery darts will be most effective against you, my Sister. While reading the 18th Psalm today, I especially noticed what David says in the 5th verse, “The sorrows (the marginal reading is “the cords”) of Hell compassed me about,” as though some infernal powers had cast ropes all around him and were drawing them ever more tightly hoping to enclose the Psalmist in bonds from which he could not escape! Then he adds, “The snares of death confronted me,” as though his enemies, whether men or devils, had laid deadly traps in which they hoped to ensnare him. This is what the evil spirits are con-

stantly doing with regard to you, Beloved, and you will be wise if you do what David tells us that he did—"In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: He heard my voice out of His Temple, and my cry came before Him, even into His ears"—and then you, too, will before long be able to say with David, "He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them who hated me: for they were too strong for me."

Further, the name, "Legion," is *of historical interest*. I have not time to relate the brave deeds of some of the most noted of the Roman legions. The record of them was cherished by their successors just as the heroic exploits of famous British regiments are kept in memory in our own land today. As you think of the legions of evil spirits that are still doing their wicked master's will, you will see that they have some things in their past history wherein they can glory, though their glory will be turned to shame. The banners of our soldiers tell of victories won on many a hard-fought field. The first inscription on the black flag of Diabolus is the one word, "Eden." If Satan can be capable of any enjoyment, it must be a very sweet morsel for him to roll under his tongue when he thinks of the victory that he gained in Paradise, when the whole human race, in the person of its representative, Adam, was so ignominiously overthrown! It is true that since then he has had more defeats than victories and that, by this time, he must have had at least many a foretaste of that final bruising of his head which was foretold in the Garden, yet he still perseveres in his hopeless task of leading on his condemned legions against the followers of that great King against whom he revolted so long ago. The indomitable pluck of Satan is a thing which deserves to be imitated by Christians. The only point in which I can hold him up for your admiration is this—desperate as his cause is, he still presses on with it! Foiled as he has been ten thousand times, he is still ready for the fray. Oh, that we had half as much holy courage as he has of unholy impudence, that we might face our foes as boldly as he faces his! With such a blessed cause as our Master's is, oh, that we had valor worthy of it!

So, Christian, I bid you again to look at your great adversary, that you may realize how stern is the conflict in which you are engaged. You are often afraid of Satan, but he is never afraid of you. If you turn your back in the day of battle, it is not likely that he will turn his. If you are to come off more than conqueror in this lifelong fight, you must be no mere feather-bed soldier. If you have only the name of a Christian, and not the nature of a Christian, defeat must certainly await you. Count the cost of this campaign before you commence it—see whether your force of one thousand is likely to prevail against your adversary's hundred thousand—and then, as you realize your own insufficiency, cry to the Strong for strength! Rely upon your Almighty Ally, and in His might go forth to this holy war rejoicing in the assurance that "the God of Peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."

II. Now, turning from that part of the subject, let us next find here SOMETHING ABOUT SELF.

I believe there are some persons in this congregation who are, in a measure, desirous of salvation, yet they despair of ever being able to attain to it. We generally have some in these seats who are anxious about their eternal safety, but who fear that they never can be saved—their sins are too many, their infirmities too great, their temptations too strong and the circumstances in which they are placed too unfavorable. They conclude that while other sinners may be saved, there is no hope for them. Let us see how the case of this poor demoniac resembles theirs! Someone has said that his answer to Christ's question was, first, the proud opposition of a heart that wanted an argument for resistance to Christ and, secondly, the mournful complaint of a being conscious of its miserable condition! In each case it may be instructive to some here.

First, there was *much pride* in the answer, "Legion, for we are many." And there is also much pride in those sinners who despair of being saved because of the greatness of their sin. When men are resolved not to part with their sins, they generally use one of these two arguments. They either say, "Our sins are so great that we know we shall never get to Heaven, so we may as well keep on sinning." Or else, "We can turn from sin whenever we please. Repentance is such a simple matter that we can attend to it at any time, so we will put it off as long as we can." These are quite opposite extremes, but the exchange from the one to the other can be made very rapidly. If a man needs an excuse for clinging to his sin, he can always find one, and any lie will satisfy the soul that is resolved not to be saved! Suppose, my Friend, you were suffering from some deadly disease which a noted physician offered to cure, but you were unwilling to take his medicine? Your foolish heart might suggest to you two reasons for not taking it. The first would be, "My case is so desperate that no medicine can do me any good." And the other would be, "The medicine is so potent that if I take it in a year's time, when I am much worse than I am now, it will still cure me." Neither of these would be a valid reason for not taking the medicine at once! And if a man died through refusing to take it, a verdict of *felo de se* would be perfectly justifiable! There are multitudes of souls who are lost because they do not believe that Christ can save them and, on the other hand, probably there are quite as many lost because they think it is such an easy thing to be saved that it can be settled any time that they please! I implore you, dear Friends, not to use any argument for refusing Christ! Why should you argue yourselves into eternal ruin? Have you not some better use to which to put your wits than to reason on Satan's side to your own destruction? Rather, account the testimony of God's Word that your sins, even though they may be a legion, or more than that, are not too many to be forgiven! Believe that there is efficacy in the precious blood of Jesus to make you whiter than snow and that He is "mighty to save" even you, for, "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." If you are possessed by a legion of demons, trust in Him whose almighty arm can overthrow the whole lot of them!

This name, “Legion,” also suggests to us *the mournful utterance of self-consciousness sorrowing over its sin*. Surely in this congregation there are some who are saying, “Alas, our sins are many and they have brought us into a most pitiful plight! We have not only withered hands, but we have lame feet, we have blind eyes, we have deaf ears and, worst of all, a heart that is dead as the stones of the street! From the soles of our feet to the crown of our head there is no soundness in us—just wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores.” My dear Friends, if you truthfully utter that sorrowful lament, I am glad to hear it! And whether you know it or not, that state of things is really a reason why God is likely to save you! Let me remind you of some of the arguments that we find in the Word of God. There is one in the 18th Psalm to which I referred you just now. David says of the Lord, “He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me.” He was unable to cope with his adversaries, so he trusted the Lord to deliver him—and He did! There is a similar argument concerning the stone that covered the Savior’s sepulcher. The women said, “Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulcher? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away, “for”—for what?—“for it was very great.” If it had not been very great, they might have rolled it away themselves! But as it was too heavy for them to move, the angel rolled it away for them. David is a great master of this kind of argument. In Psalm 25:11, he prays, “For Your name’s sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity; for it is great.” That seems a strange plea to urge, yet it is one that prevails with God. If I plead to be pardoned because I am *not* a great sinner, I am legal and carnal. But if I plead to be pardoned because I am such a great sinner, I am moved by an evangelical motive and there is room for the display of Divine Grace to one who confesses his need of it! This is like the poor sufferer who cries out to the doctor, “O Sir, do attend to me, for mine is a desperate case!” Or like the beggar in the street who pleads, “Give me help, for I am starving.” You must use your need and the greatness of your need as an argument with the Lord! There are some whom I know here who would almost give their eyes if they could only feel their sin as much as you do. They want to be troubled more about it, they want to despair more over it. Well, they are foolish, and so are you! They are foolish in desiring to despair more, and you are foolish in wishing that you did not despair as much. You should, all of you, give up looking to yourselves, and go to Jesus just as you are and trust to Him to save you!

III. Now I come to the last point, SOMETHING ABOUT OUR SINS AND OUR SAVIOR. Our sins are very much like Satan—they are his children and they are very much like their father.

Our sins may rightly be called legion. Oh, how many they are! I cannot count them, they are more in number than the sands of the sea or the stars of the sky! Yet while they are so many, I may also say of them that they are one, for there is a dreadful unity about our sin. One sin very seldom checks another, it sometimes does, but more frequently one sin

incites another. I have heard it said that some men would be mean if they were not proud, but I have seen people who have been very proud and also very mean. I have known some who have been very bad-tempered, but it was said that they would not display their temper in certain places because they feared they would be losers by doing so, only it was added that they indulged themselves all the more freely in other directions and so made up for their selfish self-restraint. Except in such ways as these, I do not think that one sin is a check upon another, but on the other hand, one sin very often leads to others. If you turn one devil out at the front door, he often comes in again at the back—and brings with him 10 other devils worse than himself! You must have proved how easy it is to get rid of one vice only to fall into another. Did you ever pray with all your heart against sloth, and then feel proud to think how busy you were getting? Then, when you got rid of your pride, you found that despondency was following close behind! And when you had fought against despondency and overcome it, there was presumption pressing to the front! So will you find it till your dying day, but I trust that you will also find that though your sins are many, and though there is a terrible unity about them by which they work together to ruin you, your experience will be, like David's, so that you will be able to say, "They were too strong for me, but the Lord delivered me."

That brings me to my last point, which is this, *the Lord Jesus Christ can as easily cast out a legion of sins as He can cast out one*. If I had only committed one sin in the whole of my life, I should have needed an Omnipotent Savior to put away that one sin by the Sacrifice of Himself. And if I could have committed all the sins that have ever been committed by all the sinners in the whole world, I should not have needed any greater Savior than I have now! If I had only one disposition towards evil, one vice that needed to be overcome, or one evil tendency that had to be counteracted, I should need the Almighty Power of the ever-blessed Spirit to accomplish the task. And if my heart is a cage full of unclean birds, that same Holy Spirit can drive them all out! When the Lord comes into the field of battle, we need not trouble about counting the numbers of the enemy, for He is the Lord of Hosts, and He is, in Himself, mightier than all who can be gathered against Him—He can overthrow all the forces of evil as easily as He cast the legion of devils out of that poor demoniac!

Perhaps some of you are just now in great trouble because of your inward corruptions. It may be that you have lately had such a sight of them as you have never before had in all your lives. Well, dear Friends, this may humble you, but I pray that you will not let it cause you to dishonor the Lord Jesus Christ. Never forget that the King of kings is still reigning supreme over all the powers of darkness! Satan may rage and rave in his great wrath, but there is a bit in his mouth and a bridle on his jaws—and he can be controlled and restrained just as the Lord pleases. He who rules the roaring billows and rides upon the wings of the wind can make all the forces of evil subservient to His will. Even when the devil is permitted to attack the children of God, there is always a lim-

it set beyond which he cannot go, as there was in the case of Job. To my mind, the poor Patriarch sitting down among the ashes, smitten with sore boils from the sole of his feet to the crown of his head, and yet resignedly saying to his wife, "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" is a much nobler being than Satan reigning among the fiends of the Pit! Job might have laughed Satan to scorn as messenger after messenger came to tell him that his oxen and asses were stolen and his servants slain by the Sabeans, that his sheep had been burned up by lightning, that his camels had been carried away by the Chaldeans and last and worst of all, that his children had been killed by the great wind from the wilderness that smote the four corners of the house where they were eating and drinking. And I think that was what Job practically did when, with sublime resignation, he said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." How glorious was the Patriarch's victory when he had been still further tried, yet was able to utter that grand declaration of his faith in God, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him"!

But how much more glorious was the victory of the Man, Christ Jesus, over His great adversary and ours! When "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," was nailed to the Cross, Satan thought that he had won the day. The old serpent had stung Him to death, vainly imagining that all was over with Him. I think I see the arch-fiend gloating over the awful agonies of the dying Savior and maliciously taunting Him as He hung there apparently forsaken by God and man. "Ah," he said, "Seed of the woman, I have indeed bruised Your heel. I have made men reject You and put You to death! I have vexed and tormented You, I have scorned and scouted You and You have not a word to say for Yourself. And now Your soul must soon depart out of Your body." Yet as the devil was still pouring out his vainglorious boasts and taunts, with a mighty voice, the expiring Savior cried, "It is finished," and in that moment His soul sprang upon the enemy and utterly routed him forever! "You have conquered, O Galilean!" is said to have been the dying cry of Julian the apostate, and Satan might have said the same, for when Jesus nailed to His Cross the handwriting that was against us, "having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in Himself," for that is the marginal reading of Colossians 2:15 and, therefore, with Dr. Watts—

***"I sing my Savior's wondrous death;
He conquered when He fell!
'Tis finished!" said His dying breath,
And shook the gates of Hell!
His Cross a sure foundation laid
For Glory and renown,
When through the regions of the dead
He passed to reach the crown"***

Yes, Jesus triumphed in the very hour that looked like the time of His defeat! So praise Him, you bright spirits before the Throne of God, and imitate Him, you saints still here below, for—

**“As surely as He overcame,
And triumphed once for you,
So surely you that love His name
Shall triumph in Him too”—**

even though your foes are named Legion, for they are many. God bless you, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 5.**

Verses 1-6. *And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. And when He was come out of the boat, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones. What a pitiful object this poor creature must have been—a terror to the whole region! So far as man was concerned, he was in an utterly hopeless condition, yet there was hope for him, for Jesus had crossed the sea apparently with the special purpose of healing him! Our Savior had proved His power over the winds and waves and He was about to show that demons were equally subject to His control.*

6, 7. *But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him, and cried with a loud voice and said, What have I to do with You, Jesus, You Son of the Most High God? I adjure You by God, that You torment me not.* [See Sermon #2966, Volume 51—RESISTANCE TO SALVATION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *The voice was the voice of the man, but the devil so completely dominated the whole of his being that he could only speak as the unclean spirit directed him.*

8. *For He said unto him, Come out of the man, you unclean spirit. So that the demon’s adjuration was an answer to the Lord’s command, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit.”*

9-13. *And He asked him, What is your name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many. And he besought Him much that He would not send them away out of the country. Now there was there near unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. And all the devils besought Him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand) and were drowned in the sea. It is clear from this narrative that the demons knew that Jesus was the Son of the Most High God, and that He had absolute power to do with them whatever He pleased. It is also clear that they believed in*

prayer, and that they were all agreed in their supplication to Him—and it is significant that Jesus granted their request. “Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.” There was a certain congruity in the unclean spirits entering into the unclean animals, so, “forthwith Jesus gave them leave.”

14, 16. *And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done. And they come to Jesus, and saw him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.* What a wonderful sight that was for them to see! Yet they need not have been afraid—they ought rather to have rejoiced to see the poor demoniac “sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind.”

16, 17. *And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine. And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts.* Here is a second prayer in which many united—a very foolish and wicked prayer—yet the Savior did as these people wished. He would not force His company upon those who wanted Him to go, so He at once turned His face to the boat that He might “depart out of their coasts.”

18, 19. *And when He was come into the boat, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed Him that he might be with Him. Howbeit Jesus allowed him not, but said to him, go home to your friends, and tell them how great things the Lord has done for you, and has had compassion on you.* [See Sermon #2262, Volume 38—CHRIST’S CURATE IN DECAPOLIS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] This is the third prayer in this chapter. Not like the two previous ones—the petition of many who were not Christ’s followers. It was the earnest supplication of one who was so grateful for what Jesus had done for him that he longed to be always with Him. Yet it was not granted, because Jesus saw that the man could serve Him better by bearing testimony among those who knew him to the great things the Lord had done for him.

20. *And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.* His testimony not only made men marvel, but it helped to prepare the people to welcome the Savior when He returned to that region.

21. *And when Jesus had passed over again by boat unto the other side, many people gathered unto Him: and He was near unto the sea.* How many missionary voyages Jesus made, sometimes to one side of the sea, sometimes to the other side! What an example of holy diligence He is to us! So long as He lived here below, He never ceased to labor for He never ceased to love.

22. *And, behold, there came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw Him, he fell at His feet.* It was an unusual thing for a ruler of the synagogue to be at the feet of Jesus, yet that is the best place for us all! If God has placed any of you in an eminent position, it will well become you to fall at the feet of Jesus as Jairus did.

There is no place more suitable, no place more honorable, no place more profitable than at the feet of Jesus! What brought Jairus there? It was his great need—and that is what will bring us there—a sense of our great need.

23. *And sought Him greatly, saying, My little daughter lies at the point of death: I pray You, come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.* This was great faith, yet it was also little faith, for he limits Christ's power to His bodily Presence and he stipulates about the way in which the cure is to be worked! "I pray You, come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed." Yet we never like to criticize faith, there is so little of it, and it is so precious a thing that we are glad to see it anywhere—and especially in a ruler of the synagogue! Oh, that we all prayed thus for our little daughters and our little sons—"Lord, come and lay Your hands on them! There is sin in them and sin means spiritual death—come and lay Your hands on them, that they may be healed and live forever."

24. *And Jesus went with him.* He will always regard true prayer! If we can believe, Jesus will come.

24, 25. *And much people followed Him, and thronged Him. And a certain woman—*There were many in the throng around Jesus who did not touch Him, and there were many who touched Him, but not as she did! So she is singled out from the crowd. "A certain woman,"—

25-28. *Which had an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse. When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched His garment. For she said, If I may touch but His clothes, I shall be whole.* [See Sermons #827, Volume 14—THE FACULTY BAFLED—THE GREAT PHYSICIAN SUCCESSFUL and #1382, Volume 23—THE TOUCH—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Was this woman sent, do you think, to encourage the faith of Jarius? It has been well said that the child of Jairus had been twelve years living, but this woman had been twelve years dying, so, if Christ could heal the woman who had been twelve years dying, He could raise the child who had been twelve years living! It is significant that there should have been this equalization of the number of years in the two cases. Although Jairus seemed strong in faith, he was not really so. He put the best side of his faith forward, while this woman, who was strong in faith, yet coming behind Christ and touching Him, as it were, by stealth, put the worst side of her faith forward. We have known this to be the case in others—some who seem to be strong in faith are none too strong. And some who seem to be very weak in faith are much stronger than they seem.

29-31. *And immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague. And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that virtue had gone out of Him, turned Him about in the press, and said, Who touched My clothes? And His disciple said unto Him, You see the multitude thronging You, and say You, Who touched Me?* They spoke too fast, as we also sometimes do. It would have

been well if they had said nothing which looked like questioning their Master's word.

32, 33. *And He looked round about to see her that had done this thing. But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before Him, and told Him all the truth.* [See Sermon #514, Volume 9—TELL IT ALL—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] The miracle had been worked in her, yet she was fearing and trembling because she perceived the imperfection of her way of approaching the Savior! Probably, after we are saved, we see more of our mistakes than we did before. And when the blessing really comes to us, we begin to be anxious lest we should lose Christ because of some misapprehension in our way of finding Him. The woman “fell down before Him, and told Him all the truth.”

34. *And He said unto her, Daughter*—This was a very unusual way for Christ to speak to a woman, so careful was He in His speech, but then she was a very exceptional woman! “Daughter”—

34, 35. *Your faith has made you whole, go in peace, and be whole of your plague. While He yet spoke, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house a certain man who said, Your daughter is dead: why trouble you the Master any further?* This ruler of the synagogue was on the brink of getting the blessing he sought and then the very worst news comes to him! It may be that just now some of you have seemed to receive the sentence of death to all your hopes, yet you are on the very verge of getting the blessing. It is often so—just when the devil knows that the blessing is near, he struggles the hardest with the soul that is seeking it. Do not be cast down if that sentence of death comes to you, but still believe.

36-39. *As soon as Jesus heard the words that was spoken, he said unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe. And He suffered no man to follow Him, save Peter and James, and John the brother of James. And He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. And when He was come in, He said unto them, Why make you this ado, and weep? The damsel is not dead, but sleeps.* Jesus knew what He was about to do and, speaking with the knowledge of the miracle He was about to perform, He said, “The damsel is not dead but sleeps.” A charlatan, who wanted to make himself famous, and in order to increase the effect of the miracle, would have said, “The damsel is really dead,” but the Savior, in His infinite modesty of heart, puts it thus, “The damsel is not dead, but sleeps.”

40. *And they laughed Him to scorn.* Can you picture the scene? These people who had been hired to weep and wail, had not much of the spirit of mourning in them, for they laughed directly and derisively—they turned upon the mighty Master of life and death and “laughed Him to scorn.”

40. *But when He had put them all out*—That was the best way to answer the scorners. It is no good arguing with people who can cry or laugh to order! “When He had put them all out”—

40-42. *He took the father and the mother of the damsel, and they that were with Him, and entered in where the damsel was lying. And He took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto you, arise. And immediately—*Notice how this word, “immediately,” comes in again! It is the characteristic word in reference to Christ’s miracles—they are usually worked at once. We read in the 29th verse, “Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up.” Now we read, “Immediately”—

42. *The damsel arose, and walked.* Oh, that the Lord Jesus Christ would work some “immediately” miracles in our midst just now! He can do it if He pleases! Before this service ends, there may be some who shall have passed from death unto life, out of the darkness of sin into the marvelous light of Grace! Blessed be God for this—who will it be?

42, 43. *For she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment. And He charged them immediately that no man should know it.* He did not want to blaze abroad the story of these wondrous deeds of His. The crowd was already inconveniently large, so that “He charged them immediately that no man should know it.”

43. *And commanded that something should be given her to eat.* She might have continued to live by a miracle as she had been miraculously raised from the dead, but it was needless, and Christ never worked an unnecessary miracle. Do not look for miracles when ordinary means will suffice. “He commanded that something should be given her to eat.” When life is given or restored, the next thing needed is nourishment! When you are made spiritually to live, be sure to attend a soul-feeding ministry—and diligently read the Word—that you may get all necessary nourishment for your soul out of it.

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

CHRIST'S CURATE IN DECAPOLIS

NO. 2262

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 26, 1892.
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“And they began to pray Him to depart out of their coasts. And when He was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed Him that he might be with Him. However, Jesus suffered him not, but said unto him, Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you.”
Mark 5:17-19.

THAT is a striking name for a man, “he that had been possessed with the devil.” It would stick to him as long as he lived and it would be a standing sermon wherever he went. He would be asked to tell the story of what he used to be and how the change came about. What a story for any man to tell! It would not be possible for us to describe his life while he was a demoniac—the midnight scenes among the tombs, the cutting himself with stones, the howling, the frightening away of all the travelers that went near him, the binding with chains, the snapping of the manacles, the breaking of the fetters—and a great many details that he, alone, could enter into when he told the story among his own familiar friends. With what tenderness would he tell how Jesus came that way and how the evil spirit forced him to confront Him! He would say, “That was the best thing that could have happened to me, to be brought to the Master of that desperate legion of demons which had encamped within my nature and made my soul to be its barracks.” He would tell how, in a moment, out went the whole legion at the word of Christ!

There are some people who could tell a story very similar to this man's—a story of slavery to Satan and deliverance by the power of Christ! If you can tell such a story, do not keep it to yourself! If Jesus has done great things for you, be always ready to speak of it, till all men shall know what Christ can do. I think that great sinners who have been saved are especially called upon to publish the good news, the Gospel of the Grace of God. If you have been valiant *against* the Truth of God, be valiant *for* the Truth of God. If you were not lukewarm when you served Satan, be not lukewarm, now that you have come to serve Christ! There are some of us here who might bear the name of “the man who was born blind,” or, “the leper that was healed,” or, “the woman that was a sinner.” And I hope

that we shall all be willing to take any name or any title that will glorify Christ. I do not find that this man ever persecuted Mark for libel because he wrote of him as, "he that had been possessed with the devil." Oh, no! He acknowledge that he was once possessed with the devil—and he glorified God that he had been delivered by the Lord Jesus!

I. I am going to make a few observations upon the passage I have chosen for a text—and the first observation is this, SEE HOW MEN'S DESIRES DIFFERED. We find in the 17th verse that, "they began to pray Him to depart out of their coasts." In the 18th verse, "he that had been possessed with the devil prayed Him that he might be with Him." The people wanted Christ to go away from them—the man whom He had cured wanted to go wherever He might go! To which class do *you* belong, my dear Friend?

I hope you do not belong to the first class, the class of *the many who pray Jesus to depart from them*. Why did they want Him to go?

I think it was, first, because they loved to be quiet and to dwell at ease. It was a great calamity that had happened—the swine had run into the sea. They did not want any more such calamities and evidently the Person who had come among them possessed extraordinary power. Had He not healed the demoniac? Well, they did not want Him—they did not want anything extraordinary. They were easy-going men who would like to go on in the even tenor of their ways, so they asked Him to be good enough to go away. There are some people of that kind still living. They say, "We do not need a revival, here—we are too respectable. We do not need any stirring preaching here—we are very comfortable. Do not break up our peace." Such men, when they think that God is at work in any place, are half inclined to go elsewhere. They want to be quiet! Their motto is, "Anything for a quiet life." "Leave us alone, let us go on our old way," is the cry of these foolish people, as it was the cry of the Israelites when they said to Moses, "Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians."

Possibly these people wanted the Savior gone because they had an eye to business. That keeping of the swine was a bad business. As Jews, they had no business with it. They may have said they did not *eat* them—themselves, they only kept them for other people to eat—but now they had lost the whole herd! I wonder what all those swine would have brought to their owners? As they began calculating how much they had lost, they resolved that the Savior must get out of their coasts before they lost anything more. I do not wonder that, when men sell intoxicating liquors, for instance, or when they follow any trade in which they cannot make money except by injuring their fellow men, they do not want Christ to come that way. Perhaps some of you would not like Him to see you pay those poor women for making shirts. I am afraid if Jesus Christ were to come around and go into some people's business houses, the husband would say to his wife, "Fetch down that book where I enter the wages and hide it—I should not like Him to see that."

Oh, dear Friend, if there is any such reason why you do not want Christ to come your way, I pray that the Holy Spirit may convince you that you *do* need Him to come your way! He who has the most objection to Christ is the man who most needs Christ! You can be sure of this—if you do not desire to be converted, if you do not wish to be born again—you are the person above all others needing to be converted and to be born again! Is it not a most unwise decision when, for the sake of swine, we are willing to part with Christ? “For what shall it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?” He will get a corner in the newspaper saying that he died worth so many thousands of pounds—and that will *not* be true, for *he* was never worth a penny! Who would give a penny for him, now he is dead? He will cost money to get rid of and he cannot not take it with him. He was not worth anything—he used his money for selfish purposes and never used it for the glory of God. Oh, the poverty of an ungodly rich man!

I do not wonder that these people, taken up with themselves, and with the world, prayed Christ “to depart out of their coasts.” May He not, even though you may not care to hear Him, stop somewhere on the shore? No—when men get excited against religion they go to great lengths in trying to drive it away from their midst. Many a poor man has lost his cottage where he had a few Prayer Meetings because the landlord not only did not want Christ, Himself, but, like the dog in the manger, would not let others have Him who did want Him. Are any of you in that condition?

I hope that I have some here who are of another kind—like *this poor man who prayed Him that he might be with Him*. Why did he want to be with Jesus? I think he wanted to be His attendant to show his gratitude. If he might but wait on Christ, loose the laces of His shoes and wash His feet, or prepare His meals, he would feel himself the happiest man on earth! He would love to be doing *something* for the One who had cast a legion of devils out of him!

Next, he wished not only to be an attendant to show his gratitude, but a disciple that he might learn more of Him. What he *did* know of Christ was so precious—he had personally had such an experience of His gracious power that he wanted to be always learning something from every word of those dear lips, and every action of those blessed hands! He prayed Him that he might be with Him as a disciple who wished to be taught by Him.

He also wanted to be with Him as a comrade, for now that Christ must go, exiled from Decapolis, he seemed to feel that there was no reason why he should remain there. “Lord, if You must leave there Gadarenes, let me leave the Gadarenes, too! Do you go, O Shepherd? Then let me go with You. Must You cross the sea and go, I know not where? I will go with You to prison and to death!” He felt so linked with Christ that he prayed Him that he might be with Him.

I think that there was this reason, also—one of fear at the back of his prayer. Perhaps one of that legion of devils might come back—and if he could stay with Christ, then Christ would turn the devil out again! I should not wonder but he felt a trembling about him, as if he could not bear to be out of the sight of the great Physician who had healed him of so grievous an ill. I would say to all here that we are never safe unless we are with Christ. If you are tempted to go where you could not have Christ with you, do not go!

Did you ever hear the story of the devil running away with a young man who was at the theater? It is said that John Newton sent after Satan and said, "That young man is a member of my Church." "Well," replied the devil, "I do not care *where* he is a member! I found him on my premises, and I have a right to him." And the preacher could not give any answer to that. If you go on the devil's premises and he takes you, I cannot say anything against it. Go nowhere where you cannot take Christ with you! Be like this man who longs to go wherever Christ goes.

II. Now, secondly, SEE HOW CHRIST'S DEALINGS DIFFER and how extraordinary they are. Here is an evil prayer—"Depart out of our coasts." He grants it. Here is a pious prayer—"Lord, let me be with You." "However Jesus suffered him not." Is that His way, to grant the prayer of His enemies, and refuse the petition of His friends? Yes, it is sometimes.

In the first case, *when they prayed Him to depart, He went.* Oh, dear Friends, if Christ ever comes near you and you get a little touched in your conscience and feel a throb of something like spiritual life, do not pray Him to go away, for if He goes—if He should leave you to yourself and never return—your doom is sealed! Your only hope lies in His Presence, but if you pray against your one Hope, you are a suicide—you are guilty of murdering your own soul!

Jesus went away from these people because it was useless to stay. If they wanted Him to go, what good could He do to them? If He spoke, they would not listen. If they heard His message, they would not heed it. When men's minds are set against Christ, what else is to be done but to leave them?

He could spend His time better somewhere else. If you will not have my Lord, somebody else will. If you sit there in your pride and say, "I need not the Savior," there is a poor soul in the gallery longing for Him and crying, "Oh, that I might find Him to be my Savior!" Christ knew that if the Gadarenes refused Him, the people on the other side of the lake would welcome Him on His return.

By going away, He even saved them from yet greater sin. If He had not gone, they might have tried to plunge Him into the lake. When men begin to pray Christ to depart out of their coasts, they are bad enough for anything. There might have followed violence to His blessed Person, so He took Himself away from them. Is it not an awful thing that if the Gospel ministry does not save you, it is helping to damn you? We are a savior to

God, always sweet—but in some *men*, we are a savor of death unto death—while in others we are a savor unto life. O my Hearers, if you will not come to Christ, the seat you occupy is misappropriated! There might be another person sitting here to whom the Gospel might be very precious—and our opportunities of preaching it are none too many. We do not like to waste our strength on stony ground, on hard bits of rock that repel the Seed. Rock, rock, rock, will you never break? Must we continue to sow you though no harvest comes from you? God change you, rock, and make you good soil, that yet the Truth of God may grow upon you! The evil prayer, then, was answered.

The good prayer was not answered. Why was that? The chief reason was because the man could be useful at home. He could glorify God better by going among the Gadarenes and among his own family and telling what God had done for him, than he could by any attention he could pay to Christ. It is remarkable that Christ took nobody to be His body-servant, or personal attendant during His earthly ministry. He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister! He did not desire this man to be with Him to make Him comfortable—He bade him go back to his family and make known the power of Jesus Christ and seek to win them for God.

Perhaps, too, his prayer was not answered lest his fear should have been thereby sanctioned. If he did fear and I feel morally certain that he did—that the devils would return—then, of course, he longed to be with Christ. But Christ took that fear from him and, as good as says to him, “You do not need to be near Me—I have so healed you that you will never be sick again.” A patient might say to his doctor, “I have been so very ill and through your skill have been restored to health, I should like to be near you, so that if there should be any recurrence of my malady, I might come to you at once.” If the doctor should reply, “You may go to Switzerland, or to Australia, if you like,” it would be the best evidence that the doctor had no fears about him—and it ought to put a quietus to his doubts.

You see, then, how Christ's dealings differ with different men. Have I not known some continue in sin and yet prosper in business, heaping up wealth and having all that heart could wish? Have I not known others repent and turn to God—and from that very day they have had more trouble than they ever had before—and their way has been strangely rough? Yes, I have seen them and I have not envied the easy ways of the wicked, neither have I felt that there was anything very amazing about the rough ways of the righteous, for, after all, it is not the *way* that is the all-important matter—it is the *end* of the way—and if I could travel smoothly to Hell, I would not choose to do so! And if the way to eternal life is rough, I take it with all its roughness! At the foot of the Hill Difficulty, Bunyan makes his pilgrim sing—

***“The hill, though high, I covet to ascend,
The difficulty will not me offend;
For I perceive the way of life lies here.”***

III. My third point is this—SEE HOW GOOD A THING IT IS TO BE WITH JESUS. This man entreated of the Lord that he might be with Him.

If you have recently been saved, I expect you have a longing in your heart to always be with Christ. I will tell you what shape that longing is likely to take. You were so happy, so joyful, and it was such a blessed meeting, that you said to yourself, "I am sorry it is over; I should like this meeting to have been kept on all night, and the next day, and never to end." Yes, you were of the mind of Peter when he wanted to build the three tabernacles on the holy mountain and to stay there the rest of his days! But you cannot do it—it is no use wishing for it. You must go home to that drinking husband or that scolding wife—to that ungodly father or that unkind mother. You cannot always stay in that meeting!

Perhaps you have another idea of what it is to be with Christ. You are so happy when you can get alone and read your Bible and meditate, and pray, that you say, "Lord, I wish I could always be like this. I should like to be always upstairs in this room, searching the Scriptures and having communion with God." Yes, yes, yes, but you cannot do it. There are the children's socks to be mended, there are buttons to be put on the husband's shirts, and there are all sorts of odds and ends to be done and you must not neglect any of them! Whatever household duties come upon you, attend to them. You wish that you had not to go to the city tomorrow. Would it not be sweet to have an all-night Prayer Meeting and then to have an all-day searching of the Scriptures? No doubt it would, but the Lord has not so arranged it. You have to go to business, so just put on your week-day clothes and think yourself none the less happy because you have to show your religion in your daily life.

"Ah, well!" says one, and this I hear often, "I think that I would always be with Christ if I could get right out of business and give myself up to the service of the Lord." Especially do you think that it would be so if you were a minister! Well, I have nothing to say against the ministry of the Gospel. If the Lord calls you to do it, obey the call and be thankful that He has counted you faithful, putting you into the ministry. But if you suppose that you will be nearer to Christ simply by entering the ministry, you are very much mistaken! I daresay that I had about as many of the other people's troubles brought to me this morning, after I had done the preaching, as would last most men a month! We have to bear with everybody's trouble, and everybody's doubt, and everybody's need of comfort and counsel! You will find yourself cumbered with much serving, even in the service of the Lord—and it is very easy to lose the Master in the Master's work!

We need much Grace lest this insidious temptation should overcome us even in our ministry. You can walk with Christ and sell groceries! You can walk with Christ and be a chimney-sweep. I do not hesitate to say that, by the Grace of God, you can walk with Christ as well in one occupation as another, if it is a rightful one. It might be quite a mistake if you were to

give up your business under the notion that you would be more with Christ if you became a city missionary, or a Bible-woman, or a tract distributor, or a captain in the Salvation Army, or whatever other form of holy service you might desire! Keep on with your business! If you can black shoes well, do that! If you can preach sermons badly, do *not* do that!

"Ah," says one, "I know how I would like to be with Christ." Yes, yes, I know. You would like to be in Heaven. Oh, yes, and it is a laudable desire, to wish to be with Christ, for it is far better than being here! But, mind you, it may be a *selfish* desire and it may be a *sinful* desire if it is pushed too far. A holy man of God was once asked by a fellow servant of Christ. "Brother So-and-So, do you not want to go Home?" He said, "I will answer you by another question. If you had a man working for you and, on Wednesday, he said, 'I wish it were Saturday,' would you keep him on?" The other thought that he would need a large stock of patience to do so. Why? You will be glad to see the back of him before Saturday comes, for he will be no good for work! Have I a right to be desiring to go to Heaven if I can do any good to you here? Is it not more of a Heaven to be outside of Heaven than inside if you can be doing more for God outside than in? Long to go when the Lord wills! But if not, to remain in the flesh is more for the good of the Church and the world, and more for the Glory of God—waive your desire and be not vexed with your Master when, after having prayed that you may be with Him, it has to be written of you as it was of this man—"However, Jesus suffered him not."

Still, it is a very delightful thing to be with Jesus.

IV. But now, in the fourth place, SEE THAT THERE MAY BE SOMETHING EVEN BETTER THAN THIS. In the sense which I have mentioned, there is something better, even, than being with Christ!

What is better than being with Christ? Why, to be working for Christ! Jesus said to this man, "Go home to your friends and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you."

This is *more honorable*. It is very delightful to sit at Jesus' feet, but if the most honorable post on the field of battle is the place of danger. If the most honorable thing in the State is to have royal service allotted to you, then the most honorable thing for a Christian is not to sit down and sing, and enjoy himself, but to get up and risk reputation, life and everything for Jesus Christ's sake! Dear Friend, aspire to *serve* our Lord—it is a more honorable thing, even, than being with Him!

It is also *better for the people*. Christ is going away from the Gadarenes. They have asked Him to go and He is going. But He seems to say to this man, "I am going because they have asked Me to go. My leaving them looks like a judgment upon them for their rejection of Me, but yet I am not going away altogether. I am going to stay with you. I will put My Spirit upon you and so will continue with you. They will hear you though they will not hear Me." Christ, as it were, resigns the pastorate of that district,

but He puts another in His place, not as good as Himself, but one whom they will like better. Not as powerful and useful as Himself, but one better adapted to them. When Christ was gone, this man would be there and the people would come to him to hear about those swine and how they ran down into the sea. And if they did not come to him, he would go and tell them all about it. And so there would be a permanent curate left there to discharge the sacred ministry, now that the great Bishop had gone! I like that thought. Christ had gone to Heaven, for He is needed there, and so He has left you here, dear Brother, to carry on His work! You are not equal to Him in any respect, but yet remember what He said to His disciples, "He that believes on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do because I go unto My Father." That is why Christ does not suffer you to be with Him at present. You must stay for the sake of the people among whom you live, as, "He that had been possessed with the devil" had to remain for the sake of the Gadarenes, to whom he might testify concerning Christ!

His remaining, also, was *better for his family*, and do you not think that, oftentimes, a man of God is kept out of Heaven for the sake of his family? You must not go yet, Father—those boys still need your example and your influence. Christian Mother, you must not go yet—I know that your children are grown up and they are grieving you very much, but still, if there is any check upon them, it is their poor old mother—and you must stay till you have prayed them to God. And you will do so yet! Be of good courage! I believe that there are many here who might be in Heaven—but God has some who He intends to bring in by them—and so they must stay here a little longer. Though infirm in body, shattered in nerve and often racked with acute pain—perhaps with deadly disease upon you and wishing to be gone—you must not go till your work is done.

"However, Jesus suffered him not." This demoniac must go home and tell his wife and his children what great things the Lord had done for him. Many eminent preachers have pictured the scene of his going home, so I will try to do it. You may only fancy what it would be if it were *your* case and you had been shut up in an asylum, or had been almost too bad even for that! How glad your friends were to have you taken away and then how much more glad to find you come back perfectly well! I can imagine how the man's wife would look through the window when she heard his voice. Has he come back in a mad fit? How the children will be filled with terror at the sound of their father's voice until they were assured that there was, indeed, a change in him! Ah, poor Sinner, you have come here tonight! Perhaps you forget that your children often have to hide away under the bed when Father comes home. I know that there are such persons about and they may even find their way into the Tabernacle. The Lord have mercy upon the drunk and turn his cups bottom upwards and make a new man of him! Then, when he goes home, to tell of Free Grace and dying love, and of the wonderful change that God has worked in him, he will

be a blessing to his family and to all about him. It may be, dear Friend, that you have to stay here till you have undone some of the mischief of your early life. You have to bring to God some of those whom you tempted and led astray and helped to ruin.

So, you see, dear Friends, there *is* even something better than being *with* Christ—*working for* Christ.

V. But lastly, CONSIDER THAT THERE IS YET A CASE WHICH IS BEST OF ALL. We must always have three degrees of comparison. What is the best state of all? To be with Christ is good. To be sent by Christ on a holy errand is better. But here is something that is best of all, namely, to work for Him and to be with Him at the same time! I want every Christian to aspire to that position. Is it possible to sit with Mary at the Master's feet and yet to run about like Martha and get the dinner ready? It is! And then Martha will never be cumbered with much serving if she does that—and she will never find fault with her sister Mary. "But, Sir, we cannot sit and stir at the same time." No, not as to your bodies, but you can as to your souls! You can be sitting at Jesus' feet, or leaning on His breast and yet be fighting the Lord's battles and doing His work!

In order to do this, *cultivate the inner as well as the outer life*. Endeavor not only to *do* much for Christ, but to be much *with* Christ and to live wholly *upon* Christ. Do not, for instance, on the Lord's-Day, go to a class and teach others three times, as some whom I know, do. But come once and hear the Master's message and get your soul fed—and when you have had a spiritual feast in the morning, give the rest of the day to holy service. Let the two things run together! To be always eating and never working, will bring on excessive fullness and spiritual indigestion! To be always working and never eating—well, I am afraid that you will not bear that trial so well as the gentleman who yesterday ate his first meal after forty days of fasting. Do not try to imitate him! It is not a right and wise thing to do, but very dangerous. Get spiritual food as well as do spiritual work.

Let me say to you, again, *grieve very much if there is the least cloud between you and Christ*. Do not wait until it is as thick as a November fog—be full of sorrow if it is only like a tiny, fleecy cloud! George Muller's observation was a very wise one, "Never come out of your chamber in the morning until everything is right between you and God." Keep in perpetual fellowship with Jesus and thus you can be with Him and yet be serving Him at the same time!

And mind this, *before you begin Christ's service, always seek His Presence and help*. Do not enter upon any work for the Lord without having first seen the face of the King in His beauty. And in the work, often, in your mind, remember *what* you are doing for *Him*—and *by whom* you are doing it! And when the work is completed, do not throw up your cap and say, "Well done, Self!" Another will say to you, by-and-by, "Well done!" if you deserve it. Do not take the words out of his mouth. Self-praise is no

recommendation! Solomon said, "Let another man praise you and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips."

When we have done all, we are still unprofitable servants—we have only done that which is our duty to do. So, if you are as humble as you are active, as lowly as you are energetic, you may stay with Christ and yet go about His errands to the ends of the earth! And I reckon this to be the happiest experience that any one of us can reach this side of the gates of pearl. The Lord bless you and bring you there, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

MARK 5:1-29.

1, 2. *And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. And when He was come out of the ship, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit.* Our Lord crossed the Sea of Galilee on purpose to rescue this poor man from the power of the unclean spirits that possessed him. He knew that there were many who needed Him on the Galilean side of the lake and He could foresee the storm that would threaten to sink the little ship. Yet He calmly said to His disciples (see chapter 4, Verse 35), "Let us pass over unto the other side." As soon as the great Physician landed, a dreadful apparition appeared. "Out of the tombs," an uncanny place, rushed a man, howling and yelling like some wild beast, or, still worse, under the influence of Satan who had taken possession of him.

3, 4. *Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains; because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him.* See how the world deals with furiously guilty men! It tries to fetter them, or else to tame them, to keep them in check by fear of punishment, or else to subdue them to a gentleness of morality—this is poor work! Christ neither binds nor tames—He changes and renews! Oh, that His aid were sought everywhere, and not so much reliance placed on the fetters of law, or the power of morals!

5. *And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.* It must have been dreadful for travelers to pass that way at night, or to meet with this terrible madman at any hour of the day. But how terrible must have been the poor creature's own condition? We get just a glimpse of it from the words, "always in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying and cutting himself with stones." See what Satan does with those who are in his power.

6. *But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped Him.* The devil does not like doing it, but if it will serve his purpose, he will pretend to be a worshipper of Christ. He comes here, sometimes. He goes to all sorts of places of worship and makes men turn worshippers who have no

worship in their hearts, for there is no end to the depth of his cunning, and many are they that have served the devil best when they have pretended to worship Christ.

7. *And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with you, Jesus, You Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God, that You torment me not.* Using the lips of this poor man, Satan spoke in him and through him. He is afraid of Christ. This dog of Hell knows his Master and crouches at His feet. He beseeches the "Son of the Most High God" not to torment him before his time.

8. *For He said unto him, Come out of the man, you unclean spirit.* Christ never wastes words over the devil. He speaks to him very shortly and very sharply. It would be well, sometimes, if we could be more concise when we are dealing with evil. It does not deserve our words as it did not observe Christ's words. Jesus said to the devil, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit."

9, 10. *And He asked him, What is your name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many. And he besought Him much that He would not send him away out of the country.* The devil can pray—he did so in this case. It is not because a man is fluent in prayer that we are sure of his salvation. It is not because a man prays with such fervor that his knees knock together, that we may conclude that he is a saint. It may be that he is trembling through fear of God's judgment! Satan besought Christ much.

11, 12. *Now there was there near unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. And all the devils besought Him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.* Satan would rather vex swine than do no mischief at all. He is so fond of evil that he would work it upon animals if he cannot work it upon men. What unanimity there is among the evil spirits! "All the devils besought Him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them."

13. *And forthwith Jesus gave them leave.* The devil cannot enter even a pig without Christ's permission! So he cannot tempt you, my Friend, without our Lord's permission! You may rest assured that even this great monster of evil is under Christ's control. He cannot molest you till Jesus gives him permission. There is a chain around the roaring lion and he can only go as far as the Lord allows him.

13, 14. *And the unclean spirit went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a deep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand), and were choked in the sea. And they that fed the swine fled. At which we do not at all wonder! Who would not flee when they thus saw the power of Christ?*

14, 15. *And told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done. And they came to Jesus, and saw him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.* You would have thought that it

would have been said, "They marveled and they praised Christ for this great and wonderful deed." No, "They were afraid." If you see another converted, do not be afraid! But rather have hope that *you* may be saved, yourself! What a beautiful sight these people saw—"they come to Jesus, and saw him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind." That thought ought to have made them rejoice instead of being afraid! There are still people who are afraid of what will happen when they see those whom Christ has blessed spiritually as He had healed this man.

16, 17. *And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine. And they began to pray Him to depart out of their coasts.* If Jesus should come to you, tonight, do not ask Him to go away! Open wide the door of your heart and entreat the Lord to come in and dwell there forever and ever! This narrative teaches us that the Lord Jesus Christ will go away if He is asked to do so—He will not remain where His company is not desired.

18-20. *And when He was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed Him that he might be with Him. However Jesus suffered him not, but said unto him, Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had companion on you. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis all the great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.* He was told to tell what great things *the Lord* had done for him. He went and told what great things *Jesus* had done for him. Did he make a mistake? Oh, no! It is but another name for the same Person, for Jesus *is* the Lord—and when you speak of Him as Divine, and talk of Him in terms fit only for God—you do but speak rightly, for so He deserves to be praised! "And all men did marvel." So our Lord left them all wondering. Leaving this one messenger to bear testimony to Him, He went His way elsewhere, to carry blessings to many others on the other side of the sea. The man appears to have gone through the wide district that bore the name Decapolis and his testimony to the power of Christ was so convincing that, when the Savior revisited that part of the country, He had a very different reception from that which He received on this occasion. (See 7:31-37; 8:1-10).

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—797, 847, 806.

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GOING HOME—A CHRISTMAS SERMON

NO. 109

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, DECEMBER 21, 1856,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“Go home to your friends and tell them how great things the Lord has done for you and has had compassion on you.”
Mark 5:19.***

THE case of the man here referred to is a very extraordinary one—it occupies a place among the memorabilia of Christ’s life, perhaps as high as anything which is recorded by either of the Evangelists. This poor wretch being possessed with a legion of evil spirits had been driven to something worse than madness. He fixed his home among the tombs where he dwelt by night and day and was the terror of all those who passed by. The authorities had attempted to curb him. He had been bound with fetters and chains but in the paroxysms of his madness he had torn the chains in sunder and broken the fetters in pieces.

Attempts had been made to reclaim him but no man could tame him. He was worse than the wild beasts—for they might be tamed. But his fierce nature would not yield. He was a misery to himself for he would run upon the mountains by night and day—crying and howling fearfully—cutting himself with the sharp flints and torturing his poor body in the most frightful manner. Jesus Christ passed by. He said to the devils, “Come out of him.” The man was healed in a moment—he fell down at Jesus’ feet. He became a rational being—an intelligent man. Yes, what is more—a convert to the Savior.

Out of gratitude to his Deliverer, he said, “Lord, I will follow You wherever You go. I will be Your constant companion and Your servant, permit me so to be.” “No,” said Christ, “I esteem your motive, it is one of gratitude to Me but if you would show your gratitude, Go home to your friends and tell them how great things the Lord has done for you and has had compassion on you.”

Now this teaches us a very important fact, namely this—that true religion does not break in sunder the bonds of family relationship. True religion seldom encroaches upon that sacred, I had almost said Divine institution called *home*. It does not separate men from their families and make them aliens to their flesh and blood. Superstition has done that. An awful superstition, which calls itself Christianity, has sundered men from their kind. But true religion has never done so.

Why, if I might be allowed to do such a thing, I would seek out the hermit in his lonely cavern and I would go to him and say, "Friend, if you are what you profess to be—a true servant of the living God and not a hypocrite, as I guess you are—if you are a true Believer in Christ and would show forth what He has done for you, upset that pitcher, eat the last piece of your bread. Leave this dreary cave, wash your face, untie your hempen girdle—and if you would show your gratitude, go home to your friends and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you. Can you edify the sere leaves of the forest? Can the beasts learn to adore that God whom your gratitude should strive to honor? Do you hope to convert these rocks and wake the echoes into songs? No, go back—dwell with your friends, reclaim your kinship with men and unite again with your fellows—for this is Christ's approved way of showing gratitude."

And I would go to every monastery and every nunnery and say to the monks, "Come out Brethren, come out! If you are what you say you are, servants of God, go home to your friends. No more of this absurd discipline. It is not Christ's rule. You are acting differently from what He would have you do, go home to your friends!" And to the sisters of mercy we would say, "Be sisters of mercy to your own sisters—go home to your friends—take care of your aged parents. Turn your own houses into convents—do not sit here nursing your pride by a disobedience to Christ's rule, which says, "go home to your friends." "Go home to your friends and tell them how great things the Lord has done for you and has had compassion on you."

The love of a solitary and ascetic life—which is by some considered to be a Divine virtue—is neither more nor less than a disease of the mind. In the ages when there was but little benevolence and consequently few hands to build lunatic asylums, superstition supplied the lack of charity and silly men and women were allowed the indulgence of their fancies in secluded haunts or in easy laziness. Young has most truly said—

***"The first sure symptoms of a mind in health
Are rest of heart and pleasure found at home."***

Avoid, my Friends, above all things, those romantic and absurd conceptions of virtue which are the offspring of superstition and the enemies of righteousness. Be not without natural affection but love those who are knit to you by ties of nature.

True religion cannot be inconsistent with nature. It never can demand that I should abstain from weeping when my friend is dead. "Jesus wept." It cannot deny me the privilege of a smile when Providence looks favorably upon me. For once Jesus rejoiced in spirit and said, "Father, I thank you." It does not make a man say to his father and mother, "I am no longer your son." That is not Christianity but something worse than what beasts would do—which would lead us to be entirely sundered from our fellows—

to walk among them as if we had no kinship with them. To all who think a solitary life must be a life of piety, I would say, "It is the greatest delusion."

To all who think that those must be good people who break the ties of relationship, let us say, "Those are the best who maintain them." Christianity makes a husband a better husband. It makes a wife a better wife than she was before. It does not free me from my duties as a son. It makes me a better son and my parents better parents. Instead of weakening my love, it gives me fresh reason for my affection. And he whom I loved before as my father I now love as my Brother and co-worker in Christ Jesus. And she whom I revered as my mother I now love as my Sister in the Covenant of Grace to be mine forever in the state that is to come.

Oh, suppose not any of you, that Christianity was ever meant to interfere with households. It is intended to cement them and to make them households which death itself shall never sever—for it binds them up in the bundle of life with the Lord their God and re-unites the several individuals on the other side of the flood.

Now, I will tell you the reason why I selected my text. I thought within myself there are a large number of young men who always come to hear me preach. They always crowd the aisles of my chapel and many of them have been converted to God. Now, here is Christmas Day come round again and they are going home to see their friends. When they get home they will want a Christmas Carol in the evening. I think I will suggest one to them—more especially to such of them as have been lately converted I will give them a theme for their discourse on Christmas evening.

It may not be quite so amusing as "The Wreck of the Golden Mary," but it will be quite as interesting to Christian people. It shall be this—"Go home and tell your friends what the Lord has done for your souls and how He has had compassion on you." For my part, I wish there were twenty Christmas days in the year. It is seldom that young men can meet with their friends. It is rarely they can all be united as happy families. And though I have no respect to the religious observance of the day, yet I love it as a family institution. It is one of England's brightest days—the great Sabbath of the year—when the plow rests in its furrow. When the din of business is hushed—when the mechanic and the working man go out to refresh themselves upon the green sward of the glad earth.

If any of you are masters you will pardon me for the digression, when I most respectfully beg you to pay your servants the same wages on Christmas Day as if they were at work. I am sure it will make their houses glad if you will do so. It is unfair for you to make them feast or fast, unless you give them wherewithal to feast and make themselves glad on that day of joy.

But now to come to the subject. We are going home to see our friends and here is the story some of us have to tell. “Go home to your friends and tell them how great things the Lord has done for you and has had compassion on you.” First, *here is what they are to tell*. Then, secondly, *why they are to tell it*. And then thirdly, *how they ought to tell it*.

I. First, then, HERE IS WHAT THEY ARE TO TELL. It is to be a story of *personal* experience. “Go home to your friends and tell them how great things the Lord has done for you and has had compassion on you.” You are not to repair to your houses and forthwith begin to preach. *That* you are not commanded to do. You are not to begin to take up doctrinal subjects and speak at length on them and endeavor to bring persons to your peculiar views and sentiments. You are not to go home with sundry doctrines you have lately learned and try to teach these. At least you are not commanded to do so.

You may, if you please and none shall hinder you. But you are to go home and tell not what you have believed but what you have *felt*—what you really know to be your own. Not what great things you have read, but what great things the Lord has *done for you*. Not alone what you have seen done in the great congregation and how great sinners have turned to God but what the Lord has done for *you*. And mark this—there is never a more interesting story than that which a man tells about himself. The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner derives much of its interest because the man who told it was himself the mariner.

He sat down, that man whose finger was skinny, like the finger of death and began to tell that dismal story of the ship at sea in the great calm when slimy things did crawl with legs over the shiny sea. The wedding guests sat still to listen, for the old man was himself a story. There is always a great deal of interest excited by a personal narrative. Virgil, the poet, knew this and therefore he wisely makes Aeneas tell his own story and makes him begin it by saying, “In which I also had a great part myself.”

So if you would interest your friends, tell them what you felt yourself. Tell them how you were once a lost abandoned sinner, how the Lord met with you, how you bowed your knees and poured out your soul before God and how at last you leaped with joy, for you thought you heard Him say within you, “I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My name’s sake.” Tell your friends a story of your own personal experience.

Note, next, it must be a story of *free grace*. It is not, “Tell your friends how great things *you* have done yourself,” but “how great things *the Lord* has done for you.” The man who always dwells upon free will and the power of the creature and denies the doctrines of grace invariably mixes up a great deal of what he has done himself in telling his experience. But the Believer in free grace, who holds the great cardinal truths of the Gos-

pel, ignores this and declares, “I will tell what the Lord has done for me. It is true I must tell how I was first made to pray. But I will tell it thus—

**“Grace taught my soul to pray
Grace made my eyes overflow.”**

It is true, I must tell in how many troubles and trials God has been with me. But I will tell it thus—

**“It was grace which kept me to this day,
And will not let me go.”**

He says nothing about his own doings, or willings, or prayers, or seeking—but ascribes it all to the love and grace of the great God who looks on sinners in love and makes them His children—heirs of everlasting life. Go home, young man and tell the poor sinner’s story. Go home, young woman and open your diary and give your friends stories of grace. Tell them of the mighty works of God’s hand which He has worked in you from His own free, sovereign, undeserved love. Make it a free grace story around your family fire.

In the next place, this poor man’s tale was a *grateful* story. I know it was grateful, because the man said, “I will tell you how great things the Lord has done for me.” And (not meaning a pun in the least degree) I may observe that a man who is grateful is always full of the greatness of the mercy which God has shown him. He always thinks that what God has done for him is immensely good and supremely great. Perhaps when you are telling the story, one of your friends will say, “And what of that?” And your answer will be, “It may not be a great thing to you but it is to me. You say it is little to repent but I have not found it so. It is a great and precious thing to be brought to know myself to be a sinner and to confess it—do you say it is a little thing to have found a Savior?”

Look them in the face and say, “If you had found Him, too, you would not think it little. You think it little I have lost the burden from my back? If you had suffered with it and felt its weight as I have for many a long year, you would think it no little thing to be emancipated and free, through a sight of the Cross.” Tell them it is a great story and if they cannot see its greatness, shed great tears and tell it to them with great earnestness and I hope they may be brought to believe that you at least are grateful, if they are not. May God grant that you may tell a *grateful* story. No story is more worth hearing than a tale of gratitude.

And lastly, upon this point—it must be a tale told by a poor sinner who feels himself not to have deserved what he has received. “How He has had *compassion* on you.” It was not a mere act of kindness but an act of free compassion towards one who was in misery. Oh, I have heard men tell the story of their conversion and of their spiritual life in such a way that my heart has loathed *them* and their story too, for they have told of their sins as if they did boast in the greatness of their crime. And they have mentioned the love of God not with a tear of gratitude—not with the simple

thanksgiving of the really humble heart—but as if they as much exalted *themselves* as they exalted God.

Oh, when we tell the story of our own conversion, I would have it done with deep sorrow, remembering what we used to be and with great joy and gratitude, remembering how little we deserve these things. I was once preaching upon conversion and salvation and I felt within myself as preachers often do, that it was but dry work to tell this story and a dull, dull tale it was to me but on a sudden the thought crossed my mind, “Why, you are a poor lost ruined sinner yourself. Tell it, tell it, as you received it. Begin to tell of the grace of God as *you* trust you feel it yourself.”

Why, then, my eyes began to be fountains of tears—those hearers who had nodded their heads began to brighten up and they listened because they were hearing something which the man felt himself and which they recognized as being true to him—if it were not true to them. Tell your story, my Hearers, as lost sinners. Do not go to your home and walk into your house with a supercilious air, as much as to say, “Here’s a saint come home to the poor sinners to tell them a story.” But go home like a poor sinner yourself. And when you go in, your mother remembers what you used to be—you need not tell her there is a change—she will notice it—if it is only one day you are with her.

And perhaps she will say, “John, what is this change that is in you?” And if she is a pious mother you will begin to tell her the story and I know, man though you are, you will not blush when I say it—she will put her arms round your neck and kiss you as she never did before—for you are her *twice-born* son. Hers from whom she shall never part, even though death itself shall divide you for a brief moment. “Go home, then, and tell your friends what great things the Lord has done for you and how He has had compassion on you.”

II. But now, in the second place—Why SHOULD WE TELL THIS STORY? For I hear many of my congregation say, “Sir, I could relate that story to any one sooner than I could to my own friends. I could come to your vestry and tell you something of what I have tasted and handled of the Word of God. But I could not tell my father, nor my mother, nor my brothers, nor my sisters.” Come, then. I will try and argue with you to induce you to do so—that I may send you home this Christmas Day to be missionaries in the localities to which you belong and to be real preachers!

Dear Friends, do tell this story when you go home. First, for your *Master’s sake*. Oh, I know you love Him. I am sure you do—if you have proof that He loves you. You can never think of Gethsemane and of its bloody sweat, of Gabbatha and of the mangled back of Christ, flayed by the whip—you can never think of Calvary and His pierced hands and feet without loving Him. And it is a strong argument when I say to you, for His

dear sake who loved you so much, go home and tell it. What? Do you think we can have so much done for us and yet not tell it? *Our* children, if anything should be done for them, do not stay many minutes before they are telling all the company, “such an one has given me such a present and bestowed on me such-and-such a favor.”

And should the children of *God* be backward in declaring how they were saved when their feet made haste to Hell and how redeeming mercy snatched them as brands from the burning? You love Jesus, young man! I put it to you, then, will you refuse to tell the tale of His love to you? Shall your lips be dumb when His honor is concerned? Will you not, wherever you go, tell of the God who loved you and died for you? This poor man, we are told, “departed and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him and all men did marvel.” So with you. If Christ has done much for you, you cannot help it—you must tell it.

My esteemed friend, Mr. Oneken, a minister in Germany told us last Monday evening that so soon as he was converted himself the first impulse of his new-born soul was to do good to others. And where should he do that good? Well, he thought he would go to Germany. It was his own native land and he thought the command was, “Go *home* to your friends and tell them.” Well, there was not a single Baptist in all Germany, nor any with whom he could sympathize, for the Lutherans had swerved from the faith of Luther and gone aside from the Truth of God. But he went there and preached and he has now seventy or eighty churches established on the continent. What made him do it? Nothing but love for his Master who had done so much for him, could have forced him to go and tell his kinsmen the marvelous tale of Divine goodness.

But, in the next place, are your friends pious? Then go home and tell them, in order *to make their hearts glad*. I received last night a short Epistle written with a trembling hand by one who is past the natural age of man living in the county of Essex. His son, under God, had been converted by hearing the Word preached and the good man could not help rising to the minister, thanking him and blessing most of all, his God, that his son had been regenerated. “Sir,” he begins, “an old rebel writes to thank you and above all to thank his God, that his dear son has been converted.” I shall treasure up that Epistle. It goes on to say, “Go on! And the Lord bless you.”

And there was another case I heard some time ago where a young woman went home to her parents and when her mother saw her, she said, “There! If the minister had made me a present of all London, I should not have thought so much of it as I do of this—to think that you have really become a changed character and are living in the fear of God.” Oh, if you want to make your mother’s heart leap within her and to make your father glad—if you would make that sister happy who sent you so many letters

which sometimes you read against a lamp-post, with your pipe in your mouth—go home and tell your mother that her wishes are all accomplished. That her prayers are heard, that you will no longer tease her about her Sunday-School class and no longer laugh at her because she loves the Lord. Tell her that you will go with her to the house of God, for you love God and you have said, “Your people shall be my people and your God shall be my God, for I have a hope that your Heaven shall be my Heaven forever.”

Oh, what a happy thing it would be if some here who had gone astray should thus go home! It was my privilege a little while ago to preach for a noble institution for the reception of women who had led abandoned lives. Before I preached the sermon I prayed to God to bless it and in the printed sermon you will notice that at the end of it there is an account of two persons who were blessed by that sermon and restored. Now, let me tell you a story of what once happened to Mr. Vanderkist, a city missionary, who toils all night long to do good in that great work.

There had been a drunken broil in the street. He stepped between the men to part them and said something to a woman who stood there concerning how dreadful a thing it was that men should thus be intemperate. She walked with him a little way and he with her and she began to tell him such a tale of woe, and sin, too—how she had been lured away from her parents’ home in Somersetshire and had been brought up here to her soul’s eternal hurt. He took her home with him and taught her the fear and love of Christ. And what was the first thing she did, when she returned to the paths of godliness and found Christ to be the sinner’s Savior?

She said, “Now, I must go home to my friends.” Her friends were written to—they came to meet her at the station at Bristol and you can hardly conceive what a happy meeting it was. The father and mother had lost their daughter—they had never heard from her. And there she was, brought back by the agency of this institution [The London Female Dormitory] and restored to the bosom of her family. Ah, if such an one is here! I know not, among such a multitude there may be such an one. Woman! Have you strayed from your family? Have you left them long?

“Go home to your friends,” I beseech you, before your father totters to his grave and before your mother’s gray hairs sleep on the snow-white pillow of her coffin. Go back, I beseech you! Tell her you are penitent. Tell her that God has met with you—that the young minister said, “Go back to your friends.” And if so, I shall not blush to have said these things, though you may think I ought not to have mentioned them. For if I may but win one such soul, I will bless God to all eternity. “Go home to your friends. Go home and tell them how great things the Lord has done for you.”

Cannot you imagine the scene, when the poor demoniac mentioned in my text went home? He had been a raving madman. And when he came and knocked at the door, don't you think you see his friends calling to one another in affright, "Oh, there he is again," and the mother running upstairs and locking all the doors, because her son had come back that was raving mad? And the little ones crying because they knew what he had been before—how he cut himself with stones because he was possessed with devils. And can you picture their joy, when the man said, "Mother! Jesus Christ has healed me, let me in. I am no lunatic now!"

And when the father opened the door, he said, "Father! I am not what I was, all the evil spirits are gone. By God's grace I shall live in the tombs no longer. I want to tell you how the glorious Man who worked my deliverance accomplished the miracle—how He said to the devils, 'Get you hence,' and they ran down a steep place into the sea. And I am come home healed and saved." Oh, if such an one, possessed with sin, were here this morning and would go home to his friends to tell them of his release—methinks the scene would be somewhat similar.

Once more, dear Friends. I hear one of you say. "Ah! Sir, would to God I could go home to pious friends! But when I go home I go into the worst of places. For my home is among those who never knew God themselves and consequently never prayed for me and never taught me anything concerning Heaven." Well, young man, go home to your friends. If they are ever so bad they are still your friends. I sometimes meet with young men wishing to join the Church who say when I ask them about their father, "Oh, Sir, I am parted from my father."

Then I say, "Young man, you may just go and see your father before I have anything to do with you. If you are at ill-will with your father and mother I will not receive you into the Church. If they are ever so bad they still are your parents." Go home to them and tell them, not to make them glad, for they will very likely be angry with you—but tell them *for their soul's salvation*. I hope, when you are telling the story of what God did for *you*, that they will be led by the Spirit to desire the same mercy themselves. But I will give you a piece of advice. Do not tell this story to your ungodly friends when they are all together, for they will laugh at you.

Take them one by one when you can get them alone and begin to tell it to them and they will hear you seriously. There was once a very pious lady who kept a lodging-house for young men. All the young men were very merry and giddy and she wanted to say something to them concerning religion. She introduced the subject and it was passed off immediately with a laugh. She thought within herself, "I have made a mistake." The next morning, after breakfast, when they were all leaving, she said to one of them, "Sir, I should like to speak with you a moment or two," and taking him aside into another room she talked with him.

The next morning she took another and the next morning another and it pleased God to bless her simple statement—when it was given individually. But without doubt, if she had spoken to them all together, they would have backed each other up in laughing her to scorn. Reprove a man alone. A verse may hit him while a sermon flies right by him. You may be the means of bringing a man to Christ who has often heard the Word and only laughed at it but who cannot resist a gentle admonition. In one of the States of America there was an infidel who was a great despiser of God, a hater of the Sabbath and all religious institutions.

What to do with him the ministers did not know. They met together and prayed for him. But among the rest, one Elder resolved to spend a long time in prayer for the man. After that he got on horseback and rode down to the man's forge, for he was a blacksmith. He left his horse outside and said, "Neighbor, I am under very great concern about your soul's salvation. I tell you I pray day and night for your soul's salvation." He left him and rode home on his horse. The man went inside to his house after a minute or two and said to one of his faithful friends, "Here's a new argument. Here's Elder Bob been down here. He did not dispute and never said a word to me except this, 'I say, I am under great concern about your soul. I cannot bear you should be lost.'

"Oh, that fellow," he said, "I cannot answer him." And the tears began to roll down his cheeks. He went to his wife and said, "I can't make this out. I never cared about my soul but here's an Elder that has no connection with me but I have always laughed at him and he has come five miles this morning on horseback just to tell me he is under concern about my salvation." After a little while he thought it was time he should be under concern about his salvation, too. He went in, shut the door, began to pray and the next day he was at the Elder's house telling him that he, too, was under concern about his salvation and asking him to tell him what he must do to be saved.

Oh, that the everlasting God might make use of some of those now present in the same way—that they might be induced to—

***"Tell to others round
What a dear Savior they have found.
To point to His redeeming blood,
And say, Behold the way to God!"***

III. I shall not detain you much longer but there is a third point, upon which we must be very brief. HOW IS THIS STORY TO BE TOLD?

First, *tell it truthfully*. Do not tell more than you know. Do not tell John Bunyan's experience, when you ought to tell your own. Do not tell your mother you have felt what only Rutherford felt. Tell her no more than the truth. Tell your experience truthfully, for maybe one single fly in the pot of ointment will spoil it and one statement you may make which is not true may ruin it all. Tell the story truthfully.

In the next place, *tell it very humbly*. I have said that before. Do not intrude yourselves upon those who are older and know more but tell your story humbly. Not as a preacher, not *ex-cathedra* but as a friend and as a son.

Next, *tell it very earnestly*. Let them see you mean it. Do not talk about religion flippantly. You will do no good if you do. Do not make puns on texts. Do not quote Scripture by way of joke—if you do, you may talk till you are dumb—you will do no good if you in the least degree give them occasion to laugh by laughing at holy things yourself. Tell it very earnestly.

And then, *tell it very devoutly*. Do not try to tell your tale to man till you have told it first to God. When you are at home on Christmas Day let no one see your face till God has seen it. Be up in the morning. Wrestle with God. And if your friends are not converted, *wrestle with God for them* and then you will find it easy work to *wrestle with them for God*. Seek, if you can, to get them one by one and tell them the story. Do not be afraid—only think of the good you may possibly do, by God’s grace. Remember, he that saves a soul from death has covered a multitude of sins and he shall have stars in his crown forever and ever.

Seek to be under God—to be the means of leading your own beloved brothers and sisters to seek and to find the Lord Jesus Christ. And then one day, when you shall meet in Paradise, it will be a joy and blessedness to think that you are there and that your friends are there, too, whom God will have made you the instrument of saving. Let your reliance in the Holy Spirit be entire and honest. Trust not yourself but fear not to trust Him. He can give you words. He can apply those words to *their* heart and so enable you to “minister grace to the hearers.”

To close up, by a short and I think a pleasant turning of the text, I will suggest another meaning to it. Soon, dear Friends, very soon with some of us, the Master will say, “Go home to your friends.” You know where the home is. It is up above the stars.

***“Where our best friends, our kindred dwell,
Where God our Savior reigns.”***

Yonder gray-headed man has buried all his friends. He has said, “I shall go to them but they will not return to me.” Soon his Master will say, “You have had enough tarrying here in this vale of tears—go home to your friends!” Oh, happy hour! Oh, blessed moment, when that shall be the word—“Go home to your friends!”

And when we go home to our friends in Paradise, what shall we do? Why first we will repair to that blessed seat where Jesus sits, take off our crown and cast it at His feet and crown Him Lord of all! And when we have done that, what shall be our next employ? Why, we will tell the blessed ones in Heaven what the Lord has done for us and how He has had compassion on us. And shall such tales be told in Heaven? Shall that

be the Christmas Carol of the angels? Yes it shall be. It has been published there before—blush not to tell it yet again—for Jesus has told it before.

“When He comes home, He calls together His friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with Me, for I have found My sheep which was lost.” And you, poor Sheep, when you shall be gathered in will you not tell how your Shepherd sought you and how He found you? Will you not sit in the grassy meads of Heaven and tell the story of your own redemption? Will you not talk with your Brothers and your Sisters and tell them how God loved you and has brought you there? Perhaps, you say, “It will be a very short story.”

Ah, it would be if you could write it now. A little book might be the whole of your biography. But up there when your memory shall be enlarged, when your passion shall be purified and your understanding clear—you will find that what was but a tract on earth will be a huge volume in Heaven! You will tell a long story there of God’s sustaining, restraining, constraining grace. And I think that when you pause to let another tell his tale and then another and then another, you will at last, when you have been in Heaven a thousand years, break out and exclaim, “O saints, I have something else to say.”

Again they will tell their tales and again you will interrupt them with, “Oh, Beloved, I have thought of another case of God’s delivering mercy.” And so you will go on, giving them themes for songs, finding them the material for the warp and woof of Heavenly sonnets. “Go home,” He will soon say, “go home to your friends and tell them how great things the Lord has done for you and has had compassion on you.”

Wait awhile. Tarry His leisure and you shall soon be gathered to the land of the hereafter to the home of the blessed—where endless felicity shall be your portion. God grant a blessing for His name’s sake. Amen.

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THE FACULTY BAFFLED— THE GREAT PHYSICIAN SUCCESSFUL NO. 827

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, AUGUST 23, 1868,
BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood 12 years,
and had suffered many things of many physicians,
and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather
grew worse, when she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind,
and touched His garment. For she said, If I may touch
but His clothes, I shall be whole.”
Mark 5:25-28.*

BRIEFLY consider this poor woman's case. She was afflicted with a disease of exceedingly long standing which not only wasted her strength and threatened to bring her speedily to the grave, but rendered her, according to the Jewish ceremonial Law, unclean, and therefore unable to mix in company. Thus she was doomed to be a poor, suffering, desponding, desolate woman. The physicians of those days were bold enough to attempt impossible cures, but their skill was not at all commensurate with their courage. They tormented their patients, but seldom relieved them of anything but their money.

Even a few hundred years ago many of the articles which were given to patients as medicines, and cried up as drugs of sovereign efficacy, were so unutterably disgusting that I should not like to repeat their names. And the processes of surgery, then common among practitioners, would have been exceedingly satisfactory if they had been intended to kill, but were both absurd and inhuman if proposed as salutary operations. The science of medicine, indeed, did not then exist. And in the age of our Lord, surgery and medicine were just a mass of quackery and daring pretension, without anything of skill or knowledge to support their claims.

This poor woman had, however, in her anxious desire to be restored to society and to health, gone first to one and then to another, and yet another—although all caused her suffering by acrid medicines or by severe operations. And after the end of 12 years she found herself penniless as well as worse in health. Just then, her physical state being still the highest thought in her mind, she heard that there was a Prophet who healed diseases. Having listened to one or two of the stories of the cures worked by Him, and having, perhaps, seen some of those who had been happy enough to be the subjects of His miracles, she said to herself, “That Man is doubtless sent of God. He professes to be the Messiah, the Son of David, the Son of God—I believe He is so—and if He is such an One, then

He is so full of sacred force that if I may but get near enough to touch the hem of His robe I shall be restored.”

Happy day it was for her when she imbibed that idea! Happier, still, when she put it into practice—when tremblingly she put forth her finger, touched the hem of the Savior’s garment and was that moment restored! I shall not need to say more concerning the narrative itself. It commends the Savior to you—shows you His great power in the physical world—and so proves His Deity and endears Him to you for His mercy and compassion.

But this woman has many parallels in the *spiritual* world. Multitudes like she are diseased with a wasting despondency, an unceasing tendency to despair—and they have been trying all the miserable comforters with which this world abounds. And after wasting their substance and their strength, they are now brought to utter spiritual destitution—they feel they can do nothing—they are ready to perish. I hope this morning, if never before, they will hear of Jesus who is able to heal the most desperate cases, and that they will be resolved to apply to Him, that by a sincere, even if a feeble faith, they may be brought into contact with His healing energy and may *today* be delivered from all evil by the great Restorer’s touch! God grant it, for the Redeemer’s sake, by the power of the Holy Spirit and He shall have all the praise!

I intend, this morning, first of all, to expose the physicians upon whom poor sin-sick souls often trust. When I have done so, I will show you why *all* these physicians, without exception, fail. Thirdly, I shall describe the plight of the patient after the failure of these trusted physicians. And lastly, show how a cure can be worked even in those.

I. Let me EXPOSE THE PHYSICIANS WHO DELUDE SO MANY BY THEIR VAIN PRETENSIONS. Among the herd of deceivers I single out one of the vilest, first—an old, established doctor who has had a wide practice among sin-sick souls—a wicked old poisoner he is, but for all that exceedingly popular, named Dr. Sadducee. He adopts usually the homoeopathic principle, namely, to cure like by its like. He gives one form of sin as a cure for another.

For instance, as soon as he sees one melancholy with unbelief, he prescribes licentiousness. He says, “You are getting dull. You must cheer up! You need to mix with society. A young person like you ought not to be disturbed with these serious thoughts. Those are mere fanatics who alarm you. Be calm. I would recommend you to attend the theater or the music hall, these will drive dull cares away.”

He feels the patient’s pulse, tells him it is much too low—he must really take a little stimulant and try what gaiety will do. Alas, this old, but damning prescription, is frequently written out and pressed upon awakened souls as if it were wisdom itself, whereas it is a piece of Satanic craft and falsehood! It never did work a cure, and never can! It bids the man escape from drowning by plunging deeper beneath the waves! It tells him

to quench the flame which is burning in his heart by adding fuel to it! It pretends to heal the leper by thrusting him into the inner recesses of the morgue where disease runs amok! By making bad worse, the lover of pleasure hopes to recover from the qualms of conscience.

As a notable instance of Dr. Sadducee's practice in its mildest form, I would quote the case of George Fox, the celebrated founder of the Quakers. When perplexed about his salvation, he went to several friends and ministers for advice. One said he thought it would do him much good to smoke tobacco. Another recommended him to get married as speedily as possible. Another thought if he joined the volunteers, that would certainly take his thoughts off of his melancholy. "Alas," he said, "I found them as empty as a hollow drum." Such physicians minister no medicine to a diseased mind.

A story is told of Carlini, the Italian actor, who, being the subject of heavy depression of spirit, applied to a French physician and it was recommended he attend the Italian theater, and, said the physician, "If Carlini does not dispel your gloomy complaint, your case must be desperate, indeed." The physician was not a little surprised when his patient replied, "Alas, Sir, I *am* Carlini. And while I divert all Paris with mirth and make them almost die with laughter, I myself am dying with melancholy." How empty and insufficient are the amusements of the world! Even in their laughter their heart rejoices not. Miserable comforters are all those who would drown seriousness in wine and merriment.

When the heart is breaking it is vain to offer music and the dance, or to fill high the flowing bowl. When the arrows of God stick fast in a man's soul, the world's vain songs suit not with the hour—they jar on the ear and increase the misery which they would remove. When *God* awakens a sinner, he cannot be so readily deceived as when he was in his dreams. The Holy Spirit has made him feel the bitterness of sin and bruised him with the rod of conviction—and now his broken bones demand a real and true Physician—and he cannot endure the simpering deceiver who tells him that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit! It is too late to say to such a man, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." He dreads the thought of dying and trembles lest death should come upon him unawares.

A much more respectable firm of physicians has been established from time immemorial in the region of Mount Sinai, near the abode of one Hagar, known as the bondwoman. The business is now carried on by Dr. Legality and his pupil, Mr. Civility. You will remember, that in John Bunyan's time they were in large practice. Mr. Worldly Wiseman was their patron and sent the pilgrim round that way, telling him that the old doctor had much skill in delivering men of their burdens, and that if the old gentleman himself was not at home, his young man, Mr. Civility, would do almost as well. This firm was trading, in our Savior's day, under the name of Scribe and Pharisee. It was the same deceptive system, but under dif-

ferent names, and it will always be the same piece of imposture until the crack of doom.

The theory of practice is this, “Be careful in diet and regimen. Be very observant of certain laws and regulations, and then your issue of blood, or whatever it may be, shall be healed.” Go all over England, and the great doctor for men’s souls, the most popular of physicians now living, is this Dr. Legality! The one great prescription is, “Do this and do that. Abstain from this, and give up the other. Keep the commandments and pray at certain hours, and these things will save you.” Dressed out in different fashions, but always the same thing, this great falsehood of salvation by the works of the Law is still holding men under its iron sway and deluding them to their destruction.

There may be some now present who are unhappy enough not to know the Truth of God which Paul tells us so plainly, “By the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the Law is the knowledge of sin.” I was myself for many a day treated by this Dr. Legality, and many a black draught have I swallowed under his orders. I tried to keep the Law of God, and thought that my repentance and tears would be an atonement for the past. But who can keep the Law? What man can keep whole what he has broken? We have, each of us, already sinned, and therefore the hope of salvation by our own goodness is a vain one!

The Law pronounces a curse upon the man that sins but *once*! How can a man, then, having already sinned 10,000 times, hope, by any *future* obedience, to escape from the curse which hangs thick and heavy over his head, soon to burst in eternal storm? Yet this is the fond delusion of humanity! Sinai is still the chosen route to Heaven for the crippled sons of a father who found the task too much for him. Some of you imagine that if you do your best—if you are kind to everybody, if you are generous to the poor, if you owe no man anything, if you conduct yourselves respectably—this is enough to save you. But it is not so! He that believes not on Jesus Christ shall be *damned* as well in his morality as in his debauchery! He that casts not himself upon the mercy of God, as revealed in the crucified Savior, has shut against himself the one portal to Heaven and shall never be able to enter into life eternal!

There is another physician whom I greatly despise, but am compelled to mention him because he has entrapped many, one Dr. Ceremonial. He is the vilest of quacks, a very mountebank, a transparent deceiver! His drugs are worthless trash and his modes of operation are rather the tricks of a Merry Andrew, or the antics of a dancing master than the sober teachings of thought and judgment. This Dr. Ceremonial has patented a lotion for producing *regeneration in little children* by the application of a few drops to their foreheads! He puts his hands on the heads of boys and girls, and by what he calls occult influence, confirms them in Divine Grace!

He professes to be able to make a piece of loaf and a cup of wine to be actually Divine, and in themselves a channel of Grace to the souls of men!

The substances are material—a mouse may nibble at the one, a bottle will hold the other! You can touch them, taste them, smell them—and yet *fools* adore them as Divine and imagine that material substances can be food for souls! Surely this Dr. Ceremonial flourishes all the more because of the monstrous absurdity of his teachings! His pills are huge, but men have wide throats and can swallow anything! Why, think, for a minute, and then wonder for an hour—men are to be *sanctified* by gazing at genuflections, millinery, and candles!

The East is said to be a more gracious quarter of the heavens than the West, and creeds repeated with the head in that direction possess a peculiar efficacy! It appears that in spiritual operation certain *colors* are peculiarly efficacious—prayers said or sung in *white* are far more prevalent than in *black*—and according to the age of the year and the condition of the moon, violet, scarlet and blue, are more acceptable to God! I have no patience with these things. It is hardly good enough sport for laughter—but so long as fools abound, knaves will flourish—and this Dr. Ceremonial will get men to spend their substance in abundance, and laugh in his sleeve to think that rational beings should be his silly dupes!

I trust there are none such here. I hope none of you are so fooled. What is there in crossings, bowings and uttering over and over the same words? What is any worship unless the reason and heart enter into it? What can there be in one material substance to give it sanctity? Is it not as absurd as the fetishism of the Bushman, to believe that bricks and mortar, and slates and boards can make a holy place—that, indeed, any one place can be a jot holier than another—that any plot of ground can be holier than common ground? Or that any *man*, because certain words have been said over his godless, graceless head, can be made a dispenser of the Divine Grace of God, and a pardoner of sins?! We are not so befooled, but still this quack drives a good trade, and is held in very high repute.

Here I may name one Dr. Ascetic, who has taken a house hard by the abode of Dr. Ceremonial. His business, however, does not flourish quite so much now as formerly, for his methods are a little too rigorous for the times. Under his treatment men are taught that pain and virtue are much alike—that starvation is a means of grace, dirt is devotion—and horsehair next to the skin a sanctifying irritant. Few persons like this heroic treatment, but certain brotherhoods and sisterhoods amuse themselves with the treatment in a modified form. The more heroic doses of wormwood and gall are out of fashion, but still, men like a bitter in *moderate* quantities.

In the olden times this Dr. Ascetic flourished! Then men wore hair shirts, flogged their poor shoulders, went on mad pilgrimages and in other ways afflicted themselves—believing that great self-denials were patent medicines by which deliverance could be obtained from spiritual diseases. This system of soul-cure had such victims as hermits in caves and the followers of Simon Stylites elevated upon columns with other imbeciles which time would fail us to mention. Even in these days we read of the

nuns of St. Ann who always sleep in their coffins upright, and become unable to sleep in any other posture. The Fakeers in Hindustan do but carry out to perfection the regulations which some in this Christian land would impose upon our respect. But all this is the mere invention of man, and he who follows it shall find that he torments himself in vain.

I shall now mention a physician who practices among Dissenters as well as elsewhere, and I am persuaded has some of you for his patients. His name is Dr. Orthodoxy. His treatment consists in this, that you are to believe certain doctrines most firmly and bigotedly and *then* you shall be saved. Have I not some in this place, this morning, whose great difficulty about salvation is that they cannot quite comprehend the mystery of predestination? If you talk to them about the precious blood of Jesus, and speak of the soul-saving efficacy of a simple trust in Him, they reply, "But I cannot quite understand the doctrine of election!"

And then they mention some passage of Scripture upon that subject—their notion being that if they could understand mysteries they would then be saved—if they could hold the orthodox faith in every point they would be delivered from their sins. But it is not so. I have known scores of persons who have been held in horrible bondage by exclusively thinking upon one part of orthodoxy to the exclusion of the rest. They have grown more wretched, more distracted, more hopeless than they were before, because, having heard the doctrine of election and predestination propounded, they must forever be harping upon it.

It is a blessed doctrine, and I believe it and hold it firmly, that God has a chosen people, but for all that, before men have come to Christ they often make that doctrine to be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. Even if you would be infallible and believe every Truth of God as it is taught in Scripture in the most correct manner, your *belief* would not save you! True religion is something more than correct *opinions*. A man may as well descend to Hell being orthodox as heterodox. There is a correct road to destruction as well as an incorrect one—I mean a way in which a man may carry truth in his right hand, as well as another road in which the pilgrim hides a lie in his left.

One more physician I will mention, and that is Dr. Preparation. He holds and teaches that the way to be saved is to *prepare* yourselves for Christ, and if you prepare and make yourselves fit for Jesus Christ, then you will obtain peace. The modes of preparation are very much these, "You must deeply wound yourself. You must doubt God's power to save you, and dishonor Jesus by your fears. You must endure terrors of conscience and be the subject of alarms." It is not said so in the Bible, but still, this is the current teaching of many and is so much believed that men will not trust in Jesus Christ because they have not felt this nor experienced the other!

Do I not, every week, meet with persons who tell me, "You invite those to come to Christ who feel their need. I do not feel any need as I ought,

and therefore I may not come”? I cannot understand why such people do not open their ears, for times out of mind I say that Jesus Christ did *not* come into this world to save *sensible* sinners only, but to save sinners from their insensibility! That Jesus Christ bids sinners, as *sinners*, believe in Him and does not limit the command to those who repent! Men are not only to come with broken hearts, but if they cannot feel their need, they should come to Jesus to be helped to feel their need—for this He gives them—“ ‘Tis His Spirit’s rising beam.”

My Lord and Master wants nothing of you, O lost and bankrupt Sinners! He bids you come simply trusting in Him, being nothing at all in yourself, and having all in Him. I believe those who think they do not feel their need, often feel their need the most. If anyone should say, “I have a sense of need,” then he claims to have something good. But those who confess that they have no good feelings or emotions—that they are poor bankrupts, broken down, so that their last penny is gone—to them is the Gospel sent!

Trust Jesus, believe that He can do what you cannot do, and in the absence of any good in yourselves, believe that all the good you need is treasured up in Him! Cast yourselves—empty, naked, soul-diseased as you are—flat upon the perfect work of Jesus and you shall be saved!

I have just gone through a list of those physicians with which I believe many of you have long been acquainted.

II. WHAT IS THE REASON FOR THEIR FAILURE? Why is it that none of the prescriptions of these learned and popular gentlemen have ever been able to work a single cure? Is it not, first of all, because they, none of them, understand the disease? If the disease of human nature were only a matter of *outward* iniquity, or only skin-deep through intellectual error—ceremonies, perhaps, might have some effect and legal exhortations might be of some use. But since the inmost *heart* of man is depraved, and the sin of our nature lies in the very *core* of our humanity—and is inherited from our birth—of what use is consecrated water, or sacraments, or good works, or anything *external* which cannot change the nature and turn the bias of the mind?

The will is obstinate. The affections are depraved. The understanding is darkened. The desires are polluted. The conscience is stultified. And legal physicians can only make clean the *outside* of the cup and platter—they touch not these inward evils. They do not really know that man is dead in sin. They treat the patient as if he had wounded himself a little, and could be salved and bound up—and made whole again. They know not the deep pollution of sin and imagine that man has stained himself a little, and only a little—so a sponge of reformation, and a little hot water of repentance—will soon remove all unpleasant marks. But it is not so—the fountain of our being is polluted! The *foundation* of our nature is *rotten*, and not until we come to Christ do we find that the Physician who comes to the point and who touches the disease at its source.

Moreover, these physicians often prescribe remedies which are impossible to their patients. They tell the man, "You must feel so much." "*Feel!*" says he, "Why my heart is like granite! If I could *feel*, I could do all the rest. But I can no more make myself feel than I can make myself an angel. You bid me do what is far beyond my power." Then they bid him work, crying, "You must press forward, be in earnest, agonizing, labor!" "But," says he, "I do try. I have tried for years, but my endeavors are not such as God accepts, and I may continue trying till I perish. I want to be told a sure way to salvation at once! I long for immediate peace, and light, and liberty."

These physicians prescribe walking to those who have broken their legs, and sight as a remedy for those whose eyes are gone! They bid men to do what they cannot—and they never point them to what Jesus has done on their behalf. The Gospel bids the sinner cease from his toiling and trust alone in Jesus—having nothing and being nothing in himself—but taking Jesus to be his All in All. And when it adds that even *this* is the *gift* of God's Spirit—then it puts before him an available method for the weakest, guiltiest, and most distressed.

Many of the medicines prescribed by these physicians do not touch the case at all. As I have already shown you, outward ceremonies cannot, by any possibility, affect the inward nature. And the mere performance of good works, or the utterance of excellent prayers can have no effect in quieting the conscience. Conscience cries, "I have offended God! How may I be reconciled to Him? My past sins clamor for vengeance! God is not just if He does not punish me! Oh, where shall I find peace for my soul?" Where, but in the bosom of the Mediator?

Only at Calvary is the medicine for a wounded conscience to be found! From those five wounds of our blessed Lord, healing fountains are still streaming. He that looks to Him shall find peace and comfort and full salvation! But the *doing* and the *feeling*, and the performing of *this* and *that*, and 10,000 things besides are all a mockery, a delusion, and a snare! The disease of fallen humanity is wholly incurable except by the hand of Omnipotence. It is as easy for us to create a world as to create a new heart—and a man might as well hope to abolish cold and snow as hope to eradicate sin from his nature by his own power! He might as well say to this round earth, "I have emancipated you from the curse of labor," as say to himself, "I will set myself free from the thralldom of sin."

Jehovah alone can save! It is His prerogative, and they who tell me that they are to have a finger in it—that they and their deceivers, the priests, can assist a little in salvation—that their tears, their groans, their cries, their repentances and their humbling can do at least a *something*—these I say, fly in the face of God! These rob Him of His dearest prerogative! These impugn His Word! They rob Him of His Glory and provoke Him to jealousy. God is still a Sovereign and will be treated as such. Woe unto the man who contends with Him!

Brothers and Sisters, let me say plainly this one word and then leave this point. Rest assured that wherever in salvation you see a trace of the *creature's* power or merit, you see a work that is *spoiled* and *polluted*. If there is in the fountain one drop of anything but Jesus' blood, it will not cleanse! If there is in the robe one single thread of anything but what Christ worked out for us while here below, the whole robe is polluted and will not serve as a wedding garment! For a needy soul the work must be Christ's from top to bottom—all of Him and all of Divine Grace—if there is *anything* of human merit, or anything else that comes of man, the work is marred upon the wheel, and God will not accept it. These are some of the reasons why these physicians fail to bring health and cure.

III. I shall describe THE PLIGHT OF THE PATIENT WHO HAS TRIED THESE deceivers and now, at last, finds himself brought into distress. For five years I was in that plight, seeking by every way that I knew of to find peace with God. At the end of that period my condition was much like that of this poor woman. Now there were four pieces of mischief done in her case. First, the woman had lost all her time. Twelve years! Who knows the value of a day? Who can calculate the costliness of a year?

Twelve years, all gone! And what a pity that these poor people who are seeking to be saved by the works of the Law should be losing all that precious time! What a pity that you, dear Friends, who are not yet saved, should be getting gray, and so many years should be running to waste! They ought to be spent for the Lord! I hope they may be, what remains of them! Think and be humbled—you have been all this time outside the banquet door—all this time unwashed, when the fountain is full! All this time unhealed, when the restoring hand can save you in a minute—all this time in jeopardy, in danger of your soul—while the gate of the City of Refuge has been open! It is a solemn loss of time that these delusions bring on men—and yet we cannot tear them away from them, for if we prove the folly of one, they take to another—and if we prove the folly of all, yet still will they go back to them like a dog to his vomit. They will have *anything*, sooner than go to Christ, for Christ Himself has said, "You will not come unto Me that you might have life." Anywhere else men will cheerfully go, but not to Him.

The second mischief in the case was that she was no better. If she had felt a little better she would have had some encouragement. It would have been satisfactory to have some pain mitigated, some measure of the disease stopped. And so in *your* case—you are no better than you were when you first entered this house five years ago. You have reformed, perhaps, which is good—you have given up some evil things which were once very dear to you—that is well. But still you are not one grain happier! You could not die today with any greater comfort than you could have died five years ago—you have no better hope of immortality now than you had then. No, sometimes you have fancied the darkness *thicken*, and the prospect of hope become less and less apparent. A sad thing, is it not, that af-

ter *doing* so much it should come to so little? You have put your money into a bag that is full of holes. You have expended it for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfies not.

The third evil in the woman's case was that she rather grew worse, and in addition to that she had suffered many things of the physicians. She had gained a loss. The doctors had blistered here, and lanced there, and given this acrid poison and that nauseous drug—and had been skillful in nothing but in causing needless pain. So, while to effect your salvation you have been looking away from Christ to someone else, you have been needlessly troubled and tortured. Despair has hovered around your path. Despondency has hung its pall above you and you have much more gloom yet to endure unless you give up all that comes of self, and cast yourself on Christ. I would make a venture of it, if I were you, for you cannot lose by it—you are as bad as you can be.

Better, even if Jesus were angry, to run into His arms than to remain apart from Him. Jesus Christ the appointed Savior of men is able to save to the uttermost, but while you seek others it is not possible for you to be saved! They will either bolster you up with self-righteousness, which will harden your heart, or else cast you down by putting before you impossible duties to attempt which will be to increase your despair—

***“None but Jesus, none but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good.”***

Yet helpless sinners pierce themselves through with many sorrows as they fly to earthly physicians for relief.

One more matter. The woman had now spent all that she had. Her poverty was a new ill of which the only good was that now she had no more to spend with the physicians! She was driven to Christ. So it is a most blessed, though painful experience, when a man has spent all—when he discovers that he has nothing left, no, not so much as an atom of merit—or hope of ever having any! It is well when the man cries, “I have always thought that perhaps there might be an escape for me, but I have no hope left now. As for power, I am as destitute of it as I am of merit. I feel that I would, but cannot pray. I would, but cannot repent. I want to believe, but I can no more believe than I can fly—it must all come from God.”

At such a time it *will* come from God—for man's extremity is always God's opportunity. When you are empty. When your stock is all gone, even to the last rag and crumb, and you are left a helpless, hopeless, undeserving, Hell-deserving sinner and can truly feel that unless God stretches out His hand to save you, you are lost as the lost in Hell are—it is *then* that Jesus Christ reveals Himself, and the soul cries, “My Lord, the glorious Son of God, there is no hope except in You! You can save me! I cast myself upon You, whether I sink or swim. For I am persuaded nothing else can rescue me, and while I can but perish if I do rely upon You, so at a venture I will rely upon You. If I am cast into Hell, as I feel I deserve to be, yet, still, I will believe that You can save me.”

Ah, then you *cannot* perish, neither shall any pluck you out of His hands! If God gives you power to believe Christ and trust yourself to Him, you are as surely saved as God is in Heaven, and Christ there pleading at His right hand!

IV. Now to those who have spent their all on the false physicians, I have A WORD TO SHOW HOW A CURE CAN BE WORKED. This woman said to herself, “The way of cure is for me to get near to Jesus. I can see that doctors are of no good. I cannot help myself, neither can all the world besides assist me. I must press to get near to Him. If I cannot put my arms around Him, yet a little of Him is enough. If I cannot press to Him so as to lay hold of Him with my hands, yet as much as I can touch with my fingers will be enough. I know if I cannot touch Him, if I can but get near the hem of His garment and touch it, it will do.”

It is a sweet Truth of God that the least of Christ will save. The best of men, the whole of men, cannot benefit you an ounce—but the least drop of Christ, the least touch of Christ—will save! If your faith is such a poor trembling thing that it is hardly fit to be called faith, yet if it connects you with Christ, you shall have the virtue that goes out from Him. Remember, it was not this woman’s *finger* that saved her—it was *Christ* whom she touched. True, the healing came by the act of *faith*, but the act of faith is *not* the healing—the healing all lies in the Person—so that you are not to be looking to your faith, but to *Jesus the Lord!*

Has your faith a good Object? Do you rest in Jesus, God’s Son, God’s appointed Propitiation? If so, your faith will bring you to Heaven—it is good enough. The strongest faith a man ever had, if it did not rest on Christ, damned him! The weakest faith ever man or woman has, if it does but terminate in the precious Person and all-sufficient work of Jesus, will certainly save. The fact is, Sinner, if you would be saved, you must, from this moment, have nothing more to do with yourself, with your goodness or your badness. “I cannot feel,” says the sinner—that is *yourself* again. Away with that feeling! You are to be saved by what *Christ* felt, not by what *you* feel!

“I cannot,” you say. What care I what you cannot do? Your salvation does not lie in what *you* can do, but in what *Jesus* can do, and He can do everything. Will you trust Him now? Let me help your faith with two or three words as the Holy Spirit may bless them. Christ is God—has He not power to save you? Christ, the bleeding Son of God, has bowed His head to the accursed death of the Cross, bearing His Father’s anger that those who trust Him may not bear it. Cannot the bloodstained Christ pardon sin? Christ is His Father’s darling, trust Him! Will not God grant mercy when you plead for Jesus’ sake? Jesus lives today—He is no dead Christ that you are bid to trust in. He lives, and this is His occupation—He is pleading before the Throne of God, and this is His plea—“Father, forgive them for My sake.”

Seeing He died to save, cannot He, now that He lives, save to the uttermost? At His last dying moment He said to the thief, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." Can He not say as much now, since He wears the crown of Glory? Yes, you may have come in here this morning without a good thought, never having spoken a holy word in your life, but He can save you as quickly as He did the thief! Yes, and though when that clock struck 12 you were a graceless wretch, yet at this moment you may already be a saved soul! Yes, and before the clock ticks again, another may be called, by Divine Grace!

Christ works not according to time. He is not limited by minutes. If you can turn your eyes to His Cross and say, "Lord, remember me," He can give us His reply, "You shall be with Me, before long, in Paradise." With God Incarnate, with the God-Man who bled on the Cross, with the Son of God ascended, clothed with majesty, reigning in splendor—with Him whose promise we this day proclaim to you—there can be neither difficulty nor debate! The promise runs thus—"He that believes on Him is not condemned." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned."

Will you believe in Him? It is to come to Him, to trust Him, to lean upon Him, to hang upon Him, to make Him your sole and only ground of dependence. Will you do this? Has God enabled you, now, to do it? If so, go in peace—your faith has made you whole, your sins are forgiven you! Go and live to His praise, who bought you with His blood! Go, young man, and serve him earnestly who has served you so well. Go now, and till life's latest hour be His servant who has been so much your Friend. The Lord bless us for His name's sake. Amen.

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THE TOUCH

NO. 1382

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 4, 1877,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“She said, If I may touch but His clothes, I shall be whole.”
Mark 5:28.***

THE miracle of the healing of this woman occurred while our Savior was on the road to the house of Jairus to raise his daughter and I have not much doubt that although, in itself, it was a very remarkable miracle, it was not meant to stand quite alone, but had a relation to the Lord's dealings with Jairus. If I read the narrative rightly, the ruler of the synagogue was about to have his faith severely tried. He had come to the Savior saying that his daughter was lying at the point of death. He beseeched Jesus to come and heal her, but before He had reached the house, other messengers came to say, “Your daughter is dead; why do you trouble the Master any further?”

Now, in order that the faith of Jairus might be prepared for that shock, our Lord had afforded him the sight of a special miracle worked upon this woman. Our Lord had said to him, “Fear not; only believe, and she shall be made whole,” and as old Bishop Hall says, “to make this good, by the touch of the hem of His garment He revived a woman from the verge of death.” It is amazing that the case of his little daughter of 12 years of age was here placed within the region of hope by our Lord's healing a woman who had been exactly the same time subject to a grievous and incurable malady. A woman who led a living death is healed that Jairus may believe that his dead daughter may be raised to life!

Brethren, we never know, when God blesses us, how much blessing He is incidentally bestowing upon others. It may be that even our conversion had a far-reaching but very distinct connection with the conversion of others. Grace smiles upon its personal subject, but its object reaches beyond the private benefit of the individual. The Lord is strengthening the faith of another of His children, or it may be He is actually working faith in a convicted soul when He is accepting and honoring *our* faith and saving us!

We speak of killing two birds with one stone, but our Savior knows how to bless two souls, no, 2,000 souls, with one single touch of His hand! I will not, however, detain you in the throng of thoughts with which I might preface my discourse upon this interesting narrative, for I long to bring you near to the glorious Person of the great Healer of men! Our Lord worked this miracle while moving on to work another—like the sun, He shines while He pursues His course and every beam is full of Grace. Not only what He does with full purpose is glorious, but He is so full of power and Grace that even what He does *incidentally* by the way is marvelous!

The main course and design of His life must ever engross our most earnest thoughts, but even the minor episodes of His life are rich beyond expression. Nor is there ever a point of detail which is without instruction. We cannot exhaust the subject, but must be satisfied to leave out many interesting matters and come at once to the heart of the story. First, I invite you to look at this woman as a patient. Secondly to observe the great difficulties with which her faith was surrounded. Thirdly, we will come to the vanishing point and see how all her difficulties fled like the mists of the morning when she thought of Christ. And, lastly, we will dwell upon her grand success.

It may be the Lord will help us to attain some greater blessing by enabling us to follow her example. Come, Holy Spirit, and aid our faith that it may bring us into closer and yet closer contact with our Divine Lord!

I. First, then, look at THE PATIENT. She was a woman who had suffered from a very grievous malady which had drained away her life. Her constitution had been sapped and undermined—her very *existence* had become one of constant suffering and weakness—yet what courage and spirit she displayed! She was ready to go through fire and through water to obtain health! She must have had a wonderful amount of vitality in her, for where others would have been lying upon the bed of sickness and long ago despairing, she still, for 12 *years* continued to seek after a cure from one physician after another. Nothing dampened or daunted her—she would not give up so long as breath remained!

When at last she had found the true Physician, she plunged into the thick of the crowd to touch Him by some means or other. She asked nobody to intercede for her, but with a dauntless courage worthy to be associated with her deep humility, she forced her way through the crowd to reach the healing Christ. She displayed intense energy and unconquerable spirit in pursuit of health. O that men were a tenth as much alive to the salvation of their souls! Note, also, her resolute determination. She would die hard, if die she must. She would not resign herself to the inevitable till she had used every effort to preserve life and to regain health.

For 12 years it appears she had persevered in different ways and in the teeth of terrible agonies. We are told that she had suffered many things of many physicians. It is bad enough to suffer many things of one surgeon, but she had suffered many things from *many* practitioners. The physicians of those days were a great deal more to be dreaded than the worst diseases. If I were, now, to read to you even a brief account of the surgery practiced in olden times, you would shudder and beg me to close the book. Any reasonable person might prefer to suffer from any form of natural disorder rather than submit himself to the hands of the doctors of those days!

As for their prescriptions, they were horrible! Even those of a couple hundred years ago, found in such books as “Culpepper’s Herbal,” are such a mess and mass of all manner of abominations that it would surely be better to die than to be drenched with such detestable concoctions. What with cupping, leeching and cutting—cauterizing, blistering and incision—strapping, puncturing and putting in set-ons, patients were made to

undergo all manner of unimaginable tortures. The physicians of her day were worthy to have been administrators of the Inquisition, for they had reached perfection in the arts of torment.

Yet the heroic woman before us endured every process which was supposed to have virtue in it. I know not how many operations she had endured, nor how many gallons of nauseous drugs she had swallowed, but they had certainly caused her a vast amount of suffering and bitter disappointment. Meanwhile her money had been paid away freely till she had nothing left to procure her comforts when she most needed them. As long as her money lasted, she never held back a single penny of it. The resolution of the woman is well worthy of being observed. She is determined that if beneath the sky there is a cure, that cure she will have—and as long as there is life left in her, that life shall be spent somehow or other seeking to baffle Death of his immediate prey.

I am glad, when I see such resolution in an awakened soul, but how seldom is it to be seen! I am happy when a man, however ignorant of the way of salvation, nevertheless resolves, “I will be saved if salvation is obtainable. Whatever is to be suffered, whatever is to be given up, whatever is to be done, if there is any way of salvation procurable by any means, I will have it. The whole world shall not be reckoned too great an expense! Self-denial of the most arduous kind shall be a trifle to me if I may but be saved.” Surely, Brothers and Sisters, the salvation of our immortal soul is worthy of all the intensity of zeal, constancy of purpose and resoluteness of determination of which we are capable! Who shall count its worth? Against what shall we weigh the soul?

Fine gold of the merchants is as dross compared with our undying spirit! The diamond and the costly crystal are not to be named in comparison with it! Job said, “Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has will he give for his life.” And truly the ransom of the soul is precious. It is a hopeful sign, a gracious token when there is a determination worked in men that, if saved they can be, saved they will be! I admire, also, this woman’s marvelous hopefulness. She still believes that she can be cured. She ought to have given up the idea long ago, according to the ordinary processes of reasoning, for generally we put several instances together and from these several instances we deduce a certain inference.

She might have put the many physicians together, and their many failures, and have rationally inferred that her case was hopeless. She might have said, “My disease is incurable. I must ask for patience to bear it till I die, but no longer dream of a cure.” But no, bright-eyed woman as I have no doubt she was, she saw hope where others would have despaired! Something within her buoyed her up and she still had hopes of better days! And so when she heard of Jesus, her heart leaped within her. Her hope said, “The blessing has come at last! I have long waited for it and now God has sent it to me! Here it is and I will seize it at once. Now has the Sun of Righteousness arisen upon me with healing beneath His wings and I will bathe in His sunlight. Now I have escaped from mere pretenders and have found One who has real power to heal!”

You see, then, the patient. A woman of spirit, of resolution and of hopefulness. Such persons make grand workers when they are converted! May God grant that I may have many such men and women before me and may the Master come, this morning, by His Spirit, and do His healing work upon them!

II. But now, secondly, I beg you to join with me in considering THE DIFFICULTIES OF THIS WOMAN'S FAITH. They must be weighed in order to show its strength. The difficulties of her faith must have been as follows. First, she could hardly forget that the disease was, in itself, incurable, and that she had long suffered from it. Taken early, many maladies may be greatly mitigated, if not altogether removed. But it was now very late in the day with this poor sufferer. Twelve years—it is a long, long portion of human life during which to have been continually drained of the very sustenance of that life. To pine and bleed for 12 years is enough to render one hopeless.

Can a cure be possible? Can the disease which has taken root in the body for 12 years be eradicated? Can the incurable be healed, after all? Her heart would naturally enquire, how can this thing be? Do you wonder that after being so long weakened by her complaint and rendered more and more infirm by its long continuance—do you wonder, I say, if it looked to her to be an utter impossibility that she should be healed? Yet observe her conduct and admire it! She staggered not, but believed in Jesus!

But then, again, she had endured frequent disappointments. And all these must have supplied her with terrible reasons for doubting. “Yes,” she might have said, “I remember the first physician I applied to, how he told me it was a very small matter and that if I would purchase a bottle of the large size of his Egyptian elixir, which he had imported from the tombs of the Pharaohs at enormous expense, I should speedily be well. Alas, he only relieved me of my gold. Then another famous professor assured me that his pills would do the work if I took them some three hundred times and was careful to purchase them only from him, as he, alone, possessed the secret, and no one else could prepare the genuine article. He had no doubt that I should be greatly improved after the three hundredth box. But, alas, after tedious delay, I was no better.”

She remembered how, under each new treatment, she interpreted every little change in herself into a hopeful sign, but soon found herself rudely shaken out of her dream by an increase of the evil. Her adventures were many, but all alike sad in their end. She remembered the grave old physician to whom she went some years ago, who shook his learned head and assured her that he had scarcely ever met with a more terrible case. It was a great mercy for her that she had come to him, for there was not another man in Palestine who understood the disease. He believed that he could certainly stop the issue of blood by the daily use of his Balm of Lebanon, prepared from the best gums of the cedar and the richest juices of odoriferous herbs and mixed in an extraordinary manner in accordance with the suggestions of the ancients and the observations of many years of practice.

It was a mercy, indeed, that he had a little left of this matchless balm which she could have at a very moderate price considering how much expense it was to him. She had taken it, but it had made her feel a new pain and had brought on a fresh disease. She had paid heavily to endure two maladies instead of one! She had changed her doctor and this time engaged a Greek physician who heartily condemned all his predecessors as fools! He taught a system so profound that the poor woman could not understand him at all, but believed in him, none the less, for she set it down to her own ignorance and his deep learning. He failed, however, and she then tried a Roman doctor, a plain, blunt, practical man who talked no Greek, but was greatly skilled in the rough and ready treatment of wounded soldiers.

After trying medicines for a very considerable time, he informed her that hers was a very suitable case for a famous operation which he had, himself, first practiced—a beautiful operation, indeed! He had tried it on scores of soldiers and although none had recovered, he believed that his treatment was the best known. She had declined that heroic operation, but she had endured another and another, until she moved about painfully, with the scars in her flesh of wounds which she had received in the house of her medical friends.

When we consider the long story of which I have thus tried to make a rough draft, it would not have been at all extraordinary if she had said, “I cannot trust anybody else! Now I give it up. I would sooner die than be tortured any more. Better to let Nature alone than that I should put myself into the hands of any more of these infallible deceivers.” Yet she was not dismayed—her faith rose superior to her bitter experience and she believed in the Lord. It is easier for me to tell this to you than it is for any of us to realize what her difficulty really must have been. If you, too, have tried by good works, by ceremonies, by prayers and tears to obtain salvation and have been defeated at all points—it is not a mystery that you should be slow to believe that you can ever be saved. May your faith, also, like hers, swim over the crests of the billows of disappointment and may you hope in the Almighty Savior!

There was, also, another difficulty in her way and that was her vivid sense of her unworthiness. When she thought of Jesus, she viewed Him as a Person who was holy as well as powerful. She revered as well as trusted Him. I am sure she did, for though she summoned courage enough to touch Him, her modesty led her to go *behind* Him, as unworthy to be seen. She was evidently afraid to face Him, lest He, knowing her unworthiness, as she knew it, should spurn her and forbid her approach. She was an unclean woman, according to the ceremonial Law, and the shame of her disease prevented her venturing upon any verbal request or open application. She had great confidence in His power and mercy, but she had equal awe of His purity and, therefore, feared that He would be angry if she touched Him.

This must have very much hampered her. “How shall I venture to draw near to Him? The other physicians I could approach, for I knew them to be like myself. But concerning Him I find that He is a Prophet mighty in

word and deed—a man of God—and something more. How shall I dare to approach *Him*?” The thought that she would go behind shows her ignorance of the Lord’s Divinity or her forgetfulness of the attribute of Omniscience, but still, it proves that she labored under a sense of unworthiness and yet she believed. Ah, dear Hearers, when you are bowed down with a sense of your own sin and folly, may the Holy Spirit lead you to believe that Jesus Christ is able to make you whole!

I do not know whether the other difficulty did occur to her at all, but it would to me, namely, that she had, now, no money. She had spent all her living, we are told—*all* her living. The physicians whom she had previously consulted had all been great in the matter of fees—they could diminish her wealth if they could not establish her health! She had carefully approached them with promises of large reward, assuring them that anything she could give would be freely rendered if she could but be cured. But now she can offer nothing. Her disease remains, but her estate is gone! She is reduced to poverty by her efforts after health—how shall she come before the Great Physician of whom she has heard so much?

I should not wonder but what the thought of His great-heartedness and the many cures which He had worked gratuitously helped her to get over that difficulty. But still, it occurs to many to dream of *purchasing* salvation and to this day many need to be reminded that Jesus *gives* His Grace to those who have no money nor any other price to offer Him! His terms are—“without money and without price!” But many awakened consciences forget this. Perhaps the worst difficulty of all was her extreme sickness at that time. We read that she was not better, but rather grew worse. She had been bad enough before, but the doctors had aggravated the disease with their strong acrid medicines, sharp incisions and fierce blisters. They had made her worse than Nature would have left her if it had been let alone!

She had reached a frightful stage of the disease and was confessedly beyond all human help. She was as bad as she could be to crawl about at all. Usually such a sickness depresses the spirits, unnerves the mind and makes the sufferer feel a lack of energy, so that, resolute woman as she was, we should little have marveled if she had said, “No, I can do no more. I must yield. There is nothing now but to lay down and die, for I am in such a condition that all attempts to gain health are futile.”

What a grand faith was hers which made her rise above her weakness, overcome her depression of spirit, throw aside the lethargy which was creeping over her and believe that everything was altered, for she had no longer to deal with a pretender who would fail her, but with One sent of God and clothed with infinite power, who could meet her case—even hers!

III. So now we come to our third point, which is THE VANISHING POINT OF ALL HER DIFFICULTIES. We read of her, first, that she had *heard* of Jesus. It is Mark who tells us that, “When she had heard of Jesus.” “Faith comes by *hearing*.” What had she heard of Him? Is it not more than probable that she had been told of that scene which is pictured in Luke’s Gospel, in the 6th chapter and the 19th verse, when, “The whole multitude sought to touch Him; for there went virtue out of Him, and

healed them all.” On one special day great multitudes followed our Lord and pressed upon Him to touch Him, for whoever touched Him was healed of whatever disease He had! What a wonderful scene that must have been when men were so enthusiastic to be blessed that they thronged the great Physician!

Not that our Lord was more able to save on one day than on another, but there were certain days in which the power seemed to emanate from His Person more mightily than at other times, always, as I judge, in proportion to the *faith* of the people who surrounded Him. On that occasion, being followed by a great company who believed in His healing power, they saw such wonders worked that they made a general rush at His blessed Person and all who touched obtained healing! Some conceive that even the healthy touched Him and gained greater vigor from the touch. I should not wonder! In spiritual things it is so. The woman had heard of all the wondrous cures He had worked and she said to herself, “Then I will touch Him and be healed! For if these reports are true, then if I may but touch Him I, too, shall be made whole.”

She seems to have believed Christ to be charged with marvelous power, somewhat like a Leyden jar charged with electricity which gives forth its power most freely. She was not a woman of any great wisdom. Her chief quality was energy. She made a great blunder about our Lord and His garments, but it did not touch the vital point—she so thought of Him as to glorify His power—and it sufficed. She truly believed in Him. And if you believe in Christ, though you are in the dark about a thousand things, your faith will save you! If you do but really believe in Jesus, all your mistakes about Him will not really destroy His power to bless you, nor set His heart against you, nor destroy the value of your faith. “If I touch but His clothes,” she says, “He is so full of power that He will heal me.”

The point to notice most distinctly is this. The poor woman believed that the faintest contact with Christ would heal her. Notice the words of my text—“If I may touch but His clothes.” It is not, “If I may but touch His clothes”—no, the point does not lie in the *touch*, it lies in *what* was touched. “If I may touch but His clothes. If I cannot get near enough to Him to touch His flesh, if I may touch but His clothes. Such is the power which dwells in Him that it overflows even into His garments! And while He wears them they are charged with the virtue which I need—it reaches even to the blue fringe which, as a Hebrew, He wears upon the edge of His robe. I am sure if I touch but that fringe, if I cannot do any more, there will be a connection between Him and me and I shall be healed.”

Splendid faith! It was not more than Christ deserved, but yet it was remarkable! It was a kind of faith which I desire to possess! The slenderest contact with Christ healed the body and will heal the soul—yes, the faintest communication! Do but become united to Jesus and the blessed work is done! Effect the junction and the virtue comes to you. “If I touch but His *clothes*, I shall be made whole.” I want you carefully to observe that the woman did not seem to think anything about herself. You could not lay the stress upon the pronoun, “If *I* touch but His clothes, *I* shall be made whole.” It would not be in accordance with the context. No, it is, “If I

touch but His clothes.” It does not matter who *I* may be, what my uncleanness may be, what my character may be, what my state of mind may be—if I *touch* but His clothes, contact being established—I shall be healed!

Every person who comes into contact with Jesus by the touch of faith will partake of His healing power! She knew this and shut her eyes to all other considerations. She lays no stress upon any *mode* of touching. No. “If I *touch* but His clothes”—not *embrace* Him, nor *grasp* Him, *hold* Him, *wrestle* with Him—no, she believes that any sort of contact will answer the purpose. Now it is always a blessed thing when a man is taught of God to forget himself—and even to forget his *faith*—and only think upon the Lord Jesus who is the Object of our trust. I admire this woman’s resoluteness. She sees nothing but Jesus! Dear Heart, she felt that the virtue to heal was all in Him and not in her, nor in her touch. She knew that whatever *she* might be, His power could master every difficulty of her case and that the result did not depend upon the mode of her touch, nor the length during which it lasted, but on Him alone!

It was from Him that the virtue was to come and come it would, however slender the contact. This faith is worth cultivating. To forget everything else and only to consider the Lord Jesus and His power to bless is wisdom! Here am I, a poor lost sinner, but if I can only get to Jesus I shall be forgiven and saved! Here am I, vexed with unruly passions, diseased with this sin and that, but if I may only touch Him, He is so full of healing power that, mass of spiritual disease though I may have, the moment I touch Him, His virtue will battle with my disease and vanquish it forever! Behold this woman! Again fix your eye upon her till you have become like she is! All her thoughts have gone towards the Lord Jesus. She has forgotten herself, forgotten the rampant fury of her disease, forgotten her being behind and out of sight—even her own touch of Him she has put into a secondary place. Everything she looks for must come out of Him!

She knows that connected with Him she will obtain the blessing, but apart from Him she will abide in her misery. “If I may touch but His clothes”—not because His garments are in themselves powerful, but because they are, “*His clothes*”—the garments which He is wearing and which, consequently, will be a medium of communication with Himself. *There* is the vanishing point, then—she has come to think of Jesus and of the certainty of cure through contact with Him. If you, seeking Sinners, would but think more of Christ, all would be well. You who cannot believe—if you would relinquish your perpetual thoughts about your faith and even about your sin, and begin to think of Him—the Son of God, exalted to be a Priest and a Savior, the Christ whose finished work is all for sinners, the Christ of the Resurrection, Jesus the Ever Living, Jesus in whom all power dwells—I think you would soon obtain eternal salvation!

When your whole heart sets itself upon Him and no more upon itself, you will enter into peace and enjoy rest for your souls.

IV. Fourthly, let us speak of HER GRAND SUCCESS. Let me remind you again, however, of how she gained her end. She gave to the Lord Jesus an intentional and voluntary touch. Upon the intentional character of it, I must insist for a minute. She pressed into the crowd. She was hustled

about, I do not doubt, and in her weak state, ready to faint, or even to die. In the midst of those rough men who pressed about the Savior, she found no sympathy. But she is desperately bound, by hook or by crook, to touch His clothes. She presses in behind, for she cares not where she touches Him, but touch Him she must.

In the throng, the garments of Christ became entangled and at some little distance from Him she perceives just a bit of the blue fringe hanging out behind. Now is her time—she has only to touch that—so strong is her faith that even the hem of His garment suffices her, for it will make a connection between her and the Savior and that is all she needs. Her finger is put out and the deed is done. Yet note that she was not healed by a contact with the Lord or with His garment against her will! She was not pushed against Him accidentally, but the touch was active and not merely passive. “You see,” said one of the Apostles, “the multitude thronging You and pressing You.” There was nothing remarkable or efficacious about such unavoidable and involuntary touches. Her touch was her own distinct, intentional, voluntary *act* and it was done under the persuasion that it would bring her a cure. Such is the faith which brings salvation.

It is not every contact with Christ that saves men. It is the awakening of yourself to come near to Him, the determinate, the personal, resolute, believing touch of Jesus Christ which saves! We must believe for ourselves. The Spirit helps us, but we, ourselves, believe. Some of you sit still and hope that the Lord will visit you. You wait by the pool till an angel comes and stirs the water and all that kind of thing. But that is not according to the tenor of the Gospel command. The Gospel does not come to you and say, “Whoever waits for impressions shall be saved.” No, it says, “*Believe* in the Lord Jesus Christ, for He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Exercise the personal, voluntary, intentional act of faith and you shall be saved!

Oh, I would to God that some sinner here, deeply conscious of his guilt, might be awakened to perform that act this morning! However little your knowledge, believe in Jesus as far as you know Him. Though you can only come into contact with that part of Christ which you have learned from the Scriptures, that little of Christ is a part of Himself and you will have touched Him! You may not be acquainted with the deep things of God, nor with the high doctrines which honor our adorable Lord, but what you *do* know will suffice for faith. If you say, “I will trust the Lamb of God,” and really do so, then you have come into contact with Him and you are saved! Yes, though it is but a believing *prayer*, a believing *sigh*, a believing *tear*—you have really reached Him and you are made whole! But the touch of faith must be your own act and deed. Nobody is saved in His sleep. Nobody may claim to have been transformed into a living soul unless he can prove it by the living act of trust. There must be this appropriating faith—and this the woman had.

And now see her grand success! She no sooner touched than she was healed! In a moment, swift as electricity, the touch was given, the contact was made, the fountain of her blood was dried up and health beamed in her face immediately. Immediate salvation! I heard a person say, the other

day, that he had *heard* of immediate conversion, but he did not know what to make of it. Now, herein is a marvelous thing, for such cases are common enough among us! In *every* case spiritual quickening must be instantaneous! However long the preparatory process may be, there must be a time in which the dead soul begins to live! There must be a time in which the babe is *not* born and a moment in which it *is* born. We are pardoned, or else condemned!

There must be a moment in which the man is not pardoned, and another in which he is—and that must be an inappreciable period of time! I grant you that many workings of conscience, and so on, may go *before* and melt into the actual reception of life, so as to make it appear a gradual work. But the actual *birth*—the Divine quickening by which the man is made to live in Christ—must be instantaneous in every case! A man is brought by degrees to a deep sense of sin, to the renunciation of self and so on—but there is no period in which a man lies between death and life—he either is alive unto God or he is dead in sin! If he is dead, he is dead! And if he is alive, he is alive—there is no state between the two. A man is either regenerate or unregenerate! There is no borderland or neutral territory between the two conditions.

This woman was healed in a moment and God can save you, my dear Hearers, in an instant. May He do it now! If you now believe, it is done! There may be cases in which a blessing comes to a man and he is scarcely aware of it, but this woman knew that *she* was saved. She felt in herself that she was whole of her plague. I do not say that I would like to have undergone her 12 years of suffering for the sake of that moment's joy, but I am sure she was quite content to have done so. The joy of the first hour in which you know you are saved! It is almost too much to live with! It is well that it does not continue in all its vehemence and ecstasy! That flash of light, brighter than the sun! That flush, that flood, that torrent of unutterable bliss which bears all before it, when, at last, we can say, "My sins are assuredly removed from me—I am saved and know it within myself!"—that joy, I say, is beyond all description!

Blessed be God if we have known that bliss! Blessed be God, I say, and I would repeat the thanks a thousand times! Oh, touch the Savior, poor Sinner! The Lord deliver you from anything of your own and bring you, now, to look for all to Jesus and you shall know in yourself that you are whole of your plague! She had, next, the assurance from Christ Himself that it was so, but she did not obtain that assurance till she had made an open confession. She felt in herself that she was whole, but there was more comfort in reserve for her. The Lord Jesus Christ would have those who follow Him come forward and no longer hide in the crowd. Those who believe ought to be baptized on confession of their faith. He, who in His heart believes, should with His mouth make confession of Him.

So Christ turned round and said, "Who touched My clothes?" At the hearing of that enquiry the newly-kindled flame of her joy began to dampen under the fear of losing what she had stolen. Down went her spirits below zero! Then the officious disciples said, "You see the multitude thronging You, and pressing You and You say, who touched Me?" But Je-

sus said, as He looked around again, "Somebody has touched Me." For not His clothes, alone, but *He* had been touched by somebody. That poor "somebody" wanted to sink into the earth! I know she did! She trembled as Jesus looked for her. Those blessed eyes looked around and, by-and-by, they lighted upon her. And as she gazed upon them she did not feel so much alarmed as before, but still afraid and trembling, she came and fell down before Him and told Him the truth.

Then He gently raised her up and said, "Daughter, your faith has made you whole. Go in peace and be whole of your plague." Now she knew her cure from Christ's lips as well as from her own consciousness! She had, now the, Divine Witness bearing witness with her spirit that she was, indeed, a healed one! Mark then, that those of you who desire to obtain the Witness of the Spirit should come forward and confess your faith and tell what the Lord has done for you—then shall you receive the sealing Witness of the Spirit with your spirit that you are, indeed, born of God! God help you tremblers who have, at last touched my Master's hem, to acknowledge it bravely before all and specially before Him!

Brothers and Sisters, the wine which comes out of these grapes is this—the *slightest* connection with Jesus will bless us! I desire to send you away with this one Truth of God upon your minds. Whether you are a child of God or not a child of God, hear this weighty doctrine! This woman believed the matchless Truth that the least touch of Christ will cure. "If I may touch but His clothes, I shall be made whole." Believe this, I pray you, each one for himself. If you, dear child of God, feel very depressed this morning—coldhearted, dead, sluggish—if you touch but His clothes you shall become warm-hearted *again*! You shall get all your life and vigor and enthusiasm back if you only draw near to your Lord.

Do I hear you say "I seem so full of doubts, so depressed in spirits, so unhappy. I trust I am converted, but I cannot rejoice." Then, Brother, get a fresh hold of your Lord, for if you touch but His clothes you shall be made whole of the plague of doubting! Only draw near to Jesus, your risen Lord, by a prayer, or a believing thought and it is done! Be it ever so slight a touch, you shall be made whole! Perhaps you say, "I feel so discouraged in my Christian work and even feel as if I must give it up. I have seen no conversions lately and, therefore, I cannot go about my work with the spirit I once had."

Brother, you are falling into a spiritual lethargy! But if you but touch your Lord, again, you shall be made whole! Did not the Lord Jesus heal you at the first? He can heal still! He loses no virtue when He gives forth His power. If a master takes a scholar and fills him full of wisdom, the master is just as wise afterwards as he was at first. And when our Lord grants us a fullness of Grace, He remains just as full of Grace as He was originally. Come to Him, then, you downcast saints. Come now! Come always! If any of you have backslidden. If you have become altogether wrong and out of sorts. If your spiritual digestion is bad. If your spiritual eyes are dim so that you cannot see afar off. If your knees are weak and if your hands hang down. If your whole head is sick and your heart faint, yet still, if you touch but your Lord's garments you shall be made whole!

This wonderful medicine has boundless power to restore from relapses as well as to heal the first disease. I cannot help reminding you of the Church at Laodicea, which was in so horrible a state that our Lord, Himself, said He must spit it out of His mouth—and yet He added—“Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.” *Communion* with our Master is the cure for lukewarmness! When you have fallen so low that even Christ, Himself, is sick of you—and it must be a very bad case when He becomes sick of a Church—yet even then, if you but sup with Him and He with you, all will be well! Only get into communion with Him who has life in Himself and your own life shall become full of vigor. Oh, dear children of God, if you have fallen into an unhappy state, put in practice the example of the woman and see whether Jesus is not, still, the same! A touch is a very simple matter, but do not, therefore, doubt its value.

As for you who fear that you are not His children, behold, I set before you an open door, this morning, and I pray God that you may be enabled to enter into it! If you touch but the Redeemer’s clothes you shall be made whole! Whatever the transgression, the iniquity, the sin of which you have been guilty—come into contact with the bleeding Lamb and you shall be forgiven! You need not even so much as touch, for there is life in a *look*. A look will set up sufficient contact to bring salvation! “Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth.” “They looked unto Him and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed.”

Do but look! Do but get out of yourself to Him, somehow or other, and it is done! Though a glance will not carry a thread as thin as a spider’s cobweb, yet it will establish a connection! The ray of light which comes from Jesus’ wounds to your eyes will be link enough—and along it eternal salvation will come to you! Get to Christ, Sinner! Get to Christ at once! Have you come to Him? Then you are saved! Confess your faith and give Jesus honor. Love Him with all your heart and while angels are rejoicing over you, be glad, also! Christ has saved you! Praise Him forever and ever! May the Lord add His blessing for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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

THE TOUCH

NO. 1640

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 8, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd and said, Who touched My clothes? And His disciples said to Him, You see the multitude thronging You, and do You say, Who touched Me?”
Mark 5:30, 31.***

WE just now read the story of this woman who was immediately healed. Spiritual persons know that the miracles recorded by the Evangelist are true because they have seen them reproduced. That is to say, we have not seen an issue of blood stopped by the touch of Christ's garments, but we have seen the spiritual counterpart of it. We have seen men and women healed of all kinds of spiritual and moral diseases by coming into contact with our Lord Jesus. They have touched Jesus and they have been made whole, for Jesus lives still and His healing work is not ended, but has only entered on another phase. Jesus has said, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” And, being with us, He is not here inactively or ineffectually, but He is here—the same yesterday, today and forever—to work the same miracles, only not on men's bodies, but on their *souls*.

Jesus is present to heal leprosies of the mind and to open the eyes of the understanding. Yes, He is still among us to raise those who are dead in trespasses and sins. Though we live in a great leper house, yet are we comforted because we see that Jesus walks the hospitals and still heals on the right hand and on the left, all those who come into contact with Him. At the sight of His wonders of Grace, we cry out as they did in the days of His flesh, “He has done all things well!” As the miracles of our Lord Jesus Christ are pictures of His wondrous works in the spiritual kingdom, so are they instructive because they set forth much impressive and precious Truths of God most vividly. Tonight I have but one desire and that is to lead some poor sin-sick soul to Jesus. And I shall not be satisfied unless very many shall, this evening, for the first time, break through this crowd and press forward to touch the hem of Christ's robe and find immediate healing!

I shall speak upon three things. First, upon this wonderful Person, who, if He is but *touched*, gives out a healing virtue. Secondly, upon a very

able touch which is evidently a distinct thing from the touch and pressure of the eager, curious crowd. And then we will ask you to answer the singular personal question which the Savior puts to this assembly, "Who touched Me?" Perhaps there are some here, tonight, who will be able to say with trembling assurance, "I touched Him and He has made me whole." May the Holy Spirit cause it to be so!

I. First, then, I have the blessed work, far beyond my power, but, oh, how sweet to my soul, of speaking upon THIS WONDERFUL PERSON. The Lord Jesus Christ, as He stood in the midst of the crowd, was charged with a power which is called by our translators, "virtue." An efficacious healing force was in Him. Sometimes He emitted it by words, frequently by the touch of His hands and, in this case, it seemed to stream, even, from His garments when He was but fitly and properly touched. He was charged with Omnipotent blessing and those who came into contact with Him were made whole! Do not think, dear Friends, that He is less full of benedictions for the sons of men tonight. No, if I may venture to say as much, He is more full of healing power, for He has bowed His head to death and worn the crown of thorns—and He has risen from the tomb and gone up into Glory leading captivity captive!

In our midst at this moment He is, if it is possible, more charged with energy to bless than even when He walked the fields of Palestine and healed the feeble men and women of His time! Observe that Christ's power to bless lay mainly in the fact of His Deity. That humble, weary, way-worn Man was the Son of the Highest! Because He was still very God of very God, His will was Omnipotent. He did but speak to fever or leprosy and they went at His bidding—even as the centurion put it, "I am a man under authority and I say unto this man, Go, and he goes, and to my servant, Do this, and he does it." Even so, the Divine Christ did but will it and diseases fled at His bidding. He is not less Divine today. At this hour He cries, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else."

But His power to bless us lay, also, in the fact that He had become Man for our sake. I speak with lowly reverence, but "it behooved Christ to suffer." He found it necessary to be compassed with infirmities that He might save us from our infirmities. He was able to heal not only because He was God, but because He was Emmanuel, God With Us. Oh, the blessed mystery of the Incarnation! What a fount of mercy it is to us miserable sinners! He that spanned the heavens condescended to be wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger! He that bears up the pillars of the universe was, Himself, weary here below—and by His weakness gave us strength! Because He took our sicknesses, therefore is He able to deliver us from spiritual sickness and make us every bit whole. Oh, see, my

Brothers and Sisters, God Incarnate present among us, “able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.”

In addition to this, it is never to be forgotten that our blessed Master, being both Divine and Human, was also endowed with the Holy Spirit without measure. Often are we told in Scripture that He was able to do these mighty signs and wonders because the Holy Spirit was with Him. Even now that same Holy Spirit is with Him in plenitude of power. Jesus, whom I preach to you, the Man of Nazareth, the Mighty God, has the residue of the Spirit by which power He can remove from us sicknesses, the guilt and power of sin—and can make us perfectly whole, that is, holy! Is not this something to be delighted in—that there should be such a Savior—and such a Savior accessible tonight? The blessed Physician of souls can heal every sort of spiritual malady!

I am able to say that I have seen Him heal such maladies. I think I have been witness to the cure of every sort of sin. At any rate, He is healing me of my own maladies and I am under His tender care, persuaded that He will make even *me* perfectly whole before He has done with me. I have seen the proud man, who could not otherwise have been cured of his haughtiness, come and sit at Jesus’ feet and learn of Him until he has been made meek and lowly! I have seen the obstinate man come to Jesus and gladly take Christ’s yoke upon him—and become willingly and joyfully obedient to the supreme will of Him who bought him with His blood! Often have I seen the unclean and the lascivious enticed to Jesus by His gentleness and they have been made pure!

How often have these eyes seen the despairing that have been on the verge of madness cheered and comforted till they have sung for joy of heart! How frequently have I seen the coward made brave; the morose made gentle; the revengeful made forgiving by coming into contact with Jesus! You cannot love my Lord and love sin! You cannot trust my Lord and yet delight yourselves in iniquity! Only get near to Him and He will begin a cure upon your character and, before long, will perfect it! If your malady should be a delight in the pleasures and the pursuits of the world, He will teach you not to love the world, nor the things of it. Do you suffer from selfishness? He shall teach you to deny yourselves! His lance and nails and Cross shall crucify you with Himself till self-seeking shall die. Are you afflicted with a sloth that will not let you be active? My Master’s zeal shall fire your soul till, like He, you shall be consumed with energy! I do not care what your fault is, my Brother or my Sister, but this I know—there is power in my Divine Lord and Master to redeem you from that fault! He can destroy evil and create good! Behold, He makes all things new!

Ah, now, if I were addressing myself to a number of persons that were blind, or deaf, or sick and I told them that Christ was here to heal them of their bodily infirmities, what a rush there would be! Set Jesus up in Trafalgar Square to be touched by all manner of sick folk and I guarantee you the crowd would press one another to death in their eagerness to get at Him! But, surely, *spiritual* maladies are worse! It is worse to have a blind spiritual eye than a blind bodily eye. But men do not think so and, consequently, they are not anxious for spiritual health. I may praise up my Master, as I gladly would, even to the skies, and yet men will care nothing for Him, for they would just as soon be morally and spiritually sick as not—and some of them are even proud of their sicknesses!

Well, what shall become of you? In that day when God shuts out the spiritually sick folk—the diseased, the pestilential, the putrid, the corrupt—when He casts them into Hell because they cannot be permitted to stand among His saints in His holy house in Heaven, whose fault shall it be that you were not healed? Who shall bear the blame that you died in your sins? Not the Lord Jesus Christ, but yourselves, because you chose your own delusions and would have none of Him!

Thus have I feebly tried to set Him forth and oh, how I wished that you desired Him and longed for Him, for He is here and a touch of Him will save you! Poor Souls, must He pass you by?

II. And now, secondly, I want to say a little, by God's help, about THE REMARKABLE TOUCH OF THIS WOMAN. Such a touch as hers may be given to Jesus at this good hour. We cannot, by our fingers, literally touch His cloak, but there is a spiritual touch that can still be given to Christ which will draw virtue out of Him so that all our spiritual diseases shall straightway be healed! This contact is not always described in Scripture as a touch—sometimes it is represented as *hearing*. "Incline your ear and come unto Me. Hear and your soul shall live." There is a link between you and me tonight in the fact that I speak and you hear. Well, a spiritual connection, of which this is the analogy—if it is set up between Christ and you—will cure you of your sin.

Sometimes this contact is described as being formed by a *look*. This is the favorite example. "Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth." It is apparently a very meager connection which is set up by a glance—and yet if you have such a contact between you and Christ as the eye made between the dying Israelite and the brazen serpent, it will save you! Here in this narrative the contact is symbolized by a *touch*. The patient, by her touch, was linked with Jesus and felt in her body that she was healed of her plague. Now, do you not wish to touch Jesus and to be made whole, that is, holy? If you do, remember that the touch must be a *voluntary* one!

If any of you were brought into a supposed connection with Christ when you were children, without consciousness of what was done, I charge you, do not put any confidence in the ceremony! Religion performed for you, when you were unconscious and gave no consent to it, cannot possibly save you! Whatever there might be in it, there is nothing *saving* in it! You must come into a voluntary union with Jesus if you would be made whole. It must be an *intentional* contact. Some were pressed against the Savior as they pushed against each other and as the crowd surged to and fro—but this woman was not driven against Christ without her consent. Oh no, she was eager to get at Him! She pushed! She struggled and, at last, she reached the fringe of His mantle and a contact was established intentionally by her finger. She wished to be made whole and she touched Christ with that view.

You, too, must come to Jesus with the view of being delivered from the guilt, penalty and power of sin. And you must get into contact with Christ with the intent that He should be your *Savior*. I entreat you to see to this and may the Holy Spirit lead you to do it at once. “Oh,” you say, “but I do not know how to get into contact with the Savior.” The best way, the *only* way, is by believing in Him. If you, tonight, say in your heart, “I trust Christ to save me,” there is, immediately, a contact between you and Christ of the right kind—you are the trusting one and He is the Person trusted in. There is a point of union between you and Christ and this will save you—for there never was anyone, yet, that did wholly trust the blood and righteousness of Jesus without finding himself fully justified in so trusting! The rule of the kingdom is—“According to your faith so be it unto you.”

If your faith is only as a grain of mustard seed, if it is genuine faith, it shall work in you the cure of your soul’s disease and you shall live unto righteousness! The point of contact is a main consideration and I pray you look to it. Do you not see that when the woman’s finger touched Christ’s garment, there was established, at once, a connection between the two, along which the Divine virtue flashed? I will not illustrate this by electricity, for such a figure will suggest itself to you all—but the fact is that faith sets up a contact between the sinner and Christ—and through this the healing virtue comes to us. Faith on our part is an act of reception. We agree to receive Christ as what God has made Him to be—a Propitiation for sin. We accept Him as our Savior, Teacher, Leader, Ruler—and in all these senses He is ours.

Whatever God the Father says that Jesus is, we agree that He is that and we take Him to ourselves to be all that to us. Especially since He has come to save His people, we accept Him as our Savior. I have sometimes quoted to you the words of Luther who often put a Truth of God so

broadly that he overshadowed other Truths of God and uttered language which would not bear to be closely looked into, though most fit to set forth his immediate meaning. Luther says, "I will have nothing to do with saving myself! Jesus Christ is a Savior—I leave my soul wholly in His hands." That puts it very broadly, but it is what I mean within a little, that is to say, you must just go and say, "I cannot deliver myself from the power of sin, but I know that Jesus can deliver me and I put myself into His hands that He may do it."

When faith thus unites us to Jesus, the healing virtue will flow from Him to us. "Oh, well," says one, "I have often heard you preach about being saved from sinning by Christ, but I do not feel that I can do anything." Just so. That is why I want you to get Christ to work in you and for you. "Oh, but I am nobody." That is the very sort of person I delight to find, that Jesus Christ may make you into somebody and say, "Somebody has touched Me." Nobody is made into somebody when he once touches Jesus Christ! "Oh, but I am ____." There will be no end to these objections and, therefore, let me say plainly, never mind what you are! The question is, What is the Lord Jesus Christ? If He is able to save you, trust Him, rely upon Him, rest your soul with Him!

Did I hear one reply, "I do not see how that will make me better"? My speedy answer is that faith, simple as it seems, is the one thing which, by God's Grace, shall make you a new man! Here is the philosophy of it—If you trust Jesus, you will love Him. If you love Him, you will serve Him. Believing that Jesus has saved you, gratitude springs up in your heart and becomes the motive power by which a new life is begun and continued. I pray you try it! I remember years ago when I tried the power of faith in Jesus. It was a poor, feeble, trembling touch that I gave to Christ, but by it from sadness and despair I rose to gladness and hope! I had something to live for and I had the expectation of being able to accomplish it, too, when I had touched Him!

And at this hour, when I am sick and sad and sorry and sinful, I go to Him and I am blest. If I need washing, He must wash me. If I need clothing, He must clothe me. If I need strength, He must invigorate me. He is All-in-All to my soul and so I do but tell you what I know myself and persuade you, by my own experience, to Him.

III. Lastly, the poor woman, having touched the hem of Christ's garment and being made whole, was about to sneak away when the Master asked THE REMARKABLE QUESTION which brought her to the front, so that she was obliged to confess what Christ had done for her. I would to God that all of you who have felt the power of Christ would bear testimony to the fact! As a rule, those who have been converted in this place have not been backward to confess Christ, but still, some among you who love

my Lord have never yet avowed your attachment to Him. You are on Christ's side, but you do not wear His uniform and acknowledge His cause. You have not acknowledged Him, though He has promised that those who do so, He will confess at the last.

We are all too fond of ease and so it happens, in this world of ours, that much of the force of goodness remains unused because men are inactive and retiring. Who covets the front of the battle? Only a bold, brave man whose heart God has touched! He comes to the front and remains the butt of opposition when prudence might dictate that he should shelter himself from the conflict. Oh, my dear Friend, if you love Jesus Christ, my Master, I ask you never to be ashamed to be on His side and on the side of the right and the true, the just and the kind! Take your place like a man and avow yourself a soldier of the Cross! Too many are like the timid woman of our text—they receive benefits from Jesus and then try to lose themselves in the crowd.

I will tell you a little about that. The touch that brings virtue out of Christ is one that cannot be perceived by our fellow men. That young man over yonder touched Christ tonight, but he who sits close to him is not aware of it. The saving act is done in secret and sometimes it is almost a secret to the person himself! He hardly dares to think that he has been so bold. This poor woman shrank into herself—she knew that she was cured—but she was afraid to think of what she had done to get the cure! I have known many poor souls believe in Christ and yet feel as if it were presumption to do so! It appears, to a truly humbled conscience, to be so great a mercy to be forgiven that it feels hardly justified in daring to think that Jesus could have put away its sins!

Listen to me, you who are trembling! Let not your fears rob your Lord of His honor! You must confess your faith, for Jesus loves that those whom He heals should acknowledge it. That is why He turned round and said, "Who touched My clothes?" He delights in that tender acknowledgment, wet with many tears. If you have done good to one of your neighbors, you think it ungrateful if no word of thanks is spoken. I have known benevolence almost shriveled up for lack of gratitude! My Master is not of such a temper, but still, He welcomes words of humble acknowledgment. He loves to hear the bleating of the sheep which His shoulders have brought back to the fold. He loves that much love comes of having much forgiven. Do not, then, hold your tongue! If Jesus has, indeed, healed you, tell Him of it and tell His people of it to His praise.

Such Grace ought to be known. Is there anything to be ashamed of? For my part I glory in being saved by Christ. If he that is a Christian is a fool, write me down among the fools! Say you not so, poor working Brother? When you go into the workshop and they say, "These Christian

people are a set of hypocritical Presbyterians,” will you not answer, “Then put me down among them”? If your Lord and Master did not grudge to stand in the pillory for you till they spit in His face, what a coward you must be if you always draw back from avowing your faith in Him from the fear of ridicule! If He acknowledged your cause even unto death, never blush to be regarded as His follower! Let every cowardly thought be banished from your spirit! If Jesus saved you from going down into the Pit and made you a new creature, never be ashamed, in *any* company, to say, “Christ has made me whole and, therefore, I am His.”

From that day, the healed woman and Jesus had instituted a friendship that never ended—they had conversed together and their lives were openly linked together. Would you not wish the same thing to happen to you? To this woman Christ said, “Go in peace.” What a blessing she gained by being fetched out of her hiding place, for had she gone away without an open confession, she might often have been disturbed in mind by the fear that a stolen cure would not be permanent. The Master said, “Go in peace,” and a profound calm fell upon her spirit, as when the sea birds sit on the waves and all the winds have fallen into a deep sleep! She was a happy woman from that day, for Jesus had said, “Go in peace,” and what could trouble her?

Now, it may be that some of you who love Christ will go to Heaven safely enough. But you will miss a mint of comfort on the road because you have never openly confessed that you belong to Christ. Perhaps certain of you will never get peace till you acknowledge your discipleship and link your whole life with Jesus. When you do that and take up His Cross with all its shame—and are known to be a Christian in every society into which you enter—then shall your peace be like a river. I have done, only I would put to the whole congregation the question, “Who has touched Christ tonight?” O that some would answer in their hearts, “I have touched Him tonight by faith.” Why should you not *all* trust the appointed Savior?

Do you tell me that you do not understand what faith is? It is trusting—trusting wholly upon the Person, work, merit and power of the Son of God. Some think this trusting to be a strange business, but, indeed, it is the simplest thing that can possibly be! To some of us, Truths of God which were once hard to believe are now matters of fact about which we should find it hard to doubt! If one of our grandfathers were to rise from the dead and come into the present state of things, what a deal of trusting he would have to do! He would say, tomorrow morning, “Where are the flint and steel? I need a light.” And we should give him a little box with tiny pieces of wood in it and tell him to strike one of them on the box. He

would have to trust a good deal before he would believe that fire would thus be produced!

We would next say to him, “Now that you have a light, turn that tap and light the gas.” He sees nothing but is annoyed with an offensive smell. How can he believe that light will come of that invisible vapor? And yet it does. “Now come with us, Grandfather. Sit in that chair. Look at that box in front of you. You shall have your likeness directly.” “No, child,” he would say “it is ridiculous! The sun take my portrait? I cannot believe it!” “Yes, and you shall ride 50 miles in an hour without horses!” “I do not believe it,” he says. “What is more, you shall speak to your son in New York and he shall answer you in a few minutes.” Should we not astonish the old gentleman? Would he not need all his faith?

And yet these things are believed by us without effort because experience has made us familiar with them. Faith is greatly needed by you who are strangers to spiritual things. You seem lost while we are talking about them and our very words puzzle you. But oh, how simple it is to us who have the new life and have communion with spiritual realities. We have a Father to whom we speak and He hears us! And we have a blessed Savior who hears our heart’s longing and helps us in our struggles against sin. It is all plain to him that understands!

May the Spirit of God bring every one of you to understand it! What a joy it would be if we all touched the Savior, should all be healed of sin and all be admitted to stand at His right hand forever! Then, whoever we may be and however much we may differ in rank and talent, we shall all heartily join to sing the new song, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive honor and glory forever and ever, Amen.”

EXPOSITION

Mark 5:21-43.

Verses 21, 22—*And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, many people gathered unto Him: and He was nigh unto the sea. And, behold, there comes one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw Him, he fell at His feet.*

Paying our Lord respect and deference, as was His due. See here an instructive sight—the Law at the feet of the Gospel! This is the place for the Law. The best work the Law can do is to bring us to the feet of Jesus! The elder had an earnest request to make and, therefore, he put himself into a lowly suppliant position. We, too, shall succeed in prayer when we plead with all humility, bowing in the dust before the Lord.

23, 24—*And besought Him greatly, saying, My little daughter lies at the point of death: I pray You, come and lay Your hands on her, that she may*

be healed; and she shall live. And Jesus went with him; and many people followed Him, and thronged Him.

We are told elsewhere that this was his only daughter and 12 years of age. All the father's heart was set upon her. His life was wrapped up in the child's life. She was now in extremis. She must die unless the great Teacher will come and raise her up to health, again. There was faith in this ruler and, therefore, we read, "And Jesus went with him." Faith ensures the aid of Jesus without delay and if you and I can trust Him, He will go with us. Friend, can you rely on Jesus? Then shall it be written of you, also, "And Jesus went with him."

25—*And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years.*

In this passage of our Lord's life, He blesses two women—the damsel sick unto death and the matron sorely diseased. A large portion of the cures that Jesus worked were upon men, but those worked upon women are nearly all specially noteworthy. Surely, of miracles of a spiritual kind, the women have a double share. This poor woman had been a sufferer for 12 years, that is to say, just as long as the damsel had lived. How many only live to suffer—their existence being little better than a protracted wasting away!

26, 27—*And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse. When she had heard of Jesus, she came in the press behind and touched His garment.*

"When she had heard of Jesus." "Faith comes by hearing." My dear Hearers, whatever you do not hear, take care that you hear much of Jesus! Some preach the Church—it were better, by far, if they preached the Church's Head. Some preach up a creed—it were wiser to proclaim Him who is the Essence of the creed! Attend those places where most is said of *Christ*, for it is by hearing of Him that you will be blest as this poor woman was. That which she heard brought her to Jesus and coming to Jesus is the great thing to be desired! When she had heard of Jesus, she determined to obtain for herself the healing which He was able to bestow. Have you no such resolve?

28—*For she said, If I may touch but His clothes, I shall be whole.*

Not. "If I may *but* touch His clothes," as if she meant to lay stress on the mere *touch*. The translators were wise to place the "but" after the "touch," for *there* the emphasis rests. The woman believed that Jesus was full of healing energy everywhere—even in His garments—and, therefore, she felt—"If I may touch but His clothes, I shall thus come into contact with Him and I shall be whole." Nor did she rest content with theory—she carried it out into act—she pressed through the throng and touched the

border of His garment as Luke informs us. O that all good intentions were as promptly turned into actions!

29—*And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague.*

“Straightway.” Mark is very fond of that word, “straightway,” or, “immediately.” And truly the instantaneous action of our Lord at the call of faith is so remarkable that we do not wonder that the Evangelist should record it! Are there not sick souls here who would gladly obtain an immediate salvation? A touch of Jesus will win it!

30, 31—*And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that virtue or power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd and said, Who touched My clothes? And His disciples said to Him, You see the multitude thronging You, and do You say, Who touched Me?*

Peter led the way in this remark, acting as the spokesman for the rest. Jesus is always right, even when, to the eye of sense, He appears to be wrong. We ought never to suspect Him of making a mistake! Indeed, for us to question Him would be great presumption.

32—*And He looked round about to see her that had done this thing.*

He knew who it was; evidently He looked for “her.” He looked round, not to make a discovery of what was unknown, but to look on one whom He would gently bring out of her hiding place. Taking a long and steady gaze around the multitude, He at last singled her out.

33—*But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before Him and told Him all the truth.*

Here is another instructive sight. Just now we saw the Law at Christ’s feet and here we have a needy sufferer at Christ’s feet. What a picture! If the ruler of the synagogue had a right to be at Jesus’ feet, much more this poor healed one who owed everything to Him. Oh, you that have been saved by Jesus, worship Him! Fall at His feet with reverence! Sit there with attention and abide there in obedience.

34, 35—*And He said unto her, Daughter, your faith has made you whole; go in peace, and the whole of your plague. While He yet spoke, there came from the ruler of the synagogue’s house certain which said, Your daughter is dead: why trouble you the Master any further?*

The word for “trouble,” is a very strong one, as if they judged it to be exacting on the ruler’s part to take the Savior to his house. Surely it implies that there were such signs of weariness upon our Lord that friendly minds judged it to be troubling Him to induce Him to struggle through the crowd to the house. Sometimes these side lights reveal more of the condition of the Man of Sorrows than the narrative actually records. Ah, there is no fear of troubling Jesus, now—it is His joy to visit where He is prayed to come!

36—*As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe.*

As much as to say—“That is all you can do and all you need do. Just trust Me. Be not staggered if death, itself, is there. I am greater than death.” Would our Lord have spoken thus if He had not been conscious of infinite power, conscious, indeed, of His Deity? How can any say, some among *you*, that He is not the Son of God? Assuredly He speaks the language of Omnipotence! These are not the words of a mere man! Hear them and practice them—“Be not afraid. Only believe.”

38—*And He suffered no man to follow Him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James. And He went to the house of the ruler of the synagogue and saw the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly.*

That is to say, the hired mourners who came there to mimic sorrow. Everything false and hired must go out when Jesus enters to work his wonders.

39—*And when He was come in, He said unto them, Why make you this ado and weep? The damsel is not dead, but sleeps.*

She was not dead for good and all. He knew that she was dead for the time, but He spoke broadly, looking at the future. And in His sense she was not dead, since in a few moments she would be among them alive. Her brief death was, in effect no death, but a mysterious sleep.

40—*And they laughed Him to scorn.*

How this sentence ought to encourage any who, in doing right, meet with disgrace and reproach! “They laughed HIM to scorn.” Will you ever think it hard that *you* should be ridiculed when the Lord, the Prince of Glory, is laughed to scorn? No, my Brothers and Sisters, say in your hearts—

***“If on my face for Your dear name
Shame and reproaches be,
All hail reproach and welcome shame,
If You remember me.”***

40—*But when He had put them all out.*

And here is another flash of Deity. Did you ever notice how the Lord Jesus frequently does things which are perfectly unaccountable if performed by a mere man, as when He went into the Temple and cleared out the buyers and sellers with a scourge of small cords? And when, in Gethsemane, He only said, “I am He,” and they fell backward? Here, again, He put out of the room all the minstrels and hired mourners. Does it not show that occasionally a majesty flashed from the human Person of Christ which overwhelmed everybody and was perfectly irresistible? Yes, in His deepest humiliation, our Lord had a Glory about Him which revealed the indwelling God!

40—*He took the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with them, and entered in where the damsel was lying.*

Christ and death—together in one room! A grand picture! Look at the pale, dead child and the life-giving Lord. We know what the issue will be when our Lord enters the lists with the last enemy!

41—*And He took the damsel by the hand.*

That chill, motionless hand! See how the maiden lies before Him like a dew-laden lily wet with the damps of death!

41—*And said unto her, Tabitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto you, arise.*

He spoke to her in her own dear mother tongue. How sweet to be recalled to life by sounds which were so familiar! There is something homely about all the calls of heavenly love.

42, 43—*And straightway the damsel arose and walked, for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment. And He charged them that no man should know it.*

He did not wish to have this miracle published. There were reasons why, just then, there should not be much noise made by His miracles. Besides, our blessed Savior was ever gentle and modest, as it is written, “He shall not strive or cry, or cause His voice to be heard in the streets.” He sought not honor of men. Let us do nothing with the view of its being blazoned abroad.

43—*And commanded that something should be given her to eat.*

This command is natural enough, but how singularly it follows a miracle! Could not He who gave her back to life have satisfied her appetite without food? Yes, but Jesus is always cautious of His miracles, and this is the mark of the true Christ. Look at antichrist and see her lavish marvels at Lourdes and a thousand shrines—shovelfuls of them! Paul speaks of these signs and lying wonders as the trademark of the mystery of iniquity! But the Christ works no needless miracle—He pauses where the need of the supernatural ceases.

He also teaches us this lesson, that when He gives spiritual life, it is our duty to furnish it with suitable nutriment of the Divine Truth of God. We should teach and console those who are newly born into the household of faith! Especially is this the duty of parents and those who are our fathers in the Church. Let us not fail to obey our Lord’s precept and may God thus bless the reading of his Word to us.

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TELL IT ALL

NO. 514

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 14, 1863,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before Him and told Him all the truth.”
Mark 5:33.***

JESUS was pressing through the throng to the house of Jairus to raise the ruler's dead daughter. But He is so profuse in goodness that He works another miracle while upon the road. While yet this rod of Aaron bears the blossom of an unaccomplished wonder, it yields the ripe almonds of a perfect work of mercy. It is enough for us, if we have some purpose, straight-way to go and accomplish it. It were imprudent to expend our energies by the way. Hastening to the rescue of a drowning friend, we cannot afford to exhaust our strength upon another in like danger.

It is enough for a tree to yield one sort of fruit and for a man to fulfill his own peculiar calling. But our Master knows no limit of power or boundary of mission. He is so prolific of Divine Grace, that like the sun which shines as it fulfils its course, His path is radiant with loving kindness. He is a fiery arrow of love which not only reaches its ordained target, but perfumes the air through which it flies. Virtue is always going out of Jesus, as sweet odors exhale from the flowers. And it always will be emanating from Him, as light from the central orb. What delightful encouragement this Truth of God affords us!

If our Lord is so ready to heal the sick and bless the needy, then, my Soul, be not slow to put yourself in His way, that He may smile on you! Be not slack in asking if He is so abundant in bestowing! I will give earnest heed to His Word this morning, for it may be, though the sermon should be mainly intended to bless another, yet incidentally and by the way, Jesus may speak through it to my soul. Men speak of killing two birds with one stone, but my Lord heals many souls on one journey. May He not heal me? Son of David, turn Your eyes and look upon my distress and let me be made whole this day!

The afflicted woman in the narrative came behind Jesus in the press and won a cure from Him—all unobserved by the multitude. Ah, how many there may be in the crowd who are really healed by Jesus Christ, but concerning whom little or nothing is known! It is delightful to see conversion work, to trace the good hand of the Lord, and to rejoice therein. But, beyond a doubt, when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, we shall find that Jesus Christ has worked ten times more wonders than eye has seen or ear heard. We must not dream that we know all that our infinite God is doing.

The works of the Lord are great, and are sought out of all them that have pleasure therein, but even these seekers see not all—

“Full many a gem of purest ray serene

The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear.

***Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.”***

Let each timid hearer now say—“If it is so that there are many who receive God’s Grace, who through much trembling hide themselves from the eyes of men, may it not be so with me? May I not this morning venture secretly to touch the Lord? And since the virtue streams abundantly from Him, may I not hope that He will bless me? Even me, unknown, unnoticed though I am.”

I commence with these two or three notes of encouragement, just to tune my harp, for I desire to sing a song to the Lord’s Beloved, of which the burden shall be—“Comfort You, comfort You my people.” The story of this trembling woman, from first to last, though it is but a piece of by-play, as I have said before, is one of the most touching and teaching of the Savior’s miracles. The woman was very ignorant. She fondly imagined that virtue came out of Christ by a law of necessity, without His knowledge or direct will. She supposed that the holiness and Divinity of His Nature had communicated a mysterious efficacy to His garments.

Just as the bones of Elisha had restored a dead man to life, so she conceived that the garments worn upon the living Body of the Savior might remove her sickness. She had true faith, but there was, to say the least, a tinge of superstition in it. Moreover, she was a total stranger to the generosity of Jesus’ Character, or else she would not have gone behind to steal the cure which He was so ready to bestow. Misery should always place itself right in the face of mercy. Had she known the love of Jesus’ heart, she would have said, “I have but to put myself where He can see me. His Omniscience will teach Him my case, and His love at once will work my cure.”

We admire her faith, but we marvel at her strange ignorance. For how could she imagine that she would be hidden from one whose garment could stanch her issue of blood? He who could cure her secret malady could certainly perceive her secret touch. After she had obtained the cure, she rejoices with trembling. Glad was she that the Divine virtue had worked a marvel in her, but she feared lest Christ should retract the blessing, and put a negative upon the grant of His Grace. How sad that she should have such unworthy ideas of our gracious Master—little did she comprehend the fullness of His love.

You and I have not so clear a view of Him as we could wish. We know not the heights and depths and lengths and breadths of His love—but we know Him better than she did—at least we know, for sure, that He is too good to withdraw from a trembling soul the gift which it has been able to obtain. But here is the marvel of it—little as was her knowledge, great as was her unbelief, and astounding as was her misconception of our Lord—yet her faith, because it was *real* faith, saved her! If we have faith as a grain of mustard seed, there is life in that grain and die it cannot.

A ray of faith ensures complete deliverance from the blackness of darkness forever. If in the list of the Lord’s children you and I are written, as the feeblest of the family, yet being children and heirs through faith, no power, human or devilish, can reverse our adoption. If we cannot clasp the Lord in our hands with Simeon, if we dare not to lean our heads upon His bosom with John—yet if we can venture in the crowd behind Him, and

touch the hem of His garment, we are made whole. Courage, you that are so timid that you seldom read your titles clear to mansions in the skies—the title is none the less sure, in spite of the fact you cannot read it!

I would to God your faith were stronger, but God forbid that I should wound your sensitive spirits and discourage your growing hopes. My Master quenched not the smoking flax. He broke not the bruised reed—neither must the servant do so. I had rather see you, with all your timidity, exercising a real faith in Jesus, than I would have to mourn over you as lifted up with rash presumptuous confidence—without a solid ground for your boldness. Better to go limping to Heaven, than running to Hell. Better to enter into life halt or maimed, than having two hands, and two feet, and cast into Hell fire. Courage, I say, you Trembler. To cry “Abba,” with tears and groans, is better than to shout with loud boastings, “Peace, Peace,” where there is no peace. Happier, by far to be folded with the tender lambs than to be driven away with the strong and lusty goats.

Now let us turn aside to hear this woman preach. She has a word for two classes. First, *to the penitent*, urging him to a full confession. “She told Him all the truth”—Penitent, do you the same. Next, *to the true convert*, an exhortation to an open profession. For she declared before them all how she had been made whole. Secret Disciple—“Go and do you likewise.”

I. This timid woman shall be AN EXAMPLE TO PENITENTS to make a full avowal of their state and condition. “She told Him all the truth.” There need be no difficulty about the matter of prayer with a soul that needs help from Christ. Never question your power to pray acceptably if God has given you a sense of need. Say not—“I have no eloquence. I cannot arrange my words. I cannot fashion a suitable form of extemporaneous address.” Remember that none of these things are necessary. All that is wanted for acceptable prayer is that in the name of Jesus you tell the Lord all the truth.

You require no argument more moving than your misery. You need no description more glowing than your sad case, itself, affords you. Though you know not how to plead your cause as an advocate in a court of law, plead it as the publican in the court of mercy. The simple statement of your wants, and the sincere expression of your desire that those wants should be supplied, for Jesus’ sake, is all the prayer that God asks of you.

We should, dear Friends, if we would come before the Lord acceptably, tell Him all the truth about *our disease*. This woman did so. Her malady was such that her modesty had prompted her to conceal it from the throng, but she must not hide it from Jesus. Her disease had rendered her unclean, so that she had no right to mingle with the crowd, since her touch defiled all who touched her. All this defilement she must own in the Presence of the Healing One. Nor must she, now that her Lord demands it, hide it from the multitude who are round about her. Not to gloat over sin, but to show how sensible we are of it, we ought to make a full declaration of our disease to Jesus, and when He wills it, we must conceal from no one what sinners we were until Divine Grace reclaimed us.

Sin is our disease. Sinner, acknowledge it. Go, show yourself, in all your foulness, to the Great High Priest. Confess the depravity of your na-

ture. Tell Him that your whole head is sick, and your whole heart is faint. Do not draw the picture flatteringly when you are in prayer. Confess that your thoughts are foul, your imaginations filthy, your heart corrupt, and your judgment perverted. Tell Him that your memory will treasure up foolishness, but that it drops the Words of Wisdom from its feeble hands. Tell him you are altogether as an unclean thing, and that all your righteousnesses are as filthy rags. Make a clean breast of your overt acts.

Tell Him, when you are alone in your closet, precisely what you have done. Do not disguise your crimes, nor mince matters by using dainty terms. If you have been a thief, tell Him so. If you have been a drunkard, confess it not thus—"Lord, I have sometimes indulged the flesh." But say, "Lord, I have been drunk." Put it plainly. Acknowledge it in your privacy before God by its own proper name. It is a great temptation of Satan, with convicted souls, to induce them to apply grand titles to their sins. I pray you, do not do so.

Acknowledge, Sinner, just what you have been, and wear the sackcloth and ashes which befit your state. Call a spade, a spade, and go not about trimming your way. This is not the time for your Agags to go delicately. They must be hewed in pieces before the Lord your God. Confess the aggravations of your sin. Conceal not from God that you sinned against light, and knowledge—against many warnings and the strivings of an awakened conscience. Do not hesitate to acknowledge that you have wiped away the tears which the Gospel forced from you, and have gone once again into the world's sin, and lost every good impression.

It is well for us if we are seeking mercy of God, to state the worst of our case and not the best. It is a sure sign that mercy will soon come, when we are ready to confess to the full, our misery. O Sinner, where are you? Have you been before my God in prayer? Go again, and be more full and clear in your confession. You cannot describe your case in terms too black. It is not possible for you to exaggerate either your natural or acquired guilt. You are a wretch undone without His Sovereign Grace—admit it to Him. And if you can find no words, let the groans, and sighs, and sobs of confession pour forth from you—for it is the heart and soul of true and sincere prayer to lay yourself in the dust at Jesus' feet and tell Him all the truth.

The woman next told the Lord *of her sufferings*. The peculiar disease with which she had been afflicted drained away her strength. She must have presented a most emaciated appearance. There was no flush of health upon her hollow cheek. Her gait was that of utter weakness. The toil which her poverty compelled her to endure to earn a livelihood must have been very painful to her, for she had no strength. Her purse was drained by physicians, and her heart by the flux of blood. Poor creature! We can little tell the days of languishing and the nights of pain she endured—and the seasons of despondency and despair which would come upon her spirit in consequence of the weakness of the flesh.

But she told Him all the truth. She told Him briefly, but completely, all she had endured. Tried Soul! You with whom God's Spirit is at work! Tell the Lord, if you would pray aright, all your sufferings! Tell Him how your heart has been broken, how your conscience has been alarmed. Tell Him

how your very sleep is scared with dreams, how your days are made as black as though they were nights by a want of hope. Tell Him that sin has become a torment to you, that the places in which you could once find pleasure have now become howling wildernesses to you. Tell Him the harp has lost its music, the cup its enticements, the table its charms, society its delights—for you are full of your own ways and your sins have become a burden to you. Let your sorrows flow in briny floods before the Lord of Hosts, for though no stranger can intermeddle with your sorrow, your God understands it. Tell Him, then, tell Him, troubled Sinner, tell Him all the truth.

Next, I am persuaded that this woman did not hesitate to tell him *of her futile attempts* after a cure. She had been to other physicians. She had suffered many things by them. That is to say, some of them had put her under various operations of the most painful character. And others had compelled her to drink nauseous medicine. These ancient professors of medicine had given her sleepless nights, and days of exquisite anguish—all of which she might have borne with patience if she had been one whit the better. But she rather grew worse.

Her doctors, it seems, were her worst disease. They added to the issue of her blood a waste of her money. They gave her consumption in her purse, and vexed her with the plagues of fees. Her substance might have yielded her many little comforts and some extra nourishment to sustain her under the fearful drain upon her system. But the doctors sucked like vampires and made an issue in her pockets more rapid than that in her person. She tells the Lord, although that confession was as good as saying, “Lord, I have been everywhere else, or else I should never have come to You. I have tried everyone, and it is only because all others have failed that I present myself before You.”

You would think such a confession as that would make Him angry. But it was not so. I would not have you keep back this part of the tale from your Lord and Master. Tell Him you have been to other physicians. Remind Him how you went to Moses—how he took you to the foot of Sinai and made you exceedingly fear, and quake, but never stanchd your wounds. Tell Him how you rested upon Mr. Civility and his father, Mr. Legality, who said they had skill to take the burden from your back—who set you this to do, and that to do most irksomely—but never ministered one atom to your cure.

Tell Him of your many prayers and how you have trusted in *them*. Tell Him of your good works and how you used to repose your confidence in *them*. You may spread before Him the story of your infant sprinkling, your confirmation, your Church attendance, your Chapel going. Tell Him how you were always up to early prayers, and kept the saints’ days—how you tried to mortify the body and to deny yourself many comforts. Tell Him how you did everything sooner than come *to Him*. And say that even now, if you had not been forced to it, you would not have come, for you are so vile by nature, and so great an enemy to the Cross of Christ, that you would not have come to Him if you could have found a shadow of hope elsewhere.

“Well,” one says, “would that be praying?” Yes, dear Brother! Yes, dear Sister, that is the *soul* of prayer—to tell Him all the truth. We cannot expect that He will give us pardon till we make our confession fully, and without any reserve. If you will cover any sin in your heart, your sin shall condemn you. If there is one secret corner of your soul in which you hide away any of your corruptions, or follies—*there* shall a cancer spring up which shall eat into your very soul. Tell Him all the truth! Hide nothing from Him, even this, your wicked, willful pride in going after your own righteousness and not submitting yourself to the righteousness of Christ—tell Him all the truth.

This poor woman told him *all her hopes*. She said with many a tear, “Lord Jesus, when I had spent my all and could no longer run after the various physicians of different countries, I heard of You. It was one evening as I lay on my couch, too faint to sit upright. A neighbor came and told me that a son of hers that had been born blind had received his sight. And she said that the same man, named Jesus of Galilee, a mighty Prophet, had also restored one that was dead—a widow woman’s son at the gates of Nain. Then I said in my heart, perhaps He will heal me. And my soul that had been given up to despair enjoyed for a moment a beam of hope, for my soul said, ‘If it is possible for Him to raise the dead, then He can stop my issue of blood. And if He did open the blind eyes, then He can restore me.’”

“I thought, if the journey is ever so long I will take it. If the way is ever so rough, if I may but creep into His Presence, I will be among the company, and, perhaps, when He is stretching out His hand to bless, He will bless me, even me. And perhaps the Man is so full of healing virtue that if He will not look on me, yet if I get near enough to look on Him I shall be made whole.” So she would tell him of that hope. She would also tell Him of the many disappointments that she met with when she was pressing through the throng. How the strong men jostled her, and the rough men pushed her back. How the many thoughtless told her to be gone, and the zealous few were jealous of her place and struggled to get before her.

She would tell Him how at last she did come near enough to touch the hem of His garment and how she ventured to touch in the hope that she would be made whole. Then she would plead that as she already felt a change for the better, she humbly hoped that He would not take away this omen of love, but that He would carry out the cure and send her away perfectly restored.

If you desire to pray aright, pour out your hopes before the Lord. I remember when I sought the Lord, I said to Him, “Lord, I have read in Scripture that You did hear Saul of Tarsus, and that You did save Manassas. I am a sinner, it is true, great as they are. But surely You can save me. And my soul hopes that yet You will. Turn an eye of pity and say unto me, ‘your sins are forgiven.’” Sometimes that hope grew so strong that I felt as if I should be saved—I knew I should. Then, again, that hope went down so low that it seemed impossible that He could have pity upon me. And I remember I asked Him how it was He could have buoyed me up with that fond hope and put the Scriptures in such a way that they looked as if they

were meant for me—and were sent to beckon me to Christ—and yet I could find no comfort in them.

Now, you must do the same. Spread those disappointed hopes of yours before your God and tell Him all the truth. But be sure you tell Him also *your fears*. I dare say the woman said to Him, “Oh, Son of David, I thought at one time it was foolish of me to come to You, for I know, O Jesus of Nazareth, that You are very careful concerning the Law. Now the Law says that a woman with an issue of blood is unclean, and I thought I had no right to come near to You—that You would say to me, ‘Woman, Woman, how dare you to mix with the throng, and make all these people legally unclean? And what is this, your impudence, that you should think of touching *Me*? You whose touch is a defiling one, how could you venture to come near to *Me*?’

“Lord, I thought of going back scores of times, but it was my necessity that made me bold. I felt I had no right to come. But come I must. When I did get the cure from You, I touched You surreptitiously without any invitation, without daring to do it before Your face, and now I am afraid You will curse me and say, ‘Get you gone,’ and add another disease to me, and so break the back that is already bent with a crushing load.” How soon her fears were removed when she had told them!

Now, poor Sinner, tell all your fears, whatever they may be. You think your sins are too great. Tell Him so. You fear you are not one of His chosen. Tell Him so. You think that He has never called you. Tell Him so. You believe that if you did come to Him He would refuse you. Tell Him so, if you dare. But I think you would hardly utter so flat a contradiction to His own words, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Do you feel your heart is so hard? Tell Him it is like a nether millstone, that the adamant might melt before your heart would yield. Do you feel as if you could not tell Him? Tell Him that you feel as if you could not tell Him.

Whatever it is, let all the truth come out. No, no! You need not look into the Prayer Book—you will not find much there that suits a convicted sinner. You need not buy a book of family devotions. Your own poor cries are better than the best written forms. “Oh, my prayer will be so broken!” Well, then, it will be all the more suitable for a broken heart. But then you say, “It is such an unworthy prayer.” Yes, but then you are an unworthy soul. The prayer is fitting for the person. If the Great God should hear you, you will know that it was not because of your *prayer*, but because of *Jesus*. For all you did was tell Him the truth. And if that prevails with Him, why then, His heart of love, and the sufferings of the Savior must have moved Him to have pity upon you.

I pray God the Holy Spirit guide these words which are meant to encourage you who have been seeking Jesus. Let me urge you to tell the whole of the story for these reasons. *The Lord knows it all beforehand*—you cannot hide it. Whatever your sins may have been, though they were perpetrated at night, though they were under the shadow of the thickest darkness, He saw them all. Secret sins are all committed in the face of God. Was it a theft which no one has yet discovered? Or was it only a thought, a black thought that no ear, not even your own, ever heard? God saw it—God heard it. In His book everything which you have done is re-

corded against you. Be not foolish, then—deny not that which is published on the housetops of Glory.

The Judge will publish it at last. If you hide it all your life, it will come out then. Go then, tell it—tell it now. *To tell this to God will be a very great service to you.* It will tend to make you feel your need more. I believe that often, when the penitent begins his confession, he is not half so sensible of guilt as at the close of his prayer. If you will bring your soul to look at your sin, to study its foulness, to meditate upon its heinous ingratitude—while you are considering the subject, the Spirit of God will work upon you—and your heart, like the rock in the desert, smitten by His rod, shall gush with streams of penitence.

If your heart is very grieved, do, I pray you, remember that confession is one of the most rapid ways of getting relief. While the banks hold good the lake swells. Let them break and the water is drained off. Let a vent be found for the swollen lake up yonder on the mountains, and the mass of water which might otherwise inundate the valleys will flow in fertilizing streams. When you have a festering, gathering wound, the surgeon lets in the lances and gives you ease. So confession brings peace. Would to God without any delay you who need a Savior would go to Him and confess your sin right plainly.

Jesus is no hard-hearted foe, no cruel Judge. He loves you. Awakened Sinner, He will love to hear that story of yours.

And before you have finished it, He will give you the kiss of love, and say, “I have blotted out your sins like a cloud and like a thick cloud your transgressions.” Trust the immense generosity of Jesus’ infinitely tender heart to give you your soul’s desire—the complete and perfect forgiveness of your sin.

I have thus bid this woman become the preacher of this morning and speak to those who are penitent. May the Word be blessed.

II. We now change the subject for a very short time, to address **THOSE WHO ARE CONVERTED, BUT WHO, LIKE THIS WOMAN, HAVE NOT YET ACKNOWLEDGED THEIR FAITH IN THE PRESENCE OF OTHERS.**

Our Savior will do nothing by halves. The woman may be content with having her body healed—Jesus is not satisfied till her soul is recovered, too. She has gained the cure, but she would probably go slinking away with the retiring multitude to hide herself from all observation. This will not be for her good, nor for the Master’s honor, therefore He takes means to get a plain confession from her. Turning round, He says, “Who touched Me?” At first, there is no answer. He puts it again, “Who touched Me?” They all deny. Peter, moreover, takes upon him to upbraid the Savior for asking so absurd a question—“The multitude throng You,” says he, “how can You say, ‘Who touched Me?’”

But He looked round, and probably fixing His eyes at last upon the woman herself, He said, “Somebody has touched Me, for I perceive that virtue is gone out of Me.” That “somebody” came out of the crowd, and falling flat on her face, she declared before them all, so Luke says, what had been done in her. Now, in the great work of salvation, as we have remarked aforetime, there are many who are saved who, through timidity, do not come forward and confess what Jesus Christ has done for them. I

believe that our Lord often uses singular means to make His secret ones come out and acknowledge Him. The words I may speak just now may be a part of His plan by which He will make yonder "somebody," whoever that may be, this Sister somebody, this Brother somebody, who has touched Him, come out and declare before all what the Lord has done.

His reasons for constraining her to make an open confession, were doubtless three. *It was for His glory—*

***"Why should the wonders He has worked,
Be hid in darkness and forgot?"***

When I look abroad upon nature, it is true, I do not see nature fussily trying to make itself tidy for a visitor, as some professors do, who, the moment they think they are going to be looked at, trim up their godliness to make it look smart. But on the other hand, nature is never bashful. She never tries to hide her beauties from the gazer's eyes. You walk the valley. The sun is shining and a few raindrops are falling. Yonder is the rainbow—a thousand eyes gaze at it. Does it fold up all its lovely colors and retire? Oh, no! It shrinks not from the eyes of man.

In yonder garden all the flowers are opening their lovely cups, the birds are singing, and the insects humming amid the leaves. It is a place so beautiful that God Himself might walk therein at eventide, as He did in Eden. I look without alarming the bashful beauties of the garden. Do all these insects fold their wings and hide beneath the leaves? Do the flowers hang down their heads? Does the sun draw a veil over his modest face? Does nature blush until the leaves of the trees are scarlet? Oh, no! Nature cares not for gazers, and when any come to look upon her, she does not hasten to wrap a mantle over her fair form, or throw a curtain before her grandeur.

So the Christian is not to be always wishing to expose what is in him. That were to make himself a Pharisee. Yet, on the other hand, if God has put anything that is lovely and beautiful, and of good repute in you, anything that may glorify the Cross of Christ, and make the angels happy before the Eternal Throne, who are you that you should cover it? Who are you that you should rob God of His praise? What? Would you have all nature's beauties hid? Why, then, hide the beauties of Divine Grace? Jesus Christ deserves to be confessed before men. He is not ashamed to own Himself our Friend amidst the splendors of His Father's court. Nor was He ashamed amidst the mockery and spitting of Pilate's hall. Why, then, should *you* find it a hardship or a difficulty to acknowledge *Him*?

Acknowledge Him! I ought to feel proud of the honor to be allowed to acknowledge Him! I, who am black with sin, ashamed to call Him Husband who is the fairest of the children of men? I, that am poor as poverty, blush to own that the King of kings calls Himself my Brother! I, who deserve the deepest Hell. I, ashamed to own that Christ has washed me in His precious blood and set my feet upon a rock, and put a new song into my mouth? My Master, I cannot be ashamed of You! How can it be?—

***"No, when I blush, be this my shame,
That I no more revere His name!"***

My Brother, my Sister, you who keep in retirement, and hide your candles under a bushel, you should not do so. For the sake of His dear name, who

loved you with an everlasting love, and has engraved you upon the palms of His hands—come forth and declare your faith.

Doubtless Christ would have her confession *for the good of Jairus*. Did that strike you? Jairus needed much faith. He was just informed that his child was dead. Some faith was wanted to believe that Christ could heal the sick. But that He could restore the dead? What faith was needed here? Therefore, this woman's confession is put in to nourish the faith of the trembling ruler of the synagogue. You do not know, dear Friends, of how much service your open confession of Christ might be to some trembling soul. One reason why we have Churches and are joined in fellowship, is that we may help the weak. That by our daring to say, "Christ has saved *me*," others may take heart and may come to Him and find the same mercy.

"Oh, but," you say, "the Church does not want me." Then, *I* might say the same, and all Christians might say the same. Where would there be a visible Church on earth at all? What is right for one Christian to do is right for all to do. And if it is right for you to neglect professing Christ, then it is right for all Believers to do so. And then, where is the Church? Where is the ministry? Where is Christ's Truth? How are sinners to be saved at all? Suppose, my Brothers and Sisters, that John Calvin and Martin Luther had said—"Well now, we know the Truths of God. But we had better be quiet, for we can go to Heaven much more comfortably. But if we begin preaching, we shall set all the world by the ears, and there will be a deal of mischief done. Hundreds of persons will have to be martyrs for their faith—and we shall be subject to many hardships."

They had quite as much right to hide their religion as you have. They had quite as much reason for the concealment of their godliness as you have. But, alas, for the world, where would have been the Reformation if these had been as cowardly as you are, and like you, had skulked to the rear in the day of battle? I ask again, what would be the wretched lot of England, what calamities would happen to our island, if all who know Christ as you know Him were to act as you do? There would be no ministers to preach the Gospel! Why, I might today be sitting in my own house reading my Bible, or enjoying private prayer with much comfort. I certainly should not be pleading with sinners, if I imitated your example.

Where would be the deacons of our Churches and other useful Church officers? Where? Echo only answers, "Where?" if all were like you. How would the heathen be converted? Who would be the missionary? Who would venture among the heathen if they were like you? The Christian would be dumb and have no testimony! In fact, I must add there could be no Christians! Even if there could be a number of secret Christians everywhere, then the world would say, "The religion of Christ is the most despicable religion under the sun, for those who believe in it will not join together. They will not even profess it. They are so ashamed of their Master that they will not come forward, any of them, to acknowledge what He has done for their souls."

You are acting inconsistently if you will not come forward and own your Lord. My dear Brothers and Sisters, do not shirk it! I mean some of you who have been attending here for years, and ought to have been members

of this Church years ago. And I mean others of you who have come in here this morning, who have known the Lord some little time, and ought to be united with other Christians. I say, think about how much real good you might do after you have once broken through the shell and told others what Jesus has done for you! You would find that after having once made a profession, you would be obliged to speak for your Lord—and who can tell what a career of usefulness might be opened up before you if you would but dare to do this for His sake?

Moreover, I have no doubt that the main reason why Jesus Christ would have this woman declare what was done in her was for her own good. Suppose He had let her go home quietly—there she goes—when she reached home she would have said, “Ah, I stole that cure. I am so glad I have it.” But there would come a dark thought—“One of these days it will die away. I shall be as bad as ever, for I never asked Him.” Conscience would say to her, “Ah, it was a theft.” And though she might excuse herself, still she would not be easy. Now Christ calls her up and conscience cannot disturb her, for *He gave* her the cure before them all. She will not be afraid of the return of her disease, for Jesus said, “Your faith has made you whole.”

What a blessing it would be to some of you if you would come out and confess your Lord and Master. “Well,” says one, “I do not like Baptism.” There are a great many naughty children in the world who do not like to do what their father tells them. But those children often get whipped, and this will probably be your lot. Our good Brother, who spoke here last Sunday evening, astounded me by leaving out part of the text which he most frequently quoted. If he quoted a text he should quote it all. “He that believes shall be saved,” said he. I know no such text in Scripture. There are texts very like it, and the doctrine is true. But the text is, “He that believes *and is baptized* shall be saved.” So the text stands.

Those of us who are Baptists are supposed to lay too much stress on Baptism. I think the danger is in not having stress enough upon it. I know this, if my Master tells me to preach the Gospel to every creature and puts it thus, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved,” I dare not take the responsibility of leaving out part of my Master’s message. I know that he who believes is saved. But, mark you, I would not run the risk of willfully refusing to attend to the second part of my Master’s command. If there is anything in Scripture that is as plain as noonday, it is the Baptism of Believers. The deity of Christ is a point which might quite as readily be disputed as the Baptism of Believers in Jesus. Let any simple-minded man take the Bible without prejudice—and I conceive that it would be impossible for him to read it without discovering that the Believer in Jesus is to be buried with Christ in Baptism.

Little do our friends know how much mischief they do by teaching infant sprinkling. I believe it to be the root and pillar of Popery, the stronghold and bastion of Puseyism. It is an invention of man, against which Christians ought to protest every day, because infant sprinkling is a practical denial of the need of personal godliness. It is not so intended by those who use it—but it is so read and interpreted by the world. It puts into the Church those who are not in the Church. It gives religious rites to

the unconverted. It teaches men that because their mothers and fathers were good people, therefore they are Christians—whereas they are not—they are heathens and as much heathens as if they were born amidst the Hottentot's kraals.

They are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity, notwithstanding all their parents' excellence. To give Christian ordinances to unconverted persons is to pervert the testimony of God's Church. The Baptism of the Believer in the name of Christ is, and must be, a significant emblem of death to the world. It is the crossing of the Rubicon, the throwing away of the scabbard and the drawing of the sword against the world forever. It is an ordinance whose sign can never be erased. An ordinance which disgraces and shames a man in the world's eyes more than anything else, the opprobrium of Christianity, the scoff and scorn of his religion, is Believer's Baptism. And blessed is that man who so can look at it—and then, for Jesus' sake—take up his cross and follow Him.

“Well,” says one, “I do not see it.” My dear Brothers and Sisters, if you cannot see it, I cannot help that. Your conscience is not the rule of your duty, but God's Word is. And if God's Word commands it, whatever your conscience may say about it, you are sinning if you refuse to obey. Oh, I would press this point upon you of making an open declaration, and of doing so in Christ's way, for you have no right to do it in a way of your own. It is idolatry to worship the true God by a wrong method. Acceptable service can only be rendered to God in His own way. To the Law and to the Testimony. If we speak not according to that Word, it is because there is no light in us. I believe that after you have once thus professed your faith before men, your courage will grow. Your separation from the world will be more complete.

You will be a marked man, often a despised man. People will point you out and say, “There is one of your Methodists.” Your profession will distinguish you from the world, and will be a bond to keep you right, a heavenly chain of gold to bind you fast to the principles of your Lord and Master's Truth. Do, with this poor woman, I plead, tell all the truth—and tell it in your Master's way.

Now I send you away, dear Friends, reminding Penitents of that with which we began, the necessity of telling Jesus all—still wishing, however, that you who have found a Savior, would tell the world all and bear your witness that, let others do as they will, as for you and your house, you will serve the Lord.

And unto the name of God be glory forever. Amen.

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THE SAD WONDER

NO. 935

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 12, 1870,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And He marveled because of their unbelief.”
Mark 6:6.*

THAT Jesus marveled was in itself a marvel. We never read that either science or art, Nature or Providence excited His wonder. We do not find that He marveled at the grandeur of the Temple, although His disciples were evidently wonder-struck, for they said, “Master, see what manner of stones and buildings are here!” Little did His mind dwell upon the gigantic size of the stones, or the antiquity of the pile, or the grandeur of the architecture. But His sympathetic soul mourned as it foresaw the destruction of the whole, and of those who dwelt around it—and He uttered the prophetic words, “There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”

I do not find the Redeemer marveled at the force and majesty of the Roman empire, and yet it wielded a very remarkable power, an all-pervading and irresistible influence. Out of utter insignificance the Roman empire had developed itself into a universal monarchy which locked the entire world in its embrace of iron. Scarcely a dog dared move his tongue without the leave of Caesar. In every place, whether sacred or profane, the insignia of the empire were conspicuous. In every nation, whether polite or barbarous, the tramp of the imperial legionaries was heard. And the eagles of Rome were fluttering on every hill and in every dale.

And yet I do not find that Jesus ever marveled at all the pomp and energy of the rule of the Caesars. Neither do I find that He was ever struck with any wonder by the knowledge of the sages and rabbis of His time, or of any other. There were in His days rabbis who, according to the opinion of their fellow countrymen, were renowned beyond all others. So far as rabbinical literature was concerned, our Savior may be said to have lived in an Augustan period, and yet, however profound the doctors of the Law might be, they were very shallow as compared with the Christ of God. No, Jesus never saw any cause in all their wisdom to marvel.

There were but two occasions when our Lord Jesus is recorded to have marveled at all, and both of these were concerning faith. First, he marveled at the centurion—“I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.” And on the second occasion, He marveled at the *absence* of faith where it might have been expected to be found namely, in His own fellow townsmen—“He marveled because of their unbelief.”

In the case of the centurion, who said that he was not worthy that the Lord should come under his roof, he said he relied upon the potency of

the Master's word spoken at any distance to chase out the fever—on the ground that a word from himself was sufficient to command a soldier to obedience—and therefore a command from Christ would call diseases to obedience, too. On the most slender ground comparatively, this Roman, this Gentile, believed in Christ to a very high degree—ascribing to Christ the full power of the Omnipotent God—who says to the forces of Nature, “Do this, and it is done.” Jesus, therefore, marveled that not in all Israel had He found the faith which He had discovered in this Gentile who had comparatively slender opportunity of knowing Him, of hearing His teaching, or of searching into the evidences of His mission as they were contained in the sacred Books.

On the second occasion our Lord marveled at His fellow townsmen's unbelief. So you see that in both instances it was faith, or the absence of it, that caused Christ to wonder. Ah, my Brethren, see the importance of faith! Never place that precious Grace in a secondary position. That which can make Jesus marvel! That which seems to Him to be both in its presence and in its absence, a thing to be marveled at, ought to be a very great point of consideration with us. It should be frequently thought upon, and always estimated at the highest rate. Have you believed? No man ever asked you a weightier question. Are you still in unbelief? No tongue can ever suggest a more solemn enquiry.

Do you believe on the Son of God, or are you yet in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity, wrapped up in your unbelief? O Heart, that shall soon stand before Him that judges both the quick and dead, let this question judge you this day! Turn not aside from the Judgment Seat of the Gospel, lest you be bound to hear your condemnation from the Judgment Seat of the Law hereafter!

Let us look for a moment or so into what it was, in the particular case of unbelief recorded in this chapter, which so remarkably caused the Savior to marvel. Were not these some of the circumstances? Our Lord had come into the district where He had been brought up and where He was well known. He had come there, no doubt, with the most generous intentions towards His fellow citizens, willing to make their town His headquarters, and to display His miraculous power in acts of beneficence towards all their maimed and sick.

But He was met, on His first public appearance as a preacher at the synagogue, with unbelief. And after awhile was even ejected from the place—and they even attempted to cast Him down headlong from the brow of the hill where their city was built. No kindly reception awaited Him. Cold, stolid unbelief at last turned into cruel, murderous rage. His wonder must have been this—first, He had come here bringing His disciples with Him, each man of them was a witness to His mission. They were truthful men, and some of them were known in the district. They could all bear witness to the miracles which He had worked, to the holiness of His life, to the power of His prayers.

He brings these witnesses with Him, and yet they enquire not at their hands as candid men should do, but under the influence of an unworthy

prejudice they condemn the Savior and deny His claims. He was one of themselves, they said, and how could He be the Messiah? Thus did they seem to plead guilty to the opprobrious Proverb, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Our Lord's teaching appears to have struck them—they were astonished at it. And more, "they all bare Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth" (Luke 4:22), and yet they did not believe!

Their attention was evidently awakened and their astonishment was aroused. But yet merely because they happened to know Him, and because He preached the Gospel too boldly, they allowed their prejudice first to raise the question, "Is not this a carpenter, the son of Mary?" And next they rejected Him altogether. They went even further than being struck with His teaching, for they acknowledged that He had worked bona fide miracles. They said one to the other, "What wisdom is this which is given unto Him, that even such mighty works are worked by His hands?" They did not question the truth of His miracles, they owned them to be mighty works.

These miracles should surely have proved something, and should at least have shielded the Worker from the influence of unreasoning prejudice. And yet they overlooked the overwhelming evidence of His Divine works, attested as they were by His disciples, and even acknowledged by themselves. They virtually asked, "How can this be the Christ of God, seeing He is one of our countrymen, and His mother, and His brothers and sisters are all with us?"—a reason which was, indeed, no reason, but a disgrace to themselves, and an ignominious witness to their own infamy.

I have said that prejudice against the Lord Jesus, because He dwelt in His youth at Nazareth, and had been brought up among them, was very unreasonable. But it was the more so, because that very fact gave them opportunities for knowing who and what He was. If they knew Mary His mother, why did they not learn His pedigree? They might with but little trouble have discovered that Mary was of the race and lineage of David. They might have found, if they had asked the question, that Jesus was born at Bethlehem. They might readily have learned from His mother those circumstances which were vivid in her recollection, for we are told that she kept them and pondered them in her heart.

They might have heard of the midnight song of the angels, of the visits of the shepherds, of the adoration of the wise men, of the dream of His reputed father, of the flight into Egypt, and all the other remarkable circumstances which went to corroborate the testimony that Jesus was born King of the Jews. They were just in the right place to find evidence if they had cared for it. But no, with the candle before them they shut their eyes, or, rather, in broad noonday they groped for the wall like blind men, because they were resolved not to see. What if Jesus had been brought up at Nazareth? What but prejudice could urge that against Him? Was it not an honor to themselves? He must be brought up somewhere, and being brought up there, they had all the better opportunities for knowing Him.

They might have known, and must have known something of His holy Childhood, of that remarkable excellence of disposition, of His being found in the Temple, of His growth in wisdom and in favor with God and man, and of the prophecies of Simeon and of Anna concerning Him. Surely some of these matters were talked of by the well, or at the city gates! Certainly, we may be sure that as the early history of a young man is generally known in the village from which he sets out in life, it must have been known in Nazareth, and have been spoken of in many a social gathering, that John the Baptist had declared the Son of Mary to be “the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.”

Surely Nazareth must have become the very focus of His fame, and the people there must have been placed in a position eminently advantageous for coming to a correct conclusion with regard to His Person and His office. For all these things to be set aside simply because of a silly prejudice arising from His being brought up among them was such a folly that Christ might well marvel. When all this while they were losing the incalculably precious blessings of healing, and when they were bringing upon themselves the curse of having put from them the kingdom of God merely for an idle prejudice, it was enough to make the Christ of God wonder at their unbelief.

I shall say nothing more about these Nazarites, but shall pass on to remark that the unbelief of many here present is equally marvelous in some respects. I am afraid that most of us will come under censure. First I shall address myself to those who are saved, who have felt the power of the Holy Spirit within them renewing their natures. And then, secondly, I shall speak to you who are hearers of the Gospel, who, nevertheless, have not believed to the salvation of your souls.

I. I shall speak to THE PEOPLE OF GOD, and I am afraid while I speak, there will be few of us who will be able to plead guiltless. Jesus assuredly marvels because of *our unbelief*—He marvels at the unbelief of His own people. Let me show first the wonderful forms of unbelief that are found among the professed people of God. Yes, and among the real people of God. At times we doubt the wisdom of Providence. We hold as a cardinal truth that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose.”

And yet when the circumstances of our position are dark, and our load of trouble is unusually heavy, the suggestion will arise, “Is this wise? Is this kind? Will this promote my good? Can it be that circumstances so unpropitious shall be overruled for my benefit?” There may be those who have never doubted this Truth of God, even when exposed to the most rigorous tribulation. But I am afraid the most of us have foolishly asked the question, “Has God forgotten to be gracious? If it is so, why am I thus? Has He turned to be my enemy, seeing He deals thus roughly with me?”

Methinks this is one of the wonders of unbelief. After the many occasions in which God has proved to us His faithfulness, after the many times in which, with some of us especially, God has overruled our afflictions for our present and eternal benefit, it is of all unbelief one of the

most marvelous that we should not be able to trust in the Providence of God. Another strange form of unbelief is mistrust of the Divine faithfulness. We have the written promise of God that He will never leave nor forsake those who trust Him. We have His guarantee that in His service “as our days so shall our strength be.” We know beyond question that we never have temptations capable of making us fall away, but have the Divine assurance, “My Grace is sufficient for you.”

And yet there are times when, if we are put to some little stress of labor beyond what is usual, or visible means are straitened, our spirits sink! We become depressed, and the demon of unbelief suggests that now our defeat is certain, and the enemy will triumph over us. “Aha,” says he, “where is your God now? Will He stand by you now? Will He enable you to be victorious in this terrible strife?”

Happy is that man who can go about his Master’s work as sure that God is with him as though he heard the wings of angels over his head and saw the eternal arm working visibly on his behalf. Happy is that man, but, alas, we are not always thus happy! We doubt because the flesh is weak, and unbelief enquires, “Will He make a table in the wilderness? Will He command the rocks to gush with water? If the Lord should open the windows of Heaven could such a thing be?”

Yet, Brethren, after what we have seen, and after all that our fathers have seen, after what we have experienced in deliverances, in protections, in supplies, in upholding and in restorations, the Lord of Love may well marvel because of our unbelief! When we stoop to mistrust the faithfulness of God, who cannot lie, and think that the everlasting God that faints not, neither is weary, of whose understanding there is no searching—can fail to keep His Word and fulfill His Covenant—this is unbelief, indeed!

Another very remarkable form of unbelief among God’s people is with regard to the efficacy of prayer. If there is anything under Heaven that I am as sure of as I am of the demonstrations of mathematics, it is the fact that God hears prayer. Answers to prayer have come to some of us, not now and then on rare occasions, so that after a series of years we have a few facts to collate—but they come to us as ordinary circumstances of everyday life. God has heard for us prayers about great things and prayers about little things—prayers about things that we could reveal to others, and prayers about secret matters in which none could join us. We have had so many answers to prayer that the fact is far beyond any further question with us.

And yet there may be a matter pressing upon our heart for God’s glory, and it may be a subject about which we could plead a precise promise, such as this—“If two of you are agreed as touching anything concerning My kingdom, it shall be done unto you,” and yet we are half afraid that our prayer will not be heard—the husband afraid that the conversion of his wife will never occur! The wife fearful that that swearing husband of hers will not, after all, yield to the importunate entreaties which she has addressed to Heaven! A teacher in a Sunday school class still afraid that his children, though often prayed for, will not be converted!

We have many prayers, but how little faith is mingled with them! Well, it is strange, it is passing strange, it is amazing, when we have already been heard ninety-nine times that we cannot trust God the hundredth time! And when our whole life is as full of answers to prayer as it is of hours, it is strange that we should go tremblingly to the Mercy Seat and scarcely think that God will grant our desire again. No wonder if Jesus should marvel at the unbelief of many of His people's prayers! To kneel at the Mercy Seat where the blood of God's own Son is sprinkled—where Christ Himself stands as the Apostle and High Priest of our profession—and to fear that when we plead for His sake we yet may not be heard! It is a miracle of incredulity!

Another singular form of unbelief is this—a doubt as to the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I know that this is commonly creeping over the Christian Church. The Gospel of Jesus Christ will not, according to some, be found to succeed in this enlightened age, or among enlightened nations. It may be very effectual among South Sea Islanders with their dense ignorance. It may perhaps civilize degraded Bushmen in their kraals. But to refined, intellectual men like the Hindus, the Gospel avails nothing. Yes, and the fear of this has perhaps been up to now a great hindrance to the success of the Gospel because our unbelief has restrained the hand of Christ, the Holy Spirit has been grieved, and mighty works have been few.

But I will not talk of nations, and of this truth on a broad scale, I will bring it home to you. My Brethren, have you not sometimes held your tongue concerning the Gospel of Jesus when you have met with very wicked persons? "No," you have said, "there is no hope there." Or you have been called to visit some sick man of profane life, and you have said, "There is no hope here." Or you have stumbled across some abandoned woman, and have not thought of preaching Christ to her, for you have said, "This is a case beyond the reach of the Word."

But it is not so. I will prove it is not so. Has the Gospel saved you, my Brother? And you, Sister? Then whom can it not save? Ever since the day when I came as a burdened, desponding sinner to my Master's feet, and felt my load roll off me at the sight of His dear wounds. Ever since I saw Him as the Substitute bearing the wrath of God on my behalf, I have despaired of none—nor would I if they were at the very gates of Hell. For could we get the Gospel to their ears, and the Spirit of God to their hearts, they would be saved. May God grant that we may not doubt the power of the Gospel.

So, too, in hours of great distress we have known true Christians doubtful of the efficacy of the precious blood of Christ. They would not confess such unbelief, but it comes to that. They have said, "I thought I was, indeed, one of His. I went up with the multitude that kept holy day, and gladsome were my songs, but I have turned aside. I have backslidden, I have lost the joy of my Lord, and for me there is no hope." We bid such persons look to the Redeemer anew, and we say, "There is still power in the Atonement to take away all sin, for 'the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanses us from all sin.'"

For awhile, these desponding ones will say, "Alas, I cannot find peace, I cannot get comfort. My sin is gone over my head as a heavy burden, and, as David said, my wounds stink and are corrupt, there is no healing for my sores. I thought I was a child of God, but I am driven from His Presence, and I shall know no hope." But, Brothers and Sisters, it is not so. While the Bible remains true, it becomes none of us ever to think that we can be beyond the reach of mercy. Jesus Christ came into the world not to save *good* people, but to save *sinner*s, even the very chief. He did not come to save the virtuous, but "to seek and to save that which was lost." "The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick." Our sickness and our poverty, our ruin and our destruction are proper pleas with the Christ of God. There shall never come a day when His precious blood shall lose its power—

***"Till all the ransomed Church of God
Are saved to sin no more,"***

there shall still be efficacy in the fountain for cleansing, still be power in Jesus to blot out iniquity.

I might go on and mention some other forms of this unbelief, but I will not—we will rather consider why they are so amazing. First, it is very amazing in saints of God to be disbelieving because of their relationship to the Father and to the Lord Jesus. To doubt a stranger is not at all an extraordinary thing, but for a child to doubt its father—for a brother to doubt a tender, truthful, loving brother. For a bride to doubt the bridegroom who has made her blessed—these things are strange. And for me, for you, for any blood-washed soul to doubt your Father God, to mistrust your elder Brother Jesus, to have suspicions of the Bridegroom of your hearts, even Jesus, the Well-Beloved of Heaven and earth—well may we marvel, and mingle sadness with the marvel! And well may you marvel, and mingle bitter penitence with your wonder.

Why do I mistrust my Lord? He has never lied unto me. Blessed be His name, He can forgive even this sin. But it must wound Him sorely. It must be another crucifixion to Him, that those who are saved by Him should yet doubt Him. Forgive us, Jesus, and help us against this sin in the future.

Our unbelief is a marvel, again, because the rightness of trust in God and in His Son Jesus Christ are backed up by such wonderful historical facts. None have ever trusted in Him and been confounded. The Jews of old could look back to a very memorable history, full of great wonders of faith. And so when they doubted God, they doubted Him against all the facts that stood in evidence. When the Lord brought them up out of the Red Sea, and made the waters stand upright as a heap. When He led their enemies down into the heart of the sea, where they were utterly destroyed by the embracing waters. When Israel sang a new song unto the Lord, and triumphed gloriously, was not it an amazing thing that within a few days they should ask, "Can He give us bread to eat?"

And when after that they saw the manna lying around their tents, and drank of the rock that followed them, and marked the cloudy pillar that shaded them by day, and the fiery pillar that cheered and enlightened

them by night—was it not strange that they should doubt whether He could bring them into Canaan, and drive out the giants with their chariots of iron? Israel's doubts were very strange, but so are ours. For we doubt not only in the teeth of all Bible history, but in defiance of the history of the saints ever since Apostolic times—the history of our own sires, and of ourselves.

Did the Lord fail his saints at Smithfield, when they sang as they burned? Was He not the helper of those who, but yesterday, in Madagascar, went forth to die for Jesus, with hymns of triumph on their tongues? Did not the Lord help the covenanting fathers of His saints in Scotland? And was He not the guardian of our persecuted sires in this priest-ridden land? Let us then yield to multiplied evidences the credence they deserve, and let us trust a faithful God as He should be trusted.

But we have, in addition to the history of the past, the personal experience of the present. I used to marvel at William Huntingdon's, "Bank of Faith"—a strange enough book, by the way—but I am sure I could, from my own history, write a far more remarkable, "Bank of Faith," than William Huntingdon has penned. And I question whether the life of any Christian here, with its little details of deliverance, of assistance, of answers to prayer, would not be very remarkable if it could be written. At any rate, you and I have had most singular proofs in our experience of the truth, goodness, faithfulness, and power of God and of His Christ.

We do not speak merely what we believe, but what we *know*, and testify what we have seen. I have often said that if anyone wants to dispute with me about the evidences of Christianity, the mere outworks, I might perhaps yield the day. Perhaps I might not be inclined to accept the gauge of battle—for I care comparatively little about the outworks. But if any man will attack the real inwards of Christianity (which few ever do, because they do not know much about them), then the feeblest man among us will hold the wall against all comers.

We have certain experiences—communion with the Christ of God, communion with our Father, manifestations of His face to us which we shall not publish in the street, nor cast before swine—but which, nevertheless, we would dare bring forward as witnesses, powerful to ourselves, at any rate, and to others who can understand them. Strange enough, however, is the fact that after all our inward evidence and indisputable personal proof, we do, nevertheless, doubt in dark times, and scandalously mistrust. After what our Lord has done for us, He may well marvel at our wicked, unreasonable unbelief.

And there is another reason for wonder which I shall mention, namely this, that our unbelief is singular when we consider our own beliefs. You do not doubt the inspiration of Scripture, you Christian people, yet you doubt the Truth of something *in* Scripture. You do not doubt the Deity of Christ, yet you doubt whether Christ will be true to you. You do not doubt that His Gospel comes from Heaven, yet sometimes you doubt whether it will exert a conquering power among the sons of men. You do not doubt

the promise, nor doubt the Lord, so you say, and yet you doubt whether that promise will be fulfilled to you.

Too often your faith is a *theory*, and your unbelief a *fact*. O that our faith might be a fact, and a practical fact, too, commonly carried out in all the transactions of life! At home and abroad, in joy and in sorrow, may we still be unstaggering Believers holding fast by the Truth of God, by the certainty of His promise, the infallibility of His purpose, the glory of His Gospel, the Deity of His Son and the triumph of His Word. I close this address to you who are His people by remarking that as you see what forms unbelief takes, it will be well to confess your sin with sorrow. And as you have seen how marvelous it is, it will be right to be ashamed that you should sin so strangely.

Before I have done, notice that your sin is so amazing that it makes Jesus Christ, Himself, marvel. He is used to wonders—He is Himself the Wonderful, the great Wonderworker, and yet He marvels because of our unbelief! We often wonder at the unbelief of the Jews, that they should have seen so much of God in the wilderness, and yet should doubt Him. As in a glass behold *yourselves*. I have sometimes wondered at the unbelief of others—I have put my soul in their place, and have said, “I never could be disbelieving if I had such an experience as theirs.”

Ah, why could I judge others while myself guilty? No doubt these doubters think much the same of us, and think us inexcusable when we are desponding. There are times when we wonder at our own unbelief! When God has brought us safely through a trial, we have said, “I cannot think how I could mistrust Him.” And in the surprising joy of some remarkable mercies, we have looked back with blushes and with tears, and said, “Have mercy upon me, O my God, for my unbelief, for I can never doubt You again.” Yes, it is very amazing, it is very strange that we should be so basely incredulous. May God lift us out of this unbelief, and make us to hold fast His Word, and trust in Him without ceasing.

II. I shall now want your earnest attention, You WHO ARE NOT YET CONVERTED, while I try affectionately to speak with you concerning your unbelief.

Among the hearers who continually frequent this place there are a great number who were never infidel in the common sense of the term. And though they would be very grieved even to approach to that state—they are nevertheless infidel in another sense—they are unbelieving as to any saving trust in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Now I desire to speak to your hearts this morning. Your unbelief is very marvelous, and in each form that it takes it is so!

Perhaps you fear that your sin is too great for mercy. You profess to believe God’s Word? “Yes.” And yet you dare talk in that way, when it is written, “All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” “Ah, no!” you say, “that is not the form of my unbelief—I am not in a fit state for the reception of Divine Grace.” And you believe God’s Word, do you? You believe the Gospel which I have preached to you so often, and yet dare say that?

Do you not know that your very unfitness is your fitness? “The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick.” “I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” You know very well that salvation is all of Grace, that from first to last it is all of pure mercy and yet you talk about being unfit to come! I think I have heard you sing, some of you—

***“If we tarry till we’re better,
We shall never come at all.”***

You know that, and that your present state is the very best state in which you could come, and yet you dare disbelieve in such a way! Shame on you! Shame on you!

But perhaps you say, “No, my doubts are of another kind. I am afraid mine is an excluded case.” And yet after reading the Word of God you cannot find a single text to prove that. And you are told that there are no occult texts that do it, for God has not spoken in secret in a dark place of the earth, saying to the seed of Jacob, Seek you My face in vain. You know the promises. For instance, you know this—“Whosoever will, let him take of the Water of Life freely.” “Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters.” You are not ignorant of that text, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.”

You know how broad and unlimited those promises are made, and yet you dare to talk of your being excluded! Did you not sing the other Sunday, when I gave out the verse—

***“None are excluded therefore but those
Who do themselves exclude.
Welcome the learned and polite,
The ignorant and rude.
While Grace does not forget the prince,
The poor may take their share,
No mortal has a just pretense
To perish in despair.”***

I will say that over again—

***“No mortal has a just pretense
To perish in despair.”***

The reason for despair is a mere pretense, and an unjust one. The Gospel of Jesus Christ has with a sound of trumpet declared that if you have no goodness Christ Jesus will *give* you the goodness! That if you have no fitness you need no fitness! That you may come just *as you are* and rely upon the unsurpassed and unbounded mercy of the God that made the heavens and the earth—who has Himself set forth Jesus Christ to be a Propitiation for sin—in Whom, if you put your trust, you shall find instant pardon and eternal salvation, a change of heart and a renewed life!

Such unbelief as these—I will not mention more, because they are all alike, a pack of rubbish to be thrown out at once—are all marvelous! It is amazing that they should be indulged in by people who hear the Gospel. In your case, my dear Hearers, they are more than ordinarily marvelous for this reason—because you already admit so much. If you did not be-

lieve in the Bible I could not talk so to you. If you did not believe Christ to be the Son of God I should not so much marvel at your unbelief.

If you rejected all the testimony about the precious blood of the Mediator, I could understand your being unbelieving. But there are some of you who know that Christ is God. You know He is able to save from sin. You know He is able to save YOU, and yet you are unsaved. And I marvel at your unbelief because you confess that it leaves you in a state of ruin and will land you in a state of everlasting confusion! You know you are filthy, and that the fountain is open—why, then, do you not wash? You know Christ will save you if you trust Him. You know He is worthy of your trust. O Sirs, why do you not trust Him? In the name of everything that is reasonable, why not trust Him? God grant you may.

Your unbelief is the more amazing because the cause from which it arises is so inexcusable. With some of you your unbelief is the effect of inconsiderateness. You do not think about it. You believe, but believe superficially. You do not weigh and judge. Oh, is it so? Will you ruin your own souls for want of thought? You look, as I gaze upon you, to be men and women of intelligence. And can you, with intelligence and education, trifle with your souls? Eternity, eternity, eternity! You know its meaning, and yet can you trifle with it?

You are immortal, no flame shall ever devour your soul. You shall outlast the sun, and when the moon has waned for the last time, you still shall live. And will you dare to tempt God's anger so as to live forever beneath His frown? When a simple trust in Jesus will secure for you a happy immortality—shall you through *carelessness* suffer your soul to drift down the stream to the dark ocean of despair?

With some of you it is little more than mere whim which your depraved heart pleads as a reason for keeping from Christ. Either it is the pride which will not let you take salvation gratis, or some prejudice against the preacher, or against a doctrine of the Word, or a wish for you scarcely know what—maybe of some sign or wonder. Alas, men are fools when they are wicked! Wickedness and folly are but synonymous terms. And for you who profess to believe so much to decline practically to carry it out is a folly which even the lunatics of Bedlam could not rival. O that you were wise and would consider this!

I marvel at the unbelief of some of you because it causes you so much grief. It is many months since you had a day of real happiness, some of you. Your conscience is so much awakened that you cannot be quiet, and yet there is rest, rest to be had, and you have it not. There is the cup before you, and you are thirsty, yet you refuse to drink! There is the bread, and you are hungry, but you will not eat! I marvel at your unbelief, and the more because you have seen others saved. Since you were first impressed your daughter has found peace, your son is rejoicing in Christ, the friend who sits next to you in the pew has been long ago with his feet on the Rock, and a new song in his mouth—and he has told you it is all through his trusting Jesus—and yet you will not trust, too.

O may God teach you to be reasonable, and cure you of this folly! May His Holy Spirit work wisdom of faith in you. It is marvelous that all this while you would be ashamed to avow that you doubt anything that God has said. You make God a liar, but would dread to say so. You would not be called an infidel, and yet what better is an unbeliever? For if a man believes and does not act on what he believes, is he not, if his soul is ruined, even more without excuse than he who had some mental difficulty to plead as a ground of unbelief?

My dear Friends, some of you who have been sitting here for years and yet do not believe—you are marvels to me! Count you that little? You are marvels to many in your family who long since expected to see you on the Lord's side. You are a wonder to devils—even *they* cannot make it out—the power of their spells has amazed even them! You are a wonder to the damned in Hell—with what welcome alacrity would they avail themselves of an opportunity to escape from misery, and yet you trifle with such opportunities!

You are a marvel to the angels who would have rejoiced over you if you had returned to your Father, and who wonder that you stand at the Cross's foot from Sunday to Sunday and yet doubt the power of Him who bled on it! You are marvels to the Lord Himself. One of these days, unless you repent, you will be a wonder to yourselves, for this text will come true to you if God prevents it not. "Behold, you despisers, and wonder, and perish." But I hope better things of you, even things which accompany salvation, though I thus speak.

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. Before the Redeemer was taken up and ascended to His Throne, He left this message to us, His disciples, "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. But he that believes not shall be damned." Believe and be baptized, and God grant you His salvation for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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JOHN AND HEROD

NO. 1548

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and holy and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things and heard him gladly.”
Mark 6:20.***

JOHN sought no honor among men. It was his delight to say concerning our Lord Jesus, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” Though John sought no honor of men, he had honor, for it is written, “Herod feared John.” Herod was a great monarch—John was but a poor preacher whose garment and diet were of the coarsest kind. But “Herod feared John.” John was more royal than royal Herod! His *character* made him the true king and the nominal king trembled before him. A man is not to be estimated according to his rank, but according to his *character*. The peerage which God recognizes is arranged according to a man’s justice and holiness. He is first before God and holy angels who is first in *obedience* and he reigns and is made a king and a priest whom God has sanctified and clothed with the fair white linen of a holy life. Be not covetous of worldly honors, for you will have honor enough, even from wicked men, if your lives are “holiness unto the Lord.” Let it be written on John’s tomb, if he needs an epitaph, “Herod feared John.”

There is only one better testimonial which any minister of the Gospel might be glad to receive and it is this—“John did no miracles, but all things which he spoke concerning this Man were true.” He worked no marvelous works which astonished his generation, but he spoke of *Jesus* and all that he said was true! God grant that our Master’s servants may win such praise! My subject at this time does not lead me to speak so much of John as of Herod. I desire to have no Herod in this congregation, but I am anxious about some of you lest you should be like he and, therefore, I will speak out of the tenderness of my heart with the desire that none of you may follow the steps of this evil king.

I. I would ask you to consider THE HOPEFUL POINTS IN HEROD’S CHARACTER. First, we find that Herod respected justice and holiness, for “Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and holy.” I like to see in every man a respect for virtue even if he, himself, has it not, for it may be that the next step will be to desire it and he that desires to be just is almost so. Some have brought their minds to such a pitch of sinfulness that they despise goodness and ridicule justice and devotion. May God grant that we may never, by any process, be brought into such a fearful condition as that! When the conscience comes to be so confused as to lose its reverence for that which is good and holy, then is a man in a sad plight, indeed.

Herod was not in that condition. He honored justice, honesty, truth, courage and purity of life. Though he had not these things, himself, yet he had a salutary dread of them which is a near approach to respect for them. I know I am speaking to a great many who respect everything that is good and right—they only wish they were good and right themselves. So far, so good. The next good point I see in Herod was that he admired the man in whom he saw justice and righteousness and that is a step further, for you may admire an abstract virtue and yet, when you actually see it embodied in a man you may hate him. The ancients recognized justice in Aristides and yet some of them grew sick of hearing him called “the Just.”

A man may be acknowledged to be just and holy and for that very reason he may be dreaded. You like to see lions and tigers in the Zoological Gardens, but you would not like to see them in your own house—you would very much prefer to view them behind bars and within cages. And so very many have respect for religion, but religious people they cannot stand. They admire justice! How eloquently they speak of it, but they do not like to deal justly. They admire holiness! But if they come across a saint, they persecute him. “Herod feared John” and tolerated John and went the length of even keeping John, for a while, out of the hands of Herodias. Many of you like the company of God’s people. In fact, you are out of your element when you get with the profane—you cannot endure them and from those that practice debasing vices you flee at once. You delight in choice company. So far, so good. But that is not enough. We must go much further, or else we may remain like Herod, after all.

A third good point about Herod was that he *listened* to John. It is nothing amazing that you and I should listen to sermons, but it is rather astonishing that a *king* should do so and such a king as Herod. Monarchs do not often care for religious discourses, except such as come from court preachers who wear fine raiment and use soft speech. John was not the kind of man for a king’s palace—too rough, too blunt, too plain-speaking. His words thrust too much home, yet Herod heard him gladly. It was a hopeful point in his character that he would hear a man who preached justice, holiness and the “Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.” It is a fine point and a hopeful point in *any* man that he will hear and listen to an honest proclamation of God’s Word even though it comes home to his conscience.

Perhaps I address some of you who hear the Gospel only now and then and when you drop into a religious meeting you are like the dog in the library who would gladly have changed all the books for a single bone! There are many such people in London. Religion does not suit them—places of entertainment are much more to their minds. Some say of the preacher, “I won’t hear *him* again; he cuts too closely; he is too personal.” John said to Herod that it was not lawful for him to have his brother’s wife, but, though he spoke so plainly, Herod listened to him, because “he was a just man and holy.” That was well of Herod and it is well in you, my Friend, if you are willing to hear the Gospel, however practically it is spoken. So far, so good.

But there was a better point, still, in Herod. He *obeyed* the word to which he listened. Herod heard John gladly, “And when he heard him, he did many things.” Many of our hearers do nothing. They hear, they hear, they hear and that is the end of it. They learn the way, they know the way, they are expert in the way—but they do not *follow* the way. They hear the Gospel invitation, but they come not to the feast. Some seem to think that religious duty lies in hearing, first, and talking, afterwards. But they are mistaken. Herod knew better than that. He was not a hearer, only—he *did* something and it is remarkable that the text tells us that “he did *many* things.” Perhaps these were some of the many things—he discharged a tax-gatherer who imposed upon the people, or righted the wrongs of a neglected widow, or altered a cruel law which he had promulgated, or changed his habits and manners in certain respects. Certainly, in many points, he was an improved man, for John the Baptist had an influence with him for good, “For Herod feared John and when he heard him, he did many things.”

I am speaking to some who, when they hear a sermon, put a *part* of it into practice. And they have done many things since they first attended here for which we are very grateful. I have known a man become charmed with the Gospel and he has given up his drunkenness and his Sabbath-breaking and he has tried and succeeded, in a great measure, in leaving off profane language and thus he has greatly improved. And yet—and yet he is only a Herod, after all—for Herod was Herod after he had done many things and, in his heart he was still prepared for all sorts of wickedness. Yet he *did* amend somewhat and so far, so good.

There was another point about Herod, namely, that he continued to hear the preacher gladly, for it is put into the end of the verse, as if to indicate that he heard John still. John touched his conscience, but after all, he still heard him gladly. He said, “Send for John the Baptist again.” Harry the Eighth would listen to Hugh Latimer though Hugh denounced him to his face and even sent him, on his birthday, a handkerchief on which was marked the text, “Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.” Hal cried, “Let us hear honest Hugh Latimer.” Even bad men admire those who tell them the truth! However unwelcome the warning, they believe it to be honestly spoken and, therefore, they respect the preacher. This is a good point. You who are present and unconverted have heard most cutting sentences from me. You have heard of “judgment to come” and of that eternal wrath which rests upon those who die in their sins—let me warn you then, that if, after hearing the denunciations of God’s Word, you are still willing to hear, I have great hopes for you! So far, so good.

There was yet one other point about Herod and that is, his conscience was greatly affected through the preaching of John, for I am inclined to think that a certain translation, which renders the passage, “Herod did many things,” in another way, may be correct—“Herod was perplexed,” or, “Herod was made to hesitate.” Such a sense is found in some manuscripts. He loved his sin and he could see a “beauty of holiness” in religion and he wished to be holy. But there was Herodias and he would not give her up. When he heard a sermon he was like a relative of his in later days,

“almost persuaded,” yet he did not give up his lust. He could not go the whole length John would have him go. He would not leave his bosom sin and yet he felt as if he wished to leave it. There was a halting between two opinions, a hesitating, a wavering—he was inclined to good if he could have good and have his pleasure, too—but his pleasure was so very much his master that he could not escape from it.

He was like a bird taken with lime-twigs—he wanted to fly but, sad to say, he was willingly held, limed by his lust. This is the case with many of our hearers. Their consciences are not weaned from their sins! They cannot give them up and yet they wish they could. They linger on the brink and fear to launch away. They are almost out of Sodom, have almost escaped the fire shower and yet, in all probability, they will stand like Lot’s wife, a pillar of salt, because they will look back and love the sin that lingers in their heart. Consciences nowadays seem to have gone out of fashion—but to have a conscience sensitive to the preaching of the Word is an admirable thing and if you have such a thing, so far, so good!

II. There were six good points about Herod, then. But now, very sorrowfully, I want to indicate THE FLAWS IN THE CASE OF HEROD. The first flaw was that though he feared *John*, he never looked to John’s Master. John never wanted anybody to be *his* disciple, but he cried, “Behold the Lamb of God.” Herod was, after a sort, a follower of John, but never a follower of Jesus. It is easy for you to hear the preacher and love him and admire him and yet the preacher’s Master may be unknown to you. I pray you, dear Friends, do not let this be the case with any of you! I am the Bridegroom’s *friend* and I shall rejoice greatly when the Bridegroom wins your hearts.

God forbid that my ministry should ever lead you to myself and cause you to stop there. We are only signposts pointing to Christ. Go beyond us! Be followers of us as far as we are followers of Christ, but in no other respect. It is to Christ you must go—the end of all our ministry is Christ Jesus! We want you to go directly to Him, to seek pardon from Him, redemption from Him, a change of heart from Him, a new life from Him—for vain will it be if you have listened to the most faithful of preachers and have not listened to the preacher’s Master and obeyed His Gospel! You will be Herods and nothing more unless Grace leads you to Jesus Christ!

The second flaw about Herod’s case was that he had no respect for goodness in his own heart. He admired it in another, but there was none of it in himself. Our Savior described Herod admirably. What a master-sketcher of human portraits was Christ! He said of Herod, “Go you and tell that fox.” Herod was a foxy man, selfish, full of tricks—timid when he was in the presence of his superiors—but both cruel and bold when he was in the presence of those who could not defend themselves. We sometimes meet with these foxy people—they want to go to Heaven, but they like the road to Hell! They will sing a hymn to Jesus, but they also like a good roaring song when they get merry companions together.

By all manner of means, they are a guinea to the Church of God. Oh yes, admirable thing! But how many guineas are spent upon some secret lust? So many try to dodge between God and Satan. They do not want to

fall foul of either—they hold with the hare and run with the hounds—they admire all that is good, but they do not want to have too much of it themselves. It might be inconvenient to carry the Cross of Christ on their own shoulders and become precise and exact in their own lives, yet they never say a word against other people doing so. It is a fatal flaw to have no root in yourself—a *damning* flaw, condemning yourself—to know the right and disregard it, to feel respect for it and yet trample it under foot. I judge that the doom of such will be far more dreadful than that of those who never knew the good, who were trained up in the purlains of vice and never had a glimpse of holiness or purity and, therefore, never deliberately turned away from them.

Another flaw in Herod's character was that he never loved the Word of God, as God's Word. He admired John and probably said, "That is the man for me. See how boldly he delivers his Master's message? That is the man I should like to hear." But he never said to himself, "*God* sent John. *God* speaks to me through John. Oh that I might learn what John is speaking and be instructed and improved by the Word of God John is uttering, because it is God's Word." No, no. I do pray you, ask yourselves, dear Hearers, whether this may not apply to you. May it not be that you listen to a sermon because it is Mr. So-and-So's discourse and you admire the preacher? It will be fatal to you if you treat the Word of God in that way! It must be to you what it is in truth—the Word of God—or it will not *save* you! It will never impress your soul unless you accept it as the Word of God and bow before it and desire to feel all its power as coming to you fresh from the lips of God and sent into your heart by His Holy Spirit.

We know Herod did not receive the Word as the Word of God because he was a picker and chooser in reference to it. He did not like John's discourse when he spoke of the Seventh Commandment. If John spoke of the Fourth Commandment, Herod would say, "That is admirable! The Jews ought to keep it." But when John dealt with the Seventh Commandment, Herod and Herodias would say, "We do not think preachers should allude to such subjects." I have always noticed that people who live in the practice of vice think the servants of God ought not to allude to things so coarse! We are allowed to denounce the sins of the man in the moon and the vices of savages in the middle of Africa—but as to the everyday vices of this city of London—if we put our finger upon them in God's name, then straightway someone cries, "It is indelicate to allude to these things!"

John dealt with the whole Word of God! He did not only say, "Behold the Lamb of God," but he cried, "The axe is laid to the root of the trees." He spoke plainly to the conscience. Herod, therefore, had this fatal flaw in his character that he did not attend to all that John delivered of the Word of God. He liked one part and did not like another. He resembled those who prefer a doctrinal discourse, but cannot endure the precepts of God's Word. I hear one exclaim, "I like practical discourses! I do not need any doctrine!" Don't you? There is doctrine in God's Word and you are to receive what God gives you—not half a Bible, but the whole Truth of God as it is in Jesus. That was a great fault in Herod. He did not receive the testimony of John as the Word of God.

Next, Herod did many things, but he did not do all things. He who receives the Word of God in truth does not only attempt to do many things, but he tries to do *all* that is right. He does not give up one vice, or a dozen vices, but he endeavors to forsake every false way and seeks to be delivered from every iniquity. Herod did not care for a thorough reformation, for that would call for too great a self-denial. He had one sin he wished to keep and when John spoke plainly about that, he would not listen to him. Another fault with Herod was that he was under the sway of sin. He had given himself up to Herodias. She was his own niece and had been married to his own brother and was the mother of children by his brother and yet he led her away from his brother's house that she might become *his* wife—and he cast off one who had been a good and faithful wife to him for years.

It is a mess of filthy incest one hardly likes to think of. The influence of this woman was his curse and ruin. How many men have been destroyed in that way! How many women are ruined daily in this city by coming under the vicious influence of others! My dear men and women, you will have to stand before God on your own account! Do not let anyone cast a spell over you. I pray you, escape for your life—run for it when vice hunts you! I may have been sent on purpose, at this moment, with a word for you, to stir up your conscience and awaken you to a sense of your danger. It is always perilous to be under the influence of an unconverted person, however moral he may be, but it is supremely dangerous to be under the fascination of a wicked woman or a vicious man. God help you to rise above it by His Spirit, for if you are hearers of the Word of God and doers of evil, you will end in being Herods and nothing more.

I will only allude to another point in Herod's character, that his religion, although it made him do many things, was rather one of fear than of love. It is not said that Herod feared *God*, but that he, "feared John." He did not *love* John—he "*feared* John." The whole thing was a matter of fear. He was not a lion, you see. He was a fox—fearful, timid, ready to run away from every barking cur. There are many people whose whole religion lies in fear. With some it is the fear of men—the fear of what people would say if they did not pretend to be religious—the fear of what their Christian associates would think of them if they were not reputable.

With others there is the fear that some awful judgment would come upon them. But the mainspring of the religion of Christ is love. Oh, to love the Gospel! To delight in the Truth of God! To rejoice in holiness! This is genuine conversion! The fear of death and the fear of Hell create a poor, poor faith which leaves men on Herod's level.

III. I conclude by showing you very sorrowfully WHAT BECAME OF HEROD. With all his good points he ended most wretchedly. First, he murdered the preacher whom he once respected. It was he who did it, though the executioner was the instrument. He said, "Go and fetch John the Baptist's head on a platter." So it has happened with many hopeful hearers—they have become slanderers and persecutors of the very preachers before whom they once trembled and, as far as they could, they have taken off their heads! After a time men dislike being rebuked and

they proceed in their dislike till they scoff at the things they once revered and make the name of Christ a football for their jests. Beware! I pray you, beware! For the way of sin is downhill!

Herod feared John and yet he beheaded him. A person may be evangelical and Calvinistic and so on and yet, if he is placed under certain conditions, he may become a hater and a persecutor of the Truth of God he once avowed. Herod went a step lower, however, for this Herod Antipas was the man who afterwards mocked the Savior. It is said, "Herod, with his men of war, set Him at nothing and mocked Him and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe." This is the man that "did many things" under the leading of John. His course is altered now! He spits on the Redeemer and insults the Son of God! Certain of the most outrageous blasphemers of the Gospel were originally Sunday school scholars and teachers—young men who were "almost persuaded"—but they halted and hesitated and wavered until they made the plunge and became much worse than they possibly could have become if they had not seen the light of the Truth of God.

If the devil needs raw material to make a Judas, "the son of perdition," he takes an Apostle to work upon! When he takes a thoroughly bad character like Herod, it is necessary to make him plastic as Herod had been in the hands of John. Somehow or other, border men are the worst enemies. In the old wars between England and Scotland, the borderers were the fighting men and so the border people will do more harm than any until we get them on this side of the frontier. Oh that the Grace of God may decide those who now hesitate! I must mention to you that before long Herod lost all the power he possessed. He was a foxy man and always tried to win power, but in the end he was recalled by the Roman emperor in disgrace. That was the end of Herod.

Many a man has given up Christ for honor and has lost himself as well as lost Christ. Like the man who, in the old Catholic persecuting times, was brought to prison for the faith. He said he loved the Protestant faith, but he cried, "I cannot burn." So he denied the faith and in the dead of night his house was destroyed in flames—the man who could not burn was forced to burn—but he had no comfort in *that* burning, for he had denied his Lord. If you sell Christ for a mess of pottage, it will scald your lips. It will burn within your soul like molten lead, forever, for, "the wages of sin is death." However bright the gold coins shine and however musical may be their chink, it will prove an awful curse to the man who sells his Lord to gain it!

Today the name of Herod is infamous forever. As long as there is a Christian Church, the name of Herod will be execrated. And is it not a solemn reflection that, "Herod feared John and did many things and heard him gladly"? I know that no young man here believes that he will ever turn out to be a Herod. I might, like the Prophet, say, "You will do this and do that," and you would answer, "Is your servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" But you *will* do it unless you are decided for God! An appeal like this once startled me. When I was young and tender, there was a hopeful youth who went to school with me who was held up to me as an example. He was a good boy and I used to feel no particular affec-

tion for his name because I was so perpetually chided by his goodness and I was so far removed from it.

Being younger than he, I saw him enter upon his apprenticeship, enter upon the gaities of a great city and come back dishonored. It horrified me! Might not I dishonor *my* character? And when I found that if I gave myself to Christ, He would give me a new heart and a right spirit. And when I read that promise of the Covenant, "I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me," it seemed to me like a Character Insurance Society! If I believed in Jesus Christ, my character was insured, for Christ would enable me to walk in the paths of holiness! This charmed me into desiring an interest in Christ. If you would not like to be a Herod, be a disciple of Jesus Christ! But there will be no choice for some of you. Some of you are of such powerful natures that you must either thoroughly serve Christ or serve the devil.

An old Scotsman was once looking at Rowland Hill and the good old gentleman said, "What are you looking at?" He said, "The lines of your face." "What do you think of them?" He replied, "I think that if you had not been a Christian, you would have been an awful sinner." Some people are of that sort—they are like a pendulum—they must swing one way or the other. Oh that you may swing Christ's way tonight! Cry, "Lord, help me to cleanse my way! Help me to be wholly Yours! Help me to possess the righteousness I admire, the holiness I respect! Help me not only to *do* many things, but *everything* You would have me to do! Take me, make me Yours and I will rejoice and joy in Him who helps me to be holy." God bless you, dear Friends, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

PREACHING! MAN'S PRIVILEGE AND GOD'S POWER NO. 347

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 25, 1860,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

***“For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy man and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things and heard him gladly.”
Mark 6:20.***

THE preaching of the Word has exceeding power. John commenced his ministry as an obscure individual, a man who led an almost hermit life. He begins to preach in the wilderness of Judea, but his cry is so powerful, that before he has spoken many days, multitudes wait upon his words. He continues, clothed in that shaggy garment and living on the simplest of food, still to utter the same cry of preparation for the kingdom of Heaven—Repent! Repent! Repent!

And now, not only the multitude, but the teachers, the respectable part of the community, come to listen to him. The Scribes and Pharisees sit down by Jordan's banks to listen to the Baptist's word. So powerful is his preaching that many of all ranks—publicans, sinners and soldiers—come unto him and are baptized by him in Jordan confessing their sins. Even the Scribes and Pharisees, themselves, seek Baptism at his hands. Boldly, however, he repulses them—tells them to bring forth fruits meet for repentance and warns them that their descent from Abraham does not entitle them to the blessings of the coming kingdom of the great Messiah.

His word rings from one end of Judea to the other. All men wonder what this can mean and already there begins to be a feeling in the hearts of men that Messiah is at hand. Herod, himself, hears of John and now you behold the spectacle of a cruel and unrighteous king sitting humbly to listen to this stern reformer. The Baptist changes not his preaching. The same boldness which had made him rebuke the common people and their teachers, now leads him to defy the wrath of Herod himself. He touches him in his most tender place, strikes his favorite sin, dashes down his idle lust to the ground, counts it his business not to speak the Truth of God in generals but in particulars. Yes, he tells him to his very face, “It is not lawful for you to take to yourself your brother's wife.”

Oh, what a power there is in the Word of God! I do not find that the Pharynx with all their learning had moved Herod. I discover not that the most mighty of the Grecian philosophers, or of the Gnostics who were then in existence, had any power to reach the heart of Herod. But the simple, plain preaching of John, his declaration of the Word with all honesty and simplicity, had power to pin Herod by the ear, to vibrate in his heart and to awaken his conscience—for sure we are it was awakened.

If the awakening did not end in his conversion, at any rate it made him troubled in his sins so that he could not go on peaceably in iniquity. Ah, my dear Friends, we want nothing in these times for revival in the world but the simple preaching of the Gospel. This is the great battering ram

that shall dash down the bulwarks of iniquity. This is the great light that shall scatter the darkness. We need not that men should be adopting new schemes and new plans. We are glad of the agencies and assistances which are continually arising. But after all, the true Jerusalem blade, the sword that can cut to the piercing asunder of the joints and marrow, is preaching the Word of God.

We must never neglect it, never despise it. The age in which the pulpit is despised, will be an age in which Gospel Truth will cease to be honored. Once put away God's ministers and you have to a great extent taken the candle out of the candlestick—quenched the lamps that God has appointed in the sanctuary. Our missionary societies need continually to be reminded of this—they get so busy with translations, so diligently employed with the different operations of civilization, with the founding of stores, with the encouragement of commerce among a people, that they seem to neglect—at least in some degree—that which is the great and master weapon—the *minister*—the foolishness of preaching by which it pleases God to save them that believe.

Preaching the Gospel will effectually civilize, while introducing the arts of civilization will sometimes fail. Preaching the Gospel will lift up the barbarian, while attempts to do it by philosophy will be found ineffectual. We must go among them and tell them of Christ. We must point them to Heaven. We must lead them to the Cross. Then shall they be elevated in their character and raised in their condition—but by no other means. God forbid that we should begin to depreciate preaching. Let us still honor it. Let us look to it as God's ordained instrumentality and we shall yet see in the world a repetition of great wonders worked by the preaching in the name of Jesus Christ.

Today I shall want your attention to a subject which concerns us all, but more especially those who, being hearers of the Word, are hearers only and not *doers* of the same. I shall first attempt to show the blessedness of hearing the Word of God. Secondly, the responsibilities of the hearer. And then, thirdly, those accompaniments which are necessary to go with the hearing of the Word of God, to make it effectual to save the soul.

I. First of all, my dear Friends, let us speak a little about THE BLESSEDNESS OF HEARING THE WORD.

The Prophet constantly asserts, "Blessed are the ears which hear the things that we hear. And blessed are the eyes which see the things which we see." Prophets and kings desired it long, but died without the sight. Often do the Seers of old use language similar to this, "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound, they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Your countenance." Godly men accept it as an omen of happy times when their eyes should see their teachers.

The angels sang the blessedness of it when they descended from on high, singing, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men. Behold, we bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto you and to all people." The angels' song is in harmony with the Seers' testimony. Both conjoin to prove what I assert—that we are blessed in having the privilege of listening to God's Word.

Let us enlarge upon this point. If we reflect upon what the preaching of the Word is, we shall soon see that we are highly privileged in enjoying it.

The preaching of the Word is the scattering of the seed. The hearers are the ground on which the good seed falls. Those who hear not the Word are as the arid desert, which has never seen a handful of the good corn. Or as the unplowed waves of the sea which have never been gladdened with the prospect of a harvest. But when the sower goes forth to sow seed, he scatters it broadcast upon you that hear and there is to you the hope that in you the good seed shall take root and bring forth fruit a hundred fold.

True, some of you may be but wayside hearers and evil birds may soon devour the seed. At least it does fall upon you—nor is it the fault of the seed—but of the ground, if that seed does not grow. True, you may be as stony-ground hearers, who for awhile receive the Word and rejoice therein, but having no root in yourselves, the seed may wither away. That again, I say, does not diminish your privilege, though it increases your guilt, inasmuch as it is no fault of the seed nor of the sun, but the fault of the stony ground, if the fruit is not nourished unto perfection. And you, inasmuch as you are the field, the broad acres upon which the Gospel husbandman scatters the precious grain, you enjoy the privilege which is denied to heathens and idolaters.

Again, the kingdom of Heaven is likened unto a net which is cast into the sea and which gathers fish different kinds. Now you represent the fish of the sea and it is happy, indeed, for you that you are where the net is thrown, for there is at least the hope that you may be entangled in its meshes and may be drawn out of the sea of sin and gathered into the vessels of salvation. If you were far, far away, where the net is never cast, there would be no hope of your being caught therein. But here you are gathered round the fisherman's humble boat and as he casts his net into the sea, he hopes that some of you may be caught therein—and assuredly gracious is your privilege! But if you are not caught, it shall not be the fault of the net, but the fault of your own willfulness, which shall make you fly from it, lest you be graciously taken therein.

Moreover, the preaching of the Gospel is very much in this day like the mission of Christ upon earth. When Christ was on earth He went about walking through the midst of the sick—and they laid them in their beds by the wayside, so that as Jesus passed by, they might touch the hem of His garment and be made whole. You, today, when you hear the Word, are like the sick in their beds where Jesus passes by. You are like blind Bartimaeus sitting by the wayside begging, in the very road along which the Son of David journeys. Lo, a multitude have come to listen to Him. He is present wherever His Truth is preached—"Lo, I am with you always, even to the ends of the world." You are not like sick men in their chambers, or sick men far away in Tyre and Sidon, but you are like the men who lay at Bethesda's pool under the five porches, waiting for the moving of the water. Angel of God, move the waters this day! Or rather, O Jesus, give grace to the impotent man that he may now step in.

Yet further, we may illustrate the privilege of those who hear the Word by the fact that the Word of God is the bread of Heaven. I can only compare this great number of people gathered here today to the sight which was seen upon the mountain in the days of Jesus. They were hungry and the disciples would have sent them away. But Jesus bade them sit down in ranks upon the grass, as you are sitting down in rows here and there were but a few barley loaves and five small fishes—fit type

and representation of the minister's own poverty of words and thoughts! But Jesus blessed the bread and blessed the fishes and broke them. And they were multiplied and they did all eat and were filled.

So you are as these men. God give you grace to eat. There is not given to you a stone instead of bread, nor a scorpion instead of an egg. But Christ Jesus shall be fully and freely preached to you. May you have appetites to long for the Word, faith to partake of the Word and may it be to you the Bread of Life sent down from Heaven.

Yet often in Scripture we find the Word of God compared to a light. "The people that sat in darkness saw a great light." "Unto them that dwell in darkness and in the valley of the shadow of death and in great light arisen." Those who hear not the Word are men that grope their way not only in a fog, but in a thick Egyptian darkness that may be felt. Before your eyes today is held up the flaming torch of God's Word, to show you your path through the thick darkness. No, today there is not only a torch, but in the preaching of the Word the Sun of Righteousness Himself arises with healing beneath His wings.

You are not they that grope for the wall like blind men. You are not as they who are obliged to say, "We see not the path to Heaven. We know not the way to God. We fear we shall never be reconciled to Christ." Behold, the light of Heaven shines upon you now, and if you perish, you must perish willfully. If you sink into Hell, it will be with the path to Heaven shining before you. If damned, it will not be because you do not know the way of salvation, but because you willfully and wickedly put it from you and choose for yourselves the path of death. It must even be, then, a privilege to listen to the Word, if the Word is as a light and as bread and as healing—as a Gospel net and as Divine seed.

Once more let me remind you, there is yet a greater privilege connected with the Word of God than this—for all this were nothing without the last. As I look upon a multitude of unconverted men and women, I am reminded of Ezekiel's vision. He saw lying in the valley of Hinnom multitudes of bones, the flesh of which had been consumed by fire and the bones themselves were dried as in a furnace, scattered here and there. There with other bones in other morgues, lying scattered at the mouths of other graves. But Ezekiel was not sent to them. To the valley of Hinnom was he sent and there, alone.

And he stood by faith and began to practice the foolishness of preaching—"You dry bones hear the Word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord, you dry bones, live." And as he spoke there was a rustling, each bone sought its fellow. And as he spoke again, these bones united and stood erect. As he continued his discourse the flesh clothed the skeleton. When he concluded by crying, "Come forth the winds and breathe upon these slain, that they may live," they stood upon their feet an exceeding great army. The preached Word is like Ezekiel's prophecy—life goes forth with the Word of the faithful minister. When we say, "Repent!" We know that sinners cannot repent of themselves, but God's grace sweetly constrains them to repent.

When we bid them believe, it is not because of any natural capacity for faith that lies within them, but because the command, "Believe and live," when given by the faithful minister of God, has in it a quickening power. As much as when Peter and John said to the man with the withered hand,

“In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, stretch out your hand,” and it was done. So do we say to the dead in sin—“Sinner, live. Repent and be converted. Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of the Lord Jesus.” Owned of God the Spirit, it becomes a quickening cry and you are made to live.

Blessed are the dry bones that lay in a valley where Ezekiel prophesies. And blessed are you that are found where Jesus Christ's name is preached—where His power is invoked by a heart which believes in its energy—where His Truth is preached to you by one, who in spite of many mistakes, knows this one thing—that Christ is both the power of God and the wisdom of God unto everyone that believes. This consideration alone, then—the peculiar power of the Word of God—might compel us to say, “That indeed, there is a blessedness in hearing it.”

But, my dear Friends, let us look at it in another light. Let us appeal to those who have heard the Word and have received good in their own souls by it. Brothers and Sisters, I speak to hundreds of you who know in your own soul what the Word of God is. Let me ask you—you who have been converted from a thousand crimes—you who have been picked from the dunghill and made to sit among the princely children of God—let me ask you what you think of the preaching of the Word. Why, there are hundreds of you men and women, who if this were the proper time and occasion, would rise from your seat and say, “I bless God that ever I listened to the preached Word. I was a stranger to all Truth of God, but I was enticed to come and listen and God met with me.”

Some of you can look back to the first Sunday on which you ever entered a place of worship for twenty years and that place was this very hall. Here you came an unaccustomed worshipper to tread God's hallowed floor. You stood and knew not where you were. You wondered what the service of God's House could be. But you have reason to remember that Sabbath and you will have reason to remember it to all eternity. Oh, that day! It broke your bonds and set you free! By His grace that day aroused your conscience and made you feel your need of Christ! That day was a blessed turning point in your history, in which you were led to escape from Hell, turn your back on sin and fly for refuge to Christ Jesus!

Since that day, let me ask you, what has the Word of God been to you? Has it not been constantly a quickening Word? You have grown dull and careless during the week. Has not the Sabbath sermon stirred you up afresh? You have sometimes all but lost your hope and has not the hearing of the Word revived you? Why, I know that some of you have come up to the House of God as hungry men would come to a place where bread was distributed—you come to the House of God with a light and happy step—as thirsty men would come to a flowing well.

You rejoice when the day comes round—you only wish there were seven Sabbaths a week, that you might always be listening to God's Word. You can say with Dr. Watts, “Father, my soul would still abide within Your temple, near Your side and if my feet must hence depart, still keep Your dwelling in my heart.” Personally I have to bless God for many good books. I thank God for Dr. Doddridge's *Rise and Progress of Religion*. I thank God for Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted*. For Alleyne's *Alarm to Sinners*. I bless God for James's *Anxious Inquirer*.

But my gratitude most of all is due to God, not for books, but for the Living Word—and that, too, addressed to me by a poor uneducated man. A man who had never received any training for the ministry and probably will never be heard of in this life—a man engaged in business, no doubt, of a menial kind during the week, but who had just enough of grace to say on the Sabbath, “Look unto Me and be you saved all you ends of the earth.” The books were good, but the man was better. The revealed Word awakened me, it was the Living Word saved me. I must ever attach peculiar value to the hearing of the Truth of God, for by it I received the joy and peace in which my soul delights.

But further, my dear Hears, the value of the Word preached and heard may be estimated by the opinions which the lost have of it now. Harken to one man, it is not a dream nor a picture of my imagination which I now present to you, it is one of Jesus Christ's own graphic descriptions. There lies a man in Hell who has heard Moses and the Prophets. His time is passed, he can hear them no more. But so great is the value he attaches to the preached Word, that he says, “Father Abraham, send Lazarus, for I have five brothers, let him testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.”

He felt that if Lazarus could speak—speak personally his own personal testimony to the Truth, that perhaps they might be saved. Oh, what would the damned in Hell give for a sermon—could they but listen once more to the Church bell and go up to the sanctuary! Ah, my Brethren, they would consent, if it were possible, to bear ten thousand years of Hell's torments, if they might but once more have the Word preached to them! Ah, if I had a congregation such as that would be—of men who have tasted the wrath of God—of men who know what an awful thing it is to fall into the hands of an angry God—oh, how would they lean forward to catch every word!

With what deep attention would they all regard the preacher, each one saying, “Is there a hope for me? May I not escape from the place of doom? Good God! May this fire not be quenched and I be plucked as a brand from the burning?” Value then, I pray you, the privilege while you have it. We are always foolish and we never value mercy till we lose it. But I do bid you cast not aside this privilege while it is called today—a privilege that which, once lost, will seem to us to be priceless beyond all conception—estimated then at its true worth, invaluable and precious beyond a miser's dream.

Let me again ask you to value it in a brighter light—by the estimation of the saints before the Throne. You glorified ones, what do you think of the preaching of the Word? Listen to them! Will they not sing it forth—“Faith came to us by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. It was by it that we were led to confess our sins. By it we were led to wash our robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb.” I am sure they, before the Throne, think not lightly of God's ministers. They would not speak with cold language of the Truth of the Gospel which is preached in your ears.

No, in their eternal hallelujahs they bless the Lord who sent the Gospel to them, as they sing—“Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood, unto Him be glory forever and ever.” Value, then, the preaching of the Word and count yourselves happy that you are allowed to listen to it.

II. My second head deals more closely with the text and I hope it will likewise appeal more closely to our consciences—THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE HEARER OF THE WORD.

Herod, you will perceive, went as far as very many of us, perhaps farther than some, and yet was lost. Our responsibilities concerning the Word do not end with hearing it. Herod heard it, but hearing is not enough. You may sit for fifty years in the sanctuary of God hearing the Gospel and be rather the worse than the better for all you have heard—if it ends only in hearing. It is not the Word entering into one ear and coming forth out of the other ear which converts the soul. It is the echoing of the Word down into the very heart and the abiding of the Truth of God in the conscience. I know there are very many who think they have fulfilled all their religion when they go to their Church or Chapel.

Let us not deceive you in this thing. Your Church-going and your Chapel-going, though they give you great privileges, yet involve the most solemn responsibilities. Instead of being in themselves saving, they may be damning to you unless you avail yourselves of the privileges presented to you by them. I doubt not that Hell is crammed with Church and Chapel-goers. I doubt not there are whole wards in that infernal prison that are filled with men who heard the Word. But they stopped there. They sat in their pews, but never fled to Christ. They listened to the call, but did not obey it.

“Yes,” says one, “but I do more than simply hear the Word, I choose the most earnest preacher I can find.” So did Herod and yet he perished. He was not a hearer of a man with a soft tongue, for John did not speak as one clothed in fine raiment. John was not a reed shaken with the wind—he was a Prophet, yes, I say unto you and more than a Prophet—faithful in all his house, a servant of his God. There was never a more honest and faithful preacher than John.

And you, too, may with care have selected the most excellent minister, not for his eloquence, but for his earnestness. Not for his talent, but for his power of faith and you may listen to him and that, too, with attention and, after all, may be a cast away. The responsibilities involved in listening to such a man may be so weighty that like a millstone about your neck, they may help to sink you lower than the lowest Hell. Take heed to yourselves, that you rest not in the *outward* Word, however fitly spoken, or however attentively heard.

Reach forward to something deeper and better. “Yes,” says another, “but I do not only hear the most earnest preacher, but I go out of my way to hear him. I have left my parish Church, for instance, and I come walking five or six miles—I am willing to walk ten, or even twenty, if I can but hear a sermon—and I am not ashamed to mingle with the poor. I may have rank and position in life, but I am not ashamed to listen to the earnest preacher, though he should belong to the most despised of sects.”

Yes, and Herod did the same. Herod was a king and yet listened to the peasant-Prophet. Herod is clothed in purple and yet listens to the Baptist in his shaggy garment. While Herod fared sumptuously every day, he who ate locusts and wild honey reproves him boldly to his face. And with all this, Herod was not saved. So, Sirs, you may walk many a mile to listen to the Truth and that, year after year, but unless you go further than that—unless you obey the Word, unless it sinks deep into your inmost soul, you

shall perish still—perish under the sound of the Word—the very Word of God becoming a death-knell to your soul, dreadfully tolling you down to deep destruction.

But I hear another object. “I, Sir, not only take the trouble to hear, but I hear very gladly. I am delighted when I listen. I am not a captious, critical hearer, but I feel a pleasure in listening to God’s Word. Is not that a blessed sign? Do you not think that I must be saved, if I rejoice to hear that good sound?” No, my Friend, no. It is a hopeful sign, but it is a very uncertain one, for is it not written in our text, that Herod heard the Word gladly?

The smile might be on his face, or the tear in his eye while the Baptist denounced sin. There was a something in his conscience which made him feel glad that there was one honest man alive—in that time of enormous corruption there was one fearless soul that dared with unblanched cheek, to correct sin in high places. He was like Henry the Eighth, who when Hugh Latimer presented him on New Year’s day with a napkin, on which was embroidered the words, “Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge”—instead of casting the preacher into prison, he said he was glad there was one man who dared to tell him! And he stood up for him and defended him—but he was as bad a man as there was living.

Oh Sirs! I am glad you listen to me. I do hope that the hammer may yet break your hearts but I do bid you, give up your sins. Oh, for your own soul’s sake, do not abide in your transgressions, for I warn you, if I have spoken faithfully to you, you cannot sin so cheaply as other men. I have never prosed away to you. I have never been too polite to warn you of perdition, I speak to you in rough and earnest terms—I may claim that credit without egotism.

If you perish, Sirs, it will little help you that you stood up in my defense. It will little serve you that you tried to screen the minister from slander and from calumny. I would have you think of *yourselves*, even though you thought less of me and my reputation. I would have you love yourselves and so escape from Hell and fly to Heaven while yet the gate of mercy stands open and the hour of mercy is not passed forever. Think not, I say, that hearing the Word gladly is enough. You may do so and yet be lost.

But more than that. “Ah,” says one, “you have just anticipated what I was about to say. I not only listen gladly, but I respect the preacher. I would not hear a man say a word against him.” It was so with Herod. “He observed John,” it is said, “and he accounted him a just man and an holy man.” But though he honored the preacher, he was lost himself. Ah, what multitudes go to our fashionable places of worship and as they come out they say to one another, “What a noble sermon!” And then they go to their houses and sit down and say, “What a fine turn he gave to that period! What a rich thought that was! What a sparkling metaphor!”

And is it for this that we preach to you? Is your applause the breath of our nostrils? Do you think that God’s ministers are sent into the world to tickle your ears and be unto you as one that plays a merry tune on a goodly instrument? God knows I would sooner break stones on the road than be a preacher for oratory’s sake. I would never stand here to play the hypocrite. No, it is your *hearts* we want, not your admiration. It is your espousal to *Christ* and not your love to *us*. Oh, that we could break your

hearts and awake your consciences, we would not mind what other results should follow. We should feel that we were accepted of God, if we were but filled with power to be God's servants in the hearts and thoughts of men. No, think not that to honor the preacher is enough. You may perish praising the minister in your dying moments.

Yet further. Someone may say, "I feel I am a better man through hearing the minister and is not that a good sign?" Yes, it is a good sign, but it is not a sure one for all that. For Herod they said did many things. Look at the text. It is expressly said there, "He observed him and when he heard him, he did many things." I should not wonder after that, that Herod became somewhat more merciful in his government, somewhat less exacting, a little more outwardly moral. And though he continued in his lasciviousness, yet he tried to cover it up with respectable excuses. "He did many things." That was doing a very long way, but Herod was Herod still.

And you Sirs, it may be, have been led to give up drunkenness through the preaching of the Word—to shut up the shop that used to be opened on a Sunday. You cannot now swear. You would not now cheat. It is good, it is very good. But it is not enough. All this there may be, but yet the root of the matter may not be in you. To honor the Sabbath outwardly will not save you, unless you enter into the rest which remains for the people of God. Merely to close the shop is not enough. The heart itself must be shut up against the love of sin.

To cease blasphemy is not sufficient, though it is good, but there may be blasphemy in the heart, when there is none upon the tongue. "Except you be converted and become as little children you shall in nowise enter the kingdom of Heaven." For, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." The Lord grant that you may not rest with outward cleansing, with moral purification, but strike deeper into the root and soul and marrow of these blessings—the change of your heart, the bringing of your soul into union with Christ.

One thing I must also remark about Herod, with the Greek text in view. "He did many things," will allow me to infer that he felt many doubts. As a good old commentator says, "John smote him so hard that he could not help feeling it. He gave him such home blows that he could not but be bruised every now and then and yet, though his conscience was smitten, his heart was never renewed."

It is a pleasant sight to see men weep under the Word—to mark them tremble. But then we remember Felix. Felix trembled. But he said, "Go your way for this time. When I have a more convenient season I will send for you." Happy the minister who hears the people say, "Almost you persuaded us to be Christians." But then, we remember Agrippa—we remember how he returns to his sins and seeks not the Savior. We are glad if your consciences are awakened, we rejoice if you are made to doubt and question yourselves, but we mourn because your doubts are so transient, because your goodness is as the morning cloud and as the early dew.

I have tracked some of you to your houses. I have known of some, who after a solemn sermon, when they got home could scarcely eat their meal. They sit down, leaning their head on their hands. The wife is glad to think that her husband is in a hopeful state. He rises from his seat. He goes

upstairs. He walks about the house—he says he is miserable. At last he comes down and sets his teeth together and says “Well, if I am to be damned I shall be damned. If I am to be saved I shall be saved and there’s an end of it.”

Then he rouses himself, saying, “I cannot go to hear that man again—he is too hard with me. I must either give up my sins, or give up listening to the Word. The two things will not exist together.” Happy, I say, are we to see that man troubled. But our *unhappiness* is so much the greater when we see him shaking it off—the dog returning to his vomit and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. O God, save us from this, let us never be men who spring up fairly, but wither away suddenly and disappoint all hope. O God, let us not be as Balaam, who prayed that his last end might be with the righteous, but returned to defy Israel, to provoke the Lord God and to perish in the midst of his iniquity.

And now I hear many of you say, “Well if all these things are not enough, what *is it* that is expected of the hearer of the Word?” Spirit of God! Help us so to speak that the Word may come home to all! Believer in Christ, if you would hear the Word to profit, you must hear it *obediently*. You must hear it as James and John did, when the Master said, “Follow me,” and they left their nets and their boats and them followed Him. You must *do* the Word as well as hear it, yielding up your hearts to its sway, being willing to walk in the road which it maps, to follow the path which it lays before you.

Hearing it obediently, you must also hear it *personally* for yourselves, not for others, but for yourselves, alone. You must be as Zaccheus, who was in the sycamore tree and the Master said, “Zaccheus, make haste and come down, today I must abide in your house.” The Word will never bless you till it comes home directly to yourself. You must be as Mary, who when the Master spoke to her she did not know His voice, till He said unto her, “Mary!” And she said, “Rabboni.” There must be an *individual* hearing of the Truth and a reception of it for yourself in your own heart.

Then, too, you must hear the Truth *penitently*. You must be as that Mary, who when she listened to the Word, must needs go and wash the feet of Jesus with her tears and wipe them with the hairs of her head. There must be tears for your many sins, a true confession of your guilt before God. But above all you must hear it *believingly*. The Word must not be unto you as mere sound, but as a matter of *fact*. You must be as Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened. Or as the trembling jailer, who believed on the Lord Jesus with all his house and was baptized forthwith.

You must be as the thief, who could pray, “Lord, remember me,” and who could believe the precious promise given, “Today shall you be with Me in Paradise.” God give us grace so to listen, and then shall our responsibilities under the Word be cleared up. Then, by Your grace we will receive the power of the Word into our consciences with demonstration of the Holy Spirit and fruits agreeable to our profession.

III. Now to conclude. I want your serious attention to THE NEEDFUL ACCOMPANIMENTS OF HEARING THE WORD.

There are many men who get blessed by the Word through God's Sovereign Grace without any of the accompaniments of which I am now about to speak. We have, connected with us, as a Church, a Brother in

Christ, who came into this place of worship with his gin bottle in his pocket one night. A chance hit of mine—as some would have thought it—when I pointed to the man and told him of it, not knowing why. But that the feeling that I was moved to do it, was the man's first awakening. That man came without any preparation and God blessed the Word.

Numerous have been the instances which those who have not proved them deem utterly incredible—in which persons have absolutely come to me after a sermon and begged me not to tell anybody about them—being firmly persuaded from what I said that I knew their private history. Whereas I knew no more about them than a stranger in the market. But the Word of God will find men out. Preach the Gospel and it will always find the man out and tell him all his secrets, carrying the lamp of the Lord into the hidden recesses of the heart.

But to you as a mass I speak this. If you will be blessed under the Word—would that you would pray before you come here. You sometimes hear of preparation for the Lord's Supper—I am sure if the Word is to be blessed, there ought to be a preparation for hearing it. Do you, when you come up to this house, pray to God before you come, "Lord, give the minister words. Help him to speak to me today. Lord, save me today. May the Word today be a quickening word to my poor soul"? Ah, my Friends, you would never go without the blessing, if you come up prayerfully looking for it, having asked it of God.

Then after prayer, if you would be blessed under the Word, there should be an *expectation* of being blessed. It is wonderful the differences between the same sermon preached in different places and I do not doubt that the same words uttered by different men would have different effects. With some men the hearers *expect* they will say something worth hearing. They listen and the man does say something worth hearing. Another man might say just the same—nobody receives it as other than common-place. Now if you can come up to the House of God *expecting* that there will be something for you, you will have it.

We always get what we ask for. If we come up to find fault, there always will be faults to find. If we come up to get good, good will be gotten. God will send no man away empty. He shall have what he came for. If he came merely for curiosity, he shall have his curiosity gratified. If he came for good, he shall not be disappointed. We may be disappointed at man's door—we never will be at God's. Man may send us away empty, but God never will.

Then while listening to the Word with expectation it will naturally come to pass that you will listen with deep attention. A young boy who had been awakened to a sense of sin, was remarked to be exceedingly attentive to sermons and when asked why it was, he said, "Because I do not know which part of the sermon may be blessed to me. But I know that whichever it is, the devil will do his utmost to take my attention off it for fear I should be blessed." So he would listen to the whole of it, lest by any means the Word of Life should he let slip.

So you do the same, and you will certainly be in the way of being blessed by the Word. Next to that, all through the sermon be appropriating it, saying to yourselves, "Does that belong to me?" If it is a promise, say, "Is that mine?" If it is a threat, do not cover yourselves with the shield of hard-heartedness, but say, "If that threat belongs to me, let it

have its full force on me." Sit under the sermon with your heart open to the Word. Be ready to let the arrows come in.

Above all, this will be of no avail unless you hear with *faith*. Now faith comes by hearing. There must be faith mingled with the hearing. But you say, "What is faith? Is faith to believe that Christ died for me?" No, it is not. The Arminian says that faith is to believe that Christ died for you. He teaches in the first place that Christ died for *everybody*, therefore, he says, He died for *you*. They say, of course, He died for everybody, and if He died for everybody He must have died for you. That is not faith at all. I hold, on the other hand, that Christ died for Believers, that He died for no man that will be lost, that all He died for will be saved, that His intention cannot be frustrated in any man. That if He died to save any man, that man will be saved.

Your question today is not whether Christ died for you or not, but it is this—the Scripture says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." And what is it to believe? To believe is to trust—it is the same word—though believe is not so plain a word as trust. To trust Christ is to believe. I feel I cannot save myself, that all my doings and feelings cannot save me. I trust Christ to save me. That is faith. And the moment I trust Christ, I then know that Christ died for me, for they who trust Him, He has surely died to save, so surely died to save them that He will save them, so finished His work that He will never lose them, according to His own Word—"give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand."

"But may I trust Him?" says one. May?! You are *commanded* to do it. "But I dare not." What? Dare not do what God bids you! Rather say—"I dare not live without Christ, I dare not disobey." God has said—"This is the commandment, that you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ whom He has sent." This is the great commandment which is sent to you. Today trust Christ and you are saved. Disobey that command and do what you will, you are damned.

Go home to your chamber and say unto God, "I desire to believe what I have heard. I desire to trust my immortal soul in Jesus' hands. Give me genuine faith—give me a real trust. Save me now and save me hereafter." I dare declare it—I never can believe that any man so hearing the Word can by any possibility perish. Hear it, receive it, pray over it and trust Christ through it, and if you are lost, there can be none saved. If this foundation gives way, another can never be laid. If you fall, we all fall together. If trusting in Christ you can perish, all God's Prophets and martyrs and confessors and ministers, perish too. You cannot. He will never fail you. Trust Him now.

Spirit of God! Incline the hearts of men to trust Christ. Enable them now to overcome their pride and their timidity and may they trust the Savior now and they are saved forever, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

END OF VOLUME SIX

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GOOD CHEER FROM CHRIST'S REAL PRESENCE NO. 3128

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 21, 1909.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“Immediately He constrained His disciples to get into the boat, and to go before Him to the other side to Bethsaida, while He sent away the people. And when He had sent them away, He departed into a mountain to pray. And when evening was come, the boat was in the midst of the sea, and He alone on the land. And He saw them toiling in rowing, for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them. But when they saw Him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out: for they all saw Him, and were troubled. And immediately He talked with them, and said unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I, be not afraid. And He went up unto them into the boat, and the wind ceased: and they were sorely amazed among themselves beyond measure, and wondered. For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their hearts were hardened.”
Mark 6:45-52.

WE have here a word of comfort given to a shipload of Believers *who were where their Lord had sent them*. They had been unwilling to put out to sea, though it was probably calm enough at the time, but they did not wish to leave the Lord Jesus. He constrained them to go and thus their sailing was not merely under His sanction, but by His express command. They were in their right place and yet they met with a terrible storm. The little inland sea upon which they sailed lies in a deep hollow and from the shore there pours a sudden downdraft of tremendous wind for which it is not possible to be prepared. By one of these whirlwinds the whole sea was stirred up to boiling, as only those little lakes can be. So, though they were where Jesus bade them go, they were in desperate peril, and you, dear Friends, must not think that you are in a wrong position because you are in trouble. Do not consider that adverse circumstances are a proof that you have missed your road, for they may even be an evidence that you are in the good old way since the path of Believers is seldom without trial. You did well to embark and to leave the shore, but remember, though your Lord has insured the vessel and guaranteed that you shall reach your haven, He has not promised that you shall sail over a sea of glass. On the contrary, He has told you that “in the world you shall have tribulation”—and you may all the more confidently believe in Him because you find His warning to be true!

Their Lord had bid His disciples make for the other side and, therefore, they did their best and continued rowing all night, but making no progress whatever because the wind was dead against them. It was with difficulty that they could keep what little way they had made and not be blown back again to the starting place. Probably you have heard it said that if a Christian does not go forward, he goes backward—that is not altogether true, for there are times of spiritual trial when if a man does not go backward, he is really going forward. “Stand fast” is a precept, which, when well kept, may involve as much virtue as, “press forward.” A master of a steam vessel will put on all steam and drive right into the teeth of a hurricane and remain perfectly satisfied if the good boat can only keep from being driven on shore. The Apostolic crew rowed, and rowed, and rowed—and it was no fault of theirs that they made no progress, “for the wind was contrary unto them.” The Christian may make little or no headway and yet it may be no fault of his, for the wind is contrary. Our good Lord will take the will for the deed and reckon our progress, not by our apparent advance, but by the hearty intent with which we tug at the oars!

Often, when a Believer groans in prayer and cannot pray, he has offered the best prayer. And when he tries to win men's hearts and does not win them, his zeal is as acceptable as if it convinced a nation—and when he would do good and finds evil present with him—there is good in the desire. If he threw up the oars and drifted with the wind, that would be another thing, but if our Lord sees him, “toiling in rowing,” albeit no progress is made, He has never a word to say against His servant, but He will bid him, “be of good cheer.”

It does not appear, from the narrative, that the disciples had any fear about the storm except such as might naturally arise even in the minds of fishermen when they were dreadfully tossed upon the sea. They probably said to one another, “Did not our Master constrain us to set forth on this voyage? Though we met with this storm, we are not to be blamed.” Certain Believers who have lately been brought to know the Lord, have been great losers in temporal things by becoming Christians. What then? Let them not be terrified by this fact—even Christ's boat is tossed with tempest. Let them row on against the wind and even if the storm increases in fury, let them not lose heart. One who knew the seas right well exclaimed, “Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him.” And in so doing he glorified God and before long found himself in a great calm. Does Jesus bid us make for the shore? Then let us row on, even if we cannot make headway, for Jesus knows all about it and orders all things well.

Why, then, did our Savior, when He came to this shipload of Apostles who had been toiling and rowing, say to them, “Be of good cheer”? They were bold, brave men, and were not at all afraid of the sea. What, then, did they fear? He would not have so spoken unless they had been afraid of *something*—and on looking at the text, we see, to our astonishment, that *they were afraid of Jesus Himself*. They were not afraid of wind and storms and waves and tempests, but they were afraid of their best Friend! That is the point which He aimed at by saying, “Be of good cheer: it is I, be not afraid.” We will first think over *the cause of their fear*. Then

secondly, we will meditate upon *the method by which Jesus cheered them*. And thirdly, we will reflect upon *the times when we shall need just such a good word as this*.

I. First, then, dear Friends, consider with me THE CAUSE OF THEIR FEAR.

If we had not sailed over the same lake—I mean if we had not suffered the same experience—it might have surprised us that they were afraid of their Lord. He was appearing for them and coming to their rescue. He was about to still the tempest for them, yet they were afraid of *Him*—of Him whom they loved and trusted. So blind were their eyes, so hardened were their hearts, that they were afraid of their Lord and afraid of Him when He was giving them the best reasons for trusting Him. Before their eyes He was displaying Himself as Lord over All—Master of wind and wave—and yet they were afraid of Him. The greatness of His power would have comforted them had they understood the Truth—but they did not consider the miracle of the loaves and, therefore, they were in a state of perplexity and were sorely afraid.

Meanwhile Jesus was acting in great gentleness to them. He was displaying His power, but it was not in a dazzling and overwhelming manner. Admire the sacred gentleness which made Him move as though He would have passed by them. If He had suddenly appeared in brilliant light in the middle of the boat, He might well have astounded them and driven them to fright. If, in a moment, He had shone forth just at the stern, or alighted from the heavens upon the deck, they would have been petrified with alarm! But He began by showing Himself on the crest of the billow—and one cried to his fellow, “Do you see that strange light yonder?” They watch and Jesus comes nearer! They can discern a figure. They can see a man step from wave to wave with majestic tread. In tenderness He will not flash upon them all at once. As when the morning breaks by slow increase of light, so Jesus came to His timid followers. Even then He moved as though He would pass by them, that they might not be alarmed by His appearing to bear down upon them as an adversary. Even thus He manifests Himself to us in the riches of His Grace in all wisdom and prudence!

The fears of the trembling crew were sufficiently aroused by even seeing Him at a distance—they were so afraid that they cried out thinking that they saw a ghost. What would they have done had He not, in gentleness to their weakness, manifested Himself gradually to them and set Himself in a sidelight? Take what way the Master might, His disciples were still afraid—and we are not much wiser nor much more courageous than they were. The manifestation of the Christ of God to us in all His Glory will have to be by degrees as long as we are in this body and, perhaps even in Heaven. It may not be at the very first that we shall be able to endure the fullness of its joy. Even there He may have to lead us to fountains of water which at the first we did not discover and guide us into more and more of that superlative knowledge which will utterly eclipse all acquaintance that we have of Him now, as the sunlight puts out the stars!

To return to our subject. The disciples were afraid of Jesus when He was revealing His power to help them, afraid of Him when He was acting in the gentlest possible manner toward them and treating them as a nurse does her child. Ah me, that we should be afraid of Jesus!

The Lord, after all, was doing nothing more than they knew He could do. Twenty-four hours had not passed since they had seen Him perform a work of creation, for He had taken bread and fish and multiplied them so as to make a feast for five thousand men, besides the women and children, and to leave far more, when all had eaten, than had been in store when first the loaves and fishes had been counted! After this miracle, they ought not to have been surprised that He could traverse the sea! To walk on the waters is to suspend a law, but to make loaves and fishes is to exercise the supreme power of Creation which must forever remain with God, Himself! Knowing this, they ought not to have been astonished—not so soon, at any rate. The memory of that feast ought not to have vanished quite so quickly from their most forgetful minds. Yet when they saw Him, only doing what they knew He could do, only doing something not a jot more difficult than He was accustomed to do—they cried out for fear!

Was it not because *they dreaded contact with the spiritual, the mysterious and the supernatural?* Although we are now talking about them and, perhaps, half saying in our minds, “If we had been there, we would not have been afraid of Jesus and have cried out,” we do not know what we say—it takes very little of the supernatural to make a man's flesh creep, let the man be who he may. When Belshazzar saw the handwriting upon the wall, he trembled most because of the mystery involved in a moving hand with which no visible body was connected. The unseen is the birthplace of fear. Imagination exaggerates and conscience whispers that some great ill will befall us. We are nearing the confines of the mysterious world where God and spirits dwell and, therefore, we tremble. Yet, Beloved, the spirit-world is the last thing which Christians should tremble at, for there can be nothing in the supernatural world which we have cause to dread! If there is such a thing as a ghost walking the earth, I, for one, would like to meet it—either at dead of night or noon of day!

I have not the least particle of faith in rambling spirits. Those who are in Heaven will not care to be wandering in these foggy regions! And those in Hell cannot leave their dread abode. From where, then, shall they come? Are they devils? Even so—and what then? A devil is no new personage. We have fought with devils full often and are prepared to resist them, again, and make them flee! The Lord will tread Satan, who is the master of evil spirits, under our feet shortly. Why, then, should we be afraid of his underlings? Nothing supernatural should cause any Christian the slightest alarm. We are expressly forbidden to fear the fear of the heathen and that is one of their greatest horrors—their dread of witchcraft, necromancy and other supposed manifestations of evil spirits! We who believe in Jesus are to be ashamed of such superstitions, lest a lie should have dominion over us!

If saintly spirits and holy angels can appear among men, what then? It would be a joy and a privilege to meet them! We are come to an innumer-

able company of angels—they bear us up in their hands lest we dash our feet against a stone.

Brothers and Sisters, I am more afraid of the natural than of the supernatural! And far more fearful of the carnal than of the spiritual. Yet the disciples were afraid of Jesus because they were fearful of the supernatural—and when a person falls under that dread, he will be afraid of anything. We have known such persons to be frightened by cattle, alarmed by a cat and distressed at the croak of a raven. Some foolish ones have even died with fear at the click of an insect in an old post, for they call it a “death watch.” Let us shake off all such childish folly, for if we once fall into it, we may even go the length of these Apostles and be afraid of our Master Himself!

II. Let us consider, secondly, THE METHOD BY WHICH OUR MASTER CHEERED HIS FOLLOWERS WHEN THEY WERE AFRAID OF THE SUPERNATURAL.

First of all, *He assured them that He was not a disembodied spirit.* He said, “It is I,” and that, “I,” was a Man who did eat and drink with them. A Man of flesh and blood whom they had seen and heard and touched. They were comforted when they knew that it was really no disembodied spirit, but a Man in flesh and blood.

I beg you always to remember, dear Friends, concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, that He is not to be regarded as an unclothed spirit, for He wears a body like our own. It would greatly detract from our comfort if we doubted the real Personality of Christ and the truth of His Resurrection. Our Lord has taken into Heaven our human Nature in its entirety—body as well as soul—and He ever lives not as a spirit, but as a Man like ourselves, all sin excepted, and He lives there as the pledge that we shall be there, too, in the completeness of our manhood when the trumpet of the resurrection sounds.

As a real Man, Jesus reigns above! He is no phantom, no ghost, no spirit, but a risen Man, touched with the feeling of our infirmities, who pities us and loves us, and feels for us! And in that capacity He speaks to us out of the glory of Heaven and He says, “It is I; be not afraid.”

Another thought lies on the surface of the passage, *Jesus comforted them by the assurance that it was really Himself.* They were not looking upon a fiction, they were looking upon Christ Himself.

Friend, be sure of the reality of the Christ you trust in! It is very easy to use the name of Jesus, but not quite so easy to know His Person. It is common to talk about what He did and not to feel that He lives just as truly as we do—and that He is a person to be loved and to be trusted in just as much as our own brother, or father, or friend. We need a real, living, personal Christ! A phantom Christ will not cheer us in a storm—it is rather the cause of fright than hope. But a real Christ is a real consolation in a real tempest. May every one of you, my Hearers, truly know the personal Savior to whom you can speak with as much certainty as if you could touch His hand!

The Christ of 1900 years ago worked out our salvation, but the Christ of today must apply it, or we are lost. Seeing that He always lives, He is

able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. Believe in His true Manhood and never allow your idea of Him to become thin and unsubstantial. Those are substantial Christians to whom Christ is substantial.

But the pith of the comfort lay in this—He said, “It is I; be not afraid,” which being interpreted means, *it is Jesus*, be not afraid. When our Lord met Paul on the road to Damascus, He said to him, “I am Jesus.” But when He spoke to those who knew His voice and were familiar with Him, He did not quote His name, but said, “It is I.” They were sheep that had been long enough with the Shepherd to know His voice and they had only to hear Him speak! And without a name being mentioned, they perceived that it was the Lord. To this conclusion they should have come at first. But as they blundered, and said, “It is a spirit,” the loving Master corrected them by saying, “It is I—it is Jesus.” It is not possible for me to convey to you what richness of consolation lies in the thought that Jesus is Jesus, which is, being interpreted, a Savior! That one character and office is cheering, but the same is true of all the names He wears. All the glorious titles and the blessed emblems under which He is set forth are rich in good cheer!

It is Jesus who walks the water of your trouble and comes to you—Jesus the Son of God, the Alpha and the Omega, the Head over all things to His Church—the All-in-All of all His people!

When Jesus wished to encourage John, in the first Chapter of the Revelation, the comfort He gave to him was, “I am the First and the Last.” The comfort of the Lord's people lies in the Person and Character of Jesus. Here is their solace, “IT IS I.” But what a big, “I,” it is! Compound in one all that is conceivable of goodness, mercy, Grace, faithfulness and love—add perfect Humanity, infinite Godhead and all the sovereign rights, powers and possessions of the Highest—and these are all contained in the one little letter, “I,” when Jesus says, “It is I; be not afraid.”

You have not reached the bottom of it yet. “*I Am*.” Literally rendered, the word which Jesus said was not, “It is I,” but “I Am.” When He would cheer His ancient people, the Lord bade Moses comfort Israel by saying, “I AM has sent me unto you.” The self-existence of their God was to be the joy of the tribes. When Jesus said to those who came to take Him in the garden, “I Am,” they fell backward. Such was the power of that word—but when He said to these, His cowering disciples, “I Am,” they were drawn towards Him—and yet they lost not the awe which must always go with that incommunicable name, “I AM.”

Believer, Jesus says to you, “I Am.” Is your wife dead? Is your child to be buried? Have your possessions failed? Is your health departing? Are your joys declining? Alas, it is a dying, fleeting world, but there is One who is always the same, for Jesus says to you, “I Am; and because I live, you shall live also.” Be comforted—whatever else is gone, wherever else the arrows of Death may fly, your Jesus still lives! “I AM.” Blessed word of rich comfort to be heard amid the darkness of the night by weary mariners whose spirits had been sinking within them!

The glory of it all was brought out by the fact that “Jesus went up unto them into the boat.” And as He stood amid them, the stillness all

around proved that the "I AM" was there. Had He not moved upon the face of the deep, as once the Spirit moved there? And did there not come order out of the tempest's chaos even as at the beginning? Where the great "I AM" is present, the winds and the waves perceive their Ruler and obey Him!

Then the disciples knew that Jesus was not only "I AM," but, "Immanuel, God with us." "I AM" had come to their rescue and was in the boat with them. Here, dear Friend, is your comfort and mine! We will not fear the supernatural, or the unseen, for we see Jesus and in Him we see the Father—and therefore we are of good cheer.

III. Our third point for consideration is this—THERE ARE TIMES WHEN WE SHALL BE LIKELY TO NEED SUCH COMFORT AS THIS.

Jesus spoke this message to Believers tossed with tempest—and we need it *when we are depressed by the surroundings of these evil times*. In seasons of depressed trade, great sickness, terrible wars and public disasters, it is balm to the spirit to know that Jesus is still the same. Sin may abound yet more, the light of the Gospel may burn low and the Prince of Darkness may widely sway his destroying scepter, but nevertheless, this Truth of God stands sure, that Jesus is the "I AM." At certain periods diabolical influence seems paramount, the reins of nations appear to be taken out of the hands of the great Governor and yet it is not so. Look through the darkness and you shall see your Lord amid the hurricane, walking the waters of politics, ruling national convulsions, governing, over-ruling, arranging all, making even the wrath of man to praise Him and restraining it according to His wisdom! Above the howling of the blast I hear His voice announcing, "It is I." When men's hearts sink for fear and the rowers feel their oars ready to snap by the strain of useless toil, I hear those Words which are the soul of music—"It is I; be not afraid. I am ruling all things. I am coming to the rescue of the boat, my Church—she shall yet float on smooth waters and reach her desired haven."

Another time of need will surely be *when we reach the swellings of Jordan*. As we shall get near the spirit-world and the soul will begin to strip off her material garment to enter on a new form of life, how shall we feel as we enter the unknown world? Shall we cry out, "It is a Spirit!" as we salute the first who meets us? It may be so, but then a sweet voice will destroy death's terror, end all our alarms and this shall be its utterance, "It is I; be not afraid." This new world is not new to Jesus! Our pains and dying throes are not unknown to Him! The disembodied state, wherein the spirit sojourns for a while unclothed, He knows it all, for He died and entered into the spirit-land and can sympathize with us in every step of the way. In what sweet company shall we pass through the Valley of Death-shade! Surely its gloom will turn to brightness, as when a cavern, wrapped in blackness, is lit up with a hundred torches and myriads of gems sparkle from roof and walls! Passing through the sepulcher, its damp darkness shall flash and glow with unexpected joys and marvelous revelations of the Ever-Blessed because Jesus will be with us and, "the Lamb is the Light." If, in that dread hour, we shall feel the least

trembling at our Lord as the Judge of all the earth, that dread shall vanish as He cries, "It is I."

This comfort may serve us *when we suffer great tribulation*. May you, my Friend, be spared this trial if God so wills. But should it come, you will all the better understand me. They that "do business in great waters" know that our troubles are, at times, so pressing that we lose our heads and are not able to cope with our trials. Forebodings fill the air and our sinking spirits chill the very marrow of our life. We become like distraught men or, as David put it, we reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man and are at our wits end. Then, ah then, the voices of our comrades in the boat are of little value—and even the echoes of former words from the Lord are of small account—nothing will serve but the present and sure consolations of the Lord Jesus. We must hear Him say, "It is I," or we shall faint outright. Then is the soul braced to breast the next billow and while she cries, "All Your waves and Your billows have gone over me," she is still able to add, "Yet the Lord will command His loving kindness in the daytime; and in the night His song shall be with me." When Jesus is with a man, troubles have lost their power to trouble him!

We shall need this same word of comfort *whenever the Lord graciously reveals Himself to us*. His Glory is such that we are not able to bear much of it. Its very sweetness overpowers the heart! Saints have had to ask for a staying of the intense delight which seemed to overbear their natural faculties. Those who have enjoyed those transporting manifestations can quite understand why John has written, "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead." An awful delight—or shall I say a delightful awe?—throws the man upon his face. John had lain in Jesus' bosom and yet, when he had a clear manifestation of his glorified Savior, He could not bear it till His tender Friend laid His hand upon Him and said, "Fear not." So will it be with each of us when we are favored with the visits of the Well-Beloved—we shall greatly need that He should say to us, "It is I, your Brother, your Friend, your Savior, your Husband! Be not afraid. Great as I Am, tremble not in My Presence, for I am Jesus, the Lover of your soul."

Once more, there is a day coming *when the Son of Man will be revealed in the clouds of Heaven*. We know not when it will be, but we are solemnly warned that when men look not for Him, He will suddenly appear. He will come as a thief in the night to the mass of men. But as for Believers, they are not in darkness that that day should come upon them as a thief—to them He comes as a long-expected Friend. When He comes there will be seen tokens—signs in the heavens above and in the earth beneath—which we shall recognize. We may then, perhaps, be distressed by these supernatural portents and begin to tremble. What, then, will be our delight when we hear Him say, "It is I; be not afraid!" Lift up your heads, you saints, for the coming of the Lord draws near and to you it is not darkness, but day! To you it is not judgment and condemnation, but honor and reward! What bliss it will be to catch the first glimpse of our Lord on the Throne! Sinners will wring their hands and weep and wail because of Him, but we shall know His voice and welcome His appearing!

When the last trumpet rings out clear and loud, happy shall we be to hear that gladsome sound, "It is I; be not afraid." Rolling earth and crumbling mountains, darkened sun and blackened moon, flames of fire and shocks of earthquake, gathering angels and chariots of God—none of these things shall amaze us while Jesus whispers to our soul, "I Am," and yet again, "IT IS I; BE NOT AFRAID."

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 14:22-33.**

Verse 22. *And immediately Jesus constrained His disciples to get into a boat and to go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away.* *Immediately* is a business word—Jesus loses no time. No sooner is the banquet over than He sends off the guests to their homes. While they are well fed, He bids them make the best of their way home. He who made the multitude sit down was also able *to send the multitude away*, but they needed sending, for they were loath to go.

The sea must be crossed again, or Jesus cannot find seclusion. How He must run the gauntlet to get a little rest! Before He starts again across the sea, He performs another act of self-denial, for He cannot leave till He sees the crowd happily dispersed. He attends to that business Himself, giving the disciples the opportunity to depart in peace. As the captain is the last to leave the boat, so is the Lord the last to leave the scene of labor. The disciples would have chosen to stay in His company and to enjoy the thanks of the people, but *He constrained them to get into a boat*. He could not get anyone to go away from Him at this time without sending and constraining. This loadstone has great attractions. He evidently promised His disciples that He would follow them, for the words are, "*to go before Him unto the other side.*" How He was to follow He did not say, but He could always find a way of keeping His appointments. How considerate of Him to wait amid the throng while the disciples sailed away in peace. He always takes the heavy end of the load Himself.

23. *And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone.* Now that the crowd is gone, He can take His rest—and He finds it in prayer. *He went up into a mountain*—in a place where He might speak aloud and not be overheard or disturbed. He communed with the Father *alone*. This was His refreshment and His delight. He continued therein till the thickest shades of night had gathered and the day was gone. "Alone," yet not alone, He drank in new strength as He communed with His Father. He must have revealed this private matter to the recording Evangelist and surely it was with the intent that we should learn from His example.

We cannot afford to be always in company, since even our blessed Lord felt that He must be alone.

24. *But the boat was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.* While Jesus was alone, they in *the boat* were in the same condition, but not occupied with the same spiritual exercise.

When they first left the shore it was fair sailing in the cool of the evening, but a storm gathered hastily as night covered the sky. On the Lake of Galilee the wind rushes down from the gullies between the mountains and causes grievous peril to little boats—sometimes fairly lifting them out of the water and soon submerging them beneath the waves! That deep lake was peculiarly dangerous for small craft. They were far from land, for they were “*in the midst of the sea,*” equally distant from either shore. The sea was furious and their boat was “*tossed with waves.*” The hurricane was terrible. “*The wind was contrary,*” and would not let them go anyplace which they sought. It was a whirlwind and they were whirled about by it, but could not use it for reaching either shore. How much did their case resemble ours when we are in sore distress? We are tossed about and can do nothing—the blast is too furious for us to bear up against it, or even to live while driven before it.

One happy fact remains—Jesus is pleading on the shore though we are struggling on the sea. It is also comfortable to know that we are where He constrained us to go (see verse 22), and He has promised to come to us in due time and, therefore, all must be safe though the tempest rages terribly.

25. *And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.* Jesus is sure to come. The night wears on and the darkness thickens. *The fourth watch of the night draws near,* but where is He? Faith says, “He must come.” Though He should stay away till almost break of day, He must come. Unbelief asks, “How can He come?” Ah, He will answer for Himself! He can make His own way. “*Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.*” He comes in the teeth of the wind and on the face of the wave! Never fear that He will fail to reach the storm-tossed boat. His love will find the way. Whether it is to a single disciple, or to the Church as a whole, Jesus will appear in His own chosen hour and His time is sure to be the most timely.

26. *And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit, and they cried out for fear.* [See Sermon #957, Volume 16—JESUS NO PHANTOM—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Yes, *the disciples saw Him*—saw Jesus, their Lord—and derived no comfort from the sight! Poor human nature’s sight is a blind thing compared with the vision of a spiritual faith. They saw, but knew not what they saw. What could it be but a phantom? How could a real man walk on those foaming billows? How could he stand in the teeth of such a hurricane? They were already at their wits’ end and the apparition put an end to their courage. We seem to hear their shriek of alarm—“*they cried out for fear.*” We read not that “*they were troubled*” before. They were old sailors and had no dread of natural forces. But *a spirit*—ah, that was too much of a terror! They were at their worst now and yet, if they had known it, they were on the verge of their best! It is noteworthy that the nearer Jesus was to them, the greater was their fear. Want of discernment blinds the soul to its richest consolations. Lord, be near, and let me know You! Let me not have to say with Jacob, “Surely God was in this place; and I knew it not!”

27. *But immediately Jesus spoke unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.* He did not keep them in suspense—“*Immediately Jesus spoke unto them.*” How sweetly sounded that loving and majestic voice! Above the roar of waves and howling of winds, they heard the voice of the Lord. This was also His old word, “*Be of good cheer.*” The most conclusive reason for courage was His own Presence. “*It is I; be not afraid.*” If Jesus is near. If the Spirit of the storm is, after all, the Lord of Love, all room for fear is gone! Can Jesus come to us through the storm? Then we shall weather it and come to Him. He who rules the tempest is not the devil, not chance, not a malicious enemy—but Jesus! This should end all fear.

28. *And Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it is You, bid me come unto You on the water.* Peter must be the first to speak—he is impulsive and besides, he was a sort of foreman in the company. The first speaker is not always the wisest man. Peter’s fears have gone—all but one, “if”—but that, “if,” was working him no good, for it seemed to challenge his Master—“*Lord if it is You.*” What a test to suggest—“*Bid me come unto You on the water!*” What did Peter need with walking the waters? His name might have suggested that like a stone he would go to the bottom! It was an imprudent request. It was the swing of the pendulum in Peter from despair to an injudicious venturing! Surely, he knew not what he said. Yet we, too, have put our Lord to tests almost as improper. Have we not said, “If You have ever blessed me, give me this and that”? We, too, have had our water-walking and have ventured where nothing but special Grace could uphold us. Lord, what is man?

29. *And He said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the boat he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.* When good men are unwise and presumptuous, it may be for their lasting good to learn their folly by experience. “He said, Come.” Peter’s Lord is about to teach him a practical lesson. He asked to be bid to come. He may come. He does come. He leaves the boat, he treads the wave. He is on the way towards his Lord. We can do anything if we have Divine authorization and courage enough to take the Lord at His word! Now there were two on the sea, two wonders! Which was the greater? The reader may not find it easy to reply. Let him consider.

30. *But when he saw the boisterous wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried, saying Lord, save me!* “*But*”—a sorrowful, “but,” for poor Peter. His eyes were off his Lord and on the raging of the wind—“*He saw the boisterous wind.*” His heart failed him and then his feet failed him. Down he began to go—an awful moment is this “*beginning to sink,*” yet it was only a “beginning.” He had time to cry to his Lord who was not sinking. Peter *cried*, and was safe! His prayer was as full as it was short! He had brought his eyes and his faith back to Jesus, for he cried, “*Lord!*” He had come into this danger through obedience and, therefore, he had an appeal in the word, “*Lord.*” Whether in danger or not, Jesus was still his Lord. He is a lost man and he feels it unless his Lord will save him—save him altogether, save him now! Blessed prayer—“*Lord, save me.*” Hearer, does it not suit you? Peter was nearer his Lord when he was

sinking than when he was walking! In our low estate we are often nearer to Jesus than in our more glorious seasons.

31. *And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand and caught him, and said unto him, O you of little faith, why did you doubt?* [See Sermons #246, Volume 5—MR. FEARING COMFORTED; #1856, Volume 31—THE HISTORY OF LITTLE-FAITH; #2173, Volume 36—LITTLE FAITH AND GREAT FAITH and #2925, Volume 51—REASONS FOR DOUBTING CHRIST—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Our Lord delays not when our peril is imminent and our cry is urgent—“*Immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand.*” He first “*caught him*” and then taught him. Jesus saves first and upbraids afterwards, when He must do so. When we are saved is the fit time for us to chasten ourselves for our unbelief. Let us learn from our Lord that we may not reprove others till we have first helped them out of their difficulties.

Our doubts are unreasonable—“*Why did you doubt?*” If there is reason for little faith, there is evidently reason for great confidence. If it is right to trust Jesus at all, why not trust Him altogether? Trust was Peter's strength, doubt was his danger. It looked like great faith when Peter walked on the water, but a little wind soon proved it to be “little faith.” Till our faith is tried, we can form no reliable estimate of it.

After his Lord had taken him by the hand, Peter sank no further, but resumed the walk of faith. How easy to have faith when we are close to Jesus! Lord, when our faith fails, come to us and we shall walk on the waves!

32. *And when they were come into the boat, the wind ceased.* So that Peter's walk and his rescue had happened in the face of the tempest. He could walk the water well enough when his Lord held his hand—and so can we. What a sight! Jesus and Peter, hand in hand, walking upon the sea! The two made for the boat at once—miracles are never spun out to undue length. Was not Peter glad to leave the tumultuous element and, at the same time, to perceive that the gale was over? “*When they were come into the boat, the wind ceased.*” It is well to be safe in a storm, but more pleasant to find the calm return and the hurricane end. How gladly did the disciples welcome their Lord and their Brother, Peter, who though wet to the skin, was a wiser man for his adventure!

33. *Then they that were in the boat came and worshipped Him, saying, Of a truth You are the Son of God.* No wonder that Peter “*worshipped Him,*” nor that His comrades did the same! The whole of the disciples who had been thus rescued by their Lord's coming to them on the stormy sea were overwhelmingly convinced of His Godhead. Now they were doubly sure of it by unquestionable evidence—and in lowly reverence they expressed to Him their adoring faith, saying, “*Of a truth You are the Son of God.*”

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

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NO. 3128

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 21, 1909.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Immediately He constrained His disciples to get into the boat, and to go before Him to the other side to Bethsaida, while He sent away the people. And when He had sent them away, He departed into a mountain to pray. And when evening was come, the boat was in the midst of the sea, and He alone on the land. And He saw them toiling in rowing, for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them. But when they saw Him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out: for they all saw Him, and were troubled. And immediately He talked with them, and said unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I, be not afraid. And He went up unto them into the boat, and the wind ceased: and they were sorely amazed among themselves beyond measure, and wondered. For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their hearts were hardened.”

Mark 6:45-52.

WE have here a word of comfort given to a shipload of Believers *who were where their Lord had sent them*. They had been unwilling to put out to sea, though it was probably calm enough at the time, but they did not wish to leave the Lord Jesus. He constrained them to go and thus their sailing was not merely under His sanction, but by His express command. They were in their right place and yet they met with a terrible storm. The little inland sea upon which they sailed lies in a deep hollow and from the shore there pours a sudden downdraft of tremendous wind for which it is not possible to be prepared. By one of these whirlwinds the whole sea was stirred up to boiling, as only those little lakes can be. So, though they were where Jesus bade them go, they were in desperate peril, and you, dear Friends, must not think that you are in a wrong position because you are in trouble. Do not consider that adverse circumstances are a proof that you have missed your road, for they may even be an evidence that you are in the good old way since the path of Believers is seldom without trial. You did well to embark and to leave the shore, but remember, though your Lord has insured the vessel and guaranteed that you shall reach your haven, He has not promised that you shall sail over a sea of glass. On the contrary, He has told you that “in the world you shall have tribulation”—and you may all the more confidently believe in Him because you find His warning to be true!

Their Lord had bid His disciples make for the other side and, therefore, they did their best and continued rowing all night, but making no progress whatever because the wind was dead against them. It was with difficulty that they could keep what little way they had made and not be blown back again to the starting place. Probably you have heard it said that if a Christian does not go forward, he goes backward—that is not altogether true, for there are times of spiritual trial when if a man does not go backward, he is really going forward. “Stand fast” is a precept, which, when well kept, may involve as much virtue as, “press forward.” A master of a steam vessel will put on all steam and drive right into the teeth of a hurricane and remain perfectly satisfied if the good boat can only keep from being driven on shore. The Apostolic crew rowed, and rowed, and rowed—and it was no fault of theirs that they made no progress, “for the wind was contrary unto them.” The Christian may make little or no headway and yet it may be no fault of his, for the wind is contrary. Our good Lord will take the will for the deed and reckon our progress, not by our apparent advance, but by the hearty intent with which we tug at the oars!

Often, when a Believer groans in prayer and cannot pray, he has offered the best prayer. And when he tries to win men’s hearts and does not win them, his zeal is as acceptable as if it convinced a nation—and when he would do good and finds evil present with him—there is good in the desire. If he threw up the oars and drifted with the wind, that

would be another thing, but if our Lord sees him, “toiling in rowing,” albeit no progress is made, He has never a word to say against His servant, but He will bid him, “be of good cheer.”

It does not appear, from the narrative, that the disciples had any fear about the storm except such as might naturally arise even in the minds of fishermen when they were dreadfully tossed upon the sea. They probably said to one another, “Did not our Master constrain us to set forth on this voyage? Though we met with this storm, we are not to be blamed.” Certain Believers who have lately been brought to know the Lord, have been great losers in temporal things by becoming Christians. What then? Let them not be terrified by this fact—even Christ’s boat is tossed with tempest. Let them row on against the wind and even if the storm increases in fury, let them not lose heart. One who knew the seas right well exclaimed, “Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him.” And in so doing he glorified God and before long found himself in a great calm. Does Jesus bid us make for the shore? Then let us row on, even if we cannot make headway, for Jesus knows all about it and orders all things well.

Why, then, did our Savior, when He came to this shipload of Apostles who had been toiling and rowing, say to them, “Be of good cheer”? They were bold, brave men, and were not at all afraid of the sea. What, then, did they fear? He would not have so spoken unless they had been afraid of *something*—and on looking at the text, we see, to our astonishment, that *they were afraid of Jesus Himself*. They were not afraid of wind and storms and waves and tempests, but they were afraid of their best Friend! That is the point which He aimed at by saying, “Be of good cheer: it is I, be not afraid.” We will first think over *the cause of their fear*. Then secondly, we will meditate upon *the method by which Jesus cheered them*. And thirdly, we will reflect upon *the times when we shall need just such a good word as this*.

I. First, then, dear Friends, consider with me THE CAUSE OF THEIR FEAR.

If we had not sailed over the same lake—I mean if we had not suffered the same experience—it might have surprised us that they were afraid of their Lord. He was appearing for them and coming to their rescue. He was about to still the tempest for them, yet they were afraid *of Him*—of Him whom they loved and trusted. So blind were their eyes, so hardened were their hearts, that they were afraid of their Lord and afraid of Him when He was giving them the best reasons for trusting Him. Before their eyes He was displaying Himself as Lord over All—Master of wind and wave—and yet they were afraid of Him. The greatness of His power would have comforted them had they understood the Truth—but they did not consider the miracle of the loaves and, therefore, they were in a state of perplexity and were sorely afraid.

Meanwhile Jesus was acting in great gentleness to them. He was displaying His power, but it was not in a dazzling and overwhelming manner. Admire the sacred gentleness which made Him move as though He would have passed by them. If He had suddenly appeared in brilliant light in the middle of the boat, He might well have astounded them and driven them to fright. If, in a moment, He had shone forth just at the stern, or alighted from the heavens upon the deck, they would have been petrified with alarm! But He began by showing Himself on the crest of the billow—and one cried to his fellow, “Do you see that strange light yonder?” They watch and Jesus comes nearer! They can discern a figure. They can see a man step from wave to wave with majestic tread. In tenderness He will not flash upon them all at once. As when the morning breaks by slow increase of light, so Jesus came to His timid followers. Even then He moved as though He would pass by them, that they might not be alarmed by His appearing to bear down upon them as an adversary. Even thus He manifests Himself to us in the riches of His Grace in all wisdom and prudence!

The fears of the trembling crew were sufficiently aroused by even seeing Him at a distance—they were so afraid that they cried out thinking that they saw a ghost. What would they have done had He not, in gentleness to their weakness, manifested Himself gradually to them and set Himself in a sidelight? Take what way the Master might, His disciples were still afraid—and we are not much wiser nor much more courageous than they were. The manifestation of the Christ of God to us in all His Glory will have to be by degrees as long as we are in this body and, perhaps even in Heaven. It may not be at the very first that we shall be able to endure the fullness of its joy. Even there He may have to lead us to fountains of water which at the first we did not discover and guide us into more and more of that superlative knowledge which will utterly eclipse all acquaintance that we have of Him now, as the sunlight puts out the stars!

To return to our subject. The disciples were afraid of Jesus when He was revealing His power to help them, afraid of Him when He was acting in the gentlest possible manner toward them and treating them as a nurse does her child. Ah me, that we should be afraid of Jesus!

The Lord, after all, was doing nothing more than they knew He could do. Twenty-four hours had not passed since they had seen Him perform a work of creation, for He had taken bread and fish and multiplied them so as to make a feast for five thousand men, besides the women and children, and to leave far more, when all had eaten, than had been in store when first the loaves and fishes had been counted! After this miracle, they ought not to have been surprised that He could traverse the sea! To walk on the waters is to suspend a law, but to make loaves and fishes is to exercise the supreme power of Creation which must forever remain with God, Himself! Knowing this, they ought not to have been astonished—not so soon, at any rate. The memory of that feast ought not to have vanished quite so quickly from their most forgetful minds. Yet when they saw Him, only doing what they knew He could do, only doing something not a jot more difficult than He was accustomed to do—they cried out for fear!

Was it not because *they dreaded contact with the spiritual, the mysterious and the supernatural!* Although we are now talking about them and, perhaps, half saying in our minds, “If we had been there, we would not have been afraid of Jesus and have cried out,” we do not know what we say—it takes very little of the supernatural to make a man's flesh creep, let the man be who he may. When Belshazzar saw the handwriting upon the wall, he trembled most because of the mystery involved in a moving hand with which no visible body was connected. The unseen is the birthplace of fear. Imagination exaggerates and conscience whispers that some great ill will befall us. We are nearing the confines of the mysterious world where God and spirits dwell and, therefore, we tremble. Yet, Beloved, the spirit-world is the last thing which Christians should tremble at, for there can be nothing in the supernatural world which we have cause to dread! If there is such a thing as a ghost walking the earth, I, for one, would like to meet it—either at dead of night or noon of day!

I have not the least particle of faith in rambling spirits. Those who are in Heaven will not care to be wandering in these foggy regions! And those in Hell cannot leave their dread abode. From where, then, shall they come? Are they devils? Even so—and what then? A devil is no new personage. We have fought with devils full often and are prepared to resist them, again, and make them flee! The Lord will tread Satan, who is the master of evil spirits, under our feet shortly. Why, then, should we be afraid of his underlings? Nothing supernatural should cause any Christian the slightest alarm. We are expressly forbidden to fear the fear of the heathen and that is one of their greatest horrors—their dread of witchcraft, necromancy and other supposed manifestations of evil spirits! We who believe in Jesus are to be ashamed of such superstitions, lest a lie should have dominion over us!

If saintly spirits and holy angels can appear among men, what then? It would be a joy and a privilege to meet them! We are come to an innumerable company of angels—they bear us up in their hands lest we dash our feet against a stone.

Brothers and Sisters, I am more afraid of the natural than of the supernatural! And far more fearful of the carnal than of the spiritual. Yet the disciples were afraid of Jesus because they were fearful of the supernatural—and when a person falls under that dread, he will be afraid of anything. We have known such persons to be frightened by cattle, alarmed by a cat and distressed at the croak of a raven. Some foolish ones have even died with fear at the click of an insect in an old post, for they call it a “death watch.” Let us shake off all such childish folly, for if we once fall into it, we may even go the length of these Apostles and be afraid of our Master Himself!

II. Let us consider, secondly, THE METHOD BY WHICH OUR MASTER CHEERED HIS FOLLOWERS WHEN THEY WERE AFRAID OF THE SUPERNATURAL.

First of all, *He assured them that He was not a disembodied spirit.* He said, “It is I,” and that, “I,” was a Man who did eat and drink with them. A Man of flesh and blood whom they had seen and heard and touched. They were comforted when they knew that it was really no disembodied spirit, but a Man in flesh and blood.

I beg you always to remember, dear Friends, concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, that He is not to be regarded as an unclothed spirit, for He wears a body like our own. It would greatly detract from our comfort if we doubted the real Personality of Christ and the truth of His Resurrection. Our Lord has taken into Heaven our human Nature in its entirety—body as well as soul—and He ever lives not as a spirit, but as a Man like ourselves, all sin excepted, and He lives there as the pledge that we shall be there, too, in the completeness of our manhood when the trumpet of the resurrection sounds.

As a real Man, Jesus reigns above! He is no phantom, no ghost, no spirit, but a risen Man, touched with the feeling of our infirmities, who pities us and loves us, and feels for us! And in that capacity He speaks to us out of the glory of Heaven and He says, "It is I; be not afraid."

Another thought lies on the surface of the passage, *Jesus comforted them by the assurance that it was really Himself.* They were not looking upon a fiction, they were looking upon Christ Himself.

Friend, be sure of the reality of the Christ you trust in! It is very easy to use the name of Jesus, but not quite so easy to know His Person. It is common to talk about what He did and not to feel that He lives just as truly as we do—and that He is a person to be loved and to be trusted in just as much as our own brother, or father, or friend. We need a real, living, personal Christ! A phantom Christ will not cheer us in a storm—it is rather the cause of fright than hope. But a real Christ is a real consolation in a real tempest. May every one of you, my Hearers, truly know the personal Savior to whom you can speak with as much certainty as if you could touch His hand!

The Christ of 1900 years ago worked out our salvation, but the Christ of today must apply it, or we are lost. Seeing that He always lives, He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. Believe in His true Manhood and never allow your idea of Him to become thin and unsubstantial. Those are substantial Christians to whom Christ is substantial.

But the pith of the comfort lay in this—He said, "It is I; be not afraid," which being interpreted means, *it is Jesus*, be not afraid. When our Lord met Paul on the road to Damascus, He said to him, "I am Jesus." But when He spoke to those who knew His voice and were familiar with Him, He did not quote His name, but said, "It is I." They were sheep that had been long enough with the Shepherd to know His voice and they had only to hear Him speak! And without a name being mentioned, they perceived that it was the Lord. To this conclusion they should have come at first. But as they blundered, and said, "It is a spirit," the loving Master corrected them by saying, "It is I—it is Jesus." It is not possible for me to convey to you what richness of consolation lies in the thought that Jesus is Jesus, which is, being interpreted, a Savior! That one character and office is cheering, but the same is true of all the names He wears. All the glorious titles and the blessed emblems under which He is set forth are rich in good cheer!

It is Jesus who walks the water of your trouble and comes to you—Jesus the Son of God, the Alpha and the Omega, the Head over all things to His Church—the All-in-All of all His people!

When Jesus wished to encourage John, in the first Chapter of the Revelation, the comfort He gave to him was, "I am the First and the Last." The comfort of the Lord's people lies in the Person and Character of Jesus. Here is their solace, "IT IS I." But what a big, "I," it is! Compound in one all that is conceivable of goodness, mercy, Grace, faithfulness and love—add perfect Humanity, infinite Godhead and all the sovereign rights, powers and possessions of the Highest—and these are all contained in the one little letter, "I," when Jesus says, "It is I; be not afraid."

You have not reached the bottom of it yet. "*I Am.*" Literally rendered, the word which Jesus said was not, "It is I," but "I Am." When He would cheer His ancient people, the Lord bade Moses comfort Israel by saying, "I AM has sent me unto you." The self-existence of their God was to be the joy of the tribes. When Jesus said to those who came to take Him in the garden, "I Am," they fell backward. Such was the power of that word—but when He said to these, His cowering disciples, "I Am," they were drawn towards Him—and yet they lost not the awe which must always go with that incommunicable name, "I AM."

Believer, Jesus says to you, "I Am." Is your wife dead? Is your child to be buried? Have your possessions failed? Is your health departing? Are your joys declining? Alas, it is a dying, fleeting world, but there is One who is always the same, for Jesus says to you, "I Am; and because I live, you shall live also." Be comforted—whatever else is gone, wherever else the arrows of Death may fly, your Jesus still lives! "I AM." Blessed word of rich comfort to be heard amid the darkness of the night by weary mariners whose spirits had been sinking within them!

The glory of it all was brought out by the fact that "Jesus went up unto them into the boat." And as He stood amid them, the stillness all around proved that the "I AM" was there. Had He not moved upon the face of the deep, as once the Spirit moved there? And did there not come order out of the tempest's chaos even as at the beginning? Where the great "I AM" is present, the winds and the waves perceive their Ruler and obey Him!

Then the disciples knew that Jesus was not only "I AM," but, "Immanuel, God with us." "I AM" had come to their rescue and was in the boat with them. Here, dear Friend, is your comfort and mine! We will not fear the supernatural, or the unseen, for we see Jesus and in Him we see the Father—and therefore we are of good cheer.

III. Our third point for consideration is this—THERE ARE TIMES WHEN WE SHALL BE LIKELY TO NEED SUCH COMFORT AS THIS.

Jesus spoke this message to Believers tossed with tempest—and we need it *when we are depressed by the surroundings of these evil times*. In seasons of depressed trade, great sickness, terrible wars and public disasters, it is balm to the spirit to know that Jesus is still the same. Sin may abound yet more, the light of the Gospel may burn low and the Prince of Darkness may widely sway his destroying scepter, but nevertheless, this Truth of God stands sure, that Jesus is the "I AM." At certain periods diabolical influence seems paramount, the reins of nations appear to be taken out of the hands of the great Governor and yet it is not so. Look through the darkness and you shall see your Lord amid the hurricane, walking the waters of politics, ruling national convulsions, governing, over-ruling, arranging all, making even the wrath of man to praise Him and restraining it according to His wisdom! Above the howling of the blast I hear His voice announcing, "It is I." When men's hearts sink for fear and the rowers feel their oars ready to snap by the strain of useless toil, I hear those Words which are the soul of music—"It is I; be not afraid. I am ruling all things. I am coming to the rescue of the boat, my Church—she shall yet float on smooth waters and reach her desired haven."

Another time of need will surely be *when we reach the swellings of Jordan*. As we shall get near the spirit-world and the soul will begin to strip off her material garment to enter on a new form of life, how shall we feel as we enter the unknown world? Shall we cry out, "It is a Spirit!" as we salute the first who meets us? It may be so, but then a sweet voice will destroy death's terror, end all our alarms and this shall be its utterance, "It is I; be not afraid." This new world is not new to Jesus! Our pains and dying throes are not unknown to Him! The disembodied state, wherein the spirit sojourns for a while unclothed, He knows it all, for He died and entered into the spirit-land and can sympathize with us in every step of the way. In what sweet company shall we pass through the Valley of Death-shade! Surely its gloom will turn to brightness, as when a cavern, wrapped in blackness, is lit up with a hundred torches and myriads of gems sparkle from roof and walls! Passing through the sepulcher, its damp darkness shall flash and glow with unexpected joys and marvelous revelations of the Ever-Blessed because Jesus will be with us and, "the Lamb is the Light." If, in that dread hour, we shall feel the least trembling at our Lord as the Judge of all the earth, that dread shall vanish as He cries, "It is I."

This comfort may serve us *when we suffer great tribulation*. May you, my Friend, be spared this trial if God so wills. But should it come, you will all the better understand me. They that "do business in great waters" know that our troubles are, at times, so pressing that we lose our heads and are not able to cope with our trials. Forebodings fill the air and our sinking spirits chill the very marrow of our life. We become like distraught men or, as David put it, we reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man and are at our wits end. Then, ah then, the voices of our comrades in the boat are of little value—and even the echoes of former words from the Lord are of small account—nothing will serve but the present and sure consolations of the Lord Jesus. We must hear Him say, "It is I," or we shall faint outright. Then is the soul braced to breast the next billow and while she cries, "All Your waves and Your billows have gone over me," she is still able to add, "Yet the Lord will command His loving kindness in the daytime; and in the night His song shall be with me." When Jesus is with a man, troubles have lost their power to trouble him!

We shall need this same word of comfort *whenever the Lord graciously reveals Himself to us*. His Glory is such that we are not able to bear much of it. Its very sweetness overpowers the heart! Saints have had to ask for a staying of the intense delight which seemed to overbear their natural faculties. Those who have enjoyed those transporting manifestations can quite understand why John has written, "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead." An awful delight—or shall I say a delightful awe?—throws the man upon his face. John had lain in Jesus' bosom and yet, when he had a clear manifestation of his glorified Savior, He could not bear it till His tender Friend laid His hand upon Him and said, "Fear not." So will it be with each of us when we are favored with the visits of the Well-Beloved—we shall greatly need that He should say to us, "It is I, your Brother, your Friend, your Savior, your Husband! Be not afraid. Great as I Am, tremble not in My Presence, for I am Jesus, the Lover of your soul."

Once more, there is a day coming *when the Son of Man will be revealed in the clouds of Heaven*. We know not when it will be, but we are solemnly warned that when men look not for Him, He will suddenly appear. He will come as a thief in the night to the mass of men. But as for Believers, they are not in darkness that that day should come upon them as a thief—to them He comes as a long-expected Friend. When He comes there will be seen tokens—signs in the heavens above and in the earth beneath—which we shall recognize. We may then, perhaps, be distressed by these supernatural portents and begin to tremble. What, then, will be our delight when we hear Him say, “It is I; be not afraid!” Lift up your heads, you saints, for the coming of the Lord draws near and to you it is not darkness, but day! To you it is not judgment and condemnation, but honor and reward! What bliss it will be to catch the first glimpse of our Lord on the Throne! Sinners will wring their hands and weep and wail because of Him, but we shall know His voice and welcome His appearing! When the last trumpet rings out clear and loud, happy shall we be to hear that gladsome sound, “It is I; be not afraid.” Rolling earth and crumbling mountains, darkened sun and blackened moon, flames of fire and shocks of earthquake, gathering angels and chariots of God—none of these things shall amaze us while Jesus whispers to our soul, “I Am,” and yet again, “IT IS I; BE NOT AFRAID.”

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 14:22-33.

Verse 22. *And immediately Jesus constrained His disciples to get into a boat and to go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away.* *Immediately* is a business word—Jesus loses no time. No sooner is the banquet over than He sends off the guests to their homes. While they are well fed, He bids them make the best of their way home. He who made the multitude sit down was also able *to send the multitude away*, but they needed sending, for they were loath to go.

The sea must be crossed again, or Jesus cannot find seclusion. How He must run the gauntlet to get a little rest! Before He starts again across the sea, He performs another act of self-denial, for He cannot leave till He sees the crowd happily dispersed. He attends to that business Himself, giving the disciples the opportunity to depart in peace. As the captain is the last to leave the boat, so is the Lord the last to leave the scene of labor. The disciples would have chosen to stay in His company and to enjoy the thanks of the people, but *He constrained them to get into a boat*. He could not get anyone to go away from Him at this time without sending and constraining. This loadstone has great attractions. He evidently promised His disciples that He would follow them, for the words are, “*to go before Him unto the other side.*” How He was to follow He did not say, but He could always find a way of keeping His appointments. How considerate of Him to wait amid the throng while the disciples sailed away in peace. He always takes the heavy end of the load Himself.

23. *And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone.* Now that the crowd is gone, He can take His rest—and He finds it in prayer. *He went up into a mountain*—in a place where He might speak aloud and not be overheard or disturbed. He communed with the Father *alone*. This was His refreshment and His delight. He continued therein till the thickest shades of night had gathered and the day was gone. “Alone,” yet not alone, He drank in new strength as He communed with His Father. He must have revealed this private matter to the recording Evangelist and surely it was with the intent that we should learn from His example.

We cannot afford to be always in company, since even our blessed Lord felt that He must be alone.

24. *But the boat was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.* While Jesus was alone, they in *the boat* were in the same condition, but not occupied with the same spiritual exercise. When they first left the shore it was fair sailing in the cool of the evening, but a storm gathered hastily as night covered the sky. On the Lake of Galilee the wind rushes down from the gullies between the mountains and causes grievous peril to little boats—sometimes fairly lifting them out of the water and soon submerging them beneath the waves! That deep lake was peculiarly dangerous for small craft. They were far from land, for they were “*in the midst of the sea,*” equally distant from either shore. The sea was furious and their boat was “*tossed with waves.*” The hurricane was terrible. “*The wind was contrary,*” and would not let them go anyplace which they sought. It was a whirlwind and they were whirled about by it, but could not use it for reaching either shore. How much did their case resemble ours when we are in sore distress?

We are tossed about and can do nothing—the blast is too furious for us to bear up against it, or even to live while driven before it.

One happy fact remains—Jesus is pleading on the shore though we are struggling on the sea. It is also comfortable to know that we are where He constrained us to go (see verse 22), and He has promised to come to us in due time and, therefore, all must be safe though the tempest rages terribly.

25. *And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.* Jesus is sure to come. The night wears on and the darkness thickens. *The fourth watch of the night draws near*, but where is He? Faith says, “He must come.” Though He should stay away till almost break of day, He must come. Unbelief asks, “How can He come?” Ah, He will answer for Himself! He can make His own way. “*Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.*” He comes in the teeth of the wind and on the face of the wave! Never fear that He will fail to reach the storm-tossed boat. His love will find the way. Whether it is to a single disciple, or to the Church as a whole, Jesus will appear in His own chosen hour and His time is sure to be the most timely.

26. *And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit, and they cried out for fear.* [See Sermon #957, Volume 16—JESUS NO PHANTOM—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Yes, *the disciples saw Him*—saw Jesus, their Lord—and derived no comfort from the sight! Poor human nature's sight is a blind thing compared with the vision of a spiritual faith. They saw, but knew not what they saw. What could it be but a phantom? How could a real man walk on those foaming billows? How could he stand in the teeth of such a hurricane? They were already at their wits' end and the apparition put an end to their courage. We seem to hear their shriek of alarm—“*they cried out for fear.*” We read not that “*they were troubled*” before. They were old sailors and had no dread of natural forces. But *a spirit*—ah, that was too much of a terror! They were at their worst now and yet, if they had known it, they were on the verge of their best! It is noteworthy that the nearer Jesus was to them, the greater was their fear. Want of discernment blinds the soul to its richest consolations. Lord, be near, and let me know You! Let me not have to say with Jacob, “Surely God was in this place; and I knew it not!”

27. *But immediately Jesus spoke unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.* He did not keep them in suspense—“*Immediately Jesus spoke unto them.*” How sweetly sounded that loving and majestic voice! Above the roar of waves and howling of winds, they heard the voice of the Lord. This was also His old word, “*Be of good cheer.*” The most conclusive reason for courage was His own Presence. “*It is I; be not afraid.*” If Jesus is near. If the Spirit of the storm is, after all, the Lord of Love, all room for fear is gone! Can Jesus come to us through the storm? Then we shall weather it and come to Him. He who rules the tempest is not the devil, not chance, not a malicious enemy—but Jesus! This should end all fear.

28. *And Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it is You, bid me come unto You on the water.* Peter must be the first to speak—he is impulsive and besides, he was a sort of foreman in the company. The first speaker is not always the wisest man. Peter's fears have gone—all but one, “if”—but that, “if,” was working him no good, for it seemed to challenge his Master—“*Lord if it is You.*” What a test to suggest—“*Bid me come unto You on the water!*” What did Peter need with walking the waters? His name might have suggested that like a stone he would go to the bottom! It was an imprudent request. It was the swing of the pendulum in Peter from despair to an injudicious venturing! Surely, he knew not what he said. Yet we, too, have put our Lord to tests almost as improper. Have we not said, “If You have ever blessed me, give me this and that”? We, too, have had our water-walking and have ventured where nothing but special Grace could uphold us. Lord, what is man?

29. *And He said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the boat he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.* When good men are unwise and presumptuous, it may be for their lasting good to learn their folly by experience. “He said, Come.” Peter's Lord is about to teach him a practical lesson. He asked to be bid to come. He may come. He does come. He leaves the boat, he treads the wave. He is on the way towards his Lord. We can do anything if we have Divine authorization and courage enough to take the Lord at His word! Now there were two on the sea, two wonders! Which was the greater? The reader may not find it easy to reply. Let him consider.

30. *But when he saw the boisterous wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried, saying Lord, save me!* “*But*”—a sorrowful, “but,” for poor Peter. His eyes were off his Lord and on the raging of the wind—“*He saw the*

boisterous wind." His heart failed him and then his feet failed him. Down he began to go—an awful moment is this "*beginning to sink,*" yet it was only a "beginning." He had time to cry to his Lord who was not sinking. Peter *cried,* and was safe! His prayer was as full as it was short! He had brought his eyes and his faith back to Jesus, for he cried, "*Lord!*" He had come into this danger through obedience and, therefore, he had an appeal in the word, "Lord." Whether in danger or not, Jesus was still his Lord. He is a lost man and he feels it unless his Lord will save him—save him altogether, save him now! Blessed prayer—"Lord, save me." Hearer, does it not suit you? Peter was nearer his Lord when he was sinking than when he was walking! In our low estate we are often nearer to Jesus than in our more glorious seasons.

31. *And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand and caught him, and said unto him, O you of little faith, why did you doubt?* [See Sermons #246, Volume 5—MR. FEARING COMFORTED; #1856, Volume 31—THE HISTORY OF LITTLE-FAITH; #2173, Volume 36—LITTLE FAITH AND GREAT FAITH and #2925, Volume 51—REASONS FOR DOUBTING CHRIST—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Our Lord delays not when our peril is imminent and our cry is urgent—"Immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand." He first "*caught him*" and then taught him. Jesus saves first and upbraids afterwards, when He must do so. When we are saved is the fit time for us to chasten ourselves for our unbelief. Let us learn from our Lord that we may not reprove others till we have first helped them out of their difficulties.

Our doubts are unreasonable—"Why did you doubt?" If there is reason for little faith, there is evidently reason for great confidence. If it is right to trust Jesus at all, why not trust Him altogether? Trust was Peter's strength, doubt was his danger. It looked like great faith when Peter walked on the water, but a little wind soon proved it to be "little faith." Till our faith is tried, we can form no reliable estimate of it.

After his Lord had taken him by the hand, Peter sank no further, but resumed the walk of faith. How easy to have faith when we are close to Jesus! Lord, when our faith fails, come to us and we shall walk on the waves!

32. *And when they were come into the boat, the wind ceased.* So that Peter's walk and his rescue had happened in the face of the tempest. He could walk the water well enough when his Lord held his hand—and so can we. What a sight! Jesus and Peter, hand in hand, walking upon the sea! The two made for the boat at once—miracles are never spun out to undue length. Was not Peter glad to leave the tumultuous element and, at the same time, to perceive that the gale was over? "*When they were come into the boat, the wind ceased.*" It is well to be safe in a storm, but more pleasant to find the calm return and the hurricane end. How gladly did the disciples welcome their Lord and their Brother, Peter, who though wet to the skin, was a wiser man for his adventure!

33. *Then they that were in the boat came and worshipped Him, saying, Of a truth You are the Son of God.* No wonder that Peter "*worshipped Him,*" nor that His comrades did the same! The whole of the disciples who had been thus rescued by their Lord's coming to them on the stormy sea were overwhelmingly convinced of His Godhead. Now they were doubly sure of it by unquestionable evidence—and in lowly reverence they expressed to Him their adoring faith, "*Of a truth You are the Son of God.*"

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE MIRACLE OF THE LOAVES

NO. 1218

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“They considered not the miracle of the loaves.”
Mark 6:52.***

Let us, with deep attention, consider the miracle of the loaves lest we fall into the same evil as that which happened to the disciples in the text. When they saw Jesus walking on the sea, “they were sore amazed in themselves and wondered: for they considered not the miracle of the loaves, for their heart was hardened.” Hard hearts and painful unbeliefs spring up in the waste places where we bury our forgotten mercies. The miracles of our Lord Jesus Christ ought to be considered. They are not trifles and they ought not to be passed over as if they were the mere commonplace stories of a daily newspaper. Everything that has to do with the Son of God is a fit subject for the deepest study and all His sayings and works should be sought out by them that have pleasure therein.

Neither earth nor Heaven, time nor eternity, yield choicer gems of thought than the achievements of our Lord. Remember, since Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever, what He did at one time ought to be well considered, because it is the index of what He is prepared to do *again* should the need arise. He would still sooner feed His own sheep by a miracle than allow them to lack any good thing. His accomplished wonders have not spent His strength—He has the dew of His youth still upon Him. Our Samson’s locks are not shorn! Our Solomon has not lost His wisdom! Our Immanuel has not ceased to be “God with us.”

If the disciples had considered the miracle of the loaves they would have observed that Christ is grand in emergencies. When there were 5,000 people to be fed and no towns and villages near enough to supply them with bread and the people must faint by the way before they could reach the markets, then Christ was ready, full-handed in time of scarcity, prompt to dispense His liberality, able to meet the emergency so perfectly that the people must have been very thankful that such an emergency had arisen and, no doubt, often wished that they could have been in such a strait, again, if they could have had the Lord near to bring them out of it.

Had they considered the miracle of the loaves, the disciples would have known that Christ is not only grand in emergencies, but that He displays His power spontaneously, without need of pressing or even prompting. Before anybody else had cared for the multitude, He began enquiring about the state of the supplies from which the famishing must be fed. He it was who thought of the way of feeding them—it was a design invented and originated by Himself. His followers had looked at their little bit of bread and fish and given up the task as hopeless. But Jesus, altogether unembarrassed, and in no perplexity, had already considered how He would

feed the thousands and make the fainting sing for joy. The Lord of Hosts needed no entreaty to become the *Host of Hosts* of hungry men.

Remembering this, the disciples, in their new distress should have said within themselves, "Now will He display His power. We have scarcely need to cry to Him, for before we call He will answer! And while the emergency is yet pressing upon our minds He will hear." But they forgot what He had done on that occasion and, therefore, they fell into distrust as to their new trial. Beloved, is not this a very common fault with us? Do we not too often forget what the Lord has done for us in times past? We sing so rightly—

***"His love in time past forbids me to think
He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink.
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review
Confirms His good pleasure to help me quite through."***

But do we not forget those Ebenezers? Do we not very frequently suffer our memory to let His benefits go? Is not depression of spirit occasioned by the fact that we do not well consider the miracle of the loaves or its counterpart which has taken place in our history?

How many times have I sought the Lord in sorest trouble and He has brought me through! What burdens have I carried to Him and found them vanish! What needs has He not supplied? What marvels has He not worked on my behalf? Surely, if I think of what He has done for me, I shall not, unless my heart is hardened, permit myself to be afraid. Cannot many of you say the same? Are there not oases in your pilgrimage through the desert which, as you look back upon them, are to your grateful memory very green and full of sunlight where the Lord revealed Himself to you and worked very mightily for you? Consider, then, the miracle of the loaves as it has transpired in your own life story and be not afraid, whatever your present trouble may be.

At the present time I shall not consider the miracle of the loaves in the form of a sermon, but allow our discourse to take the shape of a little friendly talk.

I. Come, let us think a little, first, about THE GUESTS who gathered around our Lord when He worked the miracle of the loaves. And we are struck, first, with *their great number*. Jesus had His feast days, when He kept open house and entertained His guests in unusual crowds. Twice, especially, He held very remarkable feasts and His banquets were distinguished for the number that came to them. Here were 5,000 men and, on another occasion, some 4,000 men, besides women and children—and I should think that is a very large "besides," for the women and children may possibly have outnumbered the men—at least they often do so in our congregations nowadays.

This was feasting on an imperial scale! In the present instance 5,000 gathered together and all were as easily provided for as if there had been but five. Should we not *consider* this point and argue from it that the Lord Jesus will feed our hungry souls if we come to Him? Should we not, each one of us, say, then, "If I am a soul needing His love and mercy, surely He can bless me? Are there a great many saved already? Are hundreds pressing to the Savior at this very hour? Then why should I be shut out? He who could feed 5,000 could certainly feed five thousand and one! One,

more or less, could make no difference at so great a feast. No, I am quite certain Jesus can supply me, for He had 12 baskets *left* after He had fed all the host. Come, my Soul, if you are hungering after Christ, do not stand back as though you would be one too many! The more the merrier! The more that come to His Gospel banquet, the more pleased Jesus is.”

Some religionists are in raptures with the text, “strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, and few there are that find it.” They dwell upon the words, “*few* there are that find it,” with an evident gusto and self-appreciation, something like the old conservative voter when he denounced household suffrage and gloried in his own monopoly! Such thoughts are not according to the mind of Christ! He did not say, “I will feed 500 out of these people and the rest may starve.” But in the mighty bounty of His heart, the greatness of their number and the direness of their need moved Him to come forward and supply them all!

Had there been 50, they might have gone home as on other occasions, for 50 might possibly have found food in the villages. But the needs of 5,000 required a Divine supply. The greatness of the number of sinners seems both to encourage our Lord to act in mercy and to make it Divinely fit that He should act, for by His knowledge shall He justify many and bring many sons unto Glory. Let no sinner ever be troubled with the dread that he would be one too many at the banquet of Mercy! Neither let him fear that he will be an intruder. Christ’s banqueting hall was an open field—there were no walls or doors, or persons guarding the entrance—thus free is His feast of Love at this moment. Whoever will, let him come!

We note, next, *the strange character of His guests*. We do not know what sort of people they were, but this we do know, He did not exempt one because of any flaw in his character! They were a nondescript multitude. Little good could be said of them except that they had an ear to hear Jesus preach and were especially glad if the sermon was the first course, with loaves and fishes for the second. They were a carnal people and had nothing about them that deserved our Lord’s consideration. But when did Jesus Christ wait until men *deserved* it before He blessed them? When we give alms we think it right to make enquiries about the deserving characters of those who apply to us for relief. And I suppose we must do so, or we shall do mischief.

But our heavenly Father sends his rain both upon the just and upon the unjust and, even so, our Lord Jesus Christ feeds these people, though many of them were mere loafers and hangers on. Bad or good, the generous Savior fed them. It could not hurt them to have a bit of bread and fish to eat. A gift of food which people eat before our eyes is generally safe charity, and so the Master fed them. Let me, then, say to myself, I may be very unworthy and am. And my character may have nothing about it to commend it to the Lord Jesus Christ. But why should He not feed me with the food that is necessary for my soul? Has He not come into the world to save sinners? Did He not visit this world as a Physician to heal the sick? Let not my unworthiness keep me back!

Need of merit did not exclude one person from the miracle of the loaves and it need not exclude me, for He bids me come. Unworthy as I am, He invites me freely, repeatedly, earnestly—yes—He *commands* me to come.

Why, then, should I hesitate? If there are many, I will be one among them. And if they are of all kinds, I may the more freely join them. These guests had one thing in common which, I have no doubt, will be found among us, also—*they were all hungry and they were all poor*. They could not supply one single dish for the table. Not one of them had a loaf to contribute nor a fish to give to the Master of the feast. They were all hungry but not one could produce a crust. And the Lord neither asked them to contribute nor repelled them because of their poverty.

Am I, then, tonight, an empty sinner, having no good in myself? Do I feel that I could not contribute even one perfect thought, much less one solitary perfect *action* to the stores of the Redeemer's merit? Nevertheless, He bids me come, and I will come. He is a great Giver. I can only be a *receiver* and my utter lack of all goodness fits me to receive from Him, since the emptier the vessel the more it can receive. If I could help Him, there would be no need for Him to work a miracle on my account. But since I can bring nothing whatever, I need His miraculous power. As I see Him feeding hungry souls I will join in with the rest and partake of the fruit of His compassion. They were a penniless, foodless people and could not help themselves, but there was One who could help them *all*—and afford that help with ease! And so, tonight, whatever our hearts' necessities may be, Jesus is here to enrich us and to do it in a manner which will manifest the boundless Nature of His Love and Grace.

On one of these occasions we read that *there were women and children among them*. Now, I must confess, myself, I am not partial to very small children coming into the congregation. I am glad to see their mothers and, if they cannot come without bringing their infants, I am glad that they should bring them. But they certainly are not an improvement to a congregation, as a rule. Yet here they were—here were women and children—and I suppose that some of the children were very closely connected with the women by being carried in their arms, because they are described as, "*women and children*."

They were all fed and that would stop their crying! They were all supplied, however little they might be. And should not this be a great encouragement to me if I am seeking Christ, that if I am no better than a little crying child that might seem to be a nuisance in God's family, or if I am a person so poor, so ill-clad, that I may seem to myself to be as much out of place in a congregation as a crying babe, yet, nevertheless, the bounties of Divine Grace are as much for *me* as for others? Jesus would not have it said that He had no food for the children! He would not have the mothers go home and say, "The big men had their food, but we had only a few bones and broken scraps. And the poor dear children had none at all."

In Christ's feasts there is no complaining of the widows as in Apostolic days. None are neglected in the general ministration when Jesus presides. Whoever will, may come and partake of the bounties which the King of Heaven has prepared for every hungry, thirsty soul! So much about the guests. May these suggestions be blessed by the Holy Spirit to induce some hungry sinner to join with the rest of the company and feast on Free Grace.

II. The next thing we will consider in the miracle of the loaves is THE ORDERLINESS OF THE GUESTS. There were 5,000 but they sat down in ranks by hundreds and by fifties. I wonder how they were marshaled so well? Oh, I remember! The Lord of Hosts was there and He knows how to marshal armies! But how was it that they were willing to sit in ranks? People are not always so willing to be ordered about and, when they are hungry, they are often very disobedient. But they sat down as they were told to do. They sat down in rows so that they were divided with little aisles between them.

The original word used by Mark represents them as divided like beds of flowers, with walks between, so that as a gardener can go up and down and water all the plants, so the waiters at the feast could conveniently give every man his share of bread and his piece of fish without confusion. They sat down in ranks by fifties and by hundreds. Things do not look so orderly now, do they, as we see Christ, through His Church, feeding the multitudes? There is a good work going on in the north of England. There is a revival in Scotland. There is an awakening in Ireland and there is a stir in the midland counties. But does it not look very much like a scramble? Do we not seem to tumble over one another instead of doing our work in soldierly order?

A good work springs up in one place all of a sudden, while religion is dying out in other quarters. The people are satiated yonder and are starving only a little way off. We do not get at the masses as a whole, or see the Church progress in all places. Let us not, however, judge too hastily, for Jesus makes *His* order out of *our* disorder. We see a piece of the puzzle, but when the whole shall be put together and we shall see the end from the beginning, I guarantee you we shall see that Christ's great feast of Mercy, with its myriads of guests, has been conducted on a principle of order as mathematically accurate as that which guides the spheres in their courses!

God has laid down, in the book of His everlasting purposes, written by Him of old, everything that shall occur in the great economy of His Grace—and from that He never swerves. His purposes ripen at the proper time and His plans are carried out according to the wisest method. Providence, which so often looks wild and blustering, is not so by any means—it is working in harmony with Grace for the salvation of as many as Christ has bought with His most precious blood—and for the accomplishment of the grand intentions of electing love. The raising up of this minister and of that. The building of this House of Prayer and that. Even the bringing of a certain number of people at one time to listen and the bringing of such-and-such persons rather than others—and the moving of the preacher's heart to speak in this way and not in that and to dwell upon that subject and not upon the other—all these things are so ordered that, when the story of the Lord's great Grace Banquet shall be told, we shall say to ourselves, "It could not have been better. He has done all things well."

While we shall have to admire the grandeur of the works of Grace as seen in the number of the saved, we shall also admire the orderliness of it in the way in which these saved ones were separated to Jesus by the right means, at the right time and in the right place in such a way as to bring

the utmost possible glory to God. I like to think this over sometimes, not that we may quiet ourselves when we do not see numbers saved, nor that we may ever grow indifferent to the great multitudes who remain unconverted, but that we may rest assured that our God is not disappointed—that His plans are not frustrated and that, after all, the Gospel is not preached in vain!

You must not think, dear Brother, because for a little while you have been preaching the Gospel apparently without success, that there will be a deficit somewhere in God's account at the end of the chapter! You must not dream that because in certain countries the Gospel light burns dimly, God is foiled and defeated! When the book of God's purposes shall be all unfolded in actual history there will be found no blots, mistakes, or blunders there. He knows the end from the beginning and His purposes shall be fulfilled in every jot and tittle—in *nothing* shall the Glory of God be marred!

Though Satan may be laughing, now, and every now and then the men of the world may boast against the people of God, it shall not be so in the close of the affair! It shall be said of the entire matter, "It was a grand banquet of mercy and it was ordered well. And Christ, the great Head of the house, made a Divine display of His munificent mercy in causing the multitude to taste of His Grace." Our duty, I believe, is to urge the people to sit down and receive the Word of God. And the duty of the sinner is, especially when he comes to hear the Gospel preached, to sit in the attitude of expectancy, desiring to obtain the blessing.

I like the thought of those people all sitting down, although I wonder some of them did not say, "I shall not sit down. Pooh! Feed me with two fishes and five loaves? I could eat the whole thing! Feed all this multitude that way? I shall not sit down. Preposterous! Ridiculous!" One is surprised that somebody or other did not get up and say, "No, no, no, we are not to be made fools of after this fashion. Show us the table and show us something on it to sit down to, and then we will sit down, but not before." Let us be always confident that when God inclines the people's hearts to come expecting a blessing and to wait upon Him for it, it is *then* that the blessing comes.

I could not imagine the 5,000 sitting there waiting to be fed and Christ not feeding them. Could you conceive such a thing? Their sitting down in expectancy laid a sacred compulsion upon the Divine Compassion to which it gladly yielded. Oh, Soul, if you sit down in your hunger before Christ, and say, "Lord, I know You can feed me. By faith I open my mouth wide that I may eat of Your flesh and drink of Your blood"—then assuredly you shall be fed! Never was such a soul sent empty away. If you believe in Him so as to accept of Him, *you have Him!* Rejoice in Him! Enough, then, about the order of the feast.

III. And now a little about THEIR FARE. They had bread and fish. Jesus seems to have made that His standing bill of fare whenever He spread a banquet—bread and fish. They once gave *Him* a piece of honeycomb, but He seems always to have given them bread and fish. Bread was enough, was it not? Yes, enough. But not enough for Him to give, for He loves to supply a little more than enough. He would give a delicacy as well as a

staple—there was bread and fish. When Jesus Christ makes feasts for souls He gives them a staple—bread, all that they can need, all the necessities for their souls' life.

Giving a sufficiency He also gives excellency—He gives fish, there shall be savor and delight and peace with God. You shall not say, "He has given me workhouse fare—He doles out by half-ounces exactly what I need, but He helps me to no sweet morsels, no fat things full of marrow." No, you shall have more than you actually need! You shall find in your dish a secret something which will sweeten all and many other precious things of which you shall sing, "He satisfies my mouth with good things." Jesus might have called some of the people close to Him and given them bread and fish, and then have fed the next row with bread only, but He did not do so.

He gave bread and fish all round—and it is very sweet to think that all souls that come to Christ get the same spiritual food—and if they do not eat in the same measure it is their own fault, not His, for every promise that is in the Word of God is for every soul that believes in Him, save only where some promises are reserved for spiritual attainments, and then those spiritual attainments are to be sought after and may be reached by all the family.

O, chief of sinners! If you come to Jesus, there is the same love in His heart for *you* as for the chief of saints! O, least and weakest, and feeblest of all who believe in Jesus! There is the same Covenant Mercy and Covenant Blessing for you as for Paul or Peter! Bread and fish He gave to all who came to His table, and even so, there is a uniformity of spiritual meat for all His brethren. Jesus is the same precious Christ to all His people. What suitable food it was! Other kinds of food might have been either distasteful or indigestible to a considerable number, but bread and fish would surely suit all palates and all conditions.

They might all be satisfied with such light and yet substantial food, and probably they all were so. And here was the beauty of it—they did all eat *and were filled*. It was the right fare and a most agreeable fare. And there was so much of it that though they ate much, as I have no doubt they did, for they were very hungry, for they had been all day listening to sermons—and that is hungry work—still, for all that, there was enough for them, yes, enough and to spare! Gospel provisions are adapted to all needs. Gospel provisions are plentiful and are liberally given forth to all who come for them. Gospel provisions are sweet and pleasant to those who participate in them. Gospel provisions will satisfy the most eager appetites.

Come here, you hungry souls, you who have been to Moses and from him obtained nothing but the stony Law! Come and eat the bread of Heaven! Come, poor Sinner, you who have been to the pleasures of sin and found nothing there but the husks that the swine eat. Come to Jesus, and He will fill you to the full with a Divine meat! But we must pass on, having noticed the guests, their order and their fare, to notice the waiters.

IV. THE WAITERS at this feast were the disciples. Not the Apostles, I think, merely, but the disciples—all of them. They each came and received a portion and handed it round to the hundreds and the fifties. What a

blessed thing it is that Jesus Christ has not taken upon Himself to call all His people, by His Grace, apart from *instrumentality*. He might have done so if He had chosen. The blessed Spirit does not stand in any need of *us*—it is His condescension which leads Him to employ us. He might have sent the Bible into the world and the only part we might have been permitted to take in it might have been the printing of it, the giving of it away or the selling of it—and there it might have been left.

But instead He uses the living voice, the living example and the pious persuasions of His own quickened disciples. And what an honor this is! What a privilege this is! I am sure I should have been very delighted that day to help to pass round the bread and the fish—and would not you? It is one of the greatest pleasures you can have in life to feed a hungry man. If you have ever done it, you all know that there is a look about his eyes and a joy in the manner of his eating which makes you whisper to others, “I wish you would come and see him eat.” It gives you pleasure to see his pleasure! If he is very hungry, every mouthful is sweet to him, and you feel a sympathy with his gladness as his needs are supplied.

What delightful work it must have been to serve out that bread and fish! But O, to preach the Gospel! To preach the Gospel when God is blessing it to sinners! I have just finished 21 years of preaching to this congregation and they have been 21 years of toil, especially as the sermons have been printed every week. But I would not change the work for any conceivable occupation, or the happiness of preaching the Gospel for any happiness except that of seeing Jesus face to face! And I really do not know that I wish for that till I have done preaching the Gospel, for if souls are to be saved, I would far rather tarry here to help in it than go to Heaven itself.

Oh, the joy it gives you to see men saved! Have I not seen them, sometimes, in the vestry when I have talked with them and prayed with them, and they have risen from their knees, and said, “I see it, Sir, I understand it now. I never saw it before. I am a saved man, I believe in Jesus, I know He is my Savior.” If a man finds joy in having made £10,000 in business, he may keep his joy. I would sooner have the bliss of winning one soul for Christ! There is an intense satisfaction in soul-winning! These are the things George Herbert would have said, that make music in our bosoms when we lie awake at nights. These are the things that make it sweet to live and even sweet to die, if we may feed poor hungry souls with the bread of Heaven!

Now, I want all of you who love the Lord and have tasted of what He provides, to busy yourselves with supplying others. I wish we had more young men coming forward to enter into the Christian ministry, that more would devote their strength and talents to the preaching of the Gospel. But, at the same time, we ought to have more persons busying themselves in the school, more talking about Jesus Christ in their various families, more friends who would open their rooms for Prayer Meetings, more who would, in some way or other, try to get at the hungry world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

“Well,” says one, “but we must not push too much nor become intrusive.” We do not find that any disciple labored under that fear. No one in-

trudes on a hungry man if he brings him bread to eat. And if the hungry man should be so unkind as to call it intrusion, I have no doubt that after he has been fed he will be very grieved with himself for having said so and he whom he reproached will readily accept the apology. Go and intrude yourselves, my Brothers and Sisters, among the hungry, with the Bread of Heaven! Intrude yourselves between the living and the dead, as Aaron did with his smoking censor! Intrude yourselves in the valley of dry bones and cry aloud unto them, "Thus says the Lord, you dry bones, live!" Intrude yourselves as Christ intruded into a world which despised and rejected Him, to whom, after all, He is the only Savior.

V. We are getting on with our consideration of the miracle, for we have seen the fare and the waiters. Now let us go a step farther, namely, to THE BLESSING. There they sit, all hungry, and the waiters are all ready, but our Lord will not proceed till He has worshipped and rendered thanks. There is something in His glance and gesture—He looked up to Heaven. What did that mean? "O Father, these loaves and fishes are Yours. You have given them to us. We thank You for them. And now, O Father, the power to make these sufficient for the emergency comes from Heaven. Grant it, we pray You."

Brothers and Sisters, always give that look upward before you begin your work. Say, "Lord, here am I, a poor nobody, trying to teach others and to bring souls to Christ. For what I am, I thank You, for I am that by Your Grace, but if I am to be useful, You must make me so. Lord, I look up with the hope that You will look down." After our Lord had looked up to Heaven, we find that He blessed and then He broke the loaves. Jesus must bless our labor or it will be fruitless. *He* could bless the bread for Himself, but we must look away from ourselves for the blessing. May Jesus bless you all, and He will, if you look up, and say, "Lord, bless us."

Always do that on Sundays, especially, for those are great settled feasts of the Lord. Ask the Lord to bless what the preacher is going to say and then it will be made profitable to you. After the blessing comes the distribution, but not till then. O, for more looking up to God, for in Him lies our strength! O, for more praying—there can never be too much of that! If we stopped every evangelistic service for awhile and ceased from all teaching and preaching in order to spend a season in crying mightily unto the Lord, it might be the quickest way of doing the Lord's work! Pauses for prayer are not *delays*! Prayerless haste makes ill speed.

VI. Now came the work itself—THE EATING. The disciples distributed the bread and the fish as quickly as they could and the people began to eat. They all ate of the provision and they were all filled. Now, what should every soul, here, conclude, but this—if Jesus has provided spiritual meat He has not provided it to be *looked* at. He has not set it before us that we may merely *hear* about it. He has provided it that it might all of it be *eaten*. What is there for me? Lord, I am hungry, grant me a meal. O, Souls, if you would hear sermons with the view of knowing what there is in them for yourselves—that you might feed upon them—what blessed work it would be to preach to you!

But we hold up the Bread of Heaven and descant upon its excellencies, and tell you of its sweetness, and persuade you to taste and see how good

it is—and then we have the unhappiness of seeing you turn your backs both upon it and upon the great Lord of the feast—and you go your way as if you cared neither for Him nor for His bounties! The disciples had not this sorrow to distress them. None of the multitude refused the Lord's provision. The miracle of the loaves and fishes would have been a poor, lame business if the crowds had not eaten of the food so wondrously supplied. What? Jesus Christ a Savior and no sinner saved? Christ a Physician and no sick healed! It were a sorry business.

We must have the sinners saved and the sick ones healed, or Jesus is not honored. Ought not this to encourage all of you to lay hold upon Christ because He is set forth on purpose to be laid hold upon? Ought not this to encourage you to feast upon Him because He must have been meant to be fed upon? If you put two canaries in a cage tonight, and in the morning when they wake they see a quantity of seed in a box, what will the birds do? Will they stop and ask what the seeds are there for? No, but they each reason thus—"Here is a little hungry bird and there is some seed. These two things go well together." And straightway they eat.

Even thus, if you were in your right senses and had not been perverted by sin, you would say, "Here is a Savior and here is a sinner—these two things go well together. Dear Savior save me, a sinner. Here is a feast of mercy and here is a hungry sinner. What can that feast be for but for the hungry, and I am such. Lord, I will even lay to at this blessed festival of Yours and, unless You come and tell me to be gone, I will feast till I am full." Did you ever know of Jesus say to a sinner, "*You have no right here*"? No! But it is written, "Him that comes to Me I will in nowise cast out." No one was upbraided for eating that day, or for eating too much! Neither will any sinner ever be blamed for taking hold upon Christ, or for taking too hearty a hold upon Him!

Come and take Him, O anxious one, and the more fully you can take Him the more will Jesus be pleased! Why flows the river but to make glad your fields? Why sparkles the fountain but to quench your thirst? Why shines the sun but for your eyes to be blessed with his light? As you breathe the air around you because you feel it must have been made for you to breathe, so receive the full, free salvation of Jesus Christ because it is provided and you are in need of it! No mandate of Heaven exists to shut you out, but every sacred doctrine is an argument why you should come and welcome, and take Jesus freely!

The crowds all ate. None were so obstinate as to decline the free food. Did they receive the bread which perishes? I charge you, then, accept gladly the Bread which endures to life eternal!

VII. Now, when they had all eaten there came the CLEANING UP. There must be a cleaning up after every banquet. They went round and gathered up the fragments that remained and found 12 baskets full. This, as has often been remarked, teaches us economy in everything that we do for God—not economy as to giving to *Him*—but as to the use of the Lord's money. Break your alabaster boxes and pour out the sacred nard with blessed wastefulness, for that very wastefulness is the sweetness of the gift. But when God entrusts you with any means to use for Him, use those means with discretion.

When we have money given to us for use in God's cause we should be more careful with it than if it were our own. And the same rule applies to other matters. Ministers, when God gives them a good time in their studies and they read the Word and it opens up before them, should keep notes of what comes to them. The wind does not always blow alike, and it is well to grind your wheat when the mill will work. You should put up your sails and let your boat fly along when you have a good, favoring breeze—and this may make up for dead calms. Economically put by the fragments that remain after you have fed next Sunday's congregation, that there may be something for hard times when your head aches and you are dull and heavy in pulpit preparations.

But I think the beauty of it was this, that after they had all been fed there was *something left*. Did I hear a heavy heart complain—"I hear of a great revival and a great blessing, but I was not there. I was just gone out of the town when that blessing came. Woe's me, I am too late." Ah, there is plenty left. No penitent sinner is too late! Sometimes friends come in at the end of a meal and there is nothing left beyond the bare bones. But here is quite enough for you. Here are 12 baskets full to the brim! You are not too late! Come and welcome! Peter, bring some of that bread and fish. You have a whole basketful, hand it out. Let this poor, latecomer have his portion. What if the revival did miss you, and what if the Sabbath sermon did not bless you, though it blessed so many? Nevertheless, come along, there is something left.

And there is this to be remarked, too, that there was *something left for the waiters*. The 5,000 did all eat, but there were 12 Apostles who managed the distribution, and they have a basketful each to themselves. That was more than they had when they began! They had each a basketful. Many a time we, who are the waiters upon you in the Gospel feast, do not get so much as you do. I have sometimes, on Sunday, likened myself to a butcher who is selling his meat. This person comes for a joint, and that customer carries away a round of beef, while a third has a sirloin. Thus I have dealt out the meat of the Gospel while I have been very hungry, myself.

There seemed to be nothing for me but the chopper and the block. Is it not so occasionally with you teachers in your classes? Have you not found it so, you preachers in the street? You tread out the corn but are as starved as muzzled oxen. It shall not always be so. Go on feeding the people and you shall sit down afterwards—a great basketful will remain for you at the end. I remember a good story of one of our young Brothers from the College. He preached one Sunday afternoon what he thought to himself was a dull, powerless sermon. He was going away very much discouraged when an aged minister said to him, "My dear Brother, there are two tokens that God can give you of your being called, and they are such as He gave to Gideon.

"He can make the fleece wet while all the barn floor around is dry, or he can reverse the token, and He can make all the ground wet while the fleece is dry. Now, which token would you like to have?" "Oh, Sir," said the young man, "I see what you are driving at. If I could but hope that all the people were wet, this afternoon, I would not mind being dry myself." We

may well choose, my Brothers, to be dry fleeces if all our hearers are wet with the dew of Heaven! I like the sign best to come as a wet fleece and a wet barn floor, too, and when the Lord gives *that*, it is a favor, indeed! Such was the Divine generosity in this case. He gave the food for the 5,000, and the 12 basketfuls for those who waited on them, so that not a grumbler went away, nor a latecomer had to say, "There was none for me," nor a waiter missed his share!

Now, Brethren, cannot you believe that if 50,000 men had come trooping up that hill just then—if every blade of grass on that mountain had suddenly turned into a man. And if from among the brake, the heather, the bushes and the stones a great multitude such as that which shall gather on the Judgment Day, had all started up on a sudden, and they had all come and sat round the Savior, He would have still stood there and multiplied the loaves and the fishes right away and continued giving to His disciples till every one was filled?

I am sure that if all London should come to Jesus, they would find enough in Him for them! If all my fellow countrymen, yes, and all the human race that dwell upon the face of the earth, should be moved to come crowding around the Savior, there would be no fear of exhausting His power to save! We should not even have to hesitate for a moment, but just stand and preach the Gospel to every creature, still using, in the power of the Holy Spirit, the same cry, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved!"

Come, then, weary, hungry Sinner! You have nothing to do but to take Christ! You have not to bake the bread, or broil the fish! The bread and fish are broken, blessed and ready. Open your mouth and enjoy the food! Faith to receive what Christ provides is all that is needed. Lord grant it! Take salvation freely. Freely Jesus gives it to you. Take it and God bless you! And if you have never had Christ before, and you get Him tonight, you will have a happy future, after the sort that we read of in the Bible, when, "they began to be merry." Come, for all things are ready! Turn not away! God bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark 6:30-56.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—488, 500, 504.**

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HIDEOUS DISCOVERY

NO. 1911

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 25, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And He said, That which comes out of the man, that defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within and defile the man.”
Mark 7:20-23.***

How weary the Savior must have been of the idle prattle of the scribes and Pharisees! They are forever talking about washing hands before meals and washing pots and cups—and He is all the while occupied with the great griefs and sins of men and how He can save them from the wrath to come. He must have felt as some true physician feels who looks upon a patient, marks the serious nature of the sickness and plans a remedy—while some quack is boasting his nostrums or performing ridiculous signs and passes over the dying man. To serious compassion, imposture is provoking and sincere truthfulness is grieved by the mockeries of pretense. The dear Savior, knowing the Truth about the whole thing and solemnly concerned about it, is pained with the talk of these pretenders of learning and religion who, knowing nothing at all about the real mischief, professed to purge away defilement by the washing of water and outward ceremonies! Truly, I think every spiritual man must have a feeling of disgust, every now and then, as in these days he reads dissertations upon the cut of a priestly garment or the positioning of an altar!

Have you ever read what is to be done if a little wine is spilt upon the cloth of the holy table, or how the cup used in the “mass” is to be rinsed again and again, and carefully drained by the person ministering? Have you ever heard of arguments concerning the fate of a mouse which was so irreverent as to eat the holy wafer? What trifling it all seems—this serious discussion of garments and vessels with strange names, this exact directory as to when to bow and when to kneel, when to put on a robe and when to take it off! What a waste of time, of learning and of thought! What exaltation of trifles and forgetfulness of serious realities! Men are diseased to the heart with sin and ready to die and pass before the Judgment Seat to receive the condemnation which must lie upon those who continue in sin—and meantime, the teachers of the people are either busy with vain ceremonies or dreaming over equally vain philosophies!

Behold, a pretender to profound thought informs us that Moses was in error and Paul scarcely knew what he wrote about! These philosophic amenders of the Gospel are as arrant triflers as the superstitious posture makers at whom they sneer! The Savior makes short work of human traditions and authorities! Your meats and your drinks, your fasting thrice in the week, your paying of the tithe of mint, anise and cummin, your broad phylacteries and fringes—He waves them all away with one motion of His hand—and He comes straight to the real point. He deals with the heart and with the sins which come out of it! He draws up a diagnosis of the disease with fearless truthfulness and declares that meats do not defile men! He states that true religion is not a matter of observation or non-observation of washing and outward rites, but that the whole matter is *spiritual* and has to do with man's inmost self, with the *understanding*, the *will*, the *emotions*, the *conscience* and all else which makes up the heart of man. He tells us that defilement is caused by that which comes *out* of the man, not by that which goes into him! Defilement is of the *heart*—not of the hands!

To this teaching our Savior calls particular attention. Observe that He spoke it to the whole of the people and not to the scribes and Pharisees, only. It is necessary for every man to know this Truth of God and to lay it to heart. When He spoke, He added these words—"Hearken unto Me, every one of you, and understand." And then He said more—"If any man has ears to hear, let him hear." If a man fails to understand more deep and mysterious Truths, yet let him understand this—for an error *here* is an error upon a vital point and may lead to most serious damage, if not to eternal ruin! We are, all of us, called upon, therefore, to hear and to understand this day what the Savior says in the words of the text! Let me read them again, that they may sink into your minds. "And He said, That which comes out of the man, that defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man."

I. First, this morning, think, dear Brothers and Sisters, with deep self-abasement, of THE SWARM OF SINS. I seem to have broken open a wasp's nest and the stinging creatures fly out in number, numberless! Here are 13 words, each one of them teeming with all manner of evils. Matthew, when he condenses the Savior's utterances, mentions seven of these horrible things, one of which is omitted here, but Mark is more full in this instance and mentions 13 items of abomination. I am struck with the legion of foul spirits which are here set free, as if the door of the Bottomless Pit had been opened! As armies of locusts, or as swarms of the flies of Egypt, so are sins! As the wilderness was full of fiery serpents and scorpions, so is this world full of iniquities. The very names of them are a pain to the ears! Let us bow our heads in sorrow as we read the muster-roll of this legion of terror—"Evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickednesses, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness."

Now, notice first, that this awful catalog, this horrible list of the unclean birds that find a cage within the human heart, *begins with things that are lightly regarded among men*—“evil thoughts.” “We shall not be hanged for our thoughts,” cries one! I wish that such idle talkers would remember that they will be *damned* for their thoughts and that instead of evil *thoughts* being less sinful than evil *acts*, it may sometimes happen that in the *thought*, the man may be worse than in the deed! He may not be able to carry out all the mischief that lurks within his designs and yet, in forming the design, he may incur all the guilt! Thoughts are the eggs of words and actions—and within the thoughts lie compacted and condensed all the villainy of actual transgressions. If men did but more carefully watch their thoughts, they would not so readily fall into evil habits! Men first indulge the *thought* of evil and then the *imagination* of evil—but the process does not stop there. Picturing it before their mind’s eye, they excite their own desires after it—these grow into a thirst and kindle into a passion. Then the deed is speedily forthcoming—it was long in the hatching, but in a *moment* it comes forth to curse a whole lifetime!

Instead of fancying that evil thoughts are mere trifles, let us regard them as the root of bitterness, the still in which the poisonous spirit is manufactured. Our Savior here puts evil thoughts first in the catalog of evil things and He knew well their true nature. If we would be lost, we have only to indulge these—if we would be saved we must conquer these! Let us be very aware of our thoughts. He that does not, will not long be very aware of his words or deeds. Let us pray God to purge us in the inward parts, lest haply, by entertaining vain thoughts as lodgers within our hearts, they take up their residence, become masters of our lives and drive us onward to the outward sins which shall utterly pollute and defile us in the eyes of our fellow men.

Since this indictment begins with evil thoughts, who among us can plead guiltless? Since evil thoughts are the first of sins, we had better meet the charge with immediate repentance and an instant faith in the only Savior. These thoughts come into our minds in the House of God! They intrude into our *prayers*, they defile our *Psalms*! They disturb our meditations. Is there a sacred hill so high, is there a quiet valley so deep that in it we may be quite clear from these “evil thoughts”? Who can deliver us from this plague but the Lord our God? We need to humble ourselves at the first reading of this list and cry unto the Lord for mercy!

Carefully notice *the range which this catalog takes*. It is a very singular one, for it begins with thoughts and then it runs on until it lands us in utter lack of thought, or foolishness. Matthew Henry says, “Ill-thinking is put first and unthinking is put last.” Sin begins with “evil thoughts,” but ends in foolishness. The word rendered, “evil thoughts,” may be translated evil disputes, evil dialog. Now, this is thought, by some, to be almost a virtue, certainly a manly exercise! To be able to dispute, to be a questioner, a quibbler, a perpetual and professional doubter, that, I say, is highly esteemed among men! What is modern thought but evil thought? David says, “I hate vain thoughts” and all thoughts which run counter to the Revelation of God are vain. In this instance I may quote the Psalmist—

“The Lord knows the thoughts of men, that they are vanity.” Thoughts which are devout and reverent towards the sacred oracles are to be cultivated, but the thoughts which quibble at the revealed Truth of God and would improve upon the Infallible declarations of Jehovah are evil and vain thoughts. All manner of mischief may come out of thinking in opposition to God! Therefore it is said, “Let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts.” Thinking contrary to God’s mind and disputing with the clear statements of God’s own Word may be the first step in a descent which shall end in everlasting destruction!

Rising in evil thought, sin flows through a black country full of varying immoralities until it falls into the Dead Sea of “foolishness.” How often have I heard it said of a vicious life, when it has ripened into horror—“The man must have been mad! He was not only wicked, but what a fool he must have been! The devil himself seems to have forsaken him. He acted craftily enough at one time, but afterwards he went against his own interests and insured his own destruction!” Yes, men begin with the thought that they know better than their Maker and, at last, they reach utter thoughtlessness, stolidity of conscience and stupidity of mind! In the end they refuse to think at all and nothing can save them from reckless defiance of common prudence. They are given over to judicial senselessness. Though God Himself should speak, they have no ears for Him—their sin has brought on them the punishment of utter hardness of heart! They have made themselves to be as the adder which will not hear the voice of the charmer, charm he ever so wisely. This is the way of sin—to begin with fancied wisdom and end with foolishness! The man who thought himself more than a man, at last ends as a brute beast devoid of reason! What a range, my Brothers and Sisters, there is between these two points! Read the words, again, and see what a terrible zigzag path lies between wrong thought and no thought at all.

In this list you have *an amazing variety of sins*. The list is not complete and was not intended to be. It would be very difficult in words to compose a full roll, though it were written within and without, which would comprise all kinds of evils. But you have here, “deceit,” which seems to dread the judgment of men and, therefore, would delude it. And then you have, “pride,” which defies all mortal condemnation and lifts itself above its fellows. You have here different forms of the lust which seeks after pleasure at any expense, in the form of “fornications” and “adulteries.” And then you have the “covetousness” which clings to its gold and will consent to no outlay which it can avoid. Sin is a contradictory thing which blows hot and cold. It hurries men, like fitful winds, this way and that, yet never in the right direction. “We have turned, everyone, to his own way,” but all to the wrong way. Virtue is one, as truth is one, and holiness is one, but vice is abnormal and monstrous. Sin is 10,000 evils conglomerated in dread confusion. God keep us from ever navigating the dangerous sea of iniquity where currents run one way and undercurrents another—and where, oftentimes, sensual desires develop into whirlpools of abominable passions which suck men down into the depths of infamy and perdition!

In this list you will notice *certain sins which may be regarded as somewhat singular*. It is remarkable that, “evil thoughts” should be placed so near to atrocious acts of crime. It is singular, also, to find “an evil eye” mentioned just in this connection. What can it mean? May the very use of the eye become a sin worthy to be ranked with theft and murder? Yes, when that evil eye means envy, it proceeds to a high degree of wickedness and borders upon the worst of wrongs! When we look upon another man and regard him with malignity. When his prosperity makes us grieve. When in his very sorrows we take an inhuman delight and gloat over his misery, his sin, his degradation—we then sin most heinously and are prepared for any horror. This sin of envy and that other of blasphemy would appear to be a wanton superfluity of evil, ministering no appearance of benefit to men. Some sins have a winning witchery with them, but there are old hags of sins which ought to attract no man in his senses—and yet they hold men enslaved. Among these sins I rank envy, blasphemy and pride. This last I mention because it reads like a grim sarcasm, that sinners should be proud! What have such creatures to be proud of? What? Adulteries, murders, thefts and yet pride? One would have said that such sins would have forbidden pride. What a misalliance! A being infamous and yet puffed up! Alas, the worse a man becomes, the more is he filled with a sort of vainglory by the force of which he justifies his own iniquities and refuses to see his own vileness! This enables men to set darkness for light and light for darkness—bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. What an assemblage of banditti of every nationality range themselves under the banner of evil! Lord, save us from them!

Note, also, that of sins *there are many of each sort*. Especially in the original, it is observable that the first seven of these evil things are all in the plural. It is not, “evil thought,” but, “evil thoughts.” Not, “adultery,” but, “adulteries,” fornications, murders, thefts—the translation should also be plural of covetousness and wickedness—these are all in the plural for in any one sin there lurks a multitude of sins! One crime is built up of many—in any one form of sin there is a tangle and conglomerate of many evils. There are myriads of evil thoughts. In the crime of uncleanness there are stages—the thought, the word, the deed—all these are varieties of the same species, but they are all sins and they are, each one, worthy of the generic name though they do not take the same form.

If the varieties of each sin are so many and if all sins must be spoken of as a plurality under each variety, how innumerable must be the sins of men! O Lord, You alone know our iniquities! Who could set them in order before us but Your own Omniscient Self? What must they appear to Your perfect vision! Brothers and Sisters, if we were once to see sin in its true colors and were then to see it in its innumerable hosts, we would sink into despair if any sort of conscience remained in us. “Who can understand his errors? Cleanse You me from secret faults.” “All these evil things,” said our Lord, as He summed them up in that one solemn phrase. As we read that word it sounds the knell of all human glorying! I hear it yet again. “All these evil things.” How like the Old Testament declaration—“The Lord looked down from Heaven upon the children of men to see if there were

any that did understand and seek God. They are all gone aside; they are all together become filthy: there is none that does good; no, not one!”

How evil, my Brethren, each one of these sins may be, it is not possible for us to know, but *there is, not one of them, that is defensible*. They are, each one of them, vile before God and some of them are mischievous towards men. Evil thoughts mainly blacken the man’s own mind, but when he expresses them in disputations, they destroy the love of the Truth of God in others. Adulteries, as violations of the marriage vow, shake the very foundations of family life. Fornications, which today are winked at as though they were scarcely offenses, defile two persons at once in body and in soul! Actual murders follow frequently upon unbridled passion, but forget not that the command, “You shall not kill,” may be broken by anger, hate, malice and the desire for revenge. Many a murderer in heart may be among us this day, being angry at his brother without a cause. He that conceives and hides malice in his soul is a murderer before God! This form of evil breeds all manner of harm to society.

Thefts in all their shapes are also injurious to the commonwealth. By this we mean not only robberies, but all taking from others unjustly, such as the oppression of the poor in their wages, the taking of undue advantage in trading, the incurring of debts without hope of being able to pay and the like—these are varied forms of dishonesty and are full of injury to others. Covetousness—the greed to get and the greed to keep; the adding field to field until the man seems eager to be left alone on the earth; the grasping of excessive riches and the creation of poverty in others by crushing their humbler enterprises—all this is evil, though some applaud it as business sharpness.

Need I mention the evils which come of wickedness, deceit and lasciviousness? These are poisons in the air deadly to all who breathe them. I sicken as I think how man has plagued his fellow men by his sins. But I will not go through the list, nor need I—the devil has preached upon this text this week and few have been able to escape the horrible exposition! A foul exhalation has entered into every house in this great city, polluting the very atmosphere and spreading moral infection. Oh for a hurricane to sweep away the pestilent vapor! Within a narrow space, a multitude of iniquities have gathered like vultures upon a mass of carrion! What a collection of sins may meet in a single story! How soon does one transgression call to its fellows till, “a little one has become a thousand and a small one a strong nation!” Alas, alas for the multitudes of sins!

II. Now, secondly, I want to indicate THE NEST FROM WHICH THEY COME. Now that we have seen these evil beasts, we will go and look at their den. Let us make a journey there. No, you need not feel for your money to pay your fare—I am not going to take you very far. I do not ask you to quit your homes, or even your pews. There is not even need for you to stretch out your hand to feel for this foul nest of unclean birds—you can keep your hand upon your bosom and it will not be far off from the lair wherein these evil things are lurking, ready to leap forth whenever occasion offers. Our Lord Jesus Christ says, “All these evil things come from within.” “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts.”

The source from which these rivers of pollution proceed is the natural heart of man! Sin is not a splash of mud upon man's exterior, it is a filth generated *within himself*!

Now this is a very different story from that which we sometimes hear from thoughtless people. "Oh, yes, he used to swear. He was unkind to his wife and family—no doubt he took too much drink—but he was a good-hearted fellow!" What an awful lie! His heart could have been no better than that which came out of it. Yet how common it is to say, when a man dies, "Well, poor man, he is gone! There was no fear of God or man about him. He was a passionate, drunken man and so full of vice that no one was safe near him, but he was good at bottom." A likely story, is it not? The water which came up in the bucket was black and putrid, but, no doubt, at the bottom of the well it is clear as crystal! Do you believe it? If men bring to market baskets of fruit which upon the *top* are rotten, they will not be believed if they say that they are, "good at bottom." If the goods in the window are worthless, the stock in the warehouse is not much better. You can only judge of a tree by its fruits—and if I gather sour crabapples from a tree, I shall not believe that it is a golden pippin! If grapes, when fully ripe, are sour, we cannot believe that the vine which bears them is a sweet one! Our Savior makes short work of the lie that the life may be impure and yet the heart is good!

Another fine theory of modern times is disproved by our text. According to this evolution doctrine, as applied to theology, the new birth is a development of that which is naturally within the heart. I hope we may be spared such births and evolutions! According to this theory we have had some fine specimens of regenerate people of late, for we have heard of evolutions or developments which have brought out from within evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications and wickednesses of more than average proportions! God save us from all development of the sin which dwells in man! Philosophically the dogma of evolution is a *dream*, a theory without a vestige of proof! Within 50 years, children in school will read of extraordinary popular delusions and this will be mentioned as one of the most absurd of them! Many a merry jest will be uttered bearing upon the follies of science in the 19th Century. In its bearing upon religion, this vain notion is, however, no theme for mirth, for it is not only deceptive, but it threatens to be mischievous in a high degree. There is not a hair of truth upon this dog from its head to its tail, but it rends and tears the simple ones. In all its bearings upon Scriptural Truth, the evolution theory is in direct opposition to it! If God's Word is true, evolution is a lie! I will not mince the matter—this is not the time for soft speaking.

Regeneration is much more than reformation, or the development of natural goodness. It is described in Scripture as a new creation and as a resurrection from the dead. It is not the cleansing of the carnal mind, but the *implantation of a spiritual nature*. It is not a shaping, feeding, washing and purging of what is already in fallen man—it is a putting into us a life which was never there before. It is a supernatural work of God, the Holy Spirit—it is a miracle of Grace, a work of God! Out of the heart, if the volcano is permitted to pour forth its lava, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries,

fornications, and such like. The Savior compels us to see how bad the natural heart must be in itself, since that which comes out of it is so vile. Who could bring such unclean things out of a *clean heart*? The source must be foul if the streams are so filthy. These evils must *be within*, or else they could not *come from within*.

Our Savior is not speaking of a single man, or a certain set of men, but of man, generally, of man as a race! We are all very much alike by nature. "As in water, face answers to face, so the heart of man to man." Friend, you are of the same race as those whose sins you censure. Though out of your heart there may never proceed actual fornications and adulteries—God grant they may not!—yet the seeds of such evils are there and you will be foolish if you think that they can never grow into acts. If any man says that no such evil lurks in his heart, I lay to his charge the two last sins in the list, namely, pride and foolishness! No man should *dare* to think that he is incapable of a sin into which another man has fallen! We may never have suffered from fever, or cholera, or diphtheria—but we may not, therefore, conclude that we are not liable to such diseases. Nor may an unregenerate man, however excellent or moral he may be, conclude that he is invulnerable to the arrows of *moral* disease. Put the man in certain circumstances, tempt him in certain ways and there is a terrible possibility that he will fall into those very actions which he now so righteously denounces in others! I am a man and, therefore, liable to all the faults of human nature. Self-righteousness may induce us to say with Hazael, "Is your servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" But we shall be wise to forego so proud a question, for we may rest assured that we *are dog enough for anything* if the Grace of God is withdrawn from us! It is certainly true that "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: who can know it?" "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders" and so forth.

But what is meant here, do you think, by, "the heart?" Is it not intended to indicate the man himself—the man's most real self? Sin is sin, for the most part, because it is of the heart and the will. If the man's heart had nothing to do with it, I do not see how it would be sin. If a man had no will in the matter, where would his responsibility be? It is because we *willingly* do evil that we sin. The essence of the sin lies in the will to do it and the full consent of the heart in it. The heart is the center of life, the core of being, the place where manhood maintains its throne and what a terrible statement this is, that out of the very center of life there proceed from man "evil thoughts, wickedness, blasphemy" and the like!

The heart is the spring of action—the heart suggests, resolves, designs and sets the whole train of life in motion. The heart gives the impulse and the force and yet, out of the heart, thus initiating and working, proceeds all this mischief of sin. By the heart is meant mainly the affections, but it often includes the understanding and the will. It is, in fact, the man's vital self. Sin is not a thing extra that comes to us and afflicts us like robbers breaking into our house at night, but it is a tenant of the soul, dwelling within us as in its own house. This evil worm has penetrated into the kernel of our being and there it abides. Sin has intertwined itself with the

warp and woof of our nature and none can remove it but the Lord God Himself! As long as the heart remains unchanged, out of it will proceed that which is sinful. "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually."

If it is so, that the nest in which sin is born and nurtured is the heart, itself, we always carry about with us, by nature, that which will surely be the cause of sin unless we look well to it and cry daily for Grace to conquer it. This evil nature of ours is an always present danger—it is a powder magazine which at any moment may explode. Oh for Grace to keep our hearts with all diligence!

How clearly sin comes from within and not from outside! How truly it is born in the heart! Oftentimes we see men commit sins against conscience—they know they are doing wrong, for they will lie and even swear hard in order to conceal their folly. A man must know that he does wrong, for he labors to deny it when it is charged against him. Now, if a man sins against light and conscience, it shows that his heart must be radically bad.

Sin must be within us naturally since the best training does not prevent it. Children secluded from the sight or hearing of evil—kept, as it were, within a glass case—yet run to it when the restraint is removed! As the young duck which has been reared in a dry place yet takes to the water as soon as it sees a pond, so do many hasten to evil at the first opportunity. How often it happens that those young persons who have been most shut out from the world have become the readiest victims of temptation when the time has come for them to quit the parental roof! It must be in them, or it could not thus come out of them. In many cases, evil cannot be the result of mistaken education nor of ill example—and yet there it is—the seed is in the soil and needs no sowing.

Again, we frequently find men falling into sins towards which they would seem to have had no temptation. A man is rich and yet covetous. He has enough to content him if his heart were not evil. Men who have the enjoyment of almost every desirable pleasure too often crave after indulgences altogether unnatural. Does not this show how evil the heart is? Is not this specially striking when you see how men invent new sins, of which ordinary people would never have dreamed?

Moreover, put a man where you may and seclude him as you please, sin will still break out from him and, therefore, the sin must be somewhere within, hidden away. Do we not know this? When we are in associations of the best kind we find evil thoughts and imaginations springing up within our minds. Shut yourself up in a narrow cell, but there will be room in it for troops of sins! Hasten away and dwell alone as a hermit where rumor of pollution and iniquity can never reach you from abroad and still you will find the cauldron within boiling and bubbling up with evil! A door must be well sealed if it is to shut out temptation. No, shut the door and hermetically seal it and sin has already entered with yourself, for it is within you! Until you are delivered from that evil man, *yourself*, you are not delivered from tendencies to wickedness. The heart of man is the seed plot of iniquity and the nursery of transgression. As the

multitudes streamed forth from the hundred gates of Thebes, so do sins proceed from the heart! O Lord, have mercy upon us and give us new hearts and right spirits!

III. Thirdly, and briefly, let us notice for a minute THE DEFILEMENT WHICH IS CAUSED BY THE COMING OUT OF THESE EVIL THINGS. While they lie asleep within us, they are bad enough, but when at last they pour forth into our lives and buzz abroad in our acts, then they cause grievous defilement and make us unclean. In some cases they cause a defilement which our fellow men see and, seeing, begin to cry out against us and even to banish us from their society. Where that is not the case, sin always causes defilement to the man himself. He goes from bad to worse, from worse to worst. Sin is like a ladder. Few reach the height of iniquity at once—the most of men climb from one evil to another—and then to a third and a fourth. Sin hardens men to further sin. He who is a moral monster was not always such. By sinning much, he learned to sin more. The door of his heart was at first a little ajar, but outgoing sins opened it to its full width. A man is not capable, at first, of the sins which afterwards are habitual to him. Step by step, men descend into the abyss of infamy if their feet are not hindered by restraint, or stopped by Almighty Grace. Every sin produces a fresh degree of callousness in the heart. Even if sin is speedily repented of, its damage is not readily repaired—if its writing is erased, you can see where it used to be. Even the passage of a momentary thought over the mind will leave a stain. See, then, the defiling power of sin.

Here is the main point—the man out of whose heart these evil things proceed is *defiled before God*. I know that many will not think much of this, but that indifference only proves the hardening nature of sin. Only think of it—the sinful man is common and unclean before God! He is not fit to enter the sanctuary of God, nor to come into His Holy Presence. Sinful man cannot commune with a holy God! You do not mind that, you say. Ah me, how alienated from God are your hearts! If it were not so, we would judge that the most horrible thing in the world is for a man no longer to be able to speak with his Maker, nor his Maker to look favorably upon him. A breach of communion between the creature and the Creator is a kind of Hell, a blight, a curse, a death! God cannot comfortably commune with us while our hearts are fountains of defilement from which iniquity proceeds. By this defilement we become incapable of doing God any service. A defiled priest of old could not offer sacrifice. He that is defiled in heart and life can do nothing for God. God does not accept him and, therefore, He cannot accept anything at his hands.

All that a defiled person touches becomes defiled by that very fact—his hymns are defiled—sing them as sweetly as he may. His prayers are defiled, though he may offer them accurately as to their words. His very thoughts are defiled! By-and-by it comes to this, that God cannot bear this defiled one anywhere in His universe, among holy beings, any more than men can bear lepers in common society. The just God is driven to find a place where the willfully unclean may be placed apart—“where their worm dies not, and their fire is not quenched.” At last the great High

Priest will look upon the defiled one and, looking at him and seeing his leprosy of sin still upon him, that Priest will say, "Depart! Depart!" Oh the terror of that final word! I dare not dwell upon this awful result of choosing sin and refusing mercy! I the more readily cease from this theme because my last point is that upon which I would dwell as long as possible.

IV. Hear me, then, while I speak of **THE ONLY CURE FOR THIS EVIL.** O Sirs, your hearts must be cured of sin! Not merely the outcome of your heart, but the heart, itself, must be purged from defilement, for as long as sin comes forth from your heart, it shows that the heart is still sinful. The heart must be changed, or you can never meet God with acceptance, nor be found among the glorious throng who behold His face and find a Heaven in the sight! You must be renewed in the spirit of your minds, or you cannot dwell forever with God. How is this to be done? I answer, it is impossible—impossible with man! All that we can do towards it must fall short of the mark—

***"Madness by nature reigns within,
The passions burn and rage;
Till God's own Son, with skill Divine,
The inward fire assuage."***

You may take a thistle and water it carefully, but it will produce no figs—and you may cultivate a thorn through life, but it will yield no grapes. The leopard cub taken from its mother and tamed will still be a leopard—and the young serpent will still go upon its belly, teach it as you may. It is beyond and above all power of mortal man to change his own heart!

How, then, can we be made fit to dwell with God? Must we despair? Must we die utterly broken-hearted? Listen! For all the defilement that has fallen upon anyone here, even though all the defilement of my text should have met upon one single individual, there *is* cleansing! With God there is plenteous redemption and measureless mercy. For adultery, for murder, for blasphemy, for all manner of sin, there is forgiveness! The Lord rejoices to blot out the transgressions of repenting sinners, for He delights in mercy!

Last Sabbath morning it was my privilege to preach of Him who knew no sin, but was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. [**THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL**, Sermon #1910, Volume 32.] The glorious Doctrine of the atoning Sacrifice offered upon the Cross of Calvary is most charming to those who feel that they are defiled with sin. Upon that blessed Truth of God I could dilate without weariness by the month together—and this terrible theme of this morning, which sinks my heart into the dust—I have only brought forward that I may say afterwards, that the Lord Jesus is able to deliver us from all iniquity and cleanse us from all sin. Oh, you who are defiled, whoever you may be, come and wash and be clean! He that believes in Jesus is justified from all sin, whatever his transgressions may be! The Lord delights in mercy through the great Sacrifice of Christ. He is able to say, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Oh, that men would seek pardon through Jesus Christ who is exalted on high to give repentance and remission!

“Yes,” you say, “but pardon is not all we need.” Most true, it is not all we need. We need to have the inward source of sin taken away. This is also provided. Do you not know that in the blessed Covenant of Grace it is written, “A new heart, also, will I give you, and a right spirit will I put within you. I will take away the heart of stone out of their flesh, and I will give them a heart of flesh”? Our Divine Savior turns lions into lambs and ravens into doves! “With men it is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” There also lives among us One who came down to earth when Jesus went up to Heaven, abiding among us evermore. The Holy Spirit is here to set us free from the bondage of sin! He comes into the heart where evil dwells as a strong armed man and, being mightier than the evil, He drives out the foul spirit that held possession and He dwells there, Himself, changing the nature and creating faith and purity!

He makes us love the holiness which before we neglected and loathe the sin in which we once indulged. It is possible for us to be born again—Glory be to God for that! It is written, “Sin shall not have dominion over you.” I do not think we have ever praised God enough for this possibility. To be washed in the blood is a precious thing. But, oh, to be cleansed with the water which flowed with the blood from that dear pierced side is an equal blessing! To be made holy is a heavenly gift! To be sanctified is as great a favor as to be justified! Purity of heart is to be had by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ—is not this good news? Those who receive Jesus receive power to become sons of God and this means holiness! Those who become children of God are made like the First-Born and they grow up into Him in all things. Grace reigns in them through righteousness unto eternal life!

Brothers and Sisters, it may be well to make laws to restrain fornication, theft and blasphemy, but the only sure cure for all sin is the Grace of God in the heart. Are they going to stop dogs from going mad by muzzling them? Dogs will go mad with their muzzles on and so will men sin despite the restraints of law! So long as hearts are evil, evils will proceed from them. The only physician for sin is the Lord Jesus and His heavenly surgery lies in the renewing of the heart by Grace through the Holy Spirit who works by the Gospel. My Brothers, keep to the old Gospel—keep to the one remedy which has healed so many! No new theories for us! We accept the old and tried everlasting Gospel of the blessed God! The Truth of God will live and flourish when all the evil thoughts of men have proven their foolishness and are cast to the moles and to the bats, as images of deception, without life or power!

Pray for a blessing upon this burden of the Lord which, with a heavy heart, I have delivered to you. Amen.

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THE LITTLE DOGS

NO. 1309

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 6, 1876,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“But He answered and said, It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.”
Matthew 15:26, 27.***

***“But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it unto the dogs. And she answered and said unto Him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children’s crumbs.”
Mark 7:27, 28.***

I TAKE the two records of Matthew and Mark that we may have the whole matter before us. May the Holy Spirit bless our meditations. The brightest jewels are often found in the darkest places. Christ had not found such faith, no, not in Israel, as he discovered in this poor Canaanite woman. The borders and fringes of the land were more fruitful than the center, where the farming had been more abundant! In the headlands of the field, where the farmer does not expect to grow much beyond weeds, the Lord Jesus found the richest ear of corn that as yet had filled His sheaf. Let those of us who reap after Him be encouraged to expect the same experience. Never let us speak of any district as too depraved to yield us converts, nor of any class of persons as too fallen to become Believers. Let us go, even, to the borders of Tyre and Sidon, though the land is under a curse, for even *there* we shall discover some elect one, ordained to be a jewel for the Redeemer’s crown!

Our heavenly Father has children everywhere! In spiritual things it is found that the best plants often grow in the most barren soil. Solomon spoke of trees and discoursed concerning the hyssop on the wall and the cedar in Lebanon. So is it in the natural world—the great trees are found on great mountains and the minor plants in places adapted for their tiny roots. But it is not so among the plants of the Lord’s right hand planting, for there we have seen the cedar grow upon the wall—great saints in places where it has apparently impossible for them to exist! And we have seen hyssops growing upon Lebanon—a questionable, insignificant piety where there have been innumerable advantages! The Lord is able to make strong faith exist with little knowledge, little present enjoyment and little encouragement. And strong faith in such conditions triumphs and conquers and doubly glorifies the Grace of God!

Such was this Canaanite woman, a cedar growing where soil was scant. She was a woman of amazing faith, though she could have heard but little of Him in whom she believed and, perhaps, had never seen Him at all un-

til the day when she fell at His feet and said, "Lord, help me!" Our Lord had a very quick eye for spying faith. If the jewel was lying in the mire, His eyes caught its glitter. If there was a choice ear of wheat among the thorns, He failed not to perceive it. Faith has a strong attraction for the Lord Jesus! At the sight of it, "the king is held in the galleries," and cries, "you have ravished my heart with one of your eyes, with one chain of your neck." The Lord Jesus was charmed with the fair jewel of this woman's faith and watching it and delighting in it, He resolved to turn it round and set it in other lights, that the various facets of this priceless diamond might, each one, flash its brilliance and delight His soul!

Therefore He tried her faith by His silence and by His discouraging replies, that He might see its strength. But He was, all the while, delighting in it and secretly *sustaining* it. And when He had sufficiently tried it, He brought it forth as gold, and set His own royal mark upon it in these memorable words, "O woman, great is your faith; be it unto you even as you will." I am hopeful, this morning, that perhaps some poor soul in this place under very discouraging circumstances may, nevertheless, be led to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with a strong and persevering faith. And though as yet it enjoys no peace and has seen no gracious answer to prayer, I trust that its struggling faith may be strengthened, this morning, by the example of the Canaanite woman.

I gather from the story of her appeal to the Lord Jesus and her success, four facts. The first is, *faith's mouth cannot be closed*. The second is, *faith never disputes with God*. Thirdly, I perceive that *faith argues mightily* and fourthly, that *faith wins her suit*.

I. THE MOUTH OF FAITH CAN NEVER BE CLOSED, for if ever the faith of a woman was tried so as to make her cease from prayer, it was that of this daughter of Tyre. She had difficulty after difficulty to encounter and yet she could not be put off from pleading for her little daughter because she believed in Jesus as the great Messiah, able to heal all manner of diseases—and she meant to pray to Him until He yielded to her importunity—for she was confident that He could chase the demon from her child.

Observe that *the mouth of faith cannot be closed even on account of the closed ear and the closed mouth of Christ*. He answered her never a word. She spoke very piteously—she came and threw herself at His feet—her child's case was very urgent. Her motherly heart was very tender and her cries were very piercing. And yet He answered her not a word! As if He were deaf and dumb, He passed her by. Yet she was not staggered. She believed in Him and even He, Himself, could not make her doubt Him, let Him try silence even if He would. It is hard to believe when prayer seems to be a failure. I would to God that some poor seeker here might believe that Jesus Christ is able and willing to save and so fully believe it that his unanswered prayers shall not be able to make him doubt!

Even if you should pray in vain by the month together, do not allow a doubt about the Lord Jesus and His power to save to cross your mind. What if you cannot, yet, grasp the peace which faith must ultimately bring you? What if you have no certainty of forgiveness of your sin? What if no

gleams of joy should visit your spirit? Still believe Him who cannot lie! "Though He slay me," said Job, "yet will I trust in Him." That was splendid faith! It would be a great deal for some if they could say, "Though He smite me, yet will I trust Him," but Job said, "Though He *slay* me." If Jesus puts on the garb of an executioner and comes out against me as though He would destroy me, yet will I believe Him to be full of love! He is still good and gracious. I cannot doubt it and, therefore, at His feet I will lie down and look up, expecting Grace at His hands! Oh for such faith as this! O Soul, if you have it, you are a saved man, as sure as you are alive! If even the Lord's apparent refusal to bless you cannot close your mouth, your faith is of a noble sort and salvation is yours!

In the next place, *her faith could not be silenced by the conduct of the disciples*. They did not treat her well, but yet, perhaps, not altogether badly. They were not like their Master—they frequently repulsed those who would come to Him. Her noise annoyed them. She kept to them with boundless perseverance and, therefore, they said, "Send her away, for she cries *after us*." Poor soul, she never cried after *them*, it was after their Master! Sometimes disciples become very important in their own eyes and think that the pushing and crowding to hear the Gospel is caused by the people's eagerness to hear them, whereas nobody would care for their poor talk if it were not for the Gospel message which they are charged to deliver! Give us any other theme and the multitude would soon melt away!

Though weary of the woman's importunate cries, they acted somewhat kindly towards her, for they were evidently desirous that she should obtain the gift she sought, or else our Lord's reply would not have been appropriate, "I am not sent, save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." It was not her daughter's healing that they cared for, but they consulted their own comfort, for they were anxious to be rid of her. "Send her away," they said, "for she cries after us." Still, though they did not treat her as men should treat a woman, as disciples should treat a seeker, as Christians should treat *everybody*, yet for all that, her mouth was not stopped!

Peter, I have no doubt, looked in a very scowling manner and, perhaps, even John became a little impatient, for he had a quick temper by nature. Andrew and Philip and the rest of them considered her very impertinent and presumptuous, but she thought of her little daughter at home and of the horrible miseries to which the demon subjected her, and so she pressed up to the Savior's feet and said, "Lord, help me." Cold, hard words and unkind, unsympathetic behavior could not prevent her pleading with Him in whom she believed. Ah, poor Sinner, perhaps you are saying, "I am longing to be saved, but such-and-such a good Christian man has dealt very bitterly with me. He has doubted my sincerity, questioned the reality of my repentance and caused me the deepest sorrow. It seems as if he did not wish me to be saved." Ah, dear Friend, this is very trying, but if you have true faith in the Master you will not mind us disciples—neither the gentlest of us, nor the most rough of us—just urge on your suit with your Lord till He deigns to give you an answer of peace.

Her mouth, again, was not closed by exclusive doctrine which appeared to confine the blessing to a favored few! The Lord Jesus Christ said, "I am not sent save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," and though properly understood there is nothing very severe in it, yet the sentence must have fallen on the woman's heart like a talent of lead. "Alas," she might have thought, "then He is not sent to me! Vainly do I seek for that which He reserves for the Jews." Now, the Doctrine of Election, which is assuredly taught in Scripture, ought not to hinder any soul from coming to Christ, for, if properly understood, it would rather encourage than discourage! And yet, often, to the uninstructed ear the Doctrine of the Divine Choice of a people from before the foundation of world acts with very depressing effect.

We have known poor seekers mournfully say, "Perhaps there is no mercy for me. I may be among those for whom no purpose of mercy has been formed." They have been tempted to cease from prayer for fear they should not have been predestinated unto eternal life! Ah, dear Soul, if you have the faith of God's elect in you, you will not be kept back by any self-condemning inferences drawn from the secret things of God! You will believe in that which has been clearly revealed, and you will be assured that this cannot contradict the secret decrees of Heaven. What? Though our Lord was only sent to the house of Israel, yet there is a house of Israel not after the flesh but after the *spirit* and, therefore, the Syrophenician woman was included even where she thought she was shut out—and you may, also, be comprehended within those lines of gracious destiny which now distress you. At any rate, say to yourself, "In the election of Grace others are included who were as sinful as I have been, why should not I? Others have been included who were as full of distress as I have been on account of sin and why should not I be, also?" Reasoning thus, you will press forward, in hope believing against hope, suffering no plausible deduction from the doctrine of Scripture to prevent your believing in the appointed Redeemer.

The mouth of faith, in this case, was not even closed by a sense of admitted unworthiness. Christ spoke of *dogs*—He meant that the Gentiles were to Israel as the dogs—she did not at all dispute it but yielded the point by saying, "Truth, Lord." She felt she was only worthy to be compared to a dog! I have no doubt her sense of unworthiness was very deep. She did not expect to win the blessing she sought on account of any merit of her own—she depended upon the goodness of Christ's heart, not on the goodness of her cause—and upon the excellence of His power rather than upon the prevalence of her plea. Yet, conscious as she was that she was only a poor Gentile dog, her prayers were not hindered! She cried, notwithstanding all, "Lord, help me."

O Sinner, if you feel yourself to be the worst sinner out of Hell, still pray, believably pray for mercy! If your sense of unworthiness is enough to drive you to self-destruction, yet I beseech you, out of the depths, out of the dungeon of self-loathing, still cry unto God, for your salvation rests in no measure or degree upon yourself or upon anything that you are or

have been or can be! You need to be saved *from* yourself, not *by* yourself! It is yours to be empty, that Jesus may fill you! It is yours to confess your filthiness, that He may wash you! It is yours to be less than nothing, that Jesus may be everything to you! Suffer not the number, blackness, frequency, or heinousness of your transgressions to silence your prayers, and though you are a dog—yes, not worthy to be set with the dogs of the Lord's flock—yet open your mouth in believing prayer!

There was, besides this, a general tone and spirit in what the Lord Jesus said which tended to depress the woman's hope and restrain her prayer, yet *she was not kept back by the darkest and most depressing influences*. "It is not meet," said the Lord Jesus, "it is not becoming, it is not proper, it is hardly lawful to take children's bread and throw it to dogs." Perhaps she did not quite see all that He might have meant, but what she *did* see was enough to pour cold water upon the flames of her hope, yet her faith was not quenched! It was a faith of that immortal kind which nothing can kill, for her mind was made up that whatever Jesus meant, or *did* not mean, she would not cease to trust Him! She would continue to urge her suit with Him.

There are a great many things in and around the Gospel which men see as in a haze and, being misunderstood, they rather repel than attract seeking souls. But be they what they may, we must resolve to come to Jesus at all risks. "If I perish, I perish." Beside the great stumbling stone of election, there are Truths of God and facts which seekers magnify and misconstrue till they see a thousand difficulties. They are troubled about Christian experience, about being born again, about inbred sin and all sorts of things. In fact, a thousand lions are in the way when the soul attempts to come to Jesus! But he who gives Christ the faith which He deserves, says, "I fear none of these things. Lord, help me, and I will still confide in You. I will approach You. I will press through obstacles to You and throw myself at Your dear feet, knowing that him that comes to You, You will in no wise cast out."

II. FAITH NEVER DISPUTES WITH THE LORD. Faith worships. You notice how Matthew says, "Then came she and worshipped Him." Faith also begs and prays. You observe how Mark says, "She besought Him." She cried, "Lord, help me," after having said, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, You Son of David." Faith pleads, but never disputes, not even against the hardest thing that Jesus says. If faith disputed—I am uttering a mistake—she would not be faith, for that which disputes is *unbelief*! Faith in God implies agreement with what God says and, consequently, it excludes the idea of doubt. Genuine faith believes anything and everything the Lord says whether discouraging or encouraging. She never has a, "but," or an, "if." Or even a, "yet," to put in, but she stands to it, "You have said it, Lord and, therefore, it is true! You have ordained it, Lord and, therefore, it is right." She never goes beyond that.

Observe in our text that *faith assents to all the Lord says*. She said, "Truth, Lord." What had He said? "You are comparable to a dog!" "Truth, Lord. Truth, Lord, so I am." "It would not be meet that the children should

be robbed of bread in order to feed dogs.” “Truth Lord, it would not be fitting, and I would not have one of Your children deprived of Grace for *me*.” “It is not your time yet,” said Jesus, “the children must *first* be fed, children at the meal times and dogs after dinner. This is Israel’s time and the Gentiles may follow after. But not yet.”

She virtually replies, “I know it, Lord, and agree.” She does not raise a question or dispute the justice of the Lord’s dispensing His own Grace according to His sovereign good pleasure. She fails not, as some do who quibble at Divine Sovereignty. It would have proven that she had little or no faith if she had done that. She disputes not as to the Lord’s set time and order. Jesus said, “Let the children first be filled,” and she does not dispute the time, as many do, who will not have it that *now* is the accepted time, but are as much for postponing as this woman was for antedating the day of Grace!

She entered into no argument against its being improper to take the Covenant bread from the children and give it to the uncircumcised heathen. She never wished Israel to be robbed for *her*. Dog as she was, she would not have any purpose of God nor any propriety of the Divine household shifted and changed for her. She assented to all the Lord’s appointments. *That* is the faith which saves the soul, which agrees with the mind of God even if it seem adverse to herself—which believes the revealed declarations of God whether they appear to be pleasant or terrible—and assents to God’s Word whether it is like a balm to its wound or like a sword to cut and slay. If the Word of God is true, O man, do not fight against it, but bow before it! It is not the way to a living faith in Jesus Christ, nor to obtain peace with God, to take up arms against anything which God declares. In yielding lies safety. Say, “Truth, Lord,” and you shall find salvation!

Note that she not only assented to all that the Lord said, but *she worshipped Him in it*. “Truth,” she said, “but yet You are my Lord. You call me, ‘dog,’ but You are my Lord for all that. You account me unworthy to receive Your bounties, but You are my Lord, and I still acknowledge You as such.” She is of the mind of Job—“Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?” She is willing to take the evil and say, “Whether the Lord gives, or whether He refuses, blessed be His name! He is still my Lord.” Oh, this is grand faith, which has thrown aside the argumentative spirit and not only assents to the Lord’s will, but worships Him in it!

“Let it be what it may, O Lord, even if Your Truth condemns me, yet You are still Lord, and I confess Your Deity, confess Your excellence, acknowledge Your crown rights and submit myself to You. Do with me what You will.” And, you observe, when she said, “Truth, Lord,” *she did not go on to suggest that any alteration should be made for her*. “Lord,” she said, “You have classed me among the dogs.” She does not say, “Put me among the children,” but she only asks to be treated as a dog is! “The dogs eat the crumbs,” she says. She does not want a purpose altered nor an ordinance changed, nor a decree removed—“Let it be as it is. If it is Your will,

Lord, it is *my* will”— she spies a gleam of hope, where, if she had not possessed faith, she would have seen only the blackness of despair! May we have such a faith as hers and never enter into controversy with God.

III. Now I come to an interesting part of our subject, namely, that FAITH ARGUES, though it does not dispute. “Truth, Lord,” she said, “yet the dogs eat the crumbs.” This woman’s argument was correct and strictly logical throughout. It was an argument based upon the Lord’s own premises and, you know, if you are reasoning with a man, you cannot do better than take his own statements and argue upon them. She does not proceed to lay down new premises, or dispute the old ones by saying, “I am no dog.” But she says, “Yes, I am a dog.” She accepts that statement of the Lord, and uses it as a blessed *argumentum ad hominem*, such as was never excelled in this world! She took the words out of His own mouth and vanquished Him with them, even as Jacob overcame the Angel!

There is so much force in the women’s argument that I quite despair, this morning, of being able to set it all forth to you. I would, however, remark that the translators have greatly injured the text by putting in the word, “yet,” for there is no, “yet,” in the Greek! It is quite another word. Jesus said, “It is not meet to take the children’s bread and cast it to the dogs.” “No,” she said, “it would not be meet to do this, because the dogs are provided for, for the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.” “It would be very improper to give them the children’s bread, because they have bread of their own.” “Truth, Lord, I admit it would be improper to give the dogs the children’s bread, because they have *already* their share when they eat the crumbs which fall from the children’s table. That is all they need, and all I desire. I do not ask You to give me the children’s bread, I only ask for the dog’s crumbs.”

Let us see the force of her reasoning, which will appear in many ways. The first is this. *She argued with Christ from her hopeful position.* “I am a dog,” she said, “but, Lord, You have come all the way to Sidon. Here You are close on the borders of my country and, therefore, I am not like a dog out in the street—I am a dog under the table.” Mark tells us that she said, “The dogs under the table eat of the children’s crumbs.” She as good as says, “Lord, You see my position—I was a dog in the street, afar off from You—but now You have come and preached on our borders and I have been privileged to listen to You. Others have been healed and You are in this very house doing deeds of Grace while I look on and, therefore, though I am a dog, I am a dog under the table. Therefore, Lord, let me have the crumbs.”

Do you see, dear Hearer? You admit that you are a sinner and a great sinner, but you say, “Lord, I am a sinner that is *permitted* to hear the Gospel, therefore bless it to me! I am a dog, but I am under the table, deal with me as such! When there is a sermon preached for the comfort of Your people, I am there to hear it. Whenever the saints gather together and the precious promises are discussed, and they rejoice therein, I am there, looking up and wishing that I was among them. But Lord, since You have had the Grace to let me be a hearer of the Gospel, will You reject me, now

that I desire to be a *receiver* of it? To what end and purpose have You brought me so near, or rather *come* so near to me, if, after all, You will reject me? Dog I am, but still, I am a dog under the table. It is a favor to be privileged to be among the children, even if I may only lie at their feet. I pray You, good Lord, since now I am permitted to look up to You and ask this blessing, do not reject me.”

To me it seems that this was a strong point with the woman and that she used it well. Her next plea was *her encouraging relationship*. “Truth, Lord,” she says, “I am a dog, but the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from *their master’s table*.” See the stress laid there by Matthew—“From their master’s table”? I cannot say that you are my father. I cannot look up and claim the privilege of a child, but you are my Master, and masters feed their dogs. They give at least the crumbs to those dogs which acknowledge them as their lord.” The plea is very much like that suggested to the mind of the poor returning prodigal. He thought to say to his father, “Make me as one of your hired servants,” only his faith was far less than hers.

For hers pleaded, “Lord, if I do not stand in relation to you as a child, yet I am Your *creature*. You have made me and I look up to You and beseech You not to let me perish. If I have no other hold upon You, I have at least this, that I ought to have served You and, therefore, I am Your servant though I am a runaway. I do belong to You—at least under the Covenant of Works if I do not under the Covenant of Grace, and oh, since I am Your servant, do not utterly reject me! You have some property in me by creation, at any rate. Oh, look upon me, and bless me. The dogs eat what falls from their master’s table—let me do the same.” She spies out a dog’s relation to its master and makes the most of it with blessed ingenuity, which we shall do well to imitate.

Notice next, she pleads *her association with the children*. Here I must tell you that it is a pity that it was not, I suppose, possible for our translators to bring clearly out what is, after all, the heart of the passage. She was pleading for her *little* daughter and our Lord said to her, “It is not meet to take the children’s bread and cast it to the *little* dogs.” The word is a diminutive and the woman focused upon it. The word, “dogs,” could not have served her turn one half as well as that of, “*little* dogs.” But she said, “Truth, Lord, yet the little dogs eat of the crumbs.” In the East, as a rule, a dog is not allowed indoors. In fact, dogs are looked upon there as foul creatures and roam about uncared for and half wild.

Christianity has raised the dog and made him man’s companion, as it will raise all the brute creation, till the outrages of vivisection and the cruelties of the vulgar will be things unheard of except as horrors of a past barbarous age. In the East a dog is far down in the scale of life—a street wanderer, prowling for scanty food—and in temper little better than a reformed wolf. So the adult Easterns do not associate with dogs, having a prejudice against them. But children are not so foolish and, consequently, the Eastern *children* associate with the little dogs. The father will not have the dog near him, but his child knows no such folly and seeks out a little

dog to join him in his sports. Thus the little dog comes to be under the table, tolerated in the house for the child's sake.

The woman appears, to me, to argue thus—"You have called me and my daughter whelps, little dogs. But then the little dogs are under the children's table. They associate with the children, even as I have been with Your disciples today. If I am not one of them, I have been associating with them, and would be glad to be among them." How heartily do I wish that some poor soul would catch at this and say, "Lord, I cannot claim to be one of Your children, but I love to sit among them, for I am never happier than when I am with them. Sometimes they trouble and distress me, as little children pinch and hurt their little dogs, but oftentimes they caress me and speak kindly and comfortably to me. And they pray for me, and desire my salvation. So, Lord, if I am not a child, yet You call me a little dog and so I am. So give me a little dog's treatment—give me the crumbs of mercy which I seek."

Her argument goes further, *for the little dog eats the crumbs of the children's bread with the child's full consent*. When a child has its little dog to play with while he is eating, what does the child do? Why, of course, it gives a little bit to the dog every now and again and the doggie, himself, takes great liberties and helps himself as much as he dares. When a little dog is with the children at meal time it is sure to get a crumb from one or other of its playmates—and none will object to its eating what it can get.

So the woman seems to say, "Lord, there are the children, Your disciples. They do not treat me very well. Little children do not treat little dogs always so kindly as they might, but still, Lord, they are quite willing that I should have the blessing I am seeking. They have a full portion in You. They have Your Presence. They have Your Word. They sit at Your feet. They have obtained all sorts of spiritual blessings. I am sure they cannot grudge me so much less a blessing—they are willing that I should have the devil cast out of my daughter, for that blessing, compared with what they have, is but a crumb—and they are content that I should have it. So Lord, I answer Your argument. You say it is not meet until the children are filled to give bread to dogs, but, Lord, the children are filled and are quite willing to let me have my portion. They consent to allow me the crumbs! Will You not give them to me?"

I think there was another point of force in her plea—*the abundance of the provision*. She had a great faith in Christ and believed big things of Him and, therefore, she said, "Lord, there is no great strength in Your argument if You do intend to prove that I ought not to have the bread for fear there should not be enough for the children, for You have so much that even while the children are being fed, the dogs may get the crumbs and there will still be enough for the children!" Where it is a poor man's table and he cannot afford to lose a crumb, dogs should not be allowed. But when it is a *king's* table where bread is of small account, and the children are sitting and feeding to the full, the little dogs may be permitted to feed under the table for the mere droppings—not the bread the master

casts down, but the crumbs which *fall* by accident are so many that there is enough for the dogs without the children being deprived of a mouthful.

“No, Lord,” she said, “I would not have You take away the bread from Your own children! God forbid that such a deed should be done for *me*! But there is enough for Your children in Your overflowing love and mercy and still enough for me, for all I ask is but a *crumb* compared with what You are daily bestowing upon others.” Now, here is the last point in which her argument had force. *She looked at things from Christ’s point of view.* “If, great Lord,” she said, “You look at me as a dog, then behold I humbly take You at Your word, and plead that if I am a dog to You, then the cure I ask for my daughter is but a crumb for Your great power and goodness to bestow on me.” She used a diminutive word, too, and said, “A little crumb.”

The little dogs eat of the little crumbs which fall from the children’s table. What bold faith this was! She valued the mercy she sought beyond all price! She thought it worth 10,000 worlds to *her*, but yet to the Son of God she knew it to be a mere crumb, so rich is He in power to heal and so full of goodness and blessing! If a man gives a crumb to a dog, he has a little the less, but if *Jesus* gives mercy to the greatest of sinners, He has none the less—He is just as rich in condescension and mercy and power to forgive as He was before! The woman’s argument was most potent. She was as wise as she was earnest and, best of all, she believed most marvelously!

I shall close this outline of the argument by saying that at bottom the woman was, in reality, arguing according to the eternal purposes of God, for what was the Lord’s grand design in giving the bread to the children, or, in other words, sending a Divine Revelation to Israel? Why, it always was His purpose that through the children, the dogs should get the bread—that through Israel the Gospel should be handed to the Gentiles! It had always been His plan to bless His own heritage that His way might be known upon earth, His saving health among all nations! And this woman, somehow or other, by a Divine instinct, fell into the Divine method. Though she had not spied out the secret, or at least it is not told us that she did so in so many words, yet there was the innate force of her argument.

In other words, it ran thus—“It is through the children that the dogs have to be fed. Lord, I do not ask You to cease giving the children their bread. Nor do I even ask You to hurry on the children’s meal—let them be fed first—but even while they are eating, let me have the crumbs which drop from their well-filled hands and I will be content.” There is a brave argument for you, poor coming Sinner. I leave it in your hands and pray the Spirit of God to help you to use it! And if you can turn it to good account, you shall prevail with the Lord this day!

IV. Our last and closing head is this—FAITH WINS HER SUIT. This woman’s faith first *won a commendation for herself*. Jesus said, “O, Woman, great is your faith.” She had not heard of the prophecies concern-

ing Jesus. She was not bred and born and educated in a way in which she was likely to become a Believer and yet she *did* become a Believer of the first class. It was marvelous that it should be so, but Grace delights in doing wonders. She had not seen the Lord, before, in her life. She was not like those who had associated with Him for many months and yet, with but *one* view of Him, she gained this great faith! It was astonishing, but the Grace of God is always astonishing!

Perhaps she had never seen a miracle—all that her faith had to rest upon was that she had heard in her own country that the Messiah of the Jews was come—and she believed that the Man of Nazareth was He and on this she relied. O Brothers and Sisters, with all our advantages! With the opportunities that we have of knowing the whole life of Christ and understanding the doctrines of the Gospel as they are revealed to us in the New Testament—with many years of observation and experience—our faith ought to be much stronger than it is! Does not this poor woman shame us when we see her with her slender opportunities, nevertheless so strong in faith, so that Jesus Himself commending her says, “O Woman, great is your faith”?

But her faith prevailed further in that it *won a commendation for the mode of its action*, for, according to Mark, Jesus said, “Go your way; *for this saying* the devil is gone out of your daughter.” It was as if He rewarded the *saying* as well as the faith which suggested it! He was so delighted with the wise, prudent and humble, yet courageous manner in which she turned His words against Himself, that He said, “For this saying the devil is gone out of your daughter.” The Lord who commends faith, afterwards commends the fruits and acts of faith! The Tree consecrates the fruit! No man’s actions can be acceptable with God till He, Himself, is accepted. And the woman, having been accepted on her faith, the results of her faith were agreeable to the heart of Jesus.

The woman also *gained her desire*—“The devil is gone out of your daughter,” and he was gone at once! She had only to go home and find her daughter on the bed taking a quiet rest—something which she had not done since the demon had possessed her! Our Lord, when He gave her the desire of her heart, gave it in a grand manner! He gave her a sort of *carte blanche* and said, “Be it unto you even as you will.” I do not know that any other person ever had such a word said to them as this woman, “Be it unto you even as you will.” It was as if the Lord of Glory surrendered at discretion to the conquering arms of a woman’s faith! The Lord grant to you and me, in all times of our struggling, to be able, thus, by faith, to conquer—and we cannot imagine how great will be the spoil which we shall divide when the Lord shall say, “Be it unto you even as you will.”

The close of all is this—this woman is a lesson to all outsiders—to you who think yourselves beyond the pale of hope, to you who were not brought up to attend the House of God, who perhaps have been negligent of all religion for almost all your life. This poor woman is a Sidonian. She comes of a race that had been condemned to die many centuries before—

one of the accursed seed of Canaan! And yet, for all that, she became great in the kingdom of Heaven because she believed! And there is no reason why those who are reckoned to be quite outside the Church of God should not be in the very center of it—and be the most burning and shining lights of the whole! O you poor outcasts and far-off ones, take heart and comfort! Come to Jesus Christ and trust yourselves in His hands!

This woman is, next of all, an example to those who think they have been repulsed in their endeavors after salvation. Have you been praying and have you not succeeded? Have you sought the Lord and do you seem to be more unhappy than ever? Have you made attempts at reformation and amendment and believed that you made them in the Divine strength—and have they failed? Yet trust in Him whose blood has not lost its efficacy, whose promise has not lost its truth, and whose arm has not lost its power to save! Cling to the Cross, Sinner! If the earth sinks beneath you, hang on! If storms should rage and all the floods be out, and even God, Himself, seems to be against you, cling to the Cross! There is your hope! You cannot perish there!

This is a lesson, next, to every intercessor. This woman was not pleading for *herself*, she was asking for another. Oh, when you plead for a fellow sinner, do not do it in a cold-hearted manner! Plead as for your own soul and your own life! That man will prevail with God as an intercessor who solemnly bears the matter upon his own heart and makes it his own and with tears entreats an answer of peace! Lastly, remember that this mighty woman, this glorious woman, is a lesson to every mother, for she was pleading for her little daughter! Maternal instinct makes the weakest strong, and the most timid brave. Even among poor beasts and birds, how powerful is a mother's love!

Why, the poor little robin which would be frightened at the approach of a *footstep*, will sit upon its nest when the intruder comes near when her little ones are in danger. A mother's love makes her heroic for her child! And so, when you are pleading with God, plead as a mother's love suggests to you, till the Lord shall say to you, also, "O Woman, great is your faith; the devil is gone out of your daughter; be it unto you even as you will." I leave that last thought with parents as an encouragement to pray. The Lord stir you up to it, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew 15:1-31.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—906, 551, 540.**

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THE PROBLEM OF THE AGE

NO. 1885

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 7, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And His disciples answered Him, How can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?”
Mark 8:4.

I HAVE been, for a while, lying outside the crowd, unable either to feed the multitude or to bring the sick to the Master. Here and there I have helped one, as opportunity has occurred, but I have been called to rest rather than to serve. Yet all the while I have never ceased from constant thought about the perishing multitudes—this great city and its sad estate, this country, Ireland and continental nations are all under a cloud of deep depression. One can remove his body from the turmoil, but his heart is still in it. If ever there was a time when there was a call for the deep sympathy of all Christian people with the perishing multitudes, it is just now. If ever the Church should gird herself to do her Master's service, it is today. Never forget that the Church is the Spouse of Christ. She is His chosen Bride and she is, therefore, to unite with Him in His great enterprise among the sons of men. The work is *salvation* and that work is to be worked by means of Divine Truth, carried to men, externally, by human hands and, internally, through the Spirit of God. The Church will be false to her heavenly Bridegroom if she does not sympathize with the tenderness of His heart and enter into His gracious labor of love.

The question before us is certainly unique if we remember that those who asked it had seen a former miracle of feeding the multitude. It would seem that those who had seen 5,000 fed would not ask concerning the feeding of 4,000. “How can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?” Inasmuch as on one memorable occasion they had seen the Master multiply loaves and fishes, they might have expected Him to do the same again. I grant you to the fullest that it was an inexcusable question. I will not offer the slightest apology for it, but yet it is a very *natural* question—natural, I mean, to that fallen and depraved human nature which is our daily grief. He that knows what human nature is will be astonished at nothing evil that it produces! I do not mean human nature merely unrenewed by Grace, but I mean that carnal nature which remains even in the disciples of Christ. This is of such a character that it shamefully gives way to unbelief.

You ask me to give an instance—I point to you! Have you not often seen the hand of God? And yet the next time you have needed Divine help, you have been in anxiety and doubt. Remember how Israel saw the Red Sea

divided and yet the people feared that they would die of thirst? When the riven rock had relieved them, they were next, afraid of hunger! And after the heavens had rained them bread, they became alarmed at the size of the giants who dwelt in Canaan. All that God had done seemed to go for nothing with them—they relapsed into their old unbelief. Are you and I much better? Alas, we may here see ourselves as in a mirror! Those who have a smooth path often boast of a vast amount of faith, or what they think to be faith. But those who follow a wilderness way must often confess to their shame that after receiving great mercy they still find unbelief creeping in.

This is shameful to the last degree and should cause us bitter sorrow and great fear lest we should provoke the Lord to anger! Before us must often rise the example of those whose carcasses fell in the wilderness because of their unbelief. All this makes us fear that had we been with our Lord in the desert, we would not have behaved better than Peter and James and John! We, too, might have forgotten the former miracle of the loaves and have anxiously enquired, “How can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?”

The question, although it is thus surprising and inexcusable, may, however, be used this morning for our profit. It may at least do this good—as we shall not be able to answer it on any human lines, it will show us our inability—and that is what our Lord would make most clear before His power is revealed. I should not wonder but what He drew those people into the desert on purpose that there might be *no suspicion* that when they were fed, they had *not* been supplied from fields or gardens, or by the charity of inhabitants. It was a barren spot, out of which nothing could be grown! The disciples had to feel this and recognize this and state this—and then the Lord had a clear platform for working His miracle. He wants to clear you out, Brothers and Sisters! He wants to make you see what a weak, poor, petty, miserable thing you are! And when He has brought you to that, then His own arm shall be revealed in the eyes of all the people—and all who behold it shall give Him the Glory due unto His name.

Let us come, then, to our question with the hope that it may be sanctified to holy ends.

“How can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?” First, *this is a pressing problem*—how to meet the needs of the multitude. Secondly, press as it may, *it is one of tremendous difficulty*. But thirdly, and cheeringly, *it is capable of a very glorious answer*. There is a Man who, from His infinite resources, can satisfy the countless myriads of our race even in this wilderness!

I. First, then, IT IS A VERY PRESSING PROBLEM. What is to be done for the perishing multitude? What is to be done to satisfy men’s souls? I confine the question to *spiritual* matters at this time, though I, by no means, slight the dreadful social and material questions which are also especially urgent at this hour.

At this present moment *myriads of souls are in present need*. We sometimes think too exclusively of salvation as having reference to the world to

come, but it has an urgent, all-important reference to this present state. A man who does not know Christ is a wretched man! A man who has never been renewed in heart, who lives in sin and loves it, is a pitiable being, a lost soul over whom angels might weep! If there were no Heaven to miss and no Hell to merit, sin is a curse upon this life. It is Hell to live without a Savior! If there were no poverty in London, it would be quite enough to break one's heart to think that there is *sin* in it reigning over the ungodly.

That grievous side of London life which raises "the bitter cry," is not, after all, the worst side of it—it is, to a great extent, the outer disease which marks a secret cancer at the heart! If drunkenness brought no consequences, if vice involved no misery it would not be better, but far worse, for our race. It is a more horrible thing when wickedness wraps itself in scarlet and fine linen and when vice, by the help of an abominable protectorate, is enabled to escape Scot free. Sin rampant without check would be even worse than the present woe! It is an awful thing to think that masses of our fellow men have never turned to their Creator with obedient hope, have never confessed their sin against Him and have lived without thanking Him for His mercy, or trembling at His justice! Great Lord, You know better than we do what horror dwells in the ungodliness of men! Brothers and Sisters, the multitudes are without the Bread of Life! Shall we not distribute it among them at once?

The multitudes are, also, in *awful peril as to the future*. When our Savior looked with compassion on the multitude, He not only noticed their present hunger, but He foresaw what would come of it. "If I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for many of them came from far." Their immediate hunger touched the Savior, but He did not forget its consequences—they would go back to their mountain dwellings and, in the attempt to climb their terraces, one would fall by the hillside from need of food, and another would drop in the sun from sheer exhaustion. Perhaps a mother carrying her babe at her bosom might find it dead for lack of nourishment, or the women, themselves, might faint and perish by the way. This our tender Lord could not bear to think of. Thus, when we look into the future of a soul, we start back aghast from the vision!

In these times, my Brothers and Sisters, many attempts have been made to represent the condition of impenitent sinners in the world to come as less dreadful than the plain Scripture declares it to be. I cannot see what practical result can arise out of such teaching except it be the hardening of men's hearts and placing them more at ease than they are, now, in their indifference with regard to their fellow men. I know that at this hour a master argument with my heart in seeking to save my fellow men is the intolerable thought that if they die without a Savior, they enter upon a fixed state in which they will continue in sin and consequent misery without hope of change. I am anxious to save men from Hell, at once, because I see no other day of hope for them.

Since these things are so—and I am assured they are—every man who has a spark of humanity and a grain of Grace is bound to cry mightily unto God concerning the vast multitude of men who are passing away

from under the sound of the Gospel and rejecting it—who are living in the land of Gospel light and willfully closing their eyes to it and so are choosing endless darkness! If you are not awakened to action, O Christian, by the twofold belief that sin in this life is an intolerable evil and that, in the world to come, it involves endless woe, what will bestir you? If this does not awaken your compassion for men! If this does not bring you heart-break, are you not hard as stones, unfeeling as savage beasts?

The case of the multitude is laid upon the Church of God. The Lord Jesus Christ took up all the hungry thousands and laid them at the feet of His disciples. These were His own words, as He commissioned them, “Give you them to eat.” It was a great honor to them to be taken into co-partnership with their Lord—a high privilege to be workers together with Him in relieving this far-spread hunger. It was a great honor, but what a responsibility it involved! If one of them had quietly stolen into the background, whispering to himself, “this is a Quixotic notion.” If another had hidden behind a rock and said, “I shall pray about it, but that is all I can do”—why what a disgrace it would have been to them! Instead of which, they were found true-hearted to their Master and, the burden being laid upon them, they took up that burden in a fashion—and their Lord enabled them to carry it with joy. They had the special happiness of handing out the bread to the vast host who gratefully received the gift. The 12 were very popular men that day, I guarantee you, and they were looked upon with great envy by all who surrounded them! Was it not a high privilege to distribute food among so many hungry men, women, and children? They must have been flushed with excitement and filled with delight! I know I would have been. To go among a crowd of eager, hungry people and to feed them to the full is a work an angel might covet! I am sure that many generous hearts here are already devising ways of feeling this delight. Are you not? I mean literally! Will you not help to relieve the present distress by gifts of food and clothing?

Returning to the *spiritual* aspect of the matter—the Lord has called His Church in these days to this work—onerous and, indeed, impossible without Himself! But with Him, honorable, simple and easily accomplished. He calls His Church to the great task of feeding the multitudes of London, the multitudes of our empire, the multitudes throughout the whole world! And since He is present to multiply our loaves and fishes, the pressing problem may not be abandoned in despair.

Brothers and Sisters, we cannot put aside this work! We that are Christians cannot escape from this service! The Master has laid it upon us and the only way to get out of it is by renouncing His leadership altogether! To attempt to be a Christian and not to live for your fellow men is hypocrisy! To suppose that you can be faithful to Christ and let these multitudes die without an effort is a damnable delusion! He is a traitor to his Master who does not enter heart and soul into the great life-work of that Master—and His life-work was—“that the world through Him might be saved” (John 3:17). If you will say good-bye to Jesus, you may run away with your own loaf and your own little fish and eat them in secret selfishness. But if you mean to be with Christ, you must bring your loaf and your fish here and

contribute it—you must bring *yourself* and be the personal dispenser of the multiplied bread and fish—and you must persevere in the distribution till the last man, the last woman, the last child shall be filled! Then Jesus shall have all the Glory of the feast, but to you will be the honor of having been a servitor at His royal table in the august banquet of His love.

So you see where we are this very morning. We are called to work out a very pressing problem—“How can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?” Let us not sleep, as do others, but let us awaken ourselves to work side by side with those dear and faithful Brothers and Sisters who are toiling manfully to hand out the Bread of Life to the millions of this city, the teeming myriads of this world!

II. But now secondly, IT IS A PROBLEM OF TREMENDOUS DIFFICULTY. The difficulty of feeding the 4,000 was enormous, but the difficulty of saving the multitudes of the human race is as high above it as the Heaven is high above the earth! After all, this miracle only gave a single meal to a few thousand who soon grew hungry again—the work needed is to feed myriads so that they shall not hunger again, forever! Think of this!

For first, what a thing it is *to satisfy the needs of a single soul!* I would like those who think the salvation of souls from sin to be easy to try to convert one person. Sunday school teacher, did you ever attempt to bring one girl to Christ, yourself? She shall be one of the sweetest children in the whole school, but if you have attempted her conversion without seeking Divine aid in prayer and without looking to the Spirit of God to influence that little heart for good, you have made a miserable failure of it! If you had to save a soul, where would you begin? The introduction of a holy thought into carnal minds is a miracle as great as to get a beam of light into a blind eye, or a breath of life into a dead body! How hard it is to deliver a man from brutish carelessness and make him think of his soul, eternity and God! As to renewing the stony heart, as to quickening the dead soul into life, who can do it? Here we enter into the region of miracles! Can you create a fly? When you have created the most minute creature, then talk about making a new heart and a right spirit!

To “satisfy,” says the text—“how shall a man satisfy these men?” To satisfy a soul is a work which only God can accomplish! Open your mouth, O man of ambition! We put the round world upon his tongue and when he has swallowed it, he cries, like Alexander, for another! He is no more satisfied with the whole world than with a pill of bread! As to the *spiritual* cravings of men, how can you satisfy them? Pardon for sin, a hope of eternal life, likeness to Christ—these are necessary to satisfy—how can *we* give them? The world has no such food in all its stores! The work is impossible at the outset, when only one claimant appears! How can a man satisfy the spiritual hunger of a single soul? I should like every Christian man to be laid low with this thought, that he may be driven entirely out of conceit of himself and may at once cry to the Strong for strength and use the simple weapon of the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit—and not in his own strength.

But, Brothers and Sisters, what am I talking about? One soul! What of that? *Think of the numbers who need heavenly bread!* We have not only

one soul, not only one million souls, but hard upon five millions of immortal beings in this single city! In this huge world what myriads have we? A thousand millions would not compass the countless army now encamping on the globe! Would we deliberately exempt one of these from hope? Would we desire one of these to be willfully left to perish? Must not all be fed, if possible? Shall not every man, woman and child, as far as our desire can go, partake of the feast? Well, then, where are we? We are altogether at sea! Why, we have not a notion of what a million is! It will take a very, very long time even to *count* to that number. Think of this City of London—why, you shall ride through it, or you shall traverse it on weary foot for a year—and at the end you shall only wonder more at its incalculable vastness! To supply this great metropolis with gracious influences is a labor worthy of a God! The Church of God is called to feed all these with the Bread of Heaven—and all those out yonder in the heathen world! O Feebleness! What can you do alone? Yet, O Feebleness, how gloriously God can use you for the accomplishment of His Divine purposes! There is the problem. Said I not truly that it is one of tremendous difficulty?

What seems to have struck the disciples was the place they were in—it was a *desert place*. Perhaps you might see, here and there, a little bitter herbage which a goat would disdain to browse, but for the most part it was bare ground. Our Evangelist, in describing the first miracle, is quite graphic in describing the green grass, but in this case he says that they sat on “the ground”—the ground bare of green grass. There were no corn fields, nor fruit-bearing plants. There was literally nothing to turn to account. If the stones could have been turned into bread, the people might have been filled, but the ground, itself, yielded absolutely nothing. I may be supposed, perhaps, to croak when I say that the present period is as bare of all help to the Gospel as that ground was barren of help to the feast. The world has never known a period less helpful to the Gospel than the present! We read in the Revelation of a time when “the earth helped the woman,” but it is not so now. I see no element favorable to the conversion of the world to Christ, but everything is in array against it.

The people are not so attentive to the Gospel as once they were—the masses do not care even to enter the House of Prayer. In London they have, to a very large extent, ceased to care about the preaching of the Word. They are to be reached—blessed be God, they *shall* be reached—but the tendency of the times is not towards religion, but towards unbelief, materialism and sordid selfishness. A current, no, a *torrent*, of unbelief is roaring around the foundations of society and our pulpits are reeling beneath its force. Many Christian people are only half-believers now—they are almost smothered in the dense fog of doubt which is now around us. We have come into cloud-land and cannot see our way. Many are sinking in the slough and those of us who have our feet upon the Rock of Ages have our hands full with helping our slipping friends.

Standing before God with a child-like faith and trusting in Him without question, it does not matter to us, personally, if the surrounding darkness should deepen into seven midnights black as Hell, for we walk by faith and not by sight. Though the earth were removed and the mountains cast

into the midst of the sea, we would still hold to God and to His Christ in a death grip of unshaken confidence. But the mass of professors are not so. I constantly meet with Brethren who are reeling to and fro and staggering like a drunk and are at their wits' end! And, rejoicing that I have been given my sea-legs, I have to cheer them and assure them that we are not shipwrecked after all. The good ship is not going down! The everlasting Truth of God is as sure as ever! The day is not far distant when the Lord shall send us a great calm. It will, before long, come to pass that the infidel philosophies of the 19th Century will be exhibited to little children in our Sunday schools as an instance of the monstrous folly into which wise men were allowed to plunge when they refused the Word of the Lord! I am as sure of it as I am sure I live, that the present wisdom is foolery written large and that the doctrine which is now rejected as the effete theory of Puritans and Calvinists will yet conquer human thought and reign supreme! As surely as the sun which sets tonight shall rise tomorrow at the predestined hour, so shall the Truth of God shine forth over the whole earth! But this era is a desert place—in pulpits and out of pulpits, in social morals and in politics, it is a dreary wilderness. "How can a man satisfy these men with bread here in this wilderness?"

The Lord has often suffered the multitude to be in straits that He might work gracious deliverances. Take a modern instance. One hundred and fifty years ago or so, there was a general religious lethargy in England and ungodliness was master of the situation. The devil, as he flew over England, thought that he had drugged the Church so that it would never wake again. How deceived he was! A student at Oxford, who had been a pot-boy down in Gloucester, found the Savior and began to preach Him. His first sermon was said to have driven 19 people mad because it awakened them to true life. Certain other scholars in Oxford met together and prayed—and were dismissed by the university for the horrible iniquity of holding a Prayer Meeting! Out of the same university came another mighty evangelist—John Wesley—and he, with Whitefield, became the leader of the great Methodist revival! Its effects are with us to this day. The arch-enemy soon found that his hopes were blighted, for the Church awoke again! Poor miners were listening to the Gospel—their tears were making gutters down their black cheeks, while seraphic men told them of pardoning love. Then respectable dissent awoke from its bed of sloth and the Church of England began to rub her eyes and wonder where she was. An evil time brightened into a happy era! Shall it not be so again? Have no fear about it! All things shall work together for good. The Lord brings the people into the wilderness on purpose that there it may be seen that it is not the earth, but Himself, that feeds the people!

The sting of the question before us, however, I have not quite brought out—*it was human feebleness*. His disciples answered Him—"How can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?" How can a man do it? We are only men. If we were angels! Oh, if we were angels! Well, what of it? If we were angels I am sure we would be quite out of the business, for, "Unto the angels has He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak?" The angels are not in the field. But how can a

man or a woman do it? How shall a *man* feed this multitude? “Why, see,” says one, “what I am! I am no great orator, I have not ten talents, I am a weak creature! How can I feed this multitude? What can I do?” This is the sting of it all to earnest hearts. “Ah,” says one, “if I were So-and-So, what I would do!” You may thank God you are not anybody but yourself, for you are best as you are, though you are not much to speak of *now*. “But if I were somebody else, I could do something,” which means this—that since God has chosen to make you what He has made you, you will not serve Him! But if He will make you somebody else—that is, if your will may be supreme, then, of course the house will be rightly ordered. You had better be what you are and a little better—and get to work and serve your Master and no longer talk about, “How shall a man do this or that?”

The possibilities of a man are stupendous! God with a man, nothing is impossible to that man! Give us not the power of gold, or rank, or eloquence, or wisdom, but give us a man! Our Lord thought so when He went up to Heaven. He meant, as He entered the pearly gates, to scatter a Divine largess among His people down below—and He reached His hand into His Father’s treasury and He took out of it—what? He took men! “And He gave some, Apostles and some, Prophets and some, Evangelists and some, pastors and teachers.” These were His ascension gifts to the sons of men!

Though we speak thus of what God can make of us, we are in and of ourselves poor creatures. We do meet with a perfect Brother, now and then, and I always feel inclined to break that bubble. The imperfections of the perfect are generally more glaring than those of ordinary Believers! Alas, we are all such poor, frail creatures, that we are driven away from all confidence in ourselves and we ask with emphasis the question, “How can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?”

III. I am happy, therefore, to come to a blessed conclusion in the third head of our discourse, by saying that, laying the emphasis on its weakest word, “How can a *man*?”—THIS QUESTION IS CAPABLE OF A VERY GLORIOUS ANSWER.

I might almost say, as John the Baptist did, “There stands One among you, whom you know not.” Though He has stood a among us all these centuries, yet His people scarcely know Him. Who knows Him fully? “Oh,” says one, “I know Christ.” Yes, in a sense, but yet He passes knowledge. “I believe in God,” says one. Are you sure you do? I remember reading of a certain minister who spent many days in wrestling prayer because he was tempted to doubt whether there was a God. And when he came into the full conviction of it, he said to his people, “You will be surprised at what I say; but it is a far greater thing to believe in God than any of you know.” And so it is a greater thing to believe in Jesus than most people dream! To believe in the notion of a god is one thing, but to believe God is quite another matter. One said to me when I was troubled, “Have you not a gracious God?” I answered, “Certainly I have.” He replied, “What is the good of having Him, then, if you do not trust Him?” I was sorely struck by that reply and felt humbled in spirit. We do not fully know what Jesus is. He is far above our highest thought of Him. He stands among us and we know Him not.

But what I want you to think of is, that this wonderful Man can feed this people with bread this day—and in this wilderness. I hope to make you believe it by the power of the Spirit of God. Therefore I ask you, first, *to listen to what this Man says*. I read to you just now this narrative as we find it in the 15th of Matthew. Turn again to the 32nd verse—“Jesus called His disciples unto Him, and said—“Stop a moment. Prepare your ears for music”? No, He said, “I have compassion on the multitude.” Oh, the sweetness of that word! When you are troubled about the people, troubled about Ireland, troubled about London, troubled about Africa, troubled about China, troubled about India—hear the echo of this word—“I have compassion on the multitude.” If Jesus spoke thus to His people while here, He equally says it now that He is exalted on high, for He has carried His tender human heart up to Heaven with Him! And out of the excellent Glory we may hear Him still saying, in answer to His people’s prayers, “I have compassion on the multitude.” *There* is our hope! That heart through which the spear was thrust and out of which there came blood and water, is the Fountain of hope to our race! “I have compassion on the multitude.”

Hear Him speak, again, and I think you will grant that there is much sweetness in the utterance. At the end of the 32nd verse we read, “I will not send them away fasting.” We do not wish to judge Peter and James and John, but it seems to me that after hearing the Master say, “I will not send them away fasting,” they hardly ought to have said, “How can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?” They ought quietly to have replied, “Good Lord, You have asked us a question which You must, Yourself, answer, for You have distinctly made the promise, ‘I will not send them away fasting!’”

Do you think the Lord Jesus Christ means, after all, to leave this world as it is? It is written that, “God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.” Will He forego His purpose? The chronicle of time’s history will not wind up with this horrible state of things. The loom of Providence will not leave its piece of cloth with its edge so fearfully unraveled—it shall be finished off in due order and yet be bordered with threads of gold! The Glory of God shall yet illuminate history from the beginning even to the end. All flesh shall see the salvation of God and all nations shall yet call the Redeemer blessed. “I will not send them away fasting.” The people must, therefore, eat bread from the Lord’s hands. Great Master, the task is far too much for us, alone! But if You have said, “I have compassion on the multitude, I will not send them away fasting,” then we will feed them at Your command. Your humble servants are waiting to do Your bidding, whatever it may be, assured that You will be with them in it all.

I beg you, also, to think for a moment of what the Lord did *not* say, because He was speaking about common bread; but *of what we know to be true of Him* concerning His spiritual supplies for men. The greatest spiritual need of man is the pardon of sin by an Atonement. Brothers and Sisters, if the question were now standing, “Where shall we find an Atonement?” it would indeed stagger us! Blessed be God, that question does not remain, for the Atonement has been presented, completed and fully ac-

cepted! Jesus has said, "It is finished," and the real difficulty is over. The Cross has rolled away the stone from the sepulcher and hope has arisen! The application of the Atonement may be difficult, but it must be a small labor compared with the *making* of the Atonement. The well has been dug—the drawing of the water is an easier task. If Jesus died, there must be life for men! If He has prayed, "Father, forgive them," there must be pardon for the guilty! If Jesus has risen into Glory, our race cannot perish in shame! We argue from the Cross a millennium of Glory! This Man can satisfy the people because of the rich merit of His blood!

Next, remember that this glorious Man is now invested with Omnipotence. His own words are, "All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth. Go you, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them." Our Jesus is Omnipotent. It is He who, by the infinite wisdom of God, made the world and without Him was not anything made that was made. Is anything hard for the Creator? Is anything impossible, or even difficult to Him who rules all things by the power of His Word? Courage, Brothers and Sisters—the grand question is answered! Since there is a full Atonement and there is an exalted Savior with all power in His hands, what remains to dismay us?

Listen once more. The Spirit of God has been given. Better than Christ's bodily Presence among us is the Presence of the Holy Spirit. It was expedient that Jesus should go away that the Holy Spirit might abide with us as a greater blessing for the Church! Is the Holy Spirit gone? Has the Holy Spirit left the Church of God? Is the Church appalled by her difficulties though the Spirit of God is poured out upon her? What is she thinking? Has she forgotten herself? Has she become insane? Brothers and Sisters, with Jesus Himself slain as an Atonement—Jesus exalted as a Prince and a Savior at the right hand of God and with the Divine Spirit abiding with us forever—what is there impossible to the Church of God?

So I close by one more point, which is this—As I have made you hear our Lord's words and also led you to remember the infinite resources at His disposal, I now want you to *anticipate His working*. How does the Christ work among men? How will He proceed when He gets fairly to work among the masses? There are varieties of operations, but there is a continuity of law running through them all. The Divine line of action is much the same in all cases.

The way of the Christ was, first of all, to find out what there was which He could use. The little provisions provided by His followers consisted of a few loaves and fishes. Is it not wonderful how the Lord sometimes finds out little matters which have been hidden away and makes much of them? Scotland was once under the sway of unbelief and formalism—how was it to be delivered? Thomas Boston went into a shepherd's hut and found a book which had become extremely scarce. It was Fisher's, "Marrow of Modern Divinity." Boston rejoiced in the Light of the Gospel which flashed in upon his soul and he began to bear witness to it. A great controversy followed and, what was far better, a great awakening! The lovers of the marrow of the Gospel soon broke the bones of error! See what one book may do? Sweden, too, was greatly blessed by the discovery in a

country house of an old copy of Luther on Galatians. See how one voice may wake a nation?

Brothers and Sisters, who knows what may come out of seven loaves and a few small fishes? Yes, the enemies may do what they like—they may preach what they please—they may take away one pulpit after another from the orthodox. They may even bury us under the rubbish of evolution and false philosophy—but we shall rise again! These small clouds will soon blow over. There may not remain one single sound expounder of the Gospel, but as long as God lives, the Gospel will not die! Its power may slumber, but before long it shall awake out of sleep and cry like a mighty man who shouts by reason of wine! As long as we have one match left, we can yet set the world on fire! As long as one Bible remains, the empire of Satan is in danger! Only barley loaves and a few small fishes were in the possession of the Apostolic company, but Jesus found them and began to work with them!

The next thing was a secret and mysterious multiplication. The bread began to grow in the disciples' hands as before it had grown in the ground. Peter had a loaf in his hand and he began to break off a corner. To his amazement, it was just as big as before! So he broke off the other end and gave that to another hungry person and lo, the loaf was *still* intact! He kept on breaking as fast as he could and the loaf continued increasing till everybody had received his full! Wonderful hands they were, were they not? No, they were not—they were only the rough hands of weather-beaten fishermen. Those other hands which first took and blessed, and broke, were doing the deed all the while! It is wonderful how God works by *our* hands and yet His own hands do it all.

Apart from human agency, the Lord can impress the minds of men and women and so multiply His Truth. I heard of a woman in the Isle of Skye, when there was very little Gospel preaching, there, who all of a sudden felt God was not working in Skye. She journeyed till she reached the ferry and then she crossed to the mainland. She asked those she met where she could find God. At last she met with a good woman who said, "I will tell you where you will find Him." She took her into a place of worship where Jesus was plainly set forth. She heard the Gospel and went back to tell others about the Savior!

The devil's work is never done—but it is undone, again, in five minutes when the Grace of God is at work. Even in our ashes live our little fires—a breath from Heaven shall kindle them into a flame! God is never at a loss for agents. He could turn the Pope into an Evangelist, a cardinal into a reformer, a priest into a preacher of the Gospel! The most superstitious, the most ignorant, the most infidel, the most blasphemous, the most degraded may yet be made the champions of His Truth. Therefore let no man's heart fail him—the bread shall be multiplied and the people shall be fed!

It was done by everybody distributing his portion. Peter was dividing his loaf and many people were specially pleased to be fed by Peter. It was quite right that they should be. If Peter fed them, let them be satisfied with Peter. Yonder was John with the same bread, breaking it with less

impetuosity and more graciousness of manner. And yonder was James working away very steadily and methodically. But what of the difference of distribution? The *bread* was the same. So long as the people were filled, what did it matter which hand passed them their bread and fish? Dear Friends, do not imagine that God will bless one preacher, only, or one denomination only! He does bless some preachers more than others, for He is Sovereign, but He will bless you all in your work, for He is God.

I shall never forget one day, when my dear old grandfather was alive, I was to preach a sermon. There was a great crowd of people and I was late, for the train was delayed and, therefore, the venerable man commenced to preach in my place. He was far on in his sermon when I made my appearance at the door. Looking at me, he said, "You have all come to hear my dear grandson and, therefore, I will stop that you may hear him. He may preach the Gospel better than I can, but he cannot preach a better Gospel, can you, Charles?" My answer from the aisle was, "I cannot preach the Gospel better, but if I could, it would not be a better Gospel." So it is, Brothers—others may break the bread to more people, but they cannot break better bread than the Gospel which you teach, for that is bread from our Savior's own hands!

Get to work, each one of you, with your bread-breaking, for this is Christ's way of feeding the multitude! Let each one who has, himself, eaten, divide his morsel with another. Today fill someone's ear with the good news of Jesus and His love. Endeavor this day, each one of you who are Christian people, to communicate to one man, woman, or child, something of the spiritual meat which has made your soul glad. This is my Master's way, will you not drop into it? You cannot propose a better! None can contrive a method more likely to be successful, more honorable to your Lord and more beneficial to yourself! Bring your barley loaf, bring your little fish and put your provision into the common store. Take it back again from the great Master's hands filled with that blessing which makes it fruitful and multiplies it—and then feed the multitude with it! So shall you go forth with joy and be led forth with peace. So be it. Amen.

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CERTAIN CURIOUS CALCULATIONS ABOUT LOAVES AND FISHES NO. 1822

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
FEBRUARY 15, 1885,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON OCTOBER 30, 1884.**

*“When I broke the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments did you take up? They said unto Him, Twelve. And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments did you take up? And they said, Seven. And He said unto them, How is it that you do not understand?”
Mark 8:19-21.*

THE disciples had come on board the vessel and had forgotten to bring bread with them—good men’s memories sometimes fail them. For that reason they were greatly disturbed in mind and they supposed that Jesus was also disquieted and that He had shaped His speech so as to give them an indirect rebuke when He mentioned the leaven of the Pharisees. How little they understood His mind, though they had been so long a time with Him! His thoughts were not occupied about bread for Himself and neither was there any carking care in His heart about bread for them. His mind was at perfect rest about all secular things and, even as to all spiritual things, He was by no means tossed about. Notwithstanding all His trials and His sorrows, I suppose that there never was a serener mind than that of Jesus Christ our Lord. His heart was great as an ocean and though visited with terrible tempests, yet it was the Pacific Ocean, still. *They* might be troubled about bread, but He was resting about that and all things else. The winds which tossed the little lakes of their little minds into boiling cauldrons did not suffice to create a ripple upon the surface of His mighty soul!

Is it not well for us at this hour that it is so? We are fluttered and dismayed, but the mind of our great Lord is fearless and undisturbed. “He will not fail nor be discouraged.” The child cries because the ship rolls, but his father at the helm smiles at the storm—and what a mercy it is for the child that father can smile, for if the captain were weak, where would the vessel be? If the father’s heart failed him, where would his boy look for comfort? Calm face of Jesus, we look up to You and we are quieted!

The Master wishing to comfort His servants had them consider what they already knew and review what they had already seen. Usually the eyes of the Christian should be directed forward—it is foolish to try to live on past experience—it is a very dangerous, if not a fatal habit, to judge ourselves to be safe because of something that we felt or did 20 years ago. Yet, for all that, we may look back to gain practical lessons for times of service and comfortable lessons for hours of trial. Like the ar-

cher, we may draw the string back that it may shoot the arrow onward with greater force.

The Master asks His followers whether they had used their eyes. “Having eyes, see you not?” They had seen two wonderful miracles, by which thousands of persons had been fed—had they *really* seen them? Had they been satisfied just to look at the bread and the fish—and at the feasting multitude—and then to let the whole scene melt away from them? Had they *really* heard the voice of what the Lord had done? “Having ears, hear you not?” Had they missed the message altogether? Then He adds, “Perceive you not yet, neither understand?” Do you not know what My action meant when I multiplied the loaves? Do you not see how it reveals My all-sufficiency? Have you not read between the lines, this Word of God—that God feeds all things—that He opens His hands and supplies the needs of every living thing? Have you not yet discovered, by those two miracles, that there is nothing impossible with your Lord?

May we not also have missed our Lord’s meanings full often? May we not have walked through a palace of wonders without observing the gleams of Glory, the flashes of Eternal Light? Our unbelief is the undeniable evidence that we have not learned all that we ought to have learned, for the outcome of spiritually seeing, perceiving and understanding is *faith*. He that believes little has learned little. He that doubts and is troubled, is but a baby, still needing to learn the rudiments of holy scholarship!

The Lord further asks them that tender question, “And do you not remember?” Brothers and Sisters, we remember much that we ought to forget—and we forget much that we ought to remember! Down the stream of memory floats trash from the city of Sodom and we diligently gather it! But down the *same* stream descends costly timber from Lebanon and we suffer it to drift by us! Our sieve holds the chaff and rejects the corn. It ought not so to be. Let us look back upon the whole of our past lives at this hour with a careful, leisurely glance, and see whether there is not enough in our diaries to condemn our doubts and bury our cares—or at least to shut up our anxieties in a cage made of the golden bars of past mercy and fastened in with jeweled bolts of gratitude! “The Lord has been mindful of us; He will bless us.” Let us glory in what the Lord is *going* to do and magnify His name for His mercy which is yet to be revealed!

Let each one of us sing with David, “I will go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yes, I will praise You, O God, my God.” Then has memory performed her part aright when, from the altars of the past, she has snatched a living coal with which to set on fire the incense of today. Not being able to read your own personal diaries, for these are only known to yourselves, I shall endeavor to take you back to the records of the Apostles’ memories and we will think of the text as it brings before us the two great miracles of feeding the hungry. May we learn what the Spirit designs to teach us by them!

I. And the first thing I shall want to bring to your recollection is THE DARING PROJECT, YET UNAVOIDABLE. This was the daring project—to feed 5,000 persons in the wilderness. Two hundred pennyworth was the calculation of one of the ready-reckoner of the hour. Some men are al-

ways very ready at counting the pennies which they have not got. Whenever there is a holy deed to be done, our mathematical-minded unbelievers are prompt with their estimates of cost and their prudent forecasts of grave deficiencies! We are great at calculations when we are little at believing! How can the necessary amount be raised? It is so much a head among so many members. Unfortunately the heads do not yield the poll tax and the money does not come—and confidence in *man* leaves us weeping by the broken cistern. This is the way in which a large part of the Church's thought boils up, evaporates and is wasted. Alas for those calculations about pennyworths!

Or else it is, "From where can we satisfy these men with bread, here in the wilderness?" "From where?" as if there could be any "where" but one! Where comes *everything* by which man lives? Comes it not from God? It goes round about in different channels, but it knows only one source! When any of the channels fail, the fountain is still flowing and he that has faith to go to it directly shall not want! But it did seem, to the disciples, a very preposterous idea that with nothing but sand, stone and rock round about them, they should make a banquet for 5,000 men! Is it not much more preposterous that the Christian Church should have to evangelize such a city as London? It may not seem so to you, but if you lived in the midst of the extreme poverty of the East End, you would think it the problem of problems—how to reach the sunken multitudes! We little dream on what a volcano we live. The pent-up misery and the seething sin of London may yet produce a second edition of the French Revolution unless the Grace of God shall interpose!

The people are famishing bodily, mentally, morally, spiritually—and we must feed them. I marvel not if in the presence of these dying millions you cry—"From where?" But then, London is only *one* out of many cities. Our whole nation is a small fraction of the myriads of our race! China, India, Africa are yet to be fed. The command is, "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." The proposal is that the knowledge of the Lord shall yet cover the earth as the waters cover the sea—and I repeat the keynote which I sounded just now—it is a daring project! It is startling to the thoughtful, impossible to the calculating—difficult, even, to the believing!

But then, you see, in the case of the Apostles in the wilderness, it was an inevitable project. However strange the proposition might seem, it pressed upon them. They could not avoid it, for the people had no food with them and were fainting. Many of them had come from far. If they attempted to seek their own homes without refreshment, they would die by the way and, therefore, it would not do to send the multitude away. They must be fed. "How is it to be done?" is the question and whether they can answer it or not, the necessity is there, all the same!

With the Savior it was an unavoidable necessity. *It would break His heart to see them fainting and famishing.* He could not endure it. At the very thought of their destitute condition He was moved with compassion. His whole Nature was stirred, convulsed and filled with excitement at the sight of hunger, pallor, weariness and faintness. The Great Shepherd must feed these hungry sheep! It is not with *Him*, "Can it be done?" or, "Can it not be done?" but it *must* be done. One of the imperial necessities

which sometimes took possession of the royal heart of Christ had entered into His soul and “He had to” do its bidding. He, Himself, took their infirmities and carried their sorrows. He was such an all-comprehending Man that he included them within His own Manhood. If they hungered, He hungered; if they fainted, He fainted and if they died, He, Himself, seemed to die and, therefore, by the intense sympathy of His Nature, He was driven to feel that the multitude must be fed.

Just imagine that they had *not* been fed—that they had begun to faint and die of hunger all over those hills to which they had followed Jesus—*how it would have marred His ministry!* Why, surely, the disciples who had said somewhat flippantly, “Send the multitude away,” would have been oppressed with a lifelong sorrow if their wish had been carried out! They never would have forgotten that dreadful dreary day and the starvation, the fainting and the death which followed it. Think of what mischief it would have done to Christ’s cause! The rumor that He led the people into solitary places and that there they died of hunger would have been greatly derogatory to our Lord, for what Prophet ever did this? What capital the Pharisees would have made of it! How exultingly they would have cried, “Is this Man, after all, a Prophet like Moses, who fed the people with manna in the wilderness?” They would have cried, “He said that He was the Son of God; He claimed to have raised the dead—but if He had really possessed this power, He would have fed the hungry multitude who had spent their strength in following Him.” No, the Christ cannot have it so. He has come to save men’s lives—He cannot let them die. He must feed the crowd.

Now, imagine, Brothers and Sisters, that we never carry out the commission which Christ has laid upon us today, that of teaching the multitude—imagine that from now on we never labor to win souls—that we give up London as a forlorn case—that we abandon the heathen world as assuredly given over to destruction like a vessel driven by a hurricane upon an ironbound coast—imagine it, I say! Can you endure the imagination? I cannot abandon the drifting boat. Let us man the lifeboat! I know that some quiet themselves into a kind of despair as to the possibility of the Lord Jehovah ever being King over this whole earth—will you try the wretched experiment? So these people must be left to die, for how can so many be fed? But the project of love shall be executed—to that hope we cling and to that end would we spend and be spent! If things look not so and Christianity occupies as yet but a mere corner of the world, it matters not to our faith—we still believe! Faith counts no odds. One man with God on his side is in the majority if never another thinks as he does! Therefore, in feebleness of numbers we are yet *omnipotent* in the might of the Most High!

Had not the multitude been fed, *our Lord would have missed a grand occasion for the display of His Grace.* Grace is sovereign, but it is abounding! Wherever it finds the occasion, it displays its power. A hungering, fainting crowd! What space for compassion! What vantage ground for benevolence! It could not be that the Lord of Love should let such an opportunity slip by—His love was too eager to display itself to lie quiet at such an hour! But, Brothers and Sisters, what an occasion for revealing the splendor of Divine Grace does the *present age* present! London is a brave

canvas on which to paint a master picture of mercy, of power, of wisdom. What a block of marble the great world presents for the Infinite Sculptor! What a monument of Grace will the human race become when it shall rejoice in God the Savior! I am persuaded that the Lord has permitted the present sorrow that He may produce from it a greater glory! I am sure in my own soul that He suffers the multitudes to hunger in this terrible wilderness simply and only that He may feed them and thus prove to all the universe His power to bless.

I hope I have brought before your minds very clearly that amazing project which seemed most daring and even preposterous, and yet was necessary and even inevitable.

II. Brethren, hoping for the help of God's good Spirit, I would take you, secondly, to another sight—THE BAFFLED DISCIPLES AND THEIR SERENE MASTER. The Master has consulted Philip about supplies in order that the difficulty of the case and the insufficiency of mere means might be seen of all. Philip found that all that was available was a lad's breakfast of five barley cakes and a few small fishes and, he anxiously added, "What are they among so many?" The prudent counselor had done his best, but it did not come to much. He left this problem unsolved, "What are they among so many?" As for the rest of the disciples, they looked in Jesus' face with astonishment and blank despair and said, "Where should we have so much bread in the wilderness as to fill so great a multitude?"

But all the time that they were thus full of fidgeting and worries, there stood the Master, calm as a sweet summer's evening, not in the least disturbed or troubled. What a difference between the feebleness and unbelief of the disciples and the mighty confidence of the Lord Jesus! How much need that we be changed from glory to glory as by the image of the Lord, for we, also, are very far, as yet, from being like He in our tone and spirit! We have not yet entered fully into His rest, nor shall we, till we learn His faith in God. Why was Jesus Christ, our Master, so calm? I have upon my mind the savor of a word the Lord once gave me for you upon that text, "Jesus knew what He would do." [See No. 1605, Volume 27—*Jesus Knew What He Would Do*—<http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols25-27/chs1605.pdf>.] It is in great part our ignorance which puts us into such a quandary. We do not know what is going to be done; we are in suspense and suspense eats into the soul as an acid eats into metal. "From where? How? When? Where?"—all these questions prick us like so many daggers and each prick kills a joy. "Our thoughts are all a case of knives," as George Herbert puts it, and every knife in that case destroys a hope.

But the Master had no suspense—He knew what He would do! We shall get peace, Brothers and Sisters, when we also know what *we* shall do. "Oh," you say, "I thought you were going to say when we know what HE will do." Oh, no! We probably shall not know that till He does it. It is enough for us to know what *we* shall do. "But," says one, "that is what we do *not* know." I answer—that is what we *ought* to know. We ought to know that we mean to leave everything with our Lord. If we once settled it in our minds that we would trust and not be afraid, what peace we would enjoy! If we will leave God's work with God and simply trust, we shall drink into the peace of God!

Besides that, our Lord was thus calm because *He had faith, while they had nothing better than mere sense*. Here they were, as I have said before, counting the loaves and numbering the fishes. Hear them saying, “Here are only five loaves, and they are of barley, and the fish are not only few, but *small*.” They took care to record that fact and to lay stress upon it! And they are equally clear as to the greatness of the hungry multitude and the barrenness of the wilderness around them. They are all going on in that style, judging by the sight of the eyes and the touch of the hands. But the Son of God has another and better sense—He trusts His Father. Jesus, a Man like themselves, has confidence that in the hour of His need the Godhead will not fail Him, but will fulfill His needs.

We have no Godhead in unity with our humanity, but yet we have more than Jesus had. “Oh,” you say, “that cannot be!” you will agree with my statement when I remind you that we have all that Christ had and then we have Christ, Himself, in addition. He has given us all that He has—so we have that. And then He has given us Himself, so we possess the double. We ought never to doubt, but to rely upon the Godhead—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—in every time of our need. “In the mount it shall be seen”—Jehovah-Jireh—the Lord will provide. Oh, for Grace to cast all care away; to be baffled and worried no longer, but to rest and be still!

Moreover, one thing, I think, which made Christ so calm was that *He really acted while they only questioned*. He said, “How many loaves have you? Bring them here to Me.” He came at once to practical action. The people who do not believe in conversions are those who never convert anybody, but as soon as a man is led of the Spirit to turn men from darkness to Light and God blesses him in his work, he believes in it! He that has something to do has less temptation to doubt than the man who has nothing else to do *but* to doubt. Heresies in the Christian Church come never from the city missionary, never from the faithful pastor, never from the intense evangelist—but always from gentlemen at ease—who take no actual part in our holy war. Those literary fops who criticize religion in reviews and have nothing else to do except to put their hands to their heads and press whimsies out of their brows—these are the men that trouble us.

Our Lord Jesus Christ gave way to no sort of doubt, for He speedily took the bread and the fish in His hands and began blessing and breaking them, while promptly upon His own action followed the Divine energy which multiplied the little store. If you and I would but serve the Lord in earnest, we might end our calculations as to how *much* is to be done and *how* it is to be done—and *where* it is to be done and all that. Get to your work, my Brother, and your doubts shall fly like chaff before the wind! The baffled disciples and the calm and quiet Master make up an instructive picture—we shall have profited by it to the fullest if we, also, become calmly reliant upon God and are no more carried away with unbelieving amazement.

III. Thirdly, and briefly, I want to set two more matters before your mind’s eye for your comfort. In the miracles where we see the multitudes fed, we see MEANS USED, BUT CHRIST CONSPICUOUS. You perceive that our Lord says of the loaves, “Bring them to Me.” *The means were*

used. When He has multiplied these very loaves and fishes, He gives them to the men that are round about Him and of these the multitudes partake. Whatever men in their folly may talk as to neglecting the outward means and sitting still and doing nothing because God will do His own work, we hear nothing of the kind from Jesus! He used the loaves and He used the fishes—and He used the *men*—though He could well enough have done without them. He was Omnipotent and did not need them. But He was wise and He would teach us the lesson that by instrumentality God's great work is to be done. Therefore, despise not means and, at the same time, do not rest in them.

But observe how the fish, the loaves, the men *and all the means were made to sink*. In that picture you see the great crowd—I do not think the painter needs to lay his colors on very vividly. He can draw the people as a kind of luminous haze if he likes. The *one* figure that stands out like the sun at noonday, hiding all else by the brilliance of His light, is the Master, Himself. Only *Jesus* is glorious in that outdoor banqueting room! Where are those few fishes? “Here,” says one. “Here,” cries another. “Here,” shouts another. But those few and little fishes cannot be in the hands of all those five thousand! Where has the bread gone? “I have a loaf,” cries one. “I have a loaf,” says another, and they are all feeding as voraciously as they can! What has become of the original five loaves? Bring them here, Brother—at least go and make a diligent search for the original five loaves and those little fishes—that we may preserve one of them as a relic!

What? Can you not find *one* of them? You do not know where they are? They are all gone? Of course they are! Whenever God blesses a man very greatly, that man sinks to *nothing* in his own esteem. If Peter's boat is full, Peter's boat sinks. If we are plunged in blessing up to the hilt, *self* is hidden under the weight of mercy. A little blessing, fancied and imagined to be something extraordinary, elevates the little man—but a great, all-swamping blessing comes like a torrent and bears the man and his littleness away—and nothing is seen but the Lord and the blessing! I am sure that it is so when the Lord uses any one of us as the means of doing good to others—we are humbled and He is exalted!

And after the miracle is over, when they go round to gather up the fragments in their 12 baskets or 7 baskets, Peter has a quick eye but ask him whether *he* can find one of those original loaves. He may go from basket to basket and he cannot find *one*. It is lost in the *creation* which God has made out of it! And can he find, in all those baskets, the original fishes? They must be there, for it is out of those fish that all the meat came to feed the people! But you cannot discover them. So it shall be if God will bless us, my Brothers and Sisters! People will gather about us and say, “What is there in this man? We perceive no superlative talent. What is there in this woman to make her so useful? We see nothing special about her.”

Never you mind. Let them pick at any bit of fish which they think they can see in your native talent or vigorous character! But as for yourself, you know that if any of the multitude are fed, the provision came from the Master's hands when he took your little and blessed and broke and multiplied it so as to make it sufficient for the occasion. *I believe that*

means are honored by Christ's using them, but I am quite sure that before He has done with them, the means will sink into the uttermost obscurity and Jesus Christ will be All in All—and that not because the means are unblessed, but because they are blessed in so gracious a degree!

IV. Furthermore, we see in the miracles of feeding, **WORK ACCOMPLISHED OF A MARVELOUS KIND, BUT POWER UNEXHAUSTED.** Look at those 5,000 men and the women and the children! *They are all fed.* It is a proverb that there never was a feast yet from which someone did not go away unsatisfied. But there is no rule without an exception. Here are *two* exceptions to that proverb. "They did all eat and were filled," upon two occasions! It did not matter how many *thousands* there were, not one of them was overlooked by the ever-blessed Host. It did not matter how hungry they were, they all ate till they were full.

But this is the point I want to show you—*the power that multiplied the bread and fish and fed the thousands had not come to an end.* Their power to eat was exhausted, but not Christ's power to feed, for when they had received to their utmost capacity, there was yet more to follow! The people were sharp set that day, the mountain air made their appetites keen and their long fasting put a razor-edge upon them. Yet when they had all eaten to the full, great baskets were brought and these were filled—in the one case 12, and in the other seven of them. There is enough for each, enough for all, and still enough remaining for future needs! The infinite Worker reveals His infinity by His unstinted bounty, His unmeasured liberality!

I cannot understand, from the Greek, of what size these baskets may have been. The second set, the seven, have a name which shows that they were tolerably large, for Paul was let down in such a basket from the window when he escaped from his enemies in Damascus. The first sort which were used when there were 12 of them, appear to me to have been still larger. They give you an idea of a coffin, or a coffer. They were large baskets of which it is said that men could sleep in them. Yet these baskets, whatever their size may have been, were filled—12 and seven—and if the Lord had willed to do so, He could have filled 12,000 baskets, or 70,000 baskets! His power was running over—it could not be contained in earthly vessels any more than a river can be held in a cup! It was still flowing in a copious stream when every mouth and every basket had been filled. Some seem to fancy that the Lord does everything by the inch and the ounce, keeping to stint and quantity, but this is rather the manner of *men* than the fashion of the Lord!

We know that the Lord Jesus Christ redeemed His elect from among men and therefore, some will have it that the *merit* of His Atonement must be limited. No such thing. "He gave Himself for us," and there can be no measure to the value of such a gift. "He died for our sins," and not for our sins, only, but for the sins of the whole world! His objective was definite, but He achieved it by an agency which cannot be limited. He not only did that which He mainly aimed at, but He did more—just as in this case He not only fed the thousands, but filled baskets with the fragments. The power of God and the merit of the Sacrifice of Christ are

among the infinite things—let us bow before the Lord and rejoice in that which surpasses measure.

Moreover, Brothers and Sisters, whatever the Lord has given to you, He has still far more to bestow upon you. Whatever you may feast upon in this public service, there is yet a portion for you to take home with you in the basket and lay up in the store. However God may have blessed you in your work for Him in the past, He is yet able to do exceeding abundantly above all that you ask or even think! However much the Church may have been increased by a true revival, God has never done according to the fullness of His ability in the Church as yet—even Pentecost was but the Firstfruits. I hear a voice from Heaven, saying, “you shall see greater things than these.” “And greater things than these shall you *do*, because I go unto the Father.”

We have been far from reaching the *Ultima Thule* of sacred possibility! Still “the arrow is beyond you.” We have never seen the best of our God as yet. We may go forward with the supreme faith that Pentecost has yet to be outdone—that all the mighty preaching of the fathers, when they turned nations to Christ, shall yet be exceeded in the triumphs of the Cross in the latter days! We are approaching nobler ages and God’s great acts will not dwindle into trifles. Remember that all that you could see and all that you could know would be but a minute portion of His glorious power! All that you could apprehend would only be a manifestation of the hem of His garment! What Omnipotence is and, especially, what it is in the Kingdom of Grace, none know except God, Himself. Let us not limit the Holy One, nor bound the Infinite. In our Father’s house there is bread enough and to spare, even after *millions* have been satisfied from His supplies!

V. I am going to finish by observing that THE DETAILS OF THESE MIRACLES WERE DIFFERENT, BUT THEY WERE EQUALLY INSTRUCTIVE. Kindly listen to what I am now saying, not as to anything of remarkable weight, but still as to a matter of interest in which there may be more instruction than at first sight appears.

Concerning our Lord’s great free dinners, remark, first, that *the remainder after the feast was greater than the stock when these banquets began*. They began with five loaves and two fishes. They began on another occasion with seven loaves and a few fishes—but they left off with 12 baskets full in the one case and with seven full baskets in the other! Never was this done at any of *your* tables, I am sure, when your children have gathered for their meals. But these did all eat and were filled—and yet there was more left than when they began!

This seems impossible, and yet it is the rule in the Kingdom of Grace. I have often found, when I have come with a very small stock to feed you, Brothers and Sisters, that I have gone away with more than I came with. You have been refreshed and I have been more full than when I handed out your portions to you. You have gone to the class, dear Friend, and felt that you were scantily supplied for feeding your dear ones, but you have given them your all and, under the Divine blessing, there has been enough for the class and a double portion for you! You went out with five loaves and you came back with 12 baskets heaped up. Strange!

We may so give for God as to get in the giving; so spend as to increase in the spending; so die for God as to live more than ever! If this is fact, what a wide field it opens to our hope and how it banishes our fear! It shuts the door of the counting-house where we calculate according to human reason and it opens the doors of the treasury where we may draw ever-growing supplies! Go, Brother, and scatter your handful of seed, for you shall come, again, rejoicing, bringing sheaves with you! Give of your meal and oil to the Lord's servant and your barrel and cruse shall be replenished in the giving! Remember Bunyan's rhyme is true spiritually as well as providentially—

***“There was a man and some did count him mad,
The more he gave away, the more he had.”***

Next, learn that *care is always taken by Christ of all the broken pieces*. The Lord All-Sufficient is yet the God of economy. Since Jesus could create as much food as He pleased, you might have thought that it was hardly worth His while to gather up the fragments—and yet He did so. Waste is of Satan, not of God! God is not lavish of creation, nor prodigal of miracles. Though the Lord can raise up in this place, if He pleases, 50 ministers in an instant, He may not do so. But what He would have us do is to make use of such powers as we have. If we are only fragments, our place is not the ground, but the basket. We must not allow ourselves to be thrown away, or to be consumed by an animal passion, or to be left to decay—we must be in the Lord's store, ready to be used when the time comes. We shall be of some use, one of these days, if we are willing to be used.

If you, my Friend, are not a whole loaf, you are a crust, and no crust may be wasted. If you are not a slice of bread, you are a crumb, and even crumbs are dear to hungry men. If you are not a big fish, yet you may be a little fish, and you must not waste yourself, nor must the Church of God allow you to be wasted, but use must be found for you somewhere. But what a wonderful thing this is—Omnipotence picking up crumbs! God All-Sufficient, to whom the cattle on a thousand hills are as nothing—who could make a whole sea of fishes, or 10,000 worlds of bread by His bare will and nothing else—and yet He sets His disciples to gather up broken pieces that nothing may be lost! Surely it ill becomes us to waste a penny, an hour, or an opportunity! Let us be severely economical for the Lord our God!

Notice a rather curious thing—*there was most left when there was least to begin with*. When they commenced the dinner with seven loaves, they gathered up seven baskets full, but when they had only *five* loaves they filled 12 baskets with the fragments. I suppose the baskets to have been of the same size, for I do not discover that the second set of baskets were any larger than the first. However, from a stock of seven loaves, after all expenditure, there came seven baskets as a remainder. But when there were only five loaves and a *greater* expenditure, there were 12 baskets full left for the waiters. This is amazing! The more they begin with, the less they end with—and the less they begin with, the more they have when the feast is concluded!

Yet I have often noticed that this does occur. Have not you? When you and I have begun rather grandly and God has blessed us, we have had

great reason to thank Him. But when we have begun very *feebly*, He has frequently blessed us far more and we have ended by praising Him upon the high-sounding cymbals! We have gone away wondering—"Five loaves and 12 baskets! Why, the other day, when I had seven loaves, I had only seven baskets!" Yes, let the rich rejoice when he is brought low, for he, like Job, shall be richer than before! Do not begin to sink in spirit because you seem to have declined in ability—but just be confident in God that in your case, also, there will be most reward at the end when there was least capital to work with.

Note, again, that *there was less visible means when there was more done*. There were only five loaves, but they fed 5,000—but when there were seven loaves they fed only four thousand. The most was done when there was the least to do it with. And so it shall happen to you, O worker for Jesus, for the more God blesses you, the less you shall see of any adequate reason in *yourself* why you should be blessed. With your five loaves you shall feed your 5,000, while somebody who had seven shall do less than you.

Another curious thing is that when there was most eaten there was most left. When 5,000 besides women and children ate as much as they could, they left more than the 4,000 did. The smaller number could not eat as much as the greater, yet their leftover food uneaten was less than when 5,000 filled themselves to the full. It is a curious inversion of all our regulations. We suppose the larger our company, the less will remain. But here it seems that when the company was larger then that which was left was largest—and when the company was fewer—less was left. It is so with us—the more we have to draw from us, spiritually, the more will remain for our own portion. We shall make no saving by reducing the number of those whom we serve, but the reverse.

One other thing learn and that is that *where there is the most work for Jesus, there will be the most remuneration*. It is not so elsewhere, for men are often paid best for doing least, but in our Lord's case every man's reward shall be according to his service. Those who waited on the vast crowd of people could not get much to eat, themselves, during the meal, for they were fully occupied in handing the bread to others. But when all was over, the Master said to them, "So you have had a great company today, there were 5,000 at the least. You must need refreshment, yourselves. Yonder are 12 baskets full of that which remains over, divide them among yourselves." Another day their work was hard, but not quite so laborious. That extra thousand that always brings in the excessive labor through overcrowding had not been there and they had supplied four thousand pretty pleasantly. Then it was that they received only seven baskets for their share—a liberal allowance, but still not so large as on the former occasion.

If you will work for Christ, give for Christ and labor for Christ, you shall have a rich return of present joy from Him and this shall have a proportion in it. Many people will always be poor because they never give to the cause of God. Poor people should give in order that they may not be poor any longer—and the rich should give that they may not become poor. I mean not that these are to be the chief motives, but they may have their place. You that have little ability should work hard with that

little ability that you may increase it. And you that have great ability, of course, should do so, because you have so many talents entrusted to you. The Lord will allow no service to remain unrecompensed. And work done for the poor and needy shall win its wage, not of debt, but of Grace.

Satan said, "Does Job serve God for nothing?" Suppose he had done so—the devil would have gone his way and said that God was a hard master, whose service brought no sort of reward with it! Either way, Satan would have made mischief and, as we have no wish to please *him*, we admit that we do not serve God for nothing, but that in keeping His Commandments there is great reward! When the multitude have done feasting, your Master will let you sit down to meat and you shall have abundant joy with Him!

The chief point for all of us is to get at the blessed work! In the name of the ever-living God, let us feed, each one, the man that is nearest to him till the whole company shall be fed, for the Christ is behind us, the Son of God is working with us—and the bread is not our bread but His bread! And the feeding of the multitude is not our work, but His! And the power is not ours, but all His own and to His name shall be all the glory! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Mark 6:34-44. 8:1-21.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—46, 685, 85.**

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

DEAR FRIENDS—Revising this sermon reminds me of our happy Thursday evening gatherings. May I soon have the joy of ministering among you again and marking your numerous attendances at the week night services! May these always be to us the happy evidences of the spiritual life of the Church! I have now been here for a week and the sunshine and warmth are doing wonders for me. We are struck down all of a sudden, but we recover our lost strength slowly and therefore I am still weak, but the pain is gone and I can walk a little, for which I am joyfully grateful. My heart is with the work at home. I am glad to hear that the Elders propose special services. Give them your utmost aid. Will any one member of the Church hold back? Surely each one will be eager to make up for my lack of service by his own personal endeavor. I pray my Lord and God to send prosperity to this effort. By the love of Jesus, I plead with Him to stir you all up, and through you to save sinners.

With all my heart, your loving minister,

C. H. Spurgeon,

Mentone, February 7, 1885.

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE FREE AGENCY OF CHRIST

NO. 2761

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 12, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 21, 1879.

“And He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him to touch him. So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town. And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything. And he looked up and said, I see men as trees, walking. After that He put His hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw everyone clearly.”
Mark 8:22-25.

THERE is a very wonderful variety in the miracles of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the variety is apparent even in the way in which men come to Him to partake of His blessing. With regard to the blind men to whom our Lord gave sight, we read of some that they were brought to Christ by their friends, as in the case of this man at Bethsaida, who was almost passive all the way through. His friends appear to have had more faith than he had and, therefore, they brought him to Jesus. There were other cases in which the blind men cried to Christ and, as far as they could, came to Him of themselves. Some of them even came to Him in the teeth of stern opposition, for, when the disciples upbraided one of them for crying out so loudly, he cried out the more loudly, “Son of David, have mercy on me.” So that, you see, some were brought to Christ by their friends and others came to Him in spite of much opposition.

Then there is that notable case which many of you must remember, of that remarkable blind man who had been blind from his birth, to whom Jesus came uninvited. Jesus saw him and anointed his eyes with the clay which He had made, and then bade him go and wash in the pool of Siloam. “He went his way, therefore, and washed, and came seeing.” Thus, from the very commencement of our Savior’s earthly ministry, there were differences in the way in which one class of characters, the blind, came to Jesus Christ.

I. The lesson for us to learn from this undoubted fact is just this—that THERE ARE GREAT DIFFERENCES IN THE WAY IN WHICH MEN COME TO JESUS CHRIST—and differences even in their first desires. Some will begin to seek the Savior like merchantmen seeking goodly pearls and when they have found Him, He will be the Pearl of Great Price to them. Others will be like the plowman whose plow struck against a crock of gold—they will know Christ’s value as soon as they stumble upon Him, as it were, and will be ready to sell all that they have and buy the field so

that the treasure may be theirs. Some of you who are here may get a blessing instantaneously, though you have not come especially seeking it. Others of you may have come here for months and years, seeking the Savior—and you may *now* find Him.

Some may begin to seek even while the sermon is progressing, but may not find Christ for a while—while others will no sooner seek Jesus than they will at once find Him. Some will be brought by the example of the godly. Some by the preaching of the minister. Some by a kind word from a friend. Many by parental exhortations. Some by a holy book. Some by no outward means at all. Some simply by their own thoughts in solitude, or at the dead of night—all led by the one gracious Spirit of God—but each one brought to Christ in a different way and by different means from all the rest.

I think that the same differences will be found, not only at the beginning of the Christian life, but also all the way through that life in all who are the subjects of Divine Grace. All Christians are like each other in some respects, but no one Christian is exactly like another in all points. There is, often, a great family likeness in the children in one family. Sometimes, you might go where there are 10 or twelve, and you might pick them all out and say, Yes, we are quite sure that they all belong to this family—there are certain distinctive features which evidently show that they belong to these parents.” After you have noticed that resemblance, take the 10 or 12 children, one by one, and look at them individually. Perhaps, at first sight, you might say that you did not know one from the other, but those who see them day by day will tell you that there are distinct differences of countenance and contour about each one—and idiosyncrasies of character which distinguish them from one another—so that there is not one of them who is exactly like the rest.

Now, it would be a great pity if they should all begin to wish that they were exactly like someone in the family whom they set up as a model. It would be a right and proper ambition that every son should wish to be like a godly father, and that every daughter should seek to imitate a lovely and gracious mother, but that one girl would wish to be just like her sister, or a boy to be exactly like his brother would be absurd. Yet I have often seen that absurdity in the Church of God! One is depressed because his experience is not quite like his neighbor’s. Another because he sees that there are points in his experience that are unlike anybody else’s—and I have even known them go and try to remove their names from God’s register and “unchristianize” themselves! And, what is worse, sometimes unchristianize one another because they are not all exactly run into the same mold—like so many shot, precisely alike in form and shape—as manufactured articles are when they come quickly from under the die! No, we fall into grievous error when we entertain this kind of idea! God’s ways are diverse—from the beginning to the end, God the Father, God the Holy Spirit and our Lord Jesus Christ act sovereignly and do not choose to follow one particular mode of action in every case.

That lesson I wish to teach, first, in reference to our prayers. We must not attempt to dictate to God with regard to His answers to our prayers. Let us learn that lesson from the incident before us—“They brought a

blind man to Him, and begged Him”—to open his eyes? No—that would have been a very proper prayer, but they, “begged Him to touch him.” But Christ did not do His work according to their request—“He took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town. And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything.” Now, with regard to our prayers, we may bring our children, friends and neighbors to Christ—and we may ask that they may be saved—but we must not dictate to Christ the methods by which salvation is to come to them, for it is very usual with Him not to follow those means which *we* would prescribe!

That plan of touching the sick person was a very common one with Christ and, therefore, the people began to expect that He must always heal by a touch. Naaman thought that the Prophet Elisha would come out to him, “and stand and call on the name of the Lord, his God, and strike his hand over the place and recover the leper.” But he was mistaken, as were those folk at Bethsaida. It was a sort of understanding among them that Christ’s touch was the usual method by which His cures were worked, so they begged Him to touch their blind friend. But He would not give any support to that notion. If they thought that He worked His miracles by putting His hands upon the sick, then He would *not* put His hands upon them—He would let them see that He was not bound to any particular method. If He had allowed them to cherish such an idea, probably their next step in error would have been that they would have said that it was an enchantment, a kind of performance by certain passes and touches, as by a wizard or conjurer, through which Christ went in order to heal the sick.

Superstition can be very easily made to grow, and you and I, mark you, may think ourselves perfectly free from superstition, yet, all the while, it may only have taken some other form from that in which it appears in other people. For instance, if the Lord is pleased to bless a certain preacher to the conversion of souls, you may settle it in your mind that if you get your children to hear him, they will assuredly be saved. Yet it may not be the case, for the Lord has a thousand ways of saving souls and He is not tied to any one man as His agent or instrument. It may get to be a kind of superstitious notion that in some one person, alone, the power of converting others may rest. Or it may be that you say to yourself, “I was converted by reading such-and-such a book. If I get my boy to read that book, it will convert him, too.” Yet it may have no influence whatever upon him, for the Grace of God is not tied to any book, nor to any way of working that you choose to prescribe!

I would not wonder, my dear Friends, if some of you have tried to tie the Lord down to your way of working. For instance, in your class in the Sunday school, it was the reading of a certain chapter in the Bible that brought one of your scholars to Christ. So, in order to bring the rest of them to the Savior, you get them to read that chapter. That may be all right, for the Lord can bless it to them if He pleases, but, at the same time you must remember that He is a Sovereign and, therefore, He will probably use other means in other cases. You preached, dear Friend, in the street, or in a Chapel, and God blessed that sermon. So you have

made up your mind that you will preach it a second time. I recommend you not to do so, for very likely it will hang fire if you do. If you begin to confide in the sermon, God will not bless it. I think it is often well to do with a good sermon as David did with Goliath's sword—he said that there was none like it, yet he did not keep it by him for constant use, but he laid it up before the Lord—then it was ready for the special occasion when it was required. When God has blessed any sermon that I have preached, I do not make it a rule to preach it again, lest I might be led to put my trust in that sermon, or to have some confidence in the way in which I set forth the Truth of God, rather than in the Truth itself—though I never hesitate to preach the same sermon again and again if I feel that the Spirit leads me to do so. We must not, in our prayers, tie the Lord down to any particular means, for He can use what means He pleases and He will do so, whatever we may say. We may ask Him to open the blind man's eyes, but it is not our place to beseech Him to touch the blind man in order to effect His cure!

Notice, also, that Christ did not answer the prayer of these people in the place where they presented it. They brought the blind man to Him and they evidently expected the Lord Jesus Christ to open his eyes there. But Jesus did not do so. "He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town"—right away from the place where the people wanted to have the miracle performed! The Savior acted as though He could not do anything in the matter until He was out of town—and He would not speak a word to him till He got him quite away by himself. Well, now, it is very easy, in our prayers, to fix upon a certain place as the one where God will give His blessing, and to think, "The friend I am praying for must be converted in the Tabernacle, or must be converted in the little meeting that I hold in my house, or must be brought to Jesus Christ in the Church where I attend, or in the Chapel where I worship." But our Lord may, perhaps, never convert that young man in any of the places you have mentioned—He may meet with him behind the counter, or on board boat, or walking by the way, or on a sickbed. Do not be disappointed, therefore, when your place does not prove to be God's place! Take your friend to the House of God, for Christ's miracles on a Sabbath and in the synagogue are frequent—but do not try to tie Him down to the synagogue, for He must be left at liberty to work His miracles in His own way.

Neither, dear Friends, must we, for a moment, try to tie the Lord Jesus Christ down to work in our particular manner! I have no doubt that these people meant to prescribe to Christ that He should open that man's eyes directly. He had done so before and He was able to make the sightless one see in a single moment. And they, therefore, naturally expected that He would do it. But the Savior did not do so—He did not work an immediate, but a progressive cure. He opened the man's eyes a little and afterwards opened them more fully. This was a very extraordinary miracle—there is no other case like it in Scripture. All the other cures that Christ worked were immediate—but this one was progressive. So, my Brother, the Lord may hear and answer your prayer, but it may not be by a conversion in the way you expected. You thought that, all of

a sudden, you would hear that your dear friend had been turned from darkness to the Light of God. You have not heard that, but you have heard that he begins to be more thoughtful than he used to be, and that he attends the means of Grace more regularly than he formerly did. Perhaps the Lord intends, in his case, to work salvation by degrees.

Do not go and run the risk of spoiling it by trying to run faster than God guides you! The daylight does not always come in a moment. I am told that in the tropics there is but slender notice of the rising of the sun—he seems to be up and shining in full glory in a few seconds! But here, in England, you know how long a time of twilight and dawn we have before the sun has fully risen. No doubt there are conversions that are just like the tropical morning—in a moment the great deed of Grace is done! But there are many more conversions that are slow and gradual, yet they are none the less sure! The genial sun is up when he is up—even if he takes an hour in the operation of rising—quite as effectually as he is up when he seems to leap out of the sea into meridian splendor! So, if the Lord should see fit to bless your friend in a different manner from that which you had thought of, do not you quarrel with Him. Whatever He does is right—so let us never question any of His actions.

One other point, in which we must not dictate to God, is this. *He may hear our prayer and grant our request, yet we may not know that it is so.* I do not think that these people who brought the blind man to Christ ever saw him again after his eyes had been opened. Mark tells us that Christ “led him out of the town”—that is, away from his friends. And after He had healed him, “He sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.” I suppose they found it out afterwards, but then and there, at any rate, they did not see the man’s eyes opened. If he did as Christ commanded him, he went straight away home and kept the matter quiet, so far, at least, as the general public and, perhaps, these friends of his were concerned.

Now, it is quite possible that God may hear your prayer for some dear friend in whom you are interested and yet you may never know of it till you get to Heaven. The Lord has promised to hear prayer, but He has not promised that you shall know that He has heard your prayer! A godly mother may be in Glory long before her supplications have been answered in the conversion of her son. A Sunday school teacher may go Home to be with Christ before the boys, over whom he has agonized, are brought to the Savior. Our farmers know that earthly harvests are sometimes late and it is the same in spiritual husbandry! Divine Grace ensures the crop, but even the Grace of God does not guarantee that the crop shall come up tomorrow, nor whenever we please. So, dear Friend, keep on sowing the good seed of the Kingdom of God, water it with your tears and your prayers, and then leave with God the question whether you shall see the harvest or not. He may, in your case, fulfill that gracious promise, “He that goes forth and weeps, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” Or He may simply choose to make you the sower and another the reaper. It is for you to believe that your petitions shall be granted, even if you do not live to see them!

There have been many instances in which men's prayers have prevailed, although they themselves have never lived to see that happy result. I think I have told you, before now, the story of a godly father whose unhappy lot it was to see his sons grow up without the fear of God in their hearts. This was a very heavy burden upon the good old man's spirit. Day and night he wept and prayed about it before God. At last, the time came for him to die and he had not, then, one son who had found the Savior! It had been the old man's prayer that his death might be the means of the conversion of his children if they were not brought to Christ in his lifetime—and so it was. Yet the scene at his death was very different from what he had hoped that it might be, for it was a very gloomy departure. His faith was grievously tried—he did not enjoy the Light of God's Countenance—he was put to bed, as God often puts some of His best children to bed, in the dark. He died humbly trusting in Jesus, but not triumphing, not even rejoicing—he was in great pain of body and deep depression of spirit—and his last thought was, "This experience of mine will only confirm my sons in their infidelity. I have borne no witness for Christ as I had hoped to do. And now they will say that their father's religion failed him at the last and so, my heart's desire will not be granted to me."

Yet it was granted, though he did not live to see it, for, after they had put him in the tomb and had come home from the funeral, the eldest son said to the others, "You noticed, brothers, what a struggle our father seemed to have on his dying bed and how hard it went with him. Now, we all know that he was a man of God. His conduct and example were such that we have no doubt about his being a true Christian, yet, if he found it so hard to die, what will it be for us when we come to the day of our death and have no God to help us, and no Christ to look to in the hour of our extremity?" It was remarkable that the same thought had struck all the good man's sons—and they went to their own homes deeply impressed by their father's gloomy death—to seek their father's God and to find Him!

Could the old man have known what was best, he would have chosen just such a death in order that he might, thereby, be the means of bringing his children to Christ! In like manner, you may not be sure that you will see, here, the answer to all your prayers, but you will see it when you get up yonder—when God shall bid you fling up the celestial windows and you will look down and see the harvests which you never reaped, but for which you sowed the seed! You will see, springing up from the soil, the rich result of your labor, though you saw it not while here on earth—and your Heaven will be all the sweeter because, then, you will know that the Lord has heard and answered the prayers that you offered in your lifetime here below.

II. Secondly, I learn, from this narrative that WE MUST NOT ATTEMPT TO TELL THE LORD JESUS CHRIST HOW HE IS TO WORK, for He has various ways of working in the blessing of men.

For instances, when this blind man was brought to Him, *He did not open his eyes with a word.* Often, when the sick were brought to Him, He spoke and they were at once cured. He might have done so in this case.

He might have said to the blind man's eyes, "Be opened!" The ancient fiat might have been repeated, "Light be!" and there would have been light in his darkness. But there came out of Christ's mouth—not a word—but spittle! Christ spat on the blind man's eyes. Ah, but if anything comes out of His mouth, it does not matter much what it is—whatever comes out of the mouth of the Christ of God means healing and life to those whom it reaches! He has His own ways of working. Usually, He is pleased to save men by the preaching of the Word and, sometimes, the great change is brought about through very feeble testimony. Yet, nevertheless, it is the Word of the Lord that is spoken, and it comes from the mouth of God, so He blesses it to the opening of blind men's eyes.

In this case, too, *Christ did not work upon this man all at once*. As I have already reminded you, He worked a gradual cure upon him. So, dear Friend, you must not dictate to Jesus Christ as to how you will be saved. I know that some of you do. One said to me, in my vestry, that she believed she had found Christ, but she was half-afraid it could not really be so. "Why not?" I asked. And she answered, "My old grandfather told me that it took him three years before he got peace and he was locked up in a lunatic asylum most of the time. I thought it was an awful affair altogether." I enquired where she could find anything in the Word of God to support that idea and then told her to simply believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and not to trouble about what her grandfather did. I have no doubt that he got to Heaven even through a lunatic asylum, but there are other and better ways of getting there!

Mr. Bunyan tells us that his pilgrim went through the Slough of Despond and did not pick the steps well, so he floundered, and it was with difficulty that he got to the other side. Mr. Bunyan pictures Evangelist as bidding the poor seeker fly towards a certain wicket gate and keep his eyes on the light within that gate. Now that was a mistake on the part of Evangelist—and it was through that mistake that the poor pilgrim got into the Slough of Despond. The Gospel does not tell you to look for wicket gates, nor to keep your eyes on any light! You remember how, at last, the poor pilgrim *did* get rid of his burden—it was at the Cross that the burden rolled from his shoulders and disappeared into the sepulcher so that he saw it no more! And, dear Friends, that is where *your* eyes have to be turned—to the Cross of Christ and to the full Atonement He has made for all who trust in Him! As for wicket gates and the Sloughs of Despond—the less you have to do with them, the better. "But is there no Slough of Despond?" someone asks. Oh, yes! Twenty of them, but it is far easier to go through that Slough with the burden off rather than on your shoulders! The best thing you can possibly do is to go to Christ, first, for then you can better go wherever you have to go. As for me, I would rather avoid the Slough of Despond altogether if I could—and keep my eyes always upon the Cross—for Christ Crucified is the one and only hope of sinners!

You must not, any of you, say, "Bunyan went through the Slough of Despond. According to his '*Grace Abounding*,' he was there for years. And there is our Pastor, I have often heard him say that he was a long while in that Slough." Yes, I am sorry to say that he was, but that is no reason

why *you* should go there. If, when I was a youth, I had heard the Gospel of Christ preached as plainly as I have preached it to you, I feel certain that I would never have been in the bog so long as I was. But I heard a mixed sort of Gospel, a mingle-mangle—a mixture of Law and Gospel—a muddling up of Moses and Christ—something of “do” and something of “believe.” And, therefore, I was for so long a time in that sad state of bondage! In fact, the good sound doctrine people that I used to hear, said, “You must not come to Christ, for you do not know whether you are one of the elect—and you must not come until you do.” I know perfectly well that nobody can possibly tell whether he is elect, or not, till he finds it out by coming to God! And that no one ever comes to God the Father, who makes the election, except by Jesus Christ His Son! So we have first to do with the Son and afterwards with the Father. That I did not know when I was seeking the Savior. I needed an angel to tell me that I was one of the elect, but I was obliged to come to Christ as a poor, guilty sinner and just trust in Him, and so to find peace in believing. That is the plan that I recommend you adopt if you want to be saved!

Do not say, “I shall not come to Christ till I stick in the mud of the Slough of Despond. I shall not come to Him till I get laid by the heels in Giant Despair’s Castle! I shall not come to Him till I get whipped on the back with the ten-thonged lash of the Law.” If you really want to have that lash, perhaps you will get it, and I hope you will like it—but the Gospel says, “Come and welcome! Come and welcome! Come to Jesus just as you are!” Never try to lay down rules and regulations for Christ, but let Him save you in His own way and be you content, just as you are, to take Him just as He is!

There is one more point about this man in which the singular Sovereignty of Christ is seen, and that is, *He did not make use of the healed man*, though we would have thought that He would have done so. If this miracle had been worked in the present day, we would soon have seen this man in the Salvation Army, or in some other public position. Nowadays, the rule seems to be send off a paragraph to the newspapers, “So many in the enquiry-room! So many converted on such-and-such a night! Blow the trumpets! Beat the drums! Let everybody know!” But that was not Jesus Christ’s way of working—He told this man not to go into the town. And when he did get home, not to tell anybody what had been done to him. Why was he not to tell anybody? Well, first, because the Lord wanted to do good and not to have a noise made about it. And, secondly, because there was no need to tell anybody. Suppose I had been for years a blind preacher and that my eyes had been opened—would there be any need for me to tell you, next Sunday, that my eyes were opened? You would see it for yourselves—everybody can see when a man’s eyes are opened. And, often, the best way in which a man can tell that he is converted is simply by letting other people see what a change there is in him because, if his eyes are not really open, it is of no use for him to stand up and say, “Bless the Lord! My eyes are open,” while he is still blind! I have heard people say that they were converted and I have thought that if the work were done over again, it would not hurt them much and that, indeed, six or seven such conversions would not amount

to much! Oh, give us a conversion that speaks for itself! Give us a new heart that shows itself in a new life! If a man is not able to control his temper, or to speak the truth—if he is not a good servant, or a good master, or a good husband—do not let him think it necessary to proclaim what Christ has done for him, for, if he has done anything that was worth doing, it will speak for itself!

Now I must close by just noticing one fact about this man as to the early steps that Jesus Christ used with him. There is one point I want to dwell upon for a minute. Our Lord, before He did anything else with the blind man, took him by the hand and led him out of town. There are some of you here, perhaps, with whom the Lord has been thus working. You have begun to come to listen to the Gospel—through your wife, perhaps, or through some Christian friend. I am very hopeful concerning you, for, although you cannot yet see, the Lord has taken you by the hand. All the faith that this poor man had was a *yielding* faith—he gave himself up to be led—and that is a saving faith. My dear Friend, give yourself up to be led by Christ! If you have come under gracious, heavenly influences, yield yourself up to them!

The Master led this blind man right away from other people and it will be a good sign when you begin to feel that you are getting to be lonely. Sometimes, when the Lord means to save a man, He lays him aside by illness, or, if not, He takes him away from the company he used to keep by some other means. Or, if the man is allowed to go into the same company, he gets to dislike it. He does not feel at home with those who were once his companions—he goes in and out of the shop as if he were one by himself. He has the Lord's arrow sticking in him and, like the wounded stag, he tries to get away to bleed alone. You feel, sometimes, as though nobody understood you. You read in the Book of Job, or the Lamentations of Jeremiah and you say, "This is the kind of experience that I am passing through. I have a broken heart and a troubled conscience, and I feel that I am all alone."

Well, dear Friend, that is the Lord Jesus Christ leading you out of town, getting you away from everybody. And, mark you, the place of mercy is the place where a man stands alone—away from everybody except his Lord. Do not draw your hand back from the hand that is leading you away! Perhaps ungodly company has been your ruin and it is through solitude that God intends to save you. Be much alone. Think over your own case. Make a personal confession of sin. Seek for personal faith in a personal Savior. You were born alone—you will have to pass through the gates of death alone. Although you will stand in a crowd to be judged, yet you will be judged as a separate individual—and even though myriads perish with you, your loss will be your own if you are lost!

Therefore, look into your own affairs. Cast up your own account and, before the living God, stand separate from all your fellow men! I believe that if any of you have reached that point, you are where the deed of Grace shall be done. May the Lord enable you to yield yourself up completely to Him, for your safety lies there! We rightly put faith before you as a look, but now I will put it before you, if you have not even an eye to look with, as the yielding up of yourself to the guidance of the Savior. Be

nothing and let Christ be everything! Give yourself entirely up into His hands and He must and will save you! For, though it is faith in its passive form, it is, nevertheless, a real and saving faith! And blessed are all they that have it! May God grant it to everyone of us now, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 8:1-30.**

Verses 1-4. *In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples to Him and said to them, I have compassion on the multitude because they have now been with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for many of them came from far. And His disciples answered Him, From where can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness? Why did they not ask their Master what He could do in such an emergency as that? After so much experience of His power as they had already had, it is amazing that they did not refer the matter to Him and say, "Lord, You can feed the multitude; we beseech You do it." But they did not act so wisely. Instead, they began questioning about ways and means. "From where can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?"*

5-9. *And He asked them, How many loaves have you? And they said, Seven. And He commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and He took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and broke them and gave to His disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people. And they had a few small fishes: and He blessed them and commanded to set them also before them. So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up seven baskets of leftover fragments. And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and He sent them away.* Christ is the great Master of the art of multiplication! However small is the stock with which we begin, we have only to dedicate it all to Him and He will multiply and increase it until it will go far beyond our utmost expectations—and there will be more left after the feast is over than there was before it began!

Bring your small talents! Bring the little Grace you have to Christ, for He can so increase your store that you will never know any lack, but shall have all the greater abundance the greater the demand that is made upon that store. Had these four thousand people not been miraculously fed by Christ, the seven loaves and the few small fishes would have remained just as they were—but now that the four thousand have to be fed, the loaves and fishes are multiplied by Christ in a very extraordinary manner, so that, in the end, there is far more provision than they had at the beginning. *Expect, Beloved, to be enriched by your losses, to grow by that which looks as if it would crush you and to become greater by that which threatens to annihilate you! Only put yourself into Christ's hands and He will make good use of you and leave you better than you were before He used you as the means of helping and blessing others!*

10-12. *And straightway He entered into a boat with His disciples and came into the region of Dalmanutha. And the Pharisees came forth and be-*

gan to question Him, seeking of Him a sign from Heaven, tempting Him. And He sighed deeply in His spirit, and said, Why does this generation seek after a sign? Verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation. Unbelief always pricked Him to the heart and greatly grieved Him. When men trusted Him, He delighted to exhibit His matchless Grace. But when they quibbled and questioned, His heart was heavy and He turned away from them.

13. And He left them and, entering into the boat again, departed to the other side. But, alas, even on board that little boat there was unbelief—and from the small and select circle of His own disciples! He had fresh reason for sorrow from the same cause.

14-21. Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the boat with them more than one loaf. And He charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread. And when Jesus knew it, He said unto them, Why reason you because you have no bread? Perceive you not yet, neither understand? Have you your heart yet hardened? Having eyes, see you not? And having ears, hear you not? And do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took you up? They said unto Him, Twelve. And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took you up? And they said, Seven. And He said unto them, How is it that you do not understand? Can we not learn from past experience? If the Lord has helped us before, is He not equally ready to help us again? What? When there are only a few of you disciples on board boat, do you begin to distrust your Lord because you have only one loaf when He found enough food for five thousand and for four thousand out of a few scanty loaves? O you unbelieving children of God! What infinite patience your gracious God has with you, though you so often and so shamefully doubt Him! “Do you not remember?” “How is it that you do not understand?” Can it be that all your Lord’s lessons of love and deeds of kindness have taught you nothing? Do you still doubt Him—still distrust Him? Has He delivered you in six troubles and can you not trust Him in the seventh? Has He kept you, by His Grace, till you are 70 years of age, and can you not trust Him for the few remaining years of your earthly pilgrimage? Oh, shame upon us that we are such dull scholars in the school of Christ!

22-26. And He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him to touch him. So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town. And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything. And he looked up and said, I see men as trees, walking. After that He put His hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw everyone clearly. And He sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town. “Your house is outside Bethsaida, so go round-about, and get home without going into the town. And if any of your neighbors call to see you, say nothing about Me to them, for I wish to remain concealed for the present.”

27. *And Jesus went out, and His disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi: and by the way He asked His disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am?* It was Christ's usual way, when He took a walk with His disciples, to beguile the time with holy conversation. It would be well if we always did the same. We might do much good and we might get much good if we made our Lord Jesus the theme of our talks "by the way." It was an important question that He put to His disciples, "Whom do men say that I am?"

28, 29. *And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elijah; and others, one of the Prophets. And He said unto them, But whom do you say that I am?* "That is the main point. It matters little to you what other men say about Me—whether they are right, or wrong, may not concern you. But what is your own opinion? What do you know about Me? 'Whom do you say that I am?'"

29. *And Peter answered and said unto Him, You are the Christ.* "You are the Messiah." We know, from Matthew's Gospel, that it was this confession of which our Lord said to Peter, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona," son of Jonas—"for flesh and blood have not revealed it unto you, but My Father which is in Heaven."

30. *And He charged them that they should tell no man of Him.* He wished, at that time, to remain in comparative retirement. He was not anxious that His miracles should be blazoned abroad. By-and-by He was to die and He preferred to derive His fame from His death rather than from His life—to gather His honors from His Cross rather than from His miracles. He never bade any man to be silent about His death on the Cross, but when honor was likely to come to Him among men from His miracles, He frequently "charged them that they should tell no man of Him." That restriction is no longer in force—it was entirely abrogated after our Lord's Resurrection when He said to His disciples, "All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth. Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

HYMNS FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK—235, 491, 538.

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

SEEING AND NOT SEEING—OR, MEN AS TREES WALKING NO. 701

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 22, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And He came to Bethsaida and they brought a blind man unto Him, and besought Him to touch him. And He took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town. And when He had spit on his eyes, and put His hands upon him, He asked him if he saw anything. And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking. After that He put His hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up. And he was restored, and saw every man clearly.”
Mark 8:22-25.*

OUR Savior very frequently healed the sick by a touch, for He intended to impress upon us the truth that the infirmities of fallen humanity can only be removed by contact with His own blessed humanity. He had, however, other lessons to teach, and therefore He adopted other methods of action in healing the sick. Moreover, it was wise for other reasons to manifest variety in His methods. Had our Lord cast all His miracles in one mold men would have attached undue importance to the manner by which He worked, and would have superstitiously thought more of *it* than of the Divine power by which the miracle was accomplished.

Accordingly, our Master presents us with great variety in the form of the miracles. Though they are always fraught with the same goodness, and display the same wisdom and the same power, yet He is careful to make each one distinct from its fellow, that we may behold the manifest goodness of God and may not imagine that the Divine Savior is so short of methods as to need to repeat Himself. It is the besetting sin of our carnal natures to stay in what is seen and to forget the unseen—hence the Lord Jesus changes the outward *modus operandi*, or manner of working, in order that it may be clear that He is not bound to any method of healing—and that the outward operation is nothing in itself. He would have us understand that if He chose to heal by the touch, He could also heal with a word.

And if He cured with a word, He could dispense even with the word and work by His mere will—that a glance of His eye was as efficacious as a touch of His hand—and that even without being visibly present, His invisible Presence could work the miracle while yet He was at a distance. In the present case our Savior deviated from His accustomed practice, not merely in the method of healing but also in the character of the cure. In most of the Savior's miracles the person healed was restored at once. We read of the deaf and dumb man, that not only was his mouth opened, but, what was more remarkable for one who never had heard a sound before,

he *spoke plainly*, receiving the gift of language as well as the power to make articulate sounds.

In other cases the fever left the patient at once, the leprosy was completely healed on the spot, and the issue of blood was stayed. But here, “the Beloved Physician” went more leisurely to work, and only bestowed a part of the blessing at first, halting by the way, and making His patient consider how much was given, and how much withheld, and then by a second operation perfecting the good work. Perhaps our Lord’s action in this case was directed not only by the desire to make each miracle distinct, lest men should think that like a magician He had but one mode of operating—but it may have been suggested by the particular form of the disease, and the spiritual infirmity of which it is a type.

Jesus would scarcely have healed some sicknesses by degrees. It seemed necessary to deal a decisive blow and end them. The casting out of a devil, for instance, must be accomplished entirely or else it is not accomplished at all. And a leper is a leper still if but a spot remains. It is possible, however, to heal blindness by degrees—to give some little glimmer at first, and then afterwards to pour upon the eyeballs the full light of day. Perhaps it may even be necessary in some cases to make the cure gradual, that the optic nerve may grow accustomed to the light. As the eye is the emblem of the understanding, it is very possible, no, it is usual, to heal the human understanding by degrees.

The will must be changed at once. The affections must be turned instantly. Most of the powers of human nature must experience a distinct and complete change. But the *understanding* may be enlightened by a long course of illumination. The heart of stone cannot be gradually softened, but must instantaneously be made into a heart of flesh. But this is not necessary with the understanding. The reasoning faculties may be gradually brought into proper balance and order. The soul may receive at first but a slight perception of the Truth of God and there it may rest with comparative safety. Afterwards it may come to apprehend more clearly the mind of the Spirit, and in that degree of light it may abide without serious peril, although not without loss.

It may be described as seeing, but not seeing afar off. And then the ultimate restoration of the understanding may be reserved to more mature experience. Probably the spiritual sight will never be, in absolute perfection, bestowed upon us till we enter into the light for which the spiritual state is intended, namely, the glory of that place where they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. The miracle before us portrays the progressive healing of a darkened understanding.

The miracle cannot be used as a picture of the restoration of a willful sinner from the error of his ways, or the turning of the debauched and depraved from the filthiness of their lives. It is a picture of the darkened soul gradually illuminated by the Holy Spirit, and brought by Jesus Christ into the clear light of His kingdom. This morning, feeling that there are many half-enlightened souls present, I shall, by the Holy Spirit’s assistance, picture the case. Then we shall notice the means of cure. Thirdly, we shall stop awhile and consider the hopeful stage, and then conclude by a short notice of the completion of the cure.

I. First, we have TO PICTURE THE CASE. It is one of a wonderfully common class nowadays—very common, certainly, among the new additions to this congregation—for very many are coming to us who have been for the previous part of their lives spiritually blind, having been mere formal churchgoers, or stiff outside religionists among Dissenters.

Observe carefully the case in hand. It is a person with a darkened understanding. It is not a man who might be pictured by a person possessed with the devil. A man possessed with the devil raves, rages, is dangerous to society, must be bound with chains, watched and guarded, for he will rend himself and injure others. This blind person is perfectly harmless. He has no desire to injure others and is not likely to be violent towards himself. He is sober, steady, honest, kind, and his spiritual malady may excite our pity but not our fear.

If these unenlightened persons associate with the Lord's people they do not rave and rage against the saints, but respect them and love their company. They are not haters of the Cross of Christ—they are, in their poor blind way, even lovers of it. They are not persecutors, revilers or scoffers. Nor do they run desperately in the way of wickedness. On the contrary, although they cannot see the things of God, yet they feel their way in the paths of morality in a very admirable manner. So that, in some respects, they might even be examples to those who can see!

Furthermore, the case before us is not one of a person polluted with a contagious disease, foul and loathsome like leprosy. The leper must be put away. There must be a place reserved for him, for he contaminates all those with whom he comes in contact. Not so with this blind man who comes to the Savior. He is blind, but he does not make others blind. If he is in association with other blind persons, he does not increase their blindness—nor, if he is brought into connection with those who can see does he injure their sight in any way.

They, perhaps, might even derive some benefit from association with him, for they are led to be thankful for the eyesight which they possess when they mark the darkness in which he is so sorrowfully enveloped. It is not, therefore, the case of a person of a libidinous life or of a foul conversation. It is not at all the case of a man who would deprave your children, who would lead your son or your daughter into sin. The unenlightened people of whom we speak are beloved in our families, and very properly so, for they spread no injurious doctrines, and set no ill examples. And even when they talk of spiritual things they make us pity them because they know so little, and we are grateful to God to think that He has opened our eyes to see the wondrous things of His Word.

They are neither raving haters of God nor yet foul livers, so as to do mischief to their race. No, these people are not even incapable in any respect except the one organ of the mind's eye—it is the *understanding* which is darkened. But in all other senses, these people whom I am now picturing are hopeful, if not healthy. They are not altogether deaf, they hear the Gospel with considerable pleasure and earnest heed. It is true they do not clearly understand it. It is very much the letter which they receive, and but in a very small degree the spirit. Still, at the same time, they do hear, and they are in the way of getting a greater blessing, for "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

And moreover, after a certain sort, they are not dumb either, for they do pray in a manner. It is true that their prayer is scarcely spiritual, but yet it has a kind of earnestness about it not to be despised. They have been to a place of worship from their youth up, and never neglected the outward forms of religion. Alas for them, they are still blind! But they are anxious to hear and to pray, and we trust will yet be able to do both. They are, therefore, not absolutely deaf or dumb.

Nor, moreover, do they seem to be incapable in other respects. The hand is not withered, as in the case of one whom Christ met within the Synagogue. Neither are they bowed down by grievous depression of spirit, as that daughter of Abraham who had been bowed down for many years. They are both cheerful and diligent in the ways of the Lord. If the cause of God wants assistance they are ready to assist it, and though by reason of the loss of their spiritual eyes they cannot enter into the full enjoyment of Divine things, yet they are among the most forward people we know to help on any good cause—not because they thoroughly comprehend the spirit of it nor can enter therein, for by reason of their natural blindness they are still aliens—but still there is worked in them something which is very lovely and very hopeful, for they are anxious as much as lies in them to help the cause of Christ.

In connection with all Christian congregations we have a knot of people of this kind, and in connection with some Christian churches the most, even of the members, are very little better! They have not received more than enough instruction to enable them to know their right hand from their left in spiritual matters. For lack of doctrinal teaching they are left in the dark, and because there is not held up before them the form of sound words, they remain in semi-blindness, unable to enjoy the fair prospects which cheer the eyes of the enlightened Believer.

II. We have now to see OUR LORD'S METHOD OF CURE. Every part of the miracle is suggestive. The first thing to be observed is a friendly intervention—his friends brought the blind man to Jesus. How many there are who do not rightly understand the fundamental doctrine of the Gospel of Christ and need the help of Believers! They have an affection for religion in the abstract, but they do not fully know what they must do to be saved.

The great Truth of Substitution, which is the cardinal point in the Gospel, they have not yet apprehended. They scarcely know what it is to come to rest wholly upon the Lord Jesus because of the satisfaction which He has offered to almighty Justice. They have a *sort* of faith, but they have such slender knowledge that their faith brings them little or no benefit. Such people might often be blessed if more advanced Christians would try to bring them to a clearer knowledge of the Savior. Why can you not bring such souls under the sound of that ministry which has been instructive to yourself? Why can you not lay that Book in their way which was the means of opening *your* eyes? Why can you not bring before their minds that text of Scripture, that passage of God's Word, which first illuminated you?

Would it not be a most hopeful work for us to engage in, to look for those who are not hostile to the Gospel, but simply ignorant of it—who have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge—and who, if they once could be furnished with light, would then have found the one thing

necessary? Surely, if we look after the degraded, the debased, and the depraved who defile our festering courts and alleys, we ought, with equal eagerness, to seek out these hopeful ones who sit under the sound of preaching which is not Gospel preaching, or who hear the true Word of God, but perceive it not!

Brothers and Sisters, you would do well if you prayed for these, and if, moreover, you sought out the excellent young men and the amiable young women, and endeavored to answer the question of their tender consciences, "Oh that we knew where we might find Him!" It might be, in God's hand, the first step to their receiving spiritual eyesight if you would care for these children of mist and of the night. When the blind man was brought to the Savior, he first received contact with Jesus, for Jesus took him by the hand. It is a happy day for a soul when it comes into personal contact with the Lord Jesus! Brethren, when we are in our state of unbelief we sit in the House of God, and Christ seems to us to be at a distance.

We hear of Him, but it is as of one who has departed to ivory palaces, and who is not now among us. And even if He passes by we feel as if He did not come near to us, and so we sit and sigh, and long to feel His shadow fall upon us, or to touch, as it were, the hem of His garment. But when the soul really begins to close with Jesus—when He becomes the object of devout attention—when we feel that there is something to be grasped and realized about Him after all. When we realize that He is no distant and impalpable shade, but a veritable Existence, and an Existence having influence over us—then it is that He takes us by the hand.

I know some of you have felt this. It has frequently happened on the Sunday that you felt that you must pray. You felt that the sermon was made for you. You thought someone had told the preacher about *you*, the truth came so closely home—the very details of the preacher's speech fitted the condition of your mind. That was our blessed Lord, I think, taking you by the hand. The service was to you no mere word-talk and word-hearing, but a mysterious hand touched you. Your feelings were impressed and your heart was conscious of peculiar emotions originating from the Presence of the Savior. Of course Jesus does not come into any physical contact with us—it is a mental, spiritual contact—the mind of the Lord Jesus lays its hand upon the mind of sinners, and by the Holy Spirit, gently influences the soul for holiness and truth.

Mark the next act, for it is peculiar. The Savior led the man to a solitary position, for He took him out of the town. I have noticed that when persons converted have been spiritually blind rather than willfully wicked—who have not been so much hostile as they have been ignorant—one of the first signs of their becoming Christians is the getting into retirement and feeling their individual responsibility. Brethren, I have always hope for the man who begins to think of himself as he stands alone before God! There are tens of thousands in England who consider themselves to be parts of a nation of Christians and born members of a Church, and thus never consider themselves as personally responsible to God.

They say the confession of sin, but it is always with the whole congregation. They chant the Te Deum, but it is not personal, but choral praise. But when a man is led, even while in the congregation, to feel as if he were alone. When he grasps the idea that true religion is of the *individual*

and not of the *community*—and that confession of sin is more fitting from his lips than from any other man—then is a gracious work commenced! There is hope of the blindest understanding when the mind begins to meditate upon its *own* condition and examines its *own* prospects. It is a sure sign that the Lord is dealing well with you if He has taken you out of the town—if you are forgetting all others, and thinking just now of yourself.

Call it not selfishness! It is only such a selfishness as the highest law of our nature commands. Every man, when he is drowning, must think of himself! And if it is a justifiable selfishness to seek to preserve one's own life, much more is it to labor to escape from *eternal* ruin! When your own salvation is accomplished you shall have no more need to think of self, but you shall care for the souls of others—but now the highest wisdom is to think of yourself in your standing towards God, and to look to the Savior that you yourself may have eternal life. "He took him by the hand, and led him out of the town."

The next was a very strange act, too. He brought him under ordained but despicable means—He spit on his eyes. The Savior frequently used the saliva of His mouth as a means of cure. It has been said because it was recommended by ancient physicians. But I cannot think that their opinion could have had much weight with our wonder-working Lord. It seems to me that the use of spittle connected the opening of the eye with the Savior's mouth, that is to say, it connected in type the illuminating of the understanding with the Truth of God which Christ utters. Of course spiritual eyesight comes by means of spiritual Truth, and the eye of the understanding is opened by the doctrine which Christ speaks.

Yet it seems to me that the association which we naturally put with spittle is that of disgust, and that this was intentionally employed by the Savior for that very end. It was nothing but spittle, though it was spittle from the Savior's mouth. And so, mark you, Friend, it is very possible that God will bless you by that very truth which you once despised, and He might even bless you through that very man against whom you spoke the most bitterly! It has often pleased God to award to His ministering servants a gracious kind of vengeance—many and many times those who were the hottest and most furious against God's own servants have received the best blessings from the hands of those men whom they most despised.

You call it, "spittle"—nothing but that shall open your eyes. You say, "The Gospel is a very common-place thing." It is by such common places that you shall have life. You have sneeringly declared that such a man speaks the Truth of God in a coarse and vulgar style—you shall one day bless that vulgarity—and be glad enough to receive, even after a coarse fashion, the Truth as his Master bids him speak it. I think that many of us had to notice this in our conversion, that the Lord chastised our pride by saying to us, "Those poor people of whom you thought so harshly shall be made a blessing to you, and My servant, against whom you were most filled with prejudice, shall be the man to bring you into perfect peace."

It strikes me that more than that, a great deal but all that, is in the thought of the Savior's spitting on his eyes. No powders of the merchant, no myrrh and frankincense, no costly drugs—just a common spittle on

the lips. And so if you would see, my Hearer, the deep things of God, it shall not be by the philosophers, nor by the profound thinkers of the day, but he that said unto you, "Trust Christ and live," teaches you better philosophy than the philosophers! And he who tells you that in Him, in the Lord Jesus, dwells all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge, tells you in that simple statement more than you could learn though Socrates and Plato should rise from the dead, and you could sit, a scholar, at their feet. Jesus Christ will open your eyes, and it shall be by this ignoble means—the spittle of His mouth.

You will further perceive that when He had spit on his eyes it is added He put His hands upon him. Did He do that in the form of heavenly benediction? Did He, by the laying on of His hands, bestow upon the man His blessing, and bid virtue stream from His own Person into the blind man? I think so. So, Brethren, it is not the *spittle*, it is not the leading of the man out of the crowd after all! It is not the ministry! It is not the preaching of the Word! It is not the hearer's thoughtfulness that shall earn spiritual blessings—it is the benediction of Him who died for sinners which confers all upon us!

This Man is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sin. He who was despised and rejected of men, it is through Him and through Him, only, that priceless gift such as sight to the blind shall be given to the sons of men. We must use the *means*, and neither despise them nor trust them. We must get alone, for retirement is a great blessing—but we must look up, after all, to the Lord and Giver of every good gift! Or else the spittle had need to be wiped away in disgust, and the being alone shall only make the blind man lose his way the more effectually, and wander in the deeper darkness with less of sympathy and help.

This sketch is the photograph of some here. I believe there are persons here who from their youth up have attended places of worship without the slightest perception of spiritual life, and would have continued to do so had not the Lord been pleased to make use of friends, happy cheerful Christian friends, who said, "Come now, I think I can tell you something which you do not know." These friends, by prayer and teaching, brought you into contact with Jesus! Jesus touched you, influenced your mind, made you thoughtful, made you see that there was more in religion than just the mere external! He made you feel that going to church or going to chapel was not everything, no, was not anything at all, unless you learned the secret, the *real* secret of everlasting life!

It has been through all this that you have begun to feel that there is power in that Gospel which once you despised. And that which you sneered at as Methodism and rant, is now to you the Gospel of your salvation! Let us thank God for this, for it is by such means that eyes are opened.

III. We have now come to the third point, and we will pause a moment at A HOPEFUL STAGE. The Savior had given the man's eyes the power to see, but He had not removed completely the film which kept out the light. Hear the man. Jesus says to him, "Can you see anything?" He looks up, and the first joyful word is, "I see!" What a blessing! "I see!" Some of you, dear Friends, can say that, "Whereas I was once blind, now I see."

“Yes, Lord, it is not total darkness now. I do not see as much as I should, nor as much as I hope I shall, but I do see. There are many, many things I knew nothing of, which I do know something about now. The devil himself cannot make me doubt that I do see. I know I do. I used to be quite satisfied with the outward form. If I got through the hymns and prayers, and so on, I felt satisfied. But now, though I feel I cannot see as I want to see, I can see as much as that. If I cannot see light, there is certainly darkness visible. If I cannot see salvation, I can see my own ruin. I do see my own needs and necessities—if I see nothing more, I do see these.”

Now, if a man can see anything—it matters not what—he certainly has sight! Whether it is a beautiful object or an ugly thing that he sees, does not matter—the mere seeing of anything is proof positive that there is sight in his eyes! So the *spiritual* perception of anything is proof that you have *spiritual* life, whether that perception makes you mourn, or whether it makes you rejoice. Whether it makes you broken-hearted, or binds up your heart, if you do see it, you must have the power of sight. That is clear enough, is it not?

But hear the man again. He says, “I see men.” That is better still. Of course the poor fellow had once been able to see, or else he would not have known the shape of a man. “I see men,” he says. Yes, and there are some here who have enough sight to be able to distinguish between one thing and another, so as to know this from that. Though you were as blind as bats once, nobody could make you believe that baptismal regeneration was the same thing as the regeneration of the Word of God! You can see the difference between these two things, at any rate. One would think anybody might—but a great many cannot. You can see the difference between mere formal and external worship and spiritual worship—you can see that.

You can see enough to know that there is a Savior. That you need a Savior. That the way of salvation is by faith in Christ. That the salvation which Jesus gives really saves us from sinning, and brings those who receive it safe to eternal glory. Thus it is clear that you can see *something*, and you know within a little what that something is. Listen, however, to the blind man, for here comes in the word that spoils it to a great extent—“I see men as trees, walking.” He could not tell whether they were men or trees, except that they were walking, and he knew that trees did not walk, and therefore they could not be trees.

Objects were a confused blot before his eyes. He knew from their motion that they must be men, but he could not tell exactly by sight whether they were men or trees. Many precious souls are waiting at this hopeful but uncomfortable stage. They can see. Bless God for that! They will never be thoroughly blind again. For if they can see the Man Jesus and the tree on which He died, they make but one object of them if they please, for Christ and His Cross are one. Eyes, which cannot clearly see Jesus may yet dimly see Him, and even a dim sight will save the soul!

Observe that this man’s sight was very indistinct—a man or a tree—he could not tell. So is it with the first sight that is given to many spiritually blind persons. They cannot distinguish between doctrine and doctrine. The work of the Spirit and the work of the Savior they frequently confuse

in their minds. They possess justification and they possess sanctification, but it is probable they could not tell you which was which. They have received imparted righteousness of heart, and they have also received the imputed righteousness of Christ, but between the imparted righteousness and the imputed righteousness they can scarcely distinguish. They have them both, but they do not know which is which—at least not so as to be able to write down the definitions, or tell them to their fellow men. They can see, but they cannot see as they should see. They see men as trees walking.

Their sight, in addition to being indistinct, is very exaggerating. A man is not so big as a tree, but they magnify the human stature into the towering timber. And so, half-enlightened people exaggerate doctrines. If they receive the doctrine of election they cannot be content to go as far as Scripture goes—they make a tree of the man by dragging in reprobation. If they get a hold of the precept, Baptism, or whatever it may be, they exaggerate its proportions, and make it a sort of all-in-all. Some get one crotchet and some get another, and it is all through mistaking a man for a tree! It is a great mercy that they see doctrine at all and precept at all, but it would be a greater mercy if they could see it as it is, and not as it now appears to them.

This exaggeration generally leads to alarm, for if I see a man walking up to me who is as tall as a tree, I am naturally afraid that he will fall on me, and so I get out of the way. Many persons are afraid of God's doctrines because they think they are as high as trees. They are none too high. God has made them of the right stature, but their blindness exaggerates them, and makes them more terrible and high than they might be. They are afraid to read books upon certain Truths of God, and they are shy of all men who preach them only because they cannot see those doctrines in the right light but are alarmed with their own confused vision of it.

In connection with this exaggeration and this fear, there is to such people an utter loss of the enjoyment which comes from being able to perceive beauty and loveliness. The noblest part of a man is, after all, his countenance. We like to catch the features of our friend—that gentle eye, that tender expression, that winning look, that radiant smile, that expressive glow of benevolence upon his face, that towering forehead—we like to see all. But this poor man could see none of these, for he could scarcely tell a man from a tree, could not discover those softer lines of the great master artist which make true beauty. He could only say, "It is a man," but whether a black man, black as night or fair as the morning, he did not know and could not tell. And whether sour and morose, or kind and gentle, he could not distinguish.

So it is with these persons who have obtained some spiritual sight. They cannot see the details of the doctrines. You know, Brothers and Sisters, it is the details in which lies the beauty. If I trust Jesus as my Savior I shall be saved, but the *enjoyment* of faith comes from *knowing* Him in His Person, in His offices, in His work, in His present, and past, and future. We perceive His true beauty by studying Him, and observing Him carefully, and with holy watchfulness. So it is with the doctrines—the mere whole of the doctrine in the gross is blessed—but it is when we come to take the doctrine to pieces that we gain the purest enjoyment.

“Yes,” says the clown, as he looks at a fine painting, such, for instance, as Paul Potter’s famous Bull at the Hague, “it’s a rare picture certainly,” and then he goes away. But the artist sits down and studies its details. There is to him a beauty in every touch and shade which he understands and appreciates. Many Believers have light enough to know the faith in its bare outline, but they have not observed the filling up, and the minutiae wherein the sweetest comfort will always be found by the spiritually educated child of God. They can see, but they “see men as trees, walking.”

Although I know that the most of you, my Brethren, have traveled far beyond this stage, yet I know there are hundreds of God’s people who are still lingering there, and hence it is, when Satan gets the upper hand, that sects, and parties, and theories arise. If a number of people with good eyes meet together and look at an object, they will very nearly agree in the description of what they see. But if you select an equal number of men with eyes so weak that they can scarcely tell a man from a tree, they will make no end of confusion, and likely enough fall to quarrelling. “It is a man,” cries one, “he walks!” “It is a tree,” cries the second, “it is too tall to be a man!”

When half-blind men grow willful and despise their teachers, and will not learn as the Holy Spirit ordains to teach, they set up their ignorance for knowledge and perhaps lead other half-enlightened ones into the ditch with them. Even where a holy modesty prevents this mischievous result, this half-sight is still to be lamented, for it leaves men in sorrow when they might rejoice, and lets them mourn over Truth which, if understood, would fill their mouths with song all the day long! Many are troubled about election. Now if there is a doctrine in this Book which ought to make Believers sing all day, and all night, too, it is just the doctrine of electing love and distinguishing Grace of God! Some people are frightened over this and some over that, whereas if they understood the Truth, instead of flying from it as from an enemy, they would run into its arms!

IV. Having given this sketch of the man in this transition state, we close by noting the **ULTIMATE COMPLETENESS OF THE CURE**. Brethren, be grateful for any sort of light. Without the Grace of God we could not have a ray of it. One ray of light is more than we deserve. If we were shut up in the blackness of darkness forever, how could we complain? Do we not deserve, since we shut our eyes against God, to be doomed to perpetual darkness? Be thankful, then, for the least gleam of light, but do not so prize what you have as not to wish for more!

That man is still sadly blind who does not care to see more. It is a bad sign of unhealthiness when we have no desire to grow. When we are satisfied that we know all the Truth of God and cannot be taught any more, it is probable that we need to begin at the beginning. One of the first lessons in the school of wisdom is to know that we are naturally fools, and that man is growing wise who is growing conscious of his own deficiency and ignorance. But when the Lord Jesus Christ brings a man to see a little, and to desire to see more, He does not leave him till He has led him into all Truth.

We find that the Savior, to complete the cure, touched His patient again. A renewal of your contact with the Savior must be the means of your perfection, as it was your first means of enlightenment. Pray for Di-

vine Grace to be close to Christ, in intimate acquaintance with His blessed Person, in sole dependence upon His merit. Study His Character, desire to commune with Him for yourself, and to see Him with your own eyes by faith and not with the eyes of another—this shall be the means of giving you clearer light. The Divine touch does it all.

I suppose that when the man's eyes were fully opened, the first person He saw was Jesus, for he had been taken away from the crowd, and could only see men at a distance. Blessed vision, to drink in the sight of *that* face! To perceive the beauties of that matchless lover of our souls! Oh the joy! One might be content to be blind forever if He were not to be seen—but when Jesus is seen, oh the heavenly delight of being rescued from the blindness which concealed Him from our eyes!

Believer, above all things, pray that you may know Him and understand Him. With all your heart, get an understanding of Him. Count doctrine precious only because it is a throne on which He sits. Think much of the precept, but make it not to be a legal stone to hide Him in the sepulcher—think only of it as it is illustrated and set forth in His life. And even your own experience—care little for it if it does not point, as with a finger, to Christ. Consider that you only grow when you grow up in Him. “Grow in Grace,” says the Apostle, but he adds, “and in the *knowledge* of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” “Grow up,” he says, but what does he add? “Grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ Jesus.” Ask to see, but put the prayer in this form—“Sir, we would see Jesus.”

Pray for sight, but let it be a sight of the King in His beauty that you may one day see the land that is very far off. You are nearing clearness of vision when you can see only Jesus! You are coming out of cloud-land into the brightness of day, when, instead of seeing men as trees, you behold the Savior! Then you may let the men and the trees take care of themselves.

We read that our Lord bade His patient, “Look up.” If we would see, we must not look below us—no light springs from this dusky earth. If we would see, we must not look *within* us—it is a dark, black cavern, full of everything that is evil. We must look *up*. Every good gift and every perfect gift comes from above, and we must look up for it. Meditating upon Jesus and resting upon Him, we must look up to our God. Our soul must consider her Lord's perfection, and not dream of her own. She must muse upon *His* greatness, and not on any fancied greatness of her own. We must look *up*—not on our fellow servants, or upon the externals of worship—but up to God Himself. We must look, and as we look up we shall find the light.

We are told that at last, “the man could see every man clearly.” Yes, when the great Physician sends the patient home, you may rest assured that his cure is fully worked. It was all well with him in the superlative degree! He saw, he saw every man—he saw every man clearly. May this be the happy lot of many a half-enlightened one here present! Be not satisfied, my dear Friends, with being saved! Desire to know *how* you are saved, *why* you are saved, the *method* by which you are saved. It is a Rock on which you stand, I know, but think upon the questions—how you were put on that Rock, by whose love you came there, and why that love was set on *you*.

I would to God that all the members of this Church were not only *in* Christ Jesus, but *understood* Him, and knew by the assurance of the understanding to where they have attained. Be always ready to give a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear. Remember there are many grave distinctions in Scripture which will save you a world of trouble if you will know and remember them. Try to understand the difference between the old nature and the new. Never expect the old nature to improve into the new, for it never will. The old nature can never do anything but sin, and the new nature never can sin. They are two distinct principles, never confuse them.

Do not see men as trees walking. Do not confuse sanctification and justification. Remember that the moment you trust in Christ you are justified as completely as you will be in Heaven. But sanctification is a *gradual* work which is carried on from day to day by God the Holy Spirit. Distinguish between the great Truth of God that salvation is all of God, and the great lie that men are not to be blamed if they are lost. Be well assured that salvation is of the Lord, but do not lay damnation at God's door! Be not ashamed if men call you a Calvinist, but hate with all your heart Antinomianism.

On the other hand, while you believe human responsibility, never run into the error of supposing that man ever turns to God of his own free will. There is a narrow line between the two errors, and ask for Divine Grace to see it. Ask for Grace neither to fall into the whirlpool nor to be dashed against the rock—to be neither a slave of this system nor that. Never say of one text of Scripture, "Be still, I cannot endure you," nor yet of another, "I believe you, and you alone." Seek to love the whole Word of God, to get an insight into every Truth revealed. Pray to have God's Word given to you not as so many discordant books, but as a whole, and seek to grasp the Truth as it is in Jesus in all its compactness and unity.

I would urge you, if you have got sight which enables you to see at all, to fall on your knees and cry unto the great Sight-Giver, "O Master, still go on! Take every film away! Remove every cataract! And if it should be painful to have my prejudices cut away or burnt out of my eyes, yet do it, Lord, until I can see in the clear light of the Holy Spirit, and shall be worthy to enter into the gates of the holy city, where they see You face to face."

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THE FREE-AGENCY OF CHRIST

NO. 2892

A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“And He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man unto Him, and besought Him to touch him. And He took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town, and when He had spit on his eyes, and put His hands upon him, He asked him if he saw anything. And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees walking. After that He put His hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly. And He sent him away to his house, saying, “Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.”
Mark 8:22-26.

THERE are several points in which these people who brought the blind man to Christ deserve our commendation and our imitation. They believed that Christ could open that blind man's eyes. In like manner, may we all believe that Jesus can save our relatives, friends and acquaintances. If we are ourselves saved, let us always be firmly convinced that He is also able to save any whom we bring before Him in prayer. Let us never give way to despair concerning any person, however far he may have gone into sin. Who but the Divine Savior could open the eyes of this blind man? Nobody. Yet He could do it. So, if your friends are very sinful and hardened, no one but the Lord can save them. But He can do it, so believe that He can do it and in prayer bring your friend to the Savior as these people of Bethsaida brought this blind man to Christ.

Their faith was of a practical kind. They were not content to simply believe that Christ could heal this man and then to remain sitting still. True faith is *active* faith, so these people brought the blind man to the Savior in whom they believed. If you are praying for any man's salvation, mind that you use the means that will best help to bring about that result. If there is any instrumentality which God peculiarly blesses to the conversion of souls, take care that you bring your friend under that instrumentality in the hope that God will bless it to him. Further, note that the blind man was willing to be brought to Jesus. Evidently he had at least as much faith as his friends had in the power of Jesus to open his eyes. It was a very hopeful case when the man and his friends believed in Christ's power to heal him—it was not likely to be long, then, before the miracle of mercy would be worked!

Observe, also, that the faith of these friends of the blind man was further proved by their earnest prayers on his behalf. They brought him to Jesus, “and *besought Him to touch him.*” It was prayer of a very forceful

kind, as the word, “besought,” clearly implies. It was also a very plain prayer—they did not make use of fine language, or beat about the bush so as to leave anyone in doubt as to what they wanted for their friend—they brought him to Jesus, “and besought Him *to touch him*.” They desired that the blind man should be made to see and they thought that result would follow from Christ’s touch—so they asked for that gift—and, dear Friends, whenever you pray for the conversion of anyone, mind that you pray straight for it. There are prayers that one has heard in Prayer Meetings which seem to go all round the world, but never to come to the case in hand. Let it not be so with you, especially in your private prayers, but pray for Jane, pray for Thomas, pray for your children or friends by name. Believingly, earnestly, in a business-like way put their case before the Lord Jesus Christ, just as if they were ill you would state their symptoms to the best physician you could find and ask him to prescribe for them!

In all these points that I have mentioned, these people are to be commended and imitated—they believed in Christ’s power to heal the blind man, they brought their friend to Him and they besought Christ’s favor for him. In doing so, however, they made the mistake of prescribing to Christ the way in which they thought their friend should be healed—they “besought Him to touch him.” It was quite the usual thing—indeed, it was almost universally the Savior’s rule to heal sick folk by laying His hands on them. And having seen Him do this, perhaps, on several occasions, these people had imbibed the notion that Christ healed the sick by His touch—that this was the special or the only way in which His power was manifested. They did not appear to know that it operated in any other way, so they, “besought Him to touch him.” Possibly they had more confidence in the touch than they had in the Christ who gave it! In any event, they thought that the touch was essential to the cure and did not realize that Christ could cure the sick in any way that He pleased—not only by His touch, but by His word, or, if He willed it, even without a word. Thus, they did, as it were, tie the Savior down to one particular method—and their faith, though it was real, was weak. Though it was acceptable as far as it went, it was imperfect—there was a measure of ignorance mingled with it. I am going to deal only with that point as I expect that some of us are making the same mistake that these people made.

I. My first observation will be that IT IS A COMMON WEAKNESS OF FAITH TO EXPECT GRACE TO COME IN A CERTAIN FIXED WAY.

Just as these people expected the healing of the blind man to come by the touch of Christ’s hands, so many expect *deliverance from trouble* to come in a certain specified way. You know it is so with many of you to whom I am speaking. You have taken your troubles to the Lord—you have told Him all about your case and you have entrusted it to Him, but you have laid down the plan by which God is to work on your behalf. You remember how He delivered you on a former occasion and you expect Him to deliver you in exactly the same way again. Or you have been reading the biography of some worthy man who cast his care upon the Lord and he was helped in a certain manner—so you think you will be helped in the same manner. But, very likely, God will do nothing of the kind! He

is not bound to give you any blessing in the particular way which you choose to select. He has His own method of giving a blessing and His own plan of warding off evil, so you must leave the, "how," and the, "when," entirely with Him. It is useless for you to think of mapping out the route for Him to whom the Psalmist said, "Your way is in the sea and Your path in the great waters, and Your footsteps are not known."

The same error also occurs with many *in seeking sanctification and growth in Grace*. They are moved to ask, "Lord, is this how we are to grow in Grace?" Then the great Husbandman says, "Yes, 'tis even so. Good vines must feel the pruning knife. That is the way to make them more fruitful." A perplexed soul enquires, "Dear Master, is this the way that I am to be made like You?" And He replies, "Yes. I was made perfect through suffering and you must have fellowship with Me in this respect if you are to become like I." We had marked out quite another mode of procedure—our Lord's hands were to be laid upon us and so we were to be blessed! Yet He knows best—therefore let us say, "Even so, Father, for so it seems good in Your sight."

The same mistake is often made *with regard to conversion*—the conversion of others, or our own conversion. I hope I am addressing many persons who are earnestly seeking faith in Christ, or who already have a measure of faith in Him, yet they have never obtained the full assurance of peace and rest because they have looked for it to come to them in a certain way. You expected to receive the blessing of forgiveness while you were listening to the preaching of the Gospel. Or having heard that many people have been converted under such-and-such a preacher, you have gone to hear him, earnestly praying all the while that the Lord would save you through that man's preaching. Yet He has not done so. It may be that He has ordained to bless you through some other means—well, be not cast down on that account, but be thankful if He blesses you anyway. Possibly you went with the great crowd that gathered to hear some notable evangelist and, after the public service, you went into the enquiry-room, as you heard that many had been led to Christ in that way, and you thought it would be so with you, but it was not. Well, be not surprised or sad if that is the case—it was not your place to dictate the way in which the Lord should reveal Himself to you!

It may be that you heard of a certain book being very useful to enquirers and seekers, and you said, "I will read that book and ask the Lord to bless it to me." You did so, yet you were none the better and you blamed yourself for not getting any good out of the book which had been blessed to others. Yet you must remember that God has His own ways and times of revealing Himself to His people. It is quite possible that you thought too much of that preacher, or that enquiry-room, or that good book—and that you did not think enough of Jesus, Himself—and probably if you had looked to Him rather than to the instrumentality, you would long before this have had your eyes opened and have seen everything clearly! You laid down certain conditions for Christ, but He would not comply with those conditions, but acted according to the good pleasure of His own will.

It is the same when we try to lay down conditions with regard to the conversion of our friends. I remember well the story of two Christian gen-

tleman who had a young companion who was about to start on a long voyage—I think, to China—and they persuaded him to spend a week with them. And they made it a matter of earnest prayer that during that week their young friend might be converted to God. They had real faith and they very properly used the means which they thought likely to be blessed to him. They induced him to attend various places of worship during the week, taking him to hear a different preacher each night—but apparently in vain. At last there remained only the Friday night—and only one man whom they had not taken their young friend to hear—that was good old Rowland Hill and they had left him to the last because he was said to be so eccentric and so likely to say strange things which they were afraid might disgust the young man.

They prayed very earnestly that God would keep Mr. Hill from saying anything amusing, lest their friend should be made to laugh, but, that night, the preacher was more humorous than usual and Surrey Chapel was made to ring again and again as peals of laughter followed the telling of some extraordinary story in his inimitable way! And the very proper gentlemen were quite shocked and saddened. Among other things, Mr. Hill said that during the day he had seen some pigs follow a butcher into the slaughterhouse and he could not make out why they did so until he noticed that the butcher had his pocket full of peas which he threw out to the swine and so induced them to follow him to their death. “Then,” added Mr. Hill, “I understood why people follow the devil though he leads them to death—it is because he draws them after him with the pleasures of the world—as the butcher drew the pigs after him with the peas!” Those gentlemen thought it was a pity that the preacher spoke like that and when they came out, they felt sorry they had taken their young friend to hear him.

But he walked along very quietly for a time and then said, “That was a very striking story about the pigs and the peas, and most appropriate to my own case. I have gone after sin for the sake of the pleasure of it, without thinking of the consequences, and now I see what a fool I have been.” That rather rough illustration was the means of leading the young man to lay hold on Christ as his Savior before he went on his way! Those two gentlemen brought their friend to Christ, as these people brought the blind man to Him, “and besought Him to touch him,” but the Lord Jesus chose to work by the very instrumentality of which his followers were afraid! He often uses very strange means—means we do not like, perhaps—means which would never occur to us as helpful. And He does this to teach us that the power to cure is not in the man, or in the means, or in the place, or in the excitement of the hour, but it is in Himself alone! And He works just how He wills and when He wills—and when it is His set time to save a sinner, He uses His own instrument—whether it is Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the learned, or the eloquent, or the impulsive!

II. Secondly, THE LORD TAKES CARE TO PREVENT THE DISHONOR WHICH WOULD THUS COME TO HIM.

Observe how He did it in this case. They brought this blind man to Him and besought Him to touch him. So, first, *Christ did touch him, yet did not heal him*—“He took the blind man by the hand.” That was certain-

ly touching him, yet his eyes were not opened. Jesus kept His hand on the blind man “and led him out of the town,” but he was still a blind man! How very surprised the poor man, himself, must have been! His own faith led him to expect that if Christ would but touch him, his eyes would be opened. He must have had a feeling of astonishment and despondency when he felt that touch—a prolonged touch—a touch that gripped his hand and led him through the town, right away past the last of the houses and out into the fields—yet a touch that did not enable him to see! But did not that very disappointment make the man realize, once and for all, that it was not merely Christ’s touch that opened blind eyes, but Christ Himself who worked the miracle? It was evident that He could, if He pleased, give a touch that did not open the eyes of the blind. Manifestly, there was no magic about the mere touch of Christ’s fingers, for His fingers were touching the blind man’s fingers all the while, yet he did not even begin to see anything.

This is the lesson which the Lord is still teaching us. *The preaching of the Gospel is the great means of the salvation of sinners*, for “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” But if you look merely to the preaching—and especially if you look simply to the preacher, instead of looking to Christ, Himself—it is more than likely that the preaching will be in vain as far as you are concerned. You may listen to it attentively and even ask God to bless you by means of it, yet it may be to you only like Christ’s hand was to the blind man. It is even possible for the Gospel to be a savor of death unto death, as well as of life unto life! And even to those whom Christ means to bless, it may be without power as long as they look to it instead of looking to Christ.

The next thing that Christ did for the blind man was this. *His friends expected that Christ would heal the man before the crowd but He did not.* They probably thought, “Now, if the Savior will but put His fingers on our friend’s eyes and make him see, all the onlookers will know of it, their faith will be strengthened and Christ will be glorified.” But Christ will not do anything to the blind man before the crowd. He takes him by the hand and leads him right away from the throng. He will not begin to operate upon him while anybody else is near, but conducts him away where he will be quite alone. Now, in the preaching of the Gospel, it is a very usual thing for our Lord Jesus Christ to save men in the crowd there. And many thousands of souls have heard of Jesus, believed in Him and found salvation in the midst of a throng of their fellows. But nowhere in His Word do we read that He intends to always save people in throngs and crowds. On the contrary, there are some to whom He seems to say, “I shall not save you here. Come away from the public assembly and get into the quiet of your own home.”

Do not object and say, “But, Lord, I thought I could believe in You, here and now, and so find peace.” That is not His will, for your believing is to be exercised out in the fields where you can be quite alone, or upstairs in that little room of yours where, in the dead of night you shall sit up in your bed, with nobody near you, and turn over in your mind the Truths of God you have been hearing and then and there put your trust in Jesus. It is dishonoring to Christ for us to say, “If we can only get large companies of people together and arouse them with stirring appeals and

sweet singing, we are sure to get them converted.” The crowd has really nothing to do with the matter of conversion! And while Christ, blessed be His name, does save many in the crowd, yet if we get to regard the presence of the crowd as essential to the conversion of anybody, He will very likely take that individual apart, as He did with this blind man when He took him by the hand and led him out of the town!

The next point is this. *Our Lord usually worked His miracles instantaneously, yet He would not be tied down to work always in the same way.* So this blind man is *gradually* enabled to see. First, only partial sight is granted to him, then the obscuring film is removed and he sees clearly. There is a deep spiritual lesson for us in this action of our Lord. Perhaps somebody has said, “I know that So-and-So found peace with God in a moment—and I will not believe until I get the blessing in the same way.” My dear Friend, let me tell you very solemnly that you must not presume to make any stipulation with Christ as to how you are to believe and when you are to believe! If you mean to be His follower, you will have to get rid of that proud spirit and leave the Lord to save you in His own way. Some find joy and peace in an instant, but there are others who first receive a little Light and then a little more, and a little more till gradually they see as clearly as this man did.

In the tropics, the sun seems, in the morning, to leap up the horizon and to turn darkness into light in a very short period. But in this country the sun gives us longer notice of its coming. It shoots many arrows of light before it, with rosy steps, advances in the full glory of the dawning day! It is just so in the spiritual realm—there are some tropical Christians who pass from darkness to light in a moment. Others are of the temperate zone—slower in their growth, yet they receive the Light of God just as surely as the others. When you read the story of anyone’s conversion, do not say, “That is the way I am going to be saved.” Of course there is only one way of salvation—that is, by faith in Christ—but there are many ways in which Christ gives this great blessing to the sons of men! And you must leave Him to work in His own way. The Spirit, like the wind, blows where He wishes and when He wishes and if you try to dictate to Him, you will grieve Him and miss the blessing you desire to obtain.

Further, *the Savior employed means which these people had not suggested and which probably appeared to them to be quite unsuitable.* In a similar fashion, my Friend, I hope that you are going to be saved and I urge you to look to Christ that you may obtain salvation through Him. Yet it is quite possible that you are not going to be saved in the way you think. You are very fond of your minister and he is very helpful to you in many ways—yet God probably means to bless you by some other servant of His. Perhaps by some godly woman. The Lord has, many a time, brought “her ladyship” into the light by means of the cook or the housemaid! And “my lord” has been brought to the Savior by a man whom he would hardly have employed to black his boots. The Lord can use whatever means He likes—and sometimes He uses means which we would never have thought of using.

I have heard of a father who used to pray much for the conversion of his sons and daughters, yet he did not see one of them saved. When he

came to die, his family had all grown up and they had, themselves, become the heads of other households. He sent for them to come to his bedside and he prayed very earnestly that he might die so joyful and triumphant a death that they might be convinced of the beauty and power of vital godliness—and seek the Savior for themselves. That was his plan of bringing his family to Jesus, but it pleased the Lord to allow him to be in great pain of body and much distress of mind. Indeed, he was in such anguish of heart that his testimony to the power of Divine Grace was of a very negative character! He had no songs of triumph, but he had many moans of pain and many questions about his spiritual state. God puts many of His children to bed in the dark, but they are His children all the same. It is of the wicked that it is written, “There are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men.” God’s best servants often pass away under a cloud—and it was so with the friend of whom I am speaking. One of his last utterances was the expression of his intense regret that his sons would be confirmed in their unbelief by his experience in his dying hour—yet mark what really happened!

They all knew of his genuine piety. They had not a doubt about that matter, for they reckoned him to be one of the best of men and, as they gathered in the house after the funeral, the eldest son said to them, “Brothers and sisters, our father died a very sad death, yet we know that his soul was saved. We all know that he trusted Christ as his Savior and that he lived a most godly life. Now,” he said, “if such a man as our father found it hard to die, think how much harder it will be for us if we have to die without a Savior.” The same thought had occurred to the rest of the family and it was not long before they all sought and found their father’s God and Savior! You see, the Lord really heard his prayer and granted him the desire of his heart—though not in the way he expected. And He will hear you, my Brother, and He will hear you, my Sister, but the answer may not come in your way. The Lord has His own way of doing His own work and, sometimes He adopts very singular methods to teach us that there is no power in the method He uses, but that all the power lies in Himself!

III. The third thing to be noted in this narrative is that OUR BLESSED LORD TAKES CARE TO HONOR FAITH EVEN WHEN HE REBUKES ITS WEAKNESS. He did not open this blind man’s eyes in the way his friends asked Him to do, but He did open his eyes and He did a great deal more than that for him. And I want you to notice how the Lord Jesus honored the imperfect faith of this man and his friends—though He also rebuked its imperfections.

First, *our Lord condescended to guide this blind man.* This is one of the most beautiful incidents in Scripture. I should like to meet with an artist who could worthily depict Christ leading that blind man out of the town. It is not everybody who would undertake such a task as that, but our Lord condescended to take this poor fellow who could not see anything by the hand and lead him right away from the crowd that had gathered. It was something to be that blind man—I think I would be willing to lose the sight of my eyes if I might be led by Christ as he was! O blessed blindness that brings Christ into such close contact with this poor man!

Was he not greatly honored? Surely he was the most highly honored blind man who ever lived, thus to have Christ to guide him. Sometimes you see a blind man led by a dog and, sometimes, by a child—but Christ Himself undertakes the task in this case! The blind man believed in Jesus sufficiently to be led by Him and Jesus led him further than he expected.

Note next that *Christ left all the rest of the crowd for the sake of this one blind man*. I do not know how many there were to whom Christ was preaching, but He said, “Good-bye” to them all that He might take this poor blind man by the hand and lead him out of the town. Have not you, dear Friend, found the Lord Jesus Christ deal with you, sometimes, as if you were the only person in the world? Has not His love been so graciously manifested that you have said, “Why, if I were the most important person in the world, He could not do more for me than He has done.” So, on this occasion, Christ left everybody else, for the time being, that He might devote all His attention to this one blind man. He seemed to say to him, “My Friend, I am going to take you into My surgery room that I may perform an operation upon you. And I want you to be alone with Me that I may give all My thoughts to your case.”

So, putting all others aside, “Christ begins to cure this blind man. For ointment, He uses the spit from His mouth. Then He lays His hands upon the man and asks him whether he can see anything. After his answer, telling that the cure is working, Christ puts His hands again upon the blind man’s eyes and makes him look up. Christ does not give His system a shock by revealing the full light to him all at once, but He works the miracle as gently as the wisest nurse or the most loving mother might have done. So it comes to pass that although the man does not get what his friends asked for him, he gets something a great deal better, for Christ gave him a complete cure, so that “he saw every man clearly.” Christ did not send him away with one eye opened and the other still remaining closed, or revealing just a little light in one corner of it. Christ did not leave him cross-eyed or short-sighted, but he “saw every man clearly.”

It seems to me that Christ must have cured this man entirely out of love to him. He may have cured some others partly with the view of their publishing His name and fame so as to attract other sufferers to Him, but He did not cure this man for that reason, for, when He had opened his eyes, He said to him, “Do not go into the town, and do not talk of this miracle to anybody who comes from the town. You can go home to your own village and tell the people there all about what I have done, but, otherwise, this is a matter between you and Me alone.”

Now, dear Friends, you who are seeking the Lord, but cannot find Him, is there not a lesson for you in this narrative? I pray you to give up dictating to the Lord as to how He is to save you, for He has a far better way of working than you have even dreamt of at present and, possibly, His way will be to get you quite alone and gradually to lead you into the light. He means to have some private talk with you, not meant for any other ear. He means to make Himself known to you in a peculiarly special manner—not in your way, but in His own far superior way! Then, why do you object to His plan? Your one business is to believe in Him, to

rely wholly on Him and to praise Him for His great goodness to you. I pray you, do not quibble about ways and methods, but trust the Lord fully. If you do so, it shall not be long before you will get the Light of God and the joy, and the peace for which you are praying!

How long I was, myself, dictating to God instead of trusting Him! I thought I must have a certain amount of conviction of sin before I could be saved. I really had it all the while, though I did not know that I had it. I thought I must feel a certain weight of guilt. I *was* feeling it and, for that very reason, I thought I was not. I might have been spared much needless suffering if I had only believed what the Lord had taught me in His Word—that I had nothing to do with feeling burdens or anything else by way of preparation for coming to Christ, but that I had to come to Him just as I was. If I could not come to Him with a broken heart, I was to come to Him to break it. If I did not feel any true conviction of sin, or a single atom of repentance in my soul, there was all the more reason why I should come to Him and, without money, buy all that I needed. So, poor blind ones, come to my Master, blind as you are—but do not lay down any rules or regulations as to how He is to save you, for He will do it in His own way, which is, after all, the best possible way.

IV. Now I close with a fourth remark. WHEN THE LORD HAS TAKEN PAINS TO PREVENT US FROM ATTACHING TOO GREAT IMPORTANCE TO THE MEANS, THEMSELVES, HE PUTS HONOR UPON THE MEANS.

I have already called your attention to this fact. The blind man's friends trusted too much to Christ's touch and too little to Christ Himself! He wanted to cure them of that evil, so He touched the man yet left him unhealed. But after He had taken him out of the town and away from the people, He did, after all, heal him by a touch, or something more than a touch, for He put His hands upon him twice, so that, though there was a touch that did not heal, there were afterwards two touches that did! It was as though Christ would say to them, "How foolish you are to trust in the touch instead of in Me! But when I have cured you of that folly, then will I put honor upon My touch which is the method by which I usually heal the sick."

It is so, too, with you who hear the Gospel, yet who seem to hear it in vain, for the Lord means you not to trust in your *hearing*, but to trust in *Him*. After He has cured you of that evil, I should not wonder if you hear the Gospel twice as well as anybody else does—and I expect that it will come with double power to your soul! It is so in this narrative and it is often so as a matter of spiritual experience. When the Lord has taken us away from trusting in ordinances, then He shows us what great blessings come from the ordinances when they are rightly observed. When we trust to the preacher, or the preaching, we get nothing—but when we trust in Christ alone, then He makes the preacher, the preaching and other means of Grace to be the channels of blessing to our souls!

Then, lastly, *the Lord sent that man home without letting anyone in that neighborhood know of the cure He had worked*. Christ thereby seems to say, "There are many whom I heal of whom nobody knows." There is a message to us preachers in this incident! Christ seems to say to us, "This is often My way of saving souls. I give the healing touch, but you do not know anything about it." Certainly, none of us can calculate the amount

of virtue which pours out of Christ through the preaching of the Word. The Last Great Day will reveal the myriads of men and women who have been brought to Jesus through the preaching of the Gospel, but, who, nevertheless, were never known to the preacher, himself, although they were converted through his instrumentality!

O Brothers and Sisters, keep on telling poor sinners about the Savior! Try to bring them into contact with Christ! You may not actually see Him open their eyes, for He may take them out of the town and work the great miracle privately. You bring them into contact with Christ and although that may not save them, it will lead up to their salvation and, therefore, you will be doing good service to them and to your Master, too! Preach away, my Brother, and preach nothing but Jesus! Teach your classes, my Brothers and Sisters, nothing but Jesus and seek to get His hands into contact with the children of men! But when you work, and when you pray, do not lay it down that God must bless souls by you, or by anybody else! But say to Him that if He will but save them anyhow, you will be content and thankful.

And as for you, poor Sinners, seek salvation by simply trusting in Jesus and if you have not any clear vision of Him at this moment, get to your knees and do not rise till you have found Him as your Savior! He has His own ways and methods of working, so you must trust *Him*—not the method—and He will bless you with life eternal! So may He do for His own name's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 4:33-41; 5:12-17.**

We are going to read some verses in the fourth and fifth chapters of Luke's Gospel—hospital chapters, I may call them, for they record many marvelous cures which were worked by the Great Physician, the Lord Jesus Christ. We shall begin at the 33rd verse of the fourth chapter.

Luke 4:33, 34. *And in the synagogue there was a man who had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with You, You Jesus of Nazareth?* There are many people in the present day who have this evil spirit in them and they also say, "Let us alone." They do not want to have their consciences disturbed. They would rather sleep on until they wake up in another world where their awaking will be too late to be of use for their repentance.

34. *Have You come to destroy us? I know You, who You are, the Holy One of God.* That is an old trick of the devil, to acknowledge the excellence of the preacher that he may avoid the personal application of the sermon—and there are many people who are quite satisfied when they have said concerning the Word which they have heard, "Yes, it was all true, and it was very well put." But that is not the purpose of a true minister of the Gospel—simply to win the compliment of your approbation—he wants to see the devil cast out of you and to stir up your hearts so that you will no longer let religion alone, but will flee to Christ to save you!

35, 36. *And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold your peace and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him and hurt him not. And they were all amazed, and spoke among themselves, saying, What a word is this! For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits and they come out.* Ah, dear Friends, when we see what the Gospel can do—how it can reclaim the thief, how it can make chaste the harlot, how it can lift up the very vilest of men from the lowest depths of degradation—we may well say, “What a Word is this!” The power of the Gospel does not lie in the preacher, but in the Truth of God which he proclaims. What a Word is this, which not only knocks at the door of the human heart, but which carries on its belt the key with which it can open that door! It does not simply invite the sinner to trust the Savior, but there is a power which goes with it which sweetly woos the heart until the unwilling become willing and those who have hitherto despised God and His great salvation, cheerfully yield themselves to Him. Christ not only comes to those who seek Him, but, in the splendor of His Grace, He is often found of them that sought Him not! Yes, those who cried, “Let us alone,” are not let alone, for Grace brings them beneath her blessed sway.

37-39. *And the fame of Him went out into every place of the country round about. And He arose out of the synagogue and entered into Simon's house. And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they made request of Him for her. And He stood over her and rebuked the fever and it left her: and immediately she arose and ministered unto them.* Here is a type of another form of the disease of sin. This time it is a hot and burning fever and there are many men who have the fever of pride, or the fever of ambition—and some who have the fever of impetuous lust. Yet we have never read of such a cure as this in the lives of the doctors of ancient or modern times! They have worked remarkable cures by long dosing the patient with various drugs, but Christ just stood over Peter's wife's mother and rebuked the fever—and instantly it fled.

40. *Now when the sun was setting.* Ah, it is setting with some of you! Those gray hairs are like the streaks of light upon the horizon as the sun goes down! But blessed be God, He who heals the spiritually sick in the early morning by bringing children to Himself does not cease to work until the sun goes down!

40. *All they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto Him and He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them.* Oh, that He would do that just now! Still is He mighty to save! Oh, that He would now display His ancient power and lay His healing hands on everyone of you! What fame He would get if He would do so! What joy there would be if all of you should now be turned to God! And why should it not be? Christ is able to do this—then let us ask it of Him in earnest believing prayer!

41. *And devils also came out of many, crying out and, saying, You are Christ, the Son of God. And He rebuking them did not allow them to speak: for they knew that He was Christ.* Perhaps they thought that their testimony would tend to blacken His Character. We are, in a sense, pleased when bad men find fault with us, for that is really the best commendation that they can give us. But when they begin to praise us, we feel sus-

picious that there is something wrong. We think of how Christ acted when the devils said to Him, “You are Christ, the Son of God,” and we would have them hold their tongues. What a vile thing sin is, for it makes even good words to be evil when they come out of sinful lips!

Luke 5:12. *And it came to pass, when He was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy: who seeing Jesus fell on his face and implored Him, saying, Lord, if You will, You can make me clean.* There was not much faith there, but faith even as a grain of mustard seed will serve and, therefore, Christ did not refuse the poor leper’s plea.

13-15. *And He put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be you clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him. And He charged Him to tell no man: but go, and show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. But so much the more went there a fame abroad of Him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by Him of their infirmities.* Oh, that sinners would come to Christ in this spirit now—“to hear, and to be healed by Him of their infirmities”! Some of you have come to hear, but have you come to Christ to be healed? Have you really come for that purpose? Alas, some even come to God’s House only to see, or to be seen! How can such people expect to receive a blessing? Yet my Master is so gracious that, often, He is found of them that sought Him not! So may it be with any careless ones who are with us now!

16, 17. *And He withdrew Himself into the wilderness, and prayed. And it came to pass on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them.* These were the least hopeful patients that the Great Physician ever had, for to heal these doctors of divinity and to bring these proud learned Pharisees down to accept the Gospel needed an Omnipotent display of Divine Power. Penitent sinners are readily brought to Christ, but often the self-righteous—who think they are rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing—are not to be persuaded to accept the fine gold which Christ presents to all who ask Him for it. The Lord grant that if any such people are here, the power of the Lord may be here to heal them!

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

PROFIT AND LOSS

NO. 92

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 6, 1856,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

***“What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the
whole world and lose his own soul?”
Mark 8:36.***

MANY men have been made bankrupts through inattention to their books. No man ever loses anything by counting the cost, knowing his own expenditures and keeping his debts and credits pretty closely together. But many men have been ruined by attempts which have been suggested by a spirit of speculation and fostered by a negligence of their own concerns, combined with absolute ignorance of their real financial position. Spiritually, man is a great trader—he is trading for his own welfare. He is trading for time and for eternity! He keeps two shops—one shop is kept by an apprentice of his, a rough unseemly hand, of clayey mold, called the body. The other business, which is an infinitely more vast concern, is kept by one that is called, “the soul”—a spiritual being who does not baffle upon little things, but who deals with Hell or Heaven and trades with the mighty realities of eternity. Now, a merchant would be very unwise who should pay all attention to some small off-hand shop of his and take no account, whatever, of a large establishment! And he would, indeed, be negligent who should very carefully jot down every trade of the expenditure of his own household but should never think of reckoning the expenses of some vast concern that may be hanging on his hands. But the most of men are just as foolish—they estimate the profits (as they conceive them to be) which are gained in that small corner shop called the body—but they too seldom reckon up the awful loss which is brought about by a negligence of the soul’s concerns in the great matters of eternity. Let me beseech you, my Brothers and Sisters—while you are not careless of the body, as, indeed, you ought not to be—seeing that it is, in the case of Believers, the Temple of the Holy Spirit—to take more especial care of your souls! Decorate the tenement, but suffer not the inhabitant to die of starvation. Paint not the ship while you are letting the crew perish for lack of stores on board. Look to your soul, as well as to your body—to the life, as well as to that by which you live. Oh that men would take account of the soul’s vast concerns and know their own standing before God! Oh that you would examine yourselves! If men

would do so—if all of you would now search within—how many of you would be bankrupts? You are making a pretty little fortune with regard to the body. You are doing tolerably well and comfortable. You are providing for yourselves things as you desire them.

Your mortal body, perhaps, is even pampered and has no fault with its owner. But ask your poor soul how that is getting on and you will find it not a gainer, but in many instances, I fear, a loser! Let me solemnly tell you that if your soul is a loser, however much your body may be a gainer, you have not profited in the least degree! Let me ask you all, this question in the name of Jesus Christ—“What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?”

We shall divide our text and consider, in the first place, *the gain a man would get if he gained the whole world*. In the second place, *the fearful loss if a man should lose his soul*. And then, afterwards, we will try to finish up by some *practical lesson*.

I. In the first place, WHAT IS A MAN PROFITED IF HE SHOULD GAIN THE WHOLE WORLD? Many Christian people, who do not exactly talk common sense, sum this all up by saying that to gain the whole world is to gain nothing at all. Perhaps they are right, but I question if they believe what they assert! They sing just as we have been singing—

**“Jewels to you are gaudy toys,
And gold is sordid dust.”**

And so they are, compared with Christ. But there are some who find it unnecessary and absurd, calling jewels, “gaudy toys,” and gold, “sordid dust.” I have often admired some of my friends, when I have heard them talking about gold as sordid dust. For I wonder why they did not give it to the dustman the next time he came round! If they were to do that, I would not mind going round, myself, for once with the bell, particularly as it might be rather convenient to us, seeing that we need some of that sordid dust to erect a Tabernacle for the Most High! Many who affect to despise wealth are the greatest hoarders of it. I suppose they are afraid it might injure other people’s hearts and, therefore, they put it away very carefully, so that others may not touch the dangerous thing! That may be all very kind of them. But we do not exactly appreciate their benevolent intention and would think it fully as kind if they were, every now and then, to distribute some of it! You hear them saying, very often, that “money is the root of all evil.” Now I would like to find that text! But it is not to be found anywhere, from Genesis to Revelation. I found a text once, which said, “*The love of money is the root of all evil.*” But as for the money, itself, I can see very little evil in it! If a man will but rightly use it, I conceive that it is a talent sent from Heaven, bestowed by God for holy purposes and I am quite sure God’s talents are not bad ones! My Broth-

ers and Sisters, it is all foolishness for a man to say that he does not really care for these things, because everyone does, in some degree. Everyone wishes to have some of this world. And there really is, in possessing a competency in this world, something considerable with regard to profit. I am not going to deceive you by striking off all the profits and saying you are losers on every point. No, I will go the whole length which any of you like to go with regard to the profit of this world. If it is considerable, I will admit its greatness. If you think it possible to make a fine thing of this world, I will grant it, if you like. And after having admitted that, I will ask you, "Will it answer your purpose to gain the whole world, in the largest sense of that word and yet lose your own soul?"

Now, I will try, if I can, to add your bills up for you and strike a balance. We will suppose a case which must very seldom occur, in fact, which never has occurred! There never was a man who gained the whole world. Some have been monarchs of almost all the known globe. But it is remarkable, if you look at a map of the ancient world, how little their territories were, compared with the whole globe. Indeed, they have not much greater than those of modern monarchs. It is but a small portion of the world that was known to the ancients. And even then, no man possessed it all! But to put this question somewhat in a point of view wherein the thing might be possible, I think there are three or four cases in which a man may be said, with some reservation, to have gained the whole world!

1. In the first place, a man who has *power over extensive empires* may be supposed, in some measure, to have gained the whole world. Take, for instance, ALEXANDER. I cannot bring you a fairer specimen of a man having possession of the whole world than he. He could say of his dominions that, although they had their limits, he did not know the nations who were able to bound his territories. He could travel thousands of miles without arriving at the boundaries. He had at his foot millions of armed men, ready to avenge his quarrels and uphold his banner. When he rose to fight, he was invincible! When he stood in his council chamber, his will was law! In his service thousands were slain, but at his summons, an equal number gathered round his standard. Alexander, I summon you! What do you think —is it worth much to gain the world? Is its scepter the wand of happiness? Is its crown the security of joy? Look at Alexander's tears! He weeps! Yes, he weeps for another world to conquer! Ambition is insatiable! The gain of the whole world is not enough. Surely to become a universal monarch is to make one's self universally miserable!

Perhaps you think there is very much pleasure in having power. I believe there is. I do not think any man who has any power over his fellow

creatures will deny that it is gratifying to his fallen nature. Or else, why is it that the politician seeks for it so continually and toils for it, days without number, and wastes the sap of his life in midnight debate? There is a pleasure in it. But mark you, that pleasure is counterbalanced by its anxiety. Popularity has its head in the clouds, but its feet are in the sands. And while the man's head is among the stars, he trembles for his feet! There is an anxiety to increase his power, or else to *maintain* it. And that anxiety takes away much of the enjoyment of it. Lord Bacon has justly compared those who move in higher spheres to those heavenly bodies in the firmament which have much admiration but little rest. And it is not necessary to invest a wise man with power to convince him that it is a garment bedizened with gold. It dazzles the beholder with its splendor, but oppresses the wearer with its weight. I do verily believe that the winning of the whole world of power is, in itself, so slight a gain that it were fair to strike the balance and say there is little left. For even Alexander, himself, envied the peasant in his cottage and thought there was more happiness on the plains, among the shepherds, than in his palace amongst his gold and silver! Oh, my Friends, if I were to compare all this with the loss of the soul, you might be startled, indeed! But I leave it to strike its own balance. I say that to gain the whole world is but little—and especially when we are sinners against God. And, moreover, if an empire over the world entails that fearful responsibility which will not allow the eyes to slumber, or the heart to cease its throbbing. If it puts into the hand the power of committing gigantic crimes and, if those gigantic crimes, like ghosts haunt men's midnight slumbers, the gaining of power over the whole world is a loss instead of a gain, even considered in itself!

2. There is another way of gaining the whole world, not so much by power, but by something next door to it, namely—*riches*. CROESUS shall be my specimen here. He amassed a world of riches, for his wealth was beyond estimation. As for his gold and his silver, he kept little account of them and his precious stones were without number. He was rich, immensely rich. He could buy an empire and, after that, could spend another empire's worth. Perhaps you think that to be immensely rich is a great gain. But I believe that to be enormously rich is, in itself, far from desirable. Ask Croesus. Dying, he exclaimed, "O! Solon, Solon." And when they asked him what he meant, he replied that Solon had once told him that no man could be pronounced happy until death. And, therefore, he cried, "O! Solon, Solon," for the misery of his death had swept away the joys of his life! Such is the slavery of great riches. Such are its anxieties. And such, too often, is that miserly avarice which wealth does beget—that the rich man is often a loser by his wealth—even apart from the loss of his soul. Many a man would be happier if he had walked the

pavement in rags, than if he rode through the streets in his chariot. "Many a heavy heart rides in a carriage," is an old saying, but a marvelously true one. Well said the poet—

***"If you are rich, you are poor,
For like an ass, whose back with ingots bows,
You bear your heavy riches but a journey,
And death unloads you."***

Suppose a man's wealth to have been gained dishonestly—then I pronounce it a terrible and infallible curse to him! In itself it constitutes a plague apart from a world to come. My Friends, estimate that gold at what price you like. I say if you were to put the soul as a debt against it, you would find that there would be a fearful loss! But even apart from that, I believe that to gain a world of riches would be a loss in itself, at least to most men. There would be few men living who would be able to steer the boat of pleasure through a sea so thick with weeds. The less a man has the better, so that he comes within the moderate competence which every man may desire. Agur was right when he said, "Give me neither poverty nor riches." Great wealth is certainly no great gain.

3. But there was another man who gained the world in a higher sense. His name was Solomon. His treasures were not so much those of wealth or power, (though he had both), as the treasures of wisdom and the pleasures of the body. Solomon had all things that could delight the mind, please the eye and charm the body. He had but to speak and music chanted the sweetest air that Israel's Psalmody could give. He had but to lift his finger and noble armies followed him and treasures were spread beneath his feet. The wines of every vintage were quaffed from his bowl and maidens gathered from every clime awaited his command. He was master over men—he was lord. He enjoyed all kinds of delight, every sort of pleasure. He mingled in his cup all that flesh calls Paradise, all that men dream of happiness. There was nothing which Solomon did not try. He ransacked the world to find joy. He was a wise man—he knew where to search for earth's happiness and he found it. Solomon, what did you find? O, Preacher! Open your lips and tell us—"*Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.*" Thus says the preacher! Oh, my Friends, if we could have all the pleasures of the flesh we desire, I question whether they would be, in themselves, a profit. But of this I am certain—that compared with the loss of our soul, it would, indeed, be a dreadful loss! I think that if many of us could indulge all the pleasure of the body we desire, we would destroy our bodies and actually waste our happiness. Many a man has hunted his pleasures too fast to win them. Many a racer has lost the prize by overstraining in the contest. And many a man might have had more pleasure, even to the body, if he had been more moderate in seeking it. He is a fool who grills a pound of butter. He grills himself away by

too fast pleasures and wastes his life till it is gone and there is nothing left of it! Ah, if you could have all the world of sensual delights and if you had all the wisdom of men, apart from the Grace of God to restrain your pleasures, I believe you would find them to be a dead loss. And I will affirm the words of the text, "It would not profit you if you had the whole world and should lose your own soul."

Even in this world, you see, these great winnings are but little gains. They are great to look at, but they are very small when you get hold of them. This world is like the boy's butterfly—it is pretty sport to chase it—but bruise its wings by an overly earnest grasp, and it is nothing but a disappointment!

But, my Friends, if there is little profit in this world by these magnificent gains I have mentioned and in these extreme cases, what shall it profit a man, if he does *not* gain the world and should lose his soul? Put the question this way—What shall it profit a man if he loses this present world and the next, too? What shall it profit a man if he gains but a small portion of this world—and this is the most that we may expect—and yet loses his soul? I have sometimes thought with regard to the rich man, "Well, such a man has a portion in this life. But with regard to the poor man, I cannot see what there is to make him happy if he has not something better to look to when he dies." I have seen the weary callous-handed sons of toil often oppressed and down-trodden as they are by their masters and I have thought, "Oh, poor souls, if you cannot look to another world, you are, of all men, the most miserable! For you do not get either world. You go trudging along, just like a pack-horse, without the hope of a secure place in which you may at last rest." The rich man, at least, makes as much as can be made of this world, little as that is, apart from Divine Grace. But the poor man makes the least of this world and then he goes from poverty to damnation—from his squalor to Perdition—and from his poorhouse and his rags to the flames of Hell! What a horrid state to have such an existence—to live in this world, a life of misery, and to find a starving existence to be only the preface and the prelude of a more doleful and fearful life hereafter! Oh, what shall it profit you, if you gain a little of this world and lose your own soul?

Now, I have only cast up accounts for this life. But what will it profit a man, *when he comes to die*, if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? There he lies dying—he has no God to console him. Bring to him his heaps of gold. What? Do they not still the throbbing of your heart? What? Cannot your bags of gold ferry you across the Jordan? What, Man? You have lived for your heaps of "glittering wealth"—will they not live with you? Will you not take them with you to Heaven? No, he shakes his head—for hoarded wealth is but of little use to help a man to die. You

have heard of a sailor, who, when the ship was sinking rushed into the cabin, broke open the captain's chest, extracted all the money he could—tied it in a belt round his waist—leaped into the sea and sank, thus hurrying himself before his Creator with the witness of his sins about his loins! Oh, it were a bad thing to die with gold so gained! And do you think gold will do you much good, however you may have come by it, when you lie on your last couch? No. You must bow to inevitable death, in spite of all your riches! And if you gain the whole world's applause or fame, can that help you on your dying bed?—

***“Jesus can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are.”***

But how little will the applause of man seem, when you come to die? Oh, I sometimes think, what poor fools we are to value ourselves by what our fellow creatures think of us! But oh, when we come to die, we shall not care about the din and noise which have followed us all our lives. What will fame and honor be when we are in the last article? Bubbles! Can souls feed on bubbles? No, we shall then despise such vanities! We shall say, “Fame! Cease your trumpet. Let me die alone. For alone must I hear the trumpet of the archangel. You babbling fame, I hate you, for you do but disturb my slumbers and wake me in my bed.” Oh, there will be no gain in wealth, or power, or pomp, or fame, when we come to die—they will profit a man nothing, if he lose his own soul!

And what will it profit a man in *the Day of Judgment*, if he has gained the whole world? Suppose he comes before God's bar clothed in purple, with a crown upon his brow? There the diadem attracts no attention. I see whole hosts of men gathered before God's White Throne. But monarchs and their slaves are mixed indiscriminately. Princes and peasants stand upon a level, there, and I see no distinction. God says, “Depart, you cursed,” and the monarch is damned. Or he pronounces, “Come, you blessed,” and the monarch is saved. But the same voice speaks to each one. If they are saints, there is a voice of joy lifting them to their Home! And if they are lost, the voice of denunciation sends them to their appointed doom! Ah, there will be no profit to man, in all he has achieved, when he comes before God's judgment bar! Suppose him standing up to tell his Maker, “Lord, I had a deal of fame on earth. They stuck me up on the top of a column, to bear all weathers and they called that glory, to be gazed at by fools, or to be admired by the populace. And, O Lord, will you send such a man as I am to Hell?” “Oh,” says Justice, “what care I for your statue? What care I for your fame? If your soul is not saved, if you are not in Christ—with all your statues and all your fame—you shall sink to Hell forever!” For these things count not in the Day of Judgment. Men shall stand alike there. All shall be level. If Christ has saved us, we shall

be saved. But if we are out of Christ, great and mighty as we may be—the sentence shall be as impartial to the rich as to the poor!

Once more—what will it profit a man, when he gets to Hell, if he has gained the whole world? Profit him, Sir? Profit him? It will be the other way! In ages long ago a monarch went to Hell. Whenever he had entered a city, nobles saluted him and monarchs did him reverence. When he went to Hell, it was known he was come. There, in their several dungeons, lay the monarchs whom he had chained and dragged at his chariot wheels. There were the men whom he had slaughtered and whose nations he had cut up, root and branch. And when he entered into Hell—lying on their beds of fire and looking on him with scorn—a thousand voices shouted, “Aha! Aha! Have you become like one of us?” Then he found that the more glory he had on earth, the more hot was Hell. And while as a common sinner, if he had received a Hell, he found that as an extraordinary sinner and a great one, Hells rolled on Hells, like waves of the ocean over his guilty head! He found himself the worse for all his greatness. Go, wicked, rich man—heap up your gold—maybe it shall be turned to brimstone one day and you shall swallow it. Go, man of fame—blow the trumpet, or bid others blow it. The breath of fame shall fan the coals of God Almighty’s vengeance! Go, man of power and get to your dignity—the higher your flight, the greater your fall—when you shall be cast down from your loftiness and shall lie forever to howl in Perdition. Having gained all this, you have gained nothing at all.

II. We have summed up, then, the first point—it is but little to gain the whole world. Apart from religion there is very little in it. But now we come to the contrast—that is, THE LOSING THE SOUL.

I shall request your attention for a brief period while I endeavor to dilate on that—to lose the soul, my Friends—to lose the soul! How shall we tell what it is to lose the soul? You can conceive how fearful is the loss of the soul in three ways. First, from its intrinsic value. Secondly, from its capabilities. And thirdly, from its doom, if it is lost.

1. You may tell how serious it is to lose the soul from *its intrinsic value*. The soul is a thing worth ten thousand worlds. In fact, a thing which worlds on worlds heaped together like sand upon the sea shore could not buy! It is more precious than if the ocean had each drop of itself turned into a golden globe—all that wealth could not buy a soul! Consider! The soul is made in the image of his Maker. “God made man,” it is said, “in His own image.” The soul is an everlasting thing like God. God has gifted it with immortality and, therefore, it is terrible to lose it. Consider how precious a soul must be when both God and the devil are after it. You never heard that the devil was after a kingdom, did you? No, he is not so foolish. He knows it would not be worth his winning. He is never after

that, but he is always after souls! You never heard that God was seeking after a crown did you? No, He thinks little of dominions, but He is after souls every day—His Holy Spirit is seeking His children. And Christ came to save souls. Do you think that which Hell craves for and that which God seeks for, is not precious?

The soul is precious, again, we know, by the price Christ paid for it. “Not with silver and gold,” but with His own flesh and blood did He redeem it! Ah, it must be precious if He gave His heart’s eyes to purchase it. What must it be to lose your soul?

2. But it is also precious because it is everlasting. And that brings me to note—(I am running over these points, you can enlarge upon them at home)—that the soul is precious, on account of *its capabilities*. Do you see, up there, that starry crown? Do you mark, there, that Throne, with the palm branch at its foot? Do you see that pearly-gated city, with its light brighter than the sun? Do you mark its golden streets and its thrice happy inhabitants? There is a Paradise which eye has not seen, which outvies dreams and which imagination could not picture! But if the soul is lost, it is all lost. We see many lost things advertised. Now if a man’s soul is lost, let me advertise what he has lost. He has lost a crown, he has lost a harp, he has lost a throne, he has lost a Heaven, he has lost an eternity! When I consider how happy a soul may be, it appears to me to be a tremendous thing for it to be lost, even though it should gain the world. In fact, I cannot set the world in contrast. It is as though I should measure the Alps by a molehill. I cannot tell you what size the world is, if you give me for its standard a grain of dust—nor can I tell you Heaven’s worth, if you only allow me to value it by a world. Oh, Sirs, because the soul is capable of Heaven, its loss is a dreadful and terrible thing!

3. But consider, lastly, *where the soul must go to that is lost*. There is a place, as much beneath imagination as Heaven is above it. A place of murky darkness, where only lurid flames make darkness visible. A place where beds of flame are the fearful couches upon which spirits groan. A place where God Almighty, from His mouth, pours a stream of brimstone, kindling that “pile of fire and of much wood” which God has prepared of old as a Tophet for the lost and ruined. There is a spot whose only sights are scenes of fearful woe! There is a place—I do not know where it is, it is somewhere—not in the bowels of this earth, I trust—for that were a sad thing for this world to have Hell within its bowels. But somewhere, perhaps in a far off world, there is a place where the only music is the mournful symphony of damned spirits. Where howling, groaning, moaning, wailing and gnashing of teeth make up the horrid concert. There is a place where demons fly, swift as air, with whips of knotted burning wire, torturing poor souls. Where tongues, on fire with agony, burn the roofs of

mouths that shriek for drops of water—that water all denied. There is a place where soul and body endure as much of Infinite Wrath as the finite can bear—where the inflictions of justice crush the soul, where the continual flagellations of vengeance beat the flesh. A place where the perpetual pouring out of the vials of eternal wrath scald the spirit and where the cuttings of the sword strike deep into the inner man. Ah, Sirs, I cannot picture this! Within an hour some of you may know it. If your curtain of life is torn in two, some of you may soon find yourselves face to face with lost souls. Then, Sirs, you will know what it is to lose your souls! But you will never know it till then, nor can I hope to set it forth to you. Vain are these words, light are the things I utter. They are but the daubing of a paint to portray and not portray a scene so dreadful, for earth has not colors black enough or fiery enough to depict it! Ah, Sinners, if you knew what Hell meant, then might you tell what it is to lose your own souls!

III. What, then, is THE PRACTICAL LESSON with which we finish? If, as most certainly is the case in the most favorable circumstances, a sinner loses fearfully by the gain of the world—if he loses his soul—then how absurd it is for a man at any time to sell his soul for a little! *There* is a man who has sold his soul for half a sovereign. “Where?” you ask. Ah, let him answer, himself. Many a man has done it. Says one, “I think I should earn two shillings on Sunday by keeping just one of my shutters up in my shop and selling a little.” Yes, fine pay, that, to damn your souls for two shillings a week! Another man says, “I think I should get a good situation if I were not one of those Calvinists,” and he leaves off going to the House of God and begins to be a more fashionable religionist. A fine thing, that—to ruin your everlasting interest for a good situation! It will bring you into a bad situation one day. It is astonishing for how little a man will sell his soul! I remember an anecdote—I believe it is true. I had almost said I hope it is. A minister, going across some fields, met a countryman and said to him, “Well, Friend, it is a most delightful day.” “Yes, Sir, it is.” And having spoken to him about the beauties of the scenery and so forth, he said, “How thankful we ought to be for our mercies! I hope you never come out without praying.” “*Pray, Sir?*” he said. “Why, I never pray, I have got nothing to pray for.” “What a strange man,” said the minister. “Does your wife pray?” “If she likes.” “Don’t your children pray?” “If they like, they do.” “Well, you mean to say you do not pray,” said the minister, (as I think, not very rightly, no doubt he saw that the man was superstitious). “Now, I will give you half-a-crown if you will promise me not to pray as long as you live.” “Very well,” said the man, “I don’t see what I have got to pray for,” and he took the half-crown. When he went home, the thought struck him, “What have I done?” And

something said to him, “Well, John, you will soon die and you will need to pray, then. You will have to stand before your Judge and it will be a sad thing not to have prayed.”

Thoughts of this kind came over him and he felt dreadfully miserable. And the more he thought, the more miserable he felt. His wife asked him what was the matter. He could hardly tell her for some time, but at last, he confessed he had taken half-a-crown never to pray again and that was preying on his mind. The poor ignorant soul thought it was the Evil One that had appeared to him. “Yes, John,” she said, “sure enough it was the devil and you have sold your soul to him for that half-crown!” The poor creature could not work for several days and he became perfectly miserable from the conviction that he had sold himself to the Evil One. However, the minister knew what he was about and there was a barn close by where he was going to preach. He guessed the man would be there to ease his terror of mind and, sure enough, he was there one Sabbath evening and he heard the same man who gave him the half-crown, take for his text, these words, “What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?” “Yes,” he said, “what will it profit a man who sold his soul for half-a-crown?” Up gets the man, crying out, “Sir, take it back! Take it back!” “Why,” said the minister, “you want the half crown and you said you did not need to pray.” “But, Sir,” he said, “I must pray. If I do not pray, I am lost.” And after some testing by parleying, the half-crown was returned and the man was on his knees, praying to God. And it came to pass that, that very circumstance was the means of saving his soul and making him a changed man!

Now, I cannot do anything so eccentric as that, but I send some of you away with this on your mind—that though you think you could not do so—yet actually there are many of those whom I have here who have sold themselves to Satan by doing something for their worldly profit, which, in the end, must lead to the loss of their souls! Do any of you desire to know how your souls may be saved? Here is the answer—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and be baptized, and you shall be saved.” And whoever among you knows himself to be a sinner, let him take this for his consolation—“Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the chief.” Go away with that, you chief of sinners, and rejoice, for Jesus Christ came to save you! May God add His blessing for Christ’s sake! Amen.

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

“JESUS ONLY” —A COMMUNION MEDITATION NO. 2634

**A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, AUGUST 6, 1899.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 2, 1857.**

**“Jesus only.”
Mark 9:8.**

THIS was the last sight the disciples had upon the mountain and it seems to me to have been the best. They saw “Jesus only.” Jesus was often with His people. He was usually with His disciples, but they did not often notice Him as “Jesus only.” They probably did so, in this case, because He had been accompanied by two great and notable personages, who, all of a sudden, withdrew themselves and then, “they saw no man any more, save Jesus only.” The disciples had seen their Lord transfigured and attended by Moses and Elijah, representatives of the Law and the Prophets. Suddenly, Moses and Elijah vanished from their sight and then, “they saw no man any more, save Jesus only.”

Beloved, we shall never see “Jesus only,” till, like the disciples, we have seen Moses and Elijah, too! Never was there an eye which saw “Jesus only,” until it had first seen Moses. We must first pass under the rigors of Sinai and the terrors of the Law of God—we must first look upon the awful countenance of that dread Lawgiver, whose words are thunder, and whose speech is fire. We must be made to tremble beneath the denunciations of the Divine Law and stand abashed, astonished and amazed while the thunders of the wrath of God roll over our heads. We must see Moses first, or else we shall never see “Jesus only.” We shall be trusting in our own self-righteousness, putting something *with* Christ—making it Christ and *self*—until Moses comes in and breaks self-righteousness into shivers, and stains self with the filth and mire of the streets. We must have the breaking down by Moses—the smashing hand, the terrible strife that the Law of God brings into the conscience—or else we shall never know the sweetness of relying wholly upon Jesus and placing our confidence in Him alone.

And mark you, Beloved, in another sense, we shall never see “Jesus only” till we understand something about the Prophets. We must see Elijah, or else we shall not see “Jesus only.” There are some men who have not yet seen Elijah—they do not understand the prophecies. They think they perceive in the future a great progress of civilization and they expect to see the spread of the Gospel. They expect to hear of great agencies employed, of multitudes of ministers going forth to preach the Word of God and of a gradual conversion of the world to the religion of Christ. But he who understands the Prophets and has seen Elijah, believes not

in the immediate conversion of the world, nor in universal peace—he believes in “Jesus only.” He expects that Jesus will first come and, to him, the great hope of the future is the coming of the Son of Man. “I know,” he says, “that God shall overturn, and overturn, and overturn, until He shall come whose right it is to reign. I know that empires shall totter to their bases and that the world shall reel to and fro in terror and alarm until He shall appear whose name is Melchisedec, the King of Righteousness and the King of Peace, who shall set His hand upon the floods and His empire upon the rivers—and shall reign ‘from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.’” We shall not see “Jesus only,” as the world’s great Deliverer, as the sinners’ one Redeemer, as the earth’s bright Sun, as well as her Morning Star until we have studied the prophecies and seen how they all speak concerning Jesus, even of Him who is yet to come! We shall see Moses and Elijah first—and when we have seen them, their united testimony will lead us to see “Jesus only.”

And now, beloved child of God, we are about to approach the Lord’s Table. I shall only utter a few thoughts which may help you in your meditations there. When we come to the Communion Table, we are to think of “Jesus only.” We have no business with anything, tonight, except “Jesus only.” We are to forget that we have a wife and children, that we have a house or a barn, that we have fields or a shop. We are not to remember anything about these things, but to say, as far as we can—

***“Far from my thoughts, vain world, be gone!
Leave my religious hours alone.
Gladly would my eyes my Savior see—
I wait a visit, Lord, from Thee.
My heart grows warm with holy fire,
And kindles with a pure desire.
Come, my dear Jesus, from above,
And feed my soul with heavenly love.”***

By God’s Grace, tonight, you have nothing to do with any other set of people under Heaven. Remember that you are coming to the Lord’s Table simply as God’s saints. There are many religious controversies which shake the world, but you have nothing to do with them tonight. When you come to the Lord’s Table, you have nothing to do with the question whether Baptism is by immersion or by sprinkling, and nothing to do with the question whether church government should be Episcopal or Presbyterian. You have nothing to do with what anybody else in the whole world believes. Men may be Arminians and you may combat their errors in other places, but not here. You have nothing to think of, tonight, except these two things—you, a sinner, loved by a gracious Savior. Try, if you can, to fix your thoughts on these facts—“I was lost, perishing, and ruined through my own sins but, glory be to God, the all-sufficient Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ has set me free and made me an heir of Heaven!” Oh, make “Jesus only” the subject of your thought and your trust and, at this Table, cast aside everything else and come, just as you are, to Him—and then it will be a precious Lord’s Supper to you, indeed!

I am going to speak to you about “Jesus only” and to show you that it must be “*Jesus only*” for your justification. It must be “*Jesus only*” for your sanctification. It must be “*Jesus only*” for your object in life and it must be “*Jesus only*” for your hope of Heaven.

I. First, it must be “JESUS ONLY” FOR YOUR JUSTIFICATION.

We were born fools and we shall continue fools till we get to Heaven—and one of the foolish things that will always be sprouting out of us is our wanting to put something else with Christ in the matter of our justification. You tell me you never do that, but I am sure you do. You may be the most enlightened and intelligent saint, but, unconsciously to yourself, you will be very often joining something to Christ and setting up an antichrist in your soul. How often does even the most orthodox preacher give utterance to sentiments which seem to militate against the great Truth of God that Christ Jesus is our only justifying righteousness! It is a hard thing to stick fast by this great fundamental Truth—“Jesus only” as the rock and foundation of our salvation. Remember, Christian, that the meritorious cause of your salvation is not in the least degree dependent upon yourself—it is dependent on “Jesus only.” Your responsibility is now merged in the Divine responsibility of Christ on your behalf. The Lord Jesus has covenanted for you that—

***“He will present your soul,
Unblemished and complete
Before the glory of His face,
With joys divinely great.”***

O Beloved, always hang your confidence where it ought to hang—on “Jesus only!” And when you find yourself full of sin and wickedness, grieve over it, but do not think that the ground of your hope is one whit the less firm for all that! When sin prevails and guilt rises, remember that as *your* righteousness cannot make Christ’s righteousness any better, so your sin cannot make it any worse—and, clothed in His righteousness, though black with sin, you may, with deep repentance, yet with holy faith, cry—

***“When from the dust of death I rise,
To take my mansion in the skies,
Even then shall this be all my plea,
‘Jesus has lived and died for me.’
Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who anything to my charge shall lay,
While through Christ’s blood absolved I am,
From sin’s tremendous curse and shame?”***

And, then, will you please remember that *all your good works do not make you any safer?* If you were to die the moment you believed and never did a good work at all, you would be as sure of Heaven as you would be if you lived to love and serve your Maker with all your soul and all your might! Remember that the saint who lives from day to day, devoting all to Christ, spending and being spent in His Master’s service, has more happiness than the saint who is not so full of love, but he is not a whit more secure. Be active and you will be happy—but do not be active in order to be safe! The heir of Heaven is no more secure when he is abundant in good works and diligent in the service of God, so far as his ultimate salvation is concerned, than when he is allowed to backslide and to become faint and weak in the cause of God, for our security lies not in anything that we do, or do not do—it lies only in the Covenant of Free and Sovereign Grace. And the only basis of our salvation is Christ who died for us, “yes, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.”

I want you also to remember that *all your sufferings do not make you any safer*. They make you better, by God’s Grace, but they do not make you any more sure of Heaven. They are not meritorious afflictions! Persons often misjudge concerning their troubles—they think that they are punishments for sin. Let the child of God remember that God *never* punishes His children for sin! He *chastises* them for it, but never with the penal punishment of a lawgiver! God’s people were punished, once and for all, in the Person of their Scapegoat and Surety, Jesus Christ—and God will never punish twice for the same offense. The chastisements of God’s Providence are the fatherly acts of His love—they are not the wrathful acts of His justice! As the righteous Judge, God cannot punish either you or me, if we are believers in Jesus. As holding the scepter of righteousness, He cannot unsheathe the sword against a Believer! He has punished our sins upon the Lord Jesus—the whole of the vials of His wrath were emptied on Christ’s head—and they cannot now come on yours or mine. But, as a Father, God uses the rod. As a loving and tender Father, He uses chastisements and, as a kind Physician, He gives us bitter medicines to take.

But, for your own sake, and for Christ’s sake, dear Brothers and Sisters, do not get to mingling your own sufferings with the Savior’s. Remember, if you suffered ever so much, all your sufferings would not be any atonement for your sins, nor even a punishment for them unless you are one of those who are *not redeemed* and, therefore, bear the penalty of your own sin and perish everlastingly! But, as a child of God, as a redeemed and elect vessel of mercy, your sufferings are not penal and, suffer or not suffer, the Atonement of Christ is enough for you—you, by God’s Grace, can say, “Jesus only is the ground of my justification. I will rest there and nowhere else.”

And now I will ask you, Beloved, do you not frequently find when you have been in a very good frame of mind, when you have been praying well at the Prayer Meeting and helping the poor, when the minister has patted you on the back and said what a good fellow you were, and the deacons have looked lovingly at you and said you were a very useful man, and when you have got on well at Sunday school, and have had a letter from Mary James, telling you that she was converted through your teaching—do you not find that you have gone home and you do not know how it was, but, in a day or two, you got so dull and low, you could not tell what was the matter with you? Have you ever thought what was the cause of it? You have lost all your hope and confidence and you have been obliged to come, as a guilty sinner, to the footstool of Christ’s mercy and take His love and blood to be your only trust? Do you know why it was you were so low in spirit?

It was for this reason. Unconsciously to yourself, you had been leaning a little on your own good works! You had said to yourself, “Well, now, I really begin to think I am sure of Heaven. Look, are not these things the fruits of the Spirit? Oh, may I not rejoice with confidence? Am I not secure? Surely, now I am safe! How I prayed the other day! What a blessed season I had in private prayer the other evening! Now I know I can trust Christ.” Stop, my Friend! You are really saying, “*I know I can now trust in myself,*” for that is the English of it! And then you get into a heavy, dull

frame of mind for a long time afterwards, only to make you spell out those two words, “Jesus only.” And He will make you spell them out until you are bound to say, every day, by a constraint upon your heart and conscience, that it must be there, and there, alone, that you can put your confidence and trust!

That is the first point—“Jesus only” for our justification.

II. Next, it must be “JESUS ONLY” TO SANCTIFY US.

Some professors will not say so. “We are justified by God,” they say, “but we have to sanctify ourselves.” They believe in what they call *progressive sanctification*. Is that Scriptural or not? Well, I have always thought that sanctification is *continual*, but I am not sure that it is progressive. Many divines have written it down as a settled truth, that God’s people are sanctified progressively and that, the longer they are here, the more and more sanctified they get. Did any of them ever stop and ask an old Believer whether he found it so? I have asked many and I have heard a venerable saint, whose hairs are silvered over with gray, say, “I think my heart is as bad, now, as ever it was. And I am sure if it is not actually so, I think it is, and it plagues me more than it ever did.” It has been the custom to pray God to protect young men in the slippery paths of youth. Why, the paths of old age are quite as slippery! They are *all* slippery paths—all the way to Heaven! The old nature still remains in us, unchanged and unchangeable, and there will have to be a fight between the new nature and the old nature, between the house of David and the house of Saul until, at last, the house of David shall overcome and we shall get clean free from sin. Beloved, do not be looking, with regard to your sanctification, for any great progress! Expect it to be continual every day, but do not expect that your old nature will get holier every day—and in your sanctification take this for your motto, “Jesus only.”

If you cannot see Christ in your prayers, and in your good works, away with them! Your good works are sins unless Christ Jesus lies in them! Unless *through* Him, and *for* Him, and *by* Him, you perform your works, your best works are bad works! Remember, it is not the outward fashion of the work, it is the inward spirit of it that makes it good. Therefore, it is not the mere outward appearance of sanctification, it is the inward spirit of it that makes it *true sanctification*. Desire, then, if you desire and pray for sanctification, not after the virtues of a Paul, or after the glories of an Evangelist, or the magnificent excellences of some of God’s saints—but desire, first and last, after the Character of Jesus, in all its sublimity and perfection! And pray for the Spirit of Jesus to sanctify you, for, “Jesus only” is enough in sanctification, as the pattern to which you are to attain, and as the One who, by His Spirit, shall make you conformable unto Himself.

Keep your eyes on your Savior, as much in your good works as in your bad ones. After your prayers, look to the Cross, as well as after your sins. After the Lord’s Supper, look to the Cross, as well as after a fall. Look to the Savior as much in almsgiving, as much in Bible reading, as much in preaching, as much as you ever do in looking to Him for justification, for, unless you do, your sins will unman you, yet, and bring you down, again, with some sad fall to make you learn the truth of this motto, “Jesus only.”

III. Now, dear Friends, thirdly, I will speak of “JESUS ONLY” AS THE OBJECT OF OUR LIVES.

It was my privilege, this morning, to address a congregation, most of you being present, from the text, [Sermon #144, Volume 3—*Waiting Only Upon God*—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>] “My soul, wait you only upon God.” Now, if you please, just extract the marrow out of the morning’s discourse and put that into the third head. Let “Jesus only” be the object of your life. Oh, I pray the Holy Spirit so to enter into our hearts, minds, consciences, judgments and affections, that every idolatrous love—all affection towards everything but Christ—may be cast out of all the Lord’s family and that they may be brought to set Jesus upon the throne of their hearts, and to utterly crush every rival! O Brothers and Sisters, after all, we do not love Jesus Christ much! Oh, if we saw the ocean of Christ’s love running towards us, and the little stream of our love running towards Him, what a shocking contrast it would be on our part! There is His love—I cannot see across it! It is a sea without a shore! The wings of imagination flag with fatigue before they can cross that shoreless sea! There is His love—I cannot fathom it! The plumb line fails. But, oh, here is our love—it is a little stream that is almost dry! The heat of worldly joys will sometimes absorb it till the stones stand in the bed of its little brook, unwashed and dry. Oh, it is so small that sometimes it takes an hour to scoop up so much as a cupful of it to give to the Lord’s poor family! It will take us, perhaps, a week to get even a consciousness that we love Christ—and we will be singing for hours together—

***“Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought!
O do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I His, or am I not?”***

That is because we have so little love—otherwise we would know whether we did love Him or not. If we loved Him more, there would be no doubt about it! But we love Him so little that we have reason to cry, “O Jesus, fill our hearts with Your love! Come and enter our souls and reign there forevermore!” I beseech you, dear Friends, do not be content with the poor little paltry love you already have. Ask Him who gave you that little which you have, to give you a thousand times more! Do not sing that hymn—

***“Had I ten thousand tongues, they all
Should join the harmony.”***

Do not wish for so many tongues. Do not say—

***“Had I ten thousand hearts, dear Lord,
I’d give them all to You.”***

Try and give Him the one you have—that will be enough for you. Ask that your whole heart may be offered on the altar, that your whole tongue may be dedicated to God and that your body, soul and spirit may be a whole burnt-offering, holy and acceptable unto God, presented to Him as your reasonable service. “Jesus only.” Put that on your banner and go on fighting for “Jesus only.” Strive not for sect or party. Strive not for self or family. Strive not for your own aggrandizement or wealth, but sanctify all you do, sacred or secular, with this motto, “I do it for Jesus only.”

IV. And then, Beloved, to conclude—“JESUS ONLY” IS OUR ONE HOPE OF HEAVEN.

What do I hope to have when I die? I may answer, in the words of my text, “Jesus only.” “Whom have I in Heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside You.” Be not beguiled with the poet’s visionary Heaven—he tells you of a Heaven of the intellect, a Heaven of imagination. Be not carried away, like children, by any such fictitious paradise! The Heaven of your heart, and the only Heaven that can content it, is “Jesus only.” To lie in His embrace, to be pressed to His bosom, to feel the kisses of His lips, to drink the wine of His eternal love, to be forever steeped in the ocean of His Grace, to know His heart, to behold His Countenance, to admire His beauties and to be swallowed up in His Glory is the highest ambition of the Believer! There is nothing in Heaven that is equal to Christ! There is no flower in all the gardens of Paradise that blooms so sweetly as the Rose of Sharon! There is not a gem with which the crowns of the glorified are now adorned that glistens one half so gloriously as the eye of Christ! There is not a splendor in the realms of Paradise, however God-like and Divine, that is one half so majestic as that head of His, the locks whereof are bushy and black as a raven’s. Well may we sing—

***“When shall I see Your smiling face,
That face which often I have seen?
Arise, you Sun of Righteousness,
Scatter the clouds that intervene.”***

And—

***“Oh when, you city of my God,
Shall I, your courts ascend,
Where congregations never break up,
And Sabbaths have no end?”***

Oh, when shall I behold my Savior and, wrapped in His embrace, be forever blest? So “Jesus only” is our one hope of Heaven!

Now, poor Christian, you have this precious treasure, have you not? I was wondering how a man would feel if he could say that he had nothing in the world but “Jesus only.” You do not know, and I do not know. You have a pretty fair income now—you are tolerably well off and you have good strong limbs. You can work and earn your own living. But now suppose a case. Suppose there is a man somewhere on the face of the earth who can say, “There, now, I have not a rag nor a crust. I have not in the whole world so much as would fetch a solitary half-farthing. I have no health, I am as sick as I can be. I have no fame—foul slanders have blasted my character. I have no friends. I have buried the last of my family. I have no earthly hopes, no prospects. All that I have is ‘Jesus only!’” Now, I can imagine, no, I can express my firm belief that a consciousness of the possession of Jesus would have such an overcoming effect upon the heart of this poor beggar that he would forget his poverty, forget his nakedness, forget his lack of kindred and forget his hopelessness! This one thought would swallow up all his misery—“I have Christ! How, then, can I be poor when I have Him?”

But, now, there is another case which you need *not* suppose. Perhaps such a man is here tonight. You have a fortune! Or you have money enough for your needs. You have a wife and children. You have houses,

lands, a name, honor and reputation. You seem to have everything! What is there that you have not? I go into your pantry—it is well-stocked. I go into your parlor—it is well-furnished. I go into your treasury and see your coffers—there is abundance—your business yards and warehouses are filled with goods. The whole place is busy, from the highest room to the lowest, and a stream of wealth is pouring in upon you every day. You have everything that heart can wish—except Christ. Now, I cannot, by any flight of imagination, think of you as a happy man! I did not need to stretch my thoughts to think of that poor penniless beggar as being happy, after all, but I cannot imagine that if you know what it is to be without Christ, you can be a happy man. Just think a moment what will happen to you if you continue living as you now are. You will die and your soul will be driven into Hell! Within a little while, your riches will “take to themselves wings and fly away.” Your family may die, or if they do not, you will die—you cannot take your money with you. If you are buried in a gold coffin, it will not enrich you! All your lands will belong to another. Somebody else’s eyes must see your fair acres. Somebody else’s hands shall pluck the fruit from your trees. Think of this and then remember that all this while you will be in Hell—in torments! I cannot think of you as a happy man.

Go home and take your wine—and see damnation in its dregs! Go home and walk over your farm and see death in its clods, and damnation in its meadows! Go home to your house and climb its topmost story and look abroad upon your estates and see the autumn coming on—and remember that “we do all fade as a leaf” and that, if not in Christ, our transgressions, like the wind, shall carry us away! Go home and let the thoughts of eternal fire mingle with all you have! You have all things but Christ. Go, then, and stir up in your most joyous pleasures the prospect of eternal wrath! And if you can be happy after that, you must not be men! You must be brute beasts.

But if you can say, “Jesus,” do not be afraid to say, “Jesus only.” If you have a prospect of losing all, gladly give it up for Christ. If you are afraid you should not have enough, just be sure of this—that if you have Jesus, you have enough! And remember, if the worst should come to the worst and you were locked up in prison without a bed to lie on, or a crust to eat—if you had Jesus with you, you might be as happy as an angel in your prison! But if you had all the wealth of India, you might be as wretched as a devil if you had not Christ with you. Oh, treasure up the text and make it true of yourself, “Jesus only!”

And you, poor Souls, who are panting to know the way to Heaven, remember, there is only one ladder that can ever take you there. The rungs of it are made by Sovereign Grace. That ladder is called Jesus. The foot rests on the earth, in His humanity. The top leans in Heaven, on His Godhead. Poor Sinner, run up the rungs! Do you think you are so heavy that you will break the them? Oh, no! There have been some stout old sinners up that ladder before now! Many a guilty one has run up it with enough weight of sin upon his back to have crushed the heavens into Hell if God had put their sin there! But the ladder has never been broken, yet, and it never will be! Up with you, Sinner! If your feet are ever so black, they will not soil the ladder. Run up with all your sin, and care,

and woe! Come to the Lord Jesus and He will not cast you away, for He has said, “He that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.”

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HEBREWS 11.**

This is a very familiar chapter, but it is none the less precious. It is the roll of the heroes of faith. Here you have a list of the men who believed in God and who, therefore, did great things.

Verses 1, 2. *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report.* “The elders”—that is, those who lived in the ancient times—worked wondrous works by faith, and the “report” of them still encourages others to try to do likewise.

3. *Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.* That is one of the earliest lessons of faith. We do not discover the secrets of Creation by mere reason, or the teachings of science—it is only by Divine Revelation that the marvelous story can reach us. Faith accepts the Inspired declaration that God made all things, and that the things that are seen were made out of things that are not seen, so that, after all, the foundation of everything is that which is not seen. The visible is but a dream. The things which are round about us are the transient things that shall all pass away. The things that are not seen are eternal and shall abide forever. The things which are seen were made out of the invisible, not out of things which are seen.

4. *By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he, being dead, yet speaks.* Paul begins his list of heroes of faith with Abel. And you will notice that faith works differently in each one of these mighty men. It is the same living principle in all of them, but they are different men and their faith is seen in very different circumstances. Faith is able to work in all manner of ways—it is good at everything. There is nothing that God calls us to do but faith can enable us to accomplish it. In Abel’s case, we see that faith is grand at worshipping. Faith brings a right sacrifice—brings it in the right way and speaks even after she is dead, for the blood of Abel cried out of the ground. Oh, that all of us might so live that, even out of our graves, there might come a voice speaking for God!

5, 6. *By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for He that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.* See, here, how faith has learned the secret art of pleasing God. God is the thrice-Holy One. He is a jealous God and a very little sin greatly provokes Him. But faith knows how to please Him. I do not wonder that Enoch did not die—it was a less thing to be translated to Heaven than it was to please God! To live for 300 years in constant communion with God, as he did, to be always pleasing God, was a mighty triumph of faith! May God grant that

during all the years that we live, whether they are few or many, we may so live as always to please Him! “But without faith it is impossible to please Him.”

7. *By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his home; by which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.* Fear and faith may sometimes dwell together. There is a holy, humble fear that perfect love never casts out, but entertains and cherishes—this is the kind of fear that Noah possessed. “Being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, he prepared an ark.” Noah was a practical life-saver—an ark-builder. And so he became the second father of the human race—a sort of new Adam—and that simply by his faith! Oh, what is there that is impossible to the man who believes in God? “All things are possible to him that believes.”

8. *By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should later receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing where he went.* He was self-exiled from his home—a wanderer upon the face of the earth. Yet, when called of God, it mattered not to him where he was bid go! He seemed to say, “Appoint my way, great God. It is for me not to ask the reason why, but to obey Your command”

9-11. *By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God. Through faith, also, Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised.* So that faith made the barren woman to keep house and to be a joyful mother! Faith has caused our spiritual barrenness to bring forth abundantly. Oh, that some barren soul here might catch the blessed influences of faith and begin at once to bear fruit for God!

12. *Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.* “Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead.” That “one” was Isaac, for he was given up to die and, apparently, nothing could save him from death. Yet God did save him, and from him there sprang “so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.”

13. *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.* “These all”—Paul means Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Jacob “died in faith.” They “embraced” the promises—threw their arms round them—hugged them to their hearts—embraced them as those who dearly loved them!

14, 15. *For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from where they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.* If they were seeking a country, might they not have gone back to their own country from where they came out? No. True Believers know nothing about going back! We are bound to go forward to the better land that is before us! Almighty Grace will not permit the people of God to turn aside

and find their rest anywhere else. We are bound for the Kingdom of God and, by the Grace of God, we shall not rest until we enter it, to go no more out forever.

16-19. *But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He has prepared for them a city. By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only-begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall your seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from whence also he received him in a figure. See how faith consecrates natural affection! See also how faith laughs at impossibilities. Abraham expects that God will raise his son from the dead, or do something equally amazing, so that the promise He had given shall be fulfilled. It was not Abraham’s business to keep God’s promise for Him. It was God’s business to do that for Himself and He did it. You remember how Rebecca tried to make God’s promise come true for Jacob, and what a mess she made by her plotting and scheming! When we give our attention to keeping God’s precepts and leave Him to fulfill His own promises, all will be well. It was Abraham’s part to offer up his son—it was God’s part to fulfill the promise to his seed according to the Covenant which He had made.*

20. *By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. Looking into the future, although he was blind. Poor old man, lying upon his bed, with his eyes so dim that he could not tell one of his sons from another, he could yet look into the future and bless his sons “concerning things to come.” Oh, what sharp eyes faith has! Even when the eyes of bodily vision have become dim, we may see far more by faith than we can by sight.*

21. *By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff. Ah, that staff of his! You know why he used it? I believe he loved it because it made him remember the Brook Jabbok where “he halted upon his thigh.” It had long been his companion, for he said, “With my staff I passed over this Jordan.” But it became more than ever necessary to him after he had won that victory and had also learned his own weakness. And now, as if in memory of the God who had blessed him, he leans upon the top of his staff and blesses the sons of Joseph. Now the chapter goes on with a long list of those who, by faith, worked wonders.*

22-31. *By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones. By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months by his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king’s commandment. By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of evil for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible. Through faith he kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest He that destroyed the firstborn should touch them. By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: which the Egyp-*

tians attempting to do were drowned. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days. By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace. What? Has the unchaste Rahab got in here with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph—the chaste Joseph? Yes! “By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.” She hid them in her house, although that action would have cost her her life if they had been discovered. And though there was some deception mixed with her faith, which we need not dwell upon now, yet God the Holy Spirit records her faith and hides her fault.

32-39. *And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David, also, and Samuel, and of the Prophets who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mocking and scourging, yes, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy). They wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise. They did not live to see Christ come. They expected Him, but before the time when Paul was writing—before the actual coming of Christ—they had all passed away. “These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise.”*

40. *God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.* Is it not wonderful that we, who bring up the rear of the army of faith, are necessary to its completeness? It cannot be perfect without us! Yes, Heaven itself will not be complete without us who are on the road to it! There would be empty seats in the holy orchestra, gaps in the sacred circle—so we who believe must all go there to make them perfect. God help us to hasten on our road, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY
TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

BRINGING SINNERS TO THE SAVIOR

NO. 2731

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 16, 1901.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 22, 1880.

“And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto You my son, who has a dumb spirit; and wherever he takes him, he tears him: and he foams, and gnashes with his teeth, and pines away: and I spoke to Your disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not. He answered him, and said, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me. And they brought him to Him: and when he saw Him, straightway the spirit convulsed him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming at the mouth.”
Mark 9:17-20.

I DO not intend to speak so much upon the whole of this text as to use the latter part of it as a sort of motto for an appeal to Christian people to be diligent in the service of their Lord. If we wish to do good to our fellow creatures, the best thing that we can do for them is to bring them to the Lord Jesus Christ. At the feet of Jesus we ourselves obtained salvation if we are saved—we never had any true peace of heart until we came to Christ—and we never would have had any if we had remained apart from Him. The great Physician, who healed our soul-sickness, was Christ Jesus the Lord! And if we are to be the means of blessing to the sons of men, we must recommend to them the Physician whom we have proved to be so exceedingly useful to ourselves. They cannot be blessed, any more than we could be, until they are brought to Jesus!

When any of us desire to be of service to others, it is well for us to learn the best way of setting about our task, for if we do not know how to go to work, all our earnestness may be expended upon that which is useless. But when we understand what we are doing and concentrate all our powers upon wise and proper efforts, then are we likely to succeed. To my mind, the first thing that we have to strive after, in the name of God, and by the help of the Holy Spirit, is to bring men to Jesus Christ—and God forbid that we should ever lift even a finger to point them anywhere else for salvation! Each true Believer, as well as every Christian minister, should say—

***“Tis all my business here below
To cry, ‘Behold the Lamb!’”***

We are to point sinners to Jesus— all the while looking at Him and praying that they, also, may look unto Him and live.

I think I need hardly remind you that every Christian is bound to give himself to the blessed work of bringing sinners to the Savior. Common humanity should lead us to attempt this task. Is it necessary for me to bid you love your fellows and seek their good? Why, even they who have no Christianity are often exceedingly generous, humane and kind. Some persons whose religious opinions are full of error have, nevertheless, manifested great tenderness and sympathy towards the sick, the suffering and the poor—and they have set a noble example of what others might do for the needy. Much more, then, ought the followers of the loving Christ to have tender, sympathetic hearts, and anxiously desire to do the most they can for their fellow men. I shall take it for granted, my dear Hearers, that you who are members of this Church, or of any other true Christian Church, are desirous to be the means of blessing to those who are about you and that you also believe that the surest way to bless them is to bring them to Christ!

I. So, coming to our text, I begin by remarking that PARENTS ARE THE FIRST PERSONS WHO SHOULD LABOR TO BRING THEIR CHILDREN TO CHRIST.

In the 17th verse, we read that *the epileptic youth was, in a sense, brought to Christ by his father.* “Master,” said the poor man, “I have brought unto You my son, who has a dumb spirit.” He hardly knew how to set to work, for he somehow confused Christ with His disciples. So, as the Lord Jesus was away upon the mountain, he brought his son to the disciples. They could not cast out the devil, yet it was a right thing, on the part of the father, to bring his child to them. It showed a loving spirit and a desire to see him cured. I am afraid there are some fathers, who even call themselves Christians, who have not yet done as much for their sons and daughters as that father did for his boy, for they have not asked for the sympathy and help of Christian people on behalf of their own children. I am utterly ashamed of some professors of religion who say that they really must leave that matter to their children. I have heard of one man who said that he did not like to prejudice his boy, so he would not say anything to him about religion! The devil, however, was quite willing to prejudice the lad, so very early in life he learned to swear, although his father had a foolish and wicked objection to teaching him to pray! If you ever feel it incumbent upon you not to prejudice a piece of ground by sowing good seed in it, you may rest assured that the weeds will not imitate your impartiality, but they will take possession of the land in a very sad and shocking manner! Where the plow does not go, and the seed is not sown, the weeds are quite sure to multiply—and if children are left untutored and untrained, all sorts of evils will spring up in their hearts and lives!

If a professedly Christian parent has not even put his children under godly tuition, what shall I say of him? He must be a Christian watered down to a very low point, or beaten out to extreme thinness. There must be very little, if any, Divine Grace left in such a man as that! We have known wealthy Christian men send their boys to school where the whole influence was altogether against religion, or else utterly neutral. Girls

have sometimes been sent abroad to learn a foreign language in the midst of those who are steeped in gross error—and it does not seem to have occurred to the parents that they first ought to have cared about the souls of their daughters. Oh, dear me! Are such people as these worthy to be called Christians at all? Or do they merely wear the Christian label upon their breasts without having the Grace of God in their hearts? Dear Brother or Sister, if you cannot speak to your own children altogether as you can wish about their souls, do follow the example of this man and bring your dear ones to the disciples, that they may see what they can do for them in the Master's name. Still, remember that there was a mistake in this father's action because, at first, he made the disciples the terminus of his journey instead of merely coming to them *en route* to Christ. We may make Christian men the way by which we try to get to Christ, but to stop at them and not to bring the children to Christ, Himself, will be fatal to all our desire for the salvation of their souls!

This man did not see his child cured by the disciples, *yet he persevered after his first failure*. "Master," he said, "I have brought unto You my son, who has a dumb spirit...I spoke to Your disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not." In effect, he said, "They have failed, so I have brought him to You." So, if the Sunday school teacher has not been blessed to your girl—if the instruction in that Bible class, to which she has gone for years, has not been the means of her conversion—if your boy, after having had the best religious training, remains unsaved, go straight away to the great Master in your earnest prayers and so bring your dear children to Christ! I am not a believer in the theory that some hold—that children do not grow up in the fear of God if they have been trained in it. It is true that there have been many ministers' sons who have been ungodly young men—I have had very sad proof of that fact—yet I fear that some of those ministers may have neglected their own families while they were preaching to others! It is very easy for a man—especially if his wife does not help him to train their children aright—to neglect the affairs of his own family while he is continually busy about the work of the Church. And thus his own children are not trained up in the way they should go. I wish that this evil was not so common as it is, but I do know that some have grown up ungodly because there was not due attention paid to them. The vineyard at home was neglected while other people's vineyards were being kept.

If you have no family prayer and your children do not grow up to be Christians, how can you expect that they will? If there is no altar in the house, is it right to call it God's house at all? Wherever Abraham pitched his tent, he built an altar—and that is the custom of all those who live near to God—they sanctify their dwellings with daily prayer and praise. But if that practice is neglected and the father keeps his religion in the background and does not let it be seen at home, I do not marvel if his boys and girls grow up to say that there is nothing in it! It is a sad thing when children can say, "Father made a profession of religion, but his life was not consistent with it. Mother also professed to be a Christian, but

we never heard her speak of Christ. She never prayed with us, or, in our hearing, for us.”

Where no influence is used, it is not probable that there can be any result! I told you, the other night, of a dear Brother who said, when I exhorted my hearers to select somebody to pray for, that he had prayed for one person for 20 years and that he is not converted yet. So I said to him, “Have you spoken to your friend personally about his soul? Have you made it your business to go down to his house and tell him that you are anxious about him?” “No,” he replied, “I cannot say that I have done so.” “Well, then,” I asked, “do you expect God to hear prayers of that kind? Suppose I were to pray that it might be a good harvest over in that field and yet, for 20 years, I did not sow any corn there? The probability is that when I *did* sow some, I should get my prayers answered, and gather in the harvest.” If we pray for anything, God expects us to use the proper means of obtaining it—and if we neglect the means, we have no right to expect Him to believe in the sincerity of our prayer. If a father and mother pray *for* their children, but never pray *with* them, or speak to them personally about the welfare of their souls, they must not wonder if they are not brought to Christ.

II. But, secondly, although parents should be the first persons to bring their children to Christ, WE MAY, EACH ONE OF US, HELP IN THIS BLESSED WORK. Our text says, “They brought him to Him.” That is, the disciples helped the father to bring this poor epileptic child to Jesus.

In seeking to bring sinners to the Savior, we shall find that *some are brought to Him by almost unconscious influence*. I believe that where a man is full of the Grace of God, he is like a Leyden jar that is charged with electricity—if he possesses true holiness, he will give some of it to others almost without knowing that he is doing so. I have met with many singular instances of that indirect way of doing good. Some three or four months ago there was a working man, whose wife, being suddenly taken ill, needed a certain Christian woman to come and attend her. The husband went to her house to try to find her. It was on the Sabbath evening, so she was where she ought to be at that time—in the House of God, in a little Chapel not many miles from here.

The man knew that he must have this good woman to go to his wife, so he went to the Chapel. And as he could not get her at once, he waited for a few minutes and listened to the preacher. He was interested in what he heard, so he went to that Chapel again the next Sabbath morning. Before long, he was brought to know the Lord and now he has joined the Church and, by his earnest work, is a great help to the minister. Well, now, if that good woman had not been a Christian, she might not have been in that Chapel! If she had not been a regular attendant to the means of Grace, she would not have been there and the man would not have had to go to the place where he found blessing to his soul!

I know of another case that may seem equally strange. A man and his wife went to live in a certain street where nobody, to their knowledge, attended any place of worship. It is dreadful to think that, in London, you

may go into street after street where a person who goes to either a Church or a Meeting House is quite an exception to the general rule! It is sad that it should be so, but it certainly is. These two people regularly went to a place of worship and it happened there was living in the same street a man who, when he resided in the country, was a regular attendant on the means of Grace. And, as these people went by his window, Sunday after Sunday, although they did not know him and never said a word to him—and were even quite unconscious of their influence over him—they were preaching to him by their action, for it rebuked him and he said to himself, “What would my mother think if she knew how I spend my Sundays? There are two good people who, are just like my father and mother at home, who, about this time, are going to the Meeting House.” He brushed himself up for the evening service, found his way to the House of God and soon became a Christian!

When you are doing anything that is right, you cannot tell how much blessing you are scattering! Any man or woman, a master or a servant, may be of essential service in bringing others to Jesus simply by a happy, cheerful, kind, gentle behavior. You may not have the opportunity of saying much for Christ—perhaps it might not be proper in your position that you should do so—but those about you *watch* you, they note your genial spirit and they begin to like you. They observe your consideration for others and they admire it. Then they see your cheerfulness and they wonder what is the secret of it. Possibly you are ill and someone comes to visit you. You are very patient, you even sing in the midst of your pain. Persons who see and hear you, and who note how you bear it all, say to themselves, “There is something within these people that we do not understand.” And thus you exercise an influence over them although you may have said very little to them. The fact that you are a Christian is one of the most practical and powerful means of bringing others to inquire what this religion is which elevates, sweetens, softens and yet strengthens—and makes people to be manifestly like their Father in Heaven!

I remember hearing Mr. Jay, of Bath, tell the story of a good girl, a servant, who attended his Meeting House. Her master and mistress were very strict Church people, and when they found out that Jane went to the Meeting House, they talked to her very roughly and said that she must give up going there. She answered very gently that she must go where her own soul was fed and she could not meet their wishes in that matter, though she was willing to do so in everything else. “Very well, Jane,” they replied, “then you must take a month’s notice, for we cannot have any of these horrible Dissenters living with us.” That evening, as the lady and gentleman sat talking together, one of them said, “She is really a good girl. Do you not think we are treating her very badly? Suppose she were to insist that we should go to the Meeting House with her—we would say that it was very wrong for her to tyrannize over us—so is it not wrong for us to try to tyrannize over her?” “She took it so gently, too,” said the other. “We would not have stood it as she did. Suppose we go

and see what this Mr. Jay is like whom she goes to hear—for if he is a good man, she may as well go to the Meeting House as to the Church.”

They went and, in telling the story, Mr. Jay said, “they have continued to come and hear Mr. Jay up to the present time.” So, you see, that the servant had, by her consistent Christian character, brought her master and mistress round to her way of thinking although they could not coerce her to theirs—and you can judge what influence you also may exert over others if you have the Grace of God abounding in you! May God fill us full of it, that we may be the means of bringing many sinners to the Savior! Yet we must not be content with unconscious influence—and I hope none of us will be like the young gentleman who advertised that he would like board and lodging where his Christian example would be considered to be an equivalent for what he received!

In many instances, much good has been done in bringing souls to Christ *by casual seed-sowing*. Eternity alone will disclose the good results that have sometimes followed from the utterance of one short word. I trace all the light I have upon a certain subject to a remark made by the usher in a school where I was many years ago. He was teaching geography and he let drop a sentence, which I need not repeat, but I remember it to this day, and it later had an influence upon my whole career and character. I also remember a few gracious words that were spoken to me by a godly old woman who used to read her *Gospel Herald* and talk to me about the power of Divine Grace. I rejoiced to get a grip of the grand old Calvinistic doctrine, very much through half a dozen sentences that fell from the lips of that poor, humble Christian woman, whom it was my great happiness to help, in later years, when she was in poverty. I felt that I owed so much to her that I must do anything I could to comfort her!

You will often prove that, as George Herbert says—

“A verse may find him who a sermon flies”—

and that a short sentence may strike and stick where a long address may altogether fall flat. Give away a tract whenever you can. Better still, give a little book that will not be torn up—one that has a cover on it—for you will probably see it upon the table when you call again. Speak a word for the Master whenever it is possible and offer a short prayer at every convenient opportunity. I think we should make it a rule, whenever we hear a foul or blasphemous word in the street—(and, alas, we constantly do so)—always to pray for the person who utters it. Perhaps then the devil might find it expedient not to stir up people to swear, if he knew that it excited Christians to pray. Try it, at all events, and see whether it may not have a subtle power to stop the profanity which is so terribly on the increase.

Over and above all this indirect service, there ought to be *direct effort made by all Christians for the conversion of those around them*. Try what you can do, each one, by personally addressing other people. I have heard of one, an utter stranger to religion, who was brought to Christ through a gentleman tapping him on the shoulder and saying to him, “Well, my Brother, how does your soul prosper today?” The one to whom

he spoke turned round, having never heard such a question before, and the other, as he saw his face, exclaimed, "I beg a thousand pardons! I thought you were my old friend, So-and-So, who has been in the habit of putting that question to me." It was a mistake, but it was a very blessed mistake, for the Spirit of God used it to the awakening of a conscience that was lying dormant—an honest conscience which only needed to be awakened by some such startling inquiry as that! Dear Friends, try to speak personally to some friends about their immortal souls! I know that it is not easy work for some of you to break the ice and make a beginning in such service, but I can assure you that you will do it better and better the more often you attempt it.

Beside that, bring people to the means of Grace with a definite view to their conversion. Help me all you can in trying to preach to the people. Get any in whom you are concerned to come to the House of God. A young man who grew up to be a most useful minister of Christ had been entirely careless about Divine things until a neighbor said to him, "I have a sitting in the Tabernacle. If you will come with me, you can use my ticket." The friend, who made that kind suggestion, stood through all the service where he could see the young man, and he was earnestly praying for him all the while. The result of lending his seat on that one occasion, was that the young man was brought to the Savior! He was soon in the Sunday school as a teacher and, afterwards, as I told you, he became a most useful minister. Are there not more of you who might try that plan? I know that some of you have done this—then do it over and over again! Deny yourself of a Christian privilege for the sake of bringing others where the Lord will be likely to meet with them, especially if you back up the preacher's word with your continual prayer on behalf of those whom you have brought to listen to his message!

Then, if you really want to bring souls to Christ, remember that there are the young to be taught. Just now, all our schools are languishing for lack of teachers. O you who would have your crown studded with gems, seek them among the little ones! It is a happy task, however arduous it may be, so give yourselves to it with your whole heart and soul. Others of you, if you do not feel called to take a class of children, might sometimes speak words of warning to the grosser sinners with whom you come into contact—and words of encouragement to those who are seeking the Savior. There are many and many a poor sinner floundering in the Slough of Despond who only need someone, rightly named, Help, to come and point out to them where the steppingstones are, or to lend them a hand lest they should altogether sink under their crushing burden of guilt.

This I know, dear Christian Friends—if you are not trying to bring sinners to the Savior, you are missing the chief end of your being and you are also missing the most joyous work that can ever occupy your attention. Oh, if you bring a soul to Jesus, the joy of it is unspeakable! I have before my mind's eye, at this moment, a little cottage in the country in which lived the first person of whom I heard that I had been the means of bringing her to Jesus. After preaching for some little time, I wanted some seal to my service and when the deacon of the little Church of which I

was the minister said to me, “There was a poor woman cut to the quick, the other Sunday night, and I believe she has found the Savior,” I posted off directly to see her. Those of you who have had a similar experience can imagine the joy I had in hearing her tell the story. She went Home years ago—perhaps the first of those who have gone to Heaven, whom God has called by my means—but I was so glad, so happy, so delighted with my first convert that I say to you, “Seek the same joy, if you, yourself, know the Lord!”

So that is my second point, that all of us, who are, believers in Christ, may bring others to Him.

III. My third observation is that THERE ARE SOME OCCASIONS THAT NEED UNITED EXERTIONS.

God, the Holy Spirit, of course does the whole work in the conversion of a soul, but He works by instrumentalities, and there are some desperate cases in which He does not work upon a soul through one instrument, alone, but He moves a number of persons to act together to that end. Our text says, “*They* brought him to Him.” This poor youth was foaming and gnashing with his teeth—and tearing himself just as you have seen persons do in an epileptic fit—so that it took several persons to hold him. Together they grasped him and, with one desperate, united effort, they brought him to the feet of Jesus—and Jesus cast out the evil spirit and healed the poor sufferer.

In this way, *people and minister may unite in bringing sinners to the Savior*. There may be some persons who come here, who will never be converted until you and I join in seeking their salvation. Somebody must preach, but other bodies must pray—and if a score of you should be praying about any one person in the congregation, I believe that it will not be long before that epileptic is cured! The devil himself shall be defeated by the united prayers of many Believers, especially if they are those mighty prayers of which our Savior spoke when He said, “This kind goes not out but by prayer and fasting”—when the praying souls hunger for the salvation of the suffering one and unitedly cry to God to effect it!

We have had much happy union in Christian work, let us have more of it! Say to one another, “While the pastor preaches, we will pray. No, more than that, we will continually remember him in our prayers, for we know that he needs them and prizes them.” That is quite true, dear Friends, for it is no small thing to minister, every Sabbath, to this great company of people and then, through the printed page, to address tens of thousands of readers, even to the utmost ends of the earth. Yes, I do, indeed, need your prayers and your help—give them to me, for then we may be sure that “they”—that is, all of us together—shall bring many to Jesus!

Another form of cooperation is when there is a soul that has been prayed for, but no answer has come. So you call a few praying people to meet in your house and you tell them the details of the case and make a point of praying especially for that person. I have known instances in which Brothers and Sisters have collected a score of Christian friends, who, perhaps, never before met in one place—but they pledged them-

selves to pray about one particular case and their united prayers have, with God's blessing, accomplished what previously seemed to be impossible! It has been truly said that if you have a very hard thing, you can cut it with something harder. And if any heart is especially hard, God can use the hard, strong, persistent vehemence of other mighty, passionate souls to pray the blessing of eternal life into that stubborn, rebellious heart! I would like to hear more frequently of friends banding themselves together and meeting in their private houses to pray about somebody or other, making the person about whom they are interested the subject of special supplication—that would be the way to bring him to Jesus!

Then, *add to that prayer, distinct united effort*. Perhaps if one friend should speak to that person, he may resent it. Then, if another should address him, he may receive it coolly. But when another speaks to him, he may begin to listen a little more attentively—and the next one may be able to put the key into the keyhole and be the means, in the hand of God, of opening the closed door of that man's heart. If God moves us to join in effort for any soul, I do not believe that we shall often find it to be a failure. At any rate, if a man insists on going down to Hell, I should like that we would make it very difficult for him to get there! If he will not turn to Christ, I would that we were resolved that it should not be for want of being prayed for, or for lack of being earnestly pleaded with. We will be clear of his blood—we will shake off the very dust from our feet against such as determine to remain impenitent—and resolve that, to the utmost of our capacity, Christ shall be set forth, so that if men reject Him at all, they shall willfully reject Him.

Oh, that my words might stir up all of you who profess to be Christians! We have over 5,000 members—nearly six thousand. Oh, if all were alive unto God and earnest in His service—"all at it, and always at it"—what might not be done, God the Holy Spirit blessing our labors? But, alas, there are many people here like the camp-followers of an army who do not fight when the battle comes on! Those who do the fighting are often hampered by these other people and, sometimes, they almost feel as if they needed to clear the ground of such loiterers and hinderers. But, instead of doing that, I beg all of you, dear Friends, to wake up and see what you can do for the Christ who has done so much for you! Let us all ask to be awakened, again, and to be thoroughly stirred up in the service of the Savior! God grant that this South of London—and the North, and West, and East, too—may be permeated and saturated with your earnest endeavors to bring sinners to the Savior! The Lord bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 PETER 2:18-25; 3:1-17.**

Peter is very practical in his Epistles. In the early days of the faith, Christians occupied a far more difficult and dangerous position than they do today. They were few in number and greatly despised. All manner of crimes were falsely alleged against them—they were accused of things

too vile for me to mention. The Apostle, in writing to these Christians, begs them to so behave that they should commend the Gospel of Christ. Very many of them were servants or slaves, so the Apostle says to these lowly followers of Christ, “Here are your duties”—

1 Peter 2:18-20. *Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when you are buffeted for your faults, you shall take it patiently? But if, when you do well, and suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.* A sense of injustice stings a man. He does not like to lose his rights, or to be buffeted when he has done no ill. But the Spirit of Christ teaches us to “endure grief, suffering wrongfully”—to bear still, and still to bear. We are to be like the anvil—let others strike us if they will, but we shall wear out the hammers if we only know how to stand still and bear all that is put upon us.

21-23. *For even hereunto were you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judges righteously.* There was no reason why He should be made to suffer, for He had done no wrong. He was buffeted for no fault of His own, yet how patiently He endured it all! He did not even open His mouth to murmur or complain, but He handed the whole matter over to the Supreme Court of Appeal—“to Him that judges righteously.” It will be wise for us, also, to feel that we can afford to wait, knowing that our Avenger lives and that, in His own good time, He will rectify all wrongs and justify His people against all their accusers. It is sweet, for the dear love of Jesus, to put up with a thousand things which, otherwise, we should resent. “But,” says one, “if you tread on a worm, it will turn.” Perhaps it will, but a Christian is not a worm—he is a being of a nobler order than that and he does not go for his example to reptiles—he looks up to Christ and follows His steps.

24, 25. *Who His own Self bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes you were healed. For you were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.* Therefore, since you have been brought back by the rich Grace of God, continue to bear and forbear, that you may be the means of bringing others back. That is Peter’s counsel to servants, or slaves, as most of them were.

1 Peter 3:1, 2. *Likewise, you wives be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the Word, they also may, without the Word, be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.* Could any men be won to Christ without the Word of God? Yes, it was even so in the Apostle’s day. When they refused to attend the little Christian meetings that were being held, and so could not hear what was said, yet, at home, they saw the change that the Gospel of Christ had worked in their wives and they said, “She is quite different from what she used to be. Certainly, she is a far better wife than any

heathen woman is—there must be something in the religion which can make such a change as that.” In this way, without the Word, many of them were won to Christ by the godly conversation of their wives.

3, 4. *Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.* There is no ornament like that! No taste can ever conceive anything so lovely as a holy character. No expensive materials, and no ingenious fashioning of them, can ever produce such true beauty as “a meek and quiet spirit.” You must have known some godly matrons, venerable Christian women, whose gentle piety has blessed the whole household of which they formed a part. They attained supreme authority over all by simply yielding—they gained a queenly position in the house by gentleness and quietness. Nobody dared to offend them—not because they would have been in a passion, but because they were so inoffensive, so kind, so gentle.

5-7. *For after this manner in the old time the holy women, also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters you are, as long as you do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. Likewise, you husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the Grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.* It has been one of the most beautiful results of the spread of the Christian religion that it has uplifted womanhood so that now—instead of women being, as they were, and still are where the Gospel is not received—the slaves of their husbands, Christianity has taught that honor should be given to the wife. If there are any husbands who do not so, they err from the Gospel way.

8. *Finally, be you all of one mind.* Be unanimous. Do not hold Church meetings to talk about nothing, and so quarrel for the lack of something to do. Be united with the resolve that you will glorify God and that there shall be no dissension, no division among you. “Be you all of one mind.”

8. *Having compassion one of another.* Have true fellow-feeling towards each other.

8. *Love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous.* The Christian should be the highest type of gentleman, in every respect the most gentle man, kind, self-forgetful, seeking the comfort and well-being of others to the utmost of his power.

9. *Not rendering evil for evil.* That is beastlike—it is certainly not the rule for a Christian. Good for evil is Godlike. And you who are the children of God should seek to act as He does—“not rendering evil for evil.”

9. *Or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that you are thereunto called, that you should inherit a blessing.* Every man should give away according to what he has. He who gives curses probably gives them because he has so much cursing in him. You can always tell what a man is like by noticing what comes from him. If he curses, it is because

curses abound in him. But you are to give blessing to others because you have inherited so much blessing from Christ—your whole tone, temper, spirit, language, action should be the means of blessing to others!

10. *For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile.* Not only no lies, but no guile, no deceit, no shuffling. Say to a man's face all that you say behind his back. You will soon be in trouble if you have two tales to tell—one in his presence and the other in his absence—but if you are free from “policy”—from “knowing how to play your cards,” as the world says, then shall it be seen that you have one of the attributes of a true Christian. If you refrain your lips, that they speak no guile, people will know where to find you and they will *want* to find you, for such men are always in demand.

11, 12, *Let him turn away from evil, and seek to do good; let him seek peace, and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.* He “sets His face against them,” as we say that we set our face against certain company which we do not approve. But “the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous”—that is, those who seek to do good to others, for Christ's sake, are under the special protection of God—and they have the high privilege of being permitted to pray with the certainty that “His ears are open unto their prayers.”

13-15. *And who is he that will harm you, if you are followers of that which is good? But and if you suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are you: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.* Have your doctrinal views and all your knowledge of Christ packed away in a handy form, so that when people want to know what you believe, you can tell them! If they wish to know why you believe that you are saved, have your answer all ready in a few plain, simple sentences—and in the gentlest and most modest spirit make your confession of faith to the praise and glory of God. Who knows but what such good seed will bring forth an abundant harvest?

16, 17. *Having a good conscience that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God is so, that you suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.* Who can doubt the truth of that clear declaration?

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—492, 992, 552.

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

“IF YOU CAN”—“IF YOU CAN”

NO. 2224

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, OCTOBER 4, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN, NEWINGTON.**

***“If You can do anything, have compassion on us, and help us.
Jesus said unto him, If you can believe, all things
are possible to him that believes.”
Mark 9:22, 23.***

WE are all familiar with the story of this youth who was possessed by a dumb spirit which caused him to fall into violent fits of epilepsy and worked worse evils, casting him, at times, into the waters and into the fire to destroy him. The father intended to bring his child to Jesus, of whom he had heard so much, but our Lord, being absent, he made his application to the disciples. They failed to effect a cure but, by-and-by, the Master came from the mountaintop and then the father addressed himself to the Lord. I shall need you to notice some lessons from this story before I come to the text.

The main thought which I would emphasize is that our Lord would have us clearly know, when we seek a blessing, what it is we really seek. If you go to Jesus Christ for anything, either for yourself, or someone else, the Savior will earnestly desire that you should know what it is that you are asking of Him. You know there is much blind praying—asking for mercies because you know that such and such words are proper, without having a clear and vivid idea of what the blessing is which is intended by those words. Now, our Savior loves us to pray with the understanding and to have a consciousness of our need and some perception of what it is that we want Him to do. Therefore try to get into your own heart a clear notion of what it is that you are seeking, for Christ would have you know why you are pleading with Him.

Hence, when this man came with his sick child, the Savior permitted him to give a statement of the case and, with the eagerness of love, the father entered into full particulars of the evil which had befallen his son. This was not needed by the Savior for His own information—He knew all about the dumb spirit’s possession of the poor lad and all the misery that had resulted from that possession—but the heart-rending account was given, first, in order that the father might distinctly remember the evil from which he desired his child to be saved and, then, that those who were standing round might know what kind of miracle it was which Jesus Christ was about to work. Sometimes it will be a very healthy thing for seekers to stop a while and say to themselves, “What is it we are seeking?” Christ may say to you, “What do you want that I should do for you? What

is it are you really asking for?” There are many that cry, “Lord, save me!” who, perhaps, have no distinct idea *from* what they are *to* be saved, or to what they are to be saved.

In connection with this statement of the case, our Lord had permitted this poor man to make an application to His disciples. I will not say that it was on purpose that he might meet with a failure, but I do believe that failure was meant to teach the man a valuable lesson—and certainly it was designed to instruct the disciples—showing clearly to both that all hope lies in Jesus Christ, Himself. You have been seeking, dear Friend. Now, how have you hoped to get saved? “Why, by attending the means of Grace,” you say. Quite right and I have not a word to say against the means of Grace any more than I should have had a word to say against the Apostles! But the means of Grace cannot save you any more than the Apostles could cast the devil out of that child! It is not the means of Grace, but it is *Christ*, Himself, that you must go to, just as it was not the Apostles, but the Apostles’ Master who had to work this miracle!

Perhaps you have been sitting in these pews for years, expecting something to come to you by your constant and continued attendance. The Lord wants to get you thoroughly convinced that you will *not* be saved except by going to Jesus Christ, Himself. No Bible-readings, no sermon-hearings, no, not even prayers, if they are relied upon, can save you! Your reliance must be upon the wonder-working Christ of God! If you will trust the Savior, you shall be saved at once. If you can believe, *now*, you shall have immediate forgiveness of every sin and instantaneous salvation by the power of the Christ of God! But, it may be, you have not thought of this. You have been going round about and now you are to be sickened of all that, so that you shall say, like the man in the narrative, “I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast him out, and they could not. I have used the means of Grace, I have heard Your ministers, I have read good books, but neither books, nor ministers, nor services, nor all combined, can cast the devil out of me. Lord, You must do it.” The failure of every other hope is another thing that Christ would have us know when we come to Him for a great blessing.

Yet further, when the poor father had stated the case and had confessed that he was disappointed with the disciples, yet the Savior caused him to see another exhibition of the mischief from which he would have his child saved. Then and there, before them all, as they brought the boy to Jesus, the devil began to treat him, perhaps, more violently than ever! He foamed at the mouth and seemed, at last, to fall into such a condition that those who looked on said, “He is dead. The case is utterly hopeless.” In the very Presence of Christ, the evil spirit made a supreme effort to retain his hold of his victim, or to destroy the body in which he dwelt before he left it!

Now, Beloved, the Lord may, in your case, if you are a seeker, permit sin to break loose in you in a possibly worse form than you have ever seen before He drives it out. It may be you will give yourself up for dead. In fact, I hope you may, for when death strikes every carnal hope and you utterly despair of salvation in yourself, *then* is the very moment when the Om-

nipotent Power of Divine Grace comes in and manifests itself without limit! Oh, you who are driven, tonight, to utter self-despair, I am glad of it! I expect to see Christ come to you and raise you up and say to the evil spirit, “Depart, and enter into him no more.” God grant it may be so!

Or, if your anxiety is about somebody else, it may be that God will permit the sin in the dear one to break out worse than ever. You have been praying for months, perhaps for years and, at last, it will seem quite hopeless. You will bring your husband or your child to Christ and instead of seeing any change for the better, there may appear, at the time, to be even a change for the worse! Yet, remember, it was then that Jesus said, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes.” It may be that He will let us see, more vividly than we have ever perceived before, the desperateness of the case in order that we may the more clearly understand the greatness of the mercy which we are seeking at His hands.

I shall run the text, as it were, with two handles. You see, properly, it should be confined to the case of a person who is praying for others, for this was spoken to a father who was pleading for his son. But the same principle applies all round and so I beg those who are praying for *themselves* to take as much of the sermon home as they can—and may God the Holy Spirit make it suitable to them! Come we, then, with this introduction, to our text.

There are two “ifs” here. The poor, troubled man said to Christ, “if,” implying some measure of doubt—“If you can do anything, have compassion on us, and help us.” Then comes the other “if,” Jesus said unto him, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes.”

I. Let us begin by saying, in the first place, that THE “IF” IS NOT IN REGARD TO CHRIST as to whether He can save you, or as to whether, in answer to prayer, He can save the object of your anxiety. There really is no, “if,” in reference to Christ, though it is quite probable that *your unbelief* is suggesting some doubt about His love, or power, or willingness to save.

There cannot be an, “if,” about Christ being able to save a sinner, or to do anything because, first, *He is God’s beloved Son*. Upon the snowy slopes of Hermon, adown whose steeps He had come to confront the multitude in the plain, Christ had been transfigured and in all His Glory He had shone like the sun in the presence of His three disciples, whiter than the snow which lay around them and out of the cloud which overshadowed them there had come forth a Divine Voice, “This is My beloved Son: hear Him.” Now, if Jesus Christ is such a favorite of Heaven, the darling of the eternal Father, will He deny Him anything? I do not say that, “if,” as being at all doubtful about the matter. The revelation of the Glory on the mount and the Voice out of the opened heavens are evidence enough of His Sonship. Even Satan, himself, could not deny that Jesus was the Son of God. In the wilderness of temptation, he, indeed, said, “If you are the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread,” but he knew in his heart that Christ was truly the Son of the Most High God. On many occasions, the demons, whom Christ cast out, cried aloud to Him, “You are Christ, the Son of God.” Being God’s true Son, can anything be impos-

sible for Him? Did He not say, “All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth”? When I think of the love which God bears to His dear Son, I cannot imagine Him stinting Christ in power to bless. He is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him, for He is the Everlasting Son of the Eternal Father!

And remember, next, if that argument is not enough, that *Jesus Christ is God*. After that, can there be an, “if,” as to His power? What is there that God cannot do? He has made this world! He has made those millions of worlds that stud the midnight skies, but all that God has ever made, though it is far beyond our conceptions, is but as a speck compared with what He could make if He pleased. He has done exceedingly great marvels, such as have astounded men, but all that God has ever done is as nothing compared with what He could do if He willed to do it, for with Him all things are possible! And Jesus Christ being very God of very God, all things are possible with Him. He can save everyone present in this house right now. Breathe a believing prayer to Him and you will prove His power, for He will save you! His word runs very quickly and if He does but send it forth, it will belt the world and, within the next few years, if He chooses so to work, all nations shall call Jesus blessed! But when you and I have one of God’s promises to plead with Him, we may know most surely that He will keep it—we never need insert an, “if,” as to whether He can or not! O Beloved, if we were more wicked than we are, He could change us! And if our children or our friends were sunk in sin more deeply than they are, which God forbid they should be, He could still save them! “The Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear.” Fie on you, you doubting one! Shame on you, you trembling heart! There cannot be an, “if,” with the Christ of God, God’s favored Son—yes, God’s *equal*—who is girded with Omnipotence!

And, in the third place, remember that, *as Savior, works of Grace are easy to Him*. If you will but think, for a minute, of what He has done in order to man’s salvation, I think you will see there cannot be an, “if,” with Him. See Him hanging on the accursed tree, nailed up to the gallows that He may die. His pains of body are inconceivably great, but meanwhile He is forsaken of His God and is brought into unknown tortures of soul. That is the Son of God who is dying so! It is He, whose face is the glory of Heaven, who is thus dying the death of a felon, “the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” I have such a conviction of the power of Christ’s death that if it were revealed to me that on the Cross He redeemed not only one world, but as many fallen worlds as there are stars, I could well believe it!

Oh, the blood of the Son of God! What merit there must be in such a Sacrifice as that! Infinite Deity united to perfect manhood and the whole life laid down that men might live! Tell me that Christ cannot save! Tell me that His blood will not wash out the most scarlet sin that ever defiled man! I know better. There must be infinite virtue in the atoning Sacrifice of Christ. There cannot be an, “if,” about the power of the Crucified to forgive all who come to Him and trust in His great Sacrifice!

If you question the power of His death, remember that He rose again from the dead and upward He went into Glory and there, today, He sits enthroned. I think I can see Him, now, at the right hand of the Father, clothed with everlasting honor and Divine majesty! What is He doing? Look! He lifts His hands. He pleads for sinners! Will the Father deny Him anything? He makes intercession for the transgressors! Will God refuse to bless them? Oh, by the living Christ at God’s right hand, pleading the merit of His own Sacrifice, I would have you confident that there cannot be an, “if,” about His power to save any of the children of men!

Do not tell me that you are the worst sinner that ever lived. I will take it for granted that you are and I will go further than that and suppose you are a lot worse than you think you are! I have sometimes had people coming to me as enquirers and sitting in a chair opposite me. They have begun by telling me about their dreadful sins. I have generally said to them, “You need not tell me that. I have not the slightest doubt that you are a thousand times worse than you tell me, or than you think you are. You are only fit to be cast into Hell.” And then they say, “Ah, it is so; it is so.” Right glad am I to hear them consent to the verdict, for that is the sort of people that Jesus Christ came to save! Do you think that He came to redeem some little miserable morsel of a sinner who never did anything very much that was wrong? Well, very likely He did, but He came to be a great Savior for great sinners. Suppose that, some day, you come and with glowing enthusiasm tell me there is a great doctor in London. I would probably say, “What does he do?” “He has a large number of patients,” you answer. “But what does he do?” At length you give the astonishing reply, “He cures bad fingers.” Well, I do not see much in that.

But suppose, on the contrary, that in answer to my question, “What does this great physician do that you are crying up so much?” you are able to give a true report and say, “He has restored a great many persons who were given up by everybody else. He can cure the very worst diseases. In fact, they say that if a man were almost dead, he could make him alive.” Why, then, indeed I would begin to sing his praises, too! And if I were diseased, I would go to him for cure. But I am more confident about the power of Christ to heal, for to Him I went when my sin was past all human remedy—and He made me every whit whole! There is no language strong enough to tell of His power to save and bless. If you believe that my Master can only save a small sinner, who has only a little imperceptible sin about him, I tell you that you do not know Him! He is a great Savior for great sinners and, however grossly guilty you may have been, lament it, mourn over it, but remember that Christ is able to save even the very chief of sinners. He is able to save them now, right now, where they are standing or sitting—and to send them out of this house new creatures in Him!

Thus you see that the “if” is not in Christ.

II. But now, secondly, where *is* the “if”? THE “IF” IS IN OUR LACK OF FAITH. Jesus said to the man, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes.” But why is faith needed?

The answer is, first, that it is *a reasonable demand* and that it is most unreasonable to expect Christ to do anything for us if we will not believe in Him. The very least thing that a great surgeon could expect of a patient would be confidence in his skill. Do not marvel, therefore, that Jesus Christ expects you to believe in Him and, “if you will not believe, surely you shall not be established.” If you refuse Christ your confidence, you cannot wonder if He refuses you His salvation! “If you can.” It seems almost as if the Lord, in astonishment, echoed this poor father’s words, starting back in wonder that He should be so misunderstood—that any human being should come to Him, who created all things—and yet doubt His power! The poor leper, who came to Him after the sermon on the mount, had a different way of expressing his misgiving. He said, “If you will,” doubting not Christ’s power to heal, but His *willingness*. I know not which is the worse, but I am sure that both are unreasonable, for if either the willingness or ability is absent, Christ cannot be a Savior for sinful men. But, as we often sing—

**“He is able,
He is willing; doubt no more.”**

Faith is needed, in the next place, because it is *for God’s Glory*. It would not be for Christ’s Glory to bless those that do not believe in Him. Shall He reward unbelief? Will you have it said that Christ came to this earth and that He lived and died for the salvation of sinners and that, after that, though a man would not believe in Him, He still gave him pardon and mercy? No, there shall never be such a thing as a pardoned unbeliever! A saved man who does not believe in Christ? That would be to the dishonor of Christ and would make Him to be rather the *patron of sin* than the Savior from sin! Faith is required, then, that God may have the glory of man’s salvation.

This faith is also *for our own good*. Our Lord means to bless that poor man by healing his child, but He means to bless him doubly by healing him of his unbelief, for it is, indeed, a horrible weakness, for a man to lack faith in His Creator! It is a loathsome disease of spirit for a man to be doubtful of his God! I have looked down the list of crimes and though there are some that are truly abominable, yet when I have looked into the very foulest transgression, I have not seen anything so vile as the sin of a man who doubts the love and power of Christ, who died that men might live! This is the masterpiece of Hell’s temptation. We are led farthest away from God when we doubt the love which He has sealed with the blood of His own heart. It is, therefore, for our own good that we should believe. Here and always, God’s Glory and our good are closely joined. To glorify God will be to enjoy Him forever.

Faith, then, is a reasonable, glorious and blessed thing and, in the sinner’s case, *it is absolutely necessary to salvation*. We must believe in Jesus Christ if we would be saved. But cannot we be saved without believing? No. What will become of us if we do not believe in Jesus Christ? Well, I will make no “ifs” nor “ans” about *that*—“He that believes not shall be damned.” I do not care to beat about the bush, or seek for a more refined version of the text—let it stand there in its own terrible simplicity, “He

that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.” If you do not believe in Jesus Christ, you will be damned, whatever that means—and it means something truly terrible, to be condemned of God and driven from His Presence because we do not believe in Him! There is no help for it, for there is no other salvation and no other door of hope except through faith in the appointed Savior of mankind! As John Newton, that great sinner saved by marvelous Grace, says—

**“The worst of all diseases
Is light, compared with sin!
On every part it seizes,
But rages most within.
'Tis palsy, poison, fever,
And madness, all combined—
And none but a Believer
The least relief can find.”**

Here is where the, “if,” is, then—it is in our *lack of faith*.

III. But now, in the third place, let me ask, WHAT PUTS THE “IF” THERE? Why is it that we cannot believe? If some unprejudiced person who before had been totally unacquainted with the Bible, read it for the first time, and was asked, “Is it a hard thing that God asks of men in order to their salvation, that they should believe in Jesus Christ, whom He has sent?” any unsophisticated mind would reply, “No, that must be the easiest thing in the world, for God cannot lie!” Such a verdict would be absolutely true, for the gift of His Son, whom He loved as He loved Himself, proves the honesty of God and leaves no room for doubt as to the certainty and the heartiness of His willingness to bless the sons of men. God could not be false and go so far with the falsehood as to give His own Son to die—that is altogether inconceivable! It seems of necessity, then, that God is true in declaring that He will save those who trust in His Son. And it looks, at first sight, as if it would be the simplest thing in all the world to trust in Jesus Christ—and so, indeed, it is. But why is it that there are *any* “ifs” about it? Why is it necessary that Christ should say, “If you can believe”?

The reason is because *we are alienated in heart from God*. If we were right with God, faith would be a matter of necessity. But we do not love God. By nature we even *hate* Him and that is why we do not trust Him. It would be a very wretched thing to meet with a young man who, if you were speaking to him in praise of his father, should say, “I do not believe in my father.” If you continued, “But your father is a man of the highest integrity,” would it not be sad to hear him reply, “I cannot trust him”? “Oh, but your father is kindness, itself,” you might add. And if the lad said, “Yes, I hear what you say, but I do not believe it—I cannot trust him,” you would know that there was some dreadful family feud, some most unhappy circumstance that had twisted that youth’s mind so that he did not love his father and, therefore, did not believe in him! Supposing his father to be a man of undoubted repute and integrity, the last thing that you would expect to happen would be that his own son would say, “I cannot believe him.”

Now, concerning God, who among us will so blaspheme Him as to say that He was ever false? Yet men say it and do not seem at all startled at what they have said! Though it is written, “He that believes not God has made Him a liar,” men will still calmly tell us, as if it were an amiable weakness rather than a sin, “Sir, I cannot believe in Christ. I cannot believe in God.” It is, then, because you are alienated from Him because you do not love Him! Lament this! Confess it before God and when your heart is renewed, by His Grace, then faith will come as a matter of course.

Another reason for this, “if,” is that *we are idolaters by nature*. “No, no,” you say, “*we are not idolaters!*” I say we are idolaters by *nature*—all of us—for what is an idolater but one who needs to have an idol, or a something which he can see, trust in and which shall represent to him the invisible? The Romanist becomes an idolater as he puts before him the “crucifix,” or some precious relic of the saints. But you may become an idolater, too, without seeming to be so superstitious. You are such, indeed, if, in Providence, for instance, you cannot trust God. If before you trust Him you need to have your income regularly guaranteed, it is not God, you then trust—it is the money. So with your soul. You could trust God, you say, if an angel were to come from Heaven to speak, or if you heard a voice in the night. So, then, it is not *God* that you would trust, but an angel, or a voice! You need something to see and something to hear. It is ingrained in human nature thus to seek a sign—and what is that but idolatry? Oh, that we would get rid of this and say, “God is invisible. I am not to expect to see Him—I am to *trust* Him. I am to believe that He who made the heavens and the earth, and who gave His Son to die, will save me, and lo, I put my trust in His dear Son once and for all!”

Another reason why this, “if,” comes in, is *because we measure God by ourselves*. We cannot think that God can forgive us because we find it so hard to forgive our fellow creatures. We cannot conceive that God will do it freely, from no motive but that of pure Grace, because we are so mercenary. We need to be *paid* for what we do and unless we can see some chance of reward, somewhere or other, we are very slow to make anything like a sacrifice! And so we think that God is altogether such as we are, whereas you remember it is written, “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.” We get to measuring God by our fellow men. We say, “Such-and-such a one is very good, but he would never forgive after *this* fashion. He would give generously, but he certainly would not give after the style that *God* is spoken of as giving.” Thus, as the Ethiopians are said to make their angels with black faces, we imagine God to be like ourselves or other men and, therefore, find it difficult to believe in Him.

Dismiss from your thoughts all such ideas of God! You might sooner hold the ocean in the hollow of your hand, or span the heavens with your fingers than, unaided by Grace, get an idea of the greatness and glory of God by all your searching! Never forget that He is as great in mercy as in any other of His attributes. He delights to forgive! It is the joy of His heart to press to His bosom His prodigal children! Nothing gives such intense satisfaction to the heart of God as the manifestation of His boundless

Grace. I wish you could believe this. But it is because we thus limit the Holy One of Israel that we find the simple matter of faith so difficult. Because of this, there stands that great, ugly black, stiff, “if.” “*If* you can believe.”

IV. In conclusion, let me ask another question and seek to answer it. HOW CAN THIS “IF” BE REMOVED? Are there any in this house who are longing to be saved and who have been putting an, “if,” upon Christ, and saying, “Lord, if You can”? First, let them know that the “if” lies with themselves. And then let us join hands and see if we cannot turn this “if” out. Come, Brother, let me help you. If this “if” has been too strong for you, I would ask God’s Spirit to bless a few words to you, that this “if” may be got rid of. With reference to that other “if” which came from the lips of the leper and to which I have already referred, I heard of a little girl whose mother found her, one day, with a carving knife and the family Bible. “What are you doing?” she asked her child, in some anxiety for the safety of both the child and the Book. “O Mother,” she said, “I was reading about that man who came to Jesus and said, ‘If You will, You can make me clean,’ and I thought He ought not to have said, “if,” to Jesus—so please, Mother, I am scraping it out.” A very good thing to do with all our “ifs”! How shall we go to work with this one? Well, we had better imitate this man with his epileptic child possessed of a devil.

First of all, *you must confess the faith you have.* This man said, “Lord, I believe.” There is something in that. If you cannot go as far as you would, go as far as you can. What do you believe about Jesus Christ? Come, poor, dear, trembling Heart, run over in your mind what you believe about Him. I think I could have said, before I really trusted Christ, “Lord Jesus, I believe You are the Son of God.” I believed that, I never doubted it. “And I believe that You are sent to be the Savior of men.” I do not know that I ever doubted that. Some of you from your childhood have believed that, too. Your mother taught you that and when you read the Scriptures, you were sure of it. Well, now, just turn that over. “Lord, I believe You are the Son of God. I believe You are God. I believe You are able to save. I believe Your precious blood takes away the sin of all who trust You. I believe that whoever trusts in You has everlasting life. I believe that You have sent Your Gospel into the world, saying, ‘He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.’ Lord, by Your Grace, I believe all this.”

That is a matter to be very thankful for and yet, do you know that is a matter that will condemn you unless you go farther? If you believe as much as that, you ought to believe more! I can understand the atheist or deist not trusting Christ. I can understand the Socinian not trusting Christ—but if you are sound in your doctrinal beliefs, I cannot think of an excuse for you why you should not *trust* Christ! If a man says to me, “I believe you, Sir, to be a thief. I cannot trust you,” that is perfectly consistent, is it not? But if he says, “Sir, I believe you are an upright man who would not, on any account, do a doubtful thing and yet I cannot trust you.” I am not anxious to answer such a man as that, for out of his own mouth he condemns himself.

So, some of you go so far that if you do not go farther, you will condemn yourselves. Surely, in all reason, if a man can say to Christ, “I believe that You are the Christ that should come into the world. I believe that You are the Son of God; I believe that You were raised again from the dead. I believe that you sit at the right hand of God, pleading for sinners,” that man must also add, “Therefore I trust You.” It is the natural inference to be drawn! God help you, then, to confess such faith as you have!

The next way to knock this, “if,” over, is to *appeal to Christ to be helped against it*. “Lord, I believe,” said this poor man, “help You my unbelief.” He cried out of the depths of his soul, “O Lord, help me against my unbelief!” So poor Heart, you have been trying to believe! Did you ever try this man’s plan of believing that Christ could make him believe? That is odd, is it not? You see, he must have had faith in Christ, or else he would not have said, “Help You my unbelief.” Let us imitate him and cry with Cowper—

**“Heal us, Emmanuel, here we are,
Waiting to feel your touch!
Deep-wounded souls to You repair,
And, Savior, we are such!
Our faith is feeble, we confess,
We faintly trust Your Word,
But will You pity us the less?
Be that far from You, O Lord!
Remember him who once applied
With trembling for relief,
‘Lord I believe,’ with tears he cried,
Oh, help my unbelief!”**

Oftentimes there is a great deal more faith in a poor sinner’s heart than he thinks there is. He really is trusting the Savior, but does not know he is doing so. He is saved and yet is afraid to think it can be possible. Long after I knew the Savior and believed in Him, I used, at times, to be staggered with the thought that it was too good to be true. The tempter would say, “It cannot be that you are really forgiven, that you are Christ’s own, that you are washed in His blood and saved forever!” Well, it *does* almost seem to be too good to be true but, then, nothing is too good to be true when you are dealing with a king! If it is a king who is about to act, we say that the grander and kinglier a thing it is, the more likely it is to be done. But rise *higher* than kings! If it is superlative, if it is infinite, if it is altogether inconceivable but for its having been revealed, then is it the more likely to be true, for it is the more like God! Oh, then, I pray you, bring your unbelief before Christ and let it die in His Presence! Unbelief does not like the Cross. If you look up to the dying Savior, to the risen Christ of God, unbelief dies! God help you, then, to say, “Lord, I believe; help You my unbelief”!

One other thing you must do if you are to follow the example of this father. *Bring the case to Christ*. This poor man brought his child to Christ. It was a hard tug and he asked others to help him. Do you not see how the suffering child was tossed about—sometimes this way, sometimes that? You may have seen some poor man or woman who is subject to fits and noticed in what a way such people are convulsed. But this poor child was much worse—he was foaming at the mouth, raving, tearing and full of the

fiend! The father is trying to help his boy. Sometimes he holds him by the waist. But the child tears away. Then another helps grasp one hand, while the father gets hold of the other. He drags him to Christ—pulls him almost piecemeal to Christ—but he gets him there at last. “Bring him to Me,” said Christ, and what better could the father do, or can you do, than obey the command and bring your loved one? So he did and he laid him down at Jesus’ feet. Where else is so fitting a place for the sick or devil-possessed as the feet of the Savior? “To whom shall we go” if we turn away from His tender heart? When the boy in the harvest field cried out in pain, his father said, “Carry him to his mother.” Where else could he be so soothed and helped—and where else but in Christ can you or your children hope for blessing?

That is what I want you to do with your friends— somehow get them to Jesus Christ by mighty, vehement, determined prayer! And when you have prayed about them, try to get them to hear the Gospel. I like to preach to people who have never heard the Gospel before—it is grand work! There are some of you upon whom I fear that I shall never make an impression. You have been hammered upon so long that I am afraid you have become Gospel-hardened. Take a person out to look at the stars—some countryman who has always been able to see. Perhaps he does not make any remark, or he simply says, “Oh, I have gone across the moor many a night! I don’t see anything particular in the stars.” But here is an old man brought from the Ophthalmic Hospital! He has been blind for many years. In fact, he forgets whether he ever could see. By a skillful operation, the film is taken from his eyes.

Take *him* out at night and the first things he sees are the stars! He says, “What a sight! How glorious! How Divine!” Those are the kind of people to whom it is a joy to preach, for when the Lord gives sight to those who were blind and they see for the first time, how glad they are to see Him! Persons who do not often have flowers are charmed with the sight of them and find much delight in their fragrance. Yet I have heard of a flower girl who sold violets in the street and had to take those that remained home to her poor miserable room every night till she said that she hated the smell of violets! She could not bear them, having got so accustomed to them.

“That is strange,” says one, yet that is how some of our Gospel hearers speak. They say that we preach too long and they begin to criticize our sermons. I dread above anything that your nostrils should become so familiar with the sweet smell of the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valleys that their fragrance should become nauseous to you! How sad it would be that any of you should get so familiar with the Gospel that, at last, you would say, “What a weariness it is!” May this *never* be the case and, lest it should, come, now, and bring your case before Christ! It is no use to bring it before *me* and let me preach to you. It is no use to bring it before the mere means of Grace! Turn to the Lord Jesus, who is beside you, and tell Him all the case—say to Him that you renounce all other hope and trust yourself in His hands. Believe in Him this moment, lest haply the very Gospel, itself, should be a “savor of death unto death” to

you. If you trust to Christ, you must have life! O Spirit of God, help many to come this very hour and trust in the Crucified, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark 9.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—241, 435, 394.**

MR. SPURGEON UPDATE:

Westwood, Beulah Hill, Upper Norwood,
September 24, 1891.

“DEAR FRIENDS—Every time I see a Church officer, I am cheered by tidings of your good condition as a Church and people. In this there is joy for me. May our Lord keep us always united in love, fervent in prayer and diligent in service!

“As for myself, I have made no progress this week, but have rather gone backward than forward. When a man cannot eat, how can he gather strength? I would have left home for the seaside if I had felt equal to the effort, but I am without energy and must stay where I am. Oh, that I could be among you! But I must be patient and wait our Father's will. Your prayers included health and strength for me and these I shall yet have, for mere life is scarcely a blessing without them. May I beg you to continue in supplication? I am sure you will.

“If sharp pruning makes fruit-bearing branches bring forth more fruit, it is not a thing to be lamented when the great Vine-Dresser turns His knife upon us. If I may, in the end, be more useful to you and to those who come in and out among us, I shall rejoice in the woes which I have endured. May you each one, when tried with sickness, improve your school-time, that you may be the sooner able to learn and know all the Master's mind!

“God bless you this day by my dear Brother, A. G. Brown. May he be happy in your midst and may God be glorified! Few are the men like-minded with Mr. Brown, a Brother tried and proved. Peace be to you and to your families!

“Yours most lovingly,

(SIGNED) C. H. SPURGEON.”

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

WHERE THE “IF” LIES

NO. 1744

DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 14, 1883,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Jesus said unto him, If you can believe, all things
are possible to him that believes.”
Mark 9:23.*

I BELIEVE that our own Authorized Version conveys to the mind of the reader the sense intended by the Evangelist. It is, however, exceedingly probable that in *exact* words, the Revised Version is nearer to the original. It runs thus—“And Jesus said unto Him, If you can! All things are possible to him that believes.” Our own Version better expresses the sense to the general reader and the main objective of a translation is to give the meaning. The father of the lunatic child had said to our Lord, “If You can do anything, have compassion on us, and help us,” and our Divine Master virtually replies, “If you can lies not with Me, but with *you*. It is not if I can, but if *you* can.” Thus, you see, the word, “*believe*,” is *implied*, if not actually expressed. Jesus would certainly go as far as the man’s faith could go—but as the rule of the kingdom is, “According to your faith, so be it unto you,” the man’s unbelief would hamper the Lord in His work.

If the suppliant could be rid of unbelief, Jesus would get rid of the devil from his child. The difficulty of casting out the demon lay mainly in the lack of faith in the father. Let it, then, be understood as the teaching of this text, that the difficulties in the way of souls that would be saved do not lie with Jesus Christ, but with themselves! They need never ask the question, “Can Jesus forgive?” or, “Can He renew?” There is a prior question—“Can *you* believe that He can forgive, and that He can renew?” If God’s Grace enables you to say, “I can and do believe that Jesus can work in me according to the full measure of my need,” then all difficulty has vanished!

Your faith is the shadow of the coming blessing, the token of the Lord’s favor towards you. When your faith believes in Christ’s Omnipotence, He is Omnipotent to you, for, “all things are possible to him that believes.” I long, at this time, to get at some here who cannot get at Christ! I would to God that by His Spirit I may deal with their difficulties, so as to prepare them, once and for all, so that they may come just as they are and put their trust in Jesus—and this day find eternal life!

I. The first subject we shall speak about is the vital question—WHAT IS BELIEVING? After all these hundreds of years of Gospel preaching, is this question necessary? I believe it is so necessary that, if faith were explained in every sermon, it would not be too often spoken of. It is a good rule that every tract ought to contain the Gospel—and it ought to be put in the most plain way, for still, despite all the Gospel teaching which is around us, nothing is so little known or so little understood as faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! I am also bound to admit that many explanations of

faith are all explanation, but tend to make the subject darker than it was before. And I am fearful lest my own explanation should be of the same order. Certainly, I will do my best to avoid such a catastrophe, for I will speak very plainly.

Let us take the man before us as an example and from him let us see what faith is. This man evidently believed that Jesus was a healer, for he says, "I brought my son unto You." He would not have brought his son to Jesus if he had not felt some measure of confidence in Him. It is a good beginning of faith to know that if I am saved it must be through Jesus Christ alone! It is well to be aware that the salvation of the soul must come from the work of Jesus and from no one else, since no other name is given among men whereby we must be saved. This man had also some slight faith in Christ's willingness to help him. It may not have been very strong, but still, it was there, or else he would not have laid the stress of his prayer upon the *Lord's* power. He did not say, "if You will, You can," but, "if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us."

Looking up into that blessed face so full of singular tenderness, the man felt that he might say, "Have compassion on us." From some persons we could not ask compassion or feelings because they do not appear to have any—they wear a harsh look and a chill air surrounds them. But the Savior was not so. The man felt that Jesus was full of compassion. His suit was that this compassion would show itself to him and his son. It is a good beginning to saving faith if you believe that Jesus is willing to save you. I trust that many of you have advanced as far as this. What is it, *really* and *savingly*, to believe in Jesus? The suppliant father had not yet reached that point of faith which would secure the miracle—more was needed—what was it?

He needed to believe in Christ's power in reference to his own case. The point in which his faith failed was our Lord's power as to the special case now before Him, for he said—"If You can do anything." Before you condemn the anxious father for his doubt, let me remind you that his son was in a very evil plight and our Lord had just caused him to remember and review the sad features of the case. The father had sorrowfully dilated upon the fact that, "wherever the spirit takes him, he convulses him: and he foams and gnashes with his teeth, and pines away." And then he had further told the Lord that the youth had suffered thus ever since he was a child. And he had gone, still more, into detail, saying, "Often it has cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him."

After that painful detail he added his pitiful, "If You can." Do you wonder at it? Jesus seems to tell him, "If you can believe, in the teeth of all this, then you shall see the salvation of God." It is very easy to say, "I believe," when you have no sense of your sin and no consciousness of your danger. It is the easiest thing in the world to say, "Yes, Christ can save me," when you do not really believe that you *need* saving. Faith, where there is no present sense of need, is but the *image* of faith and not the Grace which saves the soul. This is the question—can you, my dear Hearer, at this moment, trust Jesus to save you, though you feel that you are full of sin?

Can you say, "Lord, I am possessed with the spirit of evil. I am under bondage to him and have been so since I was a child. I have been driven to one sin and so cast into the fire, and then I have been hurled into the opposite sin, and so thrown into the water. I have been filled with passion and evil desires. I have sinned against light and knowledge. I have sinned against love and mercy. Lord, I have sinned in thought, word and deed—I have sinned grievously and continually—and yet I believe that You can pardon me and that You can make me a new creature. Wicked as I am, I believe that You can drive sin from the throne of my heart and cause me to love You and to serve You all my days." Can you say it in sincerity? If you can believe in Jesus after this fashion, He will save you! Yes, He *has* saved you! If you, as an undeserving sinner, can so honor the mercy of God as to believe that through Christ Jesus He can blot out your sin, it shall be done—only remember that this confidence must not come to you because of your forgetfulness of your sin, but while you are conscious of it and humbled on its account.

If I persuade myself that I am merely a sinner in name, then I shall only find Jesus to be a Savior in name. If I am such a sinner as to *deny* that I am a sinner and pay the Lord the weak compliment of saying, "Oh, yes, I am a sinner. We are *all* sinners," then I am a sham sinner and I shall become a sham believer—and the true Savior will have nothing to do with me! Jesus came to save that which is really and truly lost. The downright sinner who dares not deny his guilt is the object of the Lord's saving search! In the teeth of your conscious guilt can you believe that Jesus can wash you and renew you? Then you have one main element of the faith which saves! Yet, mark it—if this man could by any possibility have believed in Christ's power to save his son and yet had refused to bring him to Jesus for healing, he would have missed one of the essentials of true faith. For, listen, if you would get to the very heart of faith, you have it here—it is to trust the Lord!

Trust! Trust! That is the word! To believe that Christ is able to save you is essential, but to put yourself into His hands that He may save you, is the saving act! Believe Christ's Word to be true—then appropriate that Word to yourself as spoken to *you*—believe that it is true to *you* and rest in the truth of it. That is saving faith! To see Christ as such a Savior as you need—able and willing to save you, is a right good sight—but you must also take this Savior to be yours. Say heartily, "Into those hands which were nailed to the Cross I commit my guilty soul, hoping and believing that Jesus will forgive all my trespasses and cause me to love all that is true and holy from now on and forever."—

**"You can, You will (I dare not doubt),
The indwelling demons chase.
I trust Your power to cast them out,
I trust Your pardoning Grace."**

He that trusts in Jesus is saved. I said not, "He *shall* be saved," but He *IS* saved! "He that believes in Him has everlasting life." "He that believes in Him is justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses."

Will you please notice, about this man's faith, that it was *not* perfect faith? Though it obtained for him the healing of his son, it was *weak* faith,

and for its weakness he was blamable. But the faultiness of his faith was not the destruction of his faith. A feeble faith can receive a mighty Savior, even as a beggar with a palsied hand can receive a golden cup. An heir to an estate has as good a title to it when he is a child as he will have when he is grown up. And, even so, little faith possesses the inheritance, though as yet it is a babe! The anxious father had to cry, "Lord, help my unbelief," and that unbelief, confessed and lamented, did not shut him out of the blessing! The unbelief which lingers around our faith is a thing to be rid of by the help of Christ, but it will not destroy the virtue of the faith which we possess!

So, dear Friend, if your faith in Jesus Christ amounts to this, that you believe Him able to save and you do, therefore, trust Him, you are a saved man even though you may be staggered with a host of fears and troubled with a multitude of sins! Your faith has saved you, go in peace—for that faith of yours shall grow from a mustard seed into a far spreading tree. I would that you could take Jesus up into your arms as Simeon did, for then would you say with full assurance, "My eyes have seen Your salvation." But if you cannot do so much as that, at least stretch out your fingers and touch the hem of the Lord's garment, for if you do but touch His clothes you shall be whole! The faintest contact with the ever-blessed Christ will open up a way by which saving power will flow out of Him into you!

Oh, how blessed it is to think that God has ordained this plain way of faith for poor sinners! It is of faith that it might be of Grace, to the end that the promise might be sure to all the chosen seed. This faith in the Lord Jesus ought to be, to each one of us, the easiest thing in all the world. If we were what we ought to be, it would never occur to us to doubt our Lord Jesus! And our shameful unbelief of Him is the most conclusive evidence of our need of Him, for we must have become grievously wrong in heart to be forced to admit that we find it difficult to believe in Jesus. What an insult to Him! What a crime on our part!

Remember the whole story of Grace and blush for your wicked unbelief! God, the ever-blessed, whom we had offended, sent His dear Son to be made in the likeness of sinful *flesh*. And He dwelt here among us as our Brother, Friend and Helper. In the fullness of time, He took upon Himself our sin and sorrow, and went up to the Cross with the awful load of our guilt. Though still the well-beloved Son of the Father, He suffered even unto *death* in place of His people! God's record concerning Him is that He has set Him forth as the propitiation for sin. God has accepted His Atonement! Will not sinners accept it? Jesus is the Savior—God has ordained Him such—will not the sinner agree that Jesus should save him? If not, why not? If we were not fallen to the uttermost degree of depravity, we should cry out with delight, "Lord, we believe! Blessed be the dear name of Jesus, our Substitute—we can and do trust Him. We are quite sure if the Lord God has made Jesus to be His salvation to the ends of the earth, He must be a perfect salvation and, therefore, we, by His Grace, accept Him with joy and delight."

But this is the curse of our nature—the innate vice of our hearts—that we cannot believe our God, thus making Him a liar! Oh, the horror of sus-

pecting His Truth whom angels adore with veiled faces! Oh, the daring presumption of questioning the promise of a faithful God! It is horrible, horrible, horrible to the last degree to mistrust the Almighty Father, to doubt His bleeding Son! There ought to be no room for an, "if," when we know that in the Lord Jesus all fullness dwells! I am not, at this moment, speaking to those who reject the Word of God and deny the Deity of Christ—I can understand their position and will deal with them another time—but I am now speaking to you who accept this Bible as God's Word and unquestioningly believe that Jesus Christ is Divine—to you I say that your refusal to put your trust in Him is without excuse! At least, *I* cannot find an excuse for you.

Remember those telling words of the Lord Jesus—"if I tell you the truth, why do you not believe Me?" If you believe Jesus to be the Son of God and the Savior of men, why do you not trust your own soul with Him? Why not, at this moment, confide in Him whom you admit to be worthy of your trust?

II. I have tried, thus, to explain the nature of faith. I will now, in the second place, deal with the startling question, HOW IS IT THAT FAITH CAN BE DIFFICULT? It certainly is difficult to some. It cannot be so in *itself*, yet many in trouble of heart find it to be so—and those that labor to bring them to Christ find themselves sorely put to it. Why, first, it is difficult to get the very *idea* of faith into some men's minds—not only difficult for them to believe, but even to know what it is to believe! I have met with persons who have attended a place of worship regularly 20 or 30 years and yet they have never made the discovery that faith is a childlike trust in Jesus! I, as a lad, was taught this blessed secret by the Spirit of God, but it was, at first, a great wonder to me that I should have attended evangelical ministries for years and yet should not have known what was meant by believing in Christ.

That simple Truth of God broke in upon my mind like a new revelation! I had read the Bible. There was no part of it with which I was not acquainted and yet, even from that blessed Book I had not learned what believing in Christ meant. Is not this amazing? It is remarkable and yet it is a general fact. We try by illustrations, by anecdotes, by parables, to drill the notion of faith into men, but we cannot get it unto their heads, much less into their *hearts*. Martin Luther complained that he thought he must take the Bible and bang it about his Hearers' heads because he could not get them to see its clear teaching as to justification by faith. This idea of believing is alien to men's minds and it can only dwell there by forcing its way against the tendency of human nature!

Again, I say, that this is a sad proof of human depravity, since in itself it is no difficult idea—it is the simplest thought that can be uttered or accepted! Trust your salvation with Christ and Christ will save you—this is a lesson which a baby may learn! Still, the unregenerate do not think so—they muddle it all up and stick to their belief that faith is something to be *felt*, or *seen*, or *done*, or *suffered*. To trust their God, to rely upon the atonement of His Son—this is not to their mind and so their foolish heart is darkened—and they cannot see the way which lies straight in front of them! When we get that thought into our Hearers' heads, then there

comes the next difficulty—to make them believe that faith can save *them*. It seems so difficult to believe this because the way is so easy.

They ask—"What! Am I, after 30, 40, 50 years of sin, to be delivered from all the punishment of my transgressions by simply trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ?" If you were to tell them that they must go to a desert and live there as hermits on berries and cold water for the rest of their natural lives, they would believe the message! If they were told to scourge themselves with whips of wire, they would expect some good result from such suffering, but not from merely believing! If they were to study the idea of appeasing God by their personal suffering, it would soon become impossible to believe—yet for a time they incline to it rather than to the doctrine of salvation by trust in the great Substitute! Hideous imaginations, despairing and dread are also looked upon hopefully by many—they hope that by deep feelings they may arrive at forgiveness and may *force* their way to Heaven by the gates of Hell! But to trust Christ and to believe the *promise of God* is a thing too simple for them—they fear that safety is not to be found so soon!

Ah, poor souls! If the Prophet had bid you do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much rather, then, when he says to you, "Believe and live?" I wish you would change your opinion as to what faith really is, for it is by no means so insignificant a matter as you suppose. Simple as it is, there lies within it great excellence and value. Faith in God is the most Divine exercise of the mind! To believe in God and His Christ is to be reconciled to God and restored from enmity. We are in unison of heart with those we trust. To *believe* your God is to *worship* Him—the *essence* of worship is faith! For a poor sinner to trust the Lord, gives Him more honor than the cherubim can bring Him with their loftiest notes of praise! In the teeth of all my sin and sinfulness, with a thorough sense of my guilt, I believe that the blood of Jesus has saved me—is not this true praise?

To confess scarlet sins and yet to say, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow," gives the Lord great glory for His mercy and His power. Yet the doctrine of, "Believe and live," startles poor sinners because it is too easy! When they get over the idea of its extreme ease, they say to themselves, "This news is certainty too good to be true. Do I really understand you, Sir, that if I trust the Lord Jesus, now, I am at once delivered from sin and am made a new creature in Christ?" Yes, you understand my teaching if that is the sense you find in my words. Yet you say it is too good to be true! Do you not see how poorly you think of your God? I know that pardoning Grace is infinitely above your deserving or thoughts—but then, does not the Lord say of Himself, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts"? Grace may be too good for you to expect, but it is *not* too good for God to bestow!

Oh that you would think better of God than you have done and say of His amazing Grace, "It is just like He!" Sing with me these words—

***"Who is a pardoning God like Thee?
Or who has Grace so rich and free?"***

Salvation is pitched in such a key as this—given freely to whoever believes in Jesus! Why, that is just like the Lord, and we will accept it as

having the Divine stamp and impress upon it! He forgives like a God and this does not stagger our faith, but confirms it! Then, again, men are astounded by the rapidity of justification. Shall 50 years sinning be forgiven in a *moment*? Shall an instant's believing end the guilty past and commence a holy future? It is even so! In one instant a man begins a course of believing which introduces him into a new world! What is strange about this? Is it not God's way to do wonders in a short time? He took but a week to fit up the earth for man—no, six days sufficed—and on the seventh He rested. To make the light in which we rejoice, only needed for the Lord to say, "Let there be light"!

In the case before us, our Lord only said to the demon, "I charge you, come out of him, and enter no more into him," and the deed was done! If we had all time at our disposal, we could not work such wonders, but to God there are no limits as to length or brevity of time. A thousand years are to Him as one day, and one day as a thousand years. He speaks, and it is done! Think of it—salvation in a moment! The moment a sinner believes, he lives unto God and his trespasses are forgiven. Oh Sinner! Why should you doubt it? Yet we cannot get the conscience-stricken one to believe it. If we lead our friends out of this difficulty, they plunge into another. They cannot be satisfied with the Word of God, alone, as the ground for their faith. Why do I believe that I am saved? I know that I am saved because the Word of God says, "He that believes in Him has everlasting life"—I believe in Jesus and, therefore, I have everlasting life!

"But," says one, "if I had that word applied to me with power, then I could and would believe it." Just so! But until then, you refuse to believe the promise of God and treat Him as a liar! God must give you some pledge or bond beyond His promise, because His Word is not good enough for you, though you admit that even with a good *man*, his word is his bond! You cannot trust your God! "Oh, but if I had a dream." Just so. You would have more faith in a silly dream, perhaps caused by indigestion, than you have in the solemn Word and written promises of God! "Oh, Sir, but if an angel were to speak to me, I would believe." Just so, and if God does not choose to send the angels, what then? Then He is not to be believed, but treated as a liar? What is this but saying, "Lord, You shall bow to *my* whims, or else I will not believe a word You say"?

Has it come to this? Dare you demand signs from God? Then let me ask you—Is this Book God's Word? Say, "No," and I can understand your conduct. But if you believe, as I know you do, that this is the very Word of God, how dare you disbelieve? If all the angels in Heaven were to march by me in a file and assure me that God would keep His Word, I would say, "I did not require you to tell me that, for the Lord never fails to be as good as His Word." God is so true that the witness of angels would be a superfluity! If my father were to make a statement, I certainly would not call in his servant to confirm it! If this Book was dictated by the Holy Spirit, it is ours to believe it without demanding confirmations or applications. Let us say, "That Word is true, for God has said it. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners—I am a sinner and I trust Him to save me. Inasmuch as the Word of God says, 'To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His

name,' I do believe on His name and, therefore, I have the power and privilege to become a child of God, and a child of God I am! God says so—that is enough for me."

We cannot get men to see that the Word of the Lord is surer than all signs and wonders—they need something in addition. If we compel them to admit that the Word of God is the only and sufficient basis of faith, they straightway begin to look at their own believing as if it were the Savior. They cry, "My faith is so weak! My faith is so variable! My faith is so shaken," and so forth. It is as if those who were bid to look to the bronze serpent had, instead, tried to see their own eyes! Here is a thirsty child and there is a flowing fountain—you give the child a cup that it may drink of water. The child does not go to the fountain, but is so pleased with its empty cup that it tries to satisfy its thirst out of it! What a foolish child! Or suppose it should refuse to go to the fountain because the cup was of earthenware, or of tin—would not that be a strange way for a thirsty child to act? A child needs the cup to drink out of, but it cannot drink out of an empty cup!

Faith is the cup, but Christ is the Fountain! Faith is a *secondary* thing compared with Christ. We must have faith to be as the finger with which we touch the hem of the Master's garment, but the *finger* does not work the cure! Shall I refuse to touch because, perhaps, I have not washed my finger, or it has no gold ring upon it, or there are traces of rheumatism in it? To attach so much importance to the *finger* as to refuse to touch Christ's garment with it would be insanity! Do not mind your finger—touch the garment's hem! Sinner, get to Christ some way, any way, for if you get to Him you will live! It is not, after all, the greatness nor the perfection of your *faith*—it is His greatness and His perfection which is to be depended on!

Then the next trial is that we cannot get troubled sinners to see the difference between their faith and its fruits. "I would believe in Christ," says one, "if I were as holy as So-and-So, who is a Believer, but then, you see, I am a sinner." Now mark, dear Friend, that the person of whom you speak in that fashion does not think himself to be one particle more deserving than you are! If you talk to that good man, he will tell you that whatever holiness you can see in him is the work of Grace and that at the first he came to Jesus just as you must come, that is, as a sinner. Faith *produces* holiness—but when we first come to Jesus, we come as unholy persons, and as such He receives us. Suppose that I have a number of bulbs which I am told will produce most remarkable flowers? If I believe the statement, I shall take care to have them properly planted. The gardeners are beginning to put such things into pots, that they may have hyacinths and other fair flowers in the winter and early spring.

Suppose that I resolve not to plant my bulbs because I use my own eyesight and come to the conclusion that as I cannot see a hyacinth or even the *beginnings* of one in any of the bulbs, therefore there can be no use in planting them? Why, everyone would tell me that in this matter I must go by faith and plant my bulbs in order that I may, in due time, see them bloom. "Those bulbs will yield beautiful blue flowers," says one. I answer that they are brown, dried-up sort of onions and that I shall throw

them on the dunghill, for I can see no buds or flowers in them. What a simpleton I should be if I talked so! Though I cannot see it, yet there is closely compacted and quietly hidden away within those bulbs, slumbering things of beauty which will wake up at the call of Spring!

Even so, if you believe in Christ, there is a holy life packed away within your faith and it will gradually develop itself. Even within a feeble faith there are the elements of ultimate perfection. If you truly trust Christ, your preparation for Glory has begun! As the oak tree was hidden in the acorn, so is Christ hidden in true faith. Do not, however, expect to see all this at first—look to the root, now, and the growth will follow. You are not to come to Christ because you are healed, but to get healing! Your faith must be a sinner's faith before it can be a saint's faith. Trust Christ while you are yet foul, lost and undone—and He will wash, save and restore you! Still, we find the awakened ones clinging to the idea that they must *be* something or *feel* something before they may trust Jesus. We cannot get them to see that the whole of their salvation lies in Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ, alone. We cannot wean them from some sort of reliance upon their own feelings, or weeping, or prayers, or Bible-reading, or some other form of works!

Why, they will even look to their own faith rather than to Jesus Christ, alone! Know you not that our Lord has offered a full atonement for sin and brought in a perfect righteousness for His people? His propitiation is to be accepted as full and complete—and His righteousness we are to wear as our own. Our whole trust must go to the perfect work of our Lord! It must not even rest on our faith! To trust in our own trusting would be absurd! A wounded man has healing ointment given him and a piece of linen with which to bind on the ointment. Now, if he were to wrap the linen around the wound and leave out the healing agent, he could not expect a cure. Faith is the linen whereon the ointment of Christ is spread—and we must not put it out of its due place and order—or we shall be making it a rival to Christ!

Oh, that I could clear up some of the difficulties with which men surround themselves, so that they would consent to look out of *themselves* to Jesus *only*!

III. We must now speak to the last point. Oh, you that are seeking rest, dwell upon each word as it is now lovingly delivered to you. WHAT IS IT THAT CAN MAKE FAITH EASY? Only the Holy Spirit can do that—and He does so by bringing certain Truths of God to remembrance. Faith is rendered easy to a man by the Holy Spirit when, first of all, he sees clearly the Infallible certainty of the Sacred Record—and this is the record that God gave concerning His Son, that He that believes in Him has everlasting life! Is this Bible true or not? I believe in every letter of it! I accept it as God's Word in the most unreserved sense and so do you to whom I now speak! Well, if that is so, then it remains no longer difficult to believe what is plainly taught in this Book! If God has spoken, then questions are ended! It may be a hard saying; it may be a dark saying; it may seem to be too good to be true—but what of that? Do we dare to question the Lord? He is not a man that He should be, nor the son of man that He should re-

pent. He has said that whoever believes in Jesus shall not perish, but have everlasting life—and if we have so believed—eternal life is ours!

The next thing that the Spirit of God helps us to see is the applicability of that record to ourselves. That is to say, we read, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save *sinner*s," and we conclude that as we are just such, we may look to Him to save us. We read, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." We labor and are heavy laden and, therefore, we come and He gives us rest. We read that, "in due time Christ died for the ungodly" and, knowing that we are ungodly, we take heart and come to Him who justifies the guilty through His righteousness! We read again, "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." We feel that to will is present with us and, therefore, we freely take the living water. We read once more, "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." And as we are creatures, we conclude that the Gospel has something to say to us.

On one or other of these accounts we see that the Gospel is directed to us and so we receive it. It is better for us that the promise should be directed to us in terms of *character* than that it should mention our actual names. Is your name John Brown? Well, if the Gospel came in a letter to you, directed to John Brown, what might you say if you were tempted to doubt? You would think to yourself that there are many more John Browns besides yourself and, therefore, the message might not be for *you*. If it were directed to your address, you might then fear that another John Brown once lived at that house, before you were born—and so you would fear to appropriate the message lest it should prove to be out of date! Even supposing that your name was there, *and* the address, *and* the date—you might be mistrustful enough to fancy that there was a *mistake*, or that some other person of your name had used your address for the day. If you mean to ride on the back of unbelief, any fancy will do for a saddle!

But when the promise comes "to him that believes in Jesus," there can be no question that it is ours if we believe! We read, "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." Is it not clear that if we have confessed our sins, mercy is ours? It is a blessed thing for us when the Spirit of God leads us to see that the Gospel is free to all who are made willing to receive it. Another thing that makes faith easy is when the Spirit of God shows us the Glory of Christ's Person. Our Savior is truly God and this fact helps us to believe in Him. It strikes me that the poor anxious father may have been much helped to believe in our Lord by that peculiar majesty which shone about Him through His having just come down from the mount of transfiguration. It was a very hard case which exercised the poor man's mind and, therefore, our Lord appeared to him with an unusual splendor—a splendor of which we read—"when they saw Him they were amazed."

A sight of our Savior's face helped the trembler to cry, "Lord, I believe!" Oh, if the Spirit of God will lead you to read the Scriptures till you get a clear idea of the Godhead and perfect Manhood of the Lord Jesus, you will feel that everything is possible with an Almighty Savior! "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Our Lord is gone up to His Glory and He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. Oh, could you

but grasp the idea that He who asks your trust is the Son of the Highest who has all power in Heaven and in earth, you could not, you *would* not withhold your confidence! As for myself, knowing beyond all doubt my Lord's Divinity, it seems easy enough to rely upon Him. I have told you before what John Hyatt said on his dying bed, when his deacons said, "Mr. Hyatt, can you trust your soul with Christ, now?" "One soul!" he said, "I could trust a *million* souls with Him if I had them!" Even so could I trust the Lord Jesus not only with *my* soul, but with all the destinies of earth and Heaven, time and eternity! Every child of God may safely say that. I could trust Jesus with all the souls that ever lived or shall live, if they were all mine. Surely, He is able to keep that which we have committed to Him!

Another great help to faith is to perceive the completeness of the Divine work and Sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. He took our sin upon Himself and, in His own body on the tree, was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Only let your eyes behold the Son of God suffering the death-agonies for guilty man and you must believe in His power to redeem. I have thought that if men had been more sinful than they are, and if they were a million times as numerous as they are, and if every star that studs the midnight sky were a world and all crowded *full* of sinners, yet the sacrifice of God, Himself, must, from the Glory of His Nature, be such a vindication of the Law of God that it might well suffice as a reason for forgiving a rebel universe! Shall the infinitely Holy suffer for the guilty? Shall the Eternal take upon Himself humanity and bow His head to death? Then the Sacrifice must possess such boundless efficacy that none may fear that it will fall short of their need! No limit can be set to the power which lies in the Divine expiation! My God, I see that You have given Your own Son to die! Surely, in His precious blood there is more than sufficient reason for my faith in You!

If that does not lead you to believe, perhaps the Spirit of God will go to work in another way. Some have been helped to believe in Jesus by the sight of others converted, justified and made happy. When someone like yourself is saved, you take courage. "I have been a thief," says one—

***"The dying thief rejoiced to see
That Fountain in his day.
And there may you, though vile as he,
Wash all your sins away."***

"I have been an adulterer," says one. Alas! So was David, but he said, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." "I have been a murderer," sobs a third. So was Manasseh, who shed very much innocent blood. "But I have been a persecutor and a blasphemer." So was Saul of Tarsus, yet he obtained mercy. "But I seem to have far more of the devil in me than anybody else." So had Mary Magdalene, out of whom Christ cast *seven* devils! You think you are a sinner all by yourself, but there have been others like you and the door through which others have passed into mercy is open for you!

If I had been a little rabbit in the day when Noah brought the living creatures into the ark, I do not think I should have been troubled about whether there was room for me to enter the ark! But if I *had* been so timid, I would have forgotten all my fears when I saw the *elephant* come

up, and his mate with him, and had seen them go tramping through the door! Then I should have known assuredly that there was room for me! Oh, you who have been kept moral and upright and, therefore, are not outwardly great sinners, surely you may enter where the chief of sinners have found ready admission! The salvation of others is often a sweet encouragement to sinners to trust in Christ.

Lastly, I will tell you one thing which will make you trust Him, and that is, desperation as to all other hopes. It is an amazing thing that *despair* is often the mother of faith, but the mother dies when the child is born. We were, many of us, led to believe in Jesus because we had nothing else to trust in. When we are driven to the last extremity, then it is we come to Jesus and take Him to be our All in All. A boy was awakened in a house which was on fire. He could be seen from the street, poor child, and his danger was very great, indeed. He rushed to the window. His father stood below and called to him to drop into his arms—but it was a long way down and the child was afraid. He clung to the window, but dared not drop. Do you know what made him let go his hold and fall into his father's arms? There came a burst of fire out of the window and scorched him—and then he dropped directly! I wish that some of you would get just such a touch of the fires of despair as to compel you to say—

***"I can but perish if I go;
I am resolved to try,
For if I stay away
I know I must forever die."***

Years ago one of our students was greatly emaciated with what seemed to be consumption. He had heard of a certain medicine which was said to be useful in such cases, but he had no faith in it. When he was growing worse and worse, I said, "Brother, you are at death's door! Try that man's stuff. There may be something in it. At any rate, nothing else does you any good." He took the medicine through sheer despair, of all other prescriptions, and God blessed it to him so that he is alive this very day! He would never have tried the remedy if he had not felt that there was no other hope.

Even so, it will be well for you to be driven into a corner as to your soul's estate, that you may believe in Christ Jesus and say with His disciples in old times, "To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." Here is a closing verse for you to sing at home by yourself –

***"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Christ's kind arms I fall!
He is my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my All!"***

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FAITH OMNIPOTENT

NO. 474

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 12, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Jesus said unto him, If you can believe, all things
are possible to him that believes.”
Mark 9:23.*

I MUST take your minds back to the scene in the midst of which Christ uttered these memorable words. Christ had been upon the mountaintop, transfigured in the presence of His three disciples. During His absence the disciples remaining had been put to a nonplus. They found themselves, for lack of faith, unable to work a miracle. And the Pharisees triumphed. Christ came down just at the very moment and turned the scale.

We find a parallel case in the story of Moses, when with his servant, Joshua, he went up to the mountain and beheld the glory of the Lord. While he and Joshua were absent, evil lifted up its head, and those who would walk by sight prevailed over the poor weak faith of Aaron, so that he made for them a golden calf. And lo, as Moses returned, he saw the people given up to the worship of this image which they could see with their eyes and handle with their hands. Faith had left the field routed, because the champion was not there, and sinful sight was for the moment triumphant.

Moses dashes boldly into the midst of the people and instantly they are put to confusion. Some tremble and the most brazen of them are made to hang their heads. He lays hold upon their molten calf, grinds it to powder and makes them drink it.

Now, our Lord with his Joshuas—Peter, James, and John, the three elect out of the elect—had been on the mountain of transfiguration. The rest, like Aaron, found themselves attacked by those who would have signs and wonders. And being unable to furnish these signs and wonders for lack of faith, the Pharisees pushed their advantage, and the hosts of God seemed to fly before them. But suddenly, like a great King, Christ stands in their midst. The Pharisees are abashed. A miracle is performed. Faith triumphs, and the doubters are shamed.

It is as if some mighty general who, having been absent from the field of battle, finds that his lieutenants have rashly engaged in action, and have been defeated. The left wing is broken, the right has fled, and the center begins to fail. He lifts his standard in the midst of his troops and bids them rally around him. They gather. They dash upon the all but triumphant enemy, and soon they turn the balance of victory, and make the late victors turn their ignominious backs to flight.

Brethren, here is a lesson at the very outset. What we need for conquest is the shout of a king in the midst of us. The presence of Christ is victory to His Church—the absence of the Lord Jesus entails disgraceful

defeat. O armies of the living God, count not your numbers! Rely not upon *your* strength. Reckon not upon the ability of your ministers. Trust not in human might. Nor on the other hand be dismayed because you are few, nor tremble because you are feeble. If He is with you, more are they that are for you than they that are against you.

If Christ is in your midst, there are horses of fire and chariots of fire round about you—

***“When He makes bare His arm,
Who can His cause withstand?
When He, His people’s cause defends,
Who? Who shall stay His hand?”***

Lift up your eyes, then, to the hills from where Jesus comes who is your Help, and entreat Him never to forsake His people but to dwell with them, and walk among them forevermore.

The matter about which the dispute had arisen was this—a certain man had a demoniac son who was afflicted with a dumb spirit which threw him into convulsions and ravings of the most hideous kind. The father, having seen the futility of the endeavors of the disciples, had little or no faith in Christ, and therefore, when he was bid to bring his son to him, he said to Jesus, “If you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.”

Now there was an “if” in the request, but the poor trembling father had put the “if” in the wrong place. Jesus Christ, therefore, without telling him to retract the “if,” just puts it in its legitimate position. “No, verily,” He seemed to say, “there should be no ‘if’ about My power, nor about My willingness, the ‘if’ lies somewhere else.” “If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes.” The man received faith, offering at the same time a humble prayer for an increase of faith, and instantly Christ spoke the word and the devil was cast out with an injunction never to return.

Brethren, you and I see that there is an “if” somewhere, but we are perpetually blundering by putting it in the wrong place. *If* Christ can convert heathens? No, no, *if* the Church can believe He can! *If* Christ can make the ministry successful? No, *if* you can believe He can! *If* Christ can give me the pardon of sin, *if* He can give me high enjoyments, *if* He can lift me above doubts and fears? Not so, Brethren—not so. You have misplaced your “if.” It is *if* you can believe. For *if* you can, even as all things are possible to Christ, so shall all things be possible to you.

Faith stands in God’s power and in God’s majesty. It wears the royal apparel and rides on the king’s horse, for it is the Divine Grace which the king delights to honor. Girding itself with the glorious might of the all-working Spirit, it becomes, in the Omnipotence of God, mighty to do, to dare and to suffer. “All things,” without limit, “are possible to him that believes.”

I shall, this morning, dwell upon *some of the achievements of faith* and then notice *where faith’s great power lies*. God help us to speak on both of these points with Divine power.

I. First, SOME OF THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF FAITH. Time would fail me if I should attempt to rehearse the record of those who have earned a good report through faith. It is not necessary that my humble tongue

should recapitulate what Paul, with inspired lips, has uttered in the ears of the Church. Turn to the 11th chapter of Hebrews and see there a mighty triumphal arch which God the Holy Spirit has raised in commemoration of the splendid triumphs which faith has achieved. Behold this tower of David, built for an armory, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men.

With joy the Church recounts her worthies, for the Lord utters His voice before His army, for His camp is very great. But it needs not that I remind you of these ancient things, I will rather speak of some of the things which faith can perform today, even today.

1. First, we will consider faith in *its relationship to guilt*. Here we may say, in your hearing, if you can believe guilt can be removed—perfect pardon and complete justification are possible to the vilest sinner, if he can believe in Christ. Behold, my Brethren, faith going forth to conflict with sin. Mark for a moment its determined struggles but see it coming back, like David, with Goliath's head in his hand—a mighty conqueror—through the strength of its God. Faith, in dealing with sin, *does not forget the greatness of it*. Our sin is tremendous—it is not possible for us to overestimate its guilt.

The sinner, under the most awful convictions, never exaggerated the evil of sin, it is a dreadful and a bitter thing. But faith deals thus with it, “What if my sin is great? I have a great Savior—surely He is able to take my sin, even if it were a hundred times as great as it is—and to cast it all into the depths of the sea. I know that I have greatly revolted and have sinned with many aggravations against my God. But I believe in His great mercy, and I know that He is able to blot out my sins like a cloud and my transgressions like a thick cloud.”

Faith does not lessen sin in the estimate of a sinner. But it exalts Christ, so that the sinner firmly and fully believes that if his sin could be multiplied by all the number of the elect, yet He who is mighty to save could roll all the burden away and make him free. The greatness of sin is no barrier to its removing, if you can believe.

Many, also, are troubled with a consciousness of *the ill consequence of sin*. They are made to look into Hell. They seem to hear the wailings as they ascend from the place of torment. Such awful passages as these are in their troubled mind—“Tophet is prepared of old, the pile thereof is wood and much smoke.” “These shall go away into everlasting punishment, where their worm dies not, and their fire is not quenched.” But faith says, “Yes, but despite all this, the agonies of Christ were so great that they are a fit and full expiation by which all these torments can be, by God's mercy, fully removed from those who trust in Jesus—and they can even mount to the upper skies.”

To know the consequence of sin, and yet believe that Christ can pardon—this is faith work. Not to make out sin to be a peccadillo, a small and trivial offense—but to confess that the full weight of God's eternal arm can be none too heavy to fall upon the man who has dared to insult his Maker's laws. But despite all this, to believe that the Atonement made by blood upon the Cross is enough, and more than enough, to ex-

piate all—this is the victory of faith—to know that the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s dear Son, cleans us from all sin.

Multitudes, also, I know, are very much vexed by remembering *what guilt has done in them*. “I am,” says such an one, “so hard-hearted, I have so little repentance, I am so prayerless, I have nothing good in me. I am everything that is vile. There is not a commendable thing in me to move the pity of God.” Now faith comes in and says, “It is even so. But, despite all this, I do believe the naked promise of God. I come to Jesus as I am, having nothing in myself, but possessing all things in Him.”

Nor will faith let the hardness of the heart, or the stubbornness of the will be any argument why the soul should not rest on Christ. Believing all that could be laid to its charge, and sorrowfully repenting of it all, still faith says, “It is written, ‘Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.’ I come, and Jesus cannot, will not, cast me out.” When I feel my soul softened, when I feel the motions of the living fire within, then to believe that Christ can save me is no great faith.

But when I feel no spiritual life, when my heart is as hard as a nether millstone, and I see myself as corrupt as a dunghill, then to believe in Him that justifies the ungodly—then to take the mercy which Christ gives to the very chief of sinners—this is a masterpiece of faith. And herein faith makes all things possible to him that believes—

***“In hope against all human hope,
Self desperate, I believe
Your quickening word shall raise me up,
You shall the Spirit give.”***

The thing surpasses all my thought, but faithful is my Lord. Through unbelief staggers not, for God has spoken the word—

***“Faith, mighty faith the promise sees,
And looks to that alone,
Laughs at impossibilities,
And cries, ‘It shall be done.’ ”***

Sinners also are greatly troubled when they are awakened concerning *the future*. “You will sin again,” says Satan, “just as you have done. All pretences to a new life will be signal failures. You will go, like the dog to his vomit, and return, like the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.” The quickened mind clearly perceives that this would inevitably be the result, if the work were to be performed by human strength. But faith denies the slander by looking to the Lord, alone. “Though in me, that is in my flesh, there dwells no good thing, yet He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.”

And faith clutches that promise, “I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hands.” And she looks upon the future with the same eyes of faith with which she looks back upon the past and rests herself upon the faithfulness and power of God to save. At times these old sins will rush in upon the Believer’s mind with a terrific force. Gathering dreadful strength from *the justice of God*, our eyes are tormented with the vision of an angry God, with His sword drawn, ready to smite us for our offenses. Glorious is that faith which can fling itself into the arms of God, even when the sword is in His hand, and will not believe that God can strike the sinner who relies upon the blood of Jesus!

Mighty is that faith which, looking at Justice, stern and severe, yet trembles not, but cries, "You are merciful and *just* to forgive me my sins, for I have confessed them. Christ has made full Atonement, and You will not twice demand the debt. He paid it once, and You cannot lay anything to my charge." Triumphant is that faith which marches right up to Heaven and stands before the blazing Throne of the great and holy God, and yet can cry, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? God has justified—who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather, that has risen again." And this, even when sin rolls like a black flood, and the remembrance of the past has lashed the soul to tempest.

When we really know the blessed merit of Jesus' blood. When we fully understand the superlative mercy of God. When we come to know the overflowing love of the Father towards His beloved children—we shall not look upon sin as being less sin than before, but we shall no longer fear its penal consequences, being confidently assured in our soul that none of these sins can destroy us. That not the whole of them together can for a moment shake our standing in Him, nor by any means put us in any danger of eternal wrath, since we are covered with the righteousness of Christ, and washed in His blood.

Brethren, our sins, when pardoned, should increase our delight in God, since they afford us evidences of His exceedingly abundant Grace and love. Amalie Sieveking, a notable Christian heroine, one of the most zealous workers of modern times, writes thus—"The sense of my own powerlessness but brings me nearer to Him whose strength is made perfect in weakness. I give myself up to His guidance in cheerful trust that He will finish the work which He has begun, and help the poor stumbling child again and again to rise, yes, should it stumble a hundred times a day." And this is the point I want you to notice—"Sometimes I feel as though I must lay bare to others the whole accumulated amount of my guilt, that they may with me admire the riches of Divine long-suffering."

This is how faith learns to deal with sin—to make it a foil to show the brightness of *mercy*—the setting in which the diamond of Divine love flashes with superlative luster. The faithful heart always remembers its sin with shame. But still it remembers God's pardoning love with gratitude, and the sorrow helps to increase the thankfulness. The lower we sink by reason of our sin, the higher our love to God rises when we reflect how His strong hand has taken us up "out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and set our feet upon a rock and established our goings."

Oh, I would this morning that some of you who are full of sin would believe that Christ can save you! "All things are possible to him that believes." What if you are the blackest sinner out of Hell and think the devil, himself, white compared with yourself? If you can trust Christ this morning, "all things are possible to him that believes." Whiter than the newly fallen snow shall you be in an instant, if you can now rest your soul upon Jesus, who is able to save.

2. Let us now observe faith in the midst of *those constant attacks of which the heir of Heaven is the subject*. Here faith, again, does all things. My Brethren, no sooner is a Christian born, than there is a great stir

about him, even as concerning Christ Himself, for Herod seeks the young child that he may destroy him. We all know how constantly the *world* attacks us, more especially if we will be separate from it, and will keep our garments white, and will not indulge in the common pleasures, nor be guided by the ordinary maxims of society. Then the world howls at us like a pack of wolves.

What then? Why, faith finds here but an easy task, for it learns to glory in tribulations, delightfully remembering the beatitude of Jesus on the mount—"Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you." This is an everyday conquest with the Christian—to laugh at Satan's threats. "This is the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith."

The world attacks us also with its smiles, and unhappy is the man who has no faith, for soon the blandishments of the world will overcome him. But he that is full of faith, when the world offers him silver, replies, "No, I am rich in gold." And if the world would give him treasure, he would say, "I have a better portion than you can offer me. Will you tempt a king with farthings, or a prince with beggar's broken victuals? I am heir of all things in Christ. This world is mine and Heaven is mine, too." So *he* laughs to scorn all the smiles of the wicked, just as he did in the case of their frowns.

Alas, Brethren, we are equally attacked by *the flesh*. The lusts within are not dead. They are still powerful, and we know it. But here, too, faith overcomes. For while faith recognizes the power of the flesh, and the lusts thereof, it so lays hold upon Christ that it is lifted up into heavenly places, and is able to tread its corruptions under foot. Faith says to the Believer, "Be assured that notwithstanding all the plagues of your heart, and all the loathsomeness of your nature, yet you shall as surely conquer as Christ has conquered. And you shall one day be as pure and spotless as even Christ Himself before the Father's Throne."

Up and at your lusts, Believer! There is no sin which will not yield to faith. There is no reason that we should always be sinning as we have been—we *can* overcome our lusts. You *can* drive out these Canaanites—though they dwell in cities walled to Heaven, and have chariots of iron, you shall put your feet upon their necks, and utterly destroy them. By little and by little you may assuredly drive them out—but only by faith. Not by works, not by trust in your own moral resolutions, but by trust in the sprinkled blood of Jesus, can you overcome all temptation and subdue your sins—

***"With my sling and stone I go,
To fight the Philistine,
God has said it shall be so,
And I shall conquer sin.
On His promise I rely,
Trust in an Almighty Lord,
Sure to win the victory,
For He has spoken the word.
In the strength of God I rise,
I run to meet the foe,***

***Faith, the word of power applies
And lays the giant low.
Faith in Jesus' conquering name,
Slings the sin-destroying stone,
Points the Lord's unerring aim,
And brings the monster down."***

So is it with *the devil*. The devil comes out against us. But we are more than a match for him when our faith is firm. Upon the shield of our faith we catch his arrows, and by the sword of our faith we smite him to the very heart. There is no temptation that ever can assail a Believer but faith can certainly supply an antidote. If I believe in Jesus, I have His promise that I shall overcome, and I shall overcome because I believe that promise. Even if I should get beneath the devil's foot, and he should lift his sword to smite me, if I can say, "Rejoice not over me, O my enemy, for when I fall yet shall I rise again," I will rise and victory is mine. Faith overcomes even Hell itself and its crowned monarch—for defense it is a panoply and for attack it is our battleaxe and weapons of war.

As for the *trials of this life*, it is marvelous what teachers these are to faith, for she perceives that troubles come from God. Chrysostom has a gloss upon that passage in Job, where Job says, "The Lord has taken away." He did not say the Chaldeans did it, nor the Sabeans, though they certainly were the instruments. But the *Lord* has taken away. The Believer, seeing God's hand in everything that happens to him, feels pleased with all alike. As Providence is in his Father's hand, he knows that it is always guided by love, by wisdom and by Divine Grace.

And so he thinks his worst days to be as good as his best, his foul days are fair, his dark days are bright. In full confidence he believes that all things work together for his good, and he leaves the working of them entirely with his God. Oh, Beloved, it is only want of faith that makes this world such a place of sorrow to God's people—but when we get faith, faith laughs at every tribulation—from whatever source it may come.

Thus I have shown you that "all things are possible to him that believes." Rise up, O hosts of Hell and shoot your arrows! You heavens, prepare your tempests! O earth, cast forth your floods, and You, O flesh, come forth with all your blasphemy and wickedness—faith walks unharmed amidst all your fury more than conqueror through Him that has loved her!

3. We turn your attention to another point. The *obtaining of eminence in Divine Grace*. Many professed Christians are always doubting and fearing and they think that this is the necessary state of Believers. By no means, Brothers and Sisters! "All things are possible to him that believes." And it is possible for you to get into a state in which a doubt or a fear shall be but as a bird of passage flitting across your soul, but never lingering there. When you read in biographies of the high and sweet communions enjoyed by favored saints you sigh, "Alas, these are not for me." Oh climber! If you have but faith, you shall stand upon the very pinnacle of the temple—for "all things are possible to him that believes."

I know you read of what some great men have done for Jesus. What they have enjoyed of Him. How much they have been like He is. How they have been able to endure for His sake. And you say, "Ah, as for me, I am

but a worm. I can never attain to this.” There is nothing which one saint was that you may not be. There is no height of Divine Grace, no attainment of spirituality, no position, or assurance, no post of duty which is not open to you, if you have but the power to believe. Get up, get up from your dunghills—lay aside your sackcloth and your ashes—it is not meet that you should grovel in the dust, oh children of a King!

Ascend! The golden throne of assurance is waiting for you! The crown of confidence in Jesus is ready to bedeck your brow. Wrap yourself in scarlet and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day. For, if you believe, all your land shall flow with oil, and wine and milk, and honey—your soul shall be as a watered garden and your spirit shall be satiated as with marrow and fatness. “All things are possible to him that believes.”

4. And yet a fourth point. The power of faith in reference to *prayer*. Here “all things are possible to him that believes.” In prayer we are sometimes staggered by reason of the *great* things we are about to ask. But faith looks at the great promise, the great God, and His great love, and thinks that even a great thing is but a crumb from the Master’s table. Then, again, we are often driven back by a sense of unworthiness. But faith looks at *Christ’s* worthiness and believes that *His* worthiness is quite sufficient to put our unworthiness altogether out of court.

Then we are apt to think of God’s delays. But faith thinks that God cannot deny, though He may delay—so she hangs on till the promise is fulfilled. Though the vision tarries, she waits for it till it comes, for sure is she that it *will* come. And, oh, it is a splendid thing to see faith wait upon God in prayer, and forswear all carnal means, depending simply and wholly upon the naked promise, and believing that God can do His own work and perform His own Word. Brethren, no man ought to doubt in these modern times that God will answer prayer, and that faith with prayer can do anything.

We have often heard of George Muller, of Bristol. There stands, in the form of those magnificent orphan houses full of orphans, supported without committees, without secretaries, supported only by that man’s prayers and faith—there stands, in solid brick and mortar, a testimony to the fact that God hears prayer! But, do you know that Mr. Muller’s case is but one among many?

Remember the work of Francke at Halle. Look at the Rough House just out of Hamburgh, where Dr. Wichern, commencing with a few reprobate boys of Hamburgh, only waiting upon God’s help and goodness, has now a whole village full of boys and girls, reclaimed and saved—and is sending out on the right hand, and on the left, Brethren to occupy posts of usefulness in every land.

Remember the brother Gossner, of Berlin, and how mightily God has helped him to send out not less than two hundred missionaries throughout the length and breadth of the earth, preaching Christ, while he has for their support nothing but the bare promise of God, and faith which has learned to reach the hand of God, and take from it all it needs.

And need I remind you of a story we told you last Friday night—the story of Pastor Harms, in Hermaunsburg, where, by the power of that

man's faith in preaching the Word, he has seen the barren wilderness made to blossom like the rose. His Church has become a very model of what a Church of God ought to be, a living, working body, from which he sends out missionaries to the coast of Africa, having nothing for their supply but the offerings of the people, drawn from them by the exercise of prayer and faith.

I was reading a memorable passage in his life, where he says, he was wanting to send his missionaries out to the Gallas tribe in Africa but could not find any means. And so he says, "Then I knocked diligently on the dear God in prayer. And since the praying man dare not sit with his hands in his lap, I sought among the shipping agents, but came to no speed. And I turned to Bishop Gobat in Jerusalem, but had no answer. And then I wrote to the missionary Krapf in Mornbaz, but the letter was lost.

"Then one of the sailors who remained said, 'Why not build a ship and you can send out as many, and as often as you will.' The proposal was good. But the money! That was a time of great conflict and I wrestled with God. For no one encouraged me, but the reverse. And even the true friends and Brethren hinted that I was not quite in my senses. When Duke George of Saxony lay on his deathbed, and was yet in doubt to whom he should flee with his soul, whether to the Lord Christ and His dear merits, or to the pope and his good works, there spoke a trusty courtier to him—'Your Grace, *straightforward makes the best runner.*'

"That word has lain fast in my soul. I had knocked at men's doors and found them shut. And yet the plan was manifestly good, and for the glory of God. What was to be done? *Straightforward makes the best runner.* I prayed fervently to the Lord, laid the matter in His hand, and, as I rose up at midnight from my knees, I said, with a voice that almost startled me in the quiet room—*Forward now, in God's name!* From that moment there never came a thought of doubt into my mind."

Friends, the Churches of Christ have no need of the modern machinery which has supplanted the simplicity of faith! I verily believe if the Lord swept the committees, secretaries, and missionary societies out of the universe, we should be better without them if our Churches would but trust God, send out their own men, raise the money to support them, and believe that God would bless them. I hope the Church will soon say, like David in Saul's clanking armor, "I cannot go with these, for I have not tried them," and with only her sling and her stone, confident in her God, I trust she will confront her foe. We can do all things, if we can but trust Christ.

"All things are possible to him that believes," but nothing is possible to your schemes and to your systems. God will sweep them away, and happy shall be that man who shall lead the van in their utter destruction. Go up against her, take away her bulwarks, for they are not the Lord's. He did not ordain them, nor will He stand by them. Act in faith, O you people of God, and prove the power of prayer, for "all things are possible to him that believes."

5. There is another point, upon which I have already entrenched, that is, *in the service of God* "all things are possible to him that believes." I

know the devil will say to you, "Why, you have no gifts." And what if you have not? If you have the gift of faith, you may do somewhat and fulfill your mission. Perhaps you are a minister. You have been laboring in a village with very little success. Brother, may it not be that you did not believe that God would give you success? For if you had believed it you would have had it. You are not straitened in God, but straitened in your own heart!

I know what it is to go to my chamber and feel ashamed of many a sermon I have preached and moan and groan over it. And I have known what it is to discover, within a month, that the sermon has been far more useful in conversion than those which I thought had something about them which might render them effective. The fact is, God wants not our *power* but our *weakness*. Not our greatness but our *nothingness*. Oh, Brother, if God has called you to a work that is ten times harder than you have strength to perform, go and do it in *His* strength and "all things are possible to him that believes."

I would that this age would breed a few extravagant men—we are getting so dull, so cold, so common-place—we all run in the same cart rut, imitating one another. In the sight of one of the heroes of old, we little men do walk under their huge legs, and peep about to find ourselves dishonorable graves. And all this is because we have left off faith. Let a man believe that God has called him to a mission. Let him say, "Forward, in God's name!" and that man will carve his name in the Rock of Ages and leave memorials behind him which angels shall gaze upon when the names of emperors and kings have been swept into oblivion.

Men and Brethren in this Church! Many and many a time have I stirred you up to faith, and there are some few of you who begin to know what faith means. But, oh, I fear there are many of you still that have not come to the fullness of the meaning of faith. To live in a region of miracles, to be called fanatics, to see God's hand as visibly as you see your own, to recognize Him as greater than second causes, to find Him as one whose arm *you* can move, whose power *you* can command, to stand in an extraordinary position, far above the place where reason can put you—to know that you are a distinguished, separated, especially-favored child of God—oh, this is Heaven begun below!

Believe me, I often marvel how people can think that the present attainments of the Church are all the Church can expect. I look upon decent trades people, respectable ministers, and amiable women, and so forth, doing something but doing very, very little—and I am apt to say—"What? What? Is this all Christ shed His blood for—to make us do *this*? Is this all the Holy Spirit does, to make a man get through a decent sermon on a Sunday? Is this all? Is this God's work? I see God's work in nature, and there are towering Alps, and roaring seas, and waterfalls lashed to fury. But I look on God's work in the Church—little, little, little everywhere. Littleness is stamped upon the brow of today. We do not *do* and *dare*.

And I am inclined to think that until we see some great and daring deed attempted, and some great and marvelous thing done for Christ, we shall not see the glory of the Lord revealed, so that all flesh shall see it

together. What are we doing here, all of us cooped up in this little island, all of us living in England? “The *world* lies in the Wicked One.” How is it our hearts beat not for the heathen? We must stay at home. We have calls. But is not the call of God louder still, if we had but faith? But we are so carnal—we live so much on “the things that are seen,” that we cannot do a rash, brave, imprudent act for the Master.

God help us to do it! Then shall the Church arise and put on her beautiful garments. And woe to you, Askelon, when Israel’s God is in the camp! Woe to you, Gaza, for your gates shall be carried on our shoulders, when once we believe we are strong enough to bear them to the top of the hill, posts and bars and all! “All things are possible,” in the service of God, “to him that believes.”

Finally, when we shall come to die, sickness shall cause us no anxiety. The solemn mysteries of the last article shall give us no alarm. The grave shall be no place of gloom. Judgment shall know no terrors—eternity shall have no horrors. For to him that believes, all things are possible, and death and death’s shade give way before faith. Heaven yields to faith. Hell trembles at it. Earth is powerless before it and lies in the hand of the faithful man, like clay upon the potter’s wheel, to be molded as he wills.

II. I come to my last point and may God bless it. WHERE LIES, THEN, THE SECRET STRENGTH OF FAITH? It lies in the food it feeds on. For faith studies *what the promise is*—an emanation of Divine Grace, an overflowing of the great heart of God. And faith says, “My God could not have given this promise, except from love and Grace. Therefore it is quite certain that this promise will be fulfilled.” Then faith thinks, “Who *gave* this promise?” It considers not so much its greatness, as “Who is the Author of it?”

She remembers that it is God, that cannot lie—God Omnipotent, God Immutable. And therefore she concludes that the promise must be fulfilled. And forward she goes in this firm conviction. Then she remembers, also, *why* the promise was given—namely, for God’s glory, and she feels perfectly sure that God’s glory is safe—that He will never stain His own escutcheon, nor mar the luster of His own crown. And therefore she concludes that the promise must and will stand.

Then faith also considers the amazing *work of Christ* as being a clear proof of the Father’s intention to fulfill His word. “He that spared not His own Son but freely delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” Then faith looks back upon *the past*, for her battles have strengthened her, and her victories have given her courage. She remembers that God never has failed her. No, that He never did once fail any of His children. She recollects times of great peril, when deliverance came—hours of awful need, when as her day, her strength was. And she says, “No. I never will be led to think that He can now forswear and change His Character and leave His servant.

Faith, moreover, feels that she cannot believe a hard thing of her dear God. Is it wrong to use that expression? I must use it, for He is dear to me! I think this is one of the things I have repented of above all other sins I have committed—the sin of ever doubting Him who loves me so well that He had sooner die than I should perish, and did die that I might

live. What? That God so dear to my soul—do I doubt Him? I would not spread a report that my father was a liar, or that my mother would forswear herself. No, blessed parents, you would not be unkind to me.

And, my blessed God, my faith knows that You cannot be unkind—our love will *make* You faithful even if your faithfulness were not enough in itself. If our God *can* leave us, then indeed am I mistaken in His Character. If I can *dare* something for God, and He can leave me, then have I misread Scripture. I do not believe, young warrior, if God shall prompt you to dash into the thick of the battle, that He will leave you, as Joab did Uriah, to fall by the arrows of the enemy. Only dare it, and God will be greater than your daring. But we refuse to be honorable. A little hardship, a little difficulty, a little danger, and we shrink back to our ignoble sloth. Oh that we would rise to the glory of believing!

Dearly Beloved, I have tried thus to stir up your souls. But I am very conscious that we cannot have this faith in Christ, except as we have more of His Holy Spirit. But then we have the promise—“If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?” Ask for more faith. This Church is enough of itself for the conversion of the whole world, if God will give us faith enough. If the little band at Jerusalem were all that was wanted, a band of more than two thousand faithful men and women might be enough, if we had faith.

And look at all the Churches around—would their success be as little as it is, if they had more faith? All things are possible, and yet we do nothing! Everything within our reach, and yet we are poor! Heaven itself on our side, and yet we are defeated! Shameful unbelief, be you put to death forever! Glorious faith, live you in our souls! I hope that both sinner and saint will believe in the mercy and goodness and Truth of God, as revealed in Christ, and that we will take this home with us for today’s meal—“All things are possible to him that believes.”—

***“Faith treads on the world and on Hell;
It vanquishes death and despair.
And, O! Let us wonder to tell,
It overcomes Heaven by prayer—
Bids sins of a crimson-like dye
Be spotless as snow and as white—
And raises the sinner on high
To dwell with the angels of light.”***

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FAITH'S DAWN AND ITS CLOUDS

NO. 1033

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 28, 1872,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears,
Lord, I believe; help my unbelief.”
Mark 9:24.*

LAST Sabbath morning we treated upon the way by which faith comes to the soul. “Faith comes by hearing.” [Sermon No. 1031, “*How Can I Obtain Faith?*”] It is our joyful persuasion that on the past Sabbath faith actually came to many and they were enabled to rest themselves upon the Lord Jesus Christ to their soul’s salvation. Now, every good shepherd knows that he ought to look very carefully after the newborn lambs, and, therefore, it seemed to me that it would be most expedient, this morning, to search after those who have just believed in Christ and to endeavor to strengthen and help them against the very serious trials which are incident to their present weak condition.

When a man first lays hold upon Jesus he is very apt to be in distress if his joy is not always at its full height. He is untrained in spiritual conflict and easily dismayed. The tremor of his former conviction is upon him, and he is prone to relapse into it. The light which he has received fills him with intense delight, but it is not very clear and abiding—he sees men as trees walking—and is ready to conjure up a thousand fears. The weakness of newborn faith, therefore, calls for the compassion of all who love the souls of men.

In addition to their own weakness they are liable to special dangers, for at such times Satan is frequently very active. No king will willingly lose his subjects and the Prince of Darkness labors to bring back those who have just escaped over the confines of his dominion. If souls are never tried afterwards, they are pretty sure to be assailed on their outset from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. Bunyan very wisely placed the Slough of Despond at the very commencement of the spiritual journey. The cowardly Fiend of Hell assails the weak because he would put an end to them before they get strong enough to do mischief to his kingdom. Like Pharaoh, he would destroy the little ones. He seeks, if possible, to beat out of them every comfortable hope so that their trembling faith may utterly perish.

Perhaps the text of this morning will be suitable to many here. I trust it may, and that the Spirit of God will give us reflections upon it which shall come home comfortably to all troubled souls. “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief.” In the text there are three things very clearly—here is true faith, here is grievous unbelief and here is a battle between the two.

I. Very clearly in the text there is TRUE FAITH. “Lord, I believe,” says the anxious father. When our Lord tells him if he can believe, all things

are possible to him, he makes no objection, asks for no pause, wishes to hear no more evidence, but cries at once, "Lord, I believe."

Now, observe we have called this faith, true faith, and we will prove it to have been so. First, it was faith in the Person of Christ. It is a great mistake to fancy that to endorse sound doctrine is the same thing as possessing saving faith, for while saving faith accepts the Truth of God, it mainly concerns itself with the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ and its essence lies in reliance upon Jesus Himself. I am not saved because I believe the Scriptures, or because I believe the Doctrines of Grace. I am saved if I believe Christ, or, in other words, *trust* in Him. Jesus is my creed! He is the Truth! In the highest sense the Lord Jesus is the Word of God. To know Him is eternal life. By His knowledge He justifies many.

I do not know that the father in the narrative before us had heard many sermons. I am not sure that he had very clear notions about everything that concerned the Savior's kingdom—it was not essential that he should have in order to obtain a cure for his son. It was a very desirable thing that he should be an instructed disciple, but in the emergency before us the main thing was that he should believe Christ to be both able and willing to cast the devil out of his son. Up to that point he did believe, and, though his faith may have been deficient in breadth as well as in depth, yet it enabled him to realize that the Messiah who stood before him was the Lord, and it led him to place all his reliance upon Him.

He did not believe in the disciples. He had once trusted them and failed. He did not believe in himself—he knew his own impotence to drive out the evil spirit from his child. He believed no longer in any medicines or men, for doubtless he had spent much on physicians. He believed the Man of the shining countenance who had just come down from the mountain. When he heard Him say, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes," he at once said, "Lord, I believe."

Beloved Hearer, I hope that you have come, at some time or other—perhaps it is since last Lord's-Day—to put your trust in Jesus in the same way—believing Him to be able and willing to save you. This is the faith that will effectually save you. Do you rest in Him, in Him your God, your Brother, your Savior? Do you rest in Him as living among the sons of men? Do you rest in Him as bleeding and suffering, as a substitutionary Sacrifice in your place? Do you rest in Him as risen from the dead no more to die? Do you rest in Him as sitting at the right hand of the Father, clothed with power to save? Do you *trust* Him?

If not, whatever you believe, and however orthodox your creed, you are short of eternal life! But, if all your trust is in Him. If you get all your help from Him. If His wounds are your only shelter, His blood your only plea, Himself your only confidence—then you are a saved man, your transgressions are forgiven you for His name's sake—and you are accepted in the Beloved! Rejoice with fullness of joy, for you have a right to do so since every gladsome thing is yours! The faith of this good man was true and saving for another reason. It was *personal* faith about the matter in hand, faith about the case which he was pleading.

Have you ever found it to be wonderfully easy to believe for other people? I know when I was seeking the Savior I had no doubt about His receiving any other penitent. I felt certain that if the vilest sinner out of Hell had come to Him, He was able to save him. And though I had no faith in Him on my *own* account, yet had I met with another distressed soul in a similar condition to myself, I believe I should have encouraged him to put his trust in Jesus though I was afraid to do so myself! To believe for others is an easy matter. But when it comes to your own case. When it comes to believe that sins like your own can be blotted out. That you, who have so badly played the prodigal, may be received by your loving Father. That your spiritual diseases can be cured, and that the devil can be cast out of *you*—here is the labor— here is the difficulty.

But, Beloved, we must believe this or else we have not saving faith. O my Savior, shall I trifle in faith by believing or pretending to believe that You can heal a case parallel to mine, and yet cannot heal mine? Shall I draw a line and limit You, You Holy One of Israel, and say, “You can save up to me, but not so far as I have gone?” Shall I dream that Your precious blood has some power, but not power enough to blot out *my* sins? Shall I dare, in the arrogance of my despair, to set a boundary to the merits of Your plea and to the virtue of Your atoning sacrifice? God forbid! Jesus is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him—He is able to save *me*! Him that comes unto Him He will in no wise cast out. I come to Him and He will not, He *cannot* cast me out!

Have you a *personal* faith, a faith about yourself, about your own sins and your own condition before God? Do you believe that Christ can save you, sink or swim? Do you cast yourself upon Him, your own proper self? He, Himself, bore our sins in His own body on the Cross, and we, our own selves, must cast ourselves upon Him. If we have done so, then we, like the man in the narrative, have the real faith, the faith of God's elect! Lest any, however, should think this a very small thing, let me go on to show you that this man's faith was real because it was faith which triumphed over difficulties—difficulties which typify our own—and hence it was clearly the work of the Spirit of God, for no other will endure the trial.

I shall ask you, dear Hearer, whether faith has triumphed over difficulties in your case. For observe, his child was grievously tormented and the malady was of long standing. When the Savior said to him, “How long has this happened unto him?” he said, “Of a child.” Must it not have seemed, now that his son had grown older, a very unlikely thing that he should be recovered? We expect our children to outgrow some of their complaints, but here was one, who, after many years, was none the better. Years had only increased, but not diminished, his pains. Yet in the teeth of that the man believed that Christ could cast that long-established demon out of his son!

Dear Friend, your case of sin is similar. The sins of your youth rise up before you now—are they not in your bones? The sins of your early manhood, and the sins of your riper years, and perhaps the sins of your decaying years—all these come up before you. Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? If so, then he that is accustomed to do

evil may learn to do well. Can I, after soaking in scarlet dye till it is ingrained in my very *nature*—can I be washed and made whiter than snow? Crimes so long continued—evil habits so deeply rooted—can all these be overcome? O Soul, if you have true faith, you will say, “Yes, I believe that since Christ is God He can deliver me from all evil, and forgive me all sin.

Even if I had lived as long as Methuselah and had continued all that while in the vilest of transgression, yet Jesus is so mighty to save that He could deliver me in a moment. His word is, ‘All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.’ Looking to those dear wounds, those fountains of love and blood, I do believe, and will believe, that all my years of sin are gone as in a moment—and like thick clouds before a mighty wind are blown away never to return.” Oh, this is faith, poor Soul! I pray God will enable you to exercise it!

This man had, for a long time, considered his son’s case to be hopeless. Well he might. In addition to the fact that the child was subject to attacks of epilepsy and to extreme fits of fury, he was deaf and dumb so that no intelligent expression of feeling could come from him. If at any time he felt stronger and better, he could not give his father a word of hope. He could not utter his gratitude for the sympathetic care that watched over him. Neither could he hear any word of consolation which his father addressed to him. The ears were closed and the tongue was bound. Painful affliction, exceedingly painful to the parent—and to be continued year after year! At last the father must have felt there was no use in making any further effort. The child must be controlled, but he could not be restored—he was a hopeless maniac.

Perhaps there is one here, this morning, who has grown hopeless of salvation. He has felt as if his case were one out of the catalog of mercy. He has written bitter things against himself and supposed that God has sealed those bitter things and made them true. But as you see the father, in the Presence of Christ, believes over the head of his despair, “in hope believing against hope,” I pray that you may do the same! In the Presence of Christ the man’s confidence came back to him. Have you, my Hearer, a hope that can do the same?

I never could have believed it was possible for me to be delivered from my sins till now I see that He who came to save me is my Maker. He who came to redeem me is He who bears the earth’s huge pillars on His shoulders and sustains all things by the Word of His power. With Him nothing can be impossible! I see His pierced hands and feet, and feel that if He stooped to suffer in the sinner’s place, the merit of His sacrifice must be great beyond conception. In Jesus the hopeless one has hope! He who has despaired before now bids his heart be of good cheer! Oh, that is true faith which will not suffer itself to be any longer the slave of doubt and despondency now that it sees Jesus the Lord drawing near! It is a mighty faith which refuses to sit any longer in the valley of the shadow of death, but arises and shakes itself from the dust and puts on its beautiful garments.

The father had another trial for his faith in the fact that he had just then tried the disciples. He brought his child to Christ, but Christ being absent, he asked the Apostles who were in the valley what they could do. They tried their best, but having lost their Master's power they utterly failed. This must have been a very violent trial to the father's confidence. He knew that on other occasions Christ's power had passed through the Apostles and He had worked His miracles by them. But here was a complete cessation of their healing energy! If Jesus did not choose to work by them on this occasion, the suggestion would arise in the man's heart, "Perhaps His own power, also, has become lessened."

But he put the thought aside and believed notwithstanding all. And, O Soul, have you tried ministers and tried God's people and hoped to get comfort? And have you found none? Have you gone to the ordinances and found them like dry wells? Have you resorted to the hearing of the Gospel and found even it to be barrenness to your spirit? Yes, yet suffer no shadow of suspicion to cross your mind as to the Lord's ability or willingness to save you! Come to the feet of Jesus and believe in Him still! Whatever Reason may say in your soul to excite you to despondency on account of past defeats, believe firmly that Christ's power is still invincible!

His arm is not shortened that He cannot save, neither is His ear heavy that He cannot hear. It was good that you should see the failure of man that you might glorify the Grace of God! It was good that the servants should be unable so that the Master's ability might be the more conspicuous! May the Lord help you to believe that though no man can do you good—though all the pastors and bishops of the Church, and all the martyrs and confessors of past ages, and all the Apostles, and all the Prophets are unable to find a balm in Gilead that can meet your case—yet there is a hand, a pierced hand, which can heal your wounds and bleed a balm into your soul which shall effectually restore you! Yes, true faith believes over even such a discouragement as this.

I would have you notice, once more, while we are upon this point, that this father believed in Christ and His power to save though the child was at that very moment passing through a horrible stage of pain and misery. The spirit which possessed this poor child was accustomed to throw him sometimes into the fire, and sometimes into the water. Just our condition—for our spirit has sometimes been thrown into the very fire of presumption—and at another season into the floods of despair. We have alternated between the cold of melancholy and the heat of self-conceit. We have at one time cried, "I love pleasure, and after it I will go." And at another time we have said, "My soul chooses strangling rather than life. I would not live always."

When Satan is in a man and he is full of despair, he goes to all extremes, and rests nowhere, walking like the unclean spirit, himself, through dry places, seeking rest and finding none. At the moment while the father was speaking, the poor boy was on the ground wallowing in dreadful spasms of his disorder. He was foaming at the mouth and gnashing with his teeth. Satan had great wrath because he knew that his

time was short. When the Savior spoke and bade the devil come out of him, the fiercest struggle of all took place, for the unclean spirit rent the child and the most terrible cries were heard. Still the father said, "Lord, I believe."

Now, it may be, dear Hearer, you are, this morning, full of great trouble—vexed and tormented with innumerable fears of wrath to come. A little Hell burns within your soul—anguish unutterable has taken hold upon you. Your heart is like a battle field torn by contending hosts which rush here and there, destroying on every side. You are, yourself, an embodied agony! You are like David when he said, "The pains of Hell have hold upon me, I found trouble and sorrow." Can you now believe? Will you *now* accept the Word of the Most High? If you can, you will greatly glorify God and you will bring to yourself much blessedness. Happy is that man who can not only believe when the waves softly ripple to the music of peace, but continues to trust in Him who is almighty to save when the hurricane is let loose in its fury and the Atlantic breakers follow each other, eager to swallow up the boat of the mariner.

Surely Christ Jesus is fit to be believed at all times, for, like the pole star He abides in His faithfulness, let storms rage as they may. He is always Divine, always Omnipotent to succor, always overflowing with loving kindness, ready and willing to receive sinners, even the very chief of them! Sorrowful One, do not add to your sorrows by unbelief that is a bitterness which is superfluous to mingle with your cup. Better far is it to say, "Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him." There must be power unbounded in Him who deigned to die upon the Cross. Come to Calvary and see! Can you look to that head crowned with thorns and mark the ruby drops standing on His brow, and yet be doubtful of His power to save? Can you mark that sacred face, more marred than that of any man—marred with our griefs and stained with our sins—can you gaze on it and remain an unbeliever?

Survey that precious body, tortured in every part for our transgressions, and can you yet distrust Him upon whom the chastisement of our peace was laid? Can you behold those hands and feet fastened to the ignominious wood for the guilty? Can you look upon that spectacle of woe and know that Christ is Divine, and yet harbor doubts as to His power to save you? As for myself, I am constrained to cry, "Lord, I believe, I must believe! You have Yourself compelled my faith." Let all things reel beneath my feet, but the Cross of my Lord stands fast. If the Son of God has died for sinners, it is certain that the believing sinner cannot die, but must be saved, since Jesus bled for him!

May God grant to every one of us to stand just there where the poor father did as to his faith, and say as he did, "Lord, I believe." I am forced to leave this head incomplete for the hour commands me to hasten on. The faith before us was earnest. It led the man to tears of repentance. It taught him to pray. It led him to open confession. In all these points may your faith be of a like character.

II. But, now we must turn to the second part of the subject, for **HERE IS UNBELIEF.** "Help my unbelief," he said. He had doubted the power of

Christ. He had said, “*If You can do anything for us, have compassion on us and heal us.*” But yet he had faith and he had avowed it—he had not kept it secret within himself as though he were ashamed of it. Before the scoffing scribes he had confessed, “Lord, I believe.” He avowed it, too, with remarkable earnestness, for he said it with tears, as though his heart saturated his confession, running over at his eyes to bedew the words, “Lord, I do believe! Do not doubt it, I lie not! I do believe in You!”

But, he went on to make the confession at the same time there was an unbelief lingering in his soul. “Help,” he said, “my unbelief.” Albeit that his faith had triumphed over the considerations which I just now mentioned—which considerations appeared enough to dampen, if not to quench it altogether—yet these considerations may have had some effect upon his mind. They did not prevent his believing, but they hampered his faith with many questions. Some unbelief lingered, though faith was supreme. Learn from this that a measure of doubt is consistent with saving faith—that *weak* faith is *true* faith—and a *trembling* faith will save the soul. If you believe, even though you are compelled to say, “Help my unbelief,” yet that faith makes you whole and you are justified before God!

I thought I would, under this second head, mention some reflections which often cause unbelief to trouble the heart which, nevertheless, has been enabled by the Holy Spirit to believe. First, there are many true Believers who at the first are tried with unbelief because they have now, more than ever they had before, a sense of their past sins. Many a man receives a far deeper sense of sin after he is forgiven than he ever had before. The light of the Law is but moonlight compared with the light of the Gospel, which is the light of the sun! Love makes sin to become exceedingly sinful—

***“My sins, my sins, my Savior!
How sad on You they fall.
Seen through Your gentle patience,
I tenfold feel them all.
I know they are forgiven,
But still their pain to me
Is all the grief and anguish
They laid, my Lord, on You.”***

The light of the promise gleaming in the soul reveals the infinite abyss of horror which lies in indwelling sin. In the light of God’s Countenance we discover the filthiness, the abomination, the detestable ingratitude of our past conduct. We loathe ourselves in our own sight! While we bless God that sin is pardoned, we are staggered to think it should have been such sin as it is, and the natural feeling resulting from our discovery is a fear that we cannot be pardoned. We ask ourselves, “Can it be that such sins are forgiven?” Possibly the memory of certain peculiarly heinous sins becomes very vivid to our conscience—we had half forgotten them, but they rise up with dreadful energy—and cast suspicions into our mind as to whether forgiveness is possible.

Oh, that we could blot out those evil days! We have said, “Cursed be the sun, that it rose on such a day as that in which I so defiled myself with iniquity.” Thus, under a sense of sin, though there is the belief that

we are pardoned, there may also arise the unbelief against which we need the Lord to help us. Some have been staggered, at times, by a consciousness of their present feebleness. "Yes," says one, "I trust the past is blotted out, but then, how can I hope that I am saved? What a poor creature I am! I try to pray but it is not worth calling prayer. I go up to God's House vowing that I will praise His name, but I get to talking on the way and forget all about it, and I am dull all through the service.

"Then I was tempted yesterday, and I spoke unadvisedly with my lips, or I did not defend the cause of my Lord and Master against that skeptic as I ought to have done. Only, just lately, I hoped that I had found peace with God and yet I am behaving like this! Why, I must be a hypocrite! It cannot be that I am a saved soul. Surely, if my sins were forgiven me I should act very differently from this."

Now that is often the cause of unbelief. The soul still hopes in Jesus and rests in Him, and she has nowhere else to go. But for all that, the old monster Unbelief gives her a desperate twitch and she trembles while she hopes. Some others have been made to shiver with unbelief on account of fears for the future. "I am afraid I shall not hold on," says one. "Why, to be a Christian you must persevere to the *end*. With such a heart as mine, how can I hope to be steadfast? And in such a position as mine, surrounded by so many ungodly associates, how can I hope to persevere? I see So-and-So made a profession but he is gone back. And I know such an one who said he was a Christian, and he is a worse man than he used to be. Suppose the last end of me should be worse than the first? Suppose I should put my hand to the plow and should look back and prove unworthy of the kingdom?"

Poor heart, it forgets that word, "I will never leave you nor forsake you," and remembers not that other word, "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." Rightly filled with a holy anxiety to hold on to the end, it gives way to improper unbelief, for it ought to rest confident that Jesus changes not and where He has begun the good work, He will carry it on and perfect it unto the day of Christ. I have known some, again, whose unbelief has been excited by a consideration of the freeness and greatness of the mercy bestowed. I recollect how this staggered me, once. I had believed in Jesus and rejoiced in His salvation, but in meditating upon Divine Grace I was overcome with fear.

What? Pardoned? Justified? A child of God? An heir of Heaven—a joint-heir with Christ? One of God's elect—secure of Heaven with a crown waiting for me at the last—and power to win that crown daily secured to me? Why, it seemed altogether too good to be true! Unbelief whispered, "It cannot be." If such great Grace had been shown to others I should not have marveled. If men of great abilities, at high station and of eminent character had received such Grace, I could have believed it! Or even if that holy woman who had so long been a patient sufferer, had been so blessed, it would have appeared an ordinary circumstance. But for such a sinner as I was to be thus favored appeared to be too strange a miracle of love!

I remember how the very grandeur of the Divine Mercy threatened to crush me down and bury me under its own mass of goodness! I could believe that the Lord would give me a *little* mercy, but that He should give me such mercy, such unexpected favor almost exceeded belief! And yet, what obviously is there in such ideas—for were we not told beforehand that, “as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are His ways above our ways, and His thoughts above our thoughts”? Do we not know that we are dealing with a great God of whom the Prophet asks, “Who is a God like unto You, passing by iniquity, transgression, and sin?” Do we think that God will only give according to *our* stunted measure? Is God to take *man* for His model? Remember that Word, “He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above what we ask or even think.” Instead of the greatness of the Divine Mercy staggering us, it ought to *console* us and *assist* us to believe, seeing that it is so congruous with His Nature. Yet, oftentimes, on this sea of love poor leaky vessels have begun to sink.

I have known, too, not a few whose unbelief has arisen through a sacred anxiety to be right—a most proper anxiety if not pushed beyond its sphere. The idea has been suggested to them—“Suppose I should be, after all, presumptuous and should deceive myself by thinking I am saved, whereas I am not? What if I should film the wound when it ought to be lanced, before there can be effectual healing.” How I wish that all hypocrites would be troubled with this sort of fear! It would be a great mercy for many boastful professors if they had Grace enough to doubt! I think Cowper was right when he said—

**“He that never doubted of his state,
He may, perhaps, he may, too late.”**

But yet this anxiety may be carried too far, and the soul may slide into despondency through it. I ought to be afraid of presumption, but it cannot be presumptuous to believe God’s Word. I ought to be afraid of saying, “Peace, peace, where there is no peace,” but if peace comes to me through the Word of Christ, I need never be suspicious of it—let it be as profound as it may.

I may doubt *myself*. I may go further, I may *despair* of self, but I must not doubt the Lord. If He has said, “Trust in Me, believe in Me, and you shall be saved,” if I believe in Him, it is no presumption to know that I am saved! If He has declared that He that believes in Him is justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the Law of Moses—if I have believed in Him, I am justified from all my sins. There is far more presumption in *doubting* the Lord than there ever can be in *trusting* Him. Faith is no more than God’s due. It ought never to be looked at as too daring. If I believe in Jesus I have no right to say, “I *hope* I am saved,” for that implies a doubt of God’s declaration that the Believer is saved!

I have no right to say, “I sometimes think I am safe.” I am so undoubtedly if I believe in Jesus. It is no matter of opinion, but a matter of certainty. There is nothing in this world about which a man may be so sure as about his own salvation! Other things come to us by the evidence of our own fallible senses, or by the testimony of men who may be mistaken—but the fact that the Believer is saved is sealed to us by the

testimony of God, Himself, who cannot lie. When the Scripture says plainly, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved," I, having believed and having been baptized, ought not to question the Divine declaration, but should be as sure that if I have believed, I am saved, as I am sure that I exist! This assurance is attainable and should be the common condition of the Believer. Yet has it often happened, I say, that an anxiety which was commendable in its outset, has ended in a censurable unbelief.

Once more, I have known unbelief arise in some souls through a most proper reverence for Christ and a high esteem for all that belongs to Him. You remember our text, a few Sabbath mornings ago, told us of John, who when he saw his Master in all His glory fell at His feet as dead? [Sermon #1028, Vo. 15, "*The Glorious Master and the Swooning Disciple.*"] Ah, when the soul gets near to Jesus, it perceives His perfection and becomes conscious of its own imperfection! It sees His Glory and becomes aware of its own nothingness! It sees His love and blushes at its own unloveliness! And then it is very, very apt to be tortured with mistrust though it ought not to be. And I have even known when children of God, just converted, have come into the Church and had such a high esteem for their Brothers and Sisters that they have feared to be numbered with them!

When they have heard some earnest Brother pray, they have said, "Oh, what a prayer! I shall never be like that man." And perhaps they have listened to the preaching of some servant of God and said, "Ah, I cannot come up to that standard! The very existence of such a man as that condemns me." It is beautiful so see the little children loving the elder sons of the family and admiring what they see of the Father in them—but even this holy modesty may be turned into unbelief, though it ought not to be. O child of God, if Christ is so lovely, you are on the way to be made like He, and if there is anything beautiful in any of His people, that same shall be given to you, for they, also, are as you are—men of like passions with yourself—and God who has done great things for them will do the same for you—for He loves you with the same love!

I have thus set before you the unbelief which often will exist side by side with faith.

III. Now, let us notice very briefly THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE TWO. It is observable that this poor man did not say, "Lord, I believe, but have some doubts," and mention it as if it were a mere matter of common intelligence which did not grieve him. Oh, no! He said it with tears. He made a sorrowful confession of it. It was not the mere statement of a fact—it was the acknowledgment of a *fault*. With tears he said, "Lord, I believe," and then acknowledged his unbelief.

Learn then, dear Hearer, always to look at unbelief in Christ in the light of a fault. Never say, "This is my *infirmity*," but say, "This is my *sin*." There has been too much in the Church of God regarding unbelief as though it were a calamity commanding sympathy rather than a fault demanding censure. I am not to say to myself, "I am unbelieving and therefore I am to be pitied." No, "I am unbelieving and therefore I must blame myself for it." Why should I disbelieve my God? How dare I doubt Him who cannot lie?

How can I mistrust the faithful Promiser who has added to His promise His oath? And over and above His promise and His oath He has given His own *blood* as a seal—that by two immutable things, wherein it was impossible for God to lie—we might have strong consolation!

Chide yourselves, you doubters! Doubts are among the worst enemies of your souls. Do not entertain them! Do not treat them as though they were poor, forlorn travelers to be hospitably entertained—but as rogues and vagabonds to be chased from your door! Fight them, slay them, and pray God to help you kill them and bury them—not even to leave a bone or a *piece* of a bone of a doubt above ground! Doubting and unbelief are to be abhorred and to be confessed with tears as *sins* before God! We need pardon for doubting as much as for blasphemy. We ought no more to excuse doubting than lying, for doubting slanders God and makes *Him* a liar.

Then, again, having made a confession of his unbelief, as you observe, the father, in the narrative, prayed against it, and an earnest prayer it was. It was, “Help my unbelief.” It is very noticeable that he does not say, “Lord, I believe. Help my child.” Nor does he say, “Lord, I believe. Now cast the devil out of my boy.” Not at all. He perceives that his own unbelief was harder to overcome than the devil, and that to heal *him* of his spiritual disease was a more necessary work than even to heal his child of the sad malady under which he labored! This is the point to arrive at—to feel that there is no deficiency in the merit of Christ—no lack of power in His precious blood—that there is no unwillingness in Christ’s heart to save me, but all the hindrance lies in *my unbelief*.

There is the point. O God, bring Your power to bear where it is needed! It is not because the blood will not cleanse me—it is because I will not believe. It is not because Christ’s plea is not heard, but because I do not trust that plea. If I am not in the possession of full salvation, it is not because Christ is not mighty to save, but because I do not lean on Him fully and entirely. O God, You see this is the center of the difficulty. Bring Your power to bear on that difficulty. I ask only this. No more do I cry, “Help me here, or help me there,” but, “Help my unbelief.” That is the Slough of Despond. I carry that in my heart—that is the weak point. “Lord, strengthen me just there.” It is well when, in addition to confession, we bring up all the great guns of fervent prayer to bear upon that position which needs to be carried by storm.

And, lastly, this man did well in looking for the help against his unbelief to the right quarter. He did not say, “Lord, I believe. And now I will try to overcome my unbelief.” No, but, “Lord help,” as if he felt that the Lord alone could do it. No physician can cure unbelief but Christ. He is the Medicine for it, and He is the Physician, too. If you have any unbelief, take the blood of Christ to cure it with. Think of Him—God in the glory of His Person, living among men, working out a perfect righteousness, dying a felon’s death upon the Cross in the sinner’s place—think of Him as rising from the dead, no more to die. Think of Him as ascending into Heaven amidst the shouts of angels. Think of Him

standing at the right hand of God with the keys of Death and Hell at His waist.

Think of Him as always pleading the merit of His blood before the Father's Throne. And as you consider concerning Him, in the power of the Spirit, your unbelief will die, for you will say, "Lord, the thought of You has helped my unbelief. While I have been studying You and feeding my soul on You, and making You to be as bread and wine to my soul, my unbelief has gone. I do believe in You, and I will, for You have helped my unbelief."

Go, any of you who are in trouble about this matter. Go where you gained your first faith—go there to get more! If you first obtained your faith at the foot of the Cross, go there again to end your unbelief! View the flowing of His soul-redeeming blood and continue viewing it till you shall, by Divine Assurance, know that He has made your peace with God. God bless you in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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FEEBLE FAITH APPEALING TO A STRONG SAVIOR NO. 2881

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 28, 1904.**

***DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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***“And immediately the father of the child cried out and
said with tears, Lord, I believe; help my unbelief.”
Mark 9:24.***

THIS is the case of a man who knew well enough what he wanted and who was full of anxiety to obtain it. Indeed, he was so anxious to obtain it that he prayed most earnestly and most importunately for it. He prayed to the right Person, too, for, after having failed with the disciples, he resorted to their Master, Himself. Yet, notwithstanding all this, at the time recorded in our text, he had not obtained the blessing that he sought.

We probably know of many persons who have not yet been awakened to a sense of their need—and much labor has to be expended by the faithful minister in order to show them their danger and to make them realize their true condition in the sight of God. They have many spiritual needs, but they do not know what those needs really are. This man had gone further than that, for he did know what was the great need of himself and his son. Then there are others who have head knowledge as to their spiritual needs, but they do not seem to be anxious to have those needs supplied. They are stolid, careless, immovable. That was not the case with this man. He knew that he needed his son to be healed. He was intensely eager that he should be healed, and healed then and there. His heart was moved with compassion for his child and he was most anxious that the evil spirit should be cast out of him at once. There are some of our hearers who seem to have desire of a certain kind, but they do not use that desire in the right way. They go about seeking salvation where it is not to be found. They are, to an extent, earnest in their own fashion, but to them the Lord might say, as of old, “Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfies not?”

This man had gone a stage beyond that. He was directing all his entreaties to Jesus—he was appealing to the great Lord, Himself, from whom alone deliverance could come. It is a great mercy, my dear Friends, if you are brought as far as this poor man was—to know what you really need, to be anxious to obtain it—and to be making your appeal to Jesus to grant your requests. Yet, with all that, this man had not obtained the gift he was seeking. There are many like he who have not secured the blessing they are seeking. You are aware of your sin and you lament it,

yet you cannot get a sense of pardon. You know your spiritual needs and you bemoan them, but you cannot grasp that which supply them. You have made an appeal to God in Christ Jesus and you are resolved that you will never leave off so appealing—yet, for all that, you have not, thus far, received the blessing. There is something or other in the way—something that hinders you. And I should not wonder—no, I feel quite certain—that the thing which hinders some of you from getting what you seek from Christ is your own unbelief. That is the point at which I am going to aim in my discourse, as God shall help me. And I pray that as I do, from many a heart may be breathed this confession and cry, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief.”

I. There are three things in our text. The first is THE SUSPECTED DIFFICULTY AND THE REAL DIFFICULTY.

Reading the story carefully, I gather that this man saw difficulties as to his child’s cure, but that he never thought of the real one. *He fancied that the difficulty lay in the case of his child.* His words to Christ, “If You can do anything,” seem to imply that he felt, “This is a case that is quite out of the ordinary run—something special and singular—and, therefore, beyond Your power.” If I can interpret his thoughts, it is my opinion that he said to himself, “This is too mysterious a case to be cured. An evil spirit has struck my boy dumb, yet that same spirit makes him foam at the mouth and gnash with his teeth. Those very organs which refuse to utter articulate speech, are, nevertheless, strangely in motion. He seems to be taken, too, by this evil spirit at intervals, and hurried this way and that—he cannot tell how—and, at one time, he is hurled into the fire and, at another time, into the water. It is a most mysterious malady and, possibly, because it is so mysterious, it is not in the Messiah’s line of things.”

I have known some who have thought their case, spiritually, to be very mysterious. They have imagined that there was something about their constitution, or, still worse, that some extraordinary guilt had brought upon them a condition of heart that was peculiarly vicious. They have even fancied that this state of heart had put them beneath the ban of the unpardonable sin and that others had better beware of coming near them, for their condition was so strange, so singular, so wild, that they could not tell what to think or say of themselves. Sometimes they are hot and in the fire. But at other times, cold, and in the water—with no voice for praying or praising, yet able to curse and to blaspheme. “Ah,” says such an one, “my case is so mysterious that even the Lord Jesus Christ will never be able to save me.”

Very likely, too, the father thought that his child’s disease was too violent to be cured. He was dashed about, here and there, and torn as though his poor body must be dissolved into the atoms of which it was made. He could not be held in or restrained—no government or control could be exercised over him, for the demon carried him, with an irresistible influence, wherever it pleased. The poor father could truly have said, “Look at him. I brought him into the Presence of Christ, Himself, and here he lays wallowing upon the ground, being torn in pieces by the demon! And now that the spasm is past, he lies there as if he were dead—and some say that he really is dead.”

I should not wonder if I am addressing a man who thinks that the difficulty as to his salvation lies in the fact that his passions are so violent and so fierce. Possibly, he says, "I kept sober for months, but, all of a sudden, it seemed as if the drink demon overpowered me and I had an awful bout of drinking till delirium tremens was well-near upon me." "Ah," says another, "I struggled against a vicious habit which I had formed and I thought I had overcome it, but, alas, the next time the temptation came in my way, I did not seem to have any more power to resist it than a snowflake has to resist the wind that drives it along—and I was carried right away by the evil impulses. Some men have a peculiar bent towards evil because of their intense vehemence of character—it was so with Samson, though he had the saving Grace of faith. Such men are, perhaps, strongly developed in the sinews and muscles of their body, but, certainly, they are in the passions and impulses of their soul. You may bind them with fetters and chains, but the strongest bonds are only like the green ropes were to Samson. The devil that is in them seems to be absolutely supreme over them when he puts forth his power. I do not wonder, therefore, if they think that the difficulty, in their case, lies in the violence and suddenness of their sin. But it is not so.

Perhaps this poor father thought that in his child's case, the difficulty lay in the fact that he had been such a long time a sufferer, even from his childhood. In answer to Christ's question, "How long has this been happening to him?" he said, "From childhood." So a man sometimes says, "Sin is bred in my bones and it will come out in my flesh. My very nature is corrupt. While I was but a child, I loved sin, and since then, throughout my youth and manhood, I have gone after it greedily—and it has become a habit that is firmly fixed upon me. 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?' Then may he that is accustomed to do evil, learn to do well." Such sinners feel as if they had been steeped and soaked in the crimson lye until there was no hope of ever getting the stain out of them. They have been wanderers from God even from their youth—how can they be brought near to Him?

Yet we know that the difficulty did not lie in the child's case at all, for Jesus Christ was able to cast the devil out and He did cast it out. And if that child had been possessed by a whole legion of devils, instead of only by one, Jesus Christ could, with a single word, have cast them all out! No matter how long the demon had been in possession of the child, nor how vehement and impetuous he might be, Christ could drive him out whenever He pleased. And at this moment, dear Friend, your past life, your sins, your natural corruptions, your inherited vices, your evil habits which have grown so strong upon you, are not the real difficulty. The Lord Jesus Christ "is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him." He, Himself, said, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men."

So I care not how bad your case may be—it may even be worse than I should dare to guess—there may be a secret criminality about it that sets it altogether by itself as an unusual and even unique offense against God! But that is not the difficulty in the way of your salvation. Christ can easily write "*settled*" at the bottom of the long account of your sins—it is

no more trouble for Him to write that word at the foot of a long bill than a short one! God can as readily make you a new creature in Christ Jesus—whatever your sins may have been—as if you had been living a strictly moral life. You are spiritually dead in any case—and it is He alone who can give you life. You are lost in any case and the Good Shepherd can just as readily find the lost sheep that has gone far astray as another which is only just outside the fold, for He is Almighty and, therefore, able to do all things! So the difficulty does not lie there.

Perhaps, however—no, we know that it was so—*the father thought that the difficulty lay with Jesus Christ Himself*. He seemed to say, “I have done all I can for my child. I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him. And now I have brought him to You. *If You can*”—but he had hardly got those words out of his mouth before the Lord Jesus addressed him, in a peculiar Greek idiom, which cannot be fully translated into English, but which might run something like this—“The *if you can*”—that is exactly the Greek word—“the *if you can* believe, all things are possible to him that believes,” as much as to say, “The *if you can* does not lie with Me. Oh, no! The *if you can* lies with you.” He takes the man’s words and hurls them back at him! I daresay the man may have thought, “If His disciples *cannot* cure my child, at all events their Master *does not*. He has seen how afflicted he is. If He could have done it, surely He would at once have said to my child, ‘Be healed.’ Yet there He is, standing still and talking to me, as if this were not a pressing case of urgent need! It must be lack of power on His part that keeps Him from curing my child.” But Jesus Christ will not let such a thing as that be said without showing that it is not true! And, Brothers and Sisters, if you harbor in your heart any idea that there is a lack of power in the Lord Jesus Christ to save you, you are believing a most atrocious lie and defaming the Almighty Savior! The difficulty, in your case, is not either in the sin or in the Savior. He is able to forgive the greatest conceivable transgressions of all who believe in Him and He is able to break and to renew the hardest heart, even though it should be hard as steel or like the nether millstone!

II. We have now to consider, in the second place, THE TEARFUL DISCOVERY—“Lord, I believe; help my unbelief.”

What was his discovery? Why his discovery was *that he did not believe*—and that is where the real difficulty lay. When did the man make this discovery? When he began to believe! Is it not a very singular thing that as soon as ever he had a little faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, he discovered the great abyss of his unbelief? “Lord,” he said, “I believe, but, oh, I do also disbelieve so much that my unbelief seems to swallow up my belief!” Until a man receives faith, he may think that he has it—but when he has *real faith* in Jesus Christ, then he shudders as he thinks how long he has lived in unbelief—and realizes how much of unbelief is still mixed with his belief! There are many of you who have never believed to the saving of your souls, yet you say, “Oh, yes, we believe the Bible! We believe in God. We believe in Jesus Christ.” You stand up in church and say, “I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth,” and so on, but you do not do anything of the sort! If you did, you

would be saved, since true belief in Jesus Christ brings salvation to everyone who so believes. While men have no faith—I repeat what I said just now—while men have no faith, they are unconscious of their unbelief, but as soon as they get a little faith, then they begin to be conscious of the greatness of their unbelief! When the blind man gets a little light into his eyes, he perceives something of the blackness of the darkness in which he has been living—and so you must be able to say from your heart, “Lord, I believe,” or else you will never be able to pray, as this man did, “help my unbelief.” Even a small measure of faith is necessary to discover the great measure of the unbelief.

This man, *as soon as he discovered his unbelief, was distressed and alarmed at it.* He could not look straight at Christ and say, “Lord, I do disbelieve You, but I cannot help it.” No, he was distressed about it. He felt how dreadful a thing it was to be unbelieving and he appealed to Christ, confessing his unbelief, saying, “Lord, help me out of it, I beseech You.” Notice how he turned his whole attention to that one matter of *his own unbelief*—he did not even mention his poor child! His child was, no doubt, still in his thoughts, yet his prayer was not concerning his child, but concerning his own unbelief, for he saw *that was the difficulty* needing to be removed! And when God, in infinite mercy, visits a poor troubled heart and gives it even a little faith in Jesus Christ, its great distress is concerning its remaining unbelief, for it perceives that this is the greatest of all sins—the most terrible of all stumbling blocks—and it is, indeed, the chief hindrance to men’s entrance into rest of heart and eternal life!

Now look, all of you who are seeking Christ, but who say that you cannot get peace. The difficulty lies here—if you can believe, all things are possible to you! But it is because you do *not* believe that you remain as you are.

Let me show you what it is that you do not believe. You say that Christ cannot save you. Then you believe that Omnipotence—you dare not say it is *not* Omnipotence—has for once met its match! Look that statement in the face—that the Eternal Son of God has a task set before Him which He cannot perform! In other words, you do not believe in the Omnipotence of God, for, if He is Omnipotent, He must be able to save you.

Next, Sinner, when you say, “Jesus cannot save me,” you cast a slur upon His precious blood. You stand, in imagination, at the foot of His Cross, and you see Him bleeding away His very life—yet you say, “The merit of that blood is limited. I know it is, for it cannot atone for *my* sin.” You are trampling upon the blood of the Son of God and counting it an unholy thing by declaring that your sin is more mighty than His Infinite Sacrifice!

Again, after shedding His blood for sinners, Christ went back into Heaven—and a great part of His occupation there is to make intercession for the transgressors. Yet you say that His intercession cannot be powerful enough to avail for you, although I have already reminded you that God has said, “Therefore He is able, also, to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.” To say of yourself, “Christ cannot save me,” or to say of any other

man, “He cannot save that man,” is to insult His blood and to caste a slight upon His ever-living pleas! What greater crime can there be than thus to limit the Holy One of Israel—yes, to limit Him both when bleeding on the Cross and sitting on His throne? I charge you, Sirs, to feel the utmost horror at the very thought that you should have been guilty of such a crime against the Lord Jesus Christ! God has declared that “He that covers his sins shall not prosper: but whoever confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy.” The Apostle John, writing under the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, declares, “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” If, then, you say, “But it cannot cleanse *me* from *my* sin,” you call a lie the most solemn Revelations and pledges of the Divine Mercy! Do you mean to do that? Oh, how often shall we have to remind you that whether you mean to do so, or not, that is what you are doing? Remember how the loving John writes, “He that believes not God has made Him a liar because he believes not the record that God gave of His Son.”

In addition to insulting the Son as to the efficacy of His blood and insulting the Father concerning His veracity—bear with me, Sinner, in bringing these grave charges against you—and as God bears with you, you may well bear with me as I remind you of your sin! You also insult the Spirit of God by your unbelief, for you as good as say, “The Spirit of God cannot renew *my* heart. He cannot bring *me* to repentance, He cannot bring faith to *me*.” Yet the Spirit, the Father and the Son, is, Himself God—Infinite and Almighty. It is a great sin for anyone to say, “The Spirit cannot regenerate me. There is no hope for me.”

Is it possible that you, poor despairing Sinner, think that your despair proves that you are humble? It is not so. Despair is one of the proudest things in the world, for it even dares to tell the Almighty Spirit of God that He cannot—*He cannot*—save! I beseech you, do not say it! But if you have faith enough to believe that Jesus is Omnipotent and that there is unlimited value in His blood and His plea—that the Father is true and that His promises must be fulfilled and that the Spirit of God is able to work such a change in your heart that old things shall pass away and all things shall become new—then be alarmed to think that there should be any unbelief remaining in you, and cry out with tears, as this man did, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief.”

III. Now comes our third point—THE INTELLIGENT APPEAL.

The man has seen where the difficulty lies. He has made a discovery as to his own unbelief and now he turns round to Jesus and he cries, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief.” Kindly notice the wording of the man’s prayer as recorded in the 22nd verse—“If You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.” See that word, “*help*.” And, now, when he is convinced of his unbelief, look at his prayer: “Help my unbelief”—the same word that he had used before. In his first petition, looking at his poor child wallowing on the ground, he cried, “Help us!” But now he has been taught better and he says, in effect, “Lord, I see that it is easy work for You to cast a devil out, but the difficulty is that I am unbelieving, and that hinders You, Lord. Help me believe, for that is what is needed.” I recommend some of you, instead of praying, “Lord, give me a sense of

pardoned sin. Give me a new heart. Give me to feel that You love me”—pray those prayers, by-and-by, but for the present, pray like this, “Lord, help me to believe. Lord, give me faith. Lord, drive away my unbelief.” Direct your prayers to that *one point*—for that is the matter in which you are lacking. Unbelief is the great stone lying at the door of your heart and preventing that door from being opened!

Notice that *this man’s prayer was intelligently addressed to One, who, he believed, could help him.* He seemed to say to himself, “If Christ can help my child to get well, then He can help me to believe.” Believe that, Sinner, and ask Him to help you to believe! His prayer was addressed to One in whom he did believe, in a measure, for he would not have prayed to Christ to help his unbelief if he had not felt that Christ could do so. And he did say, “Lord, I believe.” His was a strange mixture of belief and unbelief—and so are yours, my dear Friends—and I charge you, with the little faith you have, if you believe that Jesus can save other people, go to Him and beseech Him to cast out of you the unbelief which is still lurking within you! The chief reason why you have not peace with God—why you have not found the conscious enjoyment of eternal life—is that you lack faith! You need your unbelief to be cast out.

I am going to close my discourse by showing you that *there is nobody but the Lord Jesus Christ who can help us to get rid of unbelief* and by advising you to take your unbelief, and all your other sins, and confess them to Christ as *sins* and then ask Him to enable you to get rid of them. It ought to enable you to see how Jesus Christ does help you to get rid of unbelief if you consider His Nature. If you rightly understand that, it will be a deathblow to unbelief. Who and what is Jesus. You believe—I know you do—that He is “very God of very God”—that Jesus of Nazareth is “over all God, blessed forever.” If you will only think of those two great facts, it will help you to believe in Him. Cannot you trust your soul in the hands of God? Is He not able to deliver you? Is He not able to pardon you? “The Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins” because He is God! If I had an angel sent to be my Savior, I dare not trust him. When any man says that he can forgive my sins, I will not trust him, for I know that he is a liar and a thief, trying to rob God of His prerogative. When Jesus Christ, the Son of God, says that He can save me, I cannot find any reason why I should not believe Him—and I do not believe you can suggest any reason! Unbelief is a most unreasonable thing, but faith is most reasonable and right. As Christ is Divine, my natural inference is, “Then I will trust Him.”

Moreover, our Lord Jesus Christ is Man as well as God—and such a Man as the world has never seen before or since. You have read the story of His life. Did you ever read of any other man so gentle, so tender, so true, so kind, so full of affection, so willing to live and die for others? What? Not trust *Him*? Oh, it seems to me as if I could not help trusting Him! Certainly, ever since I have known my blessed Lord and Savior, I have felt that I could say to Him, as David did, “They that know Your name will put their trust in You.” Son of God and Son of Man, Your very Nature helps to banish our unbelief and, as soon as we rightly understand it, we feel that unbelief is an unnatural, illogical and wicked thing!

Think also, for a minute or two, of His great offices. Our Lord Jesus Christ has a thousand offices, but there is one upon which I especially love to dwell. He is a Savior—He “came into the world to save sinners.” Many people imagine that they cannot be saved because they are sinners, *but that is the very reason why they can be saved*. You remember how Martin Luther put it? He said, “The devil came to me and he said, ‘Martin Luther, you are a big sinner. You are so great a sinner that you cannot be saved.’” Luther replied, “I will tell you what I will do, Satan—I will cut off your head with your own sword, for I *am* a sinner—and I know that it is so. And since Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, I believe He came to save me—and I have trusted my soul to Him for time and eternity.” A doctor does not come to heal those that are healthy—he naturally looks after the sick—and a Savior does not come to save those who need no saving! He comes to save sinners, so that your sinnership, instead of being a disqualification, is, to speak broadly, a qualification! Just as filth is a qualification for being washed—just as poverty is a qualification for receiving alms—just as sickness is a qualification for medicine, so your very sin and vileness are qualifications for Christ’s work of Grace in you! I am using expressions that some will think strange, yet I am speaking, nevertheless, what is the absolute Truth of God. Does it not help to remove your unbelief to hear that Jesus is “mighty to save”?

Think, next, of the anguish which Christ endured when He offered Himself up as the great atoning Sacrifice for His people’s sin. I have never been able, for a single instant, to believe in any limit to the value of the Atonement offered by Christ on Calvary. It does seem to me to verge upon blasphemy to suppose that if God, Himself, becomes Incarnate, and suffers, and bleeds, and dies, there can be anything less than infinite value in the Atonement that He offers. So then, Sinner, as it is infinite, it can cover your case! As it is without boundaries, there cannot be a boundary set to it as far as you are concerned! Look at Christ on the Cross and you will not dare to say, “He cannot save me.” Know what He is and who He is—see how He suffers, how the Father smites Him and yet how the Father loves Him all the while—and you must say, “Christ’s blood must have sufficient power in it to take away all the guilt of all who trust Him.” It is so! Believe it and that will help to drive away your unbelief.

Remember, too, dear Friends, that when Christ died upon the Cross, He was not working out a trifling scheme of salvation. It was a sublime enterprise that took Him from His Throne in Heaven and brought Him down to the manger in Bethlehem. It was a God-like undertaking which made Him lay aside the scepter and bear to have great nails thrust through His hands. It was a great scheme and, therefore, it included great sin, great pardon and great salvation! So, if you are a great sinner, you match the general scale of the whole scheme—which is of such huge proportions that it can encompass even you!

Christ’s design in dying, too, ought to help to kill your unbelief. Why did He die? Was it not that the Free Grace of God might have full swing and abundant scope? And will it not have full swing if you are saved and

is there not great scope for pardoning mercy in you? Remember, dear Friends, our Lord Jesus Christ never thought it was worth His while to come from Heaven to give glory to a man—He came from Heaven to bring glory to God by vindicating His justice and manifesting His mercy! Now, if such a sinner as you are—you who think yourself too bad to be saved—if you get saved, what a display of Divine Grace there will be in your case! A man said to me, some time ago, “If ever I get to Heaven, Sir, I believe they will carry me about the streets and exhibit me as a marvel of God’s mercy.” “Well, then,” I replied, “they will have to carry me around as well.” I suspect that every saved soul in Heaven is a great wonder and that Heaven is a vast museum of wonders of Grace and mercy—a palace of miracles in which everything will surprise everyone who gets there! It has been well said that there will be three surprises in Heaven—first, we shall not find some we thought we would meet there. Then, we shall find some we never thought would be there. But the greatest surprise of all will be to find ourselves there! I think it will be so—not that we shall be astonished at the fact when we remember God’s promise and what He has done for us—but we shall be amazed when we remember what we used to be and what the Grace of God had to do for us to make us fit to be there. Well, if you are one of those who will be carried all around Heaven as a marvel of mercy, I believe you are the very person who is likely to get there—because God wants the angels and all the redeemed to see the wonders of His Grace displayed to us-ward who believe!

I close with this one thought. If, poor Soul, it is your lack of faith that stands in the way of the blessing coming to you, and if that lack of faith is infamous on your part since you call God a liar, I charge you to repent of it and to believe God here and now! If you still say, “I know not how to believe and I cannot trust,” I dare not try to excuse you for saying so. Unbelief is the greatest of all crimes—I know of none to match it. But if you really want help in fighting against your unbelief, cannot you go to Christ for it? Even while you are thinking about Him, you will believe in Him! If you need to trust His blood, *think* of His blood. If you need to trust Him as a living, loving Savior, *think* of Him as a living, loving Savior. “Faith comes by hearing.” When you are hearing about it, thinking about it, reading about it, the Holy Spirit will breed faith in your soul! Oh, do get faith, whatever else you do *not* get! May God enable you to exercise saving faith in Jesus Christ before you rise from your seat, lest, in this very building, you should stumble into death and into Hell!

Do I need to ask you, Sirs, a thousand times, to believe the Truth of God? Must I, over and over again, say to you as Jesus said to the Jews, “Because I tell you the truth, you believe me not”? If Christ is not worthy of being believed, then He is a liar. If Christ cannot be trusted, then He is wrongly named. Oh, do not drive us to the inference that you think thus of Him! Commit your soul into His hands this very moment and have done with it, once and for all, for His dear name’s sake. Amen!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 9:2-29**

Verses 2-6. *And after six days Jesus took with Him Peter, and James, and John, and led them up into an high mountain apart by themselves and He was transfigured before them. And His raiment became shining, exceedingly white as snow, so as no fuller on earth could whiten them. And there appeared unto them Elijah with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah. For he knew not what to say; for they were afraid.* Brothers and Sisters, like these disciples of our Lord, we are not yet fit to be favored with a sight of His Glory. As we now are, we could not bear it. As our poet says—

**“At the too-transporting light,
Darkness rushes over my sight.”**

These three Apostles of Christ were too bewildered to know what to say. They were quite lost and, I suppose that if we could go to Heaven as we are, our bewilderment would even exceed our bliss! But we may rest assured that God will prepare us for that which He has prepared for us.

7, 8. *And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a Voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is My beloved Son: hear Him. And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man anymore, save Jesus only with themselves.* And although this was not so ravishing or so astonishing a sight, yet it was more encouraging to them—something which they could more easily bear with joy and peace—“they saw no man anymore, save Jesus only with themselves.” May God grant to us, as long as we are here below, that if no Moses or Elijah shall ever come to visit us, at any rate Jesus may never be absent from us! May our fellowship with Him be unbroken!

9, 10. *And as they came down from the mountain, He charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen till the Son of Man were risen from the dead. And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.* These were Peter, and James, and John—the three most privileged disciples of Christ—probably the best scholars in that class which had the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, for its Teacher. Yet His plain language was without meaning to them—“questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.” I wonder whether, when our Lord comes the second time, we shall discover that the prophecies concerning His advent were wonderfully clear, but that we could not understand them till He came. Plain as His teaching concerning His Resurrection was, His disciples could not understand it till that great event had really occurred!

11-13. *And they asked Him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elijah must first come? And He answered and told them, Elijah verily comes first, and restores all things; and how it is written of the Son of Man, that He must suffer many thing, and be set at nothing. But I say unto you, that Elijah is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatever they wished, as it is written of him.* John the Baptist had come, in the spirit and power of Elijah, and had reconstituted matters and prepared the people for the advent of the Savior, whose herald he was.

14, 15. *And when He came to His disciples, He saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them. And straightway all the people, when they beheld Him, were greatly amazed, and running to Him saluted Him.* Some relics of the glory on the mountain still remained upon His face, and the people were astounded. So, though deeply interested in the battle which was proceeding between the scribes and the disciples, they left them and turned to look upon that mysterious radiance which hovered about His brow.

16. *And He asked the scribes, What are you discussing with them?* The circumstances of the disciples resembled a battlefield on which the enemy was winning the day and the loyal troops were about to die defeated—when suddenly, the great Commander, Himself, appears for their relief. His Presence is worth more than a thousand battalions of men—and He charges at once upon the adversary and puts them to rout! “He asked the scribes, What are you discussing with them?”

17. *And one of the multitude answered.* One who had a peculiar reason for answering, just as, I trust there will be one in this multitude before me who will have a peculiar reason for listening to my message and a peculiar reason for remembering it after it is delivered—“One of the multitude answered.” [Remember the Exposition was always *before* the sermon.]

17-19. *And said, Master, I have brought unto You my son who has a dumb spirit; and wherever he takes him, he convulses him: and he foams, and gnashes with his teeth, and pines away. And I spoke to Your disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not. He answered him, and said, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him unto Me.* I suppose our Lord’s rebuke was meant specially for His disciples. It was something like the speech of a schoolmaster who, having taught his pupils the same lesson a great many times, and labored hard with them, from year to year, yet finds them failing in the very elements of knowledge. Christ does not speak as if He were tired of *His* life and wished to get away from His disciples—but this is His way of saying how disappointed He is that these learners have learned so little.

“How long shall I bear with you? Bring him unto Me.” Those words struck my heart very forcibly as I read them—“How long shall I bear with you?” Does not the Lord Jesus Christ have to put up with a great deal from every one of us? I applied His words to myself and I thought I heard Him saying to me, “How long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you?” Often, He must derive more pain than pleasure from communion with many of His people. How grieved He must often be to see their slowness to learn, their readiness to forget and the difficulty with which they can be brought to live the lessons which He so carefully imparts to them! Then note what His action is concerning the poor child—“Bring him unto Me.”

20. *And they brought him unto Him: and when He saw him, straightway the spirit convulsed him.* As soon as ever Christ looked at him, “the spirit convulsed him.” One look from Christ awakes the devil! Sometimes sinners are worse, for a time, when Christ looks upon them.

The devil always has great wrath when he knows that his time is short. And he rages and convulses most violently when he is about to be ejected. The Jews have a proverb, “When the tale of bricks is doubled, Moses appears,” and we may make it into a Scriptural proverb, “When the devil’s torment of the heart is doubled, then Jesus appears to cast him out.”

20. *And he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.* And Jesus, instead of curing him at once, gave his first attention to the other patient before him, namely, the father of the child. He was suffering from an equally bad disease, though the symptoms were different—and Jesus meant to cure him as well as his boy!

21, 22. *And he asked his father, how long has this been happening to him? And he said, from childhood. And oftentimes it has cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if You can do anything, have compassion on us, and help us.* He put himself on a level with his child and that is the best way to pray for your children—“Have compassion on us, and help us.” It will be compassion on *you* as well as upon your son, if the Lord saves him!

23. *Jesus said unto him.* Catching at his words, “If You can do anything”—

23-29. *If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes. And straightway the father of the child cried out and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help my unbelief! When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, You deaf and dumb spirit, I charge you come out of him and enter no more into him. And the spirit cried, and convulsed him sorely and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead. But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose. And when He was come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, Why could not we cast him out? And He said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting.* There are some things which we are not fit to do until we have drawn very near to God and have been deeply humbled and, with sincere repentance and the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit, have been cleaned so as to receive so great a gift. Faith alone will not accomplish everything. Faith must be accompanied by prayer, and prayer must be, at least sometimes, in special cases, attended with fasting. The Lord makes reserves of His mercies which He does not give immediately. Even to the request of faith, He demands importunity on our part and heart-searching, and heart-cleansing before the blessing will be bestowed.

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

RIGHT-HAND SINS

NO. 3415

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 16, 1914.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 27, 1868.

“And if your hand offends you, cut it off.”
Mark 9:43.

SALVATION is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not of works, neither can it be procured by human merit. It is the free gift of God through the atoning Sacrifice of Christ to every soul that believes. But what is salvation? Salvation is, in short, deliverance from sin, deliverance from the guilt of it, from the punishment of it, from the power of it. If, then, any man is saved, he is delivered from the reigning power of sin. It is not possible, therefore, that any man should have salvation and yet continue in the indulgence of sin. Jesus Christ came to open a hospital for sin-sick souls, not that they might remain sick in a hospital but might go out of it healed. He came not to take men to Heaven with their sins about them, but to purge them from their sins and so make them fit to enter Heaven! Hence, Jesus Christ is the severest of all moralists and while He and His followers denounce all trust for salvation in merit, they equally declare that no man is a saved soul who tolerates any known sin. All the Gospel declares this. In all its parts it implies this and that man cannot and ought not to consider himself to be saved and cannot truly be said to be saved while he lives in the indulgence of evil propensities as he did before. We shall not at all, therefore, come into conflict with the Doctrines of Grace while we preach to you the strongest claims of Christ upon our hearts and lives through His Word. We shall have to urge upon you the most strenuous giving up of sin and that which leads to sin—but this, not as a means of salvation—but as a *result* of faith and as an *evidence* that salvation is truly possessed—as the sign and token, the proof and the earnest of the good work of the Holy Spirit within the soul. We shall begin, therefore, with this short assertion which will serve as our first point of thought—

I. EVERYTHING WHICH OFFENDS GOD OUGHT TO OFFEND US.

You notice the text says, “If your hand offends you.” We might read it, “Makes you to offend God.” The two expressions ought, in our experience, mean the same thing, for everything which offends God does offend every truly gracious heart. That short statement will serve as a touchstone for us all to know *whether we are reconciled to God or not.*

Remember, if you truly love God, it must be so—that that which is hateful to Him will be hateful to you. Where two hearts are bound together in the bonds of love, they are quite sure to endeavor to remove everything out of the way that would cause pain to either. You cannot love me if you favor my enemies. You can have no affection for me if you delight to thrust before me that which vexes my spirit and grieves my heart. True love feels a sympathy with the person loved and learns to put away that which is obnoxious. Now say, Heart, do you put away from yourself that which God hates? Do you hate it because He hates it—not so much because your fellow Christians dislike it, or because the public judgment would go against it—but do you hate evil because it is detestable in the sight of God? If so, then you have a clear mark that you love God and you should be thankful for the Divine Grace which has put your heart into such a state.

Again, if that which offends God offends us, then *we may congratulate ourselves that there is some degree of conformity between God and us*. All the saints are to be made like unto God. It was in God's image that man was first made—he lost that image by his sin—but that image is to be restored by the work of the Holy Spirit. If you do, even now, in your soul war against that which God loathes—if you strive and cry after that which God loves—then there is between God and you some degree of likeness. You are like He in your hatred of evil—like, not in degree, but yet still in substance. You are like God in your love towards that which is lovely and good and pure—not like He in degree, I say again, yet still in the matter of fact there is some likeness between God and your soul.

Then there is one other thought that ought to cheer you. If you can honestly answer this question—If that which offends God offends you, *then there is some communion between God and your soul*—and though it may be a question with you and you say, “Will God in very deed speak with such a one as I am? Will He reveal Himself to His servant and show Himself gracious to such a worm as I?”—He has *done* it and He is *doing* it and this practical proof of His communion is far better than half the raptures and the joys which may be but the fruit of men's carnal excitement! This solid gold of holiness is full and true proof that the hand of the Lord has been laid upon you. Settle this, then, my beloved Brother or Sister, in your heart from this day forth! If there is a good man in this world, if God loves him, I must love him. If there is a good Doctrine preached anywhere, though I may scarcely understand it, yet if God loves it, I must believe it and rejoice in it! If there is any Providential dispensation that is really of God's mind, then let it be of my mind. Oh, Spirit of God, bring me to love what God loves, not only to acquiesce in His will, but to rejoice in His will! And Lord, teach me to hate what You hate. If there are those in this world whose company You would not have, for they blaspheme and rail and speak lightly of holy things, help me to shun their company! If there is a song that Christ's ear would not hear,

let my ears refuse to hear it. If there is any sight that a holy God would not gaze upon, let not me gaze upon it. May I seek only to love that which would approve itself to the pure mind of Christ and to be offended, heartily and naturally—without any twisting of myself towards it—at everything that is at enmity with God. That stands as the first thought. Now, let us pass on.

II. EVERY SAVED MAN WILL FIND THAT THERE ARE MANY SINS WHICH OFFEND GOD WHICH MUST BE VERY SUMMARILY DEALT WITH.

That which offends God, offends the soul. That is the first step. Then the next step is—deal with it as an offense, deal with it with vigor, deal with it in a summary manner—as the text puts it, “If your hand offends you, cut it off.” *There are sins which are very dear to men.* I shall not attempt to give a catalog of them. We are so differently constituted that the sin which might bewitch you, might not fascinate me, and the sin into which I should be likely to fall might not be that to which you would be so liable. We all have some besetting sins. We may fall into all sins, but some men are more disposed to certain offenses than others.

Now, if you have any wrong thing that has hitherto been dear to you, like your right hand, your right eye, your right foot, you are, according to this text to deal with it—and to deal with it at once!

Some sins appear to men to be necessary to them. “What shall I do without my right hand?” In certain trades and lines of business, the habit of telling white lies, or the indulgence of certain company, may seem as if it were absolutely necessary. “How can I get my daily bread unless I do such-and-such as others do? We must live,” and so on. Well, if the thing is wrong, even though it appears to be necessary to your livelihood, as the right hand is to the body, yet you are still to deal with it, for you and your sins must part, or God and you must part! There can be no salvation to one that harbors sin, and if sin is not given up, hope must be given up, for into Heaven no man shall come who hugs his sins! Some sins, then, are dear and some sins seem useful.

Some sins, again, *seem to be parts of our very selves.* “I give up that habit?” says one, “If that were relinquished, I should be, indeed, a very different man from what I am, but I cannot give it up—it is impossible! The Ethiopian might sooner change his skin, or the leopard his spots.” And yet, Friend, even if it is impossible, it must be done! Another power than yours must come to the rescue, for that sin of your must go, and the sooner, the better, if you are to be saved!

Now, observe Christ’s word about this right-hand sin which seems so dear, so necessary and so much a part of the man, himself. What does He say? “If your hand offends you”—strap it up? Well, some have said, “I will take a vow not to fall into such a sin as that.” “If your hand offends you”—secure it within certain bounds and limits, so that it shall only act up to a certain extent, but shall go no farther—fetter it, chain it? “If your

hand offends you”—swathe it in bands, keep it from doing mischief? No! But hear the Master’s sharp and, at its first sound, cruel words—“Cut it off!” In the Gospel according to Matthew, He puts it, “Cut it off and cast it from you,” as though even after it were cut off and the vital union were dissolved, yet still even the thought of it becomes detestable! “Cut it off and cast it from you.” You perceive it is a thorough-going action! It is a vigorous action! It is a final action, for, after the man has cut off his hand, he cannot put it on again! After he has plucked out his right eye and cast it from him, he cannot have it restored again! And after the right foot has been cut off, it cannot grow there again. It is a final sentence of separation between the man and his sin!

Now, I put it to some of you, tonight, who have been thinking about going to Heaven but you will never get there, while you are what you are. You are accustomed to drink, perhaps. Now, it is no use your dallying with that sin, saying, “I will keep it within bounds!” Off with it, Sirs! And cast it from you! Those pots of yours must be turned upside down! The damnable habit must be relinquished, or it will certainly be your destruction. It is of no use for a man to say, “I have been unchaste but I will keep that sin within limits.” There is no such thing as keeping the devil in a cage. Cut it off and cast it from you! Then there is your pride. It is in vain for you to say, “I will be somewhat humble. I will be somewhat resigned,” and so on. Cut it off, Man, cut it off and cast it from you! It must be thorough work—a clean severance between you and sin. Ah, these are hard tidings and many will turn on their heels and go their way, and say, “We cannot endure this!” But as the Lord lives, the pearly gates can never open to any of you who keep your sins. All your iniquities shall be forgiven you—though you have blasphemed and have even committed murder, there is pardon for you if you hate those sins and leave them—and Christ will help you to hate them if you trust Him! He will give you Grace to quit them, but if you hug those sins, you may prate about faith in Christ, and you may lie about experience in Grace, but to such things as real faith and true experience, you are and must be utter strangers unless sin, with stern resolution, is given up—not so much as *one* sin hugged, or indulged, or loved. “Must a man be perfect then?” Sir, a man must *desire* to be perfect. “But he cannot *be* perfect.” Sir, he can be perfect in intention, if not in fact, and there is a deal of difference between the sin of misadventure, and of infirmity, and the willfully wicked sin of some men! Alas, there are always men who can excuse their sins by the sins of God’s people. They eat up the sins of God’s people as they eat up bread—they make a sweet morsel of it! But the genuine child of God, if he sins, hates himself for it. The evil that he would not, that he does, but his heart is right. He would do good perfectly if he could, and he pants and longs to be delivered from sin. His heart does not go after his idols—he has given them up, cast them away, by God’s Grace and, if he could, he would never take their names upon his lips again.

Let that second point sink deep into the souls of all who would be saved. Sins that offend must be given up, and given up at once. Now, in the next place—

III. THERE ARE SOME THINGS WHICH CAUSE US TO OFFEND, and if we are true Christians, we shall not hesitate to give them up. Now, I am about to address those who are really in Christ Jesus. There are certain matters which to Believers are very risky and dangerous, and if they love Christ, they must give them up.

I think I know some who, I trust, are the Lord's people, but they are very fond of a certain class of company. There are attractions to them in certain pleasures. Now, if they would but look at their own hearts, they would find that this company is a snare to them. They are kept from weeknight services. They have little zeal for God's Glory. Prayer is not kept up as it ought to be, kept up after such meetings as they sometimes hold. And yet the society is very fascinating and not altogether in itself to be condemned—but the tendencies are, to this soul at any rate, exceedingly detrimental. The man is backsliding and he certainly gets nothing to help his growth in Grace in that society. All he gets there is evidently to the bad and has an evil tendency. Now what ought the Christian in such a case do? He ought without hesitation to give up such society! I have no right to be constantly found where I cannot grow in Grace. I have no right to find happiness in associations which are dangerous to my soul, which drive away the Holy Spirit and break my communion with Christ. Off with that right hand, then! "Oh, but it will seem so painful to give up that society! It would be like losing a right hand!" Well, but it would be a grand thing to lose a hand for Christ. They are not altogether the most ignoble soldiers who come back from battle maimed—no, their scars are their honor—and for a Christian to have to sacrifice some dear connection, to have to give up standing and position, to receive the cold shoulder, to have the wink of the eye, to have the unkind word for Christ should be counted for an honor! We should be willing to do and bear it. No, without the slightest hesitation, we should feel that there is no connection to be compared with communion with Christ, no society for a single second to be put in the scales with walking near to Him! And so, off with the right hand and stay close to Christ.

It sometimes happens that things which are right, and good, and desirable, may be causes of offense. Yes, there may come a time when a man's good name and reputation may have to be given up. I believe that a Christian minister had better, once and for all, as soon as ever he sets out earnestly preaching the Gospel, make up his mind to give up his reputation. It is very hard to be accused of this, and that, and the other—some unknown crime to which you were never tempted—to have your words wrested and your motives misconstrued! But every faithful servant of Christ ought to go in for that, and reckon upon that and settle it at first. Mr. John Wesley, I think, once said in the pulpit that he had

been accused of every crime in the whole catalog of sin, except drunkenness, and he did not know that anyone had accused him of that—whereas some wicked blasphemer in the crowd accused him of it to his face, and Mr. Wesley lifted up his hands and said—“Now this day is fulfilled the Word of the Master wherein He said, ‘Woe is unto you when men shall speak well of you, but blessed are you when they shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake and the Gospel’s.’” Why, in the old times, the old days of the Covenanters, the old times of the Puritans, there were found plenty of the followers of Christ who would keep close to Him if they could keep their reputations and their characters! But those were the brave men who would be counted the offscouring of all things, be set down for fanatics and I know not what besides, but who declared that for the Truth of God, for Christ and for His cause, they could bear it all! I was reading yesterday the famous sentence of excommunication which Cargill declared against Charles the Second, in which he cast him out of the Church of God and brought all his crimes against him—and went to the block for having done so! He and Alexander Petrie and such were known to say that they would die a thousand deaths, sooner than admit that any king could be head of the Church, or put the crown on any head, except the head of Christ Jesus the Lord! In such times, and in other times as well, the most of men are cowards—they must keep a reputation—they must not oppose themselves too much to popular opinion. They must, if they can, sail with the current. Oh, child of God, if your reputation is ever a snare to you, off with that right hand of yours and be willing to be called a dog or a devil, if Christ can get the greater honor out of you!

To some professors, their love of profit becomes a snare. I need not say many things about that. If there are any profits that you get in business that are not honest profits, I charge you before the living God, have nothing to do with them! But let the Christian’s business be conducted with such uprightness that he could afford to have it proclaimed as with the sound of a trumpet at the market, for only such business is fit for a Christian! So if there is anything about your trading that would not stand the test of the most searching investigation, cut it off! Cast it from you—what have you to do with it, you child of God?

So, too, with very much besides, which I have not time to mention. There are a thousand things we might plead for concerning which much might be said, but if these things, though they may be indifferent in themselves, should to any of us prove a preventive of our serving Christ, they become sins to us. Even if they are allowable to others, we have no right to touch these doubtful things. That which is not of faith, is sin—that is to say, that which you cannot do, believing it to be right, even if it is right, is sin to you. You have got to know in your own soul that it is according to the commandment, or else, as a child of God, you have no right to touch it, or go near it.

May I urge upon my dear Brothers and Sisters, the members of this Church, to avoid all places where they give Satan the advantage. In a battle it is a great thing for a general to fix his position. I do not think I should be inclined to often expose myself to the fire of a battery across a plain where the shots were constantly flying. And I pray you young people, and old people, too, never to be afraid of being too precise, but to be afraid of being too lax. This is a day in which the stern regulations of the Puritans are cast overboard and, perhaps, rightly so, some of them—but let us not go to the opposite extreme, but rather when we feel that anything comes to be a temptation to us, let us away with it and away with it without a moment's hesitation—off with the right foot, the right foot, and out with the right eye!

One thing there is which I have often to preach a little sermon about to myself. There is a tendency in some of us, especially those of us to who have heavy constitutions, to have a love of ease—and we have to drive ourselves on with a whip to constant industry. But it must be done, we must do it! Whitfield used to call out against the gouty doctor. That minister who takes things easily will be cursed of God at the last. I believe there is no man whose condemnation will be more dreadful than that of an easy-living minister. We are bound to be the best of men, to spend and be spent in the Master's cause. The love of ease is the temptation of many, many Christians. Their love of retirement is really indolence. They get into the back ranks of the Christian army and enjoy all the good things of the Church out of a love of self. I am sure many do. We, ourselves, like spiritual ease. We do not like being stirred up too much. We do not like a little self-examination. Are there not hundreds of Christians who do not dare to look at their own souls? They are obliged to live at secondhand, hoping it is all right, but as to a thorough ransacking of their spirits, they have not gone through that by the year together! It won't do, my Brothers and Sisters! We must cut off this easy kind of Christianity. The Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and only the violent will win it! A heart-searching contention against sin—and revenge against iniquity in our own souls must be carried out—for men will not go to Heaven sleeping! These are not times in which you will be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease. He that would win the heavenly race must run for it. He that would get to Heaven must fight for it. The Lord stir us up and deliver us from this right-hand sin of self-confidence and love of carnal ease! The Lord help us to work for His cause while we have any strength left, and to rest in the rest which He has prepared for us on the other side of Jordan! Now I come to a close.

IV. WHAT ARE THE REASONS WHY THERE SHOULD BE A CUTTING OFF OF RIGHT HANDS?

I shall speak first to you unconverted people about the giving up of sin.

“*It is not a very pleasant operation, that of cutting off the right hand,*” says one. “I cannot do it. I do not like that amputation.” Listen awhile, Man! Did you never have a friend that had a broken leg? Did you never go to see him in the hospital? You recollect that the doctor told you that the leg would mortify, and when the man heard that, what did he say? Did he object to have it taken off just above where it was mortifying? He was told that if it were *not* taken off, the whole body would perish—and was he not very thankful, indeed, when the surgeons came and removed the diseased limb?

There may be some here who have even passed through that themselves—you were glad enough to lose the arm or leg to save your life. But, Man, that sin of yours is a mortified part of your *soul*, your spiritual manhood! It must be given up—it will send mortification through your whole self if it is not cut off. Is there anything cruel in Christ’s demanding that it should be removed? No, it is the dictate of generous and kindly Wisdom. Submit yourself to it and ask the Holy Spirit to take away your darling sin and make it distasteful to you. You will soon die, and if you die with that sin unrepented of, you can have no question about where you will go! If you have any question about it, our Lord’s words that I read to you told you three times over that you will be cast “into Hell fire, where their worm dies not and their fire is not quenched.” I am not going to dwell on those words by way of explaining them. What they mean I trust you never may know, but if you ever should begin to know, you will continue to know forever and ever—“where their worm dies not, and their fire is not quenched,” as some say it is. Oh, beware lest you run that risk! Now Man, suppose you should keep your cups, keep your bad company, keep your lusts, keep your self-righteousness—and find yourself in Hell? It will be poor consolation to you! Ah, instead of consolation, it will be another tongue for remorse, another tooth for the adder of despair. What? Did you sell your soul for that little dance, for that night of revelry, for that week’s debauchery? What? Would you sell your soul for that unchaste delight or for that wild maniac shriek of pleasure? Ah, how you will curse yourselves and tear your hair and wish that you had never been born, and played the fool so horribly with your immortal soul! Let the sin go! Let the sin go! If a man were drowning with a golden belt about his loins, and could not swim because the gold was heavy, how quickly would he seek to unbind the belt! How gladly would he feel it sink in the flood, and himself begin to strike out and swim. Man, may God’s Grace help you to unbuckle that belt of sin, or, pleasure, or whatever it may be—and give up all, that you might swim for eternal life through Jesus Christ!

And now, Christians, this word to you. I have hinted that there are some things that you will have to give up in order that you may grow in Grace and serve your Master. I will not keep you, but there are two or three things I have to say to you. Remember, that what you ever have to

give up for Christ, it will be sweet to give up, and His precious society and approval will be a perfect recompense! No man ever lost by Christ in the long run. No, talk of giving up—are not those things most our own that we give up to Him? Have we not felt it to be far sweeter to drink the gall-cup than to drink the wine-cup if we have made the exchange to glorify His name? Ah, if the love is right, sacrifice will be the truest gain!

Besides, reflect—*Christians are losers to be gainers*. The farmer loses his wheat as he scatters it abroad upon the soil, but then he expects the harvest. The money that is invested and put out, the merchant has it not, but then it is making gain for him and he expects to receive it with its interest! So whatever we give up for Christ will come back to us with blessed interest in that land where to have been maimed for Christ will be nobility, where to have suffered for Christ will enroll us among the peerage of the skies, where to have died for Christ will make us brightest of the bright, amidst the fair ones, fairest of the fair! Oh, never stand questioning and parleying about anything in which Christ is concerned, but pray the Holy Spirit to keep you, from this day forward, close at the heels of the Master, casting aside every weight and every sin that besets you, and every earthly thing that attracts you—only desiring His name to be sweet upon your tongue, and His praise to be reflected in your whole character! God grant it may be so with you, my dear Brothers and Sisters, until Christ comes. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 18:1-22.**

Verse 1. *At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?* The question we have sometimes heard asked in other forms, “Which is the highest office—which form of service shall have the greatest honor?” As if we were courtiers and were to take our positions according to precedent.

2. *And Jesus called a little child unto Him and set him in the midst of them.* They all wondered what He was going to do. The little child was, no doubt, pleased to find itself in such happy company.

3. *And said, Verily I say unto you—* “And said, Verily I say unto you”—to you men or women who think no small things of yourselves and are wanting to know which is greatest—implying that you, each one, think yourself pretty good as it is.

3. *Except you are converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* Someone said to me this morning, “This is a growing day.” “Ah,” I said, “I hope we shall all grow spiritually.” “Which way?” he asked, “smaller or larger?” Let it be smaller, Brothers and Sisters—that will certainly be the surest way of growth! If we can become much less, today, we shall be growing. We have grown up, as we

call it— today let us grow down and become as little children, or else we shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven!

4. *Whoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.* The lower down, the higher up! In a certain sense the way to Heaven is downward in our own esteem. “He must increase. I must decrease.” And when that straight-backed letter, “I,” which often becomes so prominent, vanishes altogether, till there is not an iota of it left, then we shall become like our Lord!

5. *And whoever shall receive one such little child in My name, receives Me.* The humblest and the least in the family of Divine Love, if received, brings with that reception the same blessing as the reception of Christ.

6. *But whoever shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me*—It does not mean put him out of temper by his taking his silly offense—but shall cause him to sin, shall make him stumble, shall scandalize him—whoever shall do that.

6. *It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.* If you have the revised version, you will see in the margin that it is a donkey millstone—not a common millstone which women used to turn—but a bigger stone which was turned by a donkey in a mill which thus was of a larger kind altogether. The very heaviest conceivable doom were better than to be a stumbling block in the way of the very least of God’s people. Yet I have known some say, “Well, the thing is lawful, and if a weak Brother does not like it, I cannot help it—he should not be so weak.” No, my dear Brother, but that is not the way Christ would have you talk! You must consider the weakness of your Brother—all things may be lawful to *you*, but all things are not expedient—and if meat offends your Brother—eat no meat while the world stands! Remember, we must, after all, measure the pace which the flock can travel by the weakest in the flock—or else we shall have to leave behind us many of the sheep of Christ! The pace at which a company must go, must depend upon how fast the weak and the sick can travel—is it not so? Unless we are willing to part company with them, which I trust we are not willing to do. So let us take care that we cause not even the weakest to stumble by anything that we can do without harm to ourselves, but which would bring harm to them! But I am not sure if it would harm the weakest, whether it would not harm us, also, because we are not as strong as we think we are. And, perhaps, if we took a better measure, we might put ourselves among the weakest, too!

7, 8. *Woe unto the world because of offenses! For it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offenses come! If your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut them off and cast them from you.* Get rid of that which is most useful to you, most necessary to you, rather than be led astray by it and made to sin!

8. *It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.* Remember those

are the Words of Jesus—“everlasting fire”—not the words of some of those coarse, cruel theologians that you hear a great deal about now-a-days, but the Words of Jesus Christ, the Master Himself! You cannot be more tender than He! To pretend to be so will only prove us to be very foolish!

9. *And if your eye causes you to sin.* So necessary to your pleasure, to your knowledge and to your guidance, yet if it make you sin—

9. *Pluck it out and cast it from you: it is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into Hell fire.* Better to be but a maimed Believer than to be an accomplished unbeliever! Better to be an uncultured saint than a cultured modern thinker! Better that you lose an eye, or lose a hand, than lose your faith in God and His Word—and so lose your soul and be cast into Hell fire!

10. *Take heed that you despise not one of these little ones.* So apt to do so, when a man appears to have no perfect knowledge, no large pretensions, we are so apt to think, “Oh, he is a nobody!”

10. *For I say unto you, That in Heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father who is in Heaven.* There is an angel to watch over each child of God! The heirs of Heaven have those holy spirits to keep watch and ward over them. These sacred intelligences who watch over the people of God, do at the same time, behold God’s face! They do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His Word and beholding His face all the while. And if these little ones are thus honorably attended by the angels of God, never despise them! They may be dressed in fustian, they may wear the very poorest of print, but they are attended like princes—therefore treat them as such.

11. *For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost.* Another reason why you must not despise them. “What do you think?” Put on your considering cap and think a minute.

12-14. *What do you think? If a man has an hundred sheep, and one of them is gone astray, does he not leave the ninety and nine, and goes into the mountains, and seeks that which is gone astray? And if he finds it, verily I say unto you, he rejoices more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so, it is not the will of your Father who is in Heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.* Nor shall they! Christ has come on purpose that He may find them—and find them He will! And having an hundred whom his Father gave Him, He will not be satisfied with ninety-and-nine, but the whole hundred shall be there. Now, as if to show us that we are not to despise the very least in the family, nor even the most erring, He brings it personally home to us.

15. *Moreover, if your brother shall trespass against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he shall hear you, you have gained your brother.* Do not say, “You must come to me.” Go to him—he has trespassed against you. It is a personal affair—go and seek him. It is useless to expect the person who does the injury to try and make peace.

It is the *injured* one who always has to forgive, though he has nothing to be forgiven! It always comes to that and it is the injured one who should, if he is of the mind of Christ, be the one to commence the reconciliation.

16, 17. *But if he will not hear you, then take with you one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church: but if he neglects to hear the Church, let him be unto you as an heathen and a publican.* Quit his company. He has despised the last tribunal. Now you must leave him. Be not angry with him. Freely forgive him, but leave him.

18. *Verily I say unto you, Whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven: and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven.* Where the Church acts rightly, it has the solemn sanction of God. This lesser tribunal on earth shall have its decrease sanctioned by the great tribunal above. Hence it becomes a very serious matter, this binding and loosing which Christ has given to His Church.

19-20. *Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father who is in Heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.* It is not a large Church, therefore, that is girded with the wonderful power of prayer, but even two or three! Christ will not have us despise one. He will not have us despise two or three. Who has despised the day of small things? On the contrary, measure by quality rather than by quantity—and even if the quality fails—measure by love rather than by some rule of justice that you have set up!

21. *Then came Peter to Him and said, Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Till seven times? He thought he had opened his mouth very wide when he said that.*

22. *Jesus said unto him, I say not unto you, Until seven times, but, Unto seventy times seven.* I do not wonder that we read in another place that the disciples said, “Lord, increase our faith.” For it needs much faith to have so much patience and to still continue to forgive.

—Adapted from the *C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

JESUS AND THE CHILDREN

NO. 1925

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 17, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And they brought young children to Him, that He should touch them: and His disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased and said to them, Suffer the little children to come to Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the Kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter in it. And He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them and blessed them.”
Mark 10:13-16.

IT must be a very great sin, indeed, to hinder anybody from coming to Christ. He is the only way of salvation from the wrath of God. He is salvation from the terrible judgment that is due to sin—who would dare to keep the perishing from that way? To alter the signposts on the way to the City of Refuge, or to dig a trench across the road would have been an inhuman act, deserving the sternest condemnation. He who holds back a soul from Jesus is the servant of Satan and is doing the most diabolical of all the devil's work! We are all agreed about this.

I wonder, my dear Friends, whether any of us are quite innocent in this respect? May we not have hindered others from repentance and faith? It is a sad suspicion, but I am afraid that many of us have done so.

Certainly you who have never believed in Jesus, yourselves, have, sadly, done much to prevent others believing. *The force of example*, whether for good or bad, is very powerful and especially is it so with parents upon their children, superiors upon their underlings and teachers upon their pupils. Perhaps, Father, if you had been an earnest Christian, your son would not have been ungodly. Possibly, dear Mother, if you had been decided for the Savior, the girls would have been Christians, too. We have to speak and judge after the manner of men but, assuredly, example is a great fashioner of character. We can, none of us, tell, if we go down to Hell, how many we shall draw with us, for we are bound to thousands by invisible bands. Here's the respect which makes a wide calamity out of the ruin of a single soul. Over the tomb of each sinner may be read this epitaph, “this men perished not alone in his iniquity.” “None of us lives to himself and no man dies to himself.”

If we could fling our souls away as solitary stones out of the sling, this were woe enough, but since we are all threaded beads upon the string of common life, where one goes, many go with him. The plague of sin will not

confine itself to one man's house—it sallies forth from every door and window—and slays its victims all around so that “one sinner destroys much good.” May I put this question to those of you who have never repented of your sins, nor sought the Savior's face? Have you calculated what baneful influences are streaming from your lives upon the souls of your children, your wives, your brothers, your friends? Jesus says, “He that is not with Me, is against Me, and He that gathers not with Me, scatters abroad.” How many have you scattered abroad like wandering sheep? How many have you induced to remain careless and godless since they see you doing the same? These are solemn reflections for those who mean no harm and yet are doing it.

Do not some persons go further than their example and hinder others from coming to Christ *by discouraging speeches*? They dishearten those who are hoping for better things. Working men are to be found who never see any tenderness towards holy things in a fellow employee but what they hasten, at once, to wound his heart. If they suspect a comrade of endeavoring to escape from drunkenness, they ridicule him—and if he goes further and exhibits faith towards God—they make him the football of their contempt! It must entail a fearful responsibility upon a man for him to make himself the opposer of all good in his companions. Why are so many eager to undertake this responsibility? It is a sorrowful thing that certain men will let others alone and even be friendly with them, should they drink, swear and commit lewdness—and yet, as soon as they have serious thoughts of religion, they attack them bitterly! Half a fault in a Christian is made the theme of the most ungenerous comment—but actual *crimes* will be excused in an irreligious person! Why should men wish to prevent their fellow beings from being saved? Friend, if you choose to ruin your own soul, why should you try to ruin others? Why play the dog in the manger? If you will not have religion for yourself, why not let others have it? It can be no gain to you either in this world, or in the world to come, to stand with a club at the gates of life to drive back all who would enter!

Again, certain would-be wise people hinder souls from coming to Christ *by cunningly insinuating doubts* about the Revelation of the Divine Word. They have heard from an infidel lecturer, or from some “modern thought” *preacher*, a dangerous piece of error and they no sooner find a young mind inclined to serious things than they, at once, repeat this pretty lie! By their captious questions, they stagger young minds. By their evil teaching they dry up the springs of repentance and paralyze the strength of faith. Fierce as Pharaoh, they would throw all new-born faith into the river of doubt. Cruel as the Prince of Darkness, they would quench every newly-kindled candle of hope. They are more diligent to destroy the faith than others are to spread it! What an accumulation of guilt must be resting upon the mind of the man who breathes out doubt as other men breathe air! Neither God, nor Christ, nor Heaven, nor Hell can escape the foul steam of his infidelity. See how he blasts the souls on whom he breathes!

Calculate his crimes. Put down the soul-murders of which he is guilty. Item—a young man decoyed from the Bible class, familiarized with blasphemous notions and then led into outward sin and speedy death. Write that down in blood! Note the next item—a young girl, once hopeful and considerate, impressed by the supposed scientific knowledge of an unbeliever is led from the faith of her mother and, by-and-by, snared by the world so as to live and die impenitent. Write that also in blood to be demanded at the doubter's door in the Last Great Day! Woe unto those who act the part of jackals to the lion of Hell! May God give repentance to those who have been the bodyguard of the Prince of Darkness, doing his murderous work with both their hands by denying the Truth of God and sowing the seeds of unbelief! If I speak to any such, I do it with sorrowful indignation and I beg them to turn from their evil way.

In many ways, evil-minded persons may lead others to that evil decision which, in the ungodly, almost occupies the same place as conversion in the case of the regenerate. Minds in their early days are plastic. The first seven years of our being often shape all the rest. At any rate, give to godly teaching the first 12 years of any child and it will be difficult to erase the writing. Some seem to take a wretched delight in stamping upon the soft clay their own vile impression and in confirming upon youth the dangerous tendencies already present! These people work conversions unto evil by which young minds become settled in vice and established in wickedness!

God save us from hindering a single soul from coming to Christ and Heaven! I cannot help trembling, sometimes, lest a cold and chilly sermon of mine should wither young buds of promise; lest in the Prayer Meeting a wandering, rambling prayer from a heartless professor should dampen the rising earnestness of a tearful seeker. I tremble for you, my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, lest levity of conversation, worldliness of conduct, inconsistency of behavior, or callousness of demeanor should, in any one of you, at any time, turn the lame out of the way, or give cause of stumbling to one of the Lord's little ones. Lord, save me from being a partaker in other men's sins and especially in being, in any measure, the cause of another man's destruction! Oh to be clear of the blood of all men! God forbid that we should be accomplices in the murder of souls, either before the fact, or in the fact, or after the fact—for in each of these ways we may be guilty! God help us, Brothers, to avoid this great sin of hindering others in their coming to Christ!

Yet this is not the subject of my discourse this morning. I shall only deal with a single form of it. I am going to speak upon the great sin of hindering the *young* from coming to Christ. First, *let us describe it*. Secondly, *let us watch its action*. Thirdly, *let us see how Jesus Christ condemns it*. And then, lastly, *let us take a hint from the doctrine which our Lord incidentally lays down*. It may be that the Lord will bless this to our souls.

I. LET US DESCRIBE THIS SIN of hindering young children from coming to Christ.

First, I may say of it that it is *very common*. It must be common, or else it would not have been found among the 12 Apostles. The immediate disciples of our Lord were a highly honorable band of men despite their mistakes and shortcomings. They must have been greatly sweetened by living near to One so perfect and so full of love. I gather, therefore, that if these men, who were the cream of the cream, rebuked the mothers who brought their young children to Christ, it must be a pretty common offense in the Church of God. I fear that the chilling frost of this mistake is felt almost everywhere. I am not going to make any ungenerous statement, but I think if a little personal investigation were made, many of us might find ourselves guilty upon this point and might be led to cry, with Pharaoh's butler, "I do remember my faults this day." Have we laid ourselves out for the conversion of children as much as we have done for the conversion of grown-up folks? What? Do you think me sarcastic? Do you not lay yourselves out for anybody's conversion? What must I say to you? It is dreadful that the spirit of Cain should enter a Believer's heart and make him say, "Am I my brother's keeper?" It is a shocking thing that we should, ourselves, eat the fat and drink the sweet—and leave the famishing multitudes to perish! But tell me, now, if you did care for the salvation of souls, would you not think it rather too commonplace a matter to begin with boys and girls? Yes—and your feeling is shared by many. The fault is common.

I believe, however, that this feeling, in the case of the Apostles, *was caused by zeal for Jesus*. These good men thought that the bringing of children to the Savior would cause an interruption—He was engaged in much better work—He had been confounding the Pharisees, instructing the masses and healing the sick. Could it be right to pester Him with children? The little ones would not understand His teaching and they did not need His miracles—why should they be brought in to disturb His great doings? Therefore the disciples as good as said, "Take your children back, good women. Teach them the Law of God, yourselves, and instruct them in the Psalms and the Prophets and pray with them. Every child cannot have Christ's hands laid on it. If we suffer one set of children to come, we shall have all the neighborhood swarming about us and the Savior's work will be grievously interrupted. Do you not see this? Why do you act so thoughtlessly?"

The disciples had such reverence for their Master that they would send the prattlers away lest the great Rabbi should seem to become a mere teacher of babes! This may have been a zeal for God, but it was not according to knowledge! Thus in these days, certain Brothers would hardly like to receive many children into the Church lest it should become a society of boys and girls. Surely, if these come into the Church in any great numbers, the Church may be spoken of in terms of reproach! The outside world will call it a mere Sunday school. I remember that when a fallen woman had been converted in one of our county towns, there was an objection among certain professors to her being received into the Church and certain lewd fellows of the baser sort even went the length of advertis-

ing upon the walls the fact that the Baptist minister had baptized a harlot! I told my friend to regard it as an honor.

Even so, if any reproach us with receiving young children into the Church, we will wear the reproach as a badge of honor! Holy children cannot possibly do us any harm. God will send us sufficient of age and experience to steer the Church prudently. We will receive none who fail to yield evidence of the new birth, however old they may be—and we will shut out no Believers, however young they may be! God forbid that we should condemn our cautious Brothers, but, at the same time, we wish their caution would show itself where it is more required. Jesus will not be dishonored by the children—we have far more cause to fear the adults!

The Apostles' rebuke of the children arose, in a measure, from *ignorance of the children's need*. If any mother in that throng had said, "I must bring my child to the Master, for he is sorely afflicted with a devil," neither Peter, nor James, nor John would have demurred for a moment, but would have assisted in bringing the possessed child to the Savior. Or suppose another mother had said, "My child has a pining sickness upon it. It is wasted to skin and bone. Permit me to bring my darling, that Jesus may lay His hands upon her"—the disciples would all have said—"Make way for this woman and her sorrowful burden." But these little ones with bright eyes, prattling tongues and leaping limbs—why should *they* come to Jesus?

Ah, Friends, they forgot that in those children, with all their joy, their health and their apparent innocence, there was a great and grievous need for the blessing of a Savior's Grace! If you indulge in the novel idea that your children do not need conversion—that children born of Christian parents are somewhat superior to others and have good within them which only needs *development*—one great motive for your devout earnestness will be gone! Believe me, Brothers and Sisters, your children need the Spirit of God to give them new hearts and right spirits or else they will go astray as other children do! Remember that however young they are, there is a stone within the youngest breast—and that stone must be taken away, or be the ruin of the child!

There is a tendency to evil even where as yet it has not developed into act—and that tendency needs to be overcome by the Divine Power of the Holy Spirit, causing the child to be born again! Oh that the Church of God would cast off the old Jewish idea which still has such force around us, namely, that natural birth brings with it Covenant privileges! Now, even under the old dispensation there were hints that the true Seed was not born after the flesh, but after the spirit, as in the case of Ishmael and Isaac and Esau and Jacob. Will not even the Church of God know that, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit?" "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" The natural birth communicates Nature's filthiness, but it cannot convey Grace. Under the New Covenant we are expressly told that the sons of God are "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Under the Old Covenant, which was typical, the birth accord-

ing to the flesh yielded privilege, but to come at all under the Covenant of Grace you must be born again! The first birth brings you nothing but an inheritance with the first Adam. You must be born again to come under the headship of the second Adam!

But it is written, says one, "that the promise is unto you and to your children." Dear Friends, there never was a grosser piece of knavery committed under Heaven than the quotation of that text as it is usually quoted! I have heard it quoted many times to prove a doctrine which is very far removed from that which it clearly teaches. If you take one half of any sentence which a man utters and leave out the rest, you may make him say the opposite of what he means! What do you think that text really is? See Acts 2:39—"The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." This grandly wide statement is the argument on which is founded the exhortation, "Repent, and be baptized, everyone of you." It is not a declaration of special *privilege* to anyone, but a presentation of Grace as much to all that are afar off as to them and to their children! There is not a word in the New Testament to show that the benefits of Divine Grace are, in any degree, transmitted by natural descent—they come "to as many as the Lord our God *shall call*," whether their parents are saints or sinners! How can people have the impudence to tear off half a text to make it teach what is not true?

No, Brothers and Sisters, you must sorrowfully look upon your children as born in sin and shaped in iniquity, "heirs of wrath, even as others." And though you may, yourself, belong to a line of saints and trace your pedigree from minister to minister, all eminent in the Church of God, yet your children occupy precisely the same position by their birth as other people's children do, so that they must be redeemed from under the curse of the Law by the precious blood of Jesus and they must receive a new nature by the work of the Holy Spirit! They are favored by being placed under godly training and under the hearing of the Gospel, but their need and their sinfulness are the same as in the rest of the race. If you think of this, you will see the reason why they should be brought to Jesus Christ—a reason why they should be brought as speedily as possible in the arms of your prayer and faith to Him who is able to renew them!

Also, no doubt, this feeling that children may not come to Christ may be derived from *a doubt about their capacity to receive the blessing which Jesus is able to give*. Upon this subject, if I were at this moment to deal with facts, alone, and not with mere opinion, I could spend the whole morning in giving details of young children whom I have personally conversed with, some of them very young children, indeed. I will say broadly that I have more confidence in the spiritual life of the children that I have received into this Church than I have in the spiritual condition of the *adults* thus received. I will even go further than that and say that I have usually found a clearer knowledge of the Gospel and a warmer love to Christ in the child converts than in the grown-up converts. I will even astonish you still more by saying that I have sometimes met with a *deeper*

spiritual experience in children of 10 and 12 than I have in certain persons of 50 and sixty!

It is an old proverb that some children are born with beards. Some boys are little men and some girls are little old women. You cannot measure the lives of any of us by our ages. I knew a boy who, when he was 15, often heard old Christian people say, "The boy is 60 years old—he speaks with such insight into Divine Truths of God." I believe that this youth at 15 did know far more of the things of God and of soul travail than any around him, whatever their age might be. I cannot tell you why it is, but I know it is that some are old when they are young and some are very green when they are old. Some are wise when you would expect them to be otherwise and others are very foolish when you might have expected that they had left their folly.

Oh, dear Friends, talk not of a child's incapacity for repentance! I have known a child weep herself to sleep by the month together under a crushing sense of sin. If you would know a deep, bitter and awful fear of the wrath of God, let me tell you what I felt as a boy. If you would know joy in the Lord, many a child has been as full of it as his little heart could hold. If you want to know what faith in Jesus is, you must not look to those who have been befuddled by the heretical jargon of the times, but to the dear children who have taken Jesus at His Word and believed in Him, loved Him and, therefore, know and are sure that they are saved! Capacity for *believing* lies more in the child than in the man! We grow *less* rather than *more* capable of faith—every year brings the unregenerate mind further away from God and makes it less capable of receiving the things of God! No ground is more prepared for the good Seed than that which, as yet, has not been trod down as the highway, nor has been, as yet, overgrown with thorns! Not yet has the child learned the deceits of pride, the falsehoods of ambition, the delusions of worldliness, the tricks of trade, the sophistries of philosophy—and so far it has an advantage over the adult! In any case, the new birth is the work of the Holy Spirit and He can as easily work upon youth as upon age.

Some, too, have hindered the children because they have been *forgetful of the child's value*. The soul's price does not depend upon its years. "Oh, it is only a child!" "Children are a nuisance." "Children are always getting in the way." This talk is common. God forgive those who despise the little ones! Will you be very angry if I say that a boy is more worth saving than a man? It is infinite mercy on God's part to save those who are seventy—for what good can they now do with the end of their lives? When we get to be 50 or 60, we are almost worn out and, if we have spent all our early days with the devil, what remains for God? But these dear boys and girls—there is something to be made out of them! If now they yield themselves to Christ, they may have a long, happy and holy day before them in which they may serve God with all their hearts! Who knows what Glory God may have of them? Heathen lands may call them blessed! Whole nations may be enlightened by them! If a famous schoolmaster was accustomed to take his hat off to his boys because he did not know whether one

of them might not be Prime Minister, we may justly look with awe upon converted children, for we do not know how soon they may be among the angels, or how greatly their light may shine among men! Oh, Brothers and Sisters, let us estimate children at their true value and we shall not keep them back, but we shall be eager to lead them to Jesus at once!

In proportion to our own spirituality of mind and in proportion to our own child-likeness of heart, we shall be at home with children—and we shall enter into their early fears and hopes, their budding faith and opening love! Dwelling among young converts, we shall seem to be in a garden of flowers, in a vineyard where the tender grapes give a good smell!

II. Secondly, concerning this hindering of children, LET US WATCH ITS ACTION. I think the results of this sad feeling about children coming to the Savior is to be seen, first, in the fact that often there is *nothing in the service for the children*. The sermon is over their heads and the preacher does not think that this is any fault. In fact, he rather rejoices that it is so! Some time ago a person who needed, I suppose, to make me feel my own insignificance, wrote to say that he had met with a number of Negroes who had read my sermons with evident pleasure. And he wrote that he believed they were very suitable for what he was pleased to call, “Niggers.” Yes, my preaching was just the sort of stuff for “Niggers” he said. The gentleman did not dream what sincere pleasure he caused me, for if I am understood by poor people, by servant girls, by children, I am sure I can be understood by others! I am ambitious to preach to anyone, if, by these you mean the lowest, the rag-tag and bob-tail. I think nothing greater than to win the hearts of the lowly! So with regard to children. People occasionally say of such a one, “He is only fit to teach children. He is no preacher.” Sirs, I tell you that in God’s sight he is no preacher who does not care for the children! There should be at least a part of every sermon and service that will suit the little ones! It is an error which permits us to forget this.

Parents sin in the same way when they *omit religion from the education of their children*. Perhaps the thought is that their children cannot be converted while they are children and so they think it of small consequence where they go to school in their tender years. But it is not so. Many parents even forget this when their girls and boys are closing their school days. They send them away to the Continent, to places foul with every moral and spiritual danger, with the idea that *there* they can complete an elegant education. In how many cases I have seen that education completed and it has produced young men who are thorough-paced profligates and young women who are mere flirts! As we sow we reap. Let us expect our children to know the Lord! Let us, from the beginning, mingle the name of Jesus with their A B Cs. Let them read their first lessons from the Bible! It is a remarkable thing that there is no book from which children learn to read so quickly as from the New Testament—there is a charm about that book which draws forth the infant mind. But oh, dear Friends, let us never be guilty, as parents, of forgetting the religious training of our children, for if we do, we may be guilty of the blood of their souls!

Another result is that *the conversion of children is not expected* in many of our Churches and congregations. I mean that they do not expect the children to be converted as children. The theory is that if we can impress youthful minds with principles which may, in later years, prove useful to them, we have done a great deal. But to convert children as children, and to regard them as being as much Believers as their seniors is regarded as absurd! To this supposed absurdity I cling with all my heart! I believe that of children is the Kingdom of God, both on earth and in Heaven! It is a sacred joy to me, on Thursday night, to notice certain boys and girls who have, for a long time, attended the pastor's Prayer Meeting with great regularity! Some of you old folks do not come and pray for your pastor, but these children do, for they love their pastor and he, on his part, highly values their prayers! Happy Church which is adorned and blessed by prayers of dear children who early learn to cry to the great Father for the hallowing of His name and the coming of His Kingdom! We expect to see children converted and we do!

Another evil result is that *the conversion of children is not believed in*. Certain suspicious people always file their teeth a bit when they hear of a newly-converted child—they will have a bite at him if they can. They very rightly insist upon it that these children should be carefully examined before they are baptized and admitted into the Church, but they are wrong in insisting that only in exceptional instances are they to be received. We quite agree with them as to the care to be exercised, but it should be the same in all cases and neither more nor less in the cases of children. I thank God that the most of those dear children who have been added to this Church could stand a rigid examination in doctrinal matters and would bear favorable comparison with the older folks! But still, it seems to me a very harsh thing that a high degree of knowledge should be expected of them.

How often do people expect to see in boys and girls the same solemnity of behavior which is seen in older people! It would be a good thing for us all if we had never left off being boys and girls, but had added to all the excellencies of a child the virtues of a man. Surely it is not necessary to kill the child to make the saint! It is thought, by the more severe, that a converted child must become 10 years older in a minute. A very solemn person once called me from the play-ground after I had joined the Church and warned me of the impropriety of playing at trap, bat and ball with the boys. He said, "How can you play like others if you are a child of God?" I answered that I was employed as an usher and it was part of my duty to join in the amusements of the boys. My venerable critic thought that this altered the matter very materially, but it was clearly his view that a converted boy, as such, ought never to play! What foolery, Brothers and Sisters! I will say no more.

Do not others expect from children more perfect conduct than they, themselves, exhibit? If a gracious child should lose his temper, or act wrongly in some trifling thing through forgetfulness—straightway he is condemned as a little hypocrite by those who are a long way from being

perfect themselves! Jesus says, "Take heed that you despise not one of these little ones." Take heed that you say not an unkind word against your younger Brothers in Christ, your little Sisters in the Lord! Jesus sets such great store by His dear lambs that He carries them in His bosom—and I charge you who follow your Lord—show a like tenderness, in all things, to the little ones of the Divine family. I will not say more on that point.

III. And now let us notice, thirdly, how JESUS CONDEMNED THIS FAULT.

First, He condemned it as *contrary to His own spirit*. "They brought young children to Him, that He should touch them: and His disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased." He was not often displeased. Certainly He was not often, "*much* displeased," and when He *was* much displeased, we may be sure that the cause was serious. He was displeased at these children being pushed away from Him, for it was so contrary to His mind about them. The disciples *did wrong to the mothers*. They rebuked the parents for doing a motherly act—for doing, in fact, that which Jesus loved them to do. They brought their children to Jesus out of respect to Him. They valued a blessing from His hands more than gold. They expected that the benediction of God would go with the touch of the great Prophet. They may have hoped that a touch of the hand of Jesus would make their children's lives bright and happy. Though there may have been a measure of weakness in the parents' thought, yet the Savior could not judge harshly of that which arose out of reverence to His Person. He was, therefore, much displeased to think that those good women who meant Him honor, should be roughly repulsed.

There was also *wrong done to the children*. Sweet little ones! What had they done that they should be chided for coming to Jesus? They had not meant to intrude. Dear things! They would have fallen at His feet in reverent love for the sweet-voiced Teacher who charmed not only men, but children, by His tender words! The little ones meant no harm and why should they be blamed?

Besides, there was wrong done to Himself. It might have made men think that Jesus was stiff, reserved and self-exalted like the Rabbis. If they had thought that He could not condescend to children, they would have sadly slandered the repute of His great love. His heart was a great harbor wherein many little ships might cast anchor. Jesus, the Child-Man, was never more at home than with children. The Holy Child Jesus had an affinity for children. Was He to be represented by His own disciples as shutting the door against children? It would do sad injury to His Character. Therefore, grieved at the triple evil which wounded the mothers, the children and Himself, He was sorely displeased. Anything we do to hinder a dear child from coming to Jesus greatly displeases our dear Lord. He cries to us, "Stand off. Let them alone. Let them come to Me and forbid them not." Dear gray-headed Friends, who are so strict and good, I must get you to stand back a bit and suffer that child to come to Jesus, for I do

not wish the Lord to be displeased with you. And you, good Christian Sisters, who have curdled a little in your temper, I must beg you be quiet lest the Lord should be displeased with you, as He will be if you forbid the children to come to Him! So, you see, it was contrary to His spirit.

Next, *it was contrary to His teaching*, for He went on to say, "Whoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter in it." Christ's teaching was not that there is something in us to fit us for the Kingdom of God and that a certain number of years may make us capable of receiving Grace. All His teaching went the other way, namely, that we are to be *nothing* and that the less we are and the weaker we are, the better, for the less we have of *self*, the more room there is for His Divine Grace! Do you think to come to Jesus up the ladder of *knowledge*? Come down, Sir, you will meet Him at the foot! Do you think to reach Jesus up the steep hill of *experience*? Come down, dear climber—He stands in the plain! "Oh, but when I am old, I shall then be prepared for Christ." Stay where you are, young man! Jesus meets you at the door of life—you were never more fit to meet Him than now. He asks nothing of you but that you will be nothing and that He may be All in All to you. That is His teaching—and to send back the child because it has not this or that is to fly in the teeth of the blessed doctrine of the Grace of God!

Once more, *it was quite contrary to Jesus Christ's practice*. He made them see this, for, "He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them and blessed them." All His life there is nothing in Him like rejection and refusing. He says truly, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." If He did cast out any because they were too young, the text would be falsified at once—but that can never be! He is the Receiver of all who come to Him. It is written, "This Man receives sinners and eats with them." All His life He might be drawn as a Shepherd with a lamb in His bosom—never as a cruel shepherd setting his dogs upon the lambs and driving them and their mothers away! I have neither time nor strength to say more and I must close with a mere glance at our last point.

IV. LET US TAKE THE HINT WHICH JESUS GIVES TO THOSE WHO WOULD COME TO HIM. "Whoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter in it." How I wish that all my congregation would come and receive Christ as a little child receives Him! The little child has no prejudices, no preconceived theories nor opinions it cannot give up. It believes what Jesus says. You must come in the same way to learn of Christ. I fear you know a great deal—throw it out the window! You have made up your mind about a great many things—unmake your mind and be as wax to the seal before Jesus!

A little child believes with an unquestioning faith which makes everything vivid and real. Believe just so! The child believes in all humility, looking up to its teacher and receiving its teacher's word as decisive. Believe in Jesus just so! Say, "Lord, I am a know-nothing. I come to You to be taught. I am nothing, be You my All in All."

A child, when it comes to Christ, comes very sincerely and with all its heart. It knows nothing of sinister motives, or of formality. Its repentance

and faith are genuine. I wish you would come to Christ this morning, you poor guilty ones, in real earnest, just as you are. Do not play at religion any more. Do not look for fine words with which to trim yourselves and make your prayers look neat and pretty, but come as a child does, in all simplicity, not ashamed to talk as your heart feels.

When a child believes in Jesus, it cares nothing for critical points. That is the way you must come to Christ. You that have always been inventing religious riddles—you that for many years have been readers of the last new novels in modern theology—for they are mere novels and nothing better! You that have addled your brains with the vain thoughts of vain men, come to Jesus as you are and believe what Jesus says because Jesus says it! Take Christ at His Word and trust Him—that is the way to be saved!

“But I have no merit,” said one, “I have no preparation.” Neither has a child. I never find children troubled about being prepared for Christ. I never hear of such a thing as a child worried about qualifications for Grace! A child is a sinner and knows it. That is the way to come to Christ. Come as a sinner, knowing that you are such! Say, “Jesus calls me, and I come; Jesus died for me and I trust Him.” That is the true way to come to Jesus. O Friends, instead of thinking yourselves more fit for Christ by growing bigger, grow smaller! Instead of getting greater, get less! Instead of being more wise, be more completely bereft of all wisdom and come to Jesus for wisdom, righteousness and all things!

Sometimes when we are very feeble and our language is very simple, God may bless it all the more and I do pray He may, this morning, set His seal upon this poor talk of His sick servant! Every particle of my flesh and every atom of my bones is praying God to bless this sermon! Grim pain has been racking me while I have been speaking. May this discourse be more honorable than its brethren because I bore it with sorrow! I long, I pine, I cry before God that He may bless this feeble word of mine to your conversion and to the conversion of many dear children. Those of you who have never looked to Christ and lived, do unto Christ, I pray you, just what these dear children did—He called them and they came and were folded in His arms. Come along with you! Do you half wish you could be a child, again? You can be! He can give you a child’s heart and you can be in His Kingdom newly-born. May it be so, for His name’s sake! Amen.

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CHILDREN BROUGHT TO CHRIST, NOT TO THE FONT NO. 581

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 24, 1864,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And they brought young children to Him, that He should touch them and His disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto Me and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter it. And He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them.”
Mark 10:13-16.

MY attention has been especially directed to this passage by the fact that it has been quoted against me by most of the authors of those sermons and letters which are, by a stretch of imagination called “replies,” to my sermon upon “Baptismal Regeneration” (#573). Replies they certainly are *not*, except to one another. I marvel that a Church so learned as the Anglican cannot produce something a little more worthy of the point in hand. The various authors may possibly have read my discourse but by reason of mental absorption in other meditations, or perhaps through the natural disturbance of mind caused by guilty consciences, they have talked with confusion of words and have only been successful in refuting themselves and answering one another.

They must have been aiming at something far removed from my sermon or else I must give them credit for being the worst shots that ever practiced with polemical artillery. They do not so much as touch the target in its extreme corners, much less in its center! The whole question is, Do you believe that Baptism regenerates? If so—prove that your belief is Scriptural! Do you believe that Baptism does *not* regenerate? Then justify your swearing that it does! Who will reply to this? He shall merit and bear the palm.

The Scripture before us is by several of the champions on the *other* side exhibited to the people as a rebuke to me. Their reasoning is rather ingenious than forcible—indeed, because the disciples incurred the displeasure of Jesus Christ by keeping back the little children from coming to *Him*—therefore Jesus Christ is greatly displeased with *me* and with all others like me, for keeping children from *the font* and the performance there enacted! And especially displeased with me for exposing the Anglican doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration!

Observe the reasoning—because Jesus was much displeased with disciples for hindering parents from seeking a blessing upon their children, therefore He is much displeased with us who do not believe in godfathers and godmothers, or the signing of the cross on the infant brow. I must say at the outset that this is rather a leap of an argument and would not ordi-

narily be thought conclusive. But this we may readily overlook since we have long ceased to hope for reasonable arguments from those who support a cause based upon absurdity.

My Brethren, I concluded that there must be something forcible in such a text as this or my opponents would not be so eager to secure it. I have therefore carefully looked at it and as I have viewed it, it has opened up to me with a sacred splendor of Divine Grace! In this incident the very heart of Christ is published to poor sinners and we may clearly perceive the freeness and the fullness of the mighty Grace of the Redeemer of men who is willing to receive the youngest child as well as the oldest man. And He is greatly displeased with any who would keep back seeking souls from coming to Him, or loving hearts from bringing others to receive His blessing.

I. In handling this text in what I believe to be its true light, I shall commence first of all, by observing that THIS TEXT HAS NOT THE SHADOW OF A GHOST OF A CONNECTION WITH BAPTISM. There is no line of connection as substantial as a spider's web between this incident and Baptism, or at least my imagination is not vivid enough to conceive one. This I will prove to you, if you will follow me for a moment.

It is very clear, Dear Friends, that *these young children were NOT brought to Jesus Christ by their friends to be baptized*. "They brought young children to Him, that He should touch them," says Mark. Matthew describes the children as being brought, "that He would put His hands on them and pray." There is not a hint about their being *baptized*. No godfathers or godmothers had been provided and no sign of the cross was requested. Surely the parents themselves knew tolerably well what it was they desired, and they would not have expressed themselves so dubiously as to ask Him to touch them when they meant that He should baptize them! The parents evidently had no thought of regeneration by Baptism and brought the children for quite another reason.

In the next place, *if they brought the children to Jesus Christ to be baptized, they brought them to the wrong Person*. The Evangelist, John, in the fourth chapter and the second verse, expressly assures us that Jesus Christ baptized not, but His disciples—this settles the question once and for all, and proves beyond all dispute that there is no connection between this incident and Baptism. But you will say, "*Perhaps they brought the children to be baptized by the disciples*." Brethren, the disciples were not in the habit of baptizing infants and this is clear from the case in hand. If they had been in the habit of baptizing infants, would they have rebuked the parents for bringing them? If it had been a customary thing for parents to bring children with such an intent, would the disciples, who had been in the constant habit of performing the ceremony, have rebuked them for attending to it?

Would any Church clergyman rebuke parents for bringing their children to be baptized? If he did so, he would act absurdly contrary to his own views and practice. And we cannot, therefore, imagine that if infant baptism had been the accepted practice, the disciples could have acted so absurdly as to rebuke the parents for bringing their little ones. It is obvious that such could not have been the practice of the disciples who were rebuked. Moreover, and here is an argument which seems to me to have great force in it, *when Jesus Christ rebuked His disciples, then was the*

time, if ever in His life, to have openly spoken concerning infant baptism, godfathers and godmothers and the whole affair.

If He wished to rebuke His disciples most effectually, how could He have done it better than by saying, “Why keep these children back? I have ordained that they shall be baptized. I have expressly commanded that they shall be regenerated and made members of My body in Baptism. How dare you, then, in opposition to My will, keep them back?” But no, dear Friends, our Savior never said a word about, “the laver of regeneration,” or, “the quickening dew,” when He rebuked them—not a single sentence!

Had He done so, the time would have been most appropriate if it had been His intention to teach the practice. In the whole of His life there is no period in which a discourse upon infant regeneration in Baptism could have been more appropriate than on this occasion—and yet not a single sentence about it comes from the Savior’s lips. To silence all—*Jesus Christ did not baptize the children.* Our Evangelist does not inform us that He exclaimed, “Where are the godfathers and godmothers?” It is not recorded that He called for a font, or a Prayer Book! No. But, “He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them.” He then dismissed them without a drop of the purifying element.

Now, if this event had any connection with Baptism whatever, it was the most appropriate occasion for infant baptism to have been practiced. Why, it would have ended forever the controversy! There may be some men in the world who would have raised the question of engrafting infants into the body of Christ’s Church by Baptism after all this, but I am certain no honest man would have done so who reverently accepted Christ as His spiritual leader. I, my Brethren, would sooner be dumb than speak a single word against an ordinance which Christ Himself instituted and practiced.

And if on this occasion He had but sprinkled one of these infants, given him a Christian name, signed him with a cross, accepted the vows of his godparents and thanked God for his regeneration, then the question would have been settled forever! And some of us would have been saved a world of abuse—besides escaping no end of mistakes for which we are condemned, in the judgment of many good people for whom we have some affection—though for their judgment we have no respect.

So you see the parents did not ask for baptismal regeneration. Christ did not personally baptize. The disciples were not in the habit of baptizing infants or else they would not have rebuked the parents. Christ did not speak about Baptism on the occasion and He did not baptize the little ones. I will put a case to you which may exhibit the weakness of my opponents’ position. Suppose a denomination should rise up which should teach that babes should be allowed to partake at the Lord’s Table. Such teaching could plead precedents of great antiquity, for you are aware that at one period infant communion was allowed and logically, too—for if an infant has a right to Baptism, it has a right to come to the Lord’s Table.

For years children were brought to the Lord’s Table, but rather inconvenient accidents occurred and therefore the thing was dropped as being unseemly. But if some one should revive the error and try to prove that infants are to come to the Lord’s Supper, he might prove it from this passage quite as clearly as our friends can prove infant baptism from it. Moreover do not forget that even if infant baptism could be proved from

this text, the ceremony prescribed in the Prayer Book is quite as far from being established. Whether the Baptism of infants may or may not be proven from other Scriptures I cannot now stay to enquire, but even if it can be, what are we to say for godfathers or godmothers, or the assertion that in Baptism children are made “members of Christ, children of God and inheritors of the kingdom of Heaven”?

Truly I might as well prove vaccination from the text before me, as the performance which the Prayer Book calls “infant baptism”! I do not hesitate to say that I could prove *any* earthly thing, if I might but have such reasoning granted to me as that which proved infant baptism from this passage. There is no possible connection between the two. The teaching of the passage is very plain and very clear, and Baptism has been imported into it and not found in it. As a quaint writer has well said, “These doctrines are raised from the text as our collectors raise a tax upon indigent, unsolvent people—by coming armed with the law and a constable to seize and hold that which is not to be had. Certainly never was a text so strained and distrained to pay what it never owed! Never man so racked to confess what he never thought! Never was a pumice stone so squeezed for water which it never held!”

Still hundreds will catch at this straw and cry, “Did not Jesus say, ‘Suffer the little children to come unto Me?’” To these we give this one word—see that you read the Word as it is written and you will find no water in it but Jesus only. Are the *water* and Christ the same thing? Is bringing a child to a font bringing the child to Christ? No. There is a wide difference, as wide as between Rome and Jerusalem, as wide as between Antichrist and Christ, between false doctrine and the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ!

II. Now, for our second and much more pleasing task. WHY, THEN, WAS JESUS CHRIST DISPLEASED? Read the passage and at once the answer comes to you. He was displeased with His disciples for two reasons—first, *because they discouraged those who would bring others to Him. And secondly, because they discouraged those who themselves were anxious to come to Him.*

They did not discourage those who were coming to a *font*—they discouraged those who were coming to *Jesus*. There is a mighty distinction ever to be held between the font and Christ—between the sprinkling of the priest and living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! First, *His disciples discouraged those who would bring others to Him.* This is a great sin and wherever it is committed Jesus Christ is greatly displeased, for a true desire to see others saved is worked in the Believer by God the Holy Spirit who thus renders the called ones the means of bringing wandering sheep into the fold. In this case they discouraged those who would bring *children* to Him to be blessed.

How can we bring children to Jesus Christ to be blessed? We cannot do it in a corporeal sense, for Jesus is not here, “He is risen.” But we can bring our children in a true, real, and *spiritual* sense. We take them up in the arms of our *prayers*. I hope many of us, as soon as our children saw the light, if not before, presented them to God with this anxious prayer that they might sooner die than live to disgrace their father’s God. We only desired children that we might in them live over again another life of service to God. And when we looked into their young faces we never asked

wealth for them, nor fame, nor anything else but that they might be dear unto God and that their names might be written in the Lamb's Book of Life. We did, then, bring our children to Christ as far as we could do it—by presenting them before God by earnest prayer on their behalf.

And have we ceased to bring them to Christ? No, I hope we seldom bow the knee without praying for our children. Our daily cry is, "O, that they might live before You!" God knows that nothing would give us more joy than to see evidence of their conversion. Our souls would almost leap out of our bodies with joy if we could but know that they were the children of the living God! Nor has this privilege been denied to us, for there are some here who can rejoice in a converted household. Truly we can say with the Apostle Paul, "I have no greater joy than this, that my children walk in the Truth of God." We continue, therefore, to bring them to Christ by daily, constant, earnest prayer on their behalf.

So soon as they become of years capable of understanding the things of God, we endeavor to bring them to Christ by *teaching them the Truth of God*. Hence our Sunday schools. The use of the Bible and family prayer and catechizing at home. Any person who shall forbid us to pray for our children will incur Christ's high displeasure. And any who shall say, "Do not teach your children. They will be converted in God's own time if it is His purpose, therefore leave them to run wild in the streets," will certainly both "sin against the child" and the Lord Jesus!

We might as well say, "If that piece of ground is to grow a harvest, it will do so if it is God's good pleasure. Therefore leave it and let the weeds spring up and cover it—do not endeavor for a moment to kill the weeds, or to sow the good seed." Why such reasoning as this would be not only cruel to our children, but grievously displeasing to Christ! Parents, I do hope you are all endeavoring to bring your children to Christ by teaching them the things of God. Let them not be strangers to the plan of salvation. Never let it be said that a child of yours reached years in which his conscience could act and he could judge between good and evil without knowing the doctrine of the Atonement, without understanding the great Substitutionary work of Christ.

Set before your child life and death, Hell and Heaven, judgment and mercy—his own sin and Christ's most precious blood. And as you set these before him, labor with him, persuade him as the Apostle did his congregation with tears and weeping, to turn unto the Lord. And your prayers and supplications shall be heard so that the Spirit of God shall bring them to Jesus. How much more like the Scripture will such labors be than if you were to sing the following very pretty verse which disfigures Roundell Palmer's "Book of Praise"—

***"Though your conception was in sin,
A sacred bathing you have had.
And though your birth unclean has been,
A blameless babe you now are made.
Sweet baby, then forbear to weep.
Be still, my dear, sweet baby, sleep."***

I cannot tell you how much I owe to the solemn words of my good mother. It was the custom on Sunday evenings, while we were yet little children, for her to stay at home with us and then we sat round the table and read verse by verse, and she explained the Scripture to us. After that was done, then came the time of pleading. There was a little piece of "Al-

leyn's Alarm," or of Baxter's, "Call to the Unconverted"—and this was read with pointed observations made to each of us as we sat round the table. And the question was asked how long it would be before we would think about our state, how long before we would seek the Lord. Then came a mother's prayer and some of the words of a mother's prayer we shall never forget, even when our hair is gray.

I remember on one occasion her praying thus—"Now, Lord, if my children go on in their sins, it will not be from ignorance that they perish and my soul must bear a swift witness against them at the Day of Judgment if they lay not hold of Christ." That thought of a mother's bearing swift witness against me pierced my conscience and stirred my heart. This pleading with them for God and with God for them is the true way to bring children to Christ. Sunday school teachers! You have a high and noble work, press forward in it. In our schools you do not try to bring children to the baptistery for regeneration—you point them away from ceremonies. If I know the teachers of this school aright, I know you are trying to bring your classes to Christ. Let Christ be the sum and substance of your teaching in the school!

Young men and young women, in your classes lift up Christ—lift Him up on high. And if anybody shall say to you, "Why do you talk thus to the children?" you can say, "Because my soul yearns towards them and I pant for their conversion." And if any should afterwards object, you can remember that Jesus is greatly displeased with *them* and *not* with *you*, for you only obey the injunction, "Feed My lambs."

The case in our text is that of children, but objectors rise up who disapprove of endeavors to bring any sort of people to Christ by faith and prayer. There are some who spend their nights in the streets seeking after the poor harlot and I have heard many harsh observations made about their work. Some will say it is ridiculous to expect that any of those who have spent their days in debauchery should be converted. We are told that the most of those who are taken into the refuges go back and become as depraved as ever. I believe that to be a very sad and solemn truth. But I also believe if I or anyone else shall urge that or anything else as a reason why my Brethren should *not* seek the harlot, that Jesus would be greatly displeased!

Any man who stands between a soul-seeker and the Divine Object of getting a blessing for the sinner's soul excites the wrath of Christ. Some have hopes of our convicts and criminals. But every now and then there is an outcry against those who even believe it possible for a transport or a ticket-of-leave man to be converted. But Jesus is greatly displeased with any who shall say about the work, "It is too hard. It is impossible." My Brethren in Christ, labor for souls of all sorts—for your children and for those who are past the threescore years and ten. Seek out the drunkard! Go after the thief! Despise not the poor down-trod slave! Let every race, let every color, let every age, let every profession, let every nation be the object of your soul's prayers!

You live in this world, I hope, to bring souls to Jesus! You are Christ's magnets with which through His Holy Spirit He will attract hearts of steel. You are His heralds—you are to invite wanderers to come to the banquet! You are His messengers—you are to compel them to come in that His house may be filled! And if the devil tells you that you will not succeed,

and if the world tells you that you are too feeble and have not talent enough, never mind—Jesus would be greatly displeased with you if you should take any heed to them. And meanwhile He is greatly displeased with your adversaries for endeavoring to stop you. Beloved, this is why Jesus Christ was greatly displeased.

A second ground of displeasure must be noticed. These children, it strikes me and I think there is good reason for the belief, *themselves desired to come to Christ to obtain a blessing*. They are called “little children,” which term does not necessarily involve their being infants of six months or a year. Indeed, it is clear, as I will show in a moment, that they were not such little children as to be unconscious babes. They were “infants,” according to our version of Luke, but then you know the English word, “infant,” includes a considerable range of age. Every person in his minority is legally considered to be an infant though he may be able to talk to any amount. We do not, however, desire to translate the text with so great a license. There is no necessity in the language used that these should have been anything but what they are said to be—“little children.”

It is evident they could walk, because in Luke it is said, “Jesus *called* them”—the gender of the Greek pronoun used there refers it to the *children*, not to the persons, nor to the disciples. Jesus called them. He called the children, which He would hardly have done if they could not comprehend His call. And He said, “Suffer the little children to come,” which implies that they *could* come and doubtless they *did* come with cheerful faces, expecting to get the blessing. These, perhaps, may have been some of those very children, who, a short time after, pulled down branches from the trees and strewed them in the way and cried, “Hosanna,” when the Savior said, “Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings have You ordained strength.”

Now Christ was greatly displeased with His disciples for pushing back these boys and girls. They did, as some old folks do nowadays who cry out—“Stand back, you boys and girls! We do not want you here! We do not want children to fill up the place—we only want grown-up people.” They pushed them back. They thought that Christ would have too much to do if He attended to the juveniles. Here comes out this principle that we must expect Christ’s displeasure if we attempt to keep *anybody* back from coming to Christ, even though it is the youngest child.

You ask how persons can come to Christ now? They cannot come corporeally, but they can come by simple prayer and humble faith. Faith is the way to Jesus—Baptism is not. When Jesus says, “Come *unto Me* all you that labor and are heavy laden,” He did not mean, “be baptized,” did He? No. And so when He said, “Suffer the little children to come unto Me,” He did not mean, “Baptize them,” did He? Coming to Jesus Christ is quite a different thing from coming to a *font*. Coming to Christ means laying hold upon Christ with the hand of faith—looking to Him for my life, my pardon, my salvation, my everything!

If there is a poor little child here who is saying in her little heart, or his little heart, “I would like to come to Christ, O that I might be pardoned while I am yet a little one”—come, little Lamb! Come and welcome! Did I hear your cry? Was it this?—

**“Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Look upon a little child.”**

Pity my simplicity,

Suffer me to come to You.

Dear little one, Jesus will not despise your lisping, nor will His servant keep you back. Jesus calls you! Come and receive His blessing. If any of you say a word to keep the young heart back, Jesus will be displeased with you.

Now I am afraid some do that. Those, for instance, who think that the Gospel is not for little children. Many of my Brethren, I am sorry to say, preach in such a way that there is no hope of children ever getting any good by their preaching. I cannot glory in learning or eloquence—but in this one thing I may rejoice—that there is always a number of happy children here who are quite as attentive as any of my audience. I do love to think that the Gospel is suitable to little children. There are boys and girls in many of our Sunday school classes down below stairs who are as truly converted to God as any of us.

Yes, and if you were to speak with them about the things of God, though you should get to the knotty points of election and predestination, you would find those boys and girls well taught in the things of the kingdom. They know free will from Free Grace and you cannot puzzle them when you come to talk about the work of Jesus and the work of the Spirit, for they can discern between things which differ. But a minister who preaches as though he never wanted to bring children to Christ and shoots right over the little one's heads—I do think Jesus is displeased with him.

Then there are others who doubt whether children ever will be converted. They do not look upon it as a thing likely to happen and whenever they hear of a believing child, they hold up their hands at the prodigy and say, "What a wonder of Grace!" It ought to be—but in those Churches where the Gospel is simply preached it is as *common* a thing for children to be converted as for grown-up people to be brought to Christ! Others begin to doubt the truth of juvenile conversions. They say, "They are very young. Can they understand the Gospel? Is it not merely an infantile emotion, a mere profession?" My Brethren, you have no more right to suspect the sincerity of the young than to mistrust the gray-headed. You ought to receive them with the same open-hearted confidence with which you receive others when they profess to have found the Savior!

Do, I pray you, whenever you see the faintest desire in your children, go down on your knees as your servant does when the fire is almost out and blow the spark with your own breath—seek by prayer to fan that spark to a flame! Do not despise any godly remark the child may make. Do not puff the child up on account of the goodness of the remark, lest you make him vain and so injure him, but do encourage him! Let his first little prayers be noticed by you. Though you may not like to teach him a form of prayer—I shall not care if you do *not*—yet teach him what prayer *is*. Tell him to express his desires in his own words and when he does so, join in it and plead with God on his behalf, that your little one may speedily find true peace in a Savior's blood!

You must not, unless you would displease my Master, keep back the smallest child that longs to come to Christ. Here let us observe that the principle is of *general* application—you must not hinder *any* awakened soul from seeking the Savior. O my Brothers and Sisters, I hope we have

such a love for souls, such an instinct within us to desire to see the travail of Christ's soul, that instead of putting stumbling blocks in the way, we would do the best we could to gather up the stones.

On Sundays I have labored to clear up the doubts and fears which afflict coming sinners. I have entreated God the Holy Spirit to enable me so to speak that those things which hindered you from coming to the Savior might be removed. But how sad must be the case of those who delight themselves in putting stumbling blocks in men's way. The doctrine of election for instance—a great and glorious Truth of God—full of comfort to God's people! How often is that made to frighten sinners from Jesus? There is a way of preaching that with a drawn sword and say, "You must not come unless you know you are one of God's elect." That is *not* the way to preach the doctrine! The true way of preaching it is, "God has a chosen people and I hope you are one of them! Come! Lay hold on Jesus! Put your trust in Him."

Then there are others who preach up dispositions and feelings as a preparation for Christ. They do in effect say, "Unless you have felt so much depression of spirit, or experienced a certain quantity of brokenness of heart, you must not come to Christ." Instead of declaring that whoever will is permitted to come and that the true way of coming to Christ is not with a qualification of dispositions and feelings and mental depressions, but just as you are. Oh, it is my soul's delight to preach a Gospel which has an open door to it—to preach a Mercy Seat which has no veil before it!

The veil is torn in two and now the biggest sinner out of Hell who desires to come is welcome! You who are eighty years of age and have hated Christ all this time, if now the Spirit of God makes you willing to come, Christ seems to say, "Suffer the gray-headed to come unto me, and forbid them not." While to you little children He stretches out His arms in the same manner, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me." O my Beloved, see to it that your heart longs to come to Christ and not to ceremonies! I stand here this day to cry, "Come you to the *Cross*, not to the *font*." When I forget to lift up the Lord Jesus and to cast down the forms of man's devising, "let my right hand forget her cunning," and "let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth."—

***None but Jesus, none but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good.***

The font is a mockery and an imposition if it is put before Christ. If you have Baptism after you have come to Christ, well and good. But to point you to it either as being Christ, or as being inevitably connected with Christ, or as being the place to find Christ is nothing better than to go back to the beggarly elements of the old Romish harlot instead of standing in the "liberty wherewith Christ has made us free," and bidding the sinner to come as a sinner to Christ Jesus and to Christ Jesus alone.

III. In the third and last place let us also gather from our text that WHEN WE DISCOURAGE ANY, WE ALWAYS GO UPON WRONG GROUNDS. Here was the case of children. I suppose that the grounds upon which the Apostles kept back the children would be one of these—either that the children could not receive a blessing, or else that they could not receive it worthily.

Did they imagine that these little children could not receive the blessing? Perhaps so, for they thought them too young. Now, Brethren, that

was a wrong ground to go upon for these children *could* receive the blessing and they *did* receive it, for Jesus took them in His arms and blessed them. If I keep back a child from coming to Christ on the ground that he is too young I do it in the face of facts because there have been children brought to Christ at an extremely early age. You who are acquainted with Janeway's, "Tokens for Children," have noticed very many beautiful instances of early conversion.

Our dear friend, Mrs. Rogers, in that book of hers, "The Folded Lamb," gave a very sweet picture of a little son of hers, soon folded in the Savior's bosom above, who, as early as two or three years of age rejoiced and knew the Savior. I do not doubt it at all. I cannot doubt it because one has seen such cases, that children of two or three years of age may have blossoms of knowledge and of Divine Grace—a blessing which in almost every case has betokened early death—but which has been perfectly marvelous to those who have talked with them.

The fact is that we do not all, at the same age, arrive at that degree of mental stature which is necessary for understanding the things of God. Children have been reported as reading Latin, Greek and other languages at five or six years of age. I do not know that such early scholarship is any great blessing—it is better not to reach that point so soon. But some children are all that their minds ever will be at three or four and then they go home to Heaven. And so long as the mind has been brought up to such a condition that it is capable of understanding, it is also capable of *faith* if the Holy Spirit shall implant it!

To suppose that He ever gave faith to an unconscious babe is ridiculous! That there can be any faith in a child that knows nothing whatever I must always take ground to doubt, for, "How shall they believe without a preacher?" And yet they are brought up to make a profession in their long-clothes, when they have never heard a sermon in their lives? But those dear children to whom I have before referred have understood the preacher, have understood the Truth of God, have rejoiced in the Truth and their first young lisplings have been as full of Grace as those glorious expressions of aged saints in their triumphant departures! Children are capable, then, of receiving the Grace of God.

Do mark, by the way, that all those champions who have come out against me so valiantly have made a mistake. They have said that we deny that little infants may be regenerated—we do NOT deny that God can regenerate them if He pleases! We do not know anything about what may, or may not happen to unconscious babes! But we *did* say that little children were not regenerated *by their godparents telling lies at a font*—we *did* say that, and we say it again—that little children are not regenerated, nor made members of Christ, nor children of God, nor inheritors of the kingdom of Heaven by solemn mockery, in which godfathers and godmothers promise to do for them what they cannot do for themselves, much less for their children! That is the point. And if they will please to meet it, we will answer them again. But till such time as that we shall probably let them talk on till God gives them Grace to know better.

The other ground upon which the Apostles put back the children would be that although the children might receive the blessing, *they might not be able to receive it worthily*. The Lord Jesus, in effect, assures them that so far from the way in which a little child enters into the kingdom of Heaven

being exceptional, it is the *rule*. And the very way in which a child enters the kingdom is the way in which *everybody* must enter it. How does a child enter the kingdom of Heaven? Why, its faith is very simple. It does not understand mysteries and controversies, but it believes what it is told upon the authority of God's Word and it comes to God's Word without previous prejudice.

It has its natural sinfulness, but Grace overcomes it and the child receives the Word as it finds it. You will notice in boyish and girlish conversions a peculiar simplicity of belief—they believe just what Christ says—exactly what He says. If they pray, they believe Christ will hear them—if they talk about Jesus, it is as of a Person near at hand. They do not, as we do, get into the making of these things into mysteries and shadows—little children have a *realizing* power. Then they have great rejoicing. The most cheerful Christians we have are young Believers. And the most cheerful old Christians are those who were converted when they were young!

Why, see the joy of a child that finds a Savior! "Mother," he says, "I have sought Jesus Christ and I have trusted Him and I am saved." He does not say, "I hope," and "I trust," but "I *am*," and then he is ready to leap for joy because he is saved! Of the many boys and girls whom we have received into Church fellowship, I can say of them all, they have all gladdened my heart and I have never received any with greater confidence than I have these! This I have noticed about them—they have greater joy and rejoicing than any others. And I take it is because they do not ask so many questions as others do, but take Jesus Christ's Word as they find it, and believe in it!

Well now, just the very way in which a child receives Christ is the way in which *you* must receive Christ if you would be saved. You who know so much that you know *too* much. You who have big brains—you who are always thinking and have a tendency to criticism and perhaps to skepticism—you must come and receive the Gospel as a little child. You will never get a hold of my Lord and Master while you are wearing that quizzing cap. No, you must take it off and by the power of the Holy Spirit you must come trusting Jesus, simply trusting Him, for this is the right way to receive the kingdom.

But here let me say the principle which holds good in little children holds good in all other cases as well. Take for instance the case of very great sinners—men who have been gross offenders against the laws of their country. Some would say they cannot be saved. They can—for some of them have been! Others would say they never receive the Truth of God as it is in Jesus in the right manner. Yes, they do. How do great sinners receive Christ? There are some here who have been reclaimed from drunkenness and I know not what else. My Brethren, how did you receive Christ? Why in this way—You said, "All unholy, all unclean, I am nothing else but sin. But if I am saved, it will be Grace, Grace, Grace."

Why, when you and I stood up black and foul and filthy and yet dared to believe in Christ, we said, "If we are saved, we shall be prodigies of Divine mercy and we will sing of His love forever!" My dear Friends, you must all receive Jesus Christ in that very way! That which would raise an objection to the salvation of the big sinner is thrown back upon you, for Christ might well say, "Except you receive these things as the chief of sin-

ners, you cannot enter the kingdom.” I will prove my point by the instance of the Apostle Paul.

He has been held by some to be an exception to the rule, but Paul did not think so, for he says that God in him showed forth all long-suffering for a pattern to them that believe and made him, as it were, a type of all conversions. So that instead of being an exception, his was to be the rule. You see what I am driving at. The case of the children looks exceptional, but it is not. It has, on the contrary, all the features about it which must be found in every true conversion. It is of such that the kingdom of Heaven is composed and if we are not such we cannot enter it. Let this induce all of us who love the Lord to pray for the conversion both of children and of all sorts of men.

Let our compassion expand. Let us shut out none from the plea of our heart! In prayer and in faith let us bring all who come under our range, hoping and believing that some of them will be found in the election of Grace—that some of them will be washed in the Savior’s blood and that some of them will shine as stars in the firmament of God forever! Let us, on no consideration, believe that the salvation of any man or child is beyond the range of possibility for the Lord saves whom He wills. Let no difficulties which seem to surround the case hinder our efforts. Let us, on the contrary, push forward with greater eagerness believing that where there seems to be some special difficulty there will be manifested, as in the children’s case, some special privilege!

O labor for souls, my dear Friends! I beseech you live to win souls! This is the best rampart against error—a rampart built of *living* stones—converted men and women. This is the way to push back the advances of Popery, by imploring the Lord to work conversions. I do not think that mere controversial preaching will do much, though it must be used. It is Grace-work we want. It is bringing you to Christ! It is getting you to lay hold of Him—it is this which shall put the devil to a nonplus and expand the kingdom of Christ! O that my God would bring some of you to Jesus! If He is displeased with those who would keep you back then see how willing He is to receive you!

Is there in your soul any desire towards Him? Come and welcome, Sinner, come! Do you feel now that you must have Christ or die? Come and have Him! He is to be had for the asking. Has the Lord taught you your need of Jesus? You thirsty ones, come and drink! You hungry ones, come and eat! Yes, this is the proclamation of the Gospel today, “The Spirit and the bride say, Come! And let him that hears say, Come! And let him that is athirst come! And whoever will, let him take the Water of Life freely.”

I do trust there may be encouragement in this to some of you. I pray my Master make you feel it. If He is angry with those who keep you back, then He must be willing to receive you, *glad* to receive you! And if you come to Him He will in nowise cast you out! May the Lord add His blessing on these words for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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*“Take up the cross, and follow Me.”
Mark 10:21.*

YOUR mind's eye can see that procession yonder. Notice it carefully. At the head of it there walks One whom we rightly call Master and Lord. You may know Him by the prints of the nails in His hands and feet. I observe that He carries a Cross and that it is a very heavy one. Do you see the long line following Him? They are all those of whom the world was not worthy. That line has been continued even to this day and will be continued until the present dispensation shall close. As you watch these different followers of Christ in the procession, one thing will strike you—however much they differ in some respects, they are all alike in one thing—every one of them carries a cross. There is no exception to this rule! From the Master down to the last disciple, it is a procession of cross-bearers. The day will come when there will be a transformation scene and you will see all these cross-bearers transformed into crown-wearers! But, rest assured that the old motto, “No cross, no crown,” is certainly true and those who refuse to carry the cross after Christ on earth shall never be permitted to wear the crown with Christ in the land that is beyond the stars.

The chief business of a Christian is to follow Christ. You may sum up all his life in that expression. He has Christ in him, Christ gives him new life from day to day and the very way in which that life expends its force is in the following of Christ. I would, dear Friends, that you and I would aim at so following Him as to gain a distinction for the closeness of our walk—for there are some in Heaven of whom it is written, “These are they which follow the Lamb wherever He goes.” There are some who seem to follow Him but partially. There are many wanderings and many inconsistencies in their life, but thrice blessed shall he be who, like Caleb, follows the Lord fully and with purpose of heart puts his foot down in the very footprints of his crucified Lord! If you are a disciple of Jesus, your chief business is to follow Jesus. But there are difficulties in the way and these difficulties are what is meant by “the cross.” There are difficulties in the way of making a profession of faith in Jesus and of walking worthy of it. And these difficulties are a burden too heavy for flesh and blood to carry. Only Divine Grace can enable us to take it up—and when we do take it up, we are fulfilling the words of the text, “Take up the cross, and follow Me.”

I am going to urge you to ask yourselves, each one, first, “*What is my cross?*” Secondly, “*What shall I do with it?*” And, thirdly, “*What should encourage me to do so?*”

I. First, then, WHAT IS MY CROSS?

I have said that the meaning of the cross is, principally, that which is involved by difficulties in following Christ. To some, the cross they will have to carry, if they become Christians, is that of *reproach and rebuke for Christ's sake*. Perhaps they have relatives who hate all true religion so that if they should profess to be converted, they would be sneered at, ridiculed and misrepresented. All their action would be twisted to mischievous ends and motives would be imputed to them which they, themselves, abhor. It is very hard for young people, especially in ungodly families, to dare to call themselves followers of the Crucified! Nor is it easy for a working man, in the workshop, to bear that perpetual “chaffing,” as his companions call it, which they delight to inflict on those who are better than themselves. The same kind of thing takes place in other classes of society, though it is not generally done quite so overtly. There is the cold shoulder, there are suggestive hints and innuendoes and there are avoidances of the company of those who come out decidedly on the Lord's side. Some of you do not know much about this style of treatment. You were dandled on the lap of ease in this respect, for your parents rejoiced over you when you were converted and all your Christian acquaintances kept high holiday, as it were, when they heard that you had decided to be a follower of Jesus! I wonder whether you would have been quite as firm as we might have wished if your first speech upon religious matters had been met with an oath, or if some brutal father had proceeded yet further and uttered horrible threats against you? There is many a child who has had to bear all that. Or if you had had a coarse, drunken husband who hated the very name of Jesus, I wonder whether you would have been able to bear it, as I have known some good women do from year to year, enduring a lifelong martyrdom for the sake of Jesus Christ? Now, dear Friend, whoever you may be, if anybody will sneer at you, or think the less of you, or say hard things about you because you become a Christian, that is *your cross*, and Christ says to you, in our text, “Take up the cross, and follow Me.”

Sometimes the cross comes in another shape. A man is converted to God and he then discovers that his position in life is not one which a Christian ought to hold—certainly not one in which piety is likely to flourish. This case often comes under my notice. A man often comes to me and he says, “Sir, I trust I love the Lord. I am at the Tabernacle as often as possible, but I am sorry to say that I have half a dozen girls behind the bar serving drinks to people and I cannot bear the thought of it. It is a trade that I cannot now endure and I must get out of it.” Often has this difficulty come before me and I have been gratified when I have seen men who have loved the Lord so much that they have said, “This business must no longer be carried on by me. I love my Lord too much for that. How can I bow my knee to Him and ask His blessing on such a business as this?” And they have escaped from it as fast as they possibly could! And there are many positions into which a man may get in trade

in which he becomes entangled in evil. If he were quite free, he could do the right and straightforward thing, but his partner, perhaps, will do the opposite and he knows that it will not do for him to be always throwing the blame of doing a wrong thing upon another man. And then pocketing his half of the profits, he says, "Come what may, I must get out of this business, for it would be better for me to enter into life as poor as the poorest beggar than, having a prosperous but sinful business, to be cast into Hell."

And many, too, suffer losses in business, *because, as soon as they become Christians, they have to make a great many alterations.* "Sunday is our best day for business," says somebody. Well, then, so much more opportunity is there for you to make a greater sacrifice to prove your love to Jesus! Up with the shutters and mind that you do it at once. If you have to lose anything, in any way for Christ's sake, in order to be His conscientious disciple, that is your cross—and He says to you, "Take up the cross, and follow Me."

Sometimes, however, the cross may be of a somewhat different kind. *It may be the giving up of some pleasure, or habit which has been peculiarly gratifying to you.* The Christian man discovers that although this habit may be allowable for others, it is not so for him—it would injure him. It would ruin him. He cannot pray, he cannot think of Divine things as long as he clings to this habit. It is his duty, if there is anything that hinders the growth of his soul, or his fellowship with Christ, to shake it off at once as Paul shook off the viper into the fire! But some have found it difficult to do this. Dear Friend, if that is your case, pluck out your right eye, cut off your right hand rather than keep them and perish in your sin! Better to lose everything else than lose your soul! Better to give up everything else than give up the hope of eternal life!

With some, however, the cross does not assume that shape. If we are to be Christ's disciples at all, *He demands of us that we give up ourselves wholly and unreservedly to Him.* Jesus Christ will not have half of a man! He will have the whole of him—body, soul and spirit! You cannot be Christ's disciple unless you are prepared to renounce everything you have at His bidding. For instance, if it should come to pass that to be a Christian required your imprisonment for Christ's sake, you must be willing to lie in prison and to die for Him. If it were required, as once it was, that you should be dragged into the amphitheatre to be slain by wild beasts, you must be willing to do as the Christians did then—to die such a death, if necessary, for Christ. My Lord and Master will not be content with the shell of a man—He must have his heart and soul, his entire being—and he who will not thus give himself up to Christ cannot be His disciple. This is a cross to many who want to make some little reserve, or some provision for the flesh. If this is your cross, I pray you to take it up and follow Christ.

We must not forget that the Cross, as far as *Christ* was concerned, was not merely a matter of shame and reproach. It was that towards men, but, before God, *when Jesus carried His Cross, He was bearing a burden which it pleased the Father to lay upon Him.* So, to some, the

cross is poverty. They strive hard but they can never rise above grinding poverty. To others, it is a body which from their earliest childhood has been weak and feeble. To some, the cross is a proneness to disease and pain. To others, a wearing sickness which scarcely permits them to leave their bed. To others, an affliction which, while it allows them a considerable measure of bodily vigor, yet, nevertheless, frequently gnaws at their very heart and they feel as if they could die from the weariness of a long life of pain. Oh, how many of God's children have to carry this cross! Or if it is not that, perhaps the cross takes the form of an ungodly husband or an ungrateful child. But I need not try to make a list of your crosses. We have a saying that there is a skeleton in every closet and, certainly, there is a cross in every lot—

***“Shall Simon bear his cross alone,
And all the rest go free?
No, there's a cross for everyone
And there's a cross for me.”***

We all know what our own cross is. And if our Heavenly Father has appointed it for us, we must take it up and follow Christ!

II. Now, secondly, WHAT AM I TO DO WITH THE CROSS?

Well, first, *let me never try to make a cross of my own.* I know some people who do that. They have pretty nearly everything that heart could wish for, yet they are dissatisfied. They are of a fretful, discontented disposition and they can always see something to trouble them even when nobody else can see it. I charge you, Friends, to watch against that state of heart which leads a man, when he looks up to the sun, to say, “Ah, it has spots on its surface.” And when he observes the beauty of the moonlight, to draw only this reflection, “This light of the moon is very cold.” If he were to look at the greenest landscape in the world, he would say that he believed there was an extinct volcano somewhere underneath it and, perhaps, it might not be quite extinct and might erupt again. Whenever he reads the Bible, he always likes to read about the pouring out of the vials and he is particularly fond of the star called Wormwood. And he almost hopes to see the day when there shall be wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes in divers places, and I know not what besides! Some people seem to have a little trouble factory at the back of their houses. They appear to be always engaged in making new crosses! I have often said that homemade troubles are like homemade clothes—they seldom fit, and they are likely to last a very long while! O child of God, do not make your life one continual groan! Far better to make it one happy song of praise, one joyful Psalm of thanksgiving to the Most High! Do not make a cross for yourself.

And, next, *do not try to choose your cross.* Of course you cannot do it, but there are many people who wish they had So-and-So's lot. Ah, you do not know how heavy his cross is! Have you never heard the fable that once upon a time all the cross-bearers were invited to come and bring their crosses and put them in one heap and each man might take up the cross that he liked best? So, of course, nobody took the one that he had brought, but each one went away with his neighbor's cross on his back. But, before many hours, they were all back again, asking to have their old crosses, for they found that the cross they had carried before had so

worn their shoulders that they had become used to that particular burden, but the new cross was galling them in fresh places, so they were glad, each one, to put his neighbor's cross down and go away with his own. On the whole, my Brothers and Sisters, you have the best lot that you could have, for if you had a better one in some respects, it would be worse for you in other respects. Be satisfied as you are and do not wish to choose another man's cross. Christ says, "Take up the cross, and follow Me." He does not say, "Desire to have another man's cross."

Observe, too, that Christ does not say, "*Murmur at your cross.*" That is the very reverse of taking it up! As long as a man is alive and out of Hell, he cannot have any cause to complain! Be he where he may—be he placed in the most abject position conceivable—the man is better off than he deserves to be. Let not a single murmur, then, ever escape our lips. Blessed is the Grace of patience, but it is difficult to be acquired. May the Lord, of His Infinite Mercy, teach us to bear all His holy will and bear it cheerfully—and so to take up our cross for Jesus sake!

Christ does not tell us *to run away from our cross*. There are some who try to do that. I have often observed that when people change their position in order to escape from trial, the old saying has been fulfilled to them, for they have leaped out of the frying pan into the fire. I have known some of them emigrate because of the difficulties of living in this country and, in about six months, they have thought that this old country is about the best under Heaven, as I reckon it is, after all! And glad would they have been if they could only have gone back to the place whence they came out. If you expect to go to a land where you will have no trials to bear, there is but one such place that I know of, except Heaven, and that is the fool's paradise—and I would not advise you to attempt to enter that! Oh, no, we were born into this world that in the sweat of our brow we might eat bread—and the sweat must be on our brow in some form or other, and the burden must be on our back. If thorns and thistles grow in your garden, it is no use for you to move to the next street, for they will grow there, also. And it is no use moving to another country, for you will have thorns growing in France as well as in England—in Australia as well as in the British Islands—it is no use to try to run away from your cross and it is also cowardly. Do as Christ bids you, "Take up the cross, and follow Me."

And, dear Friends, there is another thing which we are rather apt to do and that is, *to faint under our cross, or to feel that it is too heavy for us to carry*. Do I address anyone in such a condition? Dear Brother, dear Sister, there are many promises suited to your case. "Underneath are the everlasting arms." "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint." "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able; but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it." "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." "Your shoes shall be iron and brass; and as your days, so shall your strength be." Let these texts be like a cordial to your spirit, and say, "I will not faint, after all. There is

hope for me that I shall yet be revived.” How can a man despair who can lift up his eyes to Heaven and call God his Father?

What, then, is meant by taking up the cross, but this? First, dear brethren, *if following Christ will involve you in any scoffing and shame, bear it and be glad to bear it.* If it will cause you any loss, say with Paul, “Yes, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ and be found in Him.” Does anyone drop your acquaintance because you belong to Christ? O my dear Friend, will you go to Hell for the sake of an earthly acquaintance? I hope not! Let the acquaintance be dropped, rather than drop your acquaintance with Christ! Will worldlings scowl at you? Let them scowl, as long as Jesus smiles. Will men put you out of their synagogue because you are a Christian? Let them put you out, for Christ will find you and if He shall welcome you, it will not matter who casts you away. Therefore, for Christ’s sake, boldly bear whatever has to be borne and be faithful in your following of Him even unto death.

Taking up the cross means, next, *be resigned to those afflictions which come to you from God your Father.* It is easier to say this, my dear Friends, than to do it, as you will find. But, still, there is the cup which our Heavenly Father has filled for us, so shall we not drink it? He has made that cross for us to carry, so dare we say, “We will not carry it”? You will find that a disobedient spirit will be sure to bring upon you a dreadful chastisement. But the kindly yielding spirit of an obedient child will make the cross lighter than it would otherwise have been. May God grant us that yielding spirit! I love to see it and how often one does see it in God’s poor, sick children! We pity them, for their pain is great and they can scarcely bear it—but when we speak to them about their Heavenly Father, they have not a word to say against Him—but they have a thousand words to say for Him! They tell us how He sustains them—how, in the dreary night, their heart is gladdened by the Presence of Jesus—how, when it seems as if they could not suffer any longer the pain which has become so intense, the Presence of Jesus has flooded their souls with delight! It is a blessed thing to see Christians take up their cross resignedly, accepting the will of their Father in Heaven—and this is exactly what we are called upon to do! I trust that in both senses, namely, in a bold willingness to suffer for Christ’s sake and for the Truth of God’s sake—and in a patient willingness to accept the Divine will, whatever it may be—we may take up our cross and follow Christ.

But this is the great point, *in carrying our cross—we are to follow Christ.* We must keep on doing that. Through floods or flames we must follow Him. In life or in death we must follow Him and never, never step aside. And what an honor it is for us to be allowed to follow such a Lord! I was thinking, just now, that if the glorified spirits in Heaven, for whom Jesus shed His precious blood, had all gone there along a smooth pathway, without a tear or a sigh—if they had never suffered anything for His sake—I can almost picture them gathering round their Lord in Heaven and saying, “Dear Master, is it not possible for us to have the opportunity of suffering somewhat for You? We were allowed to do

something for You on earth—we preached and we prayed—but we never suffered.”

And the devil might whisper from his infernal den, “Had these men been tried—if God had put forth His hand and touched their bone and their flesh—they would have cursed Him to His face!” But, dear Friends, the devil can never say that, for they *have been* touched in their bone and in their flesh. Take down Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs* when you are at home—I hope you all have it, for that book ought to be kept in every Christian’s house, to the everlasting shame of the Church of Rome—take it down and look at the long list of martyrs who counted not their lives dear unto them! It was one of the noblest sights upon which the eyes of Jesus ever rested when He could look upon them and see them gladly die for His dear sake! I think the angels must have crowded the battlements of Heaven and looked down and said, “See how they love their Lord! See how bravely they die for Him! See how the timid, trembling women come forward and are stretched upon the rack without a groan, and then are fastened to the stake and burnt there, smiling as they die, and saying, ‘None but Jesus! None but Jesus!’” I do not think that all the cherubim and seraphim in Heaven ever praised God as they have done who have died in prison for Jesus’ sake, or at the stake have poured forth their blood rather than deny Him. Be glad that you may prove your love by suffering for Christ! The ruby crown of martyrdom is not within your reach today, but be thankful if some jewels of suffering may be yours. And count it all joy when you can endure this cross for the name of Jesus Christ.

III. Now, for a few minutes I want to answer the last question. WHAT SHOULD ENCOURAGE US TO TAKE UP OUR CROSS AND FOLLOW CHRIST?

First, *I cannot be Christ’s disciple unless I do this* and, oh, I must be His disciple! He is such a Master that I must follow Him! He is such a Lord that I cannot but serve Him! And if service should involve the carrying of the cross, I say, “Welcome cross! Lord, put it on my back!” I would gladly bear the burden which goes with His service.

Let each one of us encourage himself with the next reflection, “*Better people than I am have carried a heavier cross than I have to carry.*” I know, dear Sister, that your cup is one of peculiar bitterness, but there are some who have drunk a far bitterer cup than yours, and they were better people than you are. Think of them—I have alluded to them already—the noble army of martyrs and sufferers for Christ’s sake! Will you refuse the cup which is not, after all, so filled with gall as theirs was? Think, too, how much more severe were the trials of your Lord and Master. What are all our griefs compared with His? If we were to heap up the whole mass of human woe, it would be a molehill compared with the great Alpine peaks of His griefs and woes—

***“His way was much rougher and darker than mine;
Did Christ my Lord, suffer, and shall I repine?”***

They say that when the Greeks marched into Persia and the soldiers grew thirsty and weary with the long march, Alexander did not ride on horseback and he did not drink. Although there was always water for the

great king, he refused to drink till his soldiers did. And when they saw him, hot and weary, marching side by side with them, every man said, "I must not complain, for the king is suffering as much as I am. I must bear it if he does." So, sufferers, behold your King! In all your afflictions He was afflicted. He was tempted in all points as you are, so be not ashamed of that cross which once your Savior's shoulders bore!

Furthermore, we may well take up the cross because *Grace will be given to us to bear it*. You say that you cannot bear the cross which is coming upon you, but you shall have more Grace when you get it on your back! God never gives His children any Grace to throw away. He gives them strengths according to their day and if their burden becomes heavier, their shoulders become stronger. In order to get more Grace, one might be quite willing to carry a heavier cross.

Remember, too, that *the cross will be blest to you*. A thousand good things come to us by the way of suffering and reproach. I think the sweetest letters which God ever sends to His children are done up in black-edged envelopes. You will find in many of those bright envelopes of His, some choice silver mercies, but if you want a great banknote of Grace, it must come to you in the mourning envelope. It is when the Lord covers the Heavens with clouds that He sends the showers of blessing upon the earth. Be glad of the clouds for the sake of the rain.

This thought, too, should help you to carry your cross—that *Jesus will be honored by it*. Yes, poor woman, I know that I am talking to you. Very seldom do you get a bright hour by yourself. Your lot is a very hard one, but if you bear it as a Christian should, Christ is honored through you. He looks down from Heaven and He says, "Look how she loves Me that, for My sake she is willing to bear all this." Yes, young man, I know you are harshly pressed but you have stood well and your Master has marked your brave conduct. He lets you go on being tried as our English king did with his son when he was fighting the French—he did not send relief to him because he did not wish to diminish the glory of his victory. So Christ often leaves His people, supported only by His Grace, to let the world see what a Christian really can do! That was a notable duel between Job and the devil. Satan said, "Only give me the opportunity to take away his riches and to kill his children, and he will curse God to His face." But after Satan had done all that, Job still said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Then the devil was permitted by God to cover poor Job with boils from the crown of his head to the heels of his feet. He who has ever had one boil of that kind knows how painful it is, but to be covered from head to foot with such boils—to have to scrape yourself with a potsherd and to have a foolish wife urging you to curse God and die—and so-called "friends" standing around you and aggravating your woe, is a very terrible trial. Yet Job survived it and I do not think that the devil ever meddled with him again! He found that he could not manage him at all, so, at last, he went away! He was probably never so beaten by anyone until he met Job's Lord and Master in the wilderness and He beat him still more effectually!

I believe that the Lord takes delight in the prowess of His suffering saints. "There," He seems to say to the Prince of darkness, "I let you have your will with Job, but what have you made of him? Is he not still a perfect and upright man, and more than a match for you?" Well, if God might so be glorified by us, you and I might be willing to be tried as Job was! The time will come, dear Friends, when you will be pleased with the cross. If God will give you sufficient Grace, you will come to be satisfied and even pleased to suffer for Christ's sake. Rutherford used to say that the cross he carried for Christ had become so sweet to him that he was sometimes afraid that he might love the cross better than he loved Christ, Himself! That shows the heights to which a gracious soul may attain.

Lastly, *in a very short time, the cross will be exchanged for the crown.* It is said that when Princess Elizabeth carried the royal crown in some procession during the reign of her sister, she complained that it was very heavy and someone said that she would find it much lighter when she had it on her own head. So, some of us are carrying a great cross, here, and we find it very heavy—but we shall be well repaid when we receive our crown!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 10:17-45.**

Verses 17, 18. *And when He was going out on the road, there came one running and kneeled before Him, and asked Him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why call you Me good? There is none good but One, that is God.* This was a hint that Christ was more than Man. If He was really worthy of the title that the enquirer gave Him, He was God as well as Man, for "there is none good but One, that is God."

19, 20. *You know the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honor your father and mother. And he answered and said unto Him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.* Possibly, in the ordinary sense of the words, he had observed these commandments, but Christ tested the reality of his declaration.

21, 22. *Then Jesus looking at him, loved him, and said unto him, One thing you lack: go your way, sell whatever you have, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in Heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow Me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.* Thus he proved that he had not kept either table of the Law perfectly, for he did not love the Lord with all his heart, nor did he love his neighbor as himself.

23-27. *And Jesus looked around and said unto His disciples, How hard it is for those that have riches to enter into the Kingdom of God! And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the Kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye*

of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who, then, can be saved? And Jesus looking upon them said, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible. It is impossible for man, unaided by the Spirit of God, to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but that which is impossible to man by Himself, is made possible by the Grace and power of God!

28. Then Peter began to say unto Him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed You. He spoke as if they had done what the rich man had failed to do, and evidently he thought they should be rewarded, for, according to Matthew, he added, "What shall we have, therefore?"

29-31. And Jesus answered and said, Verily, I say unto you, There is no man that has left house, or brothers, or sisters or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for My sake, and the Gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brothers, and sisters and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions, and in the world to come eternal life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last first. In the final account, it shall be found that no man has been a loser through giving up anything for the Lord Jesus Christ though He has His own method of deciding who are to be first and who are to be last.

32. And they were on the road going up to Jerusalem. It was well known to them all that the crisis of our Savior's history was close at hand and a sort of indefinable dread was upon them all. The bravest spirit in the whole company was their blessed Lord and Master. He knew that He was going up to Jerusalem to die, so you may view Him as the Sacrifice going to the altar, or as the Hero going to the conflict in which He would die and yet conquer. They were on the road going up to Jerusalem—

32. And Jesus went before them. The disciples might well have been filled with holy courage as their Leader was in the van. This is true concerning the whole life of all the saints—"Jesus went before them." What if trials lie beyond and the dark river, itself, is in front of them, yet Jesus goes before them so they need not fear to follow!

32. And they were amazed. And as they followed, they were afraid. They did not know much about what was to happen, but a great depression was upon their spirits. They must have wondered at the cheerful bravery of their Master when all of them were ready to turn back from this mournful march.

32-34. And He took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto Him, Saying, Behold we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles: and they shall mock Him, and shall scourge Him, and shall spit upon Him, and shall kill Him, and the third day He shall rise again. He thought it right that the twelve, who led the way, should be better acquainted than the rest with the sad history that was so soon to be enacted. So He tells them about it in private—and I want you to notice how He dwells in detail upon His sufferings. He does not describe them in general terms, but He brings out into strong relief each separate set of

infamy—"they shall mock Him, and shall scourge Him, and shall spit upon Him and shall kill Him"—from which we learn that our Savior knew all that He had to endure, yet He went bravely forward to bear it for our sakes. For this reason we should admire His Divine courage and complete Self-sacrifice. Mere men may promise to do a certain thing without knowing what it will involve, but—

***"This was compassion like a God,
That when the Savior knew
The price of pardon was His blood,
His pity never withdrew."***

I think, too, that as our Lord thus dwells upon each point, He means us also to dwell upon the details of His redeeming griefs. We should not be strangers at the foot of the Cross, nor in Gethsemane, but should hear each one of these notes ring out its sorrowful yet joyful music—"They shall mock Him, and shall scourge Him, and shall spit upon Him, and shall kill Him." But what a glad note that concluding one is—"and the third day He shall rise again." Death cannot hold Him in her bands, the sepulcher cannot continue to enclose Him in her gloomy prison! This is the glory and boast of our Christianity, our hope and our joy, for—

***"As the Lord our Savior rose,
So all His followers must."***

35, 36. *And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto Him saying, Master, we would that you should do for us whatever we shall desire. And He said unto them, What would you, that I should do for you?* Our Savior's question suggests to us the prudent lesson to never promise in the dark. If anyone shall say to you, "Promise that you will do whatever I ask," follow the example of Christ and first ask, "What would you, that I should do for you?" Otherwise, you may entangle yourself with your own words. These young men evidently needed to have this question put to them, for they had not themselves thoroughly considered what they were asking their Lord to do for them.

37. *They said unto Him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one at Your right hand, and the other at Your left hand, in Your Glory.* There was, undoubtedly, much that was wrong about this request and you have often heard that view of the matter dwelt upon, so I will call your attention to that which was *right* about it. These disciples showed their faith that this same Jesus who was to be mocked, scourged, spit upon and killed, would yet reign! And I think it was wonderful faith that, after they had heard from His own lips, in sorrowful detail, the description of how He should die, yet nevertheless they so fully believed in His Kingdom that they asked to have a share in its honors. It is true that they were ambitious, but their ambition was to be near the Savior. It would be well if all those who ask for right hand and left hand places, wanted them at the right hand and the left hand of the Savior!

38. *But Jesus said unto them, You know not what you ask.* Has the Lord ever said to us, when we have been praying, "You know not what you ask"? I suppose that is usually true in a certain sense—we do not fully understand the compass of the most of our prayers and sometimes

we ask so unadvisedly that we prove that we know not what we are asking.

38. *Can you drink of the cup that I drink of? And be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? “Can you share My drinking in Gethsemane and My sinking on Golgotha?”*

39. *And they said unto Him, We can.* They knew not what they said, but they felt that such was the strength of their love that they could share anything that had to do with Christ! His Throne? Yes, they would like to sit at the right hand of it. His cup? Yes, they can drink of it. Immersion into His suffering? Yes, they can endure that baptism.

39. *And Jesus said unto them, You shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized with shall you be baptized.* And so they were, for James was soon put to death and John lived, the last and longest of the Apostles, a life-long martyrdom for the Master’s sake.

40, 41. *But to sit at My right hand and at My left hand is not Mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared. And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John.* Why were they displeased? Because they were of the same spirit as James and John! As they were displeased with James and John, it is evident that they wanted those places themselves—and many a man is thus displeased with his own faults. Did you ever see a dog bark at himself in a mirror? You and I have often done that—we have even grown very angry with what was, after all, only our own image!

42-46. *But Jesus called them to Him, and said unto them, You know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: and whoever of you will be the chief, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.* Christ instituted bishops, that is, overseers, but never prelates! He never had any idea of setting some men in His Church over the heads of others, but He put all His servants upon an equality. They are to exercise no lordship, the one over the other, nor to seek it, for the truest honor in the Church of God is found in service. He that serves most is the greatest! He that will occupy the lowest office, he that will bear patiently to be the most put upon, he that is readiest to be despised, and to be the servant of all, shall be the chief of all! The way to rise in the Kingdom of Heaven is to descend, for even so was it with our Lord, Himself! God give to all of us the humble and lowly spirit that will make us willing to be the least of all!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—751, 658.

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

LOVELY, BUT LACKING

NO. 3334

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 26, 1912.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“One thing you lack.”
Mark 10:21.

THOUGH the Gospel of Jesus Christ most certainly addresses itself to the vilest of the vile, it is not exclusively to such that the message of salvation is sent. There are, indeed, no characters so far gone in vice that the Gospel does not speak to them. However abandoned they may be, still is this inviting voice sent to the very chief of sinners, “Come to Christ and live.” But the Gospel, with equal affection, addresses itself to those who are not upon any common estimation to be numbered with the chief of sinners—to those whose moral integrity has been unimpeachable, whose outward propriety has been scrupulous—whose lives in all their domestic and social relations have been commendable. There are always some such individuals in our congregation. We are very thankful that there are. We have an invitation for them as frank, as honest and as earnest as for wanton sinners, heinous transgressors and hardened criminals—and our sincere desire is that such may be saved, for we believe that they, also, will make illustrious trophies of Divine Grace when Grace decides them to decide for Christ.

Among us we have a large number of most hopeful people, to whom it may be said, “One thing you lack.” *A word of congratulation to you, that you only lack one thing!* Then I propose, therefore, to utter *a warning because you do lack one thing.* And after that *a few words of instruction to show how this one lack may be supplied.* May God grant that His power may rest upon His Word, so that you may no longer lack the one thing.

I. First, then, this is A WORD OF CONGRATULATION.

Let us take this young man’s case as descriptive of that of many here present. *He did not lack morality.* He could say, “All these things have I kept from my youth up.” Nor did the Savior tell him that he was uttering a lie—He looked upon him and *loved* him—which He would not have done if he had been a willful liar. No, he had been neither unchaste, nor dishonest, nor profane. He had been all that could be desired in these respects. I congratulate you if such is your case. It will save you from a thousand sorrows to have been kept from those grosser sins! You have not formed habits which will lead you in later years into temptation. You have not formed associations which it will be difficult to break. You have not learned words, phrases and sentiments which will defile your memo-

ry in later days, even though you should live to hate them. I thank God that you have this privilege—that it cannot be said of you that you lack in morality!

Nor was this young man's lack *that of outward religion*. We are told—I think it is by Luke or Matthew—that he was a ruler. That is to say, as we read it, a ruler in the synagogue. He was one who had taken office among his co-religionists and had even presided in their religious assemblies. He was a young man, remember, and it is not often that young men attain to such a position, so that he must have been not only scrupulously excellent in his conduct, but he must have been regarded by all who knew him as remarkably religious at heart. Indeed, when he knelt down before the Savior, when he addressed Him as, “Good Master,” he showed that his outward habits were of a religious cast. And so I congratulate some of you that you love the place where Christians meet, that in their sacred songs you take an interest, that their Holy Book is a book not altogether unread by you, that you would be grieved if you could not go up to the assembly of God's people. I am glad that as touching these things in your outward regularity, some of you might even put others to shame who are further advanced than you in spiritual things. You do not lack for morality—you do not lack for the outward part of religion!

Nor can I suppose that this young man lacked *a becoming respect for whatever was pure and lovely and of good report*. In addressing our Lord by that remarkable title which was not used by Jews even to their Rabbis, he showed how he looked upon the Holy Christ with a profound awe. He did not perceive His Deity, but what he did perceive of His matchless goodness he deferred to. And it is so with you, my Friend. You never utter an opprobrious word against God's people. You would be very grieved to hear them evilly spoken of. You love the ministers of Christ. There is no company that pleases you better than the company of the people of God. You have religion—you have a respect for that part of religion which as yet you do not possess. You wish you had it. You envy those who have it and would wish to be the meanest of them all if you might but have a part among them. I congratulate you upon this! I thank God concerning you. Looking upon you, I feel as Jesus did, that my heart loves you and I gladly would that you had the necessary supply of that thing which you still lack.

This young man did not lack *orthodoxy*. He was no doubter, skeptic, or professed infidel. He said, “What must I do that I may inherit eternal life?” He believed in eternal life. He was not one of those Sadducees who say that there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit. He venerated the grand old Truths of his father's religion—he was a firm believer in the orthodox faith. And so with you. You have never yet dared to doubt the Word of God and as far as you have learned its meaning, you hold that meaning in the most solemn respect. You would not for the world be found a heretic! You would not willfully call in the existence of God, the deity of Christ, the Atonement by blood, or any other of the essentials of

our most holy faith. As far as your head is concerned, you are clear enough about these things. I thank God for this, for it is a grand escape from a pestilent evil. It is hard to get a man's conscience sound who has gone through the great dismal swamps of infidelity. After once listening to the vile suggestions of ungodliness, or reading such infamies as come from the pen of a Tom Paine, the soul seems as if it never could get clean of the corruption! It is such pitch—it sticks to one's hands—and though one takes to himself nitre and much soap, yet shall he scarcely cleanse himself from the defilement! You have not acquired that taint of your moral constitution. Thank God for it! I bless God that in His abundant mercy, you do not lack for a knowledge of the faith and a degree of belief in it!

Nor yet, my dear Friends, did this young man lack *sincerity*. I have noticed some expositors speaking of him as a hypocrite, but he was as far away from being a hypocrite as the North Pole is from the South! He was transparent in all he said. Even that little bit that looks like boasting—"All these have I kept from my youth up," shows how ingenuous the man was. A man who was not sincere would have minced a little and kept back an expression so complimentary to himself. He was the very mirror of candor and so are some of you. You have not learned the ways of craft. You do not assume to be what you are not. Though you mix with God's people, yet you have not ventured to proceed to Baptism without faith, nor do you dare to come to the Communion Table because you fear you have not fellowship with Christ. You prove your sincerity in many ways and upon this, I again congratulate you and thank the God of Mercy!

This young ruler, moreover, did not lack *for zeal*. The way in which he came to Christ showed his ardor. He came to Him *running* and fell down before Him, saying, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" You, too, have a zeal for God, though not according to knowledge. If the Holy Spirit shall but teach you what the one thing is that you are lacking, I believe you will seek after it. I trust you will. At any rate, up to the measure of your light you have been, up till now, quick, zealous and desirous to do what you could.

This young man also *was exceedingly thoughtful*. Half the battle with many men is to make them think, even if they think wrongly. It is almost better for them to think in the most crooked manner than not to think at all. The men least likely to be saved are they who go about their business or their pleasures and will not imagine that they have time for thought. But here was a thoughtful man. He had studied the Law and had tried to keep it. He was now something more than thoughtful—he was anxious. "What lack I yet?" as if he felt there was something he did not know and he would gladly know what it was. He was not so self-righteous as some have fancied he was. He had a self-righteous head, but he had a seeking heart. His head made him think that he had kept the Law, but his heart told him that he had not, for he said, "What must I do to inherit eternal

life?” which he would not have said if he had believed that he had religion enough to inherit it. He said, “What lack I yet?” which I think he would not have said if he had not known that he did lack something, though he knew not what. I am thankful—I am again thankful to God and I congratulate you, my dear Hearers, if you are somewhat in the same position, if you can honestly say, “I have tried to do what I can, I have sought to do as far as my light guides me. I do not believe I am saved, but I wish I were. What is it? What is that secret something which can fill the aching void within my heart? What is that which can give me rest? For rest as yet I do not possess.”

Once more, this young man did not lack *for willingness*—at least *he thought he did not*. He believed himself willing to do anything, to give anything, to suffer anything if he might but be saved. So also do some of you. You would stand up in the congregation tonight and say, “The Lord knows there is nothing within my reach that I would not do. There is nothing under Heaven that I would not bear if I might but inherit eternal life.” But, perhaps like this young man, you do not know your own heart—and if Christ were to try you with some searching precept—you might, like he, go away sorrowing. But, at any rate, as far as you know, you are willing. And I am glad of this and thankful that all these points are in you. Though you do lack, yet you do not lack any of these, but lack something else.

The fact is, this young man *lacked knowledge*. He did not know the *spirituality* of the Law. He had never been taught that the Law concerns our glances, our thoughts and our imagination. He supposed he had kept the Law because he had not committed any act of adultery, or of theft—nor had he spoken the thing that was not true. He did not know that an unchaste *glance*, or a causeless hatred, or a covetous desire breaks the Law of God and betrays the sin that lurks in the breast. He did not know that and, perhaps, some of you do not know it. Oh, that you may be led to know it! May God not only make you know it as a matter of knowledge, but understand it as a matter of conviction deeply written in the conscience! And he did not know the plan of salvation. The question, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” showed that he did not know that salvation is not by *doing*, but by *believing*—not by our works, but by a simple trust in Jesus. This was a great deficiency! Though he was a model of uprightness in a hundred interesting points which we cannot now stay to discuss, he was lacking in a matter of vital interest to his immortal welfare! In that he was just like many of you. With looks of love and pity, with feelings of tender regard, but deep anxiety, we turn to you, therefore, with this reflection, “One thing you lack.”

II. And now we shall change the note. THIS TEXT HAS A WORD OF WARNING.

“One thing you lack.” What was the one thing that this young man lacked? *It was the full surrender of his heart to God in Christ*. He had not done that. Our Savior gave him, therefore, a command which tested him.

He bade him go, sell all that he had and distribute it to the poor. This is not a command which He gives to all men, but He gave that particular command to that particular young man according to his particular circumstances—He saw that he was not the man that could endure to be poor. He saw, too, that he had made his riches his idol. He was a gentleman. He was a man of great possessions. He does not seem to have been a cheapskate. He could hardly have been a ruler of a synagogue, one would think, if he had been, but still, he had a great liking for position. He was a gentleman and there are a great many people who would sooner be gentlemen than they would be saints—and sooner be thought to belong to the upper and respectable circles of society than they would be thought to be devout and holy! This young man would have liked to have been both, but the Savior, seeing that his wealth was in his heart and that he had loved it better than he did his God, said to him, “Part with your wealth, for if you are decided for God and your heart is wholly His, you will prove it by the readiness of your obedience.” Here, then, was the thing he lacked—he lacked the full surrender of his heart to God’s will. And so he went away sorrowing, for he had great possessions.

This lack of the full surrender of his heart to God’s will made him shun the reproach of being a follower of Christ. Hence, though he would call Christ, “Good Master,” he would not turn and follow Him and learn of Him. So the Master said, after He had bid him sell his goods, “Take up the cross.” That is to say, “Come out and confess Me. Having done as I bid you, then come and say I am a disciple of that Man who is despised and rejected. I will follow Him to prison and to death, and I will preach His Word though I be put to death for it. I will take up the cross.”

Christ knew that the one thing he lacked was the full giving up of his heart to God and, therefore, He said, “Follow Me, for if you really do love God, you will follow His Son. If your heart is fully given to God, you will be willing to be obedient to Christ, to take Him for your Leader, Master, Savior, Guide, Friend and Counselor.” Now, in this the young man failed. He could not so give himself up wholly to God. He could not at that time, at any rate, so give himself up as to be completely Christ’s servant. Now, no man who fails in this respect can enter Heaven! Christ will save you, but a part of the agreement on your part must be this, “You are not your own, but are bought with a price.” If you would have Christ’s blood to redeem you, you must give yourself up to Christ—your body, your soul, your spirit, your substance, your talents, your time, your all! You must from this day be Christ’s servant, come what may. If persecution should arise, you must be willing to part with all that you possess—with your liberty, with your life, itself, for Christ—or you cannot be His disciple. He may never call you literally to sell your goods and distribute all, but He does call you to acknowledge that your goods are not your own, but His. That you are only a steward and must be willing, therefore, to give to the poor and to dedicate to the honor of His Kingdom, such part as shall be

meet and right of all that you have, not as though you were bestowing anything of your own, but only as yielding up to God what belongs to Him! He claims that you now turn over, if you would be saved, yourself and everything you have by an indefeasible title deed to the Great Lord of All whose you must be. If you would be saved by the blood of Jesus, you are not from this day to choose your own pleasures, nor your own ways, nor your own thoughts, nor to serve yourselves, nor live for yourselves or your own aggrandizement. If you would be saved, you must believe what He tells you, do what He bids you and live only to serve and honor Him. I am ashamed to have to say that a great many Christian professors seem to be false to this, their agreement, but, as my Lord will take no less, I dare ask no less of you. It seems to me all too little. He has bought us, not with silver and gold, but with His own precious blood! Surely, then, we should be quite willing to say—

***“Tis done, the great transaction’s done,
I am my Lord’s, and He is mine.”***

What you keep to yourselves you shall lose, but what you give to Him you save and gain! Your treasure on earth the moth shall eat and the rust corrupt, but your treasure in His keeping no moth shall ever fret, nor canker ever devour. All is safe which is given up to Christ! That which is kept back from Him, whatever it may be, shall prove a curse to you. Say, then, my dear young Friend, with all your excellences, do you lack the giving up of your heart, the full giving up of yourself to Christ? Oh, I am grieved that you should lack it! I am, indeed, grieved that you should lack it! I would like my Lord to have such a bright gem as you to glitter in His crown! I would like the Good Shepherd to have so dear a lamb to carry in His bosom! What? Shall so fair a flower shed its fragrance for His enemies? Let the Savior take it and wear it in His bosom—He is willing—may His Grace take it tonight! One cannot bear that you, that you having so much, should lack but one thing. If you lacked all, that were grievous, but lacking but one thing, oh, why should not that lack be made up? God grant it at once! To miss Heaven! I cannot bear to think that you should, when you really are so sincerely anxious about it. To have such desires and to be so fervent, too, and yet not to give your whole heart to my Lord? Poor things are desires if they get no farther! Desire will not quench thirst, neither will it stay hunger. You must take Christ and live on Him or you shall die! To think, dear Friends, that some of you should miss Heaven through your wealth! Why need it be? And yet it is often so. The rich will not go to hear the Gospel as the poor will—and when they hear it, there is often so much care about their extensive business, or, on the other hand, there is so much attraction in that circle of gay and thoughtless friends, that it is hard for them to be saved. Oh, what a pity that the mercies of God should lead you to Hell—and that riches *here* should all but involve you, or altogether involve you, in eternal poverty *hereafter*! God in His mercy prevent it, that you may yet be saved!

The sad thing to remember is that *you who lack one thing, in lacking that one thing, lack all*, for though I congratulated you that you had morality, that is poor stuff when it has no foundation in love to God. Your sincerity, I think I must suspect that it is exhausted if, after having been told the way, which is simply to believe in Christ and give yourselves up to Him, you now refuse! Yes, and all the good things which I have strung together with words of congratulation are but as the colors of a bubble that shall pass away unless you have this one thing. The one thing is like the unit set before many ciphers which will make them into a great amount, but without the one figure, first, all those ciphers will stand for nothing, many as they are! If by the Grace of God in your heart and the exercise of a living faith in the dying Savior, you give yourself wholly up to God, then every good thing, lovely thing and thing of good repute shall be embalmed and preserved, but, without this, they shall be like faded flowers—fit only to be cast behind the wall or to perish on the dunghill!

III. Lastly, we shall give you A WORD OF DIRECTION.

If you would inherit eternal life, Christ's direction is, "Sell all that you have and give to the poor." Now, what did He mean by that? We shall read it three ways and very quickly. First, He meant in the young man's case, "*Give up your idol.*" His was wealth. He means the same kind of trial for you. Give up your idol. What is it? I pause. You may look, but I am sure that if you are not loving God you are loving something else—and whatever it is that you love better than God is your idol—and you are an idolater—and your idol must fall to the ground if Jesus is to be All in All. You cannot serve two masters—and whatever your present master is, it must be thrown out—that Christ may come in.

"Sell all that you have." Well, that means another thing as I read it, that is, consecrate your *all to God*. How can you expect, if you withhold and keep back part of the price from God, that He should accept you and save you by Jesus Christ. No, come, poor guilty Sinner, and wash in the purple stream that flows from Jesus' heart and then say in return, "My Lord, since, You have thus redeemed me—

***"All that I am, and all I have
Shall be forever Thine.
Whatever my duty bids me give,
My cheerful hands resign.
And if I could make some reserve,
And duty did not call
I'd love my God with zeal so great
That I must give Him all."***

The third reading of this passage will be—*give up your hindrances*. This young man's hindrance was his possessions, and it was better that he should relinquish his possessions and be saved, than be hindered by his wealth. What, my dear Friend, is your hindrance? Give it up! Give it up! Give it up! Oh, I know some of you that are hindered by bad company. You are often imposed, but it is all blown away by those merry men

whose merriment is tinged with lasciviousness. Give them up! Will you give them up, or give up Christ? Which shall it be? You remember in John Bunyan's *Life* he says that one Sunday when he was playing on the village green at a game of cat, he was just about to strike the cat when a voice came to him from Heaven, and said, "Will you have your sins and go to Hell, or leave your sins and go to Heaven?" And he stood there in the midst of his companions and paused, and they could not think what ailed the tinker while he was disputing in his mind which it should be—Christ and Heaven—or his sins and Hell! Now, whatever your hindrance is—if it is money, if it is anything—whatever it is, give it up! If it is your right hand, you had better cut it off and cast it from you, than having it enter into Hell. If it is your right eye, it were better for you to pluck it out than having two eyes to be cast into Hell's fire! That is the cry of the text tonight—down with your idols! Give them all up! Cast away your hindrances and come to Christ and trust Him! That is the first word of instruction.

But the second instructive word is, "*Take up the cross.*" That means, *profess Christ*. You have a notion, perhaps, some of you, that you will sneak into Heaven as secret Christians. Take care that if you try that you do not find yourselves at another gate than the gate of pearl! Christ came not to save those cowardly souls who will not acknowledge Him. His own words are, "He that denies Me before men, him will I deny before My Father who is in Heaven." Ashamed of Jesus? Ah, then, remember those words, "The fearful and unbelieving"—the fearful—that is those who are afraid to acknowledge Christ as their Master—"shall have their portion in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." I pray you, then, if you are Christ's, confess Him! Acknowledge Him! Confess that you are His—*take up the cross*, take up your cross—that is, *endure His reproach*. You would not like to be called a canting Methodist, or Presbyterian, or some other ugly name. Ah, but, my dear Friend, if you would have Christ's crown, you must have Christ's Cross—and he that is not willing to be sneered at with Christ cannot reign with Christ! And what if they do sneer at you? If that is your cross, take it up! What higher honor can a man need on this side of Heaven than to be called a fool for Christ? I know the day shall come when angels shall envy the men that were permitted to have the privilege of suffering for Christ. You know the old story of Henry the Fifth, when, in view of a battle, it was said he needed more men, but he replied that he did not wish for more men, for—

"The fewer men, the greater share of honor,"

and he pictured the day when

"Gentlemen of England, now a-bed

Shall think themselves accursed they were not here!"

Truly, if you could escape rebuke and persecution, you might well be grieved to think that you went to Heaven by so mean a way! Be willing, then, like a brave spirit, to take up the cross and carry it, counting the

reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. Take up your cross—that is, *trust in the Cross*—grasp it as your only hope! Let the Atonement which Jesus made by His death be the delight of your soul and from this day always boast therein.

The last word of direction was—“*Follow Me.*” Christ said, “Follow Me.” He meant, did He not, confide in Me? As a confiding sheep follows its shepherd, so follow Me. He meant “*Obey me*, as the servant follows where the Master leads, so trace My footsteps and let My example be your rule.” So Jesus says to you, also, “Persevere in following Me. Never cease so doing. Follow me right up to My Throne and there rest with Me.”

Listen, then, each of you here present, who have only one thing that you lack. Will you now—may His Holy Spirit make you—give up the world and all it offers you? Will you give up sin and all its fascinations and close in with God in Christ and give your whole heart to Him? Multitudes, multitudes in the Valley of Decision. There is a Valley of Decision to us all, when we are either left to our own wills to decide for evil, or the Grace of God makes us decide for Christ! The cry is heard in this house tonight, “Divide, divide.” Those who shall say “yes” within their hearts take their place with Christ! But those who say, “no”—those who give the negative to the command of Christ—let them at least know what they are doing! And if they will go the downward road, let it be with their eyes open that they may know where they go. But, oh, say not, “No!” Oh, Spirit of God, let them not say, “No!” Yield, Man, yield Woman, to the gentle impulse which now bids you say, “I will take His yoke upon me, for it is easy. I will follow Him.” Yield to His love who round you now the bands of a man would cast—the cords of His love who was given for you—to His altar binding you fast. Pray this prayer—“Lord, bind the sacrifice with cords, even with cords to the horns of the altar! Let me be Yours now, and Yours hereafter when You come in Your Glory!”

There is a question that has often been asked, with feelings of curiosity, which I cannot answer. It is this—did the young man inherit eternal life after all? I think he did. I think he did because Jesus loved him. I like his character throughout, as the Savior evidently did, and He did not love because of outward appearances—He looked at the heart. I am not altogether displeased at his going away. It was a deal better than staying if he did not follow honestly the Good Master who had eternal life at His disposal. I even look hopefully at his pausing awhile before complying, if such was the case, for the man that flings all away in a moment may want it back again tomorrow. It was a great deal he had to part from and he went away—but he did not go away careless. I know I would be glad if my Hearers went away sorrowing when they are not converted. I would think it was a hopeful sign. He went away sorrowing and though the Savior drew from that the moral that it was hard for a rich man to be saved, yet He said it was possible with God, and why, then, was it not possible

with that young man? I do not know. There are some things to be said on either side, but where Scripture is silent, we must not decide.

But there is another question that I think is vastly more important—and to me, more interesting and to each one of you a deal more so—and that is will that young man that I have been talking to tonight, be saved? And the young woman that I tried to describe just now—will she ultimately inherit eternal life? Oh, may God grant that the answer may be in each case, “Yes, Lord, You know all things, You know that I trust You, that I love You and whatever You tell me to give up, or to be, or to do for Your name’s sake, even all things, I will do it.” Then the Lord bless you, for you are saved and you shall be His in the day of His appearing!

God give His blessing for Jesus’ sake.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 9:2-21.**

Verses 2-7. *And after six days Jesus took with Him, Peter, and James, and John, and led them up into a high mountain apart by themselves. And He was transfigured before them and His raiment became shining, exceedingly white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can whiten them. And there appeared unto them Elijah with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here and let us make three tabernacles, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah. For he knew not what to say; for they were sorely afraid. And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a Voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is My beloved Son: hear Him.* You and I have sometimes wished that we could see Christ in His earthly Glory. We need not, however, wish it, for if such a sight were permitted to us, in all probability we would be more full of fear than of joy. These three men, the elect out of the elect, the very choicest of the Apostles—had little delight in what they saw at the time, for the Glory was too bright for their overwhelmed natures—

**“At the too transporting sight,
Darkness rushes o’er my sight.”**

We had better wait awhile until these eyes shall have been cleansed and our whole fabric shall be fit for such a weight of Glory as the sight of our exalted Lord will be!

8. *And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man anymore, save Jesus only with themselves.* Unhappy, indeed, would they have been if they had looked about and seen none but Moses, for poor comfort could Moses bring! Or if, looking around, they had seen none but Elijah, for the stern Prophet of Fire would have been but a poor consolation to them in their life struggles. But Moses may go and Elijah may go. Lawgiver and Prophet may vanish! As long as Jesus Christ remains, it is enough! Jesus only is enough for all our needs—for all our desires.

9, 10. *And as they came down from the mountain, He charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of Man were risen from the dead. And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.* For they did not understand the Master's words—not even these Apostles, for the Spirit of God was not yet fully given. Happy, indeed, is he upon whom the spirit of God rests—and in whom He dwells—for as John says, “You have an anointing from the Holy One, and know all things,” and these men without that measure of anointing did not know at that time even such a simple word as this—that the Son of Man should rise again from the dead! Brothers, we must be taught of the Holy Spirit, or we shall never know anything profoundly. We might go to school to Christ, Himself—now, mark this word—we might go to school to Christ Himself and yet learn nothing until the Holy Spirit should come upon us to write the Truth of God upon our heart which Christ has spoken to the ear. Oh, if you lack wisdom, ask of God, and He will give you of His Spirit!

11-13. *And they asked Him, saying, Why do the scribes say that Elijah must first come? And He answered and told them, Elijah verily comes first, and restores all things, and how it is written of the Son of Man, that He must suffer many things, and be set at naught. But I say unto you, That Elijah is indeed come—he was John the Baptist.*

13. *And they have done unto him whatever they wished, as it is written of him.* It is rather singular that the disciples should begin to ask about the scribes, for this was, as it were, a sort of warning note for a battle into which they were about to plunge. They talked about the scribes, but the scribes were down below in conflict with the rest of the Apostolic brotherhood, and now, while they are talking about them, they find themselves immediately in their presence.

14, 15. *And when He came to His disciples, He saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning them. And immediately all the people, when they beheld Him, were greatly amazed, and running to Him saluted Him.* The probability is that the face of Jesus Christ was shining like the face of Moses when he came down from the mount, and the people were amazed though not with that same amazement which seized upon Israel when they saw the face of Moses, for Moses had to cover his face with a veil. But they ran to Him and saluted Him. The Glory of Christ attracts, whereas the Glory of Moses repels. The Glory of the Law is terrible, but the Glory of the Gospel is cheering and attractive.

16. *And He asked the scribes, What are you discussing with them?* Like some great commander stepping into the field when his under followers are being beaten, he comes right to the front and charges the foe boldly. Christ said, “What are you discussing with them?”—as much as to say, “Why did you not wait a bit and ask me? I could have answered you if they cannot.”

17, 18. *And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto You my son, which has a dumb spirit, and wherever it seizes him, it throws him down: and he foams at the mouth and gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid.* A case of dreadful epilepsy accompanied with satanic possession.

18, 19. *And I spoke to Your disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not. He answered him and said, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear you? Bring him to Me.* That is a grand piece of advice, and a blessed word of permit—"Bring him to Me." There is no case so bad but if you bring it to Jesus, He can meet it. "Bring him to Me." Now, good Woman, bring your daughter's case to Christ tonight in prayer while you are sitting in the pew. Now, come, Brother, bring the case of your son who seems utterly to be abandoned to vice. Bring the case before Christ tonight! "Bring him to Me." Oh, who would not bring his friend—his wife? Who would not bring her husband or her child unto Jesus Christ? "Bring him to Me."

20. *And they brought him unto Him.* Some came to help the father, probably the bringing of the young man was too much an effort for one alone. "They brought him unto Him." Two or three of you with united prayer can do what, perhaps, one man's prayer would not. Come, help one another! "Bear you one another's burdens" in prayer. I would suggest that if one of you should have an ungodly son or daughter who causes you trouble, you should commune with some of your Brothers and Sisters in Christ and say, "Let us together make this case a matter of prayer till God hears us." And then you must take up a case of theirs, you know, turn and turn about, and see whether God does not in answer to prayer bless one after another that you thus bring to Christ! I know what the result will be—if it is honestly tried in simple confidence in the power of Jesus!

20, 21. *And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming. And He asked his father, how long is it since this came unto him? And he said, of a child. A terrible case.*

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

END OF VOLUME 58

THE BLIND BEGGAR

NO. 266

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, AUGUST 4, 1859,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

“And they came to Jericho: and as He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, Jesus, You son of David, have mercy on me. And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, You son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called. And they called the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise. He calls you. And he, casting away his garment, rose and came to Jesus, And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto you? The blind man said unto Him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Go your way. Your faith has made you whole, And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus in the way.”
Mark 10:46-52.

THIS poor man was beset with two great evils—blindness and poverty. It is sad enough to be blind, but if a man that is blind is in possession of riches, there are ten thousand comforts which may help to cheer the darkness of his eyes and alleviate the sadness of his heart. But to be both blind and poor, these were a combination of the sternest evils. One thinks it scarcely possible to resist the cry of a beggar whom we meet in the street if he is blind. We pity the blind man when he is surrounded with luxury, but when we see a blind man in want and following the beggar's trade in the frequented streets, we can hardly forbear stopping to assist him. This case of Bartimaeus, however, is but a picture of our own. We are all by nature blind and poor. It is true we account ourselves able enough to see—but this is but one phase of our blindness.

Our blindness is of such a kind that it makes us think our vision perfect—whereas, when we are enlightened by the Holy Spirit, we discover our previous sight to have been blindness indeed. Spiritually, we are

blind—we are unable to discern our lost estate—unable to behold the blackness of sin, or the terrors of the wrath to come. The unrenewed mind is so blind that it perceives not the all-attractive beauty of Christ. The Sun of Righteousness may arise with healing beneath His wings, but it were all in vain for those who cannot see His shining. Christ may do many mighty works in their presence, but they do not recognize His glory. We are blind until He has opened our eyes.

But besides being blind we are also by nature poor. Our father Adam spent our birthright, lost our estates. Paradise, the homestead of our race, has become dilapidated and we are left in the depths of beggary without anything with which we may buy bread for our hungry mouths, or raiment for our naked spirits. Blindness and beggary are the lot of all men after a spiritual fashion, till Jesus visits them in love. Look around then, children of God—look around this morning and you shall see in this hall many a counterpart of poor blind Bartimaeus sitting by the wayside begging.

I hope there are many such come here, who though they are blind and naked and poor, nevertheless are begging—longing to get something more than they have—not content with their position. With just enough spiritual life and sensitiveness to know their misery, they have come up to this place begging. Oh that while Jesus passes by this day they may have faith to cry aloud to Him for mercy! Oh may His gracious heart be moved by their thrilling cry, “Jesus You Son of David have mercy on me!” Oh may He turn and give sight unto such, that they may follow Him and go on their way rejoicing!

This morning I shall address myself most particularly to the poor and blind souls here today. The poor blind man’s faith described in this passage of Scripture is a fit picture of the faith which I pray God you may be enabled to exert to the saving of your souls. We shall notice the origin of his faith, how his faith perceived its opportunity when Jesus passed by. We shall listen to his faith while it cries and begs. We shall look upon his faith while it leaps in joyous obedience to the Divine call. And then we shall hear his faith describing his case—“Lord, that I might receive my sight.” And I trust we shall be enabled to rejoice together with this poor believing man, when his sight is restored, as we see him in the beauty of thankfulness and gratitude follow Jesus in the way.

I. First, then, we shall note THE ORIGIN OF THIS POOR BLIND MAN’S FAITH. He had faith, for it was his faith which obtained for him his sight. Now, where did he get it? We are not told in this passage how Bartimaeus came to believe Jesus to be the Messiah. But I think we may very fairly risk a conjecture. It is quite certain that Bartimaeus did not come to believe in Christ from what he saw. Jesus had worked many miracles—

many eyes had seen and many hearts had believed because of what they saw. Bartimaeus also believed, but certainly not as the result of his eyesight, for he was stone-blind. No ray of light had ever burst into his soul. He was shut up in thick darkness and could see nothing. How then was it that he came to believe?

It certainly could not have been because he had traveled much through the country, for blind men stay at home. They care not to journey far. There is nothing they can see. However fair the landscape, they cannot drink it in with their eyes. Whatever lovely spots others may behold, there are no attractions for their blank survey. They therefore stay at home. And especially a mendicant like this, how should he travel? He would be perhaps unknown out of the city in which his father Timaeus had lived—even Jericho. He could not move the heart of strangers to charity, nor would he be likely to find a guide to conduct him throughout the dreary miles of that land. He would be almost necessarily a poor blind stay-at-home.

Then how did he acquire his faith? Methinks it might be in this fashion. On the nearest bank he could find outside Jericho, he sat begging in the sunlight. For blind men always love to bask in the sun. Though they see nothing, there is a kind of glimmering that penetrates the visual organ and they rejoice in it. At least they feel the heat of the great orb of day if they see not his light. Well, as he sat there, he would hear the passers by talking of Jesus of Nazareth and as blind men are usually inquisitive, he would ask them to stay and tell him the story—some tale of what Jesus had done. And they would tell him how He raised the dead and healed the leper. And he would say, “I wonder if He can give sight to the blind.” And one day it came to pass, that he was told Jesus had restored to sight a man who had been born blind. This indeed was the great master-story that the world has to tell, for it had never been so known before in Israel—that a man who had been born blind should have his eyes opened. I think I see the poor man as he hears the story. He drinks it in, claps his hands and cries, “Then there is yet hope for me. Perhaps the Prophet will pass this way and if He does, oh I will cry to Him, I will beg Him to open my eyes, too. For if the worst case has been cured, then surely mine may be.”

Many and many a day as he sat there, he would call to the passerby again and would say, “Come tell me the story of the man that was born blind and of Jesus of Nazareth that opened his eyes,” and perhaps he would even get tiresome, as blind men are desirous. He must hear the story told him a hundred times over and always would there be a smile on the poor fellow’s face when he heard the refreshing narrative. It never could be told too often, for he loved to hear it. To him it was like a cool refreshing breeze in the heat of a burning sun. “Tell it to me, tell it to me, tell it to me again,” says he—“the sweet story of the man that opened the

eyes of the blind.” And methinks as he sat all alone and unable to divert his mind with many things, he would always keep his heart fixed on that one narrative and turn it over and over and over again, till in his day-dreams he would half think he could see and sometimes almost imagine that his own eyes were going to be opened, too.

Perhaps on one of those occasions, as he was turning this over in his mind, some text of Scripture he had heard in the synagogue, occurred to him—he heard that Messiah should come to open the eyes of the blind—and quick in thought, having better eyes within than he had without, he came at once to the conclusion that the man who could open the eyes of the blind was none other than the Messiah, And from that day he was a secret disciple of Jesus. He might have heard him scoffed at, but he did not scoff. How could he scoff at one who had opened the eyes of the blind? He might have heard many a passerby reviling Christ and calling Him an impostor, but he could not join in the reviling. How could he be a deceiver who gave sight to poor blind men? I fancy this would be the cherished dream of his life. And perhaps for the two or three years of the Savior’s ministry, the one thought of the poor blind man would be, “Jesus of Nazareth opened the eyes of one that was blind.” That story which he had heard led him to believe Jesus must be the predicted Messiah.

Now, O you spiritually blind, you spiritually poor, how is it you have not believed in Christ? You have heard the wondrous deeds which He has done—“Faith comes by hearing.” You have understood how one after another has been pardoned and forgiven. You have stood in the House of God and listened to the confession of the penitent and the joyous shout of the Believer and yet you believe not. You have journeyed up year after year to the sanctuary of God and you have heard many stories—many a glorious narrative of the pardoning power of Christ. And how is it, O you spiritually blind, that you have never thought on Him? Why is it you have not turned this over and over in your minds? “This man receives sinners and will He not receive me?” How is it that you have not recollected that He who put away the sin of Paul and Magdalene can put away yours also? Surely, if but one story told into the ear of the poor blind man could give him faith, if his faith came but by one hearing, how is it that though you have heard many times that there was no salvation without faith in Christ and listened to many an earnest appeal, yet you have not believed?

Yet, it may be I have among these poor blind men some here today that are simply believing. You have never yet laid hold of faith, but still in the depths of your soul there is a something which says, “Yes, He is able to save me. I know He has power to forgive,” and sometimes the voice speaks a little louder and it cheers your heart with a thought like this, “Go to Him, He will not cast you away, He has never cast out one yet who did

venture upon His power and goodness.” Well, my dear Hearer, if you are in this plight, you are happy and I am a happy man to have the privilege of addressing you—it shall not be long before the faith within you, which has been born by hearing, shall acquire strength enough to exercise itself to gain the blessing. That is the first thing—the origin of the faith of poor blind Bartimaeus, it doubtless came by hearing.

II. Now, in the next place, we shall notice his faith in ITS QUICKNESS AT GRASPING THE GRACIOUS OPPORTUNITY.

Jesus had been through Jericho and as He went into the city there was a blind man standing by the way and Jesus healed him. Bartimaeus, however, seems to have resided at the other side of Jericho, therefore he did not get a blessing till Christ was about to leave it. He is sitting down upon his customary spot by the wayside where some friend has left him, that he might remain there all day and beg and he hears a great noise and trampling of feet. He wonders what it is and he asks a passerby what is that noise? “Why all this tumult?” And the answer is, “Jesus of Nazareth passes by.” That is but small encouragement, yet his faith had now arrived at such a strength that this was quite enough for him, that Jesus of Nazareth passes by.

Unbelief would have said, “He passes by, there is no hearing for you. He passes by, there is no hope of mercy. He is about to leave and He takes no notice of you.” Why, if you and I needed encouragement, we should want Christ to stand still. We should need that someone should say, “Jesus of Nazareth is standing still and looking for you.” Yes, but this poor man’s faith was of such a character that it could feed on any dry crust on which our puny little faith would have starved. He was like that poor woman, who when she was repulsed, said, “Truth, Lord, I am but a dog, yet the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from the master’s table.”

He only heard “Jesus of Nazareth passes by.” But that was enough for him. It was a slender opportunity. He might have reasoned thus with himself, “Jesus is passing by, He is just going out of Jericho. Surely he cannot stay now He is on a journey.” No, rather did he argue thus with himself, “if He is going out of Jericho, so much the more reason that I should stop Him, for this may be my last chance.” And, therefore, what unbelief would argue as a reason for stopping his mouth did but open it the wider. Unbelief might have said, “He is surrounded by a great multitude of people, He cannot get at you. His disciples are round about Him, too. He will be so busy in addressing them that He will never regard your feeble cry.” “Yes,” said he, “so much the greater reason then that I should cry with all my might.” And he makes the very multitude of people become a fresh argument why he should shout aloud, “Jesus of Nazareth have mercy upon me.” So, however slender the opportunity, yet it encouraged him.

And now my dear Hearers, we turn to you, again. Faith has been in your heart perhaps for many a day, but how foolish have you been. You have not availed yourself of encouraging opportunities as you might have done. How many times has Christ not only passed by, but stopped and knocked at your door and stood in your house? He has wooed and invited you and yet you would not come, still trembling and wavering, you dare not exercise the faith you have and risk the results and come boldly to Him. He has stood in your streets—"Lo these many years," till the poor blind man's hair would have turned gray with age. He is standing in the street today—today He addresses you and says, "Sinner come to Me and live." Today is mercy freely presented to you. Today is the declaration made—"Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely."

Poor unbelieving Heart, will you not, dare you not, take advantage of the encouragement to come to Him? Your encouragements are infinitely greater than those of this poor blind man, let them not be lost upon you. Come now, this very moment, cry aloud to Him now, ask Him to have mercy upon you, for now He not only passes by, but He presents Himself with outstretched arms and cries, "Come unto Me and I will give you rest and life and salvation." Such was the encouragement of this man's faith and I would that something in the service of this morning, might give encouragement to some poor Bartimaeus, who is sitting or standing here.

III. In the third place, having noticed how the faith of the blind man discovered and seized upon this opportunity, the passing by of the gracious Savior, we have TO LISTEN TO THE CRY OF FAITH.

The poor blind man sitting there is informed that it is Jesus of Nazareth. Without a moment's pause or ado, he is up and begins to cry—"You Son of David, have mercy upon me—You Son of David, have mercy on me." But he is in the middle of a fair discourse and his hearers like not that he should be interrupted—"Hold your tongue, blind man. Begone! He cannot attend to you." Yet what does the narrative say about him? "He cried the more a great deal. Not only cried he more, but he cries a great deal more. "You Son of David, have mercy on me." "Oh," says Peter, "do not interrupt the Master, what are you so noisy for?" "You Son of David, have mercy on Me," he repeats it again. "Remove him," says one, "he interrupts the whole service, take him away," and so they tried to move him. Yet he cries the more vigorously and vehemently, "You Son of David, have mercy on me—You Son of David, have mercy on me." Methinks we hear his shout. It is not to be imitated—no artist could throw into an utterance such vehemence or such emotion as this man would cast into it.—"You Son of David, have mercy on me."

Every word would tell—every syllable would suggest an argument—there would be the very strength and might and blood and sinew of that

man's life cast into it. He would be like Jacob wrestling with the angel and every word would be a hand to grasp him that he might not go. "You Son of David, have mercy on me." We have here a picture of the power of faith. In every case, Sinner, if you would be saved, your faith must exercise itself in crying. The gate of Heaven is to be opened only in one way, by the very earnest use of the knocker of prayer. You cannot have your eyes opened until your mouth is opened. Open your mouth in prayer and He shall open your eyes to see. So shall you find joy and gladness. Mark, when a man has faith in the soul and earnestness combined with it, he will pray, indeed. Call you not those things prayers that you hear read in the Churches. Imagine not that those orations are prayers that you hear in our Prayer Meetings.

Prayer is something nobler than all these. That is prayer, when the poor soul in some weighty trouble, fainting and thirsty, lifts up its streaming eyes and wrings its hands and beats its bosom and then cries, "You Son of David, have mercy on me." Your cold orations will never reach the Throne of God. It is the burning lava of the soul that has a furnace within—a very volcano of grief and sorrow—it is that burning lava of prayer that finds its way to God. No prayer ever reaches God's heart which does not come from our hearts. Nine out of ten of the prayers which you listen to in our public services have so little zeal in them, that if they obtained a blessing it would be a miracle of miracles, indeed.

My dear Hearers, are you now seeking Christ in earnest prayer? Be not afraid of being too earnest or too persevering. Go to Christ this day, agonize and wrestle with Him. Beg Him to have mercy on you and if He hears you not, go to Him again and again and again. Seven times a day call upon Him and resolve in your heart that you will never cease from prayer till the Holy Spirit has revealed to your soul the pardon of your sin. When once the Lord brings a man to this resolve, "I will be saved. If I perish, I will still go to the Throne of Grace and perish only there," that man cannot perish. He is a saved man and shall see God's face with joy! The best of us pray with a little spasmodic earnestness and then we cease. We begin again and then once more the fervor ceases and we leave off our prayers.

If we would get Heaven, we must carry it not by one desperate assault, but by a continuous blockade. We must take it with the red hot shot of fervent prayer. But this must be fired day and night, until at last the city of Heaven yields to us. The kingdom of Heaven suffers violence and the violent must take it by force. Behold the courage of this man. He is hindered by many, but he will not cease to pray. So if the flesh, the devil and your own hearts should bid you cease your supplication, never do so, but so much the more a great cry aloud—

“You Son of David have mercy on me.”

Observe here the simplicity of this man’s prayer. He did not want a liturgy or a prayer book on this occasion. There was something he needed and he asked for that. When we have our needs at hand they will usually suggest the proper language.

I remember a remark of quaint old Bunyan, speaking of those who make prayers for others, “The Apostle Paul said he knew not what to pray for and yet,” says he “there are many infinitely inferior to the Apostle Paul, who can write prayers—who not only know what to pray for and how to pray, but who know how other people should pray and not only that, but who know how they ought to pray from the first day of January to the last of December.” We cannot dispense with the fresh influence of the Holy Spirit suggesting words in which our needs may be couched. And as to the idea that any form of prayer will ever suit an awakened and enlightened Believer, or will ever be fit and proper for the lip of a penitent sinner—I cannot imagine it. This man cried from his heart, the words that came first—the simplest which could possibly express his desire—“You Son of David, have mercy on me.” Go and do you likewise, you poor blind sinner and the Lord will hear you, as He did Bartimaeus.

High over the buzz and noise of the multitude and the sound of the trampling of feet is heard a sweet voice, which tells of mercy and of love and of grace. But louder than that voice is heard a piercing cry—a cry repeated many and many a time—which gathers strength in repetition. And though the throat that utters it is hoarse, yet does the cry wax louder and louder and stronger still—“Jesus, You Son of David, have mercy on me.” The Master stops. The sound of misery in earnest to be relieved can never be neglected by Him. He looks around—there sits Bartimaeus. The Savior can see him, though he cannot see the Savior—“Bring him here to Me,” said He. “Let him come to Me, that I may have mercy on him.” And now, they who had bid him hold his clamor change their note and gathering around him they say, “Be of good cheer. Rise, He calls you.”

Ah, poor comforters! They would not soothe him when he needed it. What cared he now for all they had to say? The Master had spoken. That was enough, without their officious assistance. Nevertheless they cry, “Arise, He calls you.” And they lead him, or are about to lead him, to Christ, but he needs no leading. Pushing them aside he hurls back the garment in which he wrapped himself by night—no doubt, a ragged one—and casting that away, the blind man seems as if he really saw at once. The sound guides him and with a leap, leaving his cloak behind him, waving his hands for very gladness, there he stands in the presence of Him who shall give him sight!

IV. We pause here to observe HOW EAGERLY HE OBEYED THE CALL. The Master had but to speak, but to stand still and command him to be called and he comes. No pressure is needed. Peter need not pull him by one arm and John by the other. No. He leaps forward and is glad to come. “He calls me and shall I stand back?”

And now, my dear Hearers, how many of you have been called under the sound of the ministry and yet you have not come? Why is it? Did you think that Christ did not mean it when He said—“Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest?” Why is it that you still keep on at your labors and are still heavy laden? Why do you not come? Oh, come! Leap to Him that calls you! I pray you cast away the raiment of your worldliness, the garment of your sin. Cast away the robe of your self-righteousness and come, come NOW! Why is it that I bid you? Surely if you will not come at the Savior’s bidding, you will not come at mine! If your own stern necessities do not make you attend to His gracious call, surely nothing I can say can ever move you. O my poor blind Brothers and Sisters! You, who cannot see Christ to be your Savior, you that are full of guilt and fear, He calls you—

**“Come you weary, heavy laden,
Lost and ruined by the fall.”**

Come you that have no hope, no righteousness. You outcast, you desponding, you distressed, you lost, you ruined, come! come today! Whoever will, in your ears today does mercy cry, “Arise, He calls you!” O, Savior! Call them effectually. Call now—let the Spirit speak.

O Spirit of the living God, bid the poor prisoner come and let him leap to loose his chains. I know that which kept me a long time from the Savior was the idea that He had never called me—and yet when I came to Him, I discovered that long before that He had invited me but I had closed my ear. I thought surely He had invited everyone else to Him, but I must be left out, the poorest and the vilest of them all. O Sinner! If such is your consciousness, then you are one to whom the invitation is specially addressed. Trust Him now, just as you are, with all your sins about you—come to Him and ask Him to forgive you. Plead His blood and merits and you cannot, shall not, plead in vain.

V. We proceed towards the conclusion. The man has come to Christ, let US LISTEN TO HIS SUIT. Jesus, with loving condescension takes him by the hand and in order to test him and that all the crowd might see that he really knew what he wanted, Jesus said to him—“What will you that I should do unto you?” How plain the man’s confession, not one word too many—he could not have said it in a word less—“Lord that I might receive my sight.” There was no stammering here, no stuttering and saying, “Lord

I hardly know what to say.” He just told it at once—“Lord that I might receive my sight.”

Now if there is a hearer in this house who has a secret faith in Christ and who has heard the invitation this morning, let me beseech you go home to your chamber and there, kneeling by your bedside, by faith picture the Savior saying to you—“What will you that I should do unto you?” Fall on your knees and without hesitation tell Him all, tell Him you are guilty and you desire that He would pardon you. Confess your sins. Keep none of them back. Say, “Lord, I implore You pardon my drunkenness, my profanity, or whatever it may be that I have been guilty of.” And then still imagine you hear Him saying—“What will you that I should do unto you?” Tell Him, “Lord I would be kept from all these sins in the future. I shall not be content with being pardoned, I want to be renewed.”

Tell Him you have a hard heart, ask Him to soften it. Tell Him you have a blind eye and you cannot see your interest in Christ. Ask Him to open it. Confess before Him you are full of iniquity and prone to wander. Ask Him to take your heart and wash it and then to set it upon things above and suffer it no longer to be fond of the things of earth. Tell Him plainly—make a frank and full confession in His presence. And what if it should happen, my dear hearer, that this very day, while you are in your chamber, Christ should give you the touch of Grace, put your sins away, save your soul and give you the joy to know that you are now a child of God and now a heir of Heaven? Imitate the blind man in the explicitness and straightforwardness of his confession and his request—“Lord, that I might receive my sight.”

Once again, how cheering the fact, the blind man had no sooner stated his desire than immediately he received his sight. Oh, how he must have leaped in that moment! What joys must have rushed in upon his spirit! He saw not the men as trees walking, but he received his sight at once. Not a glimmer, but a bright full burst of sunlight fell upon his benighted eye-balls. Some persons do not believe in instantaneous conversions, nevertheless they are facts. A man has come into this hall with all his sins about him and before he has left it has felt his sins forgiven. He has come here a hardened reprobate, but he has gone away from that day forth to lead a new life and walk in the fear of God. The fact is, there are many conversions that are gradual. But regeneration after all, at least in the part of it called “quickenings,” must be instantaneous and justification is given to a man as swiftly as the flash of lightning. We are full of sin one hour, but it is forgiven in an instant. And sins, past, present and to come, are cast to the four winds of Heaven in less time than the clock takes to beat the death of a second. The blind man saw immediately.

And now what would you imagine this man would do as soon as his eyes were opened. Has he a father? Will he not go to see him? Has he a sister, or a brother—will he not long to get to his household? Above all has he a partner of his poor blind existence, will he not seek her out to go and tell her that now he can behold the face of one who has so long loved and wept over him? Will he not now want to go and see the temple and the glories of it? Does he not now desire to look upon the hills and all their beauties and behold the sea and its storms and all its wonders? No—there is but one thing that poor blind man now longs for—it is that he may always see the man who has opened his eyes. “He followed Jesus in the way.”

What a beautiful picture this is of a true convert. The moment his sins are forgiven, the one thing he wants to do is to serve Christ. His tongue begins to itch to tell somebody else of the mercy he has found. He longs to go off to the next shop and tell some work-fellow that his sins are all pardoned. He cannot be content. He thinks he could *preach* now. Put him in the pulpit and though there were ten thousand before him, he would not blush to say, “He has taken me out of the miry clay and out of the horrible pit and set my feet upon a Rock and put a new song into my mouth and established my goings.” All he now asks is, “Lord, I would follow You where ever You go. Let me never lose Your company. Make my communion with You everlasting. Cause my love to increase. May my service be continual and in this life may I walk with Jesus and in the world to come all I ask is that I may live with Him.”

You see the crowd going along now. Who is that man in the midst with face so joyous? Who is that man who has lost his upper garment? See, he wears the dress of a beggar. Who is he? You would not think there is any beggary about him. For his step is firm and his eye glisten and sparkles. And listen to him—as he goes along, sometimes he is uttering a little hymn or song! At other times when others are singing, listen to his notes, the loudest of them all! Who is this man, always so happy and so full of thankfulness.? It is the poor blind Bartimaeus, who once sat by the wayside begging. And do you see yonder man, his brother and his prototype? The one who sings so heartily in the House of God and who when he is sitting in that house, or walking by the way is continually humming to himself, some strain of praise? Oh, it is that drunkard who has had his sins forgiven! It is that swearer who has had his profanity cleansed out! It is she who was once a harlot, but is now one of the daughters of Jerusalem—‘tis she who once led others to Hell, who now washes her Redeemer’s feet and wipes them with the hairs of her head!

Oh, may God grant that this story of Bartimaeus may be written over again in your experience and may you all at last meet where the eternal

light of God shall have chased away all blindness and where the inhabitants shall never say, "I am sick."

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

GOOD CHEER FROM CHRIST'S CALL AND FROM HIMSELF NO. 3277

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 1911.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“And they came to Jericho: and as Jesus went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, You Son of David, have mercy on me! And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, You Son of David, have mercy on me! And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they called the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise, He calls you. And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto you? The blind man said unto Him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Go your way; your faith has made you whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.”
Mark 10:46-52.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text is #266, Volume 5—THE BLIND BEGGAR—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

The blind man described in this narrative is a picture of what I earnestly desire that every hearer and reader of my sermons may become. In his first condition, Bartimaeus was a type of what the sinner is by nature—blind, hopelessly blind, unless the healing Savior shall interfere and pour in upon him the light of day. It is not, however, to this point that we shall now turn our thoughts, but to his conduct while seeking sight. This man, by God's great mercy, so acted that he may be held up as an example to all who feel their spiritual blindness, and earnestly desire to see the Light of Grace!

Several of the blind men of Scripture are very interesting individuals. There was one of the them, you remember—the man born blind—who baffled the Pharisees by answering them with cool courage mixed with shrewdness and mother wit. Well might his parents say that he was of age, for he had all his wits about him. Blind as he had been, he could see a great deal—and when his eyes were opened, he proved beyond all dispute that his questioners deserved the name of “blind Pharisees” which the Lord Jesus gave them!

Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, is a notable character. There is a sharp-cut individuality and crispness of style about him which makes him a remarkable person. He is one who thinks and acts for himself, is not soon daunted nor easily swayed, makes sure of what he knows and when he is questioned gives a clear reply. I suppose that as he sat in the midnight darkness which was his perpetual lot, he thought much. And having heard that from the seed of David there had arisen a great Prophet who worked miracles and preached glad tidings to the poor, he studied the matter over and concluded that His claims were true. A blind man might well see that fact, if at all familiar with Old Testament prophecy. And as he heard more and more of Jesus, and compared Him with the Prophetic description of the coming King, he felt convinced that Jesus was the promised Messiah. Then, he thought within Himself, "If He were ever to come this way, I would announce myself as one of His followers. I would proclaim Him King, whether others acknowledged His royalty or not. I would act as a herald to the great Prince and shout aloud that He is the Son of David." Then he further resolved to seek the pity of the Messiah and beg for his sight, for it was foretold that the Messiah would come to open blind eyes! This resolution he had so long dwelt upon that when the time did come, and he heard that Jesus passed by, he immediately availed himself of the opportunity, and cried out with all his might, "You Son of David, have mercy on me!" Oh, that you who read these lines would think over the claims of Jesus and come to the same conclusion as the blind beggar of Jericho!

Learn a simple lesson from this man, I pray you. He made use of what sense he had. He could *hear* if he could not see. We have heard persons talk about their natural inability to perform gracious acts and we have not answered them because it will be time enough to talk of what they cannot do when they have done what they can do! There are some things which we are sure they can do, and these they have neglected—it is mere hypocrisy, therefore, for them to be pleading lack of power when they do not use the strength they have. They do not constantly hear the Gospel, or, if they do, they do not listen with attention and, consequently, they do not get faith, for "faith comes by hearing." In the case of Bartimaeus, everything was honest and sincere—the man had no eyes, but he had ears and a tongue and he took care to use the faculties which remained to him, so that when the Savior passed by—he cried to Him with all his might! He made his confession of faith and offered, at the same time, a personal petition for mercy as he cried aloud, "You Son of David, have mercy on me!"

I wish to drive at one point only—which will stand out clearly when I have finished. But I must go a little roundabout, to compass my design. May the Holy Spirit dictate every word!

I. My first remark is that this man is a pattern for all seekers BECAUSE HE SOUGHT THE LORD UNDER GREAT DISCOURAGEMENTS.

He cried to the Lord Jesus so loudly, so unceremoniously and at so unseasonable a time, as others thought, that they checked him and bade him hold his peace! But this was like pouring spirits upon a fire and it only made him the more intense in his pleading.

Notice his first discouragement—*no one prompted him to cry to Christ*. No friend lovingly whispered in his ears, “Jesus of Nazareth passes by! Now is your opportunity. Seek His face!” Possibly you, dear Friend, may have been so neglected that you have sighed out, “No man cares for my soul.” Then yours is a parallel case to that of Bartimaeus. Very few can fairly thus complain if they live among lively Christians, for, in all probability, they have often been invited, entreated and almost compelled to come to Christ! Some even complain of Christian importunity and are weary of it, not liking to be spoken to about their souls. “Intrusion,” it has been called by some cavilers, but indeed it is a blessed intrusion upon a sinner, slumbering in his sin over the brink of Hell, to disturb his slumber and awaken him to flee for his life! Would you not think it very ridiculous, were a house on fire, if the fireman declined to fetch anybody out of the house because he had not been introduced to the family? Must he send his card up and obtain leave to enter? I reckon that a breach of courtesy is often a most courteous thing when the desire is the benefit of an immortal soul! If I say a very personal thing and it causes anyone to seek and find salvation, I know that he will never blame me on that score!

Still, a person may reside where there is no one to invite him to seek Jesus. And if so, he may recall the example of this man, who, all unprompted, sought the Savior's aid. He knew his need and, believing that Jesus could give him his eyesight, he did not need pressing to pray to Him. He thought for himself, as all ought to do. Will not you do the same, my dear Friend, especially on a matter so weighty as the salvation of your own soul? What if you have never been the subject of friendly importunities and entreaties? You ought not to require them! You are possessed of your reason—you know that you are already sinful and will be lost forever unless the Lord Jesus saves you—does not common sense suggest that you should cry to Him at once? Be as least as sensible as this poor blind beggar and let the voice of your earnest prayer go up to Jesus, the Son of David.

The discouragement of Bartimaeus was still greater, for when he did begin to cry, *those around discouraged him*. Read the 48th verse, “*Many charged him that he should hold his peace.*” Some for one reason and some for another, charged him that he should hold his peace. They did not merely advise him, but they “charged him.” They spoke like people in authority. “Be quiet, will you? Be still! What are you doing?” Judging him to be guilty of a grave impropriety in disturbing the eloquence of the great Preacher, they would have hushed him to silence! Those who do not smart under a sense of sin often think awakened sinners are out of

order and fanatical when they are only in earnest. The people near the blind beggar blamed him for his bad taste in shouting so loudly, "You, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

But he was not to be stopped. On the contrary, we are told that "he cried the more," and not only the more, but "the more a great deal," so that it was time wasted to try to silence him! One man thought that surely he would put him down, and therefore spoke most peremptorily, but he gained nothing by the effort, for the blind man shouted still more lustily, "You Son of David, have mercy on me!" Here was an opportunity for having his eyes opened and he would not miss it to please anybody! Folks around him might misjudge him, but that would not matter if Jesus opened his eyes. Sight was the one thing necessary, and for that he could put up with rebuffs and reproaches. To him, discouragements were encouragements and when they said, "Be silent," he cried the more a great deal! His manhood and determination were developed by opposition. Friend, how is it with you? Can you defy the opinion of ungodly men and dare to be singular that you may be saved? Can you brave opposition, discouragement and resolve that if mercy is to be had, you will have it? Opposers will call your determination obstinacy, but never mind, your firmness is the stuff of which martyrs are made! In a wrong cause, a strong will creates incorrigible rebels, but if it is sanctified, it gives great force to character and steadfastness to faith! Bartimaeus must have sight and he will have sight—there is no stopping him—he is blind to all hindrances and pushes through! He had been begging so long that he knew how to beg importunately. He was as sturdy a beggar with Christ as he had been with men and so he followed up his suit in the teeth of all who would stave him off.

There was, however, one more discouragement that must have weighed on him far more than the need of prompting and the presence of opposition—*Jesus did not answer him at first*. He had evidently, according to the run of the narrative, cried out to Jesus many times, for how else could it be said, "he cried the more a great deal"? His cry had waxed stronger and stronger, yet there was no reply! What was worse, the Master had been moving on. We are sure of that, because we are told in the 49th verse that Jesus, at length, "stood still," which implies that, before this time, He had been walking along, speaking to the crowd around Him as He went. Jesus was passing by—passing by without granting his desire, without giving a sign of having heard him!

Are you, my Friend, one who has cried for mercy long and found it not? Have you been praying for a month and is there no answer? Is it still longer? Have you spent weary days and nights in waiting and watching for mercy? There is a mistake at the bottom of the whole affair which I will not explain just now, but I will tell you how to act. Even if Jesus does not appear to hear you, be not discouraged, but cry to Him "the more a great deal." Remember, He loves importunity, and sometimes He waits a while on purpose that our prayers may gather strength—and that

we may be the more earnest. Cry to Him, dear Heart! Be not desponding! Do not give up in despair! Mercy's gate has oiled hinges and it swings easily—push at it again. If you will use the knocker long enough, the porter will appear to you and say, "Come in, you blessed of the Lord, why do you stand outside?" Do have the courage of this poor blind man and say, "Though for a while He may not hear me, yet still will I confess Him to be the Son of David, and so avow that He is able to save me, and still I will cry to Him, 'You Son of David, have mercy on me!'"

Note, then, that this blind man is an example to us because he did not take much notice of discouragements, whatever they were. He had within himself a spring of action which none could dry up! He was resolved to draw near to the Great Physician and put his case into His hands. O my dear Friend, let this be your firm determination and you, too, shall yet be saved!

II. Observe, in the second place that there came a change over the scene. "Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called." Here we see him under a warmer and brighter light for a moment, and we remark that **AFTER A WHILE HE RECEIVED ENCOURAGEMENT.**

The encouragement was not given to him by our Lord, but by the same persons who had formerly rebuked him. Christ did not say to him, "Be of good comfort," because the man was not in need of such a word. He was by no means backward, or disconsolate, or staggered by the opposition he had met with. Jesus Christ said, "Be of good cheer" in the case of the poor paralytic man who was let down by cords from the roof because he was sad at heart. But this man was already of good courage and, therefore, the Savior gave him no superfluous consolation. The onlookers were pleased with the hope of seeing a miracle and so offered their encouragements which were not of any great worth or weight since they came from lips which a few minutes before had been singing quite another tune!

At this time, I wish to give to all anxious souls who are trying to find their Savior, some little word of cheer, and yet I warn them not to think too much of it, for they need something far better than anything that man can say! The comfort given to Bartimaeus was drawn from the fact that Christ called him. "Be of good comfort, rise! *He calls you.*" To every sinner who is anxious to find Jesus, this is a note from the silver trumpet! You are invited to Jesus and need not, therefore, be afraid to come! In one sense or another, it is true of all who hear the Gospel, "He calls you," and, therefore, to everyone of our hearers we may say, "Be of good cheer."

First, it is true that *Jesus calls each one of us by the universal call of the Gospel*, for its message is unto all people. Ministers are bid to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. You, my Friend, are a creature and, consequently, the Gospel has a call for you, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." We are bid to preach

the Gospel of the Kingdom throughout all nations, and to cry, "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." "Whoever." There is no limit to it and it would be a violation of our commission if we would attempt to enclose what God has made as free as the air, and as universal as manhood! "The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commands all men everywhere to repent." This is the universal call. "Repent, you, and believe the Gospel." In this there is comfort of hope for all who desire to come to God—

***"None are excluded hence but those
Who do themselves exclude!
Welcome, the learned and polite,
The ignorant and rude."***

But there is still more comfort in what, for distinction's sake, we will name *the character call*. Many promises in the Word of God are directed to persons of a certain character. For instance, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Do you labor? Are you heavy laden? Then Christ especially calls you and promises rest to you if you come to Him. Here is another, "Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters." Are you thirsting after something better than this world can give? Then the Lord bids you come to the waters of His Grace. "And he that has no money, let him come." Is that you? Are you destitute of merit—destitute of everything that could purchase the favor of God? Then you are the person whom He specially invites! We find a very large number of invitations, both in the Old and New Testament, addressed to persons in certain conditions and positions. And when we meet with a person whose case is thus anticipated, we are bound to bid him be of good cheer because the Lord is plainly calling him.

Next, there is *a ministerial call*, which is made useful to many. At times, the Lord enables His servants to give calls to people in a very remarkable way. They describe the case so accurately, even to the little touches, that the hearer says, "Somebody must have told the preacher about me." When personal and pointed words are thus put into our mouths by the Holy Spirit, we may give our hearer comfort and say, "Arise, He calls you." What said the woman of Samaria? "Come, see a Man which told me all things that I ever did: is not this the Christ?" When your inmost secrets are revealed—when the Word of God enters you as the priest's keen knife opened the sacrificial victim, laying bare your inward and secret thoughts and intents, you may say, "Now have I felt the power of that Word which is quick and powerful. Oh, that I might also know its healing power!" When a call to repentance and faith comes on the back of a minute personal description, you may assuredly gather that the Lord has sent this message especially to you—and it is your right and privilege at once to feel the comfort of the fact that Jesus calls *you*. "To you is the word of this salvation sent."

Yet there is another call which overtops these three, for the universal call and the character call and the ministerial call are none of them *effec-*

tual to salvation unless they are attended with the Holy Spirit's own personal and *effectual call*.

Dear Friend, when you feel within yourself a secret drawing to Christ which you do not understand, but yet cannot resist—when you experience a tenderness of spirit, a softness of heart towards the Lord—when your soul kindles with a hope to which it was previously a stranger, and your heart begins to sigh and almost to sing at the same time for love of God—when the Spirit of God brings Jesus near you, and brings you near to Jesus—then we may apply to you this message, “Be of good comfort, rise. He calls you.”

III. Thus have I tried to set this man before you as receiving comfort. But we shall see that HE LEAPED OVER BOTH DISCOURAGEMENT AND ENCOURAGEMENT AND CAME TO JESUS HIMSELF!

Bartimaeus did not care one whit more for the comfort than he did for the rebuffs of those around him. This is a point to be well observed. You who are seeking Jesus must not rest in our encouragements, but press on to Jesus. We would cheer you, but we hope you will not be satisfied with our cheering. Do what this blind man did! Let us read the text again—“Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they called the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise. He calls you.” “And (it should be, “but,” not, “and”) he, casting away his garment, rose and came to Jesus.” He did not give them a “thank you” for their comfort. He did not stop half a minute to accept or to reject it. He did not need to—he wanted Christ, and nothing else!

Dear Friend, whenever any man with the best intentions in the world, tries to comfort you before you believe in Jesus, I hope you will pass him by and press on to the Lord, Himself, for all comfort short of Christ, Himself, is perilous comfort! You must come at once to Christ. You must hasten personally to Jesus, and have your eyes opened by Him. You must not be comforted till He comforts you by working a miracle of Grace. I fear we pamper you too much in unbelief, applying balm that does not come from the mountains of myrrh, nor from the Sacrifice of our redeeming Lord. I fear that we talk as if there were balm in Gilead, but there is none anywhere except at Calvary! If there is a balm in Gilead, the Lord enquires, “Why then is not the health of the daughter of My people recovered?” The ointment of comfort—apart from Christ—has been tried long enough and has healed none! It is high time to point you to Christ Jesus, Himself! Even the consolation to be drawn from the fact of a man's being called requires much caution in its use lest we do mischief with it. The true eye-salve is with Jesus, Himself, and unless the soul comes actually into personal contact with Christ, no other comforts ought to satisfy it, for they cannot save. Note with admiration, then, that this man did not content himself with the best comforts that friendly lips could utter, but he was eager to reach the Son of David!

We read first that *he arose*. He had been sitting down before, wrapped up in his great cloak in which he had often sat begging, but now that he heard that he was called, he, according to some versions, "leaped to his feet." The expression may be, perhaps, too strong, but at least he rose up eagerly and was no laggard! His opportunity had come, and he was ready for it! No, *hungering* for the gift! Now, dear Friend, I pray you, let neither discouragements nor comforts keep you sitting still, but rise with eagerness! Oh, be stirred up to seek the Lord! Let all that is within you be awakened to come unto the Savior!

The blind man was on his feet in far less time than it takes to tell. And as he rose, *he flung off his old cloak* which might have hindered him. He did not care what he left or lost as long as he found his sight! His mantle had, no doubt, been very precious to him many a time when he was a poor beggar, but now that he needed to get to Jesus, he flung it away as if it were worth nothing so that he might get through the throng more quickly and reach the One in whom his hopes centered! So then, if anything impedes you in coming to your Savior, fling it off! God help you to be rid of self and sin and everything that is in the way! If any ill company you have been accustomed to keep. If any bad habit into which you have fallen. If anything dear as life hinders you from simple faith in Jesus, regard it as an evil to be renounced! Off with it and make a rush to Him who calls you. Now, even now, draw near and cast yourself at the Redeemer's feet. Say within yourself, "Encouraged or discouraged, I have weighed the matter, and I perceive that faith in Christ will save me. Jesus Christ will give me peace and rest, and I mean to have Him at once, whoever hinders or helps."

Then we are told that *he came to Jesus*. He did not stop halfway, but emboldened by Christ's call, he came right up to Him. He did not stay with Peter, or James, or John, or any of them, but he came to Jesus! Oh, that you, my Friend, may have faith in Jesus Christ and trust in Him at once, putting your case by a distinct and personal act into Jesus Christ's hands that He may save you!

Our Lord was well aware that this man knew His name and Character and so without giving him further instruction, He addressed him in these words, "What will you that I should do unto you?" Our Lord's addresses to persons were usually based upon their condition. He knew that this man very clearly understood what he needed and so He put the question that he might only give the answer. "What will you that I should do unto you?" "Lord," he said, "that I might look up," or, as our version has it, "that I might receive my sight." Go, dear Friend, to Jesus whether comforted or discouraged, and tell Him what ails you. Describe your case in plain words. Do not say, "I cannot pray. I cannot find language." Any language will do if it is sincere. In the matter of speech, Jesus does not need hyacinths from a conservatory—He is delighted with field flowers plucked from any hedge where you can find them! Give to Him such words as come first to hand when your desires are fully awake. Tell Him

you are a wretch undone without His Sovereign Grace. Tell Him you are a sinner worthy of death. Tell Him you have a hard heart. Tell Him you are a drunkard, or a swearer, if such is the case. Tell Him all your heart, as the woman did of whom we read in the Gospel. Then tell Him that you need forgiveness and a new heart. Speak out your soul and hide nothing. Out with it! Out with it! Do not stay listening to sermons or consulting with Christian friends, but get to your chamber and speak with Jesus! This will do you good. It may be well to go into an enquiry room to be helped by an earnest Evangelist, but it is infinitely better to make your own chamber your enquiry room, and there enquire of the Lord, Himself, on your own account. May the Divine Spirit lead you to do this now, if you have never accepted Jesus before! So, when Bartimaeus had stated his case in faith, he received more than he had asked for! He received salvation—so the word may be rendered.

He was made whole, and so saved. Whatever, therefore, had caused his blindness was entirely taken away—he had his sight and he could look up a saved man! Do you believe that Jesus Christ is as able to save souls as He was to heal bodies? Do you believe that, in His Glory, He is as able to save now as He was when He was a humble Man here below? Why, if there is any difference, He must have much more power than He had then! Do you believe that He is the same loving Savior now as He was when here on earth? O Soul, I pray you to argue this out with yourself and say, “I will go to Jesus straight away. I never find that He cast out any—why should He cast out me? No bodily disease baffled Him and He is Master of the soul as well as of the body—why should my soul disease baffle Him? I will even go and lie at His feet and trust Him, and see whether He will save me or not. Discouraged or encouraged, I will have done with men, and I will go to the Savior.” That is the lesson which I would have every unsaved soul learn! I would have him go beyond the outward means of Grace to the secret fountain of Grace, even to the great Sacrifice for sin—go to the Savior, Himself, whether others cheer you or frown upon you! Dejected, rejected, neglected, yet come to Jesus and learn that you are elected to be perfected in Him!

One thing more, and I have done. I want this man to be an example to all of us, if we get a blessing from our Lord, and are saved. *Having found Christ, he stuck to Him.* Jesus said to him, “Go your way.” Did he go his way? Yes, but what way did he choose? Read the last sentence—“He followed Jesus in the way.” The way of Jesus was *his way*. He in effect said, “Lord, I do go my way when I follow You. I can now see for myself and, therefore, can choose my way and I make this my first and last choice—that I will follow You in every pathway which You mark out.” Oh, that everyone who professes to have received Christ would actually follow Him! But, alas, many are like those nine lepers who received healing for their bodies, but only one of them returned to praise Him. Great numbers, after revival services, are like the nine lepers—they declare that

they are saved, but they do not live to glorify God! Why is this—"Were there not ten cleansed?" In great disappointment we enquire, "Where are the nine?" Alas, we ask with bleeding hearts, "Where are the nine?" They are not steadfast in our doctrine and fellowship, or in breaking of bread! They are neither active in service nor exemplary in character. Where are they? Where? Echo answers, "Where?" But this man was of a nobler breed—immediately after he received his sight, he "followed Jesus in the way."

He used his sight for the best of purposes! He saw his Lord and kept to His company. He determined that He who gave him his eyes should have his eyes! He could never see a more delightful sight than the Son of David who had removed his blindness, and so he stayed with Him that he might feast his eyes upon Him! If God has given your soul peace and joy and liberty, use your newfound liberty in delighting yourself in His dear Son!

Bartimaeus became Christ's avowed disciple. He had already proclaimed Him as the royal Son of David and now he determined to be one of David's band! He enlists under the Son of David and marches with Him to the conflict at Jerusalem. He stayed with our great David in the hold to share His persecutions and to go with Him to death itself. We are told that he went with Jesus in the way, and that way was up to Jerusalem where his Leader was soon to be spit upon, and to be mocked, and to be crucified. Bartimaeus followed a despised and crucified Christ! Friend, will you do the same? Will you fare as He fares, and endure reproach for His sake? Brave men are needed for these evil times—we have too many of those thin-skinned professors who faint if society gives them the cold shoulder! Power to walk with the crucified Lord into the very jaws of the lion is a glorious gift of the Holy Spirit! May it rest on you, dear Friend, to a full degree! May the Spirit of God help you!

This Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, is a fine man. When he is once really awakened, you can see that he possesses a firm, decided, noble manhood. Many nowadays bend to every breeze like the willow by the stream, but this man held his own. Most men are made of soft material which will run into every mold, but this man had stern stuff within him. When he was a blind man, he cried till he received his sight, though Peter, and James, and John forbid him! And when he became a seeing man, he followed Jesus at all costs, though shame and spitting lay before him. It is our impression that he remained a steadfast and well-known disciple of Jesus, for Mark, who is the most graphic of all the Gospel writers, always means much by every stroke of his pen, and he mentions him as Bartimaeus, whose name signifies, "son of Timaeus." And then he further explains that his name really has that meaning. A name may not be actually correct, for many a Johnson is not the son of John, many a Williamson is not the son of William, and so there might possibly have been a Bartimaeus who was not the son of Timaeus. Mark, however, writes as if Timaeus was very well known and his son was known, too.

The father was probably a poor Believer known to all the Church, and the son made his mark in the Christian community. I should not wonder if he was what we call, "a character," in the Church—known to everybody for his marked individuality and force of mind.

If, my Friend, you have been long in seeking salvation, and have become discouraged, may the Lord give you resolution to come to Jesus Christ this very day! Bring that firm, steadfast mind of yours, and bow it to Jesus, and He will accept you and end your darkness! Under His teaching you may yet become a marked man in the Church, of whom in later years Believers will say, "You know that man—that grievous sinner while he was unsaved, that eager seeker when he was craving mercy, that earnest worker after he became a Believer—he will not be outworked by anybody! He is a true man and gives his whole heart to our Lord." I shall be delighted beyond measure if you should be such a convert—a man or woman who will not need looking after, but a determined man resolute to do right, cost what it may! Such persons are a great gain to the good cause. Gently would I whisper to each one of you—*Will not you be one of them?*

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 10:25-37.**

Verses 25, 26. *And, behold a certain lawyer stood up and tempted Him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the Law? How do you read it?* That was a most appropriate answer to a lawyer. "You ask me what you should do—well, you profess to be a teacher of the Law, you ought, therefore, to know what is written in the Law."

27, 28. *And he answering said, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself. And He said unto him, You have answered right: this do and you shall live.* This lawyer was one of those people who know the Law, yet do it not. No doubt Jesus struck the nail on the head when he gave him that very pertinent answer, "This do, and you shall live." This lawyer was trying to live by teaching the Law, by his knowledge of it, but Christ insists that nothing will do but a practical carrying out of its precepts. [There is a Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the whole of this passage #1360, Volume 23—THE GOOD SAMARITAN—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

29. *But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor?* He probably meant to say, "I have not any neighbors. I have no near relations. My father and mother are dead and gone, I have no brothers and sisters, and therefore I may be excused from the duty of loving anyone else as I love myself." Jesus did not answer the lawyer's question, "Who is my neighbor?" He did not turn the eyes of the man to

the poor mendicants who needed charity, but he made him look at himself.

30, 31. *And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.* This priest had been up to the Temple to perform his part of the service—he was much too good, in his own opinion, to go and touch a man who was wounded! “He passed by on the other side.”

32. *And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him.* He did a little more than the priest, who would not even cross the road.

32-34. *And passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast—Denying himself, therefore, because, of course, he had to walk—*

34, 35. *And brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence—A much more valuable sum than two pence of our money—*

35, 36. *And gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatever you spend more, when I come again, I will repay you. Which now of these three, think you, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves?* He might have said, “The Samaritan,” but he would not, for the Jews hated them.

37. *And he said, he that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do you likewise.* Here was a dismissal, and here was a commission, too! Jesus dismissed him. “I have nothing more to say to you. ‘Go.’” Here was the commission. “Do you likewise.” Alas, I am afraid that after most sermons people get the dismissal, “Go,” but they forget the commission—“Go, and do you likewise.” It is your privilege as well as your duty, O Christians, to assist the needy and, whenever you discover distress, as far as lies in you, to minister practically to its relief!

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE BLIND MAN'S EARNEST CRIES

NO. 645

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 20, 1865,
BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy upon me! And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Son of David, have mercy on me.”
Mark 10:47, 48.

WHEREVER Jesus Christ is found, His presence is marvelously mighty. The disciples, when Christ was absent, were like sheep without a shepherd—they were foiled in argument and even defeated in attempted miracles—but as soon as our Savior made His appearance among them, they returned to their strength. When a valiant general suddenly hastens to the rescue of his routed troops, the sound of his horse hoofs reassures the trembling, and the sound of his voice transforms each coward into a hero. May the glorious Captain of our salvation show Himself in the midst of our churches and there will be a joyous shout along our ranks!

You will have no need to exchange ministers, or to wish for a better class of Christians—the same officers and the same soldiers will suffice to win splendid victories! If Jesus is present, the men will be so changed that you will scarcely know them. They shall be filled with power from on high and do great exploits in His name and by His strength. Nor does the Divine energy of His Presence confine itself to those who are already disciples of the Savior! Strangers, neighbors, wayfarers and even blind beggars feel the effect of His nearness! This sightless beggar hears the good news that Jesus of Nazareth passes by and straightway he begins to pray!

My Brethren, there shall be no lack of praying hearts where there is a present Savior. If there are no conversions in the congregation, it must be because Christ is not dwelling there by His Spirit. You have grieved Him and He is gone—you have forgotten Him and He has left you so that you may come to know your own weakness and learn to glorify His power in the future. If the Lord shall graciously return to His Church, cries of penitents will be frequent and the songs of those who have found peace by faith in Him shall go up to Heaven in blessed chorus! Oh, that the Lord Jesus would appear among the churches of this, our age!

We have much to mourn over. Infidelity audaciously seats itself in the chief seats of the synagogue. Romanism secretly eats out the very vitals of our national religion. Broad and liberal views act as a moth upon Gospel doctrine. Inconsistency of life dishonors the profession of practical godliness. O Lord, how long, how long! If the Lord Jesus shall graciously work

by His Spirit among us, we shall soon have our languishing churches revived! Errors will fly as the bats and owls betake themselves to their hiding places when the sun arises! And every sweet flower of Christian Grace shall yield its blessed perfume under the genial influences of His celestial rays.

I thank God we have had Jesus here. We have often been able to say, "The Son of David passes by." He is here still. Believing hearts who recognize His Presence and lament when He is absent tell us that they often find Him sweetly manifested to them here in the preaching of the Word, in the breaking of bread, and in the fellowship of prayer. He is here now! But oh, we want to recognize His Presence more fully! We want to see the Divine influences, like streams from Lebanon, refreshing all our garden! We desire to see Jesus working more effectually in making poor sinners feel their need of Him and drawing them to Himself.

Providence at all times co-works with Divine Grace in the salvation of the chosen people. You have an instance of it here. It was Providence which brought the blind man where Grace brought Jesus Christ. The Lord might have been passing by, but if this blind man had not happened to live at Jericho—or if at that particular moment he had not been pursuing his avocation of begging just on the particular road along which the Savior marched—he would never have heard that Jesus passed by! Consequently he would never have cried out to Him and never have obtained the necessary cure!

Providence brings sinners under the hearing of the Word and moves the preacher to select topics suitable to their minds. Providence prepares them, as the plow prepares the soil. And Grace guides the minister's mind to act as the hand which throws the wheat broadcast over the field. I am thankful for many of you that you are here this morning, for I know that "Jesus passes by." And though it may be that you are still without the heavenly light, it is a circumstance for which you ought to thank God that many have here received sight from the Lord Jesus.

It may be a singular Providence which induced you to come here at all—I pray it may prove to be the white horse on which Christ rides forth—conquering and to conquer—that He may win a victory in your souls now. Permit me, however, to remind you that such a circumstance involves responsibility. Jesus passes by—the blind man sits by the wayside—if he does not cry, his blindness will, therefore, continue. And there will be an addition to all its gloom in the thought that he did not use the one means within his reach, namely, that of crying to the physician for healing!

Remember *your* responsibility, anxious Sinner, and ask God to give you, now, Divine Grace to improve the flying hour and may His Spirit lead you to imitate the example of the blind man and cry, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

I. Coming directly to the case before us, let us observe THE BLIND MAN'S EARNESTNESS AS A CONTRAST with the behavior of many hearers of the Word. It was a very short sermon that was preached to him. He heard that Jesus of Nazareth passed by. He heard nothing more. I do not

know that he understood doctrine—that he knew precisely what Jesus Christ came into the world for. He could not have explained the system of theology. He had never had a clear and distinct statement of Divine Grace laid down before him. All he had heard was that “Jesus of Nazareth passes by.”

But that short sermon led him to prayer. Beloved, what a contrast between him and some of you! You have been sermonized until you must well near be sermon-weary! You have heard the Truth of God till probably, in theory, there are none better instructed than you are. You know the precious doctrines of Truth so far as the killing letter is concerned, but you have never yet been led to pray! Or, if the prayer has come, it has never been that earnest, Heaven-piercing cry which will not be refused—“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

It has not been the passionate prayer of your spirit. How many there are who listen to me so often that I fear I shall never be God's instrument of salvation to them! It is so easy for you to get used to one voice till that which once was shrill as the note of a clarion, becomes like the buzzing of a bee in your ears—you get tired of it—you sleep under it as a miller sleeps while his mill is going because it makes no sound to which he is not accustomed. My figures and illustrations you have heard. My tones of pleading you well know. My words of exhortation you can probably repeat by heart. And some of you are no more affected by twelve years of earnest effort than a piece of marble might be affected by twelve years of pouring oil along its hard unmelting surface!

It is a melancholy reflection that instead of praying over sermons, many amuse themselves with them—that which costs us many a prayer and many a tear is of no further worth to them than giving an opportunity for exhibiting their critical abilities. I have not to complain of any hard criticisms from you—you kindly approve of my poorest endeavors and accept my feeblest words. I almost wish that some of you did not! Oh, that you would but kick against the Truth of God! Then I might have some hope for you! But alas for that indifference which makes you receive it all as a matter of course, and praise the style, and say you are thankful that the preacher is bold and honest with you! And thus the whole thing ends in your having complimented me without having sought my Master's favor.

Oh, my Hearer, we have something else to seek beside your good words! If you would hate us, we could not regret it if you would but love your own souls! But if you love us and listen to our voice with respect, and nevertheless choose the downward path and go on to your own destruction, how can the preacher be content? Shall he go to his bed and remember that hundreds of you will dwell in everlasting burnings and can never have a portion among the glorified spirits in Heaven? Can he go to his bed and say, “It does not matter, they are pleased with me and I am unto them as one that makes a sweet sound upon a goodly instrument”?

Oh, I would God that instead of this you were brought like this poor blind man to go from hearing to *praying*! From your pews to your closets! From listening to me to communing with God and seeking mercy at His

hands! You will say that you cannot fairly be classed in this category, for under the preaching of the Word you have been led occasionally to pray. Yes, and I do remember well when I myself was led to pray by hearing the Word. But what of it? The prayers of Sunday were forgotten in the sins of Monday and the anxieties of Sunday were dissipated in the pleasures of the week.

It is so with some of you! You pray when a sermon has been especially earnest—when the arrows of God wound you, you weep and you promise amendment and a thousand fine things—you even dream of flying to Christ and taking hold upon the horns of the blood-sprinkled altar! But yet it is not done! You have made enough resolutions to pave the road to Hell! You have piled up enough of your own professions to condemn you to an everlasting insolvency for bills dishonored and for debts unpaid! Oh, would God you had *done* with resolving and re-resolving—with these transient and temporary feelings!

And oh, that these things would go right through your heart, leaving such wounds as none but Christ is able to heal! Oh, for the effectual work of God the Holy Spirit! What is the value of the cloud of the morning which flies before the gale, or the smoke of the chimney which is gone with the first puff? For *eternity* you need something more lasting than the morning dew! Something more substantial than chimney smoke! O may the Divine Spirit build you with His own right hand upon that good foundation—faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! The blind beggar, with but one sermon and that exceedingly brief, never leaves off praying till Christ grants him his desire—may God give you also to pray in earnest—lest you be sent to Hell in earnest!

This poor man began to cry for himself, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” And we cannot bring men to hear for themselves. They will say, “I hope that sermon which was so appropriate to my *friend* will have a beneficial effect on him.” You will think of those in the opposite gallery—your hearts will remember some sitting down below. Oh, mind yourselves! Yourselves! Yourselves! Another man’s salvation is, of course, desirable—but what will it be to you that he should be in Abraham’s bosom if you are with the rich man in the flames? Your own soul is that which you have to look to first. Self-preservation is a law of nature—be not disobedient to it! May Grace put such force into it, that from this day you will say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

I confess to you that I could not read this passage without feeling the deepest and most humiliating feeling—to think that the mere *report* should have been so blessed to that man—and that year after year we should have given forth a much more full report of Christ Jesus and yet have to say of many of you, “Who has believed our report and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” I would God I could lay this more to my heart and that you laid it more to your hearts, for, after all, it is more *your* concern than mine whether you are saved or not.

The preacher is responsible for the faithfulness of his preaching, but hearers also are responsible for the earnestness of their hearing! May God

grant that your responsibility may not prove to be a millstone about your necks to sink you to the nethermost Hell!

II. Passing onwards we notice this man's intense DESIRE AS AN ABSORBING PASSION. There are many excuses which men make for themselves why they should not seek their soul's salvation just now. A very common one is, "I am a very poor man. Religion is for the gentle folks, for people that have time to spare—it is of no use to a working man." This person was a *beggar*. His position in life was far less honorable than yours! But, though a beggar, he desired that his eyes might be opened. And you who are superior in your position to him—you ought not to make the lowness of your estate an excuse for not seeking the salvation of your souls.

Where did that lie first come from—the lie that the religion of Christ is not for the poor? Is it because so many of our sanctuaries are gorgeous in architecture? Is it because it is usual on Sunday and very properly so, for people to put on their best clothes? And does the working man think that therefore he would not be welcome because he happens to be out of work, or has not a good suit of black to put on? Then, by all means, let us break down this prejudice and show to the working man that he is welcome here!

I have often noticed you give a seat to a navigator or to a laborer in a smock frock when you have left very respectable people to stand in the aisles and I do not blame you for it—well-dressed people may be less fatigued than those who have been toiling all week. I admire the choice you make because I hope it will go to prove that the working man is not a speckled bird among us. Why it is all nonsense because we see a congregation well and respectably dressed to think that they must all necessarily belong to the upper classes!

A certain preacher said to me the other day, "You preach to the rich, I preach to the poor." Now this was from want of knowing better. We have, I am happy to say, some rich among us, whose princely gifts enable us to do much for the Lord's work. But still our great multitude is made up of the genuine working class. They are not a canting, whining lot who will go about begging of everybody and therefore dress shabbily. No, they are sober, saving people, and therefore, for the most part, lift themselves out of the ditch of absolute poverty into manly independence.

The religion of Christ not for the poor man? Why, above all men, these are those that want it! And while the religion of Christ appeals to all ranks, if there is ever a preference given, it is the boast of the Gospel of Christ, that "the poor have the Gospel preached to them." Now do I have the ear of any man who has talked in that way and said, "It is all very well for gentlemen and so on"? Well, do not go and say that again, because you know it is not true! You know it is not true!

We can give you thousands of instances where the religion of Jesus Christ blesses the cottage as much as ever it could bless the palace, and is found quite as useful to the laborer who has to toil from morning to night as to, "My Lady," who has next to nothing to do if she does not do

something in the cause of Jesus Christ. Now get rid of that excuse! Well, but this beggar might have said, "I must stick to my business." His business was begging and though Jesus Christ might be passing by, he might very reasonably have said, "I really have no time to attend to this gentleman, whoever he may be. His preaching may be all very well and good, but I must beg right on, for when I get home there is little enough in my hat and I really cannot afford the time to attend to this gentleman."

That is what many people say—"Really, our business occupies all our time. We have to be always at it! Early in the morning, almost before the sun is risen and late at night till we are much too tired to read a book or to pray." Ah, but you see, this man forgot his *begging* to find his *eyesight*. And you might well forget your *trading* to find your *soul's sight*! If it were worthwhile to neglect his begging to have his eyes opened, it were worthwhile, even if it were necessary, to neglect your business if you might but find Christ! Though, mark you, I do not believe that any man need neglect his lawful calling on account of religion. Bartimaeus might have said, "I cannot attend to Jesus Christ now, for it is the height of the season."

You see a beggar's season always is when plenty of people are about and as Jesus had brought a crowd with Him, the beggar might very justly have said, "Why, if I do not beg now, it is of no use begging at any other time! I have a call of Providence to stick to my begging just now. I must attend to getting my eyes opened, if they can be opened, at some future time. Just now I must make hay while the sun shines." This is *your* style of talking. "See! I am so very busy just now. Providence has put a good thing in my way and I must stick to it. I cannot be supposed to go out week nights to hear sermons and I cannot spare time for prayer. I want every moment that I can possibly get to make money, for now is my time. When I get old and can get a house in the country, I may then rest and attend to Divine things."

Ah, you simpleton! Here is a man who flings away the golden opportunity of gleaning money of the multitudes to seek his sight! And yet you are such a simpleton that you will not leave your gains to think of your eternal state! He might have made yet other excuses if he would. For instance, he might have said, "Well, suppose I do get my eyes opened. Then I shall not be so well-fitted for my trade as I now am." For a blind beggar gets twice as much as a man who can see. And it is rather a qualification to a beggar to have no eyes.

Some of you feel, "If I had my soul saved, I could not trade as I now do. I know I should have to shut up that gin palace. I could not be the nurse of drunkenness and yet call myself a Christian." "I could not stand at that bar," said a young woman to me who had been serving at one of the gin palaces, "the Lord had met with me. I did serve a few nights, but I could not stand it. I could not serve glasses of gin and then go to the communion table—that would never do." There are some who are afraid to *think* about religion because it will disqualify them for their business—and a blessed disqualification, too! May the Lord disqualify thousands for the accursed work!

But oh, if this man could well give up his poor trade of beggary to pray for his eyes, you may well give up your wicked trade if your souls may but enter Heaven! If you should lose all the world, you have lost next to nothing if you have gained eternity! I am amazed this man did not make the well-known excuse, "I do not know whether I am predestinated to have my eyes opened—because if I am to have my eyes opened, they will be opened. And if I am not to have my eyes opened, they will not be opened. So I shall sit still here and hold my hat and beg. That is the main chance! I shall hold my hat and stick to my trade!"

I think that every man who uses this last excuse knows within himself that he is talking nonsense! I cannot believe in a rational man standing upright and saying, "If I am to be saved, I shall be saved and therefore I shall not pray." I believe that man is a sneak! He is trying to make himself believe what he knows is not true. He knows very well that he does not say that kind of thing in business—"If I am to make twenty pounds, I shall make twenty pounds and so I shall not take down the shutters tomorrow. If I am to have a harvest, I shall have a harvest and so I shall not plow this year."

He never does anything of the kind ordinarily, and yet he pretends he is such an idiot that he must throw away his soul because of the doctrine of predestination! Brethren, if a man means to hang himself, he can always find a piece of rope. And if a man means to damn himself, he can always find an excuse. And this excuse about predestination is one to which those run who are greater fools or knaves than ordinary! This man made no excuse of any sort about his family, or his trade, or predestination—he just cried out with emotion—"Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

III. We turn, now, to NOTICE HIS ZEAL and observe that it was A MOST REASONABLE ZEAL. It appears, according to the Greek, that this man had a good voice, or, at least, made the most of it. He did not sit and whisper, "Jesus, Son of David have mercy on me." But he *shouted* and, as the opposition increased, his shouts grew yet more loud, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" He was zealous and persevering in his prayer—but his zeal was justified. He was blind and he knew the misery of blindness. There are unutterable woes connected with it and it needs much Grace to make a man content when his eyes are closed to the light of day.

This poor soul could not be content while there was a chance of a cure. But yours, Sinner, is *spiritual* blindness—the blindness which does not let you see yourself or see your Savior—the blindness which shuts out all spiritual joys from your eyes and will shut out the joys of Heaven eternally from you and condemn you to wander hopelessly in the blackness of darkness forever! However awfully earnest your prayers may be, they cannot be too earnest. He was a beggar, and had doubtless learned the weakness of man. He had often gone home with nothing when he had expected that his bag would be filled.

And you, too, you are a beggar! You have tried your own works and found them worthless! You have begged at the door of ceremonies and you have found them to be an empty show! You have trusted first to one thing

of man's invention and then another—but after all your begging you still need heavenly alms to make you rich—you are naked and poor and miserable. Now, considering the weakness of man, and that Christ alone has power to save you, if your prayer should become as terribly earnest even as the shrieks of lost souls it would be fully justified, for yours is an urgent pressing case.

The beggar knew, moreover, that Jesus Christ was near and when Jesus Christ is near there is much cause for earnest prayer. If Jesus would not listen. If it were not a season of mercy. If Grace were not being distributed plentifully, you might be excused from praying! But oh, when it is a season of revival! When you are in the place where Jesus blesses souls! When you listen to a ministry which God has honored, then let your cry be more zealous than it ever has been! This poor man felt it was now or never with him. If he did not get his eyes opened that day they might never be opened.

Christ was passing by then and He might never pass that way again. Oh, Sinner! It may be now or never with YOU! I know that God saves men at the eleventh hour, but I also know that there are many who are *not* saved at the eleventh hour—and that after such-and-such an hour has struck, many are given up to hardness of heart, permitted to be their own destroyers, without any checks of conscience or of the Holy Spirit—and such may be your case.

The ticking of the clock always cries to men who know how to interpret its meaning. “Now, or never! Now, or never! Today on earth, tomorrow in eternity!” If you would have Christ, the only time to seek Him is today! “Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” “For now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.” The beggar felt this and therefore up went the cry, louder and yet more loud, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

He guessed at least *something* of the value of sight. He had heard what others told him of the happiness of gazing upon the landscape, the field, the flood, the sky. He longed to look into the face of friends and to know his own parents or his own children by sight. Well might he, if he guessed the value of his eyesight, cry most mightily! Sinner! You have at least a guess of the happiness of pardon! You have at least some idea of the sweetness of justification! You know, for you have often been told, that Eternal Life is well worth your seeking. Oh, may the Holy Spirit stir your heart this morning till you can no longer restrain the cry, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

I say, if you think of the dreadfulfulness of his present state, of the hope which the Presence of Christ afforded him and of the blessedness which he might expect from a restored eyesight, he had good reasons for being zealous! And, Sinner, if you will think of the wrath of God abiding on you now—of the future with all its array of terror—and if you will remember the power of Christ to save and the eternal blessedness of being safe in Him, all these things and especially the shortness of time and the present

necessity of your case should move you to cry yet more and more earnestly, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

IV. Let us pass on to a fourth point—THIS MAN EXPERIENCED OBSTACLES IN HIS PRAYER and this is a very common affliction. John Bunyan tells us that right by the wicket gate Diabolus had a castle! And from this castle he used to shoot at all who sought an entrance. Moreover, he kept a big dog which did always bark and howl and seek to devour every person that knocked at the gate of Mercy. I am sure that is true. Whenever a sinner gets to Mercy's gate and begins knocking, that noise is heard in Hell and straightway Satan endeavors to drive the poor wretch away from the gate of hope.

In olden times when the Algerian pirates took many Christian prisoners, they chained them to the oars of their galleys to row their masters. When Christian ships of war were seen in the distance, the captives knew that there was a hope of their being liberated—but their masters would come on deck and cry, "Pull for your lives," and the whip was laid on to make these poor captives fly, by their efforts, from their own rescue. This is what the devil does. He gets sinners to tug at the oar and whenever Christ with His blood-red flag of liberty is seen within hail, the sinner exerts himself to the utmost to get out of Christ's way! If that does not suffice, Satan will employ, sometimes, bad men and sometimes good men to stop the sinner from seeking a Savior at all.

You know the ways in which the world will try to make a crying sinner hold his peace. The world will tell him that he is crying out about a matter that does not matter, for the Bible is not true—there is no God, no Heaven, no Hell, no hereafter. But if God has set you crying, Sinner, I know you will not be stopped with that—you will cry yet the more exceedingly, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Then the world will try *pleasure*. You will be invited to the theater. You will be attracted from one ballroom to another. But if the *Lord* put the cry in your mouth, the intense anguish of your spirit will not be satisfied by the noise of viols, nor by the shouts of them that make merry. Perhaps the world will call you a fool to be vexed about such things—you are melancholy and have got the mopes. They will tell you that you will soon go where many others have gone—to Bedlam. But if once *God* has made you cry, you will not be stopped by a fool's laughter! The agonizing prayer will go up in secret, "Have mercy on me."

Perhaps the world will try its cares. You will be called into more business. You will get a prosperity which will not make your soul prosper. And so it will be hoped by Satan that you will forget Christ in accumulated wealth and growing cares. But ah, if this is such a cry as I hope it is, poor anxious Sinner, you will not be stopped by that! Then the world will affect to look down upon you with pity. Ah, poor Creature, you are being misled! When you are being led to Christ and to Heaven, they will say you have become the dupe of some fanatic, when, in truth, you are now coming to your senses and estimating eternal things at their proper value!

Yes, but the worst is that even the disciples of Christ will act us these did in this narrative—they will charge you to “hold your peace.” Some professors have no sympathy with anxious souls. Much mischief is done by the light and frothy conversation of Christian professors, especially on Sunday. How often sermons are blunted by a spirit of caviling! I have heard of a woman who prayed for her husband’s conversion very earnestly and one day, after the sermon, as she was walking home, she was speaking to her friend and pulling the sermon to pieces! The doctrine did not quite suit her taste. Her husband looked at her with wonder—that sermon had broken his heart and yet here was a woman caviling at the very Truth which God had blessed to give her the desire of her heart!

I do not doubt that Christian people, by their unprofitable criticisms upon ministrations which God has blessed, may mar the good work and be the instruments in the hands of Satan of urging poor sinners to cease their cry. But oh, poor Soul, let neither saint nor sinner make you stop! If you have begun to pray, though you have cried for months and no sweet answer of mercy has come, cry more loudly! Oh, be yet more earnest! Take the gates of Heaven and shake them with your zeal as though you would pull them up—post, and bar, and all! Stand at Mercy’s door and take no denial. Knock and knock, and knock again, as though you would shake the very spheres, until you obtain an answer to your cries!

“The kingdom of Heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force.” Cold prayers never win God’s ear. Draw your bow with your full strength if you would send your arrow up as high as Heaven. He whom God has taught to be resolved to be saved will be saved. He that will not take damnation as his fate, but who feels he must have Christ, is already under the Divine operation of the Holy Spirit! Such a man bears the marks of Divine election upon his very brow! Such a man must and shall obtain everlasting salvation!

V. I come to the closing point. This MAN’S IMPORTUNITY AT LAST BECAME SO MIGHTY THAT REBUFFS BECAME ARGUMENTS WITH HIM. “He cried the more a great deal.” He took the weapons out of their hands and used them on his own account! What do you suppose were the arguments that they used to induce him to leave off praying? Would not one of them say, “Hold your tongue, you ragged, filthy beggar! Hold your tongue!” “That is why I will *not* hold my tongue,” says he. “I am such a poor loathsome object that I have need to cry. You gentlemen that are better off have no need to cry as I have. But the worse you prove me to be, the more need I have of the Master’s help! And therefore I shall cry the more.”

The devil says to you, “Do not pray, you are such a sinner.” Tell the devil that is the reason why you *will* pray, for being so foul and filthy, these are all arguments why you, above all others, should cry aloud, “Jesus, have mercy on me.” Then they said, “Why, you have nothing to recommend you! Jesus Christ has not invited you! He has never looked on you with an eye of love! He has never called you.” “Then it is the very reason,” said he, “why *I* should call Him. If I have no love token, then so much the worse for me and so much the more reason why I should never

be happy till I get one! If He has not invited me, then I will cry to Him for an invitation!"

You see, the more you can prove that the sinner's case is hopeless and bad, you have only proved that the sinner has the more reason for prayer. If I am the furthest from hope, why, then, he who wants to be heard and is a very long way off, must call loudly! He that is further still, must call more loudly still! And he that is furthest off must be the loudest of all—so if I am the furthest off from God and hope—I will only pray with the greater importunity till I do prevail. "Yes, but," said another of them, "you make such a noise. Be still! You disturb the whole neighborhood." "Ah," says he, "I am thankful for that, for now *He* will hear me."

I think this man, if he had heard the Savior tell the parable about the woman whose perpetual coming wearied the Judge, must have said, "Make a noise, do I? So much the better! Then I will make more, for I see I tease *you*—perhaps I shall weary *Him*, so I will even keep on till the Judge is drawn to grant my request by the very noise I make." Some tell you, you should not be so earnest! You really disturb your friends—you have become so concerned about your soul that your friends are concerned about your sanity! Tell them you are glad of it and you mean to be more earnest, for if you have made hard-hearted man *feel*, you will soon make God, who bids us give Him no rest, at last give you the desire of your heart!

Then they would say to him, "Now, do not disturb the Savior! He is so busy. He has so much to do. He is preaching now. He is talking to His disciples." "Ah, well," says he, "then if He does so many good things, the more reason why I should cry that He would do *me* a good turn, also." It is of no use to ask a man to give anything who never gives anything—but the man who is always giving—always will give. And so from Christ's many works he derives a reason why he should cry! "Is He blessing others, then why not me?" So, dear Hearer, when you hear of showers of blessings, ask that they may fall on *you*. And when you know that Christ is saving so many, make that a reason why He should save *YOU*— even you.

Then they said, "He is on a journey. He is going to Jerusalem. He cannot be stopped by every beggar. Hold your tongue! When do you think He will ever get there if He is to turn aside to every clamorous beggar who chooses to urge his claim?" "Traveling is He?" said he. "Then I will stop Him now, for if I once let Him go by I shall never catch Him again. Going to Jerusalem to die! Ah, then my hope will be all over! I have Him now—I will not give Him a chance of going by." Louder goes up the cry, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me."

If the devil tells you, "It is too late!" Then say, "I will go directly, I will not stop. If so many years have passed over my head without my finding a Savior, then every one of these shall be a spur to make me fly, like the wind, more swiftly." It is very likely that they also said to him, "How dare you, a beggar, interrupt such a person as Jesus Christ? Why, He is going in triumph through Jerusalem. He is to ride with solemn pomp all through the streets. How can you think that you are to have an audience with such a great one as He is?" "Great one, is He?" the man seemed to

say. "Great one! I need a great one! A little one will not serve my need. It must be a great one that can open my eyes and the greater He is the more reason why I should cry to Him."

So whenever you are alarmed at the glory and greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ, do not be put off because of that, but rather say, "Is He mighty? Then He is mighty to save. Is He a Savior and a great one? Then He is just such a Savior as I need. I will never rest, I will never pause till He says unto my soul 'I am your salvation.'"

Now I did solemnly ask God that He would, this morning, excite in some sinner a desire to pray, and that if there were one here who had been praying and who was tempted to stop, the Word might be blessed by God the Holy Spirit to make him more incessant in his prayer. O may He grant my petition! Remember that the only way in which this praying and this waiting will come to an end, is by looking alone to Jesus Christ! If you turn those eyes of yours away from *yourself* and your *feelings* and yes, your *prayers*, to Jesus Christ's finished work and trust Him, you will find peace directly!

There is peace to the soul that looks alone to Jesus! While I have been exhorting you to pray—and I meant to do it earnestly, more earnestly than I have been able to do it—I did not wish you to put praying in the place of *believing*. If you cannot as yet understand Christ so as to rest on Him. If you cannot as yet cast yourself on Him—then pray for more enlightenment! Pray to be led to *faith*. Pray that *faith* may be given you.

But O may God give you the power and the will now, even now, to exert a living faith upon the crucified Savior—for there is "life in a look at the Crucified One." Praying will ultimately bring you to that point, but I pray God to bring you to it *now* through His mighty Spirit and so like Bartimaeus, may we receive our sight and follow Jesus in the way and to Jesus be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

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A GOSPEL SERMON TO OUTSIDERS

NO. 1389

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 19, 1877,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**Preached on a night when the Tabernacle was free to all comers,
the regular congregation having vacated their seats.**

*“Be of good comfort, rise; He calls you.
Mark 10:49.*

THESE open services, as most of you will judge, are intended to be purely evangelistic. No doubt a large number of Believers are here, many of them well-established in the faith, who would like to hear a doctrine argued, a type interpreted, or an apocalyptic symbol unfolded. But really, I cannot attend to you this evening. I feel something like Luther when preaching to a mixed assembly. He said, as nearly as I can remember, words to this effect, “I perceive in the Church Dr. Justus Jonas and Melancthon and other learned doctors. Now, if I preach to their edification, what is to become of the rest? Therefore, by their leave, I shall forget that Dr. Jonas is here at all and preach to the multitude.” So must I do at this good hour, asking those of you who are advanced in the Divine life to unite your prayers with mine, which will continually ascend, that the Word of the Gospel may be blessed to the unconverted.

Dear Friends, there are so many of you that have been, for years, listening to the proclamation of the Gospel. You are dwellers, almost, in Emmanuel's land, but not quite—that is why I feel most earnest that this night should be the time of your decision for the Savior—that you should not remain, any longer, hearers only, but should become *believers* and afterwards *doers* of the Word of God! There are gentlemen in England who can afford to drive a coach and four from town to town and carry nobody, performing their journeys for their own amusement, but I am not able or willing to do anything of that kind. Unless I can have my coach loaded with passengers to Heaven, I would sooner it were never started and had rather my team stayed in the stable.

We must carry some souls to Heaven, for our call is from above and our time is too precious to throw away on mere pretense of doing good! We cannot play at preaching—we preach for eternity. We cannot feel satisfied merely to deliver sermons to senseless throngs, or to the most attentive crowds. Whatever smiles may greet us as we start and whatever salutation may welcome us at our close, we are not content unless Jesus works salvation by us! Our desire is that Grace should be magnified and that sinners should be saved. They used to jeer at the Tabernacle in Moorfields and the one in Tottenham Court Road. They called them Mr. Whitfield's soul traps. A very excellent name for a place of worship!

Such may this Tabernacle always be! It ought to be a soul trap and we shall be disappointed, indeed, if there are not some souls taken in the trap tonight! If God does not bless the Word and make it so potent that some of you shall really close in with the Gospel proclamation and enter into eternal life, I shall be heavy of heart. Before I attempt to deal with my text, let me describe to you the plan of salvation. You know it, most of you. Oh that we could get at the thousands of London who do not know it! The multitudes that never enter a house of prayer or yield attention to the Gospel message! Our heart yearns over them—but what more can we do for them? They are perishing in willful ignorance.

Thanks be to God that so many are here tonight! I will seize the opportunity to declare the plan of Grace. Though so many of you know it, let me tell it to you again. By sin, by unrighteousness, by violation of God's Law, we have broken our peace with God. We are lost, for He must punish sin. It is not possible that He should be the righteous Governor of the universe and allow sin to go unpunished! To punish sin is no arbitrary purpose of an angry God. It is inevitable in the universe that where there is evil, there should be suffering. If not in this life, yet in another life, which will shortly succeed that which now is, every transgression must receive its meet recompense of reward.

The question is, how can we be forgiven? How, consistently with Divine Justice, can our iniquities be blotted out? This is not an impossible problem left for us to work out—God's way of peace is made clear by Divine Revelation. God, in His Infallible Word, has told us the means and appliances by which guilty sinners can be made righteous before Him. And, instead of being driven from His Presence at the last, he may be accepted and dwell at His right hand! He tells us that inasmuch as the first sin that ruined us was not ours, but Adam's, and by the transgression of one man we all fell, so it became possible for Him, in consistency with justice, to ordain that another Man should be forthcoming in whom we may rise and be restored!

That other Man has come—"the second Adam, the Lord from Heaven." But the task of lifting up was much harder than that of casting down. A mere man could ruin us, but a mere man could not redeem and rescue us. Therefore, God Himself, the Ever-Blessed, clothed Himself with the nature of man, was born of a woman, lay in Bethlehem's manger, lived here on earth a life of humiliation and self-denial and, at the last, took upon Himself the sins of men in one vast load. Even as the fabled Atlas was said to carry the world upon his shoulders, so He took sin and guilt upon Him and bore it in His own body on the tree. Jesus hung on the Cross as the Substitute for all of our race that ever will believe on Him and then and there He put away, by His suffering, all the transgression and iniquity of believing men so that now we can preach to mankind and say, "He that believes in Him is not condemned. He that believes on the Son of God has everlasting life."

When you go to a foreign city for the first time and stay at an inn, it may be that you miss your way when you go out and are not able to get

back, again, as easily as you wish. It is generally expedient, therefore, for travelers to learn the main streets of every town which they visit. In Rome we come to know which way the Corso runs and when we get an idea of the run of that main thoroughfare we, by-and-by, are able to pick our way through the city. Now, the main street of the Gospel is Substitution. "He made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." The main street of the Gospel runs cross-wise—follow it and you will know the ins and outs of the other great streets before long. This is the high street of the City of Grace—"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us."

Christ stood in our place and suffered that we might not suffer. He "died, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God." Whoever believes in Christ is saved from the damning power of sin and delivered from the wrath to come. Take this fact in all its breadth and length—and never doubt it—and you have the key of the Gospel. Whoever, I say, trusts his soul with the Lord Jesus Christ, relying on that Sacrifice which He offered, and that death which He endured, is saved! Let him not doubt it. He has God's Word for it—let him believe it and rejoice in it. "Whoever believes in Him is not condemned," for, "like as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so has the Son of Man been lifted up that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Simple, child-like reliance upon the Lord Jesus gives immediate and complete salvation to the trustful soul!

Well, that is the main street of the city. Now how to get into it is the question. I earnestly desire and devoutly hope to be the means, if God will help me, of leading some there. May the Holy Spirit now bear witness with the Truth of God and make it the power of God unto salvation! Our text says, "Be of good comfort, rise; He calls you." Our first point is that some who are seeking Christ greatly need comforting. Secondly, their very best comfort lies in the fact that Jesus calls them. But, thirdly, if they take the comfort of that call, it urges them to immediate action—"Arise." "Be of good comfort, rise; He calls you."

I. First, then, MANY PERSONS WHO ARE REALLY SEEKING THE SAVIOR GREATLY NEED COMFORTING. I know there are many such here tonight. You long after everlasting life. God has worked in you a desire to be reconciled to Himself but you need encouraging, for you labor under a sort of undefined fear that these good things are not for you. Partly your conscience, partly your unbelief and partly Satan—these three have joined together to throw a darkness over you—and you really think that you cannot be forgiven. You would not like to put it into exactly those words, but such is the tenor of your thoughts.

There is a hazy idea about you that there are many very good saintly people who will be saved and, indeed, that there are some great transgressors who will be saved—but you do not think that *you* can be. Oh that I could destroy that unbelieving thought! There is salvation, there is mercy, there is forgiveness and it is *free* to every soul that will come and take it! It is as free as the air you breathe, or as the water leaping from the street

fountain yonder. "Whoever will, let him come and take of the Water of Life freely." You are mistaken in your gloomy reflections! You write bitter things against yourself, but God has not written them! What if you should take heart and get hope—"Perhaps I may tonight find eternal life. Perhaps I may tonight go out of this house relieved of the burden of my sin"? It were a good beginning if you had such a hope, but you may with confidence go a great deal further than that!

It may be that you are cast down because you think that you have been seeking in vain. You began to pray a few months ago, young man, and I am glad to hear of it! But you have not yet obtained peace. Do not give up praying! I know you are discouraged, but do not cease seeking. I, myself, was for many months an earnest seeker after God by the way of prayer. I thought that by importunate prayer I should find pardon. I did not understand that He had said, "*Believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." So I set to work *praying*. Nevertheless, I am thankful that I did not cease from prayer, though it often seemed as if I wasted my words and spent my tears for nothing. Be not discouraged. This blind man was not heard at first, though he cried earnestly. He had to cry for sight again and again, increasing in vehemence each time.

Do not be driven to despair! There may be delays, but there shall never be denials to those who cry in earnest. Be of good comfort. Press on, dear Heart, press on, and you shall find peace and comfort! Perhaps, too, you are sad because there are many round you who discourage you. They tell you there is nothing in religion. How should they know? Theirs is a strange infatuation. There are a great many individuals in the world who are considered to be honest in business—you would take their note of hand and you would trust their word about any goods they were selling. And yet when these good folks begin to say that they are conscious of a new life within them. That they have found out that God is real and spiritual—and that they have received a Spirit which dwells within them, or that they commune with God—straightway a number of people say that it is not true! In effect they are calling them liars.

But *why* not true? On what ground are they to be discredited? Simply because the aforesaid people who deny it say that they never saw such a thing themselves and never felt such a thing themselves? But if there were a world full of blind people and among them a few persons blessed with sight, whose eyes had been opened—if these began to talk of sunlight and color, all the blind men might say, "It is not true!" Why? "Because we never saw the sunlight or the color." Does that prove that it is not true? Though you do not possess the faculties of vision, others do. If those men are honest in other things, they have as much right to be believed in this thing as in the rest. We solemnly assert that there is something real in religion! It is not a creed—alone, it is a life!

The regenerate belong to a new creation. If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature with new faculties and new powers so that he is introduced into altogether a new world. Do not believe those, then, who tell you that there is nothing in it, for they do not know and, therefore, are not fair wit-

nesses! They can witness to nothing but the fact that they are not in the secret. The man who was brought up for a murder which was sworn against him by six witnesses said that he ought not to be condemned because he could bring 60 witnesses who did not see him do it. Of course he could! And so we can bring 60,000 people to say there is no spiritual life because they have never felt it! What does that prove? It only proves that they know nothing about it!

But if you bring a few—even though they should be but a few—straightforward, honest, simple-minded people whom you would believe in other things, you are bound to accept their testimony about this. There is something real in faith in Jesus! There is a peace which passes all understanding obtained through pardoned sin. There is a new birth, for we have felt it! There is a new life, for we enjoy it! There is a joy that leaps over earth's narrow bounds. There is a rest of heart akin to the rest of the blessed in Heaven and it can be enjoyed here and now! Thousands of us bear witness that it is so! Do not be discouraged then, for we tell you no old wives' fables, but the very Truth of God which we have, ourselves, tasted and handled! You that are seeking after eternal life need not be baffled by skeptics. We are true men and tell you what we have proved for ourselves. You will yet find it to be as God declares.

One reason why you have not obtained comfort is, perhaps, because you do not know all the Gospel yet. Good news half told may often seem to be bad news. I have read that in the days of the flag and light signals, a message came across to England concerning the Duke of Wellington and half the message was read as it appeared, and astonished all England with the sad intelligence. It ran thus, "Wellington defeated." Everybody was distressed as they read it but it so happened that they had not seen all the message. Fog had intervened, and when, by-and-by, the air was clearer and the lights flashed out a second time, it was read thus—"Wellington defeated the French"—quite another thing! It was quite the reverse, indeed, of what half the message had led men to fear. Thus when you hear half the Gospel it may appear to condemn you—but you have only to hear the other half to find out its encouraging tidings.

I would say be diligent in hearing the Gospel. Be diligent in searching it out in the sacred Book which God has given us. And when you know the Truths of God more fully you will find faith comes to you by the hearing and the understanding of the Word of God. Leave those ministers who preach only a portion of the Gospel—try to know all the message of love and you will, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, soon lose your fears. Do you not think, too, that some seekers miss comfort because they forget that Jesus Christ is alive? The Christ of the Church of Rome is always depicted in one of two positions—either as a babe in His mother's arms, or else as dead.

That is Rome's Christ! But our Christ is alive. Jesus who rose has "left the dead no more to die." I was requested in Turin to join with others in asking to see the shroud in which the Savior was buried. I must confess that I had not faith enough to believe in the shroud, nor had I curiosity

enough to wish to look at the fictitious linen. I would not care a penny for the article even if I knew it to be genuine! Our Lord has left His shroud and sepulcher and lives in Heaven! Tonight He so lives that a sigh of yours will reach Him, a tear will find Him, a desire in your heart will bring Him to you! Only seek Him as a loving, *living* Savior and put your trust in Him as risen from the dead no more to die, and comfort will, I trust, come into your spirit.

Perhaps, too, you have a notion that conversion is something very difficult. A young woman came to me, the other day, after a service, to ask me whether I really meant what I said when I declared that he that believed in Jesus Christ was saved then and there. "Yes," I said, and I gave her the Scriptural guarantee for it. "Why," she said, "my grandfather told me that when he found religion it took him six months and they had nearly to put him into a lunatic asylum, he was in such a dreadful state of mind." "Well, well," I said, "that sometimes happens. But that *distress* of his did not save him! That was simply his conscience and Satan keeping him away from Christ. When he was saved it was not by his deep feelings—it was by his *believing* in Jesus Christ." I then went on to set Christ before her as our only ground of hope in opposition to inward feelings.

"I see it," she said! And I rejoiced as I noticed the bright light that passed over her face—a flash of heavenly sunlight which I have often seen on the countenances of those who have believed in Jesus Christ—when peace fills the soul even to the brim and lights up the countenance with a minor transfiguration. It is so. You have but to trust Christ and it is done! But you are afraid. Have you ever heard of the man who lost his way, one night, and came to the edge of a precipice, as he thought, and fell over? He clutched at some old tree and hung there, clinging to his frail support with all his might, for he felt that he should be dashed to pieces if he fell. There he hung till he got into a desperate state of fever and his hands could hold his body no longer! So at last he dropped and fell—about six inches—onto a smooth mossy bank where he lay, altogether unhurt, and quite safe.

Now, there are many who think that sure destruction must await them if they confess sin and resign all into the hands of God. It is an idle fear! Give up your hold upon everything but Christ and drop down! Soft and mossy shall the bank be which receives you! Jesus Christ, by His love and by the efficacy of His precious blood, shall give you immediate rest and peace. Only drop now. Drop down at once! This is the major part of faith—the giving up of every other hold and simply falling upon Christ. That dropping down will bring you present salvation.

II. Now, in the second place, the greatest comfort which I can very well conceive is that which is conveyed in the text. It is this—"BE OF GOOD COMFORT, RISE; HE CALLS YOU"—a good word for the blind man, for he knew that Jesus did not call him to mock him, and that He did not say, "come here" that He might merely tell him, "your eyes cannot be opened." Jesus did not call him to sport with him and send him away disappointed.

Christ's calls are honest calls and guarantee blessing to those who accept them.

Now, beloved Friends, there are two calls mentioned in Scripture. The one is the general call of the Gospel and the other is the effectual call, the personal call, by which men are saved. The general universal call ought to yield great comfort to any seeking soul. In the Word of God, you, dear Hearer, are called to come to Christ, even you! Why do I know that? Because when Jesus gave the commission to His disciples He said, "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." You are a creature, are you not? Well, then, you must be included in that range! We are to preach the Gospel to you. And then again, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."

You are a sinner, are you not? Do you admit that? Very well, then, according to the text that faithful saying is to be addressed to *you*. And you, dear Seeker, feel a burden upon your soul, do you not? You are laboring hard to get salvation. Therefore, the Gospel call must be addressed to you. "Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Indeed there are many such calls, but there is another which must include you—"Whoever will, let him come and take the Water of Life freely." Are you willing to come? Then you are undoubtedly called to come to Christ! Should not that fact comfort you? Remember, as I have already said, He does not call you to mock you, or invite you to come without intending to bless you. Oh hear His honest call! Pluck up courage and come to Him!

Nobody feels any trouble about going where there is a general invitation. Did you ever cross the Mont St. Bernard? If so, I do not suppose you needed much pressing to turn into the hospice, there, and spend the night! When they came out and told you that everybody was welcome, rich and poor, and that travelers nearly all stayed there, you turned in! I went the other day to St. Cross Hospital, near Winchester, which some of you may know. There they give away a piece of bread to everybody who knocks at the door. I knocked as bold as brass. Why shouldn't I? If they gave the bread away to everybody, why should not I have my piece? And so, of course, the hatch was opened and I had my little piece of bread with the friends who were with me. It was a gift to be given to everybody that called. I did not humble myself particularly and make anything special of it. It was for all and I came and received as one of the people who were willing to knock.

Now, even so, if the Gospel is to be preached to every creature, why do you stand higgling and haggling when you need the Bread of Life? Why should you waste time in raising question after question when you only need to take what Jesus freely gives? I guarantee you do not raise such quibbles against yourselves in money matters! If an estate is bequeathed you, you do not employ a solicitor to hunt for flaws in the title, or to invent objections to the will! Why do men raise difficulties against their own salvation, instead of cheerfully accepting what the infinite mercy of God so

graciously provides for all who, with broken hearts and willing minds, are ready to take what God the Ever-Bountiful is so pleased to give? The invitation is so large and there is this to be noted concerning it—no one was ever refused yet!

There is a well-known institution in London which bears across the front of it, “No destitute boy ever refused.” Well may we put this over Christ’s great house of mercy—“No destitute *soul* ever refused.” I can imagine two boys standing on the pavement in front of Dr. Barnardo’s institution and one saying to the other, “Can we go in there?” “Yes,” says the other, “I should rather think we could. We are destitute, aren’t we? Look here, my clothes are all in rags and I have not a penny in the world, and no father and no mother. I slept under a dry arch last night. I am a destitute boy, and no mistake of that.” I can only suppose that the other might boastfully say, “I ain’t destitute, not I! I can earn my living any day and I have got a half-crown in my pocket.”

Now, that fellow has no claim to be admitted because he is not destitute. But the boy who is hungry and ragged and homeless is sure to be welcomed. As he reads those lines, “No destitute boy ever refused,” he says, “There is hope for me, then.” Now, then, destitute Soul, Jesus Christ never refused one like you yet! If you have a store of merit of your own—if you believe you can be saved by your good works—you do not come under the heading of “destitute.” “The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick.” But if you are stripped of all boasting. If you are brought to bankruptcy as to personal merit. If you have come down to absolute poverty as to any hope in yourself, then, as no destitute soul ever was rejected or ever shall be, come to Jesus at once! Come at once, I say. “Be of good comfort, rise; He calls you.”

But, dear Friends, I said that there was another and an effectual call. That call the Holy Spirit directs to individuals and when it comes, it is *not* resisted, or if resisted for a while, it is ultimately yielded to, so that the man is constrained to come. O Holy Spirit, give that call tonight! There were two brothers fishing and Jesus said to them, “Follow Me.” They threw down their nets and followed Him. Matthew was sitting at the receipt of customs with his pen behind his ear and his account books before him. Jesus said, “Follow Me.” Up Matthew rose and followed Him at once. That little fellow, the tax gatherer, had climbed up a tree because, being short of stature, he could not see over the heads of the crowd. While he was looking down from among the leafy branches, the Master stood at the bottom of the tree and said, “Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must abide in your house.”

Down came Zacchaeus! How could he help it? The Spirit of God had given the effectual call and Christ was in that man’s house shortly after—and the man gave abundant evidence of a change of heart. Oh, may the eternal Spirit speak in that fashion to some here present so that they may at once yield and follow Jesus Christ! That call, wherever it comes, casts a sweet softness over the soul. The man cannot make it out, but he feels so differently from what he did before. The iron sinew of his neck is gone.

The cold stone within his breast has melted into flesh. He listens to the Gospel which once he despised. Listening, he thinks—and it is a grand matter to get a man to think about himself, his God, eternity, Heaven, Hell, the Redeemer. As he thinks, he sees his life in a different light.

He perceives that there has been sin in it—very much more of sin than he ever thought could have been there—and as he sees his sin, he mourns over it. He almost wishes that he had never been born rather than have transgressed as he has done. His heart softens under the influence of the Law of God. He lays aside his proud boasts and confesses that he is full of transgression and sin. Next to this thoughtfulness and repentance comes a little hope—he perceives that there is a salvation worth having and he asks himself why he should not have it. Then comes faith—he perceives that Jesus is the Son of God and he says to himself, “the Divine, He can save even me!” He trusts and, as he trusts, the darkness which enveloped him begins to disappear. He obtains a little light and yet a little more! And at last he cries, “I do believe that Jesus died for me. I rest my soul in His pierced hands. I am forgiven—I am saved.”

That man has been called by the blessed Spirit! It is very strange, too, how God calls some men. I have known it happen many times in this Tabernacle. I have been preaching and I have made a remark which has suited the case as well as if I had been that man’s companion or better. How was it? I will tell you. God had been at work on that man and He led His servant to work to the same point. The Lord was, by His Providence, tunneling one side of the mountain of the man’s indifference and then He set me to work on the other side by guiding me in my thoughts so that I preached the Gospel in a suitable manner. Just as when they made the Mont Cenis tunnel, one set of engineers were boring one way and one set the other way—and then they met in the heart of the great mass.

A pious mother has been boring away at the mountain by her entreaties, or an earnest Christian teacher, or a wife or a sister has been at the same work. Perhaps sickness, like the diamond boring rod, has been piercing into the man and then, at last, in this place, the Word of the Lord has exactly hit the case so that the tunnel through the soul has been completed, and eternal salvation has been the result! Perhaps the chance words of this night are no chance words to some of you now present, but the very words of God sent straight to your soul! O God, grant that it may be so and You shall have the praise. O Blessed Spirit, let it be!

III. Now, lest I weary you, I am going to close with the third head which is THE COMFORT DRAWN FROM OUR CALLING SHOULD LEAD TO IMMEDIATE ACTION. “Be of good comfort, rise; He calls you.” That exhortation to rise means instant decision. You have been hesitating and hanging like the scales of a balance, trembling between Heaven and Hell. Which is it to be? May the Holy Spirit call you so that it shall be Christ, salvation, eternal life! I am not always sorry when men grow angry while hearing a sermon. The worst thing that can happen to me tonight is for you all to be satisfied! But when some people get very angry they will *think*—and thinking they will feel—and feeling they may turn to God.

Despite their anger they will come again. The hook is in the man's jaws. We shall have that fish! Let him draw out the line further and further, for it will hold him. Let him have play. We shall have him back, again, before long. Have the landing net ready! There is nothing better for some men than to have their antagonism to the Gospel awakened for a time. The Truth of God has come home to them. It is at work on them and, before long, we trust the blessed work will be complete and the soul will be saved! This is the point aimed at. "Rise," says the text. That is, do not let it be any longer a question, "Shall it be?" or, "Shall it not be?" but decide tonight, "It shall be! By the Grace of God I will be a Christian. By the Grace of God, if there is salvation to be had, I will have it." I do not ask you to come to that decision for the mere sake of making a decision which you will cordially adopt and then carelessly forget. But I ask the Grace of God to lead you to say with purpose of heart, "It shall be."

Alas, very many of you come and go! You hear and hear without profit—for it ends in hearing and never ripens into decision. Too many of our regular hearers still remain unconverted though occasional hearers have been saved. When you take hold of a piece of India rubber, you may make any impression that you like all over it, but finally it resumes its old shape. There are hosts of hearers of that kind—very impressible, but they quickly return to their old tastes and habits. But you meet with other people who seem to be hard as rock. I have observed some who have sat in the aisle biting their lips who have never intended to believe the Gospel—and yet with one blow of the Master's hammer, their hearts have gone to shivers at once! Their armor of resistance and their mail of defiance have been broken through—and they have proven, afterwards, the heartiest and most earnest of Christian converts!

That is an unfortunate impressibility which ends in indecision. Those who show this plastic character mean to be right, but they manage to remain in the wrong. They intend to go to Heaven, but, alas, alas, little hope is there that they will ever reach the Celestial City of the blessed. The probabilities are against it—they have passed so many years in procrastination that their indecision has become chronic and fetters them to their sins! After the many seasons in which fair leaves have disappointed the hope of sweet fruits, our despondency is, we fear, the herald of their despair. There seems so little probability that they will ever decide for God and for His Christ that we scarcely hope with trembling—no, we tremble to hope! Would God it were not so. Oh dear Friends! I pray you listen to the text—"Be of good comfort, rise; He calls you." Rise! Rise to something more than decision—rise to resolution!

You have all heard of the poor woman who could not get justice done her by the judge. She called on him a great many times, but he would not listen to her. At length she made up her mind that he should attend to her. So she was present on the first court day and as soon as the judge came in she rose and said, "My Lord—" "Have I not told you not to trouble me?" "But, my Lord," she cried again. "I tell you to sit down." She sits down, but before the court is up, she says, "Can't I have a hearing?" "I

cannot attend to you now, my good woman.” But when the judge comes out of court to go home, there she is, standing at the carriage window, saying, “When will you hear my case? There are my poor children starving.”

She goes to the judge’s house and knocks at untimely hours. “Who is it?” the judge asks. And his servants tell him, “It is that poor woman who wants her case to be heard.” He bids them chase her from his gate. She goes home, sad but determined, and the next morning she is in court again. The unjust judge had commanded the ushers not to let her in, but she has entered somehow, and the first thing that is heard is that shrill voice— “My Lord, will you hear me?” At last he grows tired and he says, “Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her.” And he does avenge her! Though the just God bears no resemblance to an unjust judge, yet the widow’s importunity that prevailed in the teeth of such unpromising surrounding may urge you to incessant prayer!

Treat the great God with the importunity which Christ, by so bold a simile, counsels and commends. Say thus to yourself—“I cannot perish. But I must perish if I do not have salvation and, therefore, I will have it! I will die at the foot of the Cross if die I must, but I will have it.” It happened to me some few years ago to have to lecture at the City Hall, Glasgow. I went at the hour appointed to keep my engagement and the Provost of Glasgow went to the hall with me, but the policeman said that he could not let us in, for we had no tickets and his orders were to admit none without them. That was a pretty state of things. So the Lord Provost said, “But you must let us in.” The policeman said that he could not, no matter who we were.

I said, “This is the Lord Provost,” but the policeman said he did not know that, neither did he care who he was—he should not let us pass against rules. He had received orders from the inspector to let nobody in and he was sure no Lord Provost would wish him to disobey orders. Then the Lord Provost said, “But this is Mr. Spurgeon. He has got to deliver the lecture.” “I cannot help that. I have my orders and he shall not come in without a ticket.” What do you think we did? Did we take, “No,” for an answer? Not so! We meant to get in. So we talked and parleyed and reasoned, but he, like a good policeman, did his duty and would take no commands from us which were contrary to orders. There we stopped. At last he was condescending enough to let us send our cards in to his inspector and straightway we were admitted.

Now, if we had taken, “No,” for an answer and had gone away, I should have had, to this day, the reputation of having gathered the people together to disappoint them. No, I knew I had a right to go in and I meant to get in—and I did get in. You must do the same. Even though your sin should condemn you, the Law should denounce you and the officer of Justice should refuse you and say, “You cannot come in! No sinner comes this way,” yet insist upon it that you are a creature and a sinner—that the Gospel is sent to every creature and specially invites sinners and, there-

fore, you mean to go in to the feast of Grace, no matter who may oppose! Stand to it that you will enter and, as surely as God is true, if there is this resolve and perseverance in you, you shall enter into the banquet of love—you shall inherit eternal life—and rejoice forevermore!

But, dear Friends, if you get to that decision and resolution, there is one thing more, and that is, cast away everything that hinders you from finding salvation. The poor blind man cast away his garment. Now, if you would be saved you must resolve in your soul, by the blessing of the Holy Spirit, that every sin and every habit of yours which hinders your finding Christ shall, at once, be given up. There is no pleasure worth keeping at the price of your soul! No sin is worth preserving on any account whatever—let all your old pleasures and habits go! Let them all go and give yourself up to Jesus Christ! How I wish that many, tonight, might be led to say, “There is salvation, then, for me by believing. I believe that the Word of God is true and I take Christ to be mine.” Give yourselves up wholly to Christ. No half measures! No hesitating and halting now!

You know what Cortez did when he went to Mexico and intended to conquer it? The soldiers that were with him were few and dispirited. The Mexicans were many and the enterprise very dangerous. The soldiers would have gone back to Spain, but Cortez took two or three chosen heroes with him and went down to the seaside and destroyed up all his ships. “Now,” he said, we must conquer or die! We cannot go back.” Burn your boats! Get rid of all thoughts of return! Leave sin and abhor it! God help you to do it, for this is His Gospel—“Repent and be converted, every one of you.” Forsake sin and believe in Jesus Christ! And let the boats be burned, making this your resolution—that there shall be no going back to sin!

Thus have I told you what should be done, but God alone can make you do it. We can lead a horse to the water, but we cannot make him drink—so we can set the plan of salvation before men, but we cannot induce them to accept it, except only as, in answer to prayer, the eternal Spirit moves in the souls of men. He is moving upon you now! We are conscious that He is brooding over some of you at this hour! Do not resist Him! Yield yourselves wholly to His monitions. As the bulrushes in the stream bow their heads to the passing breeze, so bow before the motions of the ever-blessed Spirit! May He help you to do so, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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JESUS AT A STANDSTILL

NO. 1587

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 6, 1881,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And Jesus stood still.”
Mark 10:49.***

A FRIEND enquired of me yesterday, “Will you preach on Sunday morning to saints or to sinners?” I could not, at the moment, answer him, but afterwards I thought to myself—If I preach concerning Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, I shall kill two birds with one stone and give both saints and sinners a profitable theme for thought. There is but one message of the Gospel and it has a voice to all. Saints know no sweeter music than the name of Jesus and sinners know no richer comfort than His Person and His work. We preach to all when we preach Him who is All in All. Christ comes as life to the dead and He is equally life to the living.

I trust there will, at this time, be a word in season, both to those who fear God and to those who fear Him not, while I speak of the Savior from these three words, “Jesus stood still.” Our Divine Lord has changed His position, but He is, Himself, the same as always and, therefore, every Truth of God which we learn concerning Him in the past becomes all the more valuable since it is still true of Him. Our Lord’s name is “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever.” What His Character was on earth such it is still—His pursuits on earth are still His pursuits. His main objective when He was here is His chief aim even in Glory. We have not to say, “This is what Jesus *was*,” and then to mourn that He has changed, for He is without variableness. His transit from the Cross to the Throne has not affected His Nature so as to make Him other than He was when here below.

If we delight in a trait of His Character as drawn in the Gospels, we may be sure that He possesses the same excellence now that He is at the right hand of the Father. His dealing with blind Bartimaeus 19 centuries ago is a fair type of His conduct towards every poor blind sinner who at this hour comes to Him crying, “Son of David, have mercy on me.” I hope we shall see the miracle of Jericho repeated in this house this very day! I am persuaded that it will be so, for even now, encouraged by the prayers already offered, Jesus waits to be gracious and today it shall be said that at the entreaties of His people, Jesus paused to work wonders of love—“Jesus stood still.”

I. First, let us answer this question—WHAT DOES THIS PAUSE MEAN IN THE SAVIOR’S PROGRESS. “Jesus stood still”? This was not His frequent posture, for He was always on the move—“He went about doing good.” He might have done much among men if He had taken up His station and remained in one place so that the crowds could have come to Him to listen to His voice or to be healed by His power. But Jesus was not

an immovable statue of benevolence! He was active and energetic—an itinerant Preacher who never wearied in His circuit. One does not often see Jesus standing still. His was the love which does not wait to be sought after by men, for it has come to seek as well as to save that which was lost. The zeal of the Lord's house consumed Him so that for Him there was no loitering or standing still. Yet in the case before us, the Great Worker ceased from His activity—"Jesus stood still."

In the Gospel we read that our Lord was going up to Jerusalem with His face steadfastly set to accomplish His great work. His own words were, "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles: and they shall mock Him, and shall scourge Him, and shall spit upon Him, and shall kill Him: and the third day He shall rise again." (Mark 10:33, 34). He had a Baptism to be baptized with and he was straitened until it was accomplished and, therefore, with brave resolve He forced His way to the city.

Every pause to Him would have been untimely unless there had been some weighty reason to stop. His great work pressed upon His soul and He longed to be fully engaged in it—as one who has a cup to drink and thirsts to set it to His lips. Yet, though His thoughts were thus urgently preoccupied and His whole heart engrossed, we find Him pausing in His steady progress to the desired end—"Jesus stood still." There was, doubtless, somewhat special about this recorded pause. What was it which fastened Him to the spot? It was not hesitancy—His resolve was too firm. It was not fear—the thought of drawing back never passed the Redeemer's mind! Onward, onward, was His fixed resolve. He stood still from no unworthy motive—all His movements and His pauses have a nobility about them and a fullness of meaning which no personal motive can account for.

Our Lord was beginning, at the moment, that triumphal procession which continued till He reached the Temple amid the hosannas of the multitude! It is true He was advancing to the Cross, but before He reached His death, He was to be proclaimed as the King, meek and lowly, who came riding upon a colt, the foal of an ass. His triumphal march has begun and Jesus is in the midst of admiring listeners! Yet Jesus stands still. The whole procession stops. The 12 disciples and the company of the faithful are stopped and the crowd tarries in the roadway of Jericho. For what great reason did it happen that Jesus stood still?

I could have wished that a master sculptor had been there and could, then, have caught a glimpse of the standing Jesus. I think I see Him suddenly still. He moves not an inch, but waits in listening attitude. His eyes are fixed in the direction from where had come a certain pleading cry. His ears are evidently open to hear the movement which follows His command to call the suppliant. The Savior's thoughts are pausing, too—He stands still mentally as well as physically—engrossed by one objective to which He will attend before He takes another step. Ceasing from His discourse, however much His hearers regret His silence, He gives all attention to the

petitioner whose voice reached Him above the tramping and hubbub of the crowd.

That cry came from a blind beggar—that was the man. Yes, the blind beggar of Jericho had stopped the Prophet of Nazareth! Proclaim his name—blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timmus—has stopped the Savior and holds Him spellbound! Jesus waits in perfect readiness to attend to the pleading one and grant him his desire. The cry of, “Son of David, have mercy upon me,” has caught His ear and the music of the word, “mercy,” mesmerizes Him! As the Song has it, “The King is held in the galleries.” Attentive and prepared to help with all His mighty power, Jesus waits. He tarries at a blind beggar’s prayer, resolved to do his bidding! I have seen servants wait upon their masters, but here is the Lord of All waiting upon one lower than a servant—waiting upon a blind man whose trade was begging! “Jesus stood still”—He was all there—ready, willing, able, too, to do for the poor man whatever he needed.

He asked him, “What do you want Me to do for you?” as if He stood at his beck and call and could not take a step onward until He had answered the prayer! “Jesus stood still.” I have heard of Joshua who said, “Sun, stand still upon Gibeon; and you, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon,” but I rank the blind beggar *above* Joshua, for he causes the Sun of Righteousness to stand still! Yes, He who created both sun and moon stood still and the Lord listened to the voice of a man! Jericho had produced, in ages long gone by, a prodigy of faith among her harlots and now she shows us a wonder of Grace among her beggars! How marvelous was the power which dwelt in that poor man’s cry! Is such power to be found among men at this hour?

Ah, that is the point. The Savior is the same today as ever and I believe, my Brothers and Sisters, that you and I have power at this time to make Him stand still if we act as Bartimaeus did! Many a poor sinner here, this morning, if God shall help him to cry after the style of the blind man, can command the Savior’s full attention! He can command His power and get from Him the Grace which He is so willing and able to bestow! As for you who know and love Him, be well assured that no blind beggar can have such power with Him as you have who are His friends! I am sure that the voices of those who have laid their heads in His bosom must have great power over Him and if our Brethren will but use their influence with the Well-Beloved, they may ask what they will and it shall be done! Pleading saints can cause Him to stand still even now!

I have feared and trembled for my country of late lest the Lord Jesus should depart from it and take away the candlestick out of its place. More than 200 years ago George Herbert said, when he looked upon the declining state of godliness in England—

**“Religion stands on tiptoe in our land,
Ready to pass to the American strand.”**

He saw the Puritans flying away to the New England colonies and he trembled for the ark of God in his own land, but, thank God, the prayers of Herbert and the prayers of other saints have constrained the Lord Jesus to abide with us, though, “He made as though He would have gone

further.” Brethren, the Lord had thought, as it were, to cross the Atlantic and fix His dwelling among a people who should be gathered in a newly-discovered land. Thank God He has built a Church in America, but He has not left us without witness. Because of the tears of His saints, “Jesus stood still.” We still hold Him and we will not let Him go—He abides among our Churches, still opening blind eyes, saving souls and making men whole! O you that love Him, take care that by your entreaties you still detain Him!

At times our Lord, as Judge among the nations, arises to visit the sins of a people upon them. Patience makes room for Justice and Providence determines that guilty nations shall be scourged. At such times they are blessed, indeed, who can cause the King to stand still. This wicked country of ours has often escaped through the prayers of the saints. No man can read our history without perceiving that among guilty nations we hold a sorrowful place, for we have had more of the Light of God than any other people and have sinned against it full often! This erring nation of ours had been scourged to destruction if it had not been that the intercessions of God’s people have caused the Judge of all the earth to stand still!

Jesus now rules all nations as Lord of Providence and metes out justice and judgment among them, but a plea for mercy brings a decree of forbearance and sinful nations are permitted to stand within the bounds of Divine Grace. I doubt not that when the end of a reprobate has almost come and when a sinner’s breath has almost left his body and the judgment has been about to be executed upon his guilty soul, that the prayers of earnest men and women have made the Merciful One linger a little longer and give a farther space in which repentance might spring up in the long-hardened heart—and the faith-glance might yet be given by the long-blinded eyes! What pauses Grace has made when faith has interceded!

Whatever our Lord Jesus is doing, He is never so occupied as to disregard earnest prayer. He would, if necessary, put *everything* aside to listen to importunate and earnest pleading! To this day Jesus stands still to hear the cry of the destitute! If at this moment we could withdraw the curtains of Heaven, we would see our Savior waiting to be gracious, ready to hear our prayers, listening to every sigh, putting every tear into His bottle, answering every petition which comes up before Him from a sincere heart! Though He rules empires, He stands still to hear the wailing of distress! Though He inhabits the praises of Israel, He is moved by the sorrows of sinners! Though He hastens the day of His coming and is ready to begin His triumphal advent to the New Jerusalem, yet will He pause when the poor and needy present their case before Him!

Thus have I tried to picture the Lord Jesus at a standstill. How I wish that some awakened one would now behold the Savior and exclaim, with Mr. Wesley—

**“Stopped by a sinner’s prayer,
You can no farther move.
You can no more forbear
To manifest Your love.
You wait now to show Your Grace,**

And call me to seek Your face.”

II. We will now enter upon a practical enquiry—WHO AND WHAT WAS THIS WHICH STOPPED THE SAVIOR? What made Him stand still? Herod could not have done it, nor Pilate, nor chief priests, nor scribes, nor the foresight of the bloody sweat, nor a vision of the Cross. These would but have quickened His steps to enter upon the conflict and achieve Redemption. What made Him stand still? First, as I have already said, it was a blind beggar. I am afraid there are very few here, this morning, who are *literally* beggars, for nowadays we wear good clothes and are so very respectable that *really* poor people do not like to come and sit with us. That is a real pity.

Yet I know that many poor persons are here today and I thank God that it is so. Those who are of poverty will, I hope, believe that they are welcome to the House of the Lord, who is no respecter of persons. We are right glad to see the poor among us, the more the merrier! Bartimaeus was a man of the very lowest order. He did not earn his own bread—he could not—he sat publicly by the wayside and held out his hand for alms. Men give small honor to a blind beggar and are apt to pass him by without regard, but he to whom we owe all hope of Heaven stood still at the cry of such as he! After this, no one among you will dare to say, “I cannot be saved because I am so obscure, so poor, so homeless, so helpless.” Tell me what you are at your very worst and I still have good tidings concerning my Lord’s condescending favor to the likes of you!

Did you lodge in the casual ward last night? Yet you are welcome to Christ! Have you come from the workhouse? Yet you are invited to the palace of Grace! Do you labor very hard for very little and can you barely pay your way? The Lord Jesus Christ wants no fee or reward from you—come empty-handed to His treasury! Jesus does not look at garments. What does Christ care about our coats? Tailors think of such matters, but Jesus does not! Christ sees the man, himself, not his clothes—He looks not at the man’s possessions, but at his *heart*! In mercy He beholds not the excellence of the man, but his needs, his sorrows and his poverty. No man here shall ever be able to say, “It was of no use for me to think about religion—my circumstances are too low.” “I was depressed,” says one, “I should have thought about better things, but really, the grind of poverty was so dreadful that I could not rise from the dust.” This is not true, for you are not poorer than the blind beggar of Jericho—and the sharp tooth of penury has not bitten you more severely than many of the Lord’s suffering saints! Misery had eaten into the heart of this poor blind man and yet his cry made the Savior stand still!

Now then, you that are the lowest, poorest, most afflicted, most despised in this house, I pray that you may be helped to appeal to Jesus for mercy and He will stand still to listen to you, even to you! But what was the art by which Bartimaeus stopped the Lord? That which stopped the Savior was a blind beggar’s cry! The man did not sing a touching hymn to a melting tune—he only cried! Sometimes persons have such melodious voices that if they sing in the streets you linger to hear them and are in no hurry to go on with your errands. But this man did not sing! He had not

even learned to intone his prayers as certain do in these odd times. I wonder whether the Lord ever listens to prayers when men turn them into sing-song and deliver them in an unnatural voice—*intoning*, as they call it? Why do men think it an improvement to say their prayers the wrong way upwards?

This man cried. It was a cry, a ringing cry which increased in strength each time it was uttered! Thus it rose up into the ear, “Son of David, have mercy on me! Son of David, have mercy on me!” The voice came from a heart burdened with misery, breaking with desire, weary of long years of darkness, pining for the light and hopeful of obtaining it. “Son of David, have mercy on me!” Again the cry rose above all the hubbub of the throng. The prayer was a cry for mercy—“Son of David, have mercy.” If you ask our Lord for anything on the ground of merit, you will find Him deaf as a stone! If you think yourself a very good person, deserving favor at His hands, He will pass on and never regard you, for He has not come to call the righteous, but *sinner*s to repentance!

When your prayer is for *mercy*, you will touch the Savior’s heart, directly, and mercy shall be yours. The proud man prays and he thinks his eloquent prayer must prevail, but the winds carry away his supplications. The humble man does no more than smite on his breast and say, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner,” and that cry for mercy wins the day! When the Messenger of Mercy was traveling through the world He asked Himself at what inn He should alight and spend the night. Lions and eagles were not to His mind and He passed by houses wearing such warlike names. So, too, He passed by places known by the sign of “The Waving Plume” and “The Conquering Hero,” for He knew that there was no room for Him in those inns! He hastened by many a hostelry and tarried not, till at last He came to a little inn which bore the sign of “The Broken Heart.” “Here,” said mercy’s Messenger, “I would gladly tarry, for I know by experience that I shall be welcome here.” “A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.”

Now, beloved Friends, if you plead for mercy because deeply conscious that nothing but the Grace of God can save you, even though you cannot put pretty words together or offer a long prayer, you shall prevail with God! You need not be an orator in order to be mighty in pleading with the Lord. Only appeal on the ground of Free Grace and dying love and Jesus will stand still and listen to you! There was another point about this cry which must not be forgotten—the name of Jesus was used as a plea. Is there anything in Heaven, or out of Heaven, more powerful than the name of Jesus? “Whatever you shall ask the Father in My name, He will give you.” “Whatever you shall ask in My name, that will I do.” Father and Son stand pledged to recognize and accept every draft upon the check of Heaven which is endorsed with the name of Jesus—a name that makes angels rejoice and devils tremble—there is none like it anywhere!

The blind beggar of Jericho had learned to use the name of Jesus and he called Him, “Son of David—Prince, Messiah, the Sent One of God, the Savior of the world! Here is wisdom! O dear Hearer, if you know the name of Jesus, plead it! If you know what He is, what He came to do, what He

has done, what He is doing—if you know anything about His Character, His Nature, His power, or His promise—plead it before Him in prayer! In humble faith say to Him, “Son of David, if You are, indeed, all this, be all this to *me*, I beseech You! If You are a Savior, save me! If You blot out sin, blot out mine! If You open the understanding, open mine, for Your great mercy’s sake!” When we can thus reason together with the Lord, we shall have good speed in His Presence and again it shall be said, “Jesus stood still.”

I suppose the main thing which brought our gracious Master to a standstill was the fact that He had now an opportunity for doing good. Jesus has come to seek His lost sheep and when His eyes light upon one all torn and lame, He stops to deal tenderly with it. Our Lord was an itinerant Savior and wherever He found that He was needed, there He stayed. The objective of His mission is still the same—

***“He comes, from thickest films of vice,
To clear the mental ray.
And on the eyes of the blind
To pour celestial day.
He comes, the broken heart to bind,
The bleeding soul to cure.
And with the treasures of His Grace,
To enrich the humble poor.”***

Certain people in His day boasted that they could see—our Lord did not tarry to argue with them—they did not want Him and He, therefore, passed them by. But here is a blind man and was it not said of the Messiah that He should open the eyes of the blind? Here is the opportunity for Him and before that opportunity He stands still until His illuminating work shall be done!

You good people who imagine that you will go to Heaven by your own works, my Lord does not wait on you. But you poor sinners who have no merits—you guilty ones who *need* His mercy—Jesus stops for you! You who have so much strength that you can believe when you like, can repent when you like, can be saved when you like, can be quite independent of the Holy Spirit and the Sovereign Grace of God—Jesus does not look at you. But oh, you that are blind and cannot see! You that wish you could see! You who groan because you have no strength—you are the men for my Master! Believe me, the Lord of Mercy looks not at merit, but at misery! The necessity of the case is its claim upon His tender heart. O sons of men, the Infinite Savior cares not for your fullness! His eyes of pity rests upon your emptiness!

He turns indignantly from fancied claims of proud, self-righteous men, but He hastens to relieve those who confess their faults and seek His face. This is the work and office of Jesus—and He loves to exercise His high calling! Come to Him and put your case into His hands. Be this your prayer—

***“Since You still go about to do
Your needy creatures good,
On me, that I, Your praise may show,
Be all Your wonders showed.
If You, my God, are passing by,***

***Oh let me find You near!
Jesus, in mercy hear my cry,
You, Son of David, hear!
Behold me waiting, in the way,
For You, the heavenly light!
Command me to be brought, and say,
'Sinner, receive your sight.'***

Thus I have tried to show what was the power which riveted the Savior to the spot so that the Gospel says, "Jesus stood still."

III. Under our third head we shall now enquire—WHAT WAS THERE SPECIAL ABOUT THIS BLIND MAN AND HIS PRAYER? An answer lies on the surface—there was this about it, first, that the man was full of need. He had two loads to carry. He was poor—that is bad enough, but he was also blind—that is worse. Here was a man with double need—without bread and without sight—and, therefore, his cries had a double loudness in the ears of the sinner's Friend. I cannot so look around these galleries and over this area as to spy out those in direst need, or I would look their way and say—

"Come, you sinners, poor and wretched,"

but I can make a few enquiries and may the Lord find out His own by them. Is there anyone here who has a double need, who is doubly guilty, doubly helpless—a man who feels that if Jesus does not save Him, he will be doubly damned? Do I speak to one whose need is doubly pressing so that his heart breaks for immediate relief?

Ah, you doubly lost one, Jesus will stand still for you! You who are blind and poverty-stricken, too, shall have speedy audience! You that have nothing and can see no hope of ever having anything—you are the favored ones whose pleading voices Jesus never disregards! Cry mightily to Him at once! He waits at this moment. "Why," says one, "you are preaching up our poverty, our begging, our bankruptcy." Exactly so—

***"'Tis perfect poverty alone
That sets the soul at large.
While we can call one mite our own
We get no full discharge.
But let our debts be what they may,
However great or small,
As soon as we have naught to pay,
Our Lord forgives us all!"***

But there was another specialty about this man besides his double need and that was his strong desire. When he sought for sight he *meant* it and there was no question about his sincerity and eagerness. His was no prayer which froze on the lips.

His desire was, moreover, a very fitting and appropriate one. He sighed not for a luxury, but for a necessity. Our Lord said, in the 36th verse, to James and John, "What do you want Me to do for you?" And now, when He speaks to Bartimaeus, He uses the same words—"What do you want Me to do for you?" James and John asked what was not fitting, or necessary, or proper. But this poor man had a desire which was, of all others, the most natural and suitable. What should a blind man seek but sight? Have you, dear Hearer, a longing for salvation? What else should a sinner

long for? Do you desire forgiveness of sin? It is, of all things, most fitting that a guilty one should desire pardon! Do you wish for your spiritual eyes to be opened? Do you pray to be made whole? Do you pine to become holy? Oh, then, if your desires are real and fervent—their objectives are so suitable, so commendable that you may be sure of them being granted! Therefore, be of good cheer and at this moment hope in the Lord.

Another thing that was special about the case was the man's earnest pleading, for his desire turned itself into prayer and that prayer took up arguments and urged them earnestly. His prayer was so full of life that it could not be repressed! Many tried to silence his cry, but it could not be hushed. Important persons said to the man, "Be quiet." Apostles charged him to hold his tongue, but he heeded no one. I am sure that if an Apostle were to say to some of you, "Do not pray," you would feel quite warranted in ceasing from praying—at least, it would serve as a good enough excuse for you! You would say, "I never plan to seek mercy again, for Peter told me not to do so."

Oh, but if in your heart there is a work of Grace, 50 Peters could not stop your praying! Irrepressible prayer brings assured answers. If there is a prayer in your soul that James and John could not silence. If there is a cry in your soul that Andrew and Bartholomew and Nathanael and the whole 11 of them could not suffocate, the Lord Jesus will speedily hear you! Pray, my Brothers and Sisters, pray without ceasing though all the devils in Hell should charge you not to pray! Though all the saints in Heaven should vote your pleading, useless, yet still plead on and your suit shall speed with the Redeemer! He stops for you and even now it may be said of Him, "Jesus stood still." That, after all, which fastest bound the Savior was the man's faith, for He said to him, "Your faith has made you whole."

What kind of faith was it? It was the best faith as to origin, for it was the faith of a blind man and, therefore, was not adulterated by the confidence which comes of sight. Faith comes not by seeing, or else it never could have come to this poor beggar—it comes by hearing—and he *could* hear. We have among us a certain sort of people who seem to imagine that faith comes by sight. Acting upon this, they work upon the eyes in many ways. If you step inside the walls of their churches you see an enormous cross. The altar is sumptuously adorned, mystical letters and characters are here and there in abundance. Open your eyes and get a blessing, if there is one! Look, here comes a man who, on his back and all around him carries means of grace for the eyes!

He wears an embroidered cross and all over he is rigged out and ragged out, so as to instruct and save all who are willing to study symbolical vestures! He that has eyes to see, let him see! Watch what this successor of the Apostles is doing! Observe his genuflections, his facings about, his nodding of the head—all these minister grace to the beholders! Faith of the High Anglican kind would seem to come by sight, but the faith of God's elect—the faith which saves the soul—"comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Bartimaeus had seen nothing, but he had believed the report concerning the Messiah and had received the benedic-

tion, “Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.” If Jesus Christ raised the dead, this man did not *see* the miracle. If Jesus healed the leper, this man did not *see* the wonder. And if the lame man leaped like a hart, this man had neither *seen* his crutches nor his *leaping*—his faith was solely born of *hearing* and this is faith’s best pedigree.

Dear Friends, be attentive hearers of the Gospel! Thank God that you are privileged to be hearers. You need not sigh for ceremonies or architecture or processions. If you are a hearer of the Gospel, you have sufficient means of Divine Grace. By Eargate, King Jesus rides into the town of Mansoul! He says, “Incline your ears and come unto Me; hear, and your soul shall live.” What? Though no *dream*, or *vision*, or rapturous *experience* as a sign for your eyes to see? Yes, believe in Jesus and you shall find in Him more than all signs and wonders!

IV. Thus have we thought over the peculiar forces which made the Savior stand. May we now know how to use them. Does anyone enquire, What has this to do with me? This is my last point—“WHAT IS THERE SPECIAL FOR YOU, MY HEARER?” I think there may be much for you, for it contains much for *me*. I was a blind beggar, once. I was as blind as the heathens’ gods, of which we read, “eyes have they, but they see not.” And I was a beggar, too, so penniless as not to possess a pennyworth of merits to bless myself with. I thought I had some good works, once—quite a little cupboard full—but they bred worms and stunk and I had to sweep them all out and sweeten the place which they had defiled.

I found myself worse than having nothing, for, like the Egyptians when the plague of frogs was removed, I had heaps of rubbish to get rid of. My former good works became, in my judgment, like forged bank notes or counterfeit money—I was afraid of being charged with the attempt to use them! Alas, my base good works, my proud good works, my deceitful good works pressed heavily on my conscience! By putting these into the place of Christ, I had made them worse than my sins! I was in a worse state than a man who owns nothing, for I was head over heels in debt and I knew it. Then it was that I heard of One who would deliver me and I cried to Him and He speedily delivered me. Oh, how I wish that many others would feel that they, too, need the Divine Savior! O that men knew that they are poor and blind and that Jesus can give them eyes and can supply all their needs!

It is a very curious thing—a very curious thing to me—that so much uncertainty hangs over this narrative. I am not so sure as to speak positively, but I believe that this story which Mark tells us is not the whole of what happened, for Matthew is certain that there were *two* blind men. Hear what Matthew says about it. Surely it is the same incident, or one strangely similar. Matthew 20:29—“And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed Him. And behold, two blind men sitting by the wayside, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, “Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David.”

And the multitude rebuked them, that they should hold their peace. But they cried out the more, saying, “Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David.” And Jesus stood still and called them and said, “What do you

want Me to do for you?” They said unto Him, “Lord, that our eyes may be opened.” There were *two* blind beggars, though Mark only feels it necessary to mention the principal one. If there were two, one of them is not known by name at all. We know the name of Bartimaeus and we know the name of his father, but we do not know the name of his companion. Mark might have left out the father’s name, which is implied in the name of Bartimaeus, and he might have mentioned the other beggar, but he was not moved to do so, perhaps for the very reason that we should learn more out of his silence than out of the information.

I venerate the silence of the Bible as much as its speech. I have been wondering if there is a man or woman here who will be saved this morning of whom we shall never hear, whose name will never be on our books and whose story will never cheer our hearts? It appears from what Matthew says that this No. 2, whoever he was, this anonymous body, prayed in the same words as Bartimaeus. Bartimaeus was a man of force and energy and he made the prayer as to its words, “Son of David, have mercy on me.” The other man followed suit and adopted the methods of Bartimaeus. He was like the poor orator who had to speak after Burke and, very wisely said no more than, “I say ditto to Mr. Burke.” Mark does not take much notice of him because he was the echo of Bartimaeus and probably a poor, feeble-minded, shiftless body whose only chance seemed to be in following the lead of a stronger mind.

Here, then, is the mercy of it, that though we do not know the man’s name, he had his eyes opened quite as surely as Bartimaeus! And though he could not make a prayer of his own, and only followed Bartimaeus, he had sight of his own and a word of comfort for himself from Jesus. Oh, poor dear Hearts, you way back in the background there; you that never will have the courage to join the Church because you are so timid; be of good courage for Jesus observes even you! Oh, you poor tremblers, who have not wit enough to put a dozen words together—at least you think so, for there is no telling what may be hidden away in you, somewhere—remember that it is the *inward desire* that Jesus hears and not the pleasing sentences of ready speakers!

If you can only pray as somebody else prayed, I would have you borrow your prayers from the Bible, for Scriptural prayers are sure to be right. Take the prayer of the publican if you cannot make one of your own, and say, “God be merciful to me, a sinner.” As soon as I saw that there were two beggars whose eyes were opened I thought, “After preaching I will look to meet with a convert whose name and family I shall know and with his tale of Grace I will solace myself. But oh, that my Lord would bless some whom I shall *never* know—some anonymous ones, some nobodies, some weak and shrinking souls! Are there any such here? Will not many such *read* the sermon? O that at their cry Jesus may stand still to bless them!

I must mention a more curious thing, still. I am not certain, I am not clear, I am talking about things which must remain undecided, but it is very possible that there were *three* blind beggars healed. It may be that first of all, one man, Bartimaeus, applied to the Lord Jesus and had his eyes opened when Jesus was nearly out of Jericho. And then two others

had their eyes opened when Jesus and the crowds were actually going out of the town. Many writers think that Matthew and Mark record two different incidents and it is very likely to be so. Probably the two blind men, having heard of the success of Bartimaeus, were encouraged to try for themselves and carefully imitated him, crying in the same language for the same gift! Thus there was a repetition of the incident on a doubled scale. I like that notion. I wonder whether No. 3 is here, whose name we do not know and probably never shall know, but yet he is known to Jesus and his cry is heard? He has come here with poor No. 2, who is equally weak and trembling with himself—God bless them both!

Those of us on whom the Savior has worked a good work would speak well of Him for the encouragement of the fearing ones. I bear my witness to the eye-opening power of the Gospel. “One thing I know, whereas I was blind; now I see,” and no one opened my eyes but Jesus! I went to Him just as I was. I trusted Him and He saved me. May there not be two more blind men or women sitting somewhere about who will follow our example? Just do as we have done—pray and trust, cry and believe! Say, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Remember He that has saved one can save two! He that has saved two can save three! No, it stops not at three—if there were 3,000 here who all cried for mercy, they should all have it—and as many millions more as could be found to follow in the same track!

I see, this morning, before my mind’s eye, Jesus standing before Jericho like a second Joshua. As you all know, the names, Jesus, and Joshua, are the same. Joshua crossed the Jordan and he stood with his sword drawn to capture Jericho and commence his march through Canaan, conquering and to conquer. Look, here is Jesus and He must make captives in Jericho before He advances further into the land! The city of palm trees must yield Him followers before the palms of victory are cast at His feet! He enters into Jericho, not to lay its walls flat to the ground, nor to slay its inhabitants, but to open eyes that have long been closed and bless poor creatures who have pined in poverty! This is the first fruit of His warfare—the commencement of a career which shall end at Jerusalem where He shall smite the Prince of Darkness and win the victory for all mankind!

Even now I may say of Jesus Christ which was said of the son of Nun—“So the Lord was with Joshua and his fame was told abroad throughout all the country.” I wish the Lord Jesus Christ this morning would make this place as the gate of Jericho and begin, on this spot, a great revival of religion throughout the whole land by opening the eyes of some that are blind! Let the prayer go up from many a heart, “Lord, open my eyes,” and He will do it! And let that request be followed by another, “Lord, save millions,” and He will hear us! Let us pray boldly and believingly in the name of Jesus! Hear us, O Lord! Amen.

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REASONS FOR A SINGULAR QUESTION NO. 2458

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 29, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 14, 1886.**

***“What do you want Me to do for you?”
Mark 10:51.***

THAT was a very strange question to ask a blind man. Everybody could see that he was blind—they could tell by the way he struggled through the crowd, that he was blind. His very voice, which had long been used in begging, would show that he was a blind mendicant. There he stood before the Savior and Jesus knew what he wanted, yet He put to him this singular question, “What do you want Me to do for you?” The great Son of David knew that the man who cried to Him, “Have mercy on me,” really meant by that plea, “Lord, give me my sight.” Yet our blessed Lord never asked a foolish question and never spoke an idle word. There is a deep meaning, a gracious reason, in all that He says. It will be my business at this time to try to show you the reasons for this question. And while I do so, I want to speak, not so much to you people who are converted and who know the Savior, but I want to address any here who have not yet been brought to the feet of Jesus, but who are longing to be saved by Him. Oh, that God would help you to follow me in each thing as I say it, that what is said may be done as it is said, God the Holy Spirit working by the Word!

In speaking about this singular question, I am going to show you, first, *what it did* and, secondly, *what it teaches*.

I. First, let us think of WHAT THIS SINGULAR QUESTION DID—“What do you want Me to do for you?”

Well, first, it brought out the two personalities. Listen to the question: “What do you want Me to do for you?” All the people round can see these two people—there is the ever-blessed Christ—and there is the blind beggar. These make the center of the group and the Lord Jesus Christ, by His question, brings these two into prominence—“What do you want Me to do for you?” I wish that I could fetch out of this great throng the sinner and the Savior. Dear Friend, you are standing face to face with Him at this moment! Forget the crowd, never mind these thousands of people—you have nothing to do with them, but only with yourself and the Savior! Another day you may think of other blind men, but just now think only of one blind person—and that one yourself. Another day you may think of other good men, but now think only of that one truly good Man, Jesus Christ, the Lord from Heaven, the Son of God who became Man that He might bless men! The Son of Man stands before you! Isolate

yourself from all else and let the two personalities stand out clearly before your eyes—yourself, a sinner, lost and ruined by your sin—and the Savior, who alone can help you and who stands prepared at once to bless you on the spot! That is what the question did, first—it brought out the two personalities.

Secondly, *it displayed Christ's boundless power*. Do you see that in it? He says, "What do you want Me to do for you?" It is not, "What can I do?" Not, "What power have I to do this or that?" But, "What is it that you will? What is your desire? What is your request?" Christ speaks like One who is prepared to meet it, be it what it may. What, then, do you need, Sinner? The Lord Jesus Christ can meet your need though it were deep as Hell, though it were greedy as famine, though it were dire as death. You cannot be in such a state that He cannot meet you in that state. You cannot have a need which He cannot supply. You cannot be under a disease which He cannot heal. You cannot be in the power of a devil whom He cannot cast out of you. You stand in the Presence of an Almighty Savior, God Over All, even though He died upon the Cross. In weakness He bled. In Glory He reigns and He is "mighty to save." Do you understand this great Truth of God? If there is any limit, it will be in your prayer, not in His power, and He puts the question to you, "What will you? What will you? What is it you really need?"

And, thirdly—and this seems very amazing to me—this question *gave wondrous scope*. What trustfulness the Lord Jesus had towards this blind man! Just before this miracle was worked, two young men, or their mother on their behalf, came to Jesus and asked Him to do for them whatever they should desire. They were two fine young men—two of His own chosen Apostles, James and John—highly honored men! And their mother was blessed among women to have such sons—she was the mother of Zebedee's children—but when she came with the request that her sons should sit at His right and left hand in His Kingdom, the Savior said that what she asked was not His to give. He would not give *cart blanche* to the mother of James and John, or to her sons—but to the blind man He did, in effect, give *cart blanche*! He said, "What will you have? I will give you whatever you want, you have only to ask and have." The Savior knew that the blind man's ambition would go no further than to lead him to ask that his eyes might be opened. And when He comes to deal with you poor, troubled, guilty souls, He knows what you most want, so He says to you, "Ask what you like."

"Lord, I am the biggest sinner out of Hell." "I will save you." "Lord, I need a new heart." "I will give it to you." "Lord, I need to be made a new man altogether, repairs and mending are of no use. I am like an old gun, to make it of any service, lock, stock and barrel must all be new." "I will do it for you." "But, Lord, it will need a great effort to take *me* to Heaven." "I will do it for you. Come, Sinner, open your mouth wide and I will fill it." Big vile Sinner, the Savior gives you *carte blanche*! He puts a signed check into your hand and leaves you to fill it up with whatever you will because He knows that your desires all lean one way. Those desires are, "Lord, forgive me. Lord, renew me. Lord, save me." And He is ready to

give you anything of that kind. Your Master sets open all the barrels in His cellar—they are full of the Water of Life and He lets them flow in rivers at your feet as He says to you, poor thirsty one—

“Stoop down, and drink, and live.”

Come to your Master’s banquet, for the chosen and the fatlings are killed and, “all things are ready.” Feed upon them all if you have appetite enough, for He says to you, concerning spiritual food, “Eat abundantly, O Beloved!” There is no stint and no limit in the question! “What do you want Me to do for you?” gives you full scope—plenty of sea room—as the sailors say. O big Sinner, ask some great thing of your great Savior, for it is clear from the text that you may do so!

I think, also, that by this question the Savior *fixed the blind man’s mind on the blessing he needed*. The Lord Jesus wished blind Bartimaeus to know what he really needed. I believe that there are many people who pray after a very poor fashion, for they really do not know for what they are praying. “I want to be saved,” says one. Do you know what being saved is? “Oh,” says the person, “I want to be converted.” But do you know what being *converted* means? I believe that many people who go into the Enquiry Room to seek the Savior, if they knew what they were seeking, would run away sooner than get it, but they do not know what it is. “I want to be saved from going to Hell,” says one. Now, mark you, that is *not* salvation! Every murderer wants to be saved from the gallows! Every thief wants to avoid the policeman and if that is all you want, I have little comfort to give you. What Christ comes to do is to save you from your *sins*—to save the drinkers from getting drunk—to save the liar from saying what is not true. He has come into the world to save the dishonest from being dishonest! To save the lazy from being lazy! To save the ungenerous from being selfish and grasping. He has come to save the blasphemer from his blasphemy and the Sabbath-breaker from his Sabbath-breaking! His name is called Jesus, “for He shall save His people from their sins.”

Jesus wanted this blind man to know what he really needed and He wants you, Sinner, to know what you really need. And, therefore, He puts this question to you, “What do you want Me to do for you?” that you may settle distinctly in your mind what it is that you are seeking. May God the Holy Spirit enable you to do so!

II. Now I come to the second head of my discourse, which is, **WHAT THIS QUESTION TEACHES US**—“What do you want Me to do for you?”

It teaches us much more than I can tell you in a single sermon, but it does teach us, I think, very plainly, that *prayer should be personal*—“What do you want Me to do for you?” There was, just now, a host of us bowing our heads in the attitude of prayer, but how many of us were really praying? The prayer that is offered in the mass often has no prayer in it. He who would have eternal life must ask for it for *himself*, and by himself. It is quite right to have family prayer—I bless God that I cannot remember a time when I was not one of those who gathered night and morning in my father’s house to pray. It is a very delightful thing to have been brought up to attend Prayer Meetings and to join in public prayer

with the people of God—but when a man is seeking Christ, he must pray alone. He will not need to be told that. He will be sure to do it.

His difficulty will sometimes be to find a place where he can get alone. I have known some seekers get down a saw-pit, or behind a haystack, or upstairs in a room where they could lock the door. Some have had to get into the street and walk to and fro, that they might feel themselves alone with God. O Sirs, to go to church and say with a crowd, “Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners,” may bring no blessing to the troubled spirit! But to get quite alone and cry, “O God, have mercy upon me, for Your dear Son’s sake! I am a miserable sinner, but O Lord, deal with me in mercy, I pray You. Save me for Jesus Christ’s sake.” That is the way to pray! The Savior put it to Bartimaeus, “What do you want Me to do for you?” Oh, that the Holy Spirit would, at this moment, make each one of you conscious of your personal need! That He would put a pang into your heart which nobody else could bear for you, a hunger and a thirst which could not be allayed by anybody else’s eating and drinking, but which would require that *you* should *personally* feed upon the Lord Jesus and *personally* drink of the Water of Life, or else you must die!

I think the Master, in that question to the blind beggar, brings out the personality of the seeker as well as His own Personality—to come back to the point where I began. He would have us, individually, come to Him *as an individual* and ask of Him just what we need, each one for himself, for we must be gathered to Him one by one, repenting one by one, believing one by one—and we must be born again one by one! Therefore He asks of each one the question, “What do you want Me to do for you?”

Another thing that is taught us in this question is that *prayer should be a distinct act of the will*. “What do you want Me to do for you?” I will suppose that, guided by the Holy Spirit, I have picked out the right person and that person is now thinking, “Yes, I long to find eternal life and to obtain all that my soul needs at the hands of Christ.” Well now, in your seeking, do not depend merely upon the use of pious words and think that when you have repeated certain sentences, you have prayed! Do not go and hunt up a church collect, or a form of prayer written by some eminent Dissenter and fancy that you can pray by saying those words! No, you must *will* what you want—“What do you want Me to do for you?” Suppose that you desire to be freed from a certain sin? If that is the most important petition you can present to God at this time, just will it before the Lord. Say, “O God, my heart is intently set upon mastering that sin and getting rid of it. I will that You would work this miracle within me, that You would break the neck of that habit, that You would deliver me from the iron heel of that strong temptation of mine!” May God help you to *will* that! Or else, “Lord, I want at once to get peace through believing in Your Son, Jesus Christ, but I hardly know what it means, or how it is to be obtained. If I did, I would get it, or if I found that I could not get it, I would ask You to enable me to secure this priceless blessing!” Oh, that the blessed Spirit, the Holy Spirit, who is the Lord of the renewed will, would make you will to believe in Christ and make you will to

submit yourselves completely to Him, that He might be to you your sole and only Savior, your Lord and your God!

That kind of willing is really praying! It is the will setting in motion the other powers of the mind. You know that the will of man is a very crooked thing and also a very powerful thing. John Bunyan, in his *Holy War*, makes, “my Lord Will-Be-Will” governor of the town of Mansoul, and a domineering fellow he was, too, lording it over everybody! “My Lord Will-Be-Will” never yields to Christ if he can help it. “My Lord Will-Be-Will” is a sturdy defender of the rule of Diabolus and he holds out against the Prince Emmanuel as long as he can! Therefore the Savior attacks him and says, “What will you? What do you will that I should do to you?”

I can truly say, Brothers and Sisters, that my will towards the Savior is this, “Lord Jesus, do anything You please with me. Let me live, or let me die, only let Your will be done in me.” My will towards the Lord Jesus is that He would deliver me from my sin, that He would be *everything* to me—wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption and that He would abide in me and make me to abide in Him henceforth and forever. Is your will like that? If so, will away—will away with all your might! Say, “Lord, I will, I will, I will, I desire, I request, I entreat, I beg that You would forgive me, that You would take me to be Your servant, that You would break off from me the fetters of my old habits, that You would make me like Yourself, Lord, that is what I will and I will it with all the energy of my nature! My proud heart, the proudest, perhaps, that ever beat against You, now bows at Your feet willingly and cheerfully asking that Your will may be done.”

So, this question, “What do you want Me to do for you?” teaches us that there must be personal prayer and the distinct willing of what we desire Christ to do for us.

But, dear Friends, I think that the text also shows us that the prayer which wins its way with Christ should be *an act of the understanding*. “What do you want Me to do for you?” I have no fault to find with those who always preach, “Believe in Christ,” except that I wish they would sometimes tell the people *what is to be believed* and what believing really is! Now, Friend, you say, “I wish I could find the Savior tonight.” But do you know who the Savior is? What do you want of Christ? There should be an intelligent apprehension in the mind of what is desired from Him. Bartimaeus, when he was asked what he needed, said, “Lord, I need my sight.” Now, dear Hearers, we desire that you know enough about your Bibles and enough about yourselves, and enough about the Savior to understand what is meant by being saved! What are the things that make up salvation? How are men saved and what is requisite for their Salvation?

This leads me to say to you, “Search the Scriptures and try to understand God’s Word.” People who are converted without properly understanding the way of salvation may come to comprehend it, by-and-by, and be genuine Christians. But there is a large number of supposed converts who have no right understanding. They generally go back very

soon— they blunder in and they blunder out again—for if the understanding is not converted as well as the affections, it is as though but half the man were converted! I have read of an old Saxon king who wanted to be a Christian and yet desired to go where his ancestors went. So he said that he would stand with one leg in the baptismal font and be half-baptized! That style of conversion will not do—we want you to come to Christ with your whole understanding! Know you not that you have sinned, that you have broken God’s Law? What you need is Divine forgiveness! Know you not that your heart is always inclined to sin? What you need is a complete change of nature—a new birth, a regeneration!

I beg those of you who have that sincere desire to be right, to become diligent hearers of the Word, that you may know what it is to *be* right. What says the Lord to you? “Incline your ear and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live.” “Listen diligently,” says the Word of God. Many, I am afraid, think that they are to believe in Christ without knowing what to believe—they are to receive from Him without knowing what it is they need! But the Savior works by means of light, knowledge and understanding. Seek to have the Light of the Holy Spirit to illuminate your darkness and then you can come before God with the right kind of prayer, when the intellect goes with the will, and the heart wills what the understanding knows what the soul requires!

Once more, *prayer, especially when you are seeking the Savior, should be definite.* What a lot of praying there is that prays for everything in general and nothing in particular! I was reading a very good illustration, given by an eminent minister, upon this point. He says, “Why was it that the Boers in South Africa were able to hold their own against the best-trained British troops on a certain lamentable occasion? Why, because the ordinary soldier fires at the enemy in the mass and so, much of his ammunition is often lost. But the Boer, from his childhood, never wastes a shot! When he is out in the open and he sees a lion, he aims so as to hit the animal’s heart—and many of them are such shots that they are never known to miss the object at which they aim. Consequently, every time a Boer shot at our men, he killed somebody, and such soldiers as those are terrible adversaries on the field of battle.”

There are some people who pray, as it were, like a man shooting at a whole regiment—they fire anything, *at* anything! But the man who wins his suit at the Throne of Grace is the man who prays distinctly for some one thing that he wills to have. He says, “That is what I need, and that is what I am going to have if it is to be had.” And he prays for that one thing just as an archer aims at the center of the target and then deliberately draws the bowstring and lets the arrow fly so that it sticks in the gold. David said, “In the morning will I direct my prayer unto You”—like an arrow—“and will look up,” to see which way it goes. A great deal of praying is like runaway knocks at a door, but the right sort of praying knocks at the door and waits till it is opened!

Now, dear Hearer, if you are seeking anything from Christ, try to know what you are seeking, then ask for it and keep on asking till you get it! It may be that your great need is a broken heart—then pray for it. Or, is it

that you want to be delivered from a fierce temptation? Then, pray for it. Or, is it that you want faith in Christ? Then pray distinctly for that. "What do you want Me to do for you?" This is the way of salvation—the Lord makes us see what it is we need and sets us praying for it—He bids us believe in Jesus Christ and He *gives us the faith we lack*—and so we are saved. This is a kind of education that is helpful to a man all his life.

"Oh, but!" says one, "I have been praying for mercy." Yes, so had blind Bartimaeus. He cried, "Have mercy on me." But, you see, our Lord's question proves that this is a loose way of talking. So now say what you *really* need. Come to the point, pray definitely. Bartimaeus answered, "Lord, that I might receive my sight." Come to the point in like definite fashion. "Well, Sir," you say, "I asked the Lord to forgive my sin." Yes, did you say *what* sin? It would be a great mercy if you would confess it. I remember one who used to pray the Lord to have mercy upon him for his sin, but he never found peace till he said, "Lord, I have been an abominable drunk—have mercy upon me and deliver me from the drink." Then it was that God gave him what he asked! It may be that the sin which has laid hold of you is one that I hardly like to mention and, therefore, *you* have never mentioned it to God. But out with it now! Out with it! David was never restored to the favor of God until, in confessing his sin, he learned to call a spade a spade! He had robbed poor Uriah of his wife and then he had so managed matters that Uriah had been killed in battle! And David used, no doubt, to say to others, "It was a very lamentable accident." But he never had any piece of mind while that guile, that cunning, that craft, was in his heart—it was only when he fell down upon his face before the Lord and cried, "Deliver me from *blood-guiltiness*, O God," that God could rightly deal with his sin!

There are some diseases that a physician cannot cure till he throws them out on the skin. You know how it was with the leprosy. If a Jew had it on his hand, or on his face, they examined him and if they found the leprosy only here and there, they said, "This is a bad case," and they shut him up by himself, for he was a leper. But if a man came to the priest covered all over with white scales of leprosy, so that there was not a single part of him that was sound and you could not put a pin's point anywhere upon a portion of his body that was not affected—if he was leprous all over from head to foot—*then* the priest said, "That man is clean." You see, the disease had at last come out on his skin and it would go away. So, when you are willing to fully confess your sin and to throw it all out of the system by that confession—I do not mean by telling it to a *priest*—God grant that you may never be so foolish as to do that! When you are willing to confess your sin to the Lord, Himself, and say to Him, "Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight," then it is that you shall get the blessing! You must be definite in the confession of your sin.

You must also be definite in pleading the promises of God. There is no prayer like that which a man presents when he gets a grip of a Divine promise! For instance, this utterance of the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself—"All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Open

your Bible at Matthew 12:31. Put your finger on that passage and say, "Lord, this is Your Word; fulfill it to me!" Plead definitely with God His own promise and say to Him, "Do as You have said." This is the kind of praying that never yet met with a repulse! Answers of peace shall surely come to those who have become thus definite in their prayers!

I trust, dear Friends, that I have led, by God's Spirit, many of you so far. I have tried to be very practical with you and to put the Truth of God very plainly. But let me say to you that prayer, to be acceptable, must not only be personal, and an act of the will, and an act of the understanding, and also definite, but *it should be very bold*. This blind man says, "Lord, You ask me what I would have, and my answer is, 'Lord, that I might receive my sight.'" I wonder what a pair of eyes would be worth? Said one, "I have a flower in my garden, and I know a person who would give 10,000 pounds to see one like it." "No, no," said his friend, "a person would never give 10,000 pounds to see a *flower*." Then he mentioned the name of a rich man who was blind and the second speaker said, "Oh, yes! I see that what you said is true." What would a blind man give for a pair of good eyes? If I were to go into a shop and say to the man in charge, "Will you give me a pair of spectacles?"—I daresay he would reply, "I do not see why I should *give* them to you." But I do not think I would *ever* go and ask a doctor to give me a pair of eyes! It was a bold request—was it not?—for this blind beggar to say, "Lord, give me a pair of eyes!"

If you would succeed in prayer, you must be bold! You must lay aside your modesty. If you had to ask of Christ only what you deserve, it would not take you long, for you deserve nothing but His wrath. Therefore, do not begin to ask on the ground of merit and, inasmuch as you deserve nothing, yet need everything, go in and be a bold beggar! Say, "Lord, save me tonight." Yes, put it, "tonight!" "Lord, save me, perfectly." Yes, put it, "perfectly!" "Lord, give me a new heart and a right spirit." Do not ask the Lord to clean up the old one—pray for a new one right out! "Lord, make a saint of me." That is right, do *not* ask the Lord to make a whitewashed sinner of you! Pray, "Lord, make me Your child." Do not say, "Make me as one of Your hired servants," but say, "Take me into Your family. Let me be Your child!" Make a bold prayer of it.

I remember that when I was collecting the money for the building of this Tabernacle—not for myself, but for the building of this House of Prayer—I said, "Dear Friends, I feel very bold about this matter. If it were a little thing, I might feel a little timid, but inasmuch as it is a very great thing, and that I want to build a very large house for God's worship, I open my mouth wide and ask for great things!" Little things will not serve your turn. Little mercy is no good for you. Little forgiveness will not suit you. Then come to the foot of the great Savior and say, "Lord, I, am the chief of sinners, but take me as I am and save me. Save me outright! Save me now!" Why should He not? He delights to do it! Oh, that of His great mercy you might find it so at this very hour!

I feel upon me a conviction that there are some who will come and put their trust in Jesus now. Lie down at His feet. Say, "I never will leave ex-

cept You bless me.” This is God’s own message—“Look unto Me, and be you saved, all you ends of the earth.” Some of you have been hearing me a very long time. I love to look at your faces but when I see you, I always pray that you may be saved. I say to myself, “When will God bring that good man in? His wife and many friends pray for him. When will he be decided?” I look upon another and I say, “When will that elderly woman be converted? She has children who pray for her.” I look elsewhere—no, I will not look exactly that way, but you know, my Friend, whom I mean when I say, “When will that brother be brought in? He has a praying wife, yet he is not saved.” I cannot understand some of you husbands. I suppose that there are many more men than women in this congregation—there are often five men to three women in the congregation—yet when they come to join the Church, the women are probably three times as many as the men! I am half afraid it is as much as that, certainly two to one of those who really give their hearts to Christ. How do you make this out? Some of you husbands come here as regularly as your wives come, yet you do not know the Savior, and they do! Are you going to be parted forever? Are you going to die in your sins? Oh, let it not be so! Lord God, convert them by Your Grace, convert them now! Let us pray that it may be so, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 18:31-43; 19:1-10.**

Luke 18:31-33. *Then He took unto Him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the Prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished. For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully treated, and spit on: and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death: and the third day He shall rise again.* Our Lord Jesus Christ often talked to His disciples about His death. Before the time for it came He foresaw it, He thought and spoke much of it, He even dwelt upon the terrible details of it very minutely—“He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully treated, and spit on: and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death.” Ah, dear Friends, when our Lord Jesus died for us, He knew what He was doing! There are some men who, without a moment’s consideration, could do a brave notion, but they could not sit down and coolly calculate all the consequences of doing it. If they find themselves unexpectedly in the face of imminent danger—if they see a person needing to be saved from peril, they make a rush for it, and the daring deed is done. But here our Savior deliberately thinks and talks about His death, yet He never flinches, or looks back, but He prepares His heart for the solemn event and sets His face like a flint to go through it all that He may save the souls of His people! We, also, ought to think and talk much of our Lord’s death since He thought and spoke so much of it.

34. *And they understood none of these things.* They could not make out what He meant. It was plain enough, but they could not believe that it would be so.

34-36. *And this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken. And it came to pass that as He was come near unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the wayside begging: and hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. The blind man asked, as the familiar hymn puts it—*

***“What means this eager, anxious throng,
Which moves with busy haste along?”***

37, 38. *And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth passed by. And he cried, saying Jesus, You Son of David, have mercy on me. If he could not see, he could hear! So, dear Friends, like this blind man, use what senses you have. “Faith comes by hearing.” And so it came to this man, and as soon as he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth who was passing by, he began to pray to Him. Oh, that some of you would also pray to Him as soon as you hear that He is near! Deep down, from your very soul, let this cry go up, “Jesus, You Son of David, have mercy on me.”*

39. *And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace! I think I hear them saying, “Do not make such a disturbance! The Master is preaching and we are losing His words through your noise. What is all that clamor about? Can you not have more respect to the Son of David than to cry in that fashion?”*

39. *But he cried so much the more, You Son of David, have mercy on me. That is a good thing for you, also, to do, not only to keep on crying to the Lord Jesus, but to grow more importunate when others rebuke you! If you are seeking the Savior, do not be put back—if others would hinder you, be the more resolute, the more determined to be heard by Him!*

40. *And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought to Him. Jesus had been walking along. The crowd making way for Him, but He was stopped by the cry of a blind beggar—“Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought to Him”—*

40, 41. *And when he was come near, He asked him, saying, What do you want that I should do for you? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. A plain question and a very distinct answer. What is it that you, dear Friends, want of Jesus? Could you all tell if the question were put to you? What is it that you would have the Lord do for you? Do you know? This man knew and when we know, as he did, what we need from Christ, we shall soon get it! The sad fact concerning many people is that though they are not blind with their natural eyes, they are so blind in heart that they cannot see their own needs.*

42, 43. *And Jesus said unto him, Receive your sight: your faith has saved you. And immediately he received his sight and followed Him, glorifying God. Christ has only to speak and the great work is done at once! The salvation of a soul from the power of sin is not the work of weeks—it can be done in a single moment. “Immediately he received his sight and followed Him.” That is beautiful! As soon as he could see, he looked for Christ and then followed Him, “glorifying God.” He clapped his hands and followed Jesus, shouting and crying, “Blessed be God, I have found my sight! The darkness is over and the light has broken in upon my soul.”*

43. *And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.*

Luke 19:1, 2. *And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus who was the chief among the publicans and he was rich.* Jesus Christ had just blessed a blind man who was poor, so poor that he was a common wayside beggar—will He bless the rich man, too? Oh, yes! He knows no distinction of persons! He is ready to bless all classes—whether they are rich or poor is nothing to Him.

3. *And he sought to see Jesus, who He was.* Possibly he had not much respect, but he had great curiosity. He would like to see the Man about whom everybody was talking—“He sought to see Jesus, who He was.”

3. *And could not for the press, because he was little of stature.* The crowd round about him was so thick that the little short man could not see over the heads of the tall people! Though he pushed and tried to get in front, there was always some bigger body before him, so that he could not see the great Teacher.

4. *And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree*—Do you not see the little short man running in front of the throng and climbing up a tree that stood in the way? Rich men do not generally climb trees, but here was a man whose curiosity overcame his dignity, so he, “climbed up into a sycamore tree”—

4, 5. *To see Him: for He was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up, and saw him.* Cannot you imagine that you see the blessed Master stopping and looking up at that tree? Somehow He always made Himself one with those whom He meant to bless! When He spoke to the blind man, He stood, as if He were, Himself, blind, and asked Him, “What do you want Me to do for you?” And now He stops under this sycamore and looks up at curious Zacchaeus as if He, too, were taken with a fit of curiosity, and asks, “Who is that up in this tree?” “He looked up and saw him”—spied him out—

5. *And said to him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at your house.* Oh, how astonished must the little Jew have been when he heard Christ’s words! Never was a man so taken with surprise before, but with the word there came a Divine softness into the heart of the chief of the publicans and He yielded to that singularly condescending invitation, that strangely unexpected command!

6. *And he made haste, and came down; and received Him joyfully.* A great change had been suddenly worked in him—the opening of the blind man’s eyes was not at all more remarkable than the renewing of the heart of Zaccheus! “He made haste, and came down, and received Him joyfully.”

7. *And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying That He was gone to be a guest with a man that is a sinner.* I wonder where He could have gone and *not* been a guest with a man that was a sinner? But Zacchaeus was thought to be a sinner beyond ordinary sinners. Our Lord still loves to be the guest of a man that is a sinner! He still wants a place where He can stay. O man, you who are a sinner, ask Him home with you! O woman, you who are in your very trade, a sinner, ask Him home with

you and we will say again, not murmuring, but *joyfully*, “He has gone to be a guest with one who is a sinner.”

8. *And Zacchaeus stood and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor.* That was a grand proof that the conversion of Zacchaeus was genuine! I should like to see the same kind of proof in many professors whom I know—“Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor.” I remember one who was converted in this place and he at once gave £50 to some good project, and I said to his brother, “I think your brother is converted.” He answered, “I hope he is, but he is a dreadful skin-flint.” “But,” I replied, “only yesterday, he gave £50 to such-and-such a work.” “Ah, then,” said the brother, “I am sure he is converted, for nothing but the Grace of God would make him do such a thing as that!” Now Zacchaeus was, no doubt, a man of that kind—one who loved his money and kept it to himself as long as he could—but now that he is converted, he says, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor”—

8. *And if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.* He acts in charity and justice, for he is determined to do the right thing with his substance. You see, he was a rich man, so his money was a source of trouble. The blind beggar had no such difficulty, for he had not any money that he could distribute when he was converted. But this rich man—this camel, as our Savior called such men, went through the eye of a needle by the Grace of God and thus the Lord proved the reality of His conversion!

9. *And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he, also, is a son of Abraham.* “He does not look like it. He has become a tax-gatherer for the Romans. He has oppressed his own countrymen. But he is a son of Abraham and salvation has come to him.”

10. *For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.* If, at this time, we ask our Lord Jesus, “Where are You going, Divine Master?” His answer still is, “I am come to seek and to save that which was lost.” “Have You come after those who think themselves good enough without You?” He shakes His head and says, “I am a Physician and the whole have no need of a Physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” The Gospel of the Grace of God is for the guilty! If you are not guilty, there is no Gospel for you. But if you are guilty and confess it, to you is the Word of this salvation sent!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—433, 499, 568.

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY
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THE SAVIOR'S CHARITY

NO. 3491

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 23, 1915.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Jesus answered and said unto him, What do you want Me to do for you?”
Mark 10:51.*

THE story of this miracle is wonderfully attractive. It has always been a favorite theme with preachers. From the days of the Apostles and the fathers of the Church they have delighted to dwell upon any single item of it as it is described by the three Evangelists who record it. We have frequently spoken of the incident as a whole—let us, therefore, now confine our attention to the question which Jesus asked of the blind man, “What do you want Me to do for you?” He asks the same question at this good hour—He asks it of blind men and, I think, He asks it of partly blind men, too. There are some of us whose eyes are opened, but whose vision is obscure—we cannot see afar off. Our blessed Lord and Master says to us, as well as to the blind ones, “What do you want Me to do for you?”

Let us consider this question attentively, *first on our Savior's part—the disposition it shows.* And then *on our own part—the appeal to which we should respond.*

I. THE QUESTION, AS PUT BY OUR SAVIOR, is expressive of much tenderness. *There is a beautiful delicacy in its manner.* The absence of any distinct allusion to the privation the poor man suffered from, is kind. I have noticed, in many cases, that to afflicted persons, any allusion to their infirmities is very distasteful. You could hardly do anything that would be more ungracious to a blind person than to be perpetually reminding him of his blindness, or to a person who was lame than constantly referring to his misfortune. Such people are hopeful that, bearing the evil patiently, themselves, it will not be detected by others and they are anxious to avoid the pity which is grievous when it becomes obtrusive. Now our Savior did not say to this man, “Alas, poor Creature, what a sad state you are in!” There was not a word concerning the man's blindness to wound his sensibility. He was a beggar, to boot, and his dependence on alms for his subsistence would be, of itself, humiliating enough without referring to that poverty which, if keenly felt, is apt to crush a man's spirit and shear him of self-respect. There is not a word about poverty here. Christ did not say, “How long have you been sitting by the wayside begging? How much have you obtained from the cold hand of charity during the last few days?” You would not know that the man was a beggar and blind by the question which the Savior addressed to him. “What do you want Me to do for you?”—that might have been

spoken to a prince or to a king as gracefully as it was spoken to the poor blind beggar of Jericho!

I do not know whether you see much to admire and appreciate in this tenderness. I think it needs a man of fine feeling and generous sympathy to fully estimate it. Very characteristic was it of the way in which Christ deals with souls, as other instances show. The parable of the prodigal son is a correct picture of our Heavenly Father's dealings with His returning sons. In that parable we are told of the youth's nakedness, poverty, hunger and so on, but the father never mentions any one of these things—but he fell upon his son's unwashed neck and kissed his yet filthy face—and received him to his arms, all ragged as he still was! To anyone else he would have been a loathsome object, and yet to his father's heart he was still lovely, for he was his own dear child! He perceived the jewel, though it was lying on a dunghill. He did not say, "My dear Son, how sad a thing it is that you should have left my roof! How could you be so foolish as to spend your living with harlots? Alas, my dear Son, to what a degradation have you been brought in feeding swine." No, there must be no sort of allusion at all to the plight in which the prodigal youth returned. He was acknowledged and welcomed just as he was—in his sinnership.

Neither does the Gospel of Jesus Christ come to you with taunts and upbraiding, continually reminding you of your sin. That is the work of the Law of God. The Law is like a sharp needle. It must go through the fabric and draw after it the silver thread of the Gospel. The Gospel's message is not so much about your sin as it is about the remedy for it! And when it comes to deal with your sin, it deals less with it as a crime than as a disease. It looks upon it as an affliction. It takes the most merciful view that is possible—and how little does it say to you even of disease? It gives you many invitations, "Ho, every one that thirsts." Nothing about sin there. "Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden." Nothing about sin there. You remember that hymn of Rowland Hill's, which says—

"Come filthy, come naked, come just as you are."?

I am not quite certain that that is precisely the style of the Gospel invitation, for that seems to say, "Come unto Me, all you who will. Whoever will, let him come and drink of the Water of Life freely." There is as little allusion made by the Gospel, itself, to the sin of the sinner as possible. Of course, the sinner must be called a sinner, and the Gospel never says, "Peace, peace," where there is no peace—and at the same time it does not expose the disease without prescribing the remedy. The Gospel does not appeal to us so much in tones of thunder to acquaint us with our peril as it admonishes us to fly without delay to a place of safety! The Gospel does not speak from Sinai, but from Calvary! From Sinai you hear the voice of rigid justice—from Calvary you hear the voice of tender mercy and gracious pardon.

There is something, I think, then, in this omission of the Savior's which has a blessed tenderness in it. Do you ask, "Why such tenderness to the sinner?" The reply is, "Because he is one who needs to be tenderly dealt with." It has been said that the good surgeon should have a lion's

heart and a lady's hands. He should have the courage to do anything that is of vital moment to the physical frame, be it to set a joint, to amputate a limb, or to uncover a sensitive nerve, yet he should have the utmost delicacy of touch, and the most tender of hearts in performing an operation that involves pain to the patient. To have his bones set with downy fingers is the injured man's desire. The awakened conscience is extremely sensitive. The Law has been using its cat-o'-ten-tails upon the sinner's back until it has been furrowed with deep gashes. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint—from the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores." Such a man needs to be gently handled! The Physician of souls knows this! The Savior of sinners acts thus. Not a harsh word is spoken, but Grace is poured out from His lips. Not threats, terror, rebuke, but Grace, and peace, and love!

I revel in this thought—commonplace it may be, but practical and precious it certainly is! What instruction it affords us! How it teaches us wisely to deal with the tender conscience! Like the Savior, Himself, we ought to minister to those who feel their need of help and healing very lovingly and gently, lest we break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax. The hypocrite and self-righteous need have no tenderness shown towards them. Caresses would but nourish their conceit. The Savior addresses them with loathing threats—"Woe unto you, Scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites!" What indignant epithets does He use! With what utter contempt does He assail them, calling them, "fools, and blind," "serpents, and a generation of vipers!" Yes, "whitewashed sepulchers," and I know not what besides! But when He comes to deal with the shorn lambs, how tenderly He carries them in His bosom! How gently He addresses those whose broken hearts need gentleness! Let us do the same. Let us try to bring out the sweets of the promise. Let us seek to break the promise into small pieces, that it may give them the meaning and sense, so that they can understand it. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, would effectually make us the instruments of comforting every soul that is depressed and dejected.

Not less remarkable is the *wisdom of the Savior*. You notice the question, "What do you want Me to do for you?" It is a rule with Christ never to do for us what we can do for ourselves. He did not tell the man that he was blind, because the man knew that himself. He did not undertake to do the work of conscience. In vain you look to Jesus Christ or to the Holy Spirit to do for a man that which it behooves the man to do for himself! This poor fellow could tell that he was blind, hence our Lord asked him a question which set his own mind to work. Now, dear Friend, if you are desirous of being saved, Christ asks you, "What do you want Me to do for you?" Your own conscience, if it is at all enlightened, will tell you that you have many sins that need to be forgiven. Why should Christ tell you that? The inward monitor, when fully awakened, knows that there is much sin that you have committed which requires absolution—and much sin cleaving to your nature from which you require to be cleansed. You have much depravity to overcome. Your conscience tells you so. Chr-

ist does not come to you in the Gospel and tell you this. He does not accuse you or excuse you in this way. With all mildness and gentleness, He puts the question thus, "What do you want Me to do for you?"—as if to make the blind man really think of the darkness in which he had lived so long, of the scales that were over his eyes and the disease that affected his optic nerve. It was well to make him think of all this, that his conscience should be naturally and thoroughly exercised. It seems to me to have been a salutary lesson, without which he would never have felt the gratitude that the gift of sight should inspire. Full many a mercy we receive and inadequately appreciate because we have never known the lack of it. People who have never been sick in their lives are not so grateful for health as those who are restored after a long illness, or those who have often been cast upon a bed of languishing. Those who have never known the pinch of poverty are seldom so grateful as they ought to be for food and raiment. While this man could see nothing, he could discern a great deal with his inward consciousness. His privation would suggest such manifold disadvantages that when he got the light, he would be sure to bless Christ for it! With the power of vision, once more to gaze upon the outward world, he would have a song in his mouth, as well as light in his eyes! It was wise in Christ thus to exercise his conscience that he might evoke his gratitude.

By means of this question, *Christ was giving the man lessons in prayer*. A schoolboy is encouraged by his master to apply to him if he finds any difficulty in his exercises that he cannot grapple with. Suppose it is the translation of a sentence from Latin into English. When he asks help, does the master at once take the matter out of his hands and do it for him? Certainly not! He says, "Where is your difficulty? Is it the meaning of that noun, or the construction of that verb, or what is it that perplexes you? Put your finger on the point that distresses you, and I will give you the assistance you require." When the blind man said, "You, Son of David, have mercy on me," his request was valid, but vague. He craved mercy, but what particular mercy was he in need of? He had need to learn the sacred art of pleading. The most advanced Christian has still need to pray, "Lord, teach us how to pray." I have noticed that though the disciples often heard Christ preach, they never said, "Lord, teach us how to preach"—but when they heard Him *pray*—you recollect the passages—"As He was praying in a certain place, the disciples said to Him, Lord, teach us how to pray." They were so astonished with such praying as the Savior's, that though, perhaps, they thought that they might emulate His *preaching*, His praying seemed too masterly, too infinitely above them, and they could not help exclaiming, "Oh, God, show us how to pray like that!" They felt that the majesty of His prayer was a great thing if they could but attain unto it. They desired to be taught how to pray. This is what Christ was doing with this man—He was teaching him how to pray! He did not at once open his eyes, but encouraged him to ask what he needed done for him. When the child first begins to walk, it runs, eager to catch hold of something. The mother gets a little farther back, and a little farther, and the child goes tottering onwards to reach

what it desires—and so it learns to walk. So is it with the mercy of God—He holds it out a little farther, and yet a little farther—that the soul may pray yet more. It was wisdom on the part of Christ, then, for this reason to propound the question.

And oh, what marvelous generosity this question implies! The Savior's liberality knows no bounds. "What do you want Me to do for you?" If the Messrs. Rothschild, or some other eminent capitalists were to place in one's hand a book of blank checks, and say, "There, draw what you like," it would be a liberality unheard of! To whatever extent a man may be willing to benefit his fellow man, there must be a limit. But when Jesus says, "What do you want Me to do for you?" there is no limit to His resources, or His readiness to bestow! The will of the person of whom the question is asked may limit the petition, but as the Savior put it, He gave, as it were, a sort of challenge to the poor beggar to ask whatever he liked. Now, Brothers and Sisters, this is much the way the Savior deals with all His people. "What do you want Me to do for you?" Whatever your desire may be, He will hear you and attend to it. I say not that He will grant it to you if it is not for your profit, but He would have you tell Him what it is you are desirous to ask. We have an example in this Chapter of this kind of limitation—when James and John asked for something which our Lord thought it would do them no good to have. Nevertheless, if it is truly for your benefit and for His Glory, you shall have it, ask what you will! You are not to dictate—you entreat pressingly. You are not Omniscient and, therefore, your will can never be wiser than His—but you are God's child and, therefore, your desire shall be very prevalent with Him. "Ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you." Take this Book—the promises in it are exceedingly great and inestimably precious—so great that no man need ever complain that they are not large enough for him to stretch himself upon them! There are promises of God in this Book, the bottom of which no man can ever touch—streams of mercy which flow on with such a volume of Grace that it is impossible they should ever be exhausted! Even though we should be like that mighty one who drinks up Jordan at a draught, yet should we never exhaust the mighty promises of God! I wish we could really feel how freely Christ gives. When we consider that He spared not His own self, but gave up His whole heart and emptied out His whole soul unto death for us, we can well understand that, having given Himself for us, He will also freely give us all things.

Thus much have I spoken concerning the question of our text as it interprets the goodwill of Christ. Let us now turn it over again—

II. AS IT APPEALS TO OURSELVES.

What do you think it ought to say to us? Or what should we say in response to it? It strikes me that, as it shows Christ's tenderness, so, on our part, *it ought to prompt a corresponding tenderness*. Horrible is the state of that man's mind who can presume upon Christ's tenderness and yet love sin! I have heard some preach the Doctrine that God sees no sin in Jacob, neither iniquity in Israel, in such a way as to make you feel that they could not see any sin in the people of Jehovah's choice. But I

would like to feel that His great forbearance excited my scrupulousness. Does the Lord say that He can see no sin? Then I will see it all the more. Does He say of His exquisite tenderness, "You are all fair, My Love, there is no spot in you"—shall I, therefore, treat sin as though it were nothing, trifle with it and call it a nonentity? Oh, no! I will weep because of the tenderness of Him who knows all about me! And though He is too gracious to throw my sin in my teeth, yet I will take care to bemoan it myself. God forgives me—and for that reason I cannot forgive myself. God casts my sin behind His back—therefore, I have it continually before my face. Such love as His makes me appear the more black, the more detestable in my own eyes. If I had a friend who knew that I had some besetting sin, some grievous infirmity, and if that dear friend, out of the tenderness of his heart for me, never mentioned it to me, though it had grieved him much, should I, therefore, treat it with levity? Suppose I had injured him in business, do you think I should forget it for that reason? Or had I been the instrument of his losing some dear relative, and yet he never said a word to me about it, never upbraided me, never looked as if he felt that I had wronged him—never even hinted in a side way that I was the cause of his pain—well, I hope I speak honestly when I say that his kind reticence would wound and cut me to the heart more than if he spoke bitterly to me! If you, as a servant, have committed a fault and your master never says a word by way of blame, I am sure you will feel the more sorry rather than the less concerned for the wrong you have done. If a man comes to me in a rage and calls me evil names, I consider, then, that whatever my fault may be, he has taken his revenge and I am not bound to humble myself—but when he says, "Ah well, I will say nothing about it," or when he passes it over in silence and is as quiet and tender to me as if I had never done him an injury, why, then I must chastise myself, even if he will not chastise me! I must blame myself, since he will not blame me. Dear Christian Friends, let us cultivate a holy sensibility. There is what is called the sensitive plant which turns up its leaves when it is touched. Let us be like that plant. If Christ has been tender to us, let us also be tender!

Did we not also say that Christ exhibits wisdom in the question which He put to this blind man? *Let us always seek to acquire wisdom.* The text suggests the idea of studying. "What do you want Me to do for you?" How few students among us are studious to do the will of the Lord! They may take to studying Ezekiel, and Daniel, and the Revelation—and they get a blessing out of those three Books—but I wish they would do a little more for the Master than they are ordinarily known to do! Some people are so busy studying the stars that they have no time to trim the lamps here below, and yet I think the stars would shine as brightly without their study, whereas the lamps below might give clearer light if only they gave them a careful trimming. But while this is the fault of some, the fault of others is that they are all for sowing, but they scatter seed out of an empty basket! They are all for working, but their tools are out of order! They would go fishing, but they forget to mend their nets. It were well if some who are teachers were but learners. Martha worked for Chr-

ist, but Mary *learned* of Christ. A holy mixture of these employments would be profitable. Would we have Martha and Mary in one—first *learn of Christ* and then *work for Christ*—this would be comely. Very familiar is that quotation from Pope—

“The proper study of mankind is man.”

I am not so sure that it deserves the currency it has obtained. It is hardly standard gold. The proper study of mankind is God, but in order to get to God one must know something about man! It is well for us to know something of man's ruined estate, and especially to be acquainted with our own weakness, our own danger and our present exposure. Christian, study this! It is a very black book, but read on, for it is useful because of another Book which shall follow. For, in order to get wisdom, we had need study the Scriptures, too, with a view to the practical testing of what we learn abroad.

This leads me to the remark that *it would be profitable to us were we to study our prayers*. Does that sound strange? You do not think it right to come to the Lord's Table without some degree of preparation—why should you not prepare to go to the Mercy Seat and to the Throne of Grace? If you were permitted to have an audience of Her Majesty, I will guarantee you that if you intended to ask anything, you would weigh your thoughts and almost construct your sentences before you were ushered into her presence! Certainly you would not go without considering what you intended to ask! When a man sends up a petition to the House of Commons, he knows what he wants—it were idle to throw together a mere jumble of words. It is true that the Holy Spirit has promised to help our infirmities, but He will not do for us what we can do for ourselves! I love extemporaneous prayer, for I believe that when the thoughts are clear, and the emotions vigorous, fit words will not be lacking. But I am not so fond of extemporaneous prayer when the sentiment, itself, is extemporized. Let a sermon be delivered extempore, it will be doubtless more effective than the reading of an elaborate essay, but it would be a poor sermon which the preacher never thought about before he uttered it! I have heard of a certain Divine, who, after preaching, observed to some of his hearers that he had never thought of it before he went into the pulpit. The answer he got was, “That is just what we suspected.” They had noticed how void it was of meaning and method. We ought to well consider our prayers. Are we not told that we have not because we ask amiss? I fear we often ask amiss from lack of preparation! The archer, when he draws his bow, not only puts his whole strength into the effort, but he diligently takes aim before he actually discharges his arrow. So let the suppliant pray! “Unto you,” says David, “will I direct my prayer.” Follow David's example, my Friend. Be considerate of the requests you present before the Most High.

The generosity involved in our Lord's question, “What do you want Me to do for you?” supplies us with *a strong incentive to boldness at the Throne of Grace*. This is our last thought. Should we not seek much liberty in prayer when we are encouraged by such liberality, such a profusion of Grace? Let us not be so reluctant to ask while our Lord and Master is

so ready to supply! "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it," says our God. A traveler thinks that this passage must bear an allusion to a custom which prevails in the East and was practiced not many months ago by a Persian Shah. The monarch told one of his subjects to open his mouth, and when the man had done so, he began to put into it diamonds, pearls, emeralds, rubies and all sorts of jewels! Well, though I suppose that these are not very pleasant things to have in one's mouth, I can readily understand that a man who knew he was to have as many of them as he could hold in his mouth would open his mouth rather wide! And are not God's mercies so rich that they are like diamonds of the first water and jewels beyond all price? Surely there should be no need to press the exhortation—we do not ask enough. This is a complaint which was never brought against any poor mendicant in quest of this world's comforts, and yet it is a complaint which God brings against us! Our puny souls do not crave so much as His infinite bounty is willing to bestow! Let us so account of God as that courtier whom Alexander bid to ask what he would. He asked for so much that the king's treasurer was staggered at the demand. Not so Alexander the Great! He said, though it was much for a subject to ask, it was not much for Alexander to give! Let the riches of God's Glory, rather than the meanness of your own estate, measure the compass of your requests, when He says, "What do you want Me to do for you?"

Now the Savior is present with us in Spirit. He will soon be here in Person. I think I hear His voice as He puts this question, in loving tones, to each one of us, "What do you want Me to do for you?" You aged folks who have passed your "best days" (as they are called, though I hope your best days are really now coming), what do you want Christ to do for you? You venerable saints, if you have little to ask for yourselves in this world, what will you ask for us who are bearing the heat and burden of the day? You soldiers of Christ, who are in middle life, what do you want Christ to do for you? Have you no children to pray for, no household mercies to seek, no troubles from which you would be delivered? And you young men and maidens, the Master says to you, "What do you want Me to do for you?" If you can, I trust you will put up a desire while you are in your pews. If not, let the question greet you at the bedside where you have bowed so often. Pause a while before you pray. Think what you shall ask. It may be that the Lord, who appeared unto Solomon and said, "I will give you whatever you shall ask," may have appeared to you to make this the night of mercy. Ask not wealth of Him, ask not honor, ask not rank and station, but ask Him to give you His dear Son! Ask to have the Savior to be yours forever—and if you ask this, it will be a wide-mouthed prayer, but God will answer it, and you shall have this grateful response, "According to your faith be it done unto you." Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 10:13-27, 32-52.**

Verse 13. *And they brought young children to Him, that He should touch them: and His disciples rebuked those that brought them. They thought them too little, too insignificant, and that the Master had greater things to do. But He thought not so. None are too little for Him! He receives even childish honors to Himself.*

14. *But when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the Kingdom of God. Many of them come into that Kingdom and all who come there must be like they. The child is not the hardest subject of conversion! No, rather—*

15. *Verily I say unto you, Whoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. Instead of growing wiser, in order to be fit for Christ, we must be more conscious of ignorance, more trustful towards Him, more dependent upon Him, more childlike.*

16-18. *And He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them. And when He was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to Him, and asked Him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life. And Jesus said unto Him, Why do you call Me good? There is none good but One, that is, God. He did not here unveil His Deity to that young man, but if he had thought a while, he might have seen it. However, He answered his question. "If you are to be saved by your doings, this is what you have to do—not attend to sacraments and go through performances, but this."*

19, 20. *You know the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not. Honor your father and mother. And he answered and said unto Him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. And he probably had very cautiously and anxiously done so, yet, for all that, he had not really kept all those commands without a flaw. We are right well sure of that, but as yet his eyes were not open to see his own shortcomings.*

21. *Then Jesus, beholding him, loved him. There was so much that was amiable about him.*

21, 22. *And said unto him, One thing you lack: go your way, sell whatever you have, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in Heaven: and come, take up the Cross, and follow Me. He knew that there was a weak point in the young man's character—that he did not yet supremely love God, but loved his wealth—that he was living for this world, after all. And are there not many such—most correct in character? No one could point to a single flaw in their morals, but they are living purely for self—altogether that they may buy and sell and get gain. No thought of God, except a fear lest they should come under His rod—but no thought of serving Him, or laying themselves out for His Glory—nor much thought, either, for their fellow men. Christ had hit the blot—marked it out for him.*

23. *And the disciples were astonished at His words. For the Rabbis had pretty well taught that money would answer everything—that if you could give so much, and pay so much, it was all well with you. Christ*

went against all such teaching, and showed that, in this respect, money was of no service—in fact, that it often was a hindrance.

24. *But Jesus answered again, and said unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the Kingdom of God! It is an impossibility. Only God can do it.*

25-35. *It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who, then, can be saved? And Jesus looking upon them said, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible. And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed: and as they followed, they were afraid. And He took the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto Him, Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes. And they shall condemn Him to death and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles. And they shall mock Him, and shall scourge Him, and shall spit upon Him, and shall kill Him. And the third day He shall rise again.* From the number of these sentences it is clear that our Savior entered into a very detailed account of His sufferings, dwelling upon each particular which He plainly foresaw, wherein we see His Prophetic Character. But it is more to our point to see that He knew beforehand what it would cost Him to redeem our souls—

***“When the Savior knew the price of pardon
Was His blood, His pity never withdrew.”***

He knew not only that He must die, but He knew all the circumstances of pain and shame with which that death should be attended. They would condemn Him, deliver Him to the Gentiles, mock Him, scourge Him, spit upon Him and kill Him. Thus we learn that we also should dwell in holy, grateful meditation upon every point of our Lord's Passion. There is something in it. He would not, Himself, thus have divided it out, and laid it, as it were, piece by piece, if He had not intended us to do with it as they did with the burnt offering of old, when they divided it—a picture of what every intelligent, instructed Believer should do with the Passion of His Master. He should try to look into the details of the great Sacrifice and have communion with God therein. Now, albeit that this Revelation of His coming shame, and sorrow, and death afflicted the hearts of His disciples, yet, for all that, observe what they did.

35. *And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto Him, saying, Master, we would that You should do for us whatever we shall desire.* Strange request! First of all, read those words, “We would that You should do for us.” Now the genuine spirit of a Christian is not to ask that something should be done for him, but to ask his Master, especially in such a time as that, what they could do for Him! Christ was all unselfishness, but His disciples had not yet learned the lesson. “We would that You should do for us.” And then see how much they indulged their ambition. “We would that You should do for us *whatever we desire.*” And yet I question whether we are, any of us, free from this spirit! For when the Lord reproves us a little and we have not everything our own way, how apt we are to rebel! The fact is, we have got this tincture—this gall

already in us—we would that He should do for us whatever we desire! Should it be according to your mind? Should the disciple dictate to his Master? Should the child be lord of the family?

36-39. *And He said unto them, What do you want Me to do for you? They said unto Him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one at Your right hand, and the other at Your left hand, in Your Glory. But Jesus said unto them, You know not what you ask: can you drink of the cup that I drink of and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto Him, We can. Again, He might have said, “You know not what you say.”*

39, 40. *And Jesus said unto them, You shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall you be baptized. But to sit at My right hand and at My left hand is not Mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared. They are not content, you see, with being ambitious—they would fire Him with ambition—that humble, lowly Servant of God, who had laid aside for a while the power to distribute crowns and thrones! But He does not forget Himself, nor the position which He had taken up in reference to the Father, but said, “It is not Mine to give.”*

41-43. *And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to Him, and said unto them, You know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you. However, how sad the contrast is—the Master's thoughts all taken up with His death for others—and their thoughts occupied with little petty jealousies as to who should be the greatest! It is a sad thing when this creeps into Christian Churches (and it still does), when souls are perishing, and this poor world needs our weeping eyes and our laborious hands, and we get to quarreling about points of precedence! This Brother thinks the other too forward. This one has not enough respect paid to him. This one has spoken sharply and the other cannot bear it. Oh, what poor disciples we are! What a blessing it is we have a patient Master who still bears with us, and will not leave us until He has infused His own spirit into us, which spirit is the spirit of self-denial, self-abnegation—the spirit which desires not its own, but looks on the things of others. God grant us all to be full of it!*

43. *But whoever will be great among you, shall be your minister. Your servant.*

44. *And whoever of you will be the chief, shall be servant of all. And that is the way to be truly great in the Church of God—it is to be less and less in your own esteem, and willing to be nothing! The way up is downward! That is not a contradiction, but it is a paradox. Sink, and you shall rise. Be willing to serve the very least, and you shall have honor among your Brothers and Sisters. Remember that the King of Kings was the Servant of Servants! “Whoever of you will be the chief, shall be servant of all.”*

45-49. *For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many. And they came to Jericho:*

and as He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me! And many charged him that he should hold his peace; but he cried the more a great deal, Son of David, have mercy on me! And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they called the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort. "Cheer up." That would be a very exact translation.

49-51. Rise; He calls you! And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered and said unto him, What do you want Me to do for you? Do you notice here a sort of gentle rebuke that the Savior gives to James and John? Read the 36th verse, and then read this again. "He said unto them, What do you want Me to do for you?" And now here is a blind beggar, and He sweetly puts the same question to Him, "What do you want Me to do for you?"

51. The blind man said unto Him. And here he might well have shamed John and James! He asked for no thrones or kingdoms.

51. Lord, that I might receive my sight. "Lord, that I might look up." That is the exact translation, for no doubt he had been conscious that the light came from the sun as he felt its warmth upon him as he sat by the wayside! And, therefore, he thought that seeing must be looking up towards the place from where the sunlight came. "Lord, that I might look up."

52, 53. And Jesus said unto him, Go your way; your faith has made you whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way. It is a very remarkable thing that you will not often find the Lord Jesus Christ granting a favor without ascribing it to some excellence in the person to whom He grants it. It is generally, "Great is your faith," or something of that sort—"I have not seen such faith." Now this is a very remarkable thing because we know there really was nothing whatever in the persons, that they should deserve His great favor!

—Adapted from the C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

A DEFINITE CHALLENGE FOR DEFINITE PRAYER NO. 3537

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 1916.**

***DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.***

***“And Jesus answered and said unto him, What do you want Me to do for you?”
Mark 10:51.***

No doubt our Lord's disciples imagined that He was going up to Jerusalem to take unto Himself the Kingdom. They hoped that they would be partakers of that earthly grandeur which they had fondly pictured would glitter around the Person of the Son of David. When, therefore, the blind man ventured to cry out clamorously to Him, whom they esteemed to be a great King, they thought it a daring intrusion. Who was the son of Timaeus that he should say, “You Son of David, have mercy on me”? They were all anxious to hush the voice of misery in the Presence of so much Majesty. But our Lord Jesus Christ did not spurn the blind man's prayer as intrusive or impertinent. He was not angry with him. He did not even pass on without taking any notice. What He did was to stand still and command the man to be brought to Him.

May we not draw some comfort from the thought that our prayers never are intrusions? Whenever we go before God in deep distress, He is always ready to listen to our cry. Whatever grand purpose or momentous project engage His mind, He will surely be attentive to the longings of His needy suppliants. Though our Lord Jesus Christ is at this moment King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and inconceivably glorious, though hosts of angels count it their highest delight to do His bidding, yet He bears in Heaven the same heart towards sinners which He had on earth! Amidst the thunders of the everlasting hallelujahs, He can detect the sighs of the prisoners, the complaints of the sufferers and the groans of the contrite. He will stop to give heed to the requests of blind beggars and, in His pity, He will relieve their distress. Should not this encourage those of you who are seeking Him? Whatever Satan may suggest to the contrary, take this passage of God's Word for cheer! He did hear the blind man's cry when He was upon earth and He will hear you, now that He is in Heaven! And you, backsliding child of God, difficult as you may find it to pray, if enabled to vent your griefs, your sighs shall be heard, your tears shall be seen and you shall certainly have an audience from Him who delights in mercy! There are times even with those who live nearest to God, when they fall into despondencies and imagine that their voice is shut out from

Heaven's gate, but it is not so! When I cannot come to God as a saint, what a mercy it is that I may come to Him as a sinner! And if I have lost all my evidences, what a blessing it is that I need not stop to find them, that I may go to the Mercy Seat without any!—

***“Just as I am without one plea,
But that His blood was shed for me.”***

When reduced to the utmost beggary as to internal Grace. When I find myself naked, and poor, and miserable, I may still hear God saying to me, “I counsel you to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, and white raiment that you may be clothed.” In our worst estate, prayer is still efficacious! Long as we live, let us pray. Until you hear the bolts of damnation fast closed upon you, and you are shut up in Hell, doubt not the right of petition, or the prevalence of your earnest plea! There is an ear to hear in Heaven as long as there is a heart to plead on earth.

Let this first impression be riveted on your minds and you will, I trust, be prepared for three further reflections which I now wish to introduce to you. Our Lord, before He healed the blind man, said to Him, “What do you want Me to do for you?” Hence I infer that—

I. IT IS IMPORTANT A SEEKING SINNER SHOULD KNOW WHAT IT IS THAT HE REALLY WANTS. AND SOMETIMES CHRIST DELAYS TO GIVE SALVATION UNTIL MEN ARE BROUGHT MORE CLEARLY TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IS COMPREHENDED IN THAT INESTIMABLE BLESSING.

A large proportion of those persons who express a certain desire to be saved have no Scriptural idea whatever of what being saved is! I am afraid that many who profess to have found salvation are really the victims of religious excitement, greatly moved by the exhortations they have heard, yet in little or no degree enlightened as to the fundamental Truths of God on which a good hope is based.

The most current idea, of course, is that to be saved means to be delivered from going down into the pit of Hell, from enduring the sentence of everlasting damnation. That it does comprise that, we grant you, though that is far from being its sole intent. This is a result of salvation, though it is not the essence of salvation as it is discovered to the souls of the redeemed. Men are saved, blessed be God, many years before the time of death—and conscious of being saved, too. In some respects they are as thoroughly and perfectly saved as they will be when they get to Heaven. Salvation is not postponed till the Day of Judgment, when you shall have deliverance from Hell—it may be enjoyed here on earth when your sins are forgiven and you are redeemed from the present evil world.

Or it may be that you have a vague impression that salvation consists in *the pardon of your sins*. This is true, but it does not compass all the truth. When you say, “I would have my sins forgiven,” do you know what sin is? Have you ever had any clear view of what it really means? We often use certain terms and common words, I fear, without a corresponding thought in our minds. Know, then, that you have broken God's Law, both by omitting to do what you should have done, and by doing that

which you should not have done. Those Ten Commands which you will find in the 20th Chapter of Exodus are like so many mirrors in which you can see what you have done, and what you have not done—what crimes they are which cry out against you before the Judgment Throne of God, which will certainly drag you down to Hell unless you are delivered from the dread penalty. Consider, too, the heavy weight, as well as the grievous guilt, of sin. Have you felt the load and burden of sin? “A stone is heavy and the sand weighty,” says Solomon. But, ah, what specific gravity will compare with sin! Well might David groan beneath the load, “My iniquities are gone over my head. As a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me.”

All the burdens that may devolve upon you through the toils of life, the calamities of the world, or the visitations of Providence, cannot equal the load of sin—for this is a burden that oppresses the conscience, crushes the heart and paralyzes every faculty of the soul. “The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit, who can bear?” A conscience stricken with a sense of sin will readily interpret that wounded spirit which is not bearable for a man. Were that terrible incubus to rest long upon him, his spirit would fail utterly before the Lord! If mercy did not come speedily to their rescue, men might soon lose their wits and become frantic, despondency leading to despair—and despair to insanity. Oh, how venomous the poison of sin, when the arrows stick fast and fester! Have you known what sin is? If not, I am afraid your prayer will be unmeaning as that of James and John, to whom it was said, “You know not what you ask.” Have you ever had an idea, when asking for the forgiveness of sin, what sin really deserves? What kind of recompense it justly demands? Let it always be remembered by us that every sin we have committed exposes us to the wrath of God—a wrath that is represented by terrible pictures in God’s Word—as a flame that is never quenched, a fire that never ceases to burn. In order to deliver us from this penalty, it was absolutely necessary that Someone else should bear this punishment on our behalf. I do not think that we intelligently ask for the pardon of sin unless we have some view of the Crucified Savior, the slaughtered Lamb who stood in our place and put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Ah, seeking soul, if you know the weight of sin, and if you know that Christ carried it, then you can say, “Lord, I would have my sins forgiven,” in answer to the question, “What do you want Me to do for you?”

And yet salvation includes more than deliverance from Hell and a free pardon, for *it emancipates the soul from its dominant power*. Those among us who are saved from the guilt of sin are abundantly conscious that we are not fully released from the *power* of sin in our own breasts. Loved ones who have passed beyond the stars and see God’s face without a veil between, are saved, completely saved, from indwelling sin—but none of us here enjoy that blessed emancipation, though there are some who boast a perfection it were hard to prove! But, alas, they slightly prejudice

their profession by their pride. Still, salvation from the despotic power of sin must be achieved and, in a high degree, it must be compassed by all Believers—or they shall never see God’s face with acceptance. Brothers and Sisters, we must have our reigning sins subdued! Know you not that no drunk, or whoremonger, or covetous person that is an idolater, can have any inheritance in the Kingdom of God? These sins must be cut off! They must be slain and overcome! And as far as any other sins are concerned, they must be no longer citizens of the heart. You must look upon them as intruders and aliens that are to be driven out, like the Canaanites out of the land of promise. Mortify, therefore, your members! Subdue your lusts, overcome your corruptions. “But,” the man replies, “how can I do this?” A most fitting question! You cannot do it, but Christ says, “What do you want Me to do for you?” His power is equal to every emergency. There is no sin too strong for Christ. During His sojourn on earth, there was no devil that He could not cast out, so there is no sin which He cannot eject and eradicate. A legion of devils fled at the fiat of our Lord. Doubt not that legions of furious lusts and fiery tempers can be overcome by the faith that pleads His prevailing name! Brothers and Sisters, let us never sit down content with small degrees of sanctification! Reason not with yourselves as though you could never get beyond your present dwarfed stature. Others have outgrown it. There have been men far more distinguished for piety, humility and every Grace, than we are. The attainments to which the Master has led them are accessible to all saints under the same guidance, through the same Divine Power. Let us aspire to holiness! Let us follow after it with fresh ardor. Be not satisfied merely to live, but seek to grow! Be not content to remain babies, taking your portion of milk, but seek to be strong men who shall enjoy the strong meat of the Word of God!

Now I believe there are hundreds of persons who have no desire to be saved, and would rather not be saved, if this is what salvation means. Why, Man, if you are saved, you will be saved from those pleasurable sins in which you now are known to revel! Some of you, when you get a holiday, following the inclinations of a corrupt heart and a vicious taste, off you go to haunts where birds of your own feather congregate! Should you be saved, you will seek far different society. The company you now love, you will then hate, and the pleasures you enjoy so much, now, will become as detestable as they were delightful to you! When you say, “Lord, save me,” do you mean, “Lord, save me from being what I am. Lord, I have been a drunk—make me sober. I have been unchaste—make me pure. I have been dishonest—make me upright. I have been deceitful—make me speak the truth to my neighbor. I have been violating Your statutes—make me mindful of Your Word. I have been Your enemy, Lord—make me Your friend. I have made my belly my god—now You be my God. I desire to be reconciled to You, so that Your will shall be my will, Your service my delight and Your way the path which I shall choose”? Do you mean that? If any man says honestly, “I do desire to be

saved from sin," I do not think you will long have such a desire ungratified, but the Lord Jesus will say, "Your faith has made you whole." He can and He will save you, if that is what you mean!

As for you good Christian people who are seeking the conversion of sinners, *try to go about it in Christ's own way*. It is right for you to exhort them to believe in Christ. I like to hear you sing—

"There is life in a look at the Crucified One,"

but do remember that a man must have some understanding, both of what sin is and of what the Savior is, before he can believe, for "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God," Endeavor, therefore, to instruct persons in the Gospel. Merely to exhort them to believe. Simply to cry, "Believe, believe, believe!" is of little worth, however earnest a man may be in raising that cry, for the sinner naturally enquires, "What is it that I have to believe? On whom am I to believe? For what reason am I to believe? Why do I need to believe?" So, go about your work of soul-winning in the power of the Holy Spirit! Go about it intelligently, understanding that as Jesus Christ would not open the blind man's eyes till He had first made him state, not for Christ's information, but for the man's own understanding, what it was that he wanted, and made him say, "Lord, that I may receive my sight," so must you endeavor, when you proclaim the Gospel, to let men know what their need of that Gospel is! Give them not merely the expostulations, the admonitions and the exhortations of the Gospel, but also give them its instructions! Or else you go and bid them come, and there is no feast. You invite them to the waters, but you do not tell them what the waters are! Let it be with you, then, henceforth to instruct sinners in the way of the Lord. As David says, "Then will I teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted unto You." We will leave that first homily and proceed to a second. Our text clearly indicates to us all—

II. THE GREAT NECESSITY OF PRAYING WITH A DIRECT OBJECTIVE.

This poor man was not allowed to pray in general. "You Son of David, have mercy upon me!" A very proper prayer, and a very blessed prayer, but certainly it was a very wide prayer. So he was encouraged to be more specific in his request. "What do you want Me to do for you? You ask for mercy—what form of mercy do you need? In what particular shape shall the bountiful hand dispense the mercy to you?" The blind man at once replies, "Lord, that I may receive my sight!" He hits the mark with precision. It is sight he needs, and for sight he asks! This is the right way for Believers to pray. I wish we had more of it in our Prayer Meetings—I do not find fault, for we have had blessed seasons of prayer here—but rest assured that those are the best prayers in all respects, if they are earnest and sincere, which go most directly to the point. You know there is a way of praying in the closet and praying in the family in which you do not ask for anything. You say a great many good things, introduce much of your own experience, review the Doctrines of Grace very thoughtfully, but you

do not ask for anything in particular. Such prayer is always uninteresting to listen to—and I think it must be rather tedious to those who offer it. A Negro, who was noted for his great earnestness in prayer, was once asked how it was that whenever he prayed, he seemed to be so earnest. And he said, “Because I always have an errand when I go to the King! I always have an errand. I go to Him knowing that I need something, and I ask Him for it, and I don’t stop till He gives it to me. And if He does not give it to me, I ask Him again and again, for I know what I am doing.” Of what use were it to keep on going in and out of a banker’s door all day if you have no business to transact and nothing to get? But it is quite different when you go up to the counter with your check and receive in return the golden sovereigns. It would be very uninteresting to wait upon Her Majesty every morning and evening with an address which merely said, “Your Majesty’s attached and most loyal subject,” if you never asked for anything!

Yet how much prayer of that kind is addressed to Heaven—sheet lightning prayer—not the forked flash that does the work, like shooting arrows up at the moon, instead of imitating David, when he said, “*In the morning will I direct my prayer unto You.*” He looked at the target, marked the bull’s-eye, then drew the bow! And after he had shot the arrow, he adds, “And will look up”—as if to see whether the arrow really went to the mark, whether the prayer had sped with God so that a gracious answer would be given! Should we not sometimes, when alone, and about to pray, sit down a little while to consider what we are about to ask? Should we not often pray better if we remembered that the preparation of the heart in man, as well as the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord—and that the preparation of the heart precedes the answer of the tongue? In offering our sacrifices to God, this helter-skelter ill becomes us! Not with heedless step should we rush into His Presence. The decorum which is due to a king’s court might admonish us of the reverence due to the King of Kings! Although we enjoy the privileged familiarity which permits us to say, “Our Father,” as dear children of the Lord of Heaven and Earth, let us never forget the humility that becomes us, the profound obeisance we owe as subjects of the great King. Tenderly He asks—“What do you want Me to do for You?”—devoutly should we answer

Now, dear Friends, let me challenge a plain answer to a plain question. As you are sitting here in this House, what is your desire before the Lord? Let your conscience make such a reply that when you get home, you may intelligently, in the closing prayer of the day, approach the Lord for what you need. What is the upper-most desire of your soul? Perhaps with some it is that some besetting sin may be overcome. “Oh,” you say, “what would I give could I but get rid of that bad temper of mine! It is my daily cross and I do not want to harbor it.” “Ah,” says another, “I am so unbelieving, a little trouble soon casts me down. Oh, that I could get rid of my unbelief!” Well now, very likely, dear Friends, the sin you ought to *pray* against is one you are *not striving against*. Were I to come to you in

the aisle, and take you by the button-hole and tell you what your principle sin is, you would feel very vexed with me, for we are apt to resent the faithfulness of those who tell us of our faults! To touch the tender place makes the nerves tingle and it seems like willful torture. When somebody complains of something which our conscience does not endorse, we take it kindly, and accept their good intentions, thinking that had they known us better, they would have esteemed us more highly. But if they really touch the sores where most they smart, we do not admire their treatment! The flush we feel—the blush we gladly would hide. Yet cloak not now the vice which an Omniscient God discerns! Let this be a time of heart-searching. Say, now, “Lord, is my sin, covetousness?” That is a sin which never yet did I hear a man confess!

A Roman Catholic priest who had heard the confessions of some two thousand persons, said he had heard men confess heinous iniquities of every kind, even murder and adultery, but that he never had heard any man confess covetousness. This is a crime they christen and call it by another name! A covetous man thinks he is prudent—he is just laying by a little money for a rainy day. Their greed, they tell you, is not to gratify themselves, but a generous impulse to provide for their families—for their wives and their children—they would have us believe, they waste their strength and wither their souls. Nevertheless, their fortune is their fallacy. To grip and to grasp, to have and to hold is their desire as long as they live, and late enough they commonly leave it before they devise to their dear ones the possessions they can no longer retain! Alas, we are often wicked enough to try to make our affection an excuse for our avarice! Let us come to the point honestly. When we are dealing with our sin, let us confess it with all its iniquity and its heinousness. Do not dissemble by accepting a small share in a public company. David, when he wanted full discharge, said, “Deliver me from blood-guiltiness.” He acknowledged the atrocity when he sought the Atonement—“Forgive my blood-guiltiness”—as one who saw his crime in the light of its consequence, not as one who attempted to palliate it with vain excuses! “What do you want Me to do for you in that matter?”

If you have no particular sin to confess—if that is not your uppermost anxiety at this time—what, then, is your petition? What need have you to be supplied? Is it some great need? Have you numerous little needs? They may all be told to God! Get a clear idea of what it is that you really need that He should do for you, knowing that whatever your necessities may be, there is the promise, “My God shall supply all your need”—not some of it, but, “all your need”—not He *may* do it, but He *shall* do it! Not, you will have to supply it yourselves, but *He* will supply it—“My God shall supply all your need.” Think, therefore, what your need is, and then go to God! Is there any choice blessing that you desire? Get a clear idea of the blessing before you pray for it. What form of blessing would you wish to have? Oh, if I might have my choice, it would be heavenly-mindedness! Oh, if a man could but get that, he need not make much

account of where he lived, nor what he had to eat, nor how much he slept, nor how much he suffered—for a heavenly mind is Heaven! The mind makes its own Heaven here below, and up above. Though, doubtless, Heaven has a locality—yet it is much more a state than a place. Oh, for more heavenly-mindedness! What is it you would have? Communion with Christ? Love to souls? A broken heart? True humility? I may say of all these things, “The land is before you, that you may go forward and possess it. Ask what you will and it shall be done unto you.”

What promise is there that you would wish to have fulfilled to you to-night? It is a good exercise to sit down before evening prayer and look up the promise that seems most suitable, or to ask the Lord to look it up for you, and apply it to your soul? Take this promise, if so be there is disease next door, “Lord, You have said, ‘Thousands shall fall at your side, and tens of thousands at your right hand, but it shall not come near you.’ Lord, fulfill that promise now.” Are you startled by a noise in the dead of night? Then quote this promise, “You shall not be afraid of the terror by night.” Perhaps it is shortness of provision that troubles you. Then here is another promise, “Your bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure.” When you lost a key the other day, and could not open the drawer, what did you do? You sent out for a locksmith and in he came with a whole bundle of old rusty keys. What for? Why, he looked for one that fit the lock of your drawer, and opened it for you at once! Now many people’s Bibles are just like that bundle of rusty keys. There is always a key in the Bible that will fit the wards in the lock of your necessities, if you would but seek till you find it. But sometimes we are in distress, as Christian and Hopeful were in Doubting Castle, and we have to say, as Christian did, “What a fool I am to lie rotting in this stinking dungeon when I have a key in my bosom that I am persuaded would open every lock in Doubting Castle!” Search out the promises, then, and go before God with a distinct answer to the question, “What do you want Me to do for you?” “Lord, I would have that promise fulfilled, or that Grace bestowed, or that need supplied, or that sin forgiven.”

So, dear Friends, in intercessory prayer, it is very necessary, I think, in order to keep up our own interest in it, that we should have distinct objectives. I do not find that I can pray for all mankind anything like so fervently as I can pray for my own children. I do not find that I can pray for the nation as well as I can for London. When I pray for London, I seek to do it earnestly. It behooves us to pray for all men, according to Scripture. All sorts of men are to be included in our supplications. I must, however, confess that I am most fervent in prayer when I pray for this congregation, and that because I have the most vivid thought of this people, and the clearest idea of their present requirements. If you want to pray for any particular person, or any special objective, the better you understand the case you have in hand, the warmer and livelier your pleading will be. There are people in this Chapel who have asked me to pray for them. Well, I have tried to do so, and I hope the Lord heard my

prayer. But since I have known more of them, and found out where they live, and who they were, I can pray for them with more freedom than I could before. They were a sort of abstraction to me once—I have a definite acquaintance with them now. How easily you remember anything that is tied to something else, or linked by association with a place. Thus you recollect a transaction that occurred to you in the City of London. Every time that you go by the Bank, just at one spot, you say, “I met so-and-so just here the day before he died.” You will never forget it, but you think of it every time you go by. Or perhaps at the corner of a road in the country, just by a hand-post, such-and-such a thing happened to you, and the site of land revokes the circumstance. Thus we recollect our friends in prayer when we get a knowledge of them, call them up before our mind’s eye, and knit, as it were, the secret interests with what we have seen of them when we have talked to them and been interested in their trials.

Some good people have prayed for others by name. Well, you cannot do that if you have a long list and happen to be a busy man. Still, it is good to pray for others by name if you can. I like those prayers, even in public, in which men do pray for others with some distinctness. Oh, what time we waste when we go beating around the bush! We know individuals who pray for their minister with a circumlocution that distracts the listener. They travel round and round a circle, instead of going at once to the point. A man hardly likes to say, “Lord, save my wife.” He prefers talking about “those who are dear to us in the ties of consanguinity, and she who is the partner of our being.” Yes, that sounds pretty, very pretty, indeed, but would it not be as well if you said at once, “Lord, convert my wife”? There is one Brother here who does pray in that way at the Prayer Meetings, and who uses those very words. When pleading with God, do let us come straight to the mark, knowing what we are doing, ourselves and, therefore, stating our case plainly in answer to the question, “What do you want Me to do for you?” May the Lord teach us to pray in this distinct manner! Time fails us, therefore we will only mention a third point. Our Lord Jesus Christ, in asking this question of the blind man, makes—

III. NO RESERVATION, BUT THROWS OPEN THE PLENITUDE OF HIS HEART AND THE BOUNDLESSNESS OF HIS POWER.

“What do you want Me to do for you?” is tantamount to saying, “Whatever it is, I will do it. I can do it. Only tell Me what you want.” There is no bound to the Savior’s ability! Nor does He put a limit on the suppliant’s leave to command the favor he desires. It was not, then, for the blind man to say, “Lord, if You will.” He has the opportunity of procuring any blessing he solicits. Mark, Brothers and Sisters, it is no question of “can” with regard to Christ! The question is, what do you desire? Now, Sinner, observe the Lord Jesus Christ did not stop to enquire about this man’s blindness, whether he had been blind from birth, or whether he had been affected with a cataract or any other form of ocular disease. He just said,

“What do you want Me to do for you?” No species of ophthalmia could baffle Him! In any form, or at any stage, it was possible for Him to cure it! The Lord Jesus Christ speaks to you. He says to you today, “Whoever will, let Him come and take of the Water of Life freely.” He does not say anything as to whether you have been moral or immoral, whether you have been profane or religious, but simply, “What do you want Me to do for you?” Your blackest sins will disappear the moment the scarlet of the blood touches them! Your foulest crimes shall melt like snow as soon as the thaw begins. You cannot have sinned yourself beyond the reach of the long arm of Christ, nor can the weight of your sin be too heavy for the back of Christ, the great Sin-Bearer, to bear! Whatever your iniquities, though they are red like scarlet, they shall be as wool! Though they are as crimson, they shall be whiter than snow! Some of us would have no hope if we did not know that Christ will save the chief of sinners. We would long since have sunk into remorse and despair if we had not seen it written in letters of gold—“He that comes unto Me, I will in no wise cast out.” You know what John Bunyan said about that text? He said, “Who is this man? Who is this, ‘he that comes’? Why, any ‘he that comes’ in all the world, be he who he may, He will in no wise, under no pretext, for no reason and in no way, ever cast him out!” If you come to Christ, He will keep His word! He cannot be a liar! He must be as good as His own declaration! If you come to Him, He will not cast you out! What do you want Him to do for you?

Oh, Believer, have you a desire upon your soul—have you a longing in your heart? Then Christ does not say that He will give you this mercy, if it is possible, but He is able to do for you exceedingly abundantly above what you ask or even think! I hear that text still quoted by some of my Brothers and Sisters, “Above all that we can ask or even think.” I beg their pardon—that is not a faithful quotation of Scripture! It says, “Above all that we ask or think”—above all that we *do ask*! God can open a man’s mouth as wide as His mercies and He can make us ask for anything, but He generally does for us above all that we ask or think! Never keep your mouth closed because you think the mercy to be too great. “He that spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also, with Him, freely give us all things?” Do not stint yourself! Enlarge your desire! Open your mouth wide and He will fill it! He gives you *carte blanche*—ask for what you will! He puts it before you, “Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He will give you the desire of your heart.” So may it be to us, according to our faith, and His shall be the Glory! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 13:10-23.**

Verses 10-12. *And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath, and, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity*

eighteen years, and was bent over, and could in no wise lift herself up. And when Jesus saw her—With that quick eye of His which was always in sympathy with His audience.

12-14. *He called her to Him, and said unto her, Woman you are loosed from your infirmity. And He laid His hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, and said unto the people—In what a cold-blooded, heartless manner he must have said it, you may well imagine. For a man not to rejoice when he saw his poor fellow creature thus healed, shows that he must have been destitute of much milk of human kindness and that bigotry had dried up his soul.*

14. *There are six days in which men ought to work: in them, therefore, come and be healed, but not on the Sabbath.* He did not dare to speak to Christ. I suppose the majesty of Christ's manner overawed him, so he struck directly at the people—and at Christ through them. Now our Lord did not go sideways to work when He replied to him.

15-17. *The Lord then answered him, and said, You hypocrite, does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath? And when He had said these things, all His adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him.* The Jews had reduced the Sabbath to a day of idleness and luxury. The only thing they forbade themselves was the doing of anything. Now the Sabbath was never intended to be spent in idleness and luxury. It should be spent in the worship of God and works of mercy and works of piety make the Sabbath holy, instead of being contrary to its demands. And our Savior, by giving rest to that poor burdened woman was, in truth, making Sabbath in her body and in her soul.

18, 19. *Then He said, Unto what is the Kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and cast into his garden; and it grew and became a large tree: and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.* A little Grace grows and becomes great Grace. If you have at present but little faith, be thankful for that little! Bring it to Christ! Let it feed upon Him and your mustard seed will grow till it becomes a tree! The same is true of the Gospel throughout the world. We need never be afraid because we happen to be few in number. If we have got the Truth of God, the Truth will live. And if the Truth is as small as the mustard seed, there is life in it—vitality in it, and it is sure to grow before long! We must not be afraid to be in the minority. Majorities are not always right. Are they ever? Perhaps sometimes.

20, 21. *And again He said, Unto what shall I liken the Kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of*

meal, till the whole was leavened. Some read this as a parable to set forth the power of evil, and I do not doubt that it does set it forth. At the same time it sets forth the power of good, too, for it is put side by side with the other as the likeness of the Kingdom of God. And the Truth of God in the soul does work, ferment and permeate the entire nature if it is placed there!

22, 23. *And He went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. Then said one to Him, Lord, are there few who are saved?* That is a question that I have heard a great many times. What is the fascination that makes men so fond of asking it? I think that some ask it as if they almost hoped that there would be few. If they do not go to our Ebenezer or Rehoboth, what can become of them? Surely you cannot expect that there should be any good come to those that do not frequent Salem and Enod. What must they hope? In that spirit the question is often asked, but, Brothers and Sisters, may God lift us up above that spirit and make us desire that there should be great multitudes saved! I suppose that one of the surprises of Heaven will be to see vastly many more there than we ever dreamt would reach that place. Jesus Christ gave a very practical answer. It was no answer, and yet was the best of answers.

23. *And He said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.* Make a push for it! Agonize for it, for many will seek—not strive, but merely seek. Or, to put another meaning into it, strive now to enter in at the strait gate, for many will be unable, when it is too late—and that, doubtless, is the sense of the passage.

—Adapted from the *C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

NOTHING BUT LEAVES

NO. 555

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 21, 1864,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“He found nothing but leaves.”
Mark 11:13.*

MOST of the miracles of Moses were grand displays of Divine Justice. What were the first ten wonders but ten plagues? The same may be said of the Prophets, especially of Elijah and Elisha. Was it not significant both of the character and mission of Elijah when he called fire from Heaven upon the captains of fifties? Nor was he upon whom his mantle descended less terrible when the she-bears avenged him upon the mockers. It remained for our Incarnate Lord to reveal the heart of God. The Only-Begotten was full of Grace and Truth and in His miracles pre-eminently God is set forth to us as LOVE.

With the exception of the miracle before us and perhaps a part of another, all the miracles of Jesus were entirely benevolent in their character. Indeed, this one is no exception in reality, but only in appearance. The raising of the dead, the feeding of the multitude, the stilling of the tempest, the healing of diseases—what were all these but displays of the loving kindness of God? What was this to teach us but that Jesus Christ came forth from His Father on an errand of pure Grace?—

*“Your hands, dear Jesus, were not armed
With an avenging rod,
No hard commission to perform
The vengeance of a God.
But all was mercy, all was mild,
And wrath forsook the Throne,
When Christ on His kind errand came
And brought salvation down.”*

Let us rejoice that God commends His love towards us because in “due time Christ died for the ungodly.” Yet, as if to show that Jesus the Savior is also Jesus the Judge, one gleam of Justice must dart forth. Where shall Mercy direct its fall? See, my Brethren, it glances not upon a *man* but lights upon an unconscious, unsuffering thing—a tree. The curse, if we may call it a curse at all, did not fall on man or beast, or even the smallest insect. Its bolt falls harmlessly upon a fig tree by the wayside. It bore upon itself the signs of barrenness and perhaps was no one’s property. Little, therefore, was the loss which any man sustained by the withering of that verdant mockery, while instruction more precious than a thousand acres of fig trees has been left for the benefit of all ages.

The only other instance at which I hinted just now was the permission given to the devils to enter into the swine and the whole herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea and perished in the waters. In that case, again, what a mercy it was that the Savior did not permit a band of *men* to become the victims of the Evil One. It was infinitely better that the whole

herd of swine should perish than that one poor man should be rendered a maniac through their influence. The creatures choked in the abyss were nothing but swine—swine which their Jewish owners had no right to keep. And even then they did not perish through Jesus Christ's agency, but through the malice of the devils, for even swine must run when the devil drives.

Observe, then, with attention, this solitary instance of stern judgment worked by the Savior's hand. Consider seriously that if only once in His whole life Christ works a miracle of pure judgment, the lesson so unique must be very full of meaning. If there is but one curse, where does it fall? What is its symbolic teaching? I do not know that I ever felt more solemnly the need of true fruitfulness before God than when I was looking over this miracle—parable—for such it may justly be called.

The curse, you at once perceive, falls in its metaphorical and spiritual meaning upon those high professors who are destitute of true holiness—upon those who manifest great show of leaves—but who bring forth no fruit unto God. Only one thunderbolt and that for boasting pretenders! Only one curse and that for hypocrites. O blessed Spirit, write this heart-searching Truth upon our hearts!

I. We will commence our exposition with the remark that **THERE WERE MANY TREES WITH LEAVES ONLY UPON THEM, AND YET NONE OF THESE WERE CURSED BY THE SAVIOR, SAVE ONLY THIS FIG TREE.** It is the nature of many trees to yield to man nothing but their shade. The hungering Savior did not resort to the oak or to the elm to look for food, nor could the fir tree, nor the pine, nor the box offer Him any hope of refreshment. Nor did He breathe one hard word concerning them, for He knew what was in them and that they neither were, nor pretended to be, fruit-bearing trees.

So, dear Friends, there are many men whose lives bear leaves, but no fruit—and yet, thanks be unto God, almighty patience bears with them. They are allowed to live out their time and then, it is true, they are cut down and cast into the fire, but while they are permitted to stand no curse withers them—the long-suffering of God waits to be gracious to them. Here are some of the characters who have leaves but no fruit. There are thousands who ignorantly follow the sign and know nothing of the substance. In England, we think ourselves far in advance of Popish countries. But how much of the essence of Popery peeps out in the worship of very many!

They go to Church or Chapel and they think that the mere going into the place and sitting a certain time and coming out again is an acceptable act to God—mere formality, you see—is mistaken for spiritual worship! They are careful to have their infants sprinkled, but what the ceremony means they know not. And without looking into the Bible to see whether the Lord commands any such an ordinance, they offer Him their ignorant will—worship either in obedience to custom—or in the superstition of ignorance.

What the thing is, or why it is, they do not enquire, but go through a performance as certain parrots say their prayers. They know nothing about the inward and spiritual Grace which the Catechism talks about, if

indeed, inward spiritual Grace could ever be connected with an unscriptural outward and visible sign! When these poor souls come to the Lord's Supper, their thoughts go no farther than the bread and wine, or the hands which break the one and pour out the other. They know nothing whatever of communion with Jesus, of eating His flesh and drinking His blood. Their souls have proceeded as far as the shell, but they have never broken into the kernel to taste the sweetness.

They have a name to live and are dead. Their religion is a mere show—a signboard without an inn. A well-set table without meat. A pretty pageant where nothing is gold, but everything gilt—nothing real, but all pasteboard, paint, plaster and pretense. Nonconformists, your Chapels swarm with such and the houses of the Establishment are full of the same! Multitudes live and die satisfied with the outward trappings of religion and are utter strangers to internal vital godliness. Yet such persons are not cursed in this life! No, they are to be pitied, to be prayed for, to be sought after with words of love and honest truth. They are to be hoped for, for who knows but that God may call them to repentance and they may yet receive the life of God into their souls?

Another very numerous class have opinion but not faith, creed but not credence. We meet them everywhere. How zealous they are for Protestantism! They would not only die for orthodoxy, but kill others as well! Perhaps it is the Calvinistic doctrine which they have received and then the five points are as dear to them as their five senses. These men will contend, not to say earnestly, but *savagely* for the faith! They very vehemently denounce all those who differ from them in the smallest degree. They deal damnation round the land with amazing liberality to all who are not full weight according to the balance of their little Zoar, Rehoboth, or Jireh—while all the while the spirit of Christ, the love of the Spirit, heart of compassion and holiness of character are no more to be expected from them than grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles.

Doctrine, my Brethren, is to be prized above all price! Woe to the Church of God when error shall be thought a trifle, or Truth is lightly esteemed. When the Truth of God is gone, what is left? But, at the same time, we are grossly mistaken if we think that orthodoxy or creed will *save* us. I am sick of those cries of, “the Truth, the Truth, the Truth,” from men of rotten lives and unholy tempers! There is an orthodox as well as a heterodox road to Hell and the devil knows how to handle Calvinists quite as well as Arminians. No *Church* can insure salvation! No form of *doctrine* can guarantee to us eternal life. “You must be born again.” You must bring forth fruits meet for repentance. “Every tree which brings not forth fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.”

Stopping short of vital union to the Lord Jesus by real faith, we miss the great qualification for entering Heaven. Yet the time is not come when these mere head-knowers are cursed. These trees have leaves only, but no fatal curse has withered them hopelessly. No! They are to be sought after. They may yet know the Lord in their hearts and the Holy Spirit may yet make them humble followers of the Lamb. O that it may be so!

A third class have talk without feeling. Mr. Talkative, in “Pilgrim's Progress” is the representative of a very numerous host. They speak very

glibly concerning Divine things. Whether the topic is doctrinal, experimental, or practical, they talk fluently upon *everything*. But evidently the whole thing comes from the throat and the lips. There is no welling up from the *heart*. If the thing came from the heart it would be boiling, but now it hangs like an icicle from their lips. You know them—you may learn something from them. But all the time you are, yourself, aware that if they bless others by their words, they themselves remain unblessed.

Ah, let us be very anxious lest this should be our own case! Let the preacher feel the anxiety of the Apostle Paul, lest, after having preached to others he himself should be a castaway! And let my hearers feel the same concern, lest, after talking about the things of God they should prove to be mere lip-servers and not accepted children of the Most High. Another tribe springs up just now before my eyes—those who have regrets without repentance. Many of you under a heart-searching sermon feel grieved on account of your sins and yet never have the strength of mind to give them up! You say you are sorry, but yet go on in the same course. You really feel, when *death* and *judgment* press upon you, a certain sort of regret that you could have been so foolish—but the next day the strength of temptation is such that you fall a prey to the very same infatuation.

It is easy to bring a man to the river of regret but you cannot make him drink the water of repentance. If Agag would be killed with words, no Amalekite would live. If men's transient sorrows for sin were real repentance on account of it, there is not a man living who would not, sometime or other, have been a true penitent. Here, however, are leaves only and no fruit. We have yet again another class of persons who have resolves without action. They will! Ah, that they will! But it is always in the *future* tense. They are hearers and they are even *feelers*, but they are *not* doers of the Word—it never comes to that. They would be free, but they have not patience to file their chains, nor Grace to submit their manacles to the hammer.

They see the right, but they permit the wrong to rule them. They are charmed with the beauties of holiness and yet deluded with the wantonness of sin. They would run in the ways of God's Commandments, but the road is too rough and running is weary work. They would fight for God, but victory is hardly won and so they turn back almost as soon as they have set out. They put their hand to the plow and then prove utterly unworthy of the Kingdom. The great majority of persons who have any sort of religion at all bear leaves, but they produce no fruit. I know there are some such here and I solemnly warn you—though no curse falls upon you—we do not think that the miracle now under consideration has any relation to you whatever. Yet remember, there is nothing to be done with trees which bring forth only leaves but in due time to use the axe upon them and to cast them into the fire—and this must be *your* doom.

As sure as you live under the sound of the Gospel and yet are not converted by it, so surely will you be cast into outer darkness! As certainly as Jesus Christ invites you and you will not come, so certainly will He send His angels to gather the dead branches together and *you* among them, to cast them into the fire. Beware! Beware, you fruitless tree! You shall not stand forever! Mercy waters you with her tears now. God's loving kindness

digs about you still. Still the farmer comes, seeking fruit upon you year after year. Beware! The edge of the axe is sharp and the arm which wields it is nothing less than Almighty. Beware, lest you fall into the fire!

II. Secondly, THERE WERE OTHER TREES WITH NEITHER LEAVES NOR FRUIT, AND NONE OF THESE WERE CURSED! The time of figs was not yet come. Now, as the fig tree either brings forth the fig before the leaf, or else produces figs and leaves at the same time, the major part of the trees, perhaps all of them, without exception of this one, were entirely without figs and without leaves. And yet Jesus did not curse any one of them, for the time of figs was not yet come.

What multitudes are destitute of anything like religion? They make no profession of it. They not only have no fruits of godliness, but they have no leaves even of outward respect to it. They do not frequent the court of the Lord's House. They use no form of prayer. They never attend upon ordinances. The great outlying mass of this huge city—how does religion affect it? It is a very sad thing to think that there are people living in total darkness next door to the Light—that you may find in the very street where the Gospel is preached persons who have never heard a sermon!

Are there not, throughout this city, tens and hundreds of thousands who know not their right hand from their left in matters of godliness? Their children go to Sunday schools, but they, themselves, spend the whole Sunday in anything except the worship of God! In our country parishes very often neither the religion of the Establishment nor of Dissent affects the population at all!

Take, for instance, that village which will be disgracefully remembered as long as Essex endures, the village of Hedingham. There are in that place not only parish Churches, but Dissenting meeting houses, and yet the persons who foully murdered the poor wretch supposed to be a wizard, must have been as ignorant and indifferent to common sense, let alone religion, as even Hottentots or Kaffirs, to whom the light of religion has never come. Why was this? Is it not because there is not enough of missionary spirit among Christian people to seek out those who are in the lowest strata of society so that multitudes escape without ever coming into contact with godliness at all?

In London, the City Missionaries will bear witness that while they can sometimes get at the wives, yet there are thousands of husbands who are necessarily away at the time of the missionary's visit who have not a word of rebuke, or exhortation, or invitation, or encouragement ever sounding in their ears at all—from the day of their birth to the day of their death. And they might, for all practical purposes, as well have been born in the center of Africa as in the city of London, for they are without God, without hope—aliens from the commonwealth of Israel—far too often not by wicked works only, but by dense ignorance of God.

These persons we may divide into two classes, upon neither of whom does the withering curse fall in this life. The first we look upon with hope. Although we see neither leaves nor fruit, we know that "the time of figs is not yet." They are God's elect, but they are not called. Their names are in the Lamb's Book of Life and were there from before the foundations of the world! Though they are dead in trespasses, they are the objects of Divine

love and they must, in due time, be called by Irresistible Grace and turned from darkness to Light. "The Lord has much people in this city," and this should be the encouragement of every one of you to try to do good—that God has among the vilest of the vile, the most reprobate, the most debauched and drunken—an elect people who must be saved!

When you take the Word to them, you do so because God has ordained you to be the messenger of life to their souls and they *must* receive it, for so the decree of predestination runs. They must be called in the fullness of time to be the Brethren of Christ and children of the Most High. They are *redeemed*, beloved Friends, but not *regenerated*—as much redeemed with precious blood as the saints before the eternal Throne. They are Christ's property and yet, perhaps, they are waiting around the ale-house at this very moment until the door shall open—bought with Jesus' precious blood and yet spending their nights in a brothel and their days in sin.

But if Jesus Christ purchased them He will have them! If He counted down the precious drops God is not unfaithful to forget the price which His Son has paid. He will not suffer His Substitution to be in any case an ineffectual, dead thing. Tens of thousands of redeemed ones are not regenerated yet, but regenerated they must be! And this is your comfort, and mine, when we go out with the quickening Word of God. No, more—these ungodly ones are prayed for by Christ before the Throne! "Neither pray I for these alone," says the great Intercessor, "but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word." They do not pray for themselves! Poor, ignorant souls—they do not know anything about prayer. But JESUS prays for them! Their names are on His breast and before long they must bow their stubborn knees, breathing the penitential sigh before the Throne of Grace!

"The time of figs is not yet." The predestinated moment has not struck. But when it comes, they shall, for God will have His own—they must, for the Spirit is not to be withstood when He comes forth with power—they must become the willing *servants* of the living God! "My people shall be willing in the day of My power." He shall justify many. "He shall see of the travail of His soul." "He shall divide a portion with the great and He shall divide the spoil with the strong." No curse falls upon these! They *deserve* it, but eternal Love prevents it. Their sins write it, but the finished Sacrifice blots it out! They may well perish because they seek not mercy, but Christ intercedes for them and live they shall.

Alas, however, among those who have neither leaves nor fruit there is another class which *never* brings forth either the one or the other! They live in sin and die in ignorance, perishing without hope. As these leave the world, can they upbraid us for neglecting them? Are we clear of their blood? May not the blood of many of them cry from the ground against us? As they are condemned on account of sins, may they not accuse us because we did not take the Gospel to them, but left them where they were?

Dread thought! But let it not be shaken off—there are tens of thousands every day who pass into the world of spirits unsaved and inherit the righteous wrath of God. Yet in this life, you see, no special curse falls

upon them and this miracle has no special bearing upon them. It bears upon a totally different class of people, of whom we will now speak.

III. WE HAVE BEFORE US A SPECIAL CASE. I have already said that in a fig tree the fruit takes the precedence of the leaves, or the leaves and the fruit come at the same time. So that it is laid down as a general rule that if there are leaves upon a fig tree you may rightly expect to find fruit upon it. To begin, then, with the explanation of this special case—in a fig tree, fruit comes before leaves. So in a true Christian, fruit always takes the precedence of profession. Find a man anywhere who is a true servant of God and before he united himself with the Church, or attempted to engage in public prayer, or to identify himself with the people of God, he searched to see whether he had real repentance on account of sin.

He desired to know whether he had a sincere and genuine faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and he, perhaps, tarried some little time to try himself to see whether there were the fruits of holiness in his daily life. Indeed, I may say that there are some who wait too long. They are so afraid lest they should make a profession before they have Grace in possession that they will wait year after year—too long—become unwise and make what was a virtue become a vice. Still this is the rule with Christians—they first give themselves to the Lord and *afterwards* to the Lord's people according to His will.

You who are the servants of God—do you not scorn to vaunt yourselves beyond your line and measure? Would you not think it disgraceful on your part to profess anything which you have not felt? Do you not feel a holy jealousy when you are teaching others, lest you should teach more than God has taught you? And are you not afraid, even in your prayers, lest you should use expressions which are beyond your own depth of meaning? I am sure the true Christian is always afraid of anything like having the leaves before he has the fruit.

Another remark follows from this—where we see the leaves we have a right to *expect* the fruit. When I see a man, a Church member—when I hear him engage in prayer, I expect to see in him holiness—the character and the image of Christ. I have a right to expect it because the man has solemnly avowed that he is the partaker of Divine Grace. You cannot join a Church without taking upon yourselves very solemn responsibilities. What do you desire when you come to see us and ask to be admitted into fellowship? You tell us that you have passed from death unto life, that you have been born again, that there has been a change in you, the like of which you never knew before—one which only God could have worked!

You tell us you are in the habit of private prayer. You have a desire for the conversion of others. If you did not so profess, we would not dare receive you. Well now, having made these professions, it would be insincere on our part if we did not expect to see your characters holy and your conversation correct! We have a right to expect it from your own professions. We have a right to expect it from the work of the Spirit which you claim to have received. Shall the Holy Spirit work in man's heart to produce a trifle? Do you think that the Spirit of God would have written us this Book and that Jesus Christ would have shed His precious blood to produce a *hypocrite*?

Is an inconsistent Christian the highest work of God? I suppose God's plan of salvation to be that which has more exercised His thoughts and wisdom than the making of all worlds and the sustenance of all Providence. And shall this best, this highest, this darling work of God produce no more than that poor, mean, talking, fruitless deceiver? You have no love for souls, no care for the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom and yet think that the Spirit has made you what you are! No zeal, no melting heart of compassion, no cries of earnest entreaty, no wrestling with God, no holiness, no self-denial and yet say that you are a vessel made by the Master and fitted for His use! How can this be?

No! If you profess to be a Christian, from the necessity of the Spirit's work we have a right to expect fruit from you. Besides, in genuine professors we do get the fruit. We see a faithful attachment to the Redeemer's cause, an endurance to the end in poverty, in sickness, in shame, in persecution. We see other professors holding fast to the Truth of God—they are not led aside by temptation—neither do they disgrace the cause they have espoused. And if you profess to be one of the same order, we have a right to look for the same blessed fruits of the Spirit in you. And if we see them not you have lied to us.

Observe further that our Lord hungers for fruit. A hungry person seeks for something which may satisfy him—for fruit—not leaves! Jesus hungers for your holiness. A strong expression, you will say, but I doubt not its accuracy. For what were we elected? We were predestinated to be conformed unto the image of God's Son! We were chosen to *good works*, "which God has before ordained that we should walk in them." What is the end of our redemption? Why did Jesus Christ die? "He gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of *good works*."

Why have we been called but that we should be called to be saints? To what end are any of the great operations of the Covenant of Grace? Do they not all point at our holiness? If you will think of any privilege which the Lord confers upon His people through Christ, you will perceive that they all aim at the *sanctification* of the chosen people—the making of them to bring forth fruit that God the Father may be glorified in them. O Christian, for this the tears of the Savior! For this the agony and bloody sweat! For this the five death-wounds! For this the burial and the Resurrection, that He makes you holy, even perfectly holy like unto Himself!

And can it be that when He hungers after fruit, you think nothing of fruit-bearing? O Professor, how base are you to call yourself a blood-bought child of God and yet to live unto yourself! How dare you, O barren Tree, professing to be watered by the bloody sweat and dug by the griefs and woes of the wounded Savior—how dare you bring forth leaves and no fruit? Oh, sacrilegious mockery of a hungry Savior! Oh, blasphemous tantalizing of a hungry Lord—that you should profess to have cost Him all this and yet yield Him *nothing*!

When I think that Jesus hungers after fruit in *me*, it stirs me up to do more for Him! Does it not have the same effect on you? He hungers for your good works! He hungers to see you useful. Jesus, the King of kings, hungers after your *prayers*—hungers after your anxieties for the souls of

others—and nothing ever will satisfy Him for the travail of His soul but seeing you wholly devoted to His cause. This brings us into the very midst and meaning of the miracle!

There are some, then, who make unusual profession and yet disappoint the Savior in His just expectations. The Jews did this. When Jesus Christ came it was not the time of figs. The time for great holiness was *after* the coming of Christ and the pouring out of the *Spirit*. All the other nations were without leaves. Greece, Rome—all these showed no signs of progress. But there was the Jewish nation covered with leaves. They professed already to have obtained the blessings which He came to bring.

There stood the Pharisee with his long prayers. There were the lawyers and the Scribes with their deep knowledge of the things of the kingdom. They said they had the Light. The time of figs was not come, but yet they had the leaves, though not a single fruit. And you know what a curse fell on Israel! How in the day of Jerusalem's destruction the tree was withered altogether from its root because it had its leaves, but had no fruit. The same will be true of any Church. There are times when all the Churches seem sunken alike in lethargy—such a time we had, say, ten years ago—but one Church, perhaps, seems to be all alive.

The congregations are large. Much, apparently, is proposed for the growth of the Savior's kingdom. A deal of noise is made about it. There is much talk and the people are all full of expectation. And if there is no fruit, no real consecration to Christ, if there is no genuine liberality, no earnest vital godliness, no hallowed consistency, other Churches may live on. But such a Church as this—making so high a profession and being so precocious in the produce of leaves—shall have a curse from God! No man shall eat fruit of it forever and it shall wither away.

In the case of individuals the moral of our miracle runs thus. Some are looked upon as young Believers who early join the Church. "The time of figs is not yet." It is not a very ordinary case to see children converted, but we do see some and we are very grateful. We are jealous, however, lest we should see leaves but no fruit. These juveniles are extraordinary cases. And on that account we look for higher results. When we are disappointed, what shall come upon such but a curse upon their early development which led them to the deception? Some of us were converted, or profess to have been, when young. And if we have lived up to now and all we have produced has been merely words, resolves, professions—but no fruit unto God—we must expect the curse.

Again, professors eminent in station—there are necessarily but few ministers, but few Church officers. But when men so distinguish themselves by zeal, or by louder professions than others as to gain the ear of the Christian public and are placed in responsible positions—if they bring forth no fruit—they, too, are the persons upon whom the curse will light. It may be with other Christians that "the time of figs is not yet." They have not made the advances which these profess to have made. But having been, upon their own profession, elected to an office which essentially requires fruit, since they yield it not, let them beware!

To those who make professions of much love to Christ the same caution may be given. With the most of Christians, I am afraid I must say that,

“the time of figs is not yet,” for we are too much like the Laodicean Church. But you meet with some men—how much they are in love with Christ! How sweetly they can talk about Him! But what do they *do* for Him? Nothing! Nothing! Their love lies just in the wind which comes out of their own mouths and that is all. Now, when the Lord has a curse, He will deal it out on such. They went beyond all others in an untimely declaration of a very fervent love and now they yield Him no fruit. “Yes,” said one, “I love God so much that I do not reckon that anything I have is my own. It is all the Lord’s—all the Lord’s and I am His steward.”

Well, this dear good man, of course, joined the Church and after a time some mission work wanted a little help. What was his reply? “When I pay my seat rent, I have done all I intend to do.” A man of wealth and means! After a little time, this same man found it inconvenient even to pay for his seat and goes now to a place not quite so full, where he can get a seat and do nothing to support the ministry! If there is a special thunderbolt anywhere, it is for these hypocrites who whine about love to Christ and bow down at the shrine of Mammon!

Or take another case. You meet with others whose profession is not of so much love, but it is of much *experience*. Oh, what experience they have had! What deep experience! Ah, they know the humblings of heart and the plague of human nature! They know the depths of corruption and the heights of Divine fellowship and so on. Yes, and if you go into the shop you find the corruption is carried on behind the counter and the deceit in the day-book. If they do not know the plague of their own hearts, at least they are a plague to their own household. Such people are abhorrent to all men and much more to God!

Others you meet with who have a censorious tongue. What good people they must be! They can see the faults of other people so plainly! This Church is not right, and the other is not right, and yonder preacher—well some people think him a very good man but *they* do not. They can see the deficiencies in the various denominations and they observe that very few really carry out Scripture as it should be carried out. They complain of want of love and are the very people who create that want! Now if you will watch these very censorious people, the very faults they indicate in others they are indulging in themselves. And while they are seeking to find out the mote in their brother’s eye, they have a beam in their own.

These are the people who are indicated by this fig tree, for they ought, according to their own showing—taking them on their own ground—to be better than other people. If what they say is true, they are bright particular stars and they ought to give special light to the world. They are such that even Jesus Christ Himself might expect to receive fruit from *them*—but they are nothing but deceivers with these high soarings and proud boastings. They are nothing, after all, but *pretenders*. Like Jezebel with her paint, which made her all the uglier, they would seem to be what they are not. As old Adam says, “They are candles with big wicks and no tallow and when they go out they make a foul and nauseous smell.” They have summer sweat on their brow and winter freezing in their hearts. You would think them the land of Goshen, but prove them the wilderness of sin. Let us search ourselves, lest such be the case with us.

IV. And now to close. **SUCH A TREE MIGHT WELL BE WITHERED.** Deception is abhorred of God. There was the Jewish temple. There were the priests standing in solemn pomp. There were the abundant sacrifices of God's altar. But was God pleased with His temple? No, because in the temple you had all the leaves—you had all the externals of worship, but there was no true prayer—no belief in the great Lamb of God's Passover, no Truth of God, no righteousness, no love of men, no care for the Glory of God.

And so the temple, which had been a House of Prayer, had become a den of thieves. You cannot marvel that the temple was destroyed. You and I may become just like that temple. We may go on with all the externals of religion. Nobody may miss us out of our seat at the Tabernacle—no, we may never miss our Christian engagements. We may be in all external matters more precise than we used to be and yet for all that we may have become in our hearts a den of thieves. The heart may be given to the world while external ceremonies are still kept up and maintained. Let us beware of this for such a place cannot be long without a curse. It is abhorrent to God.

Again, it is deceptive to man. Look at that temple! Why do men go there? To see holiness and virtue. Why tread they its hallowed courts? To get nearer to God. And what do they find there? Instead of holiness, covetousness! Instead of getting nearer to God they get into the midst of a market where men are haggling about the price of doves and bickering with one another about the changing of shekels. So men may watch to hear some seasonable word from our lips and instead of that may get evil. And as that temple was cursed for deluding men, so may we be because we deceive and disappoint the wants of mankind.

More than this, this barren fig tree committed sacrilege upon Christ, did it not? Might it not have exposed Him to ridicule? Some might have said, "Why did you go to a tree, Prophet, where there is no fruit?" A false professor exposes Christ to ridicule. As the temple of old dishonored God, so does a Christian when his heart is not right. He does dishonor to God and makes the holy cause to be trod under foot of the Adversary. Such men, indeed, have reason to beware!

Once more, this tree might well be cursed because its bringing forth nothing but leaves was a plain evidence of its sterility. It had force and vitality, but it turned it to ill account and would continue to do so. The curse of Christ was but a confirmation of what it already was. He did as good as say, "He that is unfruitful, let him be unfruitful still." And now, what if Christ should come into this Tabernacle this morning and should look on you and on me and see in any of us great profession and great pomp of leaves and yet no fruit? What if He should pronounce the curse on *us*? What would be the effect?

We should wither away as others have done. What do we mean by this? Why, they have suddenly turned to the world. We could not understand why such fair saints should, suddenly, become such black devils. The fact was, Christ had pronounced the word and they began to wither away! If He should pronounce the unmasking word on any mere professor here and say, "Let no man eat fruit of you forever," you will go into gross out-

ward sin and wither to your shame. This will take place probably suddenly. And taking place, your case will be irretrievable—you never afterwards will be restored. The blast which shall fall upon you will be eternal! You will live as a lasting monument of the terrible Justice of Christ as the great Head of the Church. You will be spared to let it be seen that a man outside the Church may escape with impunity in this life, but a man inside the Church shall have a present curse and be made to stand as a tree blasted by the lightning of God forever.

Now this is a heart-searching matter. It went through me yesterday when I thought, “Well, here am I. I have professed to be called of God to the ministry. I have forced myself into a leading place in God’s Church. I have voluntarily put myself into a place where sevenfold damnation is my inevitable inheritance if I am not true and sincere.” I could almost wish myself back out of the Church, or at least in the most obscure place in her ranks, to escape the perils and responsibilities of my position! And so may you if you have not the witness of the Spirit in you that you are born of God—you may wish that you never thought of Christ and never dreamed of taking His name upon you.

If you have by diligence worked yourself into a high position among God’s people. If you have mere leaves without the fruit, the more sure is the curse because the greater the disappointment of the Savior. The more you profess, the more is expected of you. And if you do not yield it, the more just the condemnation when you shall be left to stand forever withered by the curse of Christ! O Brothers and Sisters, let us tremble before the heart-searching eyes of God!

But let us still remember that Grace can make us fruitful yet. The way of mercy is open still. Let us apply to the wounds of Christ this morning. If we have never begun, let us begin now! *Now* let us throw our arms about the Savior and take Him to be ours. And, having done this, let us seek Divine Grace that for the rest of our lives we may work for God. Oh, I do hope to do more for God and I hope you will, too! O Holy Spirit, work in us mightily, for in You is our fruit found! Amen.

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THE MORAL OF A MIRACLE

NO. 1444

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Jesus answering said unto them, Have faith in God.”
Mark 11:22.***

THIS exhortation stands in connection with the miracle of the withering of the fig tree that was clad with leaves but bore no fruit. The peculiarity of the parable calls for a few words of explanation, before we proceed, to enforce the moral appended to it. To many readers it seems strange and inconsistent that as it was not the time for figs, our Lord should have expected to find figs upon the tree at all. They wonder how it was that He should blame the fig tree for not having figs when the time of figs was not yet come. But it is because we do not live in the land of fig trees that we do not understand this, for, according to the natural order of production, the fig fruit *precedes* the foliage. The fig tree, first of all, puts forth its figs at the end of the shoots—the little knobs beginning to form in the early spring and the figs becoming very fairly developed before any leaves appear—so that if a fig tree has leaves upon it, it ought to have figs in a considerable state of ripeness.

This fig tree, at a time when no figs were expected and far less any leaves, seemed to have outstripped all its fellow fig trees. It seemed to have gone far ahead of them—to have been in advance of its own responsibilities as a fig tree. It seemed to have exceeded all the demands of the season and to have reached a state of supernatural fruit-bearing which no other fig tree had dreamed of reaching. There were leaves. The Savior went up and, finding the leaves which ought to have denoted figs in a considerable state of ripeness, He glanced around, but finding no single fig to justify the large pretense, He said, “Henceforth let no fruit grow on you forever.”

You know that occasionally trees do leaf at abnormal times. There is a famous oak in the New Forest which usually has well-developed leaves upon it about Christmas when winter reigns on every side and, “dead the vegetable kingdom lies.” There is a pretty superstition about it, as though the tree thrust forth its sudden honors at the birth of the great Lord. I have seen the tree and it seems very strange that it should take to leaf-bearing when there is not a leaf throughout the forest anywhere else. This fig tree, in like manner, for some reason or other, had got into leaf at a time when it ought not. If it did get into leaf, it ought to have figs, but it had leaves and no figs.

As such it becomes a fit and proper emblem of such a man as we sometimes meet with who vaunts a righteousness he cannot verify—he seems more conspicuously pious in his character than he could reasonably have been expected to be. He makes a show of piety that is altogether premature—he gives signs of maturity before the season. He professes much

though he yields nothing to corroborate it—a prodigy of self-conceit. He does not *say* he is absolutely perfect, but it needs very fine optics to distinguish the line. He outstrips all his fellows. His talk is something marvelous. His creed is more sound, his conscience more sensitive, his conduct more sanctimonious and his standard in estimating others more censorious than the rest of the community.

You are amazed at it till you come near to him and then you find it is all talk, tinsel and trumpery. “Nothing but leaves”—no real virtue, but a verdant show. Yes, I have known decent morality outraged by such monstrous duplicity! All the leaves and foliage of a godly life—and all the death and corruption of a graceless libertinism! Those round about him were ashamed to find themselves so inferior in their attainments, till presently the suddenness with which he withered astounded them more than the rapidity of his growth! There was nothing in it. The old proverb has it, “Great cry and little wool.” Great cry, indeed, for holier voices are silenced by it and no wool at all to repay the shearer! “Nothing but leaves.” If any man is withered, it is such a man as that!

One thing I have noticed in watching over a large Church is that some who have seemed too good to live, have turned out much too bad for us to want them to live very long. Such have been so pure, so white, so spotless, so stainless, so precise, so exact, so velvet-mouthed, so oily, so full of sugar, so hyper-holy in their hypocrisy that it seemed cruel to feel inward qualms when you were near them. Yet under a thin layer of this hollow pretension they have been so deficient in all spiritual life and reality and sincerity, that when we found them out, we could not help feeling a burning indignation in our own soul that men could go so far in lying unto the Holy Spirit! One does not wonder that Ananias and Sapphira fell dead, or that the fig tree was blasted that had so many leaves and no fruit!

We have seen the same thing happen to men and we have not been amazed. We have only thought how righteously God has unmasked them and exposed their hideous vices to the denunciation, even, of the world, which, though it lies in the Wicked One, has yet some sense of scorn at a religious lie! Now, our Savior performed this miracle by way of parable, not that He cared for figs, or was angry because there were none, but that it furnished Him with an opportunity of instructing His disciples. This was an object lesson. We never learn so well as from something we can actually see with our eyes. Jesus did this that they might see and that their minds might be impressed with what they saw. The main impression upon the mind of Peter and the others seems to have been the extraordinary power of Christ.

One morning their Lord said, “Henceforth let no fruit grow on you forever,” and the next day when they passed that way they found the fig tree withered, even from the roots—not simply all its shoots gone, but, according to Mark, in the 20th verse, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots, or totally destroyed. It stood a wreck of a tree, the precise opposite of what it had seemed to be some 24 hours before! They were struck with the power of Christ’s word—at the simple fiat of His mouth the doom had fallen on the tree! He had not touched the tree that we know of—He simply spoke and its bloom was past, its doom had come.

Now, our Lord did not go on to open up the parable to them, but perceiving the impression it made on their minds in one direction He aimed at still further engraving on their souls the moral which had been conveyed to their senses—and so He went on to speak about the great power of God that they were wondering at and to tell them that *they* could have that power—that *they* could wield it and that they might exert it as He did! And He practically told them how they could get that power and go forth girded with it.

I. Our first observation, in order to bring out this vein of thought, shall be that IT IS GOOD FOR US TO OBSERVE THE POWER OF GOD. These disciples saw the power of Christ, which is the power of God, in the withering of a fig tree. We do not see miracles now. We do not look for signs and wonders to supply the credentials and the seal of faith. The works of God in Nature are, if rightly understood, testimonies to the eternal power and Godhead at once simple and sublime. Perhaps, under some aspects, they convey higher lessons than miracles. We ought, I think, to have our eyes constantly open to see the power of God in renewing the face of the earth.

I like to observe it in the seasons. What a wonderful power was that which, all of a sudden, called up all sleeping bulbs and flowers from their graves and caused that which had been black soil to suddenly blossom into a golden garden, or to bloom into beds sparkling with many colors! Have you not seen lone places in the forests and nooks among the trees so glorious in color that it seemed as though the Lord had torn pieces of the robe of the sky and flung them down among the trees in the forest? We have seen the hyacinths all of a sudden in their deepest blue standing where all before had been black mold or sere leaf. We see it every year, but it is a marvelous thing and we might stand and say, "How soon has the winter passed away! How speedily has earth put on her youth again!"

Do you not see the power of God in all this? These creations and resurrections of spring—are they nothing? And now, at this season of the year when the leaves are falling all around us, though the trees are not withering away, how rapidly they are undergoing their wonderful process of disrobing! You passed by a tree the other day which was green and you delighted to be beneath its foliage—and now, in the setting sun of this afternoon it seemed as though it were blazing with golden fire—every leaf had turned yellow by the touch of autumn! How has God worked all this? Silently and quietly, without sound of trumpet, from year to year these miracles of Nature proceed, of which I am speaking very roughly now—but he that looks into them and studies them shall be filled with amazement at the extraordinary power of God!

This world has been going round the sun making its revolutions. Who could hold it to its pathway but the Most High? Each day it revolves and gives us the delightful vicissitude of day and night—it is the Lord that keeps the world on its axis. We do not think adequately at all of the mighty power of God which is continually going forth. The creation of blood out of water by the plague of Egypt astonishes us a great deal more than does the revolution of the world and yet this is, by far, the more amazing thing of the two! It does us good, beloved Friends, to stand,

sometimes, at night and look up to the starry heavens and think what a God He is that calls all of them by name, leads them out in marching order so that not one of them fails and sustains each one of those celestial orbs in its place throughout the ages!

Marvelous are the works of God in Nature! Can you read about Vesuvius beginning to pour forth its fires, or of earthquakes in different places shaking the mountains to their bases and making the strongest works of men to rock and reel, without a sense of reverential awe? Can you be in a storm at sea; can you tremble while each timber starts as the waves beat upon the vessel, without feeling that this is a great God whom we serve? I invite you to think of the greatness, the majestic grandeur of God in Nature, because the God of Nature is the God of Grace—and the God that rules on high and thunders according to His pleasure is the God whom we call Father—and who has taken us into His family that we may be His sons and daughters! Though we do not see fig trees withered away, yet often ought we to stand in holy wonder and say, “Great God, how wonderful are Your works!”

Now, if you turn your eyes from Nature to Providence, which I invite you to do, you will observe stupendous examples of the great power of God. This withering of the fig tree has been repeated 10,000 times on a grand scale. I will only remind you of what has happened in our own day. A few years ago slavery seemed to have struck its roots into the soil of the Southern States in America. Its branches ran over the wall—the Northern States were bound to return a fugitive slave. How quickly has that fig tree withered away! Slavery has gone, blessed be God, forever. And there treads not now on American soil a man of any color who is a slave.

Across yonder channel frowned the great empire of Napoleon. It looked as if it were very mighty. It spread itself like a green bay tree. It was the main support of the papacy, but how quickly has that fig tree withered away! Over yonder, in Italy, there were a number of petty principalities with paltry tyrants crushing down the people. God raised up an honest man who came forward as the champion of the oppressed and how speedily did those little fig leaves fall! There stood the man of sin with his temporal power. He was master of his own domains and chiefly of the city of Rome, but how soon has that fig tree withered away! One after another revolutions have occurred and events have transpired in our own day which prove that the Lord is very great in power!

All through history the ages bear record that whenever an institution has sprung up that has brought forth no good fruit just at the very time when it was full of leaves, when everybody said, “Now we may expect fruit from it,” and when it was supposed to be impossible that it should pass away—just then has the Lord spoken and its hour of doom has come! One word from Him and how speedily has this fig tree withered away! All Providence is full of it! He that reads history looking for Providences needs not turn two pages over without finding instances. He shall see the hand of God here and there and there and there again, permitting, for a while, the growth of evil, but then speedily sweeping it away! So shall every system which defies His Laws prove that its prosperity is the precursor of its utter destruction. It flowers and flourishes but to droop and die—to die

just in its prime. While we stand trembling and astonished at its spread, so thick its leaves, so palpable its vitality—at that very moment we hear the powerful voice of Christ and see the inevitable result in the withering away of that which was in the prime of vigor!

Now, as we have opportunity to watch the power of God, let us always be ready to observe it. Not, however, with vacant wonderment, nor with idle gossip to exclaim to one another, “How extraordinary!” Although the works of God are meet subjects for adoring wonder, yet when we remember who He is and what He is, there is a sense in which we may well cease to wonder or to be startled, as if our poor philosophy must forever reckon as strange phenomena the tokens of His Presence, the proofs of His agency and the impress of His hands! You know the story of the good woman who, on being told of some answers to prayer which had been received, was asked, “Is it not wonderful?” and she simply replied, “No, not at all. It is just like Him. That is the way of Him.”

And so, when God puts away withered fig trees and when He shows His power in other ways in His divine Providence, it is amazing for us to contemplate and yet it is not amazing for Him to perform! He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in sunder. He burns the chariot in the fire and He bids us be still and know that He is God. He will be exalted in the earth! It has been the way of Him from the first and it will be the way of Him still. We ought to watch these works of power that we may feel that this power is altogether engaged upon our side. If we are, indeed, on the side of God; if His Grace has reconciled us to Him; if we live to promote His Glory; if we are under His keeping and the guardian care of the Lord Jesus, then all the power that makes an earthquake will be put forth to shake Heaven and earth sooner than we shall perish!

All the power that shows itself in Providence shall be put forth to deliver us sooner than we shall famish! Our place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks! Our bread shall be given us and our water shall be sure. The mighty God, Jehovah is His name, has pledged His Omnipotence for the advance and the victory of His people—and stand they shall and win the day! That is my first point for our evening’s meditation—it is good to observe the power of God.

II. God has called His people to WORKS WHICH NEED ALL THAT POWER. Our Lord Jesus Christ practically tells us this when He says, “Have faith in God, for verily I say unto you, that whoever shall say unto this mountain, Be you removed, and be you cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he says shall come to pass; he shall have whatever he says.” A Christian is a miracle. He is a mass of miracles! When he gets to Heaven he will be a miracle of miracles! His story in the telling thereof will fill all Heaven with enthusiasm, so marvelous is the work of God in the heirs of salvation!

It is no small thing to be a soldier of the Cross—a follower of the Lamb. Now, tonight, dear Souls, if the Lord Jesus Christ by His Spirit should call any of you to come to Him, you would, perhaps, feel immediately the deepest anxiety in your heart. I think I hear you say, “If I come and trust Him, yet how shall I be saved, for see the difficulties that lie in my way? I see before me the vast mountain of my past sin. How can I come to

Christ? Surely this Alp of transgression must hide Him from me.” Have faith in God, dear Friend, and God’s power will be put forth to move this mountain, yes, Christ has moved it by His precious death.

“Yes,” says the poor heart, “but I feel such a mountain of despair, I cannot hope. I think I have sinned beyond Grace.” Have faith in God and you shall see this mountain of doubt and despair all swept away and you shall joy in Him that blots out your sin like a cloud and your transgressions like a thick cloud. “Ah,” says the soul, “but I seem so cold, so heavy, so dead. I do not feel as earnest and eager as I should. There is nothing in me that is good.” Have faith in God’s power to help you in this and you shall find your lethargy and languor give place to energy and vigor—and your cold heart shall be thawed in the rivers of repentance!

“Oh,” says one, “but I need everything. I am far off from God, as far as I can be. There are impassable barriers between me and God.” Yes, but have faith in God. Do but believe in His fatherly love and Grace, His goodness and faithfulness. Do but trust Christ and rely on the great Father’s love in Jesus Christ and you shall find that the mountains which stop you will melt away and no longer impede you. I know what has happened to you. Your fig tree has been withered down to the roots. How full of leaves it used to be! You were once a fine fellow. If you did not bring forth any fruit to God, yet what fair promises you did make—what grand resolutions! What a fine self-righteousness you had! But the power of God’s will has already withered it down to the roots!

Now, the same power of His Gospel by the Spirit will take up all the mountains that stand between you and God and cast them into the depths of the sea! And you shall rejoice in Him! God calls the coming sinner, then, to duties and obligations so far beyond his own natural capacity that it requires all the power of God to enable him to fulfill them! Even when bid to repent and believe and come to Christ, it needs the Godhead to help him do that, but the Godhead will enable him and so he shall receive Grace for obedience to the faith. Have faith in God, then, and faint not by reason of discouragements.

But after we have come to Christ we still find it no easy task to continue pressing on to God. You that have believed in Him and are saved, do you not often cry out, “O weak and erring mortal that I am! How shall I ever reach to perfection? How can I get rid of sin that haunts my imagination and vexes my heart? What Heaven of bliss can I know unless my soul is purified from every stain?” Most true it is that there can be no such thing as perfect happiness until there is perfect holiness and yet by faith the Believer looks for both. “But,” do I hear you say, “first, my ignorance is in the way”? Have faith in God and you shall be taught of Him—and that mountain of darkness shall disappear.

“Oh, but then there is my old corruption in the way and that comes in between me and every advance in Grace.” Have faith in God and you shall find He will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and fill you with virtue and vitality through believing. “Oh, but the trials and temptations of each day, how shall I stand against *them*?” You cannot stand against them alone. They are far too much for you, but have faith in God and then, fierce as those temptations may be, you shall be able to resist, for

His power is able to hold you up! Though a legion of devils at once should tempt you, have faith in God and they shall be put to the rout. You shall have sufficient Grace to bear you through.

“Yes, but,” says another, “you do not know my trials.” No, my dear Friend, and you do not know mine, but both you and I may know that He who measured out the trial—for they are all measured and weighed to the last pennyweight—knows how to strengthen us so that we can bear them. We shall be able to say to the mountains of trial, “Depart,” as truly as we bade the fruitless fig tree, “be dried up.” Rise, worm Jacob, and thresh the mountains and beat them small! Yes, turn them into chaff and winnow them—and the wind shall carry them away. Only trust in the eternal power and Godhead and there is nothing between here and Heaven that need give you any fear!

If we are without God we shall stumble at a straw, but if God is with us, who can be against us? Even if our life should be protracted to an advanced old age; should our bones be full of pain and our flesh infected with a thousand painful infirmities; even though we should spend years upon a weary bed with poverty as well as pain to afflict us—he that has faith in God shall sing aloud upon his bed and praise the Lord because the power of God rests upon him! You are not called to be parade soldiers to exhibit your regimentals and your fine feathers. You are called to fight! You must fight if you would reign! Do not be mistaken—you are called to work miracles—moral miracles, spiritual miracles! You are called to do great wonders between here and Heaven. You see your calling, Brothers and Sisters, and you will see, if you see aright, that nothing but a Divine power can help you to accomplish it.

Now, if this is true in respect to our own spiritual life, I am sure it is so in trying to win the souls of others to Christ. The man who brings a soul to Christ achieves a result which no genius or skill of the creature could compass. The power which God puts upon a man to make him the means of turning a sinner from darkness to light has no parallel! If a man could tell me that he stopped Niagara at a word, I would not envy him his power if God will only allow *me* to stop a sinner in his mad career of sin! If a creature could put his finger on Vesuvius and quench its flame, I would not at all regret that I had no such power if I might but be the means of staying a blasphemer and teaching him to pray!

This *spiritual* power is the greatest power imaginable and the most to be desired. If any of us aims to be useful, we cannot succeed unless we have this Divine power, for without Omnipotent *spiritual* help we can produce no spiritual results! You can read a sermon or preach a sermon, or hear your children read in your Sunday school class without any help from God, but nothing will come of it. If there is to be *living* preaching and *living* teaching that really brings souls to Jesus Christ, the work must all be worked in the power of the Holy Spirit from first to last! You see your calling, then, Brothers. You must have that power which speaks to fig trees and they wither—yes, a power sufficient to speak to a mountain and pluck it up by its roots—for nothing short of this will fit you for your work.

Take the larger scale for a minute and think of it. We are all called to try and extend the Redeemer’s kingdom and as Christians we are greatly

concerned for the progress of the Church and the Truth of God. I am sure in these evil days there is not one of us that can look upon the signs of the times without considerable sorrow. I hope it is not because I am growing older that I take a gloomier view of things than I did some years ago—it is not my eyes, but I actually see superstition much more rampant than it was. That particularly sweet fig tree of ritualism has spread its boughs amazingly!

And then there is the very specious fig tree of skepticism that seems to overshadow a considerable portion of the professing Church of Christ. Well, now, what is to be done? *Nothing* is to be done except as the text tells us—“Have faith in God.” And when we have faith in God we must speak with fidelity and with authority, too. We must show our faith by the testimony we bear—and the Word of God that comes out of faithful lips shall roll like thunder, flash like lightning and strike with electric force! And so the old effect it always had on these leafy fruitless fig trees will be repeated—it shall make them wither away.

If you have ever read the history of skeptical thought in Germany—not that I recommend you to do so, for it is a sore labor and a weariness of spirit—but if you have ever waded through any of these histories of philosophy as I have, myself, you will doubtless have observed a thought rising up like a cloud full of portents and covering the Fatherland with its fantastic shadows till the people are led to see everything in a new light or under a fresh coloring. They give the poet, the essayist and the critic of the new cloud region credit for *inspiration!* And all who abide under that shadow are written down as *infallible!* But how insecure the reign of human wisdom! In about 25 years you could buy all the books of that day at the price of waste paper—for a new philosophy has sprung up—a fresh system which has rendered obsolete all that preceded it.

The scholars are in ecstasy! They shout, “Eureka!” and sneer contemptuously at all who refrain from echoing their cry. Wait a little while and another meteor will attract their gaze; another ephemeral glowworm will glimmer in the darkness! I have read of a gourd “which came up in a night and perished in a night,” but the cedars of Lebanon grow slowly and endure longer. “How soon has this fig tree withered away!” Thus have I thought and so have I said, as I have read one after another, the various systems of nonsense that they call philosophy and metaphysics. “How soon has this fig tree withered away!”

Now, in the lives of even some of the younger folks here, you might have seen, in England, different systems of unbelief coming up in different quarters under which the thinkers of the age, (as they call themselves), or the triflers of the hour, (as we might better style them), have sought shelter. At one time we were all wrong because of some wonderful discovery of old bones. Geology had upset us! Then some other science was brought to the front. One has lived to see a number of little scares. The fig trees have come up with a vast show of foliage without any fruit. In looking back at them we can say, “How soon has this fig tree vanished.” And, as to the present pretensions, whatever they may be, we have only to wait a little while, with confidence in God, and we shall see these fruitless fig trees also wither away!

Yes, and if there are systems in the world which seem more enduring, colossal as the Alps, with foundations deep as Hell, we have still but to exercise faith enough and cry to God loudly enough and fling ourselves upon Omnipotence boldly enough—and then to speak—and in the speaking of the everlasting Gospel we shall see these mountain systems plucked up by the roots and cast into the midst of the sea! There is the point—we must have Divine strength to do it.

III. Now, our Savior shows us the **CONNECTING LINK BETWEEN THE DIVINE POWER AND OUR WORK.** How are we to acquire this power? We believe that God can do all things—we have seen something of the greatness of His power—how can we be girded with it? Here is the answer—“Have faith in God.” It is to be by *faith*, that is, trust, reliance, belief. It must be in God. Our faith must not be *partly* in God and partly in something else, but faith in God. And it is, literally, “Have the faith of God”—the faith which is worked in us by God and sustained by God, for that is the *only* faith that is worth having. Have the faith of God.

“Oh, but this is a very small thing,” says one. It is. It is a child’s instinct to trust his father, but it is the rarest Grace in the world to trust our Father who is in Heaven. “When the Son of man comes shall He find faith on the earth?” If anybody could find it, He could. He knows where it is, for He is the Author, the Giver and the Nourisher of faith. Yet there is so little of it in culture that if He, Himself, searched for it, He would not find many fields in which it grows, or many hearts in which it thrives. Why, some of us have faith in Him whereby we are saved from this present evil world, but how shocked at ourselves we have reason to be in respect to the little faith we have in Him for the furtherance of His own work and how our heart sinks under our own daily trials!

He has given us justifying faith, but our faith is still a faith, the weakness of which should make us humble ourselves before Him. Doubt God? How monstrous it sounds! How foolish it appears! How impossible it seems! To an experienced Christian, at first sight, it really seems incredible that any disciple of Jesus should doubt God. You, my dear Brother, that have been fed and nourished all your life by singular Providences—you whose life is so remarkable that if its incidents were all written, people would look on them as a romance! You who have seen His arm made bare on your behalf many times—you who have often been compelled to say, “Still has my life new wonders seen”—do you doubt Him? How can it be?

Alas! Alas! Is not this the fault, the grievous, crying sin of many of the children of God? Hence our Lord puts it thus. He not only speaks of the faith of God, but He says, “Have it; have it. Have faith in God. Have it handy. Have it about you. Have it for daily use. Carry it with you.” Some of you have got a good anchor somewhere, but you left it at home when the storm came. You have faith *somewhere*, but you do not seem to exercise it just at the time when faith is required. “Have faith in God.” He does not tell you how much. There is no need to prescribe any limit. Have *unlimited* faith in God! Have *daily* faith in God! Have continual, perpetual, abounding faith in God! “Have faith in God.”

This is the connecting link between our weakness and the Divine strength by which we are made strong. Have faith in God about every purpose and every peril that may arise. You saw how the fig tree withered away. Have faith about that. You have seen it. Now, have faith about mountains. Do not think that God's power is limited to withering fig trees! Have faith about things of magnitude and things minute, but more particularly about the things that at this moment distress you. When you feel that you could believe God about everything but one particular matter that just now frets your mind and breaks your peace, you evidently misjudge your own capacity for faith!

You ought to measure its strength by the influence it exerts upon you under your present trial. O my Sister, have faith in God about that sick little infant at home! Your heart is sad that the Lord's will in this must be done, but He will strengthen you to bear it! Have faith, too, about those simple family matters which are causing you so much irritation. You have been praying about them—now commit your cause to God and have faith that He will grant your request. "Oh, but there is a matter of deep moment harassing my very soul which I should not like to mention to anybody," you say. Have faith about it and mention it to your Lord. Do not go about and make mischief by talking of it, but have faith about it.

"Yes, but I am out of employment," says a poor man over yonder, "and I am getting hardly pressed." Dear Brother, are you a true Believer? Have faith about that, now. I know you will say to me that I do not know your trial. No, I do not. But you do not know some troubles I have had! And if you were to tell me to have faith in God about them, I would thank you for the exhortation, for that is the only way I have of getting over them. And, dear Brother, it is the only way *you* will find of being extricated from your dilemmas! What a mass of troubles are represented by this assembled multitude! If we could empty them out, what a heap they would be! And yet, if the living God is trusted, how the heap all vanishes! What does it matter? The burden is all gone when you have once left it to Him! May the Lord the Holy Spirit help each one of us to have faith in God about the present difficulty, whether it is a fig tree or whether it is a mountain.

I do not know what some of you do who have no God to trust—some of you who are very poor and have to suffer a good deal in this life—and yet have no hope of the world to come. Ah, poor Souls, the Lord have mercy upon you! Some of you seem to go through fire and water here and yet you have no Heaven in prospect, no hope in the world to come! Oh, see to it! May God grant you to have faith in Christ so there shall be no mountain between you and God, but you shall be with Him where He is when your time comes to depart.

IV. Now, I conclude with my fourth point, which is THE CONNECTING LINK BETWEEN THE DIVINE POWER AND OURSELVES. To use a very simple figure, you remember how Franklin, when he knew there was an electric fluid in the cloud, sped his kite and brought down the lightning? Well now, there is the everlasting power of God up yonder and I must learn to let my faith get up into the clouds to bring down the Divine power to me! If I have faith enough I can have any quantity of power. "According to your faith be it unto you." If you are weak it is because your faith is not

a good conductor between you and the eternal strength. If you had stronger faith, is it possible to judge how strong you might be? There is no telling what a man might be able to accomplish if his faith were to increase with the occasion.

In Samson we see what physical strength came to in a man who had confidence in God, for that man Samson, though faulty in almost every point, had such confidence in God as hardly anybody ever had. There were a thousand Philistines and they shouted against him, but what did that matter to that great big child, Samson, when the Spirit of the Lord came mightily on Him? He said, "With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw of an ass have I slain a thousand men." O glorious faith! And so ought we to feel, "I am nothing. I am nobody, yet God is with me and on I go, dauntless and undismayed." If earth is all in arms abroad, it matters not if God is with us. When there is a minority of one and that one is *God*, we are in the majority, directly, for God is all and all the people in the world are nothing before Him!

The Lord gives us some hints of how to use our faith. First, we must use it to expel every remaining doubt. "Whoever shall say unto this mountain, Be you removed, and be you cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but believe that those things which he says shall come to pass; he shall have whatever he says." God will not bless the speaking of that man who is full of doubts! Get rid of the doubts. The Gospel of this present half of the 19th Century is, "Doubt." It does not say, "And you shall be saved," because it sees no immediate need of being saved! The Gospel preached in numbers of our places of worship is—"Doubt, doubt! Do not be as those nearly extinct Puritans that believe in the Inspiration of the Bible and hold to old-fashioned, exploded doctrines! Be a man and doubt."

They will doubt themselves into a pretty scrape before long. Some of them are doubting till their chapels are empty! They are scaring their people away from them as naturally they would, for doubt is a ghastly apparition. But, dear Brothers and Sisters, you and I have to do the very opposite of this. We have to find out every lingering doubt and draw it out and drive it away. Doubt? When a man is about to strike a blow in faith it is a doubt which paralyses him! Doubt? Why even a little doubt is like a small stone in a traveler's shoe—it lames him. It is a very little thing, but he had better spend a week in picking it out than go on with it there.

Believer, you must get doubt right out of you, for until you believe you will never travel well to Heaven, or be strong in the Lord. Only fancy Martin Luther agitated with doubts as he rode into Worms! Not quite sure about justification by faith when answering for his life? Agitated with doubts when he was carrying his life in his hands to confront the powers of the world in the name of God? Doubt would have ruined him! Let us chase the spirit of unbelief away. The Lord help us to do so and to be filled with faith.

The next hint the Savior gives us is to be much in prayer, because it is by prayer that faith exercises itself unto God. "What things soever you desire when you pray, believe that you receive them and you shall have them." Much prayer, but of a believing sort, should be offered by simple, trustful disciples, for the cry of faith which is true prayer touches the

heart of the great Father and He is prompt to grant His children their desires. But one other hint. That is, we must see to it that we are purged of what would effectually prevent prayer being heard. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear my prayer."

Would you have the power of God to gird you, you must get rid of all malice from your heart. You must forgive your brother. All selfishness and uncharitableness must be eradicated from your breast or else the Lord cannot trust you with power. If you had despotic power linked with a pitiless disposition you would not only curse a leafless fig tree, but you would get to cursing anything and everything that was contrary to your own likes. If you were endued with all manner of power, it would be no mercy to you but an infinite misery unless you were also partakers of the mind of Christ! Unless you have His heart of infinite purity and inimitable benevolence, power would be a most dangerous thing to trust you with.

The Lord will only trust His children with power in proportion as they know His will and strive to do it. When they become completely like He, their very prayers which were sown in weakness shall be raised in power! But sin is awfully debilitating—it weakens, depletes and utterly prostrates a man—any kind of sin tolerated in the will. If we think that power when acquired may be used for our own pleasure, profit, or honor—the power will not come—it cannot possibly be conferred on such terms. You shall move no mountain from its place till, first of all, the mountain of your selfishness is cast into the sea!

O Lord, purge Your vessels and then fill them! Cleanse the instruments from rust and then use them! Here we are now before You! Blessed be Your name, You have saved us! Now make us fit to be serviceable in Your cause and kingdom, poor unworthy things as we are, and You shall have honor of us and by us forever! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFOOE SERMON—Mark 11.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—67E, 523.**

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TRUE PRAYER—TRUE POWER!

NO. 328

**DELIVERED OF SABBATH MORNING, AUGUST 12, 1860,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

*“Therefore I say unto you, What things so ever you desire,
when you pray, believe that you receive
them and you shall have them.”
Mark 11:24.*

THIS verse has something to do with the faith of miracles. But I think it has far more reference to the miracle of faith. We shall at any rate, this morning, consider it in that light. I believe that this text is the inheritance not only of the Apostles but of all those who walk in the faith of the Apostles, believing in the promises of the Lord Jesus Christ. The advice which Christ gave to the twelve and to His immediate followers is repeated to us in God’s Word this morning. May we have grace constantly to obey it. “What things so ever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them and you shall have them.”

How many persons there are who complain that they do not enjoy prayer. They do not neglect it, for they dare not. But they would neglect it if they dared so far are they from finding any pleasure therein. And have we not to lament that sometimes the chariot wheels are taken off and we drive right heavily when we are in supplication? We spend the time allotted but we rise from our knees unrefreshed like a man who has lain upon his bed but has not slept so as to really recover his strength. When the time comes round again conscience drives us to our knees but there is no sweet fellowship with God. There is no telling out of our wants to Him in the firm conviction that He will supply them.

After having gone again through a certain round of customary utterances we rise from our knees perhaps more troubled in conscience and more distressed in mind than we were before. There are many Christians, I think, who have to complain of this—that they pray not so much because it is a blessed thing to be allowed to draw near to God as because they must pray—because it is their duty—because they feel that if they did not, they would lose one of the sure evidences of their being Christians.

Brethren, I do not condemn you but at the same time if I may be the means of lifting you up this morning from so low a state of grace into a higher and more healthy atmosphere, my soul shall be exceedingly glad. If I can show you a more excellent way—if from this time forth you may come to look at prayer as one of the most delightful exercises of your life—if you shall come to esteem it more than your necessary food and to value it as one of Heaven’s best luxuries, surely I shall have answered a great end and you shall have to thank God for a great blessing.

Give me, then, your attention while I beg you, first, to look at the text. Secondly, to look about you. And then, to look above you.

I. First, LOOK AT THE TEXT. If you look at it carefully, I think you will perceive the essential qualities which are necessary to any great success and prevalence in prayer. According to our Savior’s description of prayer

there should always be some definite objects for which we should plead. He speaks of things—"what *things* so ever you desire." It seems, then, that He did not think that God's children would go to Him to pray when they had nothing to pray for. Another essential qualification of prayer is earnest *desire*, for the Master supposes here, that when we pray we have desires. Indeed it is not prayer—it may be something like prayer, the outward form or the bare skeleton but it is not the living thing, the all-prevailing, almighty thing called prayer—unless there is a fullness and overflowing of desires.

Observe, too, that faith is an essential quality of successful prayer—"believe that you receive them." You cannot pray so as to be heard in Heaven and answered to your soul's satisfaction unless you believe that God really hears and will answer you. One other qualification appears here upon the very surface, namely, that a realizing expectation should always go with a firm faith—"believe that you receive them." Not merely believe that "you shall" but believe that "you do" receive them—count them as if they were received. Reckon them as if you had them already and act as if you had them—act as if you were sure you should have them—"believe that you receive them and you shall have them." Let us review these four qualities, one by one.

To make prayer of any value, there should be definite objects for which to plead. My Brethren, we often ramble in our prayers after this, that, and the other and we get nothing because in each we do not really desire anything. We chatter about many subjects but the soul does not concentrate itself upon any one object. Do you not sometimes fall on your knees without thinking beforehand what you mean to ask God for? You do so as a matter of habit, without any motion of your heart. You are like a man who should go to a shop and not know what articles he would procure. He may, perhaps, make a happy purchase when he is there but certainly it is not a wise plan to adopt.

And so the Christian in prayer may afterwards attain to a real desire and get his end but how much better would he spend if having prepared his soul by consideration and self-examination, he came to God for an object at which he was about to aim with a real request? Did we ask for an audience at Her Majesty's court we should be expected to reply to the question, "What do you wish to see her for?" We should not be expected to go into the presence of Royalty and then to think of some petition after we came there!

Even so with the child of God. He should be able to answer the great question, "What is your petition and what is your request and it shall be done unto you." Imagine an archer shooting with his bow and not knowing where the mark is! Would he be likely to have success? Conceive a ship on a voyage of discovery putting to sea without the captain having any idea of what he was looking for! Would you expect that he would come back heavily laden either with the discoveries of science, or with treasures of gold? In everything else you have a plan. You do not go to work without knowing that there is something that you designed to make. How is it that you go to God without knowing what you design to have? If you had some object you would never find prayer to be a dull and heavy work.

I am persuaded that you would long for it. You would say, "I have something that I want. Oh that I could draw near my God and ask Him for it. I have a need, I want to have it satisfied. I long till I can get alone, that I

may pour out my heart before Him and ask Him for this great thing after which my soul so earnestly pants.” You will find it more helpful to your prayers, if you have some objects at which you aim and I think, also, if you have some persons whom you will mention. Do not merely plead with God for sinners in general but always mention some in particular. If you are a Sunday-School teacher, don’t simply ask that your class may be blessed but pray for your children definitely by name before the Most High. And if there is a mercy in your household that you crave, don’t go in a round-about way but be simple and direct in your pleadings with God.

When you pray to Him, tell Him what you want. If you have not money enough, if you are in poverty, if you are in straits, state the case. Use no mock modesty with God. Come at once to the point—speak honestly with Him. He needs no beautiful penny phrases such as men will constantly use when they don’t like to say right out what they mean. If you want either a temporal or spiritual mercy say so. Don’t ransack the Bible to find out words in which to express it. Express your wants in the words which naturally suggest themselves to you. They will be the best words, depend upon it. Abraham’s words were the best for Abraham and yours will be the best for you.

You need not study all the texts in Scripture to pray just as Jacob and Elijah did using their expressions. If you do, you will *not* imitate them. You may imitate them literally and servilely but you lack the soul that suggested and animated their words. Pray in your own words. Speak plainly to God. Ask at once for what you want. Name persons, name things and make a straight aim at the object of your supplications and I am sure you will soon find that the weariness and dullness of which you often complain in your intercessions will no more fall upon you. Or at least not so habitually as it has up to now done.

“But,” says one, “I do not feel that I have any special objects for which to pray.” Ah, my dear Brother, I know not who you are, or where you live, to be without special objects for prayer! I find that every day brings either its need or its trouble and that I have every day something to tell my God. But if we had not a trouble, my dear Brethren, if we had attained to such a height in grace that we had nothing to ask for, do we love Christ so much that we have no need to pray that we may love Him more? Have we so much faith that we have ceased to cry, “Lord, increase it”? You will always, I am sure, by a little self-examination, soon discover that there is some legitimate object for which you may knock at Mercy’s door and cry, “Give me, Lord, the desire of my heart.”

But if you have not any desire, you have but to ask the first tried Christian that you meet and he will tell you of one. “Oh,” he will reply to you, “if you have nothing to ask for yourself, pray for me. Ask that a sick wife may be recovered. Pray that the Lord would lift up the light of His countenance upon a desponding heart. Ask that the Lord would send help to some minister who has been laboring in vain and spending his strength for nothing.” When you have done for yourself, plead for others. And if you cannot meet with one who can suggest a theme, look on this huge Sodom, this city like another Gomorrah lying before you. Carry it constantly in your prayers before God and cry, “Oh that London may live before You, that its sin may be stayed, that its righteousness may be exalted, that the God of the earth may get unto Himself much people out of this city.”

Equally necessary is it with a definite object for prayer that there should be an earnest desire for its attainment. "Cold prayers," says an old Divine, "ask for a denial." When we ask the Lord coolly and not fervently, we do as it were, stop His hand and restrain Him from giving us the very blessing we pretend that we are seeking. When you know what you want, your soul must become so possessed with the value of that device—with your own excessive need for it, with the danger which you will be in unless that device should not be granted—that you will be compelled to plead for it as a man pleads for his life.

There was a beautiful illustration of true prayer addressed to man in the conduct of two noble ladies whose husbands were condemned to die and were about to be executed. When they came before king George and supplicated for their pardon, the king rudely and cruelly repulsed them. George the First! It was like his very nature. And when they pleaded yet again and again and again, they could not be gotten to rise from their knees. They had actually to be dragged out of court, for they would not retire until the king had smiled upon them and told them that their husbands should live.

Alas, they failed but they were noble women for their perseverance in thus pleading for their husbands' lives. That is the way for us to pray to God. We must have such a desire for the thing we want that we will not rise until we have it—but in submission to His Divine will, nevertheless. Feeling that the thing we ask for cannot be wrong and that He Himself has promised it, we have resolved it must be given and if not given, we will plead the promise again and again, till Heaven's gates shall shake before our pleas shall cease. No wonder that God has not blessed us much of late—because we are not fervent in prayer as we should be!

Oh, those cold-hearted prayers that die upon the lips—those frozen supplications—they do not move *men's* hearts—how should they move God's heart? They do not come from our own souls, they do not well up from the deep secret springs of our inmost heart and therefore they cannot rise up to Him who only hears the cry of the soul—before whom hypocrisy can weave no veil, or formality practice any disguise. We must be earnest, otherwise we have no right to hope that the Lord will hear our prayer.

And surely, my Brethren, it were enough to restrain all lightness and constrain an unceasing earnestness, did we apprehend the greatness of the Being before whom we plead. Shall I come into Your presence, O my God and mock You with cold-hearted words? Do the angels veil their faces before You and shall I be content to prattle through a form with no soul and no heart? Ah, my Brothers and Sisters! We little know how many of our prayers are an abomination unto the Lord. It would be an abomination to you and to me to hear men ask us in the streets, as if they did not want what they asked for. But have we not done the same to God? Has not that which is Heaven's greatest gift to man become to us a dry dead duty? It was said of John Bradford that he had a peculiar art in prayer and when asked for his secret he said, "When I know what I want I always stop on that prayer until I feel that I have pleaded it with God and until God and I have had dealings with each other upon it. I never go on to another petition till I have gone through the first."

Alas, for some men who begin, "Our Father which are in Heaven, hallowed be Your name." And before they have realized the adoring

thought—"hallowed be Your name"—they have begun to repeat the next words—"Your kingdom come." Then perhaps something strikes their mind, "Do I really wish His kingdom to come? If it were to come now where should I be?" And while they are thinking of that, their voice is going on with, "Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven." So they jumble up their prayers and run the sentences together.

Oh, stop at each one till you have really prayed it. Do not try to put two arrows on the string at once—they will both miss. He that would load his gun with two charges cannot expect to be successful. Discharge one shot first and then load again. Plead once with God and prevail and then plead again. Get the first mercy and then go again for the second. Do not be satisfied with running the colors of your prayers into one another till there is no picture to look at but just a huge daub, a smear of colors badly laid on.

Look at the Lord's Prayer itself. What clear, sharp outlines there are in it. There are certain definite mercies and they do not run into one another. There it stands and as you look at the whole it is a magnificent picture. Not confusion but beautiful order. Be it so with your prayers. Stay on one till you have prevailed with that and then go on to the next. With definite objects and with fervent desires mixed together there is the dawning of hope that you shall prevail with God.

But again—these two things would not avail if they were not mixed with a still more essential and Divine quality, namely, a firm faith in God. Brethren, do you believe in prayer? I know you pray because you are God's people. But do you *believe* in the power of prayer? There are a great many Christians that do not. They think it is a good thing and they believe that sometimes it does wonders. But they do not think that prayer, real prayer, is always successful. They think that its effect depends upon many other things but that it has not any essential quality or power in itself.

Now, my own soul's conviction is that prayer is the grandest power in the entire universe—that it has a more omnipotent force than electricity, attraction, gravitation or any other of those secret forces which men have called by names but which they do not understand. Prayer has as palpable, as true, as sure, as invariable an influence over the entire universe as any of the laws of matter. When a man really prays, it is not a question whether God will hear him or not. He must hear him—not because there is any compulsion in the prayer but there is a sweet and blessed compulsion in the *promise*. God has promised to hear prayer and He will perform His promise. As He is the most high and true God, He cannot deny Himself. Oh, to think of this! That you, a puny man, may stand here and speak to God and through God may move all the worlds. Yet when your prayer is heard, creation will not be disturbed.

Though the grandest ends be answered, Providence will not be disarranged for a single moment. Not a leaf will fall earlier from the tree, not a star will stay in its course, nor one drop of water trickle more slowly from its fount—all will go on the same and yet your prayer will have effected everything. It will speak to the decrees and purposes of God as they are being daily fulfilled. And they will all shout to your prayer and cry, "You are our Brother. We are decrees and you a prayer. But you are yourself a decree, as old, as sure, as ancient as we are." Our prayers are God's decrees in another shape. The prayers of God's people are but God's

promises breathed out of living hearts and those promises are the decrees only put into another form and fashion.

Do not say, "How can my prayers affect the decrees?" They cannot, except in so much that your prayers *are* decrees and that as they come out, every prayer that is inspired of the Holy Spirit unto your soul is as omnipotent and as eternal as that decree which said, "Let there be light and there was light." Or as that decree which chose His people and ordained their redemption by the precious blood of Christ. You have power in prayer and you stand today among the most potent ministers in the universe that God has made. You have power over angels, they will fly at your will. You have power over fire and water and the elements of earth. You have power to make your voice heard beyond the stars. Where the thunders die out in silence, your voice shall wake the echoes of eternity.

The ear of God Himself shall listen and the hand of God Himself shall yield to your will. He bids you cry, "Your will be done," and your will shall be done. When you can plead His promise then your will is His will. Seems it not, my dear Friends, an awful thing to have such a power in one's hands as to be able to pray? You have heard sometimes of men who pretended to have a weird and mystic might by which they could call up spirits from the vast deep—by which they could make showers of rain, or stop the sun. It was all a figment of the fancy but were it true, the Christian is a greater magician, still. If he has but faith in God, there is nothing impossible to him. He shall be delivered out of the deepest waters—he shall be rescued out of the sorest troubles—in famine he shall be fed—in pestilence he shall go unscathed—amidst calamity he shall walk firm and strong—in war he shall be ever shielded—and in the day of battle he shall lift up his head if he can but believe the promise and hold it up before God's eyes and plead it with the spell of unfaltering reliance.

There is nothing, I repeat it, there is no force so tremendous, no energy so marvelous, as the energy with which God has endowed every man, who like Jacob can wrestle, like Israel can prevail with Him in prayer. But we must have faith in this. We must believe prayer to be what it is, or else it is not what it should be. Unless I believe my prayer to be effectual it will not be, for on my faith will it to a great extent depend. God may give me the mercy even when I have not faith—that will be His own Sovereign Grace but He has not promised to do it. But when I have faith and can plead the promise with earnest desire it is no longer a probability as to whether I shall get the blessing, or whether my will shall be done.

Unless the Eternal will swerve from His Word, unless the oath which He has given shall be revoked and He Himself shall cease to be what He is, "We know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him."

And now to mount one step higher. Together with definite objects, fervent desires and strong faith in the efficacy of prayer there should be—and, oh, may Divine grace make it so with us!—there should be mingled a realizing expectation. We should be able to count over the mercies before we have got them, believing that they are on the road.

Reading the other day in a sweet little book which I would commend the attention of you all, written by an American author who seems to know the power of prayer thoroughly and to whom I am indebted for many good things—a little book called *The Still Hour*—I met with a reference to a passage in the book of Daniel, the tenth chapter I think, where, as he says, the whole machinery of prayer seems to be laid bare.

Daniel is on his knees in prayer and Michael the Archangel comes to him. He talks with him and tells him that as soon as ever Daniel began to set his heart to understand and to chasten himself before God, his words were heard and the Lord had dispatched the angel. Then he tells him in the most business-like manner in the world, "I should have been here before but the Prince of Persia withstood me, nevertheless the prince of your nation helped me and I am come to comfort and instruct you."

See now, God breathes the desire into our hearts and as soon as the desire is there, before we call, He begins to answer. Before the words have got half way up to Heaven, while they are yet trembling on our lips—knowing the words we mean to speak—He begins to answer them—sends the angel. The angel comes and brings down the needed blessing. Why the thing is a revelation if you could see it with your eyes. Some people think that spiritual things are dreams and that we are talking fancies. I believe there is as much reality in a Christian's prayer as in a lightning flash. And the utility and excellency of the prayer of a Christian may be just as sensibly known as the power of the lightning flash when it rends the tree, breaks off its branches and splits it to the very root.

Prayer is not a fancy or fiction. It is a real actual thing coercing the universe, binding the laws of God themselves in fetters and constraining the High and Holy One to listen to the will of His poor but favored creature—man. But we want always to believe this. We need a realizing assurance in prayer—to count over the mercies before they are come—to be sure that they are coming! To act as if we had them! When you have asked for your daily bread, no more to be disturbed with care but to believe that God has heard you and will give it to you. When you have taken the case of your sick child before God—to believe that the child will recover, or if it should not, that it will be a greater blessing to you and more glory to God and so to leave it to Him.

To be able to say, "I know He has heard me now. I will stand on my watchtower, I will look for my God and hear what He will say to my soul." Were you ever disappointed yet, Christian, when you prayed in faith and expected the answer? I bear my own testimony here this morning that I have never yet trusted Him and found Him to fail me. I have trusted man and have been deceived but my God has never once denied the request I have made to Him when I have backed up the request with belief in His willingness to hear and in the assurance of His promise.

But I hear someone say, "May we pray for temporals?" Yes, that you may. In everything make known your wants to God. It is not merely for spiritual but for everyday concerns. Take your smallest trials before Him. He is a God that hears prayer, He is your household God as well as the God of the sanctuary. Be ever taking all that you have before God. As one good man, who is about to be united with this Church, told me of his departed wife, "Oh," said he, "she was a woman that I could never get to do anything till she had made a matter of prayer of it. Be it what it might, she used to say, 'I must make it a matter of prayer.'" Oh for more of this sweet habit of spreading everything before the Lord just as Hezekiah did Rabshakeh's letter! And there leaving it, saying, "Your will be done, I resign it to You!"

Men say Mr. Muller of Bristol is enthusiastic because he will gather seven hundred children and believe that God will provide for them—though there is nothing in the purse oftentimes, yet he believes it will

come. My dear Brethren, he is not an enthusiast. He is only doing what ought to be the commonplace action of every Christian man. He is acting upon a rule at which the worldling always must scoff because he does not understand it. A system which must always appear to the weak judgment of sense—visionary and romantic—but which will never appear so to the child of God. He acts not upon common sense but upon something higher than common sense—upon uncommon faith.

Oh that we had that uncommon faith to take God at His Word! He cannot and He will not permit the man that trusts Him to be ashamed or confounded. I have thus now, as best I could, set forth before you what I conceive to be four essentials of prevailing prayer—“Whatever things you desire when you pray, believe that you receive them and you shall have them.”

II. Having thus asked you to look at the text, I want you now to LOOK ABOUT YOU. Look about you at our meetings for prayer and look about you at your private intercessions and judge them both by the tenor of this text.

First, look about you at the meetings for prayer. I cannot speak very pointedly in this matter because I do honestly believe that the Prayer Meetings which are usually held among us have far less of the faults which I am about to indicate than any others I have ever attended. But still they have some of the faults and I hope that what we shall say will be taken personally home by every Brother who is in the habit of engaging publicly in supplication at Prayer Meetings.

Is it not a fact, that as soon as you enter the meeting you feel that if you are called upon to pray you have to exercise a gift. And that gift, in the case of many praying men (to speak harshly, perhaps, but I think honestly) lies in having a good memory to remember a great many texts which always have been quoted since the days of our grandfather's grandfather and to be able to repeat them in good regular order. The gift lies also in some Churches, especially in village Churches, in having strong lungs so as to be able to hold out, without taking a breath for five and twenty minutes when you are brief and three quarters of an hour when you are rather drawn out.

The gift lies also in being able not to ask for anything in particular but in passing through a range of everything, making the prayer not an arrow with a point but rather like a nondescript machine, that has no point whatever and yet is meant to be all point, which is aimed at everything and consequently strikes nothing. Those Brethren are often the most frequently asked to pray who have those peculiar and perhaps, excellent gifts—although I certainly must say that I cannot obey the Apostle's injunction in coveting very earnestly such gifts as these.

Now, if instead thereof, some man is asked to pray who has never prayed before in public—suppose he rises and says, “Oh Lord, I feel myself such a sinner that I can scarcely speak to You. Lord, help me to pray! O Lord, save my poor soul! O that You would save my old companions! Lord, bless our minister! Be pleased to give us a revival. O Lord, I can say no more, hear me for Jesus' sake! Amen.”

Well then, you feel somehow as if you had begun to pray yourself. You feel an interest in that man partly from fear lest he should stop and also because you are sure that what he did say, he meant. And if another should get up after that and pray in the same spirit, you go out and say,

“This is real prayer.” I would sooner have three minutes of prayer like that, than thirty minutes of the other sort because the one is praying and the other is preaching.

Allow me to quote what an old preacher said upon the subject of prayer and give it to you as a little word of advice—“Remember, the Lord will not hear you because of the arithmetic of your prayers—He does not count their numbers. He will not hear you because of the rhetoric of your prayers—He does not care for the eloquent language in which they are conveyed. He will not listen to you because of the geometry of your prayers—He does not compute them by their length, or by their breadth. He will not regard you because of the music of your prayers—He does not care for sweet voices, nor for harmonious periods.

“Neither will He look at you because of the logic of your prayers—because they are well arranged and excellently compartmented. But He *will* hear you and He *will* measure the amount of the blessing He will give you according to the *divinity* of your prayers. If you can plead the Person of Christ and if the Holy Spirit inspires you with zeal and earnestness—the blessings which you shall ask shall surely come unto you.”

Brethren, I would like to burn the whole stock of old prayers that we have been using this fifty years. That “oil that goes from vessel to vessel”—that “horse that rushes into the battle”—that misquoted mangled text, “where two or three are met together, You will be in the midst of them and that to bless them”—and all those other quotations which we have been manufacturing and dislocating and copying from man to man. I would we came to speak to God, just out of our own head. It would be a grand thing for our Prayer Meetings—they would be better attended. And I am sure they would be more fruitful if every man would shake off that habit of formality and talk to God as a child talks to his father—ask Him for what we want and then sit down and have done.

I say this with all Christian earnestness. Often, because I have not chosen to pray in any conventional form, people have said, “That man is not reverent!” My dear Sir, you are not a judge of my reverence. To my own Master, I stand or fall. I do not think that Job quoted anybody. I do not think that Jacob quoted the old saint in Heaven—his father Abraham. I do not find Jesus Christ quoted Scripture in prayer. They did not pray in other people’s words but they prayed in their own. God does not want you to go gathering up those excellent but very musty spices of the old sanctuary. He wants the new oil just distilled from the fresh olive of your own soul. He wants spices and frankincense, not of the old chests, where they have been lying until they have lost their savor but He wants fresh incense and fresh myrrh, brought from the Ophir of your own soul’s experience. Look well to it that you really pray—do not learn the *language* of prayer—seek the *spirit* of prayer and God Almighty will bless you and make you more mighty in your supplications.

I have said, “Look about you.” I want you to continue the work and look about at your own closets. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, there is no place that some of us need to be so much ashamed to look at as our closet door. I cannot say the hinges are rusty. They do open and shut at their appointed seasons. I cannot say that the door is locked and cobwebbed. We do not neglect prayer itself. But those walls, those beams out of the wall, what a tale might they tell!

“Oh,” the wall might cry out, “I have heard you when you have been in so vast a hurry that you could scarcely spend two minutes with your God. And I have heard you, too, when you were neither asleep nor awake and when you did not know what you were saying.” Then one beam might cry out, “I have heard you come and spend ten minutes and not ask for anything—at least your heart did not ask—the lips moved but the heart was silent.” How might another beam cry out—“Oh, I have heard you groan out your soul but I have seen you go away distrustful, not believing your prayer was heard, quoting the promise but not thinking God would fulfill it.”

Surely the four walls of the closet might come together and fall down upon us in their anger, because we have so often insulted God with our unbelief and with our hurry and with all manner of sins. We have insulted Him even at His Mercy Seat, on the spot where His condescension is most fully manifested. Is it not so with you? Must we not each confess it in our turn? See to it then, Christian Brethren, that an amendment be made and may God make you more mighty and more successful in your prayers than up to now.

III. But not to detain you, the last point is, look upward, LOOK ABOVE. Look above, Christian Brothers and Sisters and let us weep. Oh God, You have given us a mighty weapon and we have permitted it to rust. You have given us that which is mighty as Yourself and we have let that power lie dormant. Would it not be a vile crime if a man had an eye given him which he would not open, or a hand that he would not lift up, or a foot that grew stiff because he would not use it?

And what must we say of ourselves when God has given us power in prayer, matchless power, full of blessedness to ourselves and of unnumbered mercies to others and yet that power lies still? Oh, if the universe were as still as we are, where should we be? Oh God, You give light to the sun and it shines with it. You give light even to the stars and they twinkle. To the winds You give force and they blow. And to the air You give life and it moves and men breathe thereof.

But to Your people You have given a gift that is better than force, and life, and light—and yet they permit it to lie still. Forgetful almost that they wield the power, seldom exercising it, though it would be blessed to countless myriads. Weep, Christian man. Constantine, the Emperor of Rome saw that on the coins of the other Emperors, their images were in an erect posture—triumphing. Instead, thereof, he ordered that his image should be struck kneeling, for said he—“That is the way in which I have triumphed.” We shall never triumph till our image is struck kneeling.

The reason why we have been defeated and why our banners trail in the dust is because we have not prayed. Go—go back to your God with sorrow—confess before Him, children of Ephraim, that you were armed and carried bows but turned your backs in the day of battle. Go to your God and tell Him that if souls are not saved it is not because He has not power to save but because you have never travailed as it were in birth for perishing sinners. Your hearts have not sounded like a harp for Kirharesh, neither has your spirit been moved because of the defenses of the tribe of Reuben.

Wake up, wake up, you people of Israel! Be astonished, you careless ones. You who have neglected prayer. You sinners that are in Zion's own self and that have been at ease. Wake up yourselves. Wrestle and strive

with your God and then the blessing shall come—the early and the latter rain of His mercy—and the earth shall bring forth plenteously and all the nations shall call Him blessed. Look up then, and weep.

Once more—look up and *rejoice*. Though you have sinned against Him He loves you still. You have not prayed unto Him nor sought His face but behold He cries to you still—“Seek My face.” And He says not, “Seek Me in vain.” You may not have gone to the fountain but it flows as freely as before. You have shut your eyes to that sun but it still shines upon you with all its luster. You have not drawn near to God but He waits to be gracious still and is ready to hear all your petitions. Behold, He says to you, “Enquire of Me concerning things to come and concerning My sons and daughters. Command you Me.” What a blessed thing it is that the master in Heaven is always ready to hear!

Augustine has a very beautiful thought upon the parable of the man who knocked at his friend’s door at midnight, saying, “Friend, give me three loaves.” His paraphrase of it runs something like this—“I knock at mercy’s door and it is the dead of night. Will not some of the servants of the house come and answer me? No, I knock but they are asleep. Oh, you Apostles of God—you glorified martyrs—you are asleep, you rest in your beds, you cannot hear my prayer! But will not the children answer? Are there not children who are ready to come and open the door to their Brother? No. They are asleep. My Brethren that have departed—with whom I took sweet counsel and who were the companions of my heart—you cannot answer me for you rest in Jesus. Your works do follow you but you cannot work for me.

“But while the servants are asleep and while the children cannot answer, the Master is awake—awake at midnight, too. It may be midnight with my soul but He hears me and when I am saying, ‘Give me three loaves,’ He comes to the door and gives me as much as I need.” Christian, look up, then and rejoice. There is always an open ear if you have an open mouth. There is always a ready hand if you have a ready heart. You have but to cry and the Lord hears. No, before you call He will answer, and while you are speaking He will hear. Oh, be not backward, then, in prayer! Go to Him when you reach your home. No, on the very way lift up your hearts silently. And whatever your petition or request may be, ask it in Jesus’ name and it shall be done unto you.

Yet, again, look up, dear Christian Brothers and Sisters and amend your prayers from this time forth. Look on prayer no longer as a romantic fiction or as an arduous duty. Look at it as a real *power*—as a real *pleasure*. When philosophers discover some latent power, they seem to have a delight to put it in action. I believe there have been many great engineers who have designed and constructed some of the most wonderful of human works—not because they would be remunerated, but simply from a love of showing their own power to accomplish wonders—o show the world what skill could do and what man could accomplish they have tempted companies into speculations that could never remunerate apparently, so far as I could see, in order that they might have an opportunity of displaying their genius.

O Christian men—shall a great engineer attempt great works and display his power and will you who have a mightier power than ever was wielded by any man apart from his God—will you let that be still? No, think of some great object, strain the sinews of your supplication for it.

Let every vein of your heart be full to the brim with the rich blood of desire—and struggle and wrestle and tug and strive with God for it, using the promises and pleading the attributes—and see if God does not give you your heart's desire.

I challenge you this day to exceed in prayer my Master's bounty. I throw down the gauntlet to you. Believe Him to be more than He is. Open your mouth so wide that He cannot fill it. Go to Him now for more faith than the promise warrants—venture it, risk it, outdo the Eternal if it is possible. Attempt it, or as I would rather put it thus, take your petitions and wants and see if He does not honor you. Try whether if you believe Him He does not fulfill the promise and richly bless you with the anointing oil of His Spirit by which you will be strong in prayer.

I cannot refrain from adding just these few syllables as you go away. I know there are some of you that never prayed in your lives. You have said a form of prayer, perhaps, many years but have never prayed once. Ah, poor Soul, you must be born again and until you are born again you cannot pray as I have been directing the Christian to pray. But let me say this much to you. Does your heart long after salvation? Has the Spirit whispered, "Come to Jesus, Sinner, He will hear you"? Believe that whisper, for He *will* hear you. The prayer of the awakened sinner is acceptable to God. He hears the broken in heart and heals them, too. Take your groans and your sighs to God and He will answer you. "Ah but," says one, "I have nothing to plead." Well but plead as David did—"Pardon my iniquity, for it is great." You have that plea—your iniquity is very great.

Then plead that precious blood—that all prevailing plea—say, "For His dear sake who shed His blood," and you shall prevail, Sinner. But do not go to God and ask for mercy with your sin in your hand. What would you think of the rebel who appeared before the face of his sovereign and asked for pardon with the dagger sticking in his belt and with the declaration of his rebellion on his breast? Would he deserve to be pardoned? He could not deserve it in any case, and surely he would deserve double his doom for having thus mocked his master while he pretended to be seeking mercy.

If a wife had forsaken her husband, do you think she would have the impudence, with brazen forehead, to come back and ask his pardon leaning on the arm of her paramour? No, she could not have such impudence and yet it is so with you—perhaps asking for mercy and going on in sin—praying to be reconciled to God and yet harboring and indulging your lust. Awake! Awake! And call upon your God, you Sinner! The boat is nearing the rock—perhaps tomorrow it may strike and be shivered and you will be cast into the unfathomable depths of everlasting woe.

I say call on your God. And when you call upon Him cast away your sin or He will not hear you. If you lift up your unholy hands with a lie in your right hand, a prayer is worthless on your lips. Oh, come unto Him, say unto Him, "Take away all iniquity, receive us graciously, love us freely," and He will hear you and you shall yet pray as prevailing princes and one day shall stand as more than conquerors before the starry Throne of Him who ever reigns God over all, blessed forevermore. Amen.

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THE PLEADING OF THE LAST MESSENGER NO. 1951

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 6, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. But those vinedressers said among themselves, This is the heir, come, let us kill him and the inheritance shall be ours. And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard. What shall, therefore, the lord of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vinedressers, and will give the vineyard unto others.”
Mark 12:6-9.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS, you know the story of God's dealing with Israel and Israel's dealing with God. The Lord chose their fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He made them a race separated unto Himself; He brought them out of Egypt from under the iron yoke; He led them through the Red Sea; He fed them for 40 years in the wilderness. He led them about and tutored them, even as a man teaches His son. In due time He brought them into the land which flows with milk and honey and He put them under a dispensation eminently gentle and full of tenderness where, as a nation, they might enjoy unbroken prosperity, “sitting every man under his vine and under his fig tree, none making them afraid.” All that He required of them was that He should be their God and that they should put no idols in His place, but should obey His statutes.

Alas, from the first, they copied the nations among whom they dwelt—they set up the gods of Egypt when they were in the wilderness and, in Canaan, they went astray after the polluted deities of the nations. They worshipped defiled gods with obscene rites—they even passed their children through the fire to Moloch—and did horrible things which angered the Most High. In His long-suffering, He sent them Prophets one after another—Prophets who received unworthy treatment at their hands whenever they rebuked their sins. The Prophets were derided, persecuted and even slain with the sword. God, in great patience, sent them more of His messengers, some of them grandly eloquent, like Isaiah and Ezekiel; others of them full of tears, like Jeremiah, or clothed with dignity, like Daniel. They warned the people and ceased not to plead with them, whether they would hear or whether they would forbear. Cruel treatment awaited many of the servants of the Lord—they were stoned, they were sawn asunder.

Israel rejected the servants that came from the great Householder asking for the rent of His vineyard. They repudiated the claims of God and cast off allegiance to Him with contempt and disdain until, at last, the na-

tion was led into captivity and, in the end, only lingered on the chosen soil as a mere remnant. Judah wept upon the dunghill—whereas before she was adorned with bridal ornaments and sat upon the throne! The adversary ruled in the halls of David, for the days of Herod, the Idumaeen tyrant, had come. The Roman yoke was heavy upon the people—their sins had brought them low. God, in His infinite compassion, gave them one more opportunity. He had one Son, His well-beloved Son, and He sent Him to His Israel. With lips that dropped mercy and with eyes that overflowed with tenderness, He came. “Oh, that you had known,” He said, “even you, in this your day”! He wept over the city which would not be saved. But His warning and His weeping were lost upon the blinded people. Those who had rejected the Prophets also rejected the Lord! The fate of the servants was repeated in “the Heir.” “Let us kill Him,” they said, and they put Him to the death of the Cross.

You know the story—it is full of infinite mercy on God’s part and of immeasurable guilt on the part of man. God seemed to out-do Himself in His long-suffering and man seemed to out-do himself in his wanton defiance of the Most High! Sin culminated in the murder of the Son of God—it reached its utmost height of horror when the cry was heard, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” Yes, they crucified the Lord of Glory!

What has this to do with us? I am not going to preach this morning merely to rehearse a piece of ancient history which has no bearing on today. I do not so regard the death of our Lord. My anxiety is to reach the consciences of living men and, if possible, to win to the Blessed Heir of all things, who has risen from the dead, some of those who have had a share in His death. I would bring to the Great Householder the fruits of the vineyard which He, Himself, has planted, and I would move many hearts to relent towards Him at the remembrance of the wicked injuries which have been done to His servants and to His Son. May the Spirit of God silently move over this audience at this time, as I try to use this passage, not in its strictest application, but with such an application as I am sure the Spirit of God will approve! May He bless the Savior’s Word to present uses, that we may this day repent!

The fact is that unless changed by Divine Grace, we have all refused to pay to our great God the service which is due Him. He has put us here and given us this life, like a vineyard, for us to cultivate, but many have cultivated that vineyard entirely for themselves—themselves or their families and friends—and not for their God, their Maker. “God is not in all their thoughts.” Now, the Lord has sent to such, many messengers. We have had no Prophets in these days living among us, but we have the Word of God and the record of the testimonies of His Inspired Messengers and these virtually speak to us. We have Moses and the Prophets—they are speaking to us even now. Besides that, we have been surrounded by men of God and encompassed by holy women who have appealed to us on God’s behalf. They have been urged to speak by the love of their hearts and they have tried to bring us to repent of past rebellion and to yield ourselves at once to God. Many are the voices around us and within us

which persuade to render unto the great Householder His due—but in many cases none of these have been successful.

Last of all, God has sent to each one of us His Son, that He, in His own Person, may lovingly repeat with greater emphasis the requirements of the Lord of Love. The Incarnate Wisdom now cries to us, “My son, give Me your heart.” Jesus warns us, “Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish.” He sets before us the way of reconciliation and bids us believe in Him and live. With many a charming parable He would draw the far-off prodigal home to the bosom of forgiving love. The very coming of the Son of God in human form, as Emmanuel, God With Us, is Love’s great plea for reconciliation! Who can resist so powerful an argument? It is in the Person of Jesus Christ that God makes His last and strongest appeal to the human conscience. By the Christ of God, He virtually says this morning, “Turn you, turn you: why will you die, O house of Israel?” And I would to God that the answer might be from many a heart, “Come, let us return unto the Lord; for He has torn, and He will heal us.” Cause it to be so, O great Spirit!

Three things I shall speak of this morning. The first will be *the amazing mission*—“Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son.” Secondly, *the astounding crime*—“they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard.” And, therefore, thirdly, *the appropriate punishment*, of which the text says, “What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do?” What vengeance can be sufficient for so base a deed?

I. First, then, let us dwell for a few moments upon *the amazing mission*—“Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also.”

Please remember concerning the Son of God, sent to us to reconcile us to the Father, that *He came after many rejections of Divine Love*. As to Israel, He followed the Prophets, so to us He comes after many others. There are none among us, I should think, who have been left without admonitions and exhortations from God. He began early with some of us, calling us, like Samuel, when as yet we were children. He repeated those calls to us all through the days of our youth. It was never cheap to some of us to sin—we never went astray but what there was a something within which plucked us by the sleeve and warned us of our wrong-doing. We have been called to God by most earnest entreaties of faithful men and affectionate women. Discourses have been addressed to us which might have moved hearts of stone, but yet, though stirred for the moment, we remain obstinate enemies to God, dishonest to His claims, careful of this world and forgetful of the world to come.

After all these refusals, if the Lord had closed the casket of mercy and had opened the vials of vengeance and had poured them out upon us, who could have blamed Him? Instead of which, He still, in His long-suffering pity, speaks to us by His Son! Jesus Christ, by whom He made the worlds, condescends to be the Messenger of the Covenant of Grace. He gently reminds us of our offenses against the great Father, of our willfulness in not returning to Him and of the tremendous peril which we incur

by remaining in opposition to the great God. The very existence of our Savior gives us warning of our sin, of our ruin and of the only way of escape. If it is so, that we have rejected God's claims so often, will not the time past suffice us to have played this dreadful game? Have we not had enough of trifling with our souls? O Lord, how long shall men act the part of fools and risk their immortal souls? Oh, will they not, at last, yield to wisdom? Jesus Himself, by the preaching of the Gospel, pleads with us—are we determined to persevere in our evil ways? Do we not feel some tender relenting? Does not a "still small voice" urge us to arise and go to our Father? After many provocations, will we not, at last, yield to the God of Grace?

Remember, that Jesus Christ, when He comes to us today, as the Messenger of the Father, *comes for no personal ends*. When the messengers were sent by the householder, it was to claim the householder's rent. When the heir came, it was for the same purpose. So it is in the human emblem, but in the Divine, this becomes less conspicuous. When Jesus pleads with us, although He urges us to render unto God our love and our obedience, yet God does not stand in *need* of these as the householder stood in need of his rents. What is it to the infinite Jehovah whether you serve Him or not? If you rebel against God, will He be less glorious? If you will not obey the Lord, what difference can it make to His boundless happiness? Will His crown shine the less brightly, or His Heaven be less resplendent because *you* choose to be a rebel against Him? What if the straw strives with the fire, will the fire be quenched by it? If a gnat should contend with yonder blast furnace, you know what the end would be! It is for your own sake that God would have you yield to Him—how can it be for His own? If He were hungry He would not tell you, for the cattle on a thousand hills are His! He can crush whole worlds to dust, "with His word or with His nod"—do you think He has anything to gain from *you*? You alone will be the gainer or the loser and, therefore, when Jesus prays you to repent, believe in the disinterestedness of His heart! Believe that it can be nothing but the most tender regard for your well-being which makes Him warn you. Hear how Jehovah puts it—"As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." A messenger after many rejections—a messenger who comes solely out of love to us ought to have our respectful attention.

Let us see for a minute who this Messenger is. *He is one greatly beloved of His Father* and in Himself *He is of surpassing excellence*. The Lord Jesus Christ is so inconceivably glorious that I tremble at any attempt to describe His Glory. Assuredly, He is very God of very God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and yet He deigned to take upon Himself a human form! He was born an Infant into our weakness and He lived as a carpenter to share our toil. When He quits the bench and the saw, it is to follow still more laborious ways as a Teacher and Healer of the people. He was the lowly and suffering Teacher of the blessed will of the Father. He took upon Himself the form of a Servant and yet in Him dwells all the

fullness of the Godhead bodily! He is the Prince of the kings of the earth and yet He took a towel and washed His disciples' feet!

Such is He who pleads with you! So majestic and so compassionate, so great and yet so good—will you refuse Him? If I plead with you, I am but as you are—flesh of your flesh. But if Jesus speaks to you, I beseech you by the Glory of His Godhead, as well as by the tenderness of His Manhood, do not refuse Him! Because of His Godhead you must not dare to harden your hearts. He is God's Well-Beloved and if you are wise, He will be yours. Do not turn your back on Him whom all the angels worship! Beware, lest you reject One whom God loves so well, for He will take it as an insult to Himself—He that despises the Anointed of God has blasphemed God Himself! You put your finger into the very eye of God when you slight His Son! In grieving the Christ you vex the very heart of God—therefore do not do it. I beseech you, then, by the love which God bears to His Son, to listen to this matchless Messenger of mercy who would persuade you to repent.

I have already said that He is so glorious that I cannot describe Him. I will, therefore, only say that *His graciousness is as conspicuous as His Glory*. There was never such a one as He! None of us loves men as Christ loves them and if the loves of all the tender-hearted in the world could be run together, they would make but a drop compared with the ocean of the compassion of Jesus! Of old His delights were with the sons of men and though He might have been happy enough among the angels, yet He left their company that He might take up this inferior race. Yes, He espoused our Nature and became bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh for love of that chosen company whom He calls His bride. He hid not His face from shame and spitting, nor His body from the shedding of blood, nor His soul from deadly agony, but He loved the Church and gave Himself for it.

It is this lover of souls that becomes God's Advocate with us and pleads with us that we would cease from our rebellion. Do not refuse Him! If He were stern and unloving I could imagine that all the obstinacy of your nature might be awakened, but His love, which passes the love of women, deserves another treatment. If you reject Him, He answers you with tears. If you wound Him, He bleeds out cleansing. If you kill Him, He dies to redeem. If you bury Him, He rises again to bring us resurrection. Jesus is Love made manifest—

***“Heart of stone, relent, relent;
Break, by Jesus' Cross subdued!
See His body, mangled, rent,
Covered with a gore of blood!
Sinful soul, what have you done?
Crucified God's only Son!”***

Furthermore, *His manner is most winning*. When I have been pleading for men with God and I have ceased my pleading, I have feared that something in my tone or in my manner would cause my pleading to fail. I am not, perhaps, so tender as I should be, nor is there sufficient pathos in my tones. If I could do better, I would go to any school to learn. God has put me often to the school of suffering to instruct me in this respect and yet I

do confess my failings with deep regret. But when Jesus, my Lord, pleads with you, this charge cannot be laid against Him! His pleading is perfect. When Jonah preaches, his tones are harsh and his spirit forbidding—but that can never be said of Jesus. When Jeremiah weeps, there is an undertone of bitter complaint within the sweet sorrow of his love, but it is never so with Jesus. “Never men spoke like this Man.” If ever His words thunder—as they often do—even in that thunder there is heard the voice of love! When He flashes with the lightning of judgment against Scribes and Pharisees, yet soft drops of mercy follow every flame of fire. He is stern because He is tender—His utterances of terror are born of a love which dares not conceal the Truth of God, even though it breaks its heart in the telling of it. God is Love, and Christ is God’s love Incarnate among men. Therefore, my Hearer, if you see anything about *me* of which you disapprove, censure me if you will, but be all the more attentive to my Lord, about whom there is nothing but what is wooing and melting. God has sent to you His own Well-Beloved Son—I implore you, do not refuse Him! My heart trembles at the bare suspicion that even one of you should reject the pleading of one so jealous for your eternal welfare!

Yet again, when God sends His Son to plead with men, remember He does not urge us to anything which will be for our loss and detriment—*obedience to Him is happiness for ourselves*. He does not urge us to follow a life of misery, nor to begin a course which will end in our destruction. Far from it! The ways in which He would have us run are ways of pleasantness. And all the paths in which He would lead us are paths of peace. Even repentance is charming sorrow, far more sweet than the joy of sin. They that repent and turn to God through Jesus Christ find such joy, such happiness, that earth becomes to them the vestibule of Heaven! The joy-bells ring within the Father’s house when a soul returns to its home! The great Father leads the joy and all the household rejoice with Him! To persuade you to be holy is to induce you to be happy! To urge you to seek God is to urge you to seek your own best welfare! To urge you to lay down the weapons of rebellion and be reconciled to the Most High is to set before you the wisest, safest and best course that you can follow. Therefore, hear Him! The Lord God out of Heaven cries to you—“This is My beloved Son; hear Him!” Well may you hear Him, when every word that He speaks intends your salvation!

Remember, once more, that if you do not hear the well-beloved Son of God, you have refused your last hope. *He is God’s ultimatum*. Nothing remains when Christ is refused. No one else can be sent. Heaven, itself, contains no further messenger. If Christ is rejected, hope is rejected! Neither would you be converted though one rose from the dead, for Jesus has risen from the dead and you have refused Him. I should like every person here that is unconverted to remember that there is no other Gospel and no more Sacrifice for sin. I have heard talk of “a larger hope” than the Gospel sets before us—it is a fable, with nothing in Scripture to warrant it! Rejecting Christ, you have rejected all—you have shut against yourself the one door of hope! Christ, who knows better than all pretenders, de-

clares that, "He that believes not shall be damned." There remains nothing but damnation for those who believe not in Jesus! "There is no other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." This is clear, for Heaven's grandest effort has been made! What more can God do? O heavens and earth, I appeal to you, what more can Jehovah do? If He gives His Son to die and that great Sacrifice is rejected, what remains? Infinite Wisdom has done its best and Infinite Love has surpassed itself—a fearful looking for of judgment is all that despisers may expect.

Thus, this amazing mission is set forth before you and I pray you, as you love yourselves, do not refuse Him that speaks, for if they escaped not who refused Him that spoke on earth, how shall they escape who despise Him that speaks from Heaven?

II. I beg your attention while I look, in the second place, to THE ASTOUNDING CRIME. It was nothing less than an astounding crime, that when this householder sent his well-beloved son, the vinedressers said one, to another, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. And they took him, and cast him out of the vineyard." "No," says one, "*we* never killed the Son of God." I will not charge you with having done so *literally*—that were to make myself chargeable with exaggeration. But a man may do *virtually* what he cannot do *actually*. If a murder is committed and I approve of it. If my own principles lead up to it; if I feel no indignation against it, but express myself very coolly about it. If there is reason to believe that if I had been there, I would have done the same, then I may be, in the sight of God, a partaker in the crime. There are many among us who are guilty of the body and blood of Christ. The hymn we just now sung does not bring a groundless charge—

**"Yes, your sins have done the deed,
Driven the nails that fixed Him there,
Crowned with thorns His sacred head,
Plunged into His side the spear,
Made His soul a sacrifice,
While for sinful man He dies!"**

Now, I say this, that all those who persistently deny the Deity of Christ—virtually kill Him—for the Son of God is not alive if His Godhead is not in existence. It is essential to the idea of Christ, the Heir of all things, that He is God—and to deny His Godhead is to stab at His heart.

All those who deny His Atonement also slay Him, for the blood of Sacrifice is the life of the Christ of God. The very essence of His Christhood, the soul of His Character as Jesus, lies in His having been appointed to be a Propitiation for sin. No Cross, no Christ. No Atonement, no Cross. Deny the great Expiation for sin and to the full extent of your power you have annihilated the Christ! As far as you can do it, you have destroyed the Savior.

"Well, we have not done that," cry some of you. "We have been no opposer of the Deity or Sacrifice of Jesus." But let me remind you that if you do not judge Him to be worthy of your most careful thoughts—if you are indifferent to His claims and refuse to obey His Gospel—you have virtually put Him away. To you it is the same as if there were no Christ—

***“Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by?
Is it nothing to you that Jesus should die?”***

You have virtually answered, “It is nothing.” You have set Christ down as nothing compared with the business of daily life and thus you have *virtually* slain Him! You have put Him out of existence so far as you are concerned. In the little world of your mind there is no living Savior—He is dead and buried to you—and the claims of God which He pleads you will not think about! You have been occupied all the week with trivial amusements, or unimportant discussions, but you have not deigned to think of Him whose advent into the world is so great a wonder that if you never thought of anything else, you might be justified in a life of devout meditation. He who deserves all your thoughts gets none of them! You have nothing to do with Christ, His Cross, His people, or His cause and, therefore—I say it with no harshness, but with much grief—you are killers of Christ and are guilty of His blood! I charge you with murdering your Savior! I press the accusation home and trust that it will strike you with horror!

I have still closer work with some of you who are most assuredly guilty. You were once members of the Church. You came to the communion table where we gather who remember His precious body and blood. You used to glory in His name, but you have gone back—you have denied the faith, you have ceased to be followers of the Lamb. Now, these are no words of mine, but Inspired Words—You have “crucified the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame.” You are, beyond all question, among those who have cast the Heir out of the vineyard and slain Him, deliberately turning your backs upon His sacred cause. The Lord have mercy on you! You have had no mercy on Christ, or on yourselves.

I must press this home upon a great many more who have heard of Christ, believe Him to be God and assent to all the Truths of God about Him but who yet have never yielded themselves to His authority. O Sirs, what have you done? You have preferred the world to Christ! You have chosen Barabbas and condemned the Savior! You have said to the claims of Jesus, “Wait.” For whom has your Lord had to wait? What? For a harlot? For a bribe of gold? For your giddy pleasure? When a great question is postponed to let another take precedence over it, we do not object if that other is of pre-eminent importance, but can you say that anything has a greater claim on you than the Son of God? Is there *anything* that has a greater right to your thoughts, to your consideration, to your love, than the great salvation which Jesus Christ has worked out? If you have pushed the Lord Jesus Christ out of the first place, He will occupy no other and, therefore, you have virtually un-Christed Him and you are guilty of His blood! You must either be justified by Him or you must be condemned by Him! There is no third course to take—you must either believe in Him or disbelieve Him. Now, to refuse to believe Him is to make Him a liar—and to call Him a liar is virtually to slay the Lord of Truth. His blood must be on you by faith to cleanse you, or else it will lie on you to condemn you, as it did the Jews of old!

What was the reason why these dressers of the vineyard dared, thus, to treat the heir? The reason is one which presses upon those here present who have rejected Christ! They did it, first, because *they had enjoyed a long immunity from punishment*. They had not been at once punished for their defiance of their lord. They had rejected his messengers without provoking him to war; they had gone on to stone and slay others of his servants and the householder had not come upon them to overthrow them. The first time they mocked at the messenger they were somewhat afraid. They feared lest soon the sword of the prince whom they had defied would threaten their gates. But as there was no invasion, they grew bold. The next messenger they slew and washed their hands, in presumption, saying, "Nothing will come of it." They grew, at last, to be very hardened. I know not what they said, but I conceive that certain of them propagated the theory that their lord took no notice of what they did, or that he was too loving to punish them severely. "See!" they said, "he only sends fresh messengers if we kill the old ones! And even if we kill his son, he will bear it. Let us not imagine that he will take vengeance. He is love, and even should we murder his son, he will lay up in store for us a larger hope. At any rate," they seemed to say, "we will run all risks. We will test his graciousness. We will kill his son and so challenge him to do his worst."

Ungrateful men abuse God's long-suffering today as they did of old. They say, "Well, I have refused the Gospel a long time. I have put aside many appeals, but I am not dead, nor struck with blindness, nor smitten down with a stroke. I can go on at least a little longer in safety. I may refuse Christ yet again, for God is merciful." "Certain teachers," you say, "tell us that God is so good that if we even kill His Son He will take no account of it. We will kill His Son and so we will reject the Atonement and trample on the precious blood—and yet we doubt not all will come right in the long run and the evil of our crime will prove to be only temporary." You do not put your thoughts into those words, but you are saying as much by your *actions*! You dare not *say* it and yet it lurks in your hearts and works itself out in your deeds! You are going to run the dreadful risk of trifling with the Son of God! To you this seems a little thing, but horror takes hold of me at the thought of it!

O Sirs, I will be no partner in your crime! I will not cease to warn you that it must be, of all risks, the most tremendous! Gracious as He is—and God has proven His Grace by sending His Son—yet God is not effeminate nor unjust! If you refuse the mercy which He so freely proffers you, He will deal with you in His justice! He is the Judge of all the earth and He must do right. Remember how He puts it—"My sword shall be bathed in Heaven." "If I whet My glittering sword, and My hand takes hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to My enemies" (Deut 32:41). For as truly as He is love, so truly is He holiness! He is wondrous in His power to forgive, but He is also terrible out of His holy places. "If the sinner turn not, He will whet His sword; He has bent His bow and made it ready." "Beware, you that forget God, lest He tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver you."

The great reason, however, why these vinedressers determined to kill the heir was this—they said, “*Then the inheritance shall be ours.*” This is what the heart of man vainly desires. It says, “Let us be rid of this troublesome talk of religion and then we can live for ourselves and study our own pleasure without remorse of conscience. Are we not our own? Who shall be lord over us? If we are rid of this Jesus, we shall not have this claim being always made upon us, that we are God’s creatures and that we ought to live to Him. We do not intend to serve God. We will pay no rent to this Householder. We will be our own proprietors. God shall have nothing from us. Who is the Lord, that we should obey His voice? If we can get rid of this Christ business, we can live as we wish and do as we please—and *no one* will call us to account. If we can persuade ourselves that religion is not true, we shall then care nothing for checks and warnings, but we shall take our full swing and enjoy ourselves without stint! A short life and a merry one will suit us. We might enjoy ourselves if this matter of God, Christ and eternity could be disposed of.”

Yes, young man, this is what your prototype thought when he said to his father, “Give me the portion of goods that falls to me.” Then he gathered all together and went into a far country and spent his “substance in riotous living.” This is what you hanker after. But your folly is exceedingly great. I grieve as I look into your young face and read the idle dream of your heart. You little know what a tyrant he serves who lives as he likes. May God grant that I may never live as my sinful lusts would make me live! I had rather be a machine and be compelled to do always what is right than have free will and with that free will give myself up to do that which is wrong! But there is no need to be made into a machine—the Grace of God can make you as free in *holiness* as in sin! Grace can make you more free in the service of God than in the service of yourself!

Self lies at the bottom of all rejection of Christ—“Let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours.” Ah, my Hearer! It *will not* be yours and if it were yours for a little while—and you could do just as you pleased with it, yet remember that the inheritance which is so gained will soon pass away—and you yourself will soon have to stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ to give an account of the deeds done in the body, whether they are good, or whether they are bad! And what will *you* do who have slain your Savior? What will you do in that day, who have lived and died unsaved?

III. I must close with that third head which is so dreadful to me—THE APPROPRIATE PUNISHMENT. I do not suppose that the thought of this subject will be half so dreadful to anybody here who is unconverted as it is to me. I tremble as I meditate upon the wrath to come. How glad I would be if I had not to preach from such a theme! But I must preach from it, or be a traitor to God and an enemy to you. If you perish, your blood will be required at my hands if I do not warn you of the punishment of sin. This is how the Savior put it—“When the lord therefore of the vineyard comes, what will he do unto those vinedressers?” He leaves our conscience to award the penalty. He leaves our imagination to prescribe a

doom sufficient for a crime so base, so daring, so cruel! They have killed the only son of their lord—what will he do unto those men?

Here I must interject a terrible passage which burdens me to deliver. At this present moment I am afraid that this parable is being written out, again, in the history of the Church of God. God has put into His vineyard, or allowed to come into His vineyard, a number of religious teachers who are not rendering to Him the honor due. Those religious teachers to whom I refer are not teaching the Gospel as it is delivered in Holy Scripture, but they are adapting it to the age and to the scientific knowledge of the period. They are described in the book of the Prophet Jeremiah—“Thus says the Lord of Hosts, Listen not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord. They say still unto them that despise Me, The Lord has said, You shall have peace; and they say unto everyone that walks after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you.”

The thoughts of their own minds are given instead of the Revelation of God! Thus they set up another gospel which is not another and there are some that trouble you. My fear is that the Lord will not much longer bear with these vinedressers. He will not long bear these “prophets of the deceit of their own hearts.” He will bring an everlasting reproach upon them and cut them off in His anger. He will destroy those wicked men and He will give His vineyard to other husbandmen who will deal more faithfully with the souls of men. I feel in my own soul that it must be so. I dare not live as a preacher of my own inventions! I dare not die as a preacher of my own thoughts, or of the thoughts of other men. I must tell my Master’s message or be accursed! The spirit of the age is the spirit of proud self-sufficiency. Be it ours to sit at Jesus’ feet. My Lord will one day say to me, “I gave you a message, did you deliver it? I bade you speak in My name, did you speak My Words or your own? I gave you a Revelation, did you deliver that Revelation as best you could? Or did you invent a new thing out of your own brain?”

I know how I shall answer. I fear that a terrible doom awaits those who go after the fashionable falsehoods of the day. Be they clergymen or dissenting ministers, an unutterably horrible damnation from the right hand of God awaits those who prostitute the office of the ministry for the delivery of human philosophies instead of teaching the Gospel of the blessed God! Brothers, beware that none of us sin against the Holy Spirit by setting up our dreams in rivalry with His certainties! Pray for those who do so, lest God deal with them speedily in vengeance. The Lord have mercy upon all false prophets and bring them humbly and tremblingly to His feet, lest they ensnare the people yet more, to the overthrow of this nation and the taking away of the candlestick out of its place!

I return to you whom I have already addressed. You have crucified the Son of God by refusing to believe in Him. What shall the Lord do to you when He comes? The sentence cannot be too severe, for the crime is horrible beyond measure! It must be the highest form of punishment known

to the Law of God. They slew the servants and they slew the heir—no *temporary* punishment can meet the case. Those who plead for a light doom for such a crime must, in their own hearts, be rebels. Those who are always making light of Hell are probably doing it in the hope of making it easy for themselves. He is the devil's advocate who would judge the punishment of the impenitent to be a light one! God's true servants say, "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." Our Lord leaves our own consciences to depict the overwhelming misery of those miserable men who carry their rebellion to its full length.

In the chapter which we read (Matthew 21), our Lord gives us a terrible Word. Comparing Himself to the stone which should be the foundation, but which the builders reject, He says, "On whomever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." Sinner, if you reject the Savior, you will have to feel His full weight! Boundless in power, infinite in majesty, *the whole weight of Him will fall on you*. Will you think that over? Since He breaks the nations in pieces with a rod of iron, judge for yourself His power! Since from His Presence Heaven and earth flee away, judge for yourself His power! And whatever that power may be, you will have to feel the full force of it! This foundation stone falling upon you shall grind you to powder!

I will not dwell further upon this TERRIBLE thought, but I will repeat it in set and solemn form—the full weight of the Incarnate God, in the day of His wrath, you will have to bear! It is put in another way in that expression—"The wrath of the Lamb." Is not that a marvelous combination, "The wrath of the *Lamb*"? Love when it turns to jealousy is the fiercest of all passions—and when the love of Christ in infinite justice shall be turned into holy indignation against unrighteousness—then it will be something terrible to think of and to bear it will be the second death! Are you prepared to bear the awful weight of a Savior's anger? No, you are not! Come, then, to Jesus. "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish from the way, while His wrath is kindled but a little."

O my Hearers, my dear Hearers, do not refuse the Lord Jesus who now pleads with you! I am not worthy to be His ambassador. I am not fit for the office, but yet I would plead with you as a loving brother! Will you lose your souls? Will you reject Christ? O Sirs, will you refuse the Son of God? Men and women, can you be so mad as to live and die without the Savior? Are you so far gone as this? Turn, I beseech you, turn this day! Lord, turn them, for your dear Son's sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Matthew 21:18-46.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—911, 517, 388.**

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THE FIRST AND GREAT COMMANDMENT NO. 162

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 8, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength: this is the first commandment.”

Mark 12:30

OUR Savior said, “This is the first and great Commandment.” It is “*the first*” Commandment—the first for *antiquity*, for this is older than even the Ten Commandments of the written Law. Before God said, “You shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal,” this Law was one of the commands of His universe. For this was binding upon the angels when man was not created. It was not necessary for God to say to the angels, “you shall do no murder, you shall not steal.” For such things to them were very probably impossible. But He did doubtless say to them, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart.” And when first Gabriel sprang out of his native nothingness at the fiat of God, this command was binding on him.

This is “the first Commandment,” then, for antiquity. It was binding upon Adam in the garden. Even before the creation of Eve, his wife, God had commanded this. Before there was a necessity for any other command this was written upon the very tablets of his heart—“You shall love the Lord your God.”

It is “the first Commandment,” again, not only for antiquity but for *dignity*. This command, which deals with God the Almighty must ever take precedence of every other. Other Commandments deal with man and man, but *this* with man and his Creator. Other commands of a ceremonial kind when disobeyed may involve but slight consequences upon the person who may happen to offend. But this disobeyed provokes the wrath of God and brings His ire at once upon the sinner’s head. He that steals commits a gross offense inasmuch as he has also violated this command. But if it were possible for us to separate the two and to suppose an offense of one command without an offense of this, then we must put the violation of this Commandment in the first rank of offenses. This is the king of Commandments. This is the emperor of the Law. It must take precedence of all those princely commands that God afterwards gave to men.

Again, it is “the first Commandment” for its *justice*. If men cannot see the justice of that Law which says, “Love your neighbor,” even if there is

some difficulty to understand how I can be bound to love the man that hurts and injures me, there can be no difficulty *here*. “You shall love your God” comes to us with so much Divine authority and is so ratified by the dictates of nature and our own conscience, that, verily, this command must take the first place for the justice of its demand. It is “the first” of Commandments.

Whichever Law you break, take care to keep this. If you break the Commandments of the ceremonial law, if you violate the ritual of your Church—your offense might be propitiated by the priest—but who can escape when *this* is your offense? This mandate stands fast. Man’s law you may break and bear the penalty. But if you break this the penalty is too heavy for your soul to endure. It will sink you, Man, it will sink you like a millstone lower than the lowest Hell. Take heed of this command above every other, to tremble at it and obey it, for it is “the first Commandment.”

But the Savior said it was a “*great* Commandment,” and so it is. It is “great,” for it contains in its heart every other. When God said, “Remember to keep holy the Sabbath Day,” when He said, “You shall not bow down unto the idols nor worship them”—when He said, “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain,” He did but instance particulars which are all contained in this general mandate. This is the sum and substance of the Law. And indeed even the second Commandment lies within the folds of the first. “You shall love your neighbor,” is actually to be found within the center of this command, “You shall love the Lord your God.” For the loving of God would necessarily produce the loving of our neighbor.

It is a great command, then, for its *comprehensiveness* and it is a great command for the immense demand which it makes upon us. It demands all our mind, all our soul, all our heart and all our strength. Who is he that can keep it, when there is no power of manhood which is exempt from its sway? And to him that violates this Law it shall be proven that it is a great command in the greatness of its condemning power. It is like a great sword having two edges, wherewith God shall slay him. It shall be like a great thunderbolt from God, wherewith He shall cast down and utterly destroy the man that goes on in his willful breaking thereof.

Hear then, O Gentiles and O house of Israel, hear then, this day, this first and great Commandment—“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.”

I shall divide my discourse thus—first, *What says this Commandment unto us?* Secondly, *What say we unto it?*

I. And in discussing the first point, WHAT SAYS THIS COMMANDMENT UNTO US? we shall divide it thus. Here is first, the duty—“You shall love

the Lord your God.” Here is, secondly, the measure of the duty—“You shall love Him with all your heart, mind, soul, strength.” Here is, thirdly, the ground of the claim, enforcing the duty—because He is “your God.” God demands us to obey, simply upon the ground that He is our God.

1. To begin, then—this command *demand*s a duty. That duty is that we should love God. How many men disobey this? One class of men break it willfully and grievously. For they *hate* God. There is the infidel who gnashes his teeth against the Almighty. The atheist who spits the venom of his blasphemy against the Person of his Maker. You will find those who rail at the very being of a God, though in their consciences they know there is a God, yet with their lips will blasphemously deny His existence. These men say there is no God because they *wish* there were none. The wish is father to the thought.

And the thought demands great grossness of heart and grievous hardness of spirit before they dare to express it in words. And even when they express it in words it needs much practice before they can do it with a bold, unblushing countenance. Now, this command bears hard on all them that hate, that despise, that blaspheme, that malign God or that deny His being, or impugn His character. O Sinner! God says you shall love Him with all your heart. And inasmuch as you hate Him, you stand this day condemned to the sentence of the Law.

Another class of men know there is a God but they *neglect* Him. They go through the world with indifference, “caring for none of these things.” “Well,” they say “it makes no difference to me whether there is a God or not.” They have no particular care about Him. They do not pay one half so much respect to His commands as they would to the proclamation of the Queen. They are very willing to reverence all powers that be but He who ordained them is to be passed by and to be forgotten. They would not be bold enough and honest enough to come straight out and despise God and join the ranks of His open enemies but they *forget* God.

He is not in all their thoughts. They rise in the morning without a prayer. They rest at night without bending the knee. They go through the week’s business and they never acknowledge God. Sometimes they talk about good luck and chance—strange deities of their own brain—but God, the overruling God of Providence, they never talk of, though sometimes they may mention His name in flippancy and so increase their transgressions against Him. O you despisers and neglecters of God! This command speaks to you—“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.”

But I hear one of these gentlemen reply, “Well, Sir, I make no pretensions to religion but still I believe I am quite as good as those that do. I am quite as upright, quite as moral and benevolent. True, I do not often

darken the door of a Church or Chapel. I do not think it necessary but I am a right good sort. There are many, many hypocrites in the Church and therefore I shall not think of being religious.” Now, my dear Friend, allow me just to say one word—what business is that of yours? Religion is a personal matter between you and your Maker. Your Maker says—“You shall love Me with all your heart.”

It is of no use for you to point your finger across the street and point at a minister whose life is inconsistent, or at a deacon who is unholy, or to a member of the Church who does not live up to his profession. You have nothing to do with that. When your Maker speaks to you, He appeals to you personally. And if you should tell Him, “My Lord, I will not love You, because there are hypocrites,” would not your own conscience convict you of the absurdity of your reasoning? Ought not your better judgment to whisper, “Inasmuch, then, as so many are hypocrites, take heed that you are not. And if there are so many pretenders who injure the Lord’s cause by their lying pretensions, so much the more reason why you should have the real thing and help to make the Church sound and honest”?

But no. The merchants of our cities, the tradesmen of our streets, our artisans and our workmen—the great mass of them—live in total neglect of God. I do not believe that the heart of England is infidel. I do not believe that there is any vast extent of deism or atheism throughout England—the great fault of our time is the fault of indifference—people do not care whether the thing is right or not. What is it to them? They never take the trouble to search between the different professors of religion to see where the Truth lies. They do not think to pay their reverence to God with all their hearts. Oh, no, they forget what God demands and so rob Him of His due. To you, to you, great masses of the population, this Law does speak with iron tongue—“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”

There is a class of men who are a great deal nobler than the herd of simpletons who allow the sublimities of the Godhead to be concealed by their care for mere sensual good. There are some who do not forget that there is a God—no they are astronomers and they turn their eyes to Heaven and they view the stars and they marvel at the majesty of the Creator. Or they dig into the bowels of the earth and they are astonished at the magnificence of God’s works of yore. Or they examine the animal and marvel at the wisdom of God in the construction of its anatomy. They, whenever they think of God, think of Him with the deepest awe, with the most profound reverence.

You never hear them curse or swear—you will find that their souls are possessed of a deep awe of the great Creator. But ah, my Friends, this is not enough—this is not obedience to the command. God does not say you

shall *wonder* at Him, you shall have *awe* of Him. He asks more than that. He says “You shall love Me!” Oh, you that see the orbs of Heaven floating in the far expanse, it is something to lift your eyes to Heaven and say—

**“These are Your glorious works, Parent of good,
Almighty, Yours this universal frame.
Thus wondrous fair. Yourself how wondrous then!
Unspeakable, who sits above these Heavens
To us invisible, or dimly seen
In these Your lowest works. Yet these declare
Your goodness beyond thought and power Divine.”**

It is something thus to adore the great Creator but ‘tis not all He asks. Oh, if you could add to this—“He that made these orbs, that leads them out by their hosts, is my Father and my heart beats with affection towards Him,” then would you be obedient but not till then. God asks not your admiration but your affection. “You shall *love* the Lord your God with all your heart.”

There are others, too, who delight to spend time in contemplation. They believe in Jesus, in the Father, in the Spirit. They believe that there is but one God and that these Three are One. It is their delight to turn over the pages of Revelation, as well as the pages of history. They contemplate God. He is to them a matter of curious study. They like to meditate upon Him. The doctrines of His Word they could hear all day long. And they are very sound in the faith, extremely orthodox and very knowing. They can fight about doctrines, they can dispute about the things of God with all their hearts.

But alas, their religion is like a dead fish—cold and stiff—and when you take it into your hand you say there is no life in it. Their souls were never stirred with it. Their hearts were never thorough into it. They can contemplate but they cannot love. They can meditate but they cannot commune. They can think of God but they can never throw up their souls to Him and clasp Him in the arms of their affections. Ah, to you cold-blooded thinkers—to you, this text speaks. Oh, you that can contemplate but cannot love—“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart.”

Another man starts up and he says, “Well this command does not bear on me. I attend my place of worship twice every Sunday. I have family prayer. I am very careful not to get up in the morning without saying a form of prayer. I sometimes read my Bible. I subscribe to many charities.” Ah, my Friend and you may do all that without loving God. Why, some of you go to your Churches and Chapels as if you were going to be horse-whipped. It is a dull and dreary thing to you. You dare not break the Sabbath but you would if you could. You know very well that if it were not for a mere matter of fashion and custom you would sooner by half be anywhere else than in God’s house.

And as for prayer, why it is no delight to you. You do it because you think you ought to do it. Some indefinable sense of duty rests upon you. But you have no delight in it. You talk of God with great propriety but you never talk of Him with love. Your heart never bounds at the mention of His name. Your eyes never glisten at the thought of His attributes. Your soul never leaps when you meditate on His works. Your heart is all untouched and while you are honoring God with your lips your heart is far from Him and you are still disobedient to this Commandment, “You shall love the Lord your God.”

And now, my Hearers, do you understand this Commandment? Do I not see many of you seeking to look for loopholes through which to escape? Do I not think I see some of you striving to make a break in this Divine wall which girds us all? You say, “I never do anything against God.” No, my Friend, that is not it—it is not what you do *not* do—it is this, “Do you *love* Him?” “Well, Sir, but I never violate any of the proprieties of religion.” No, that is not it. The command is, “You shall *love* Him.” “Well, Sir, but I do a great deal for God. I teach in a Sunday-School and so on.” Ah, I know, but do you *love* Him? It is the heart He wants and He will not be content without it. “You shall love the Lord your God.” That is the Law and though no man can keep it since Adam’s Fall, yet the Law is as much binding upon every son of Adam this day as when God first of all pronounced it. “You shall love the Lord your God.”

2. That brings us to the second point—*the measure of this Law*. How much am I to love God? Where shall I fix the point? I am to love my neighbor as I love myself. Am I to love my God more than that? Yes, certainly. The measure is even greater. We are not bound to love ourselves with all our mind and soul and strength and therefore we are not bound to love our neighbor so. The measure is a greater one. We are bound to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

And we deduce from that, first, that we are to love God *supremely*. You are to love your wife, O husband. You can not love her too much except in one case, if you should love her before God and prefer her pleasure to the pleasure of the Most High. Then would you be an idolater. Child, you are to love your parents. You cannot love him too much who begat you, nor her too much who brought you forth. But remember, there is one Law that does override that. You are to love your God more than your father or your mother. He demands your first and your highest affection—you are to “love Him with all your heart.”

We are allowed to love our relatives—we are taught to do so. He that does not love his own family is worse than a heathen man and a publican. But we are not to love the dearest object of our hearts so much as we love God. You may erect little thrones for those whom you rightly love. But

God's Throne must be a glorious high Throne. You may set them upon the steps but God must sit on the very seat itself. He is to be enthroned, the royal One within your heart, the king of your affections. Say, say Hearer, have you kept this Commandment? I know I have not. I must plead guilty before God. I must cast myself before Him and acknowledge my transgression. But nevertheless, there stands the Commandment—"You shall love God with all your heart"—that is, you shall love him *supremely*.

Note, again—from the text we may deduce that a man is bound to love God *heartily*—that is plain enough, for it says, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart." Yes, there is to be in our love to God a heartiness. We are to throw our whole selves into the love that we give to Him. Not the kind of love that some people give to their fellows, when they say, "Be you warmed and filled," and nothing more. No—our heart is to have its whole being absorbed into God, so that God is the hearty object of its pursuit and its most mighty love. See how the word "all" is repeated again and again. The whole going forth of the being, the whole stirring up of the soul is to be for God and for God only. "With *all* your heart."

Again—as we are to love God heartily, we are to love Him with *all our souls*. Then we are to love Him with all our life. For that is the meaning of it. If we are called to die for God, we are to prefer God before our own life. We shall never reach the fullness of this Commandment till we get as far as the martyrs, who rather than disobey God would be cast into the furnace, or devoured by wild beasts. We must be ready to give up house, home, liberty, friends, comfort, joy and life, at the command of God, or else we have not carried out this Commandment, "You shall love Him with all your heart and with all your life."

And, next we are to love God with all our *mind*. That is, the intellect is to love God. Now many men believe in the existence of a God but they do not love that belief. They know there is a God but they greatly wish there were none. Some of you today would be very pleased—you would set the bells a-ringing—if you believed there were no God. Why, if there were no God then you might live just as you liked. If there were no God then you might run riot and have no fear of future consequences. It would be to you the greatest joy that could be—if you heard that the eternal God had ceased to be.

But the Christian never wishes any such a thing as that. The thought that there is a God is the sunshine of his existence. His intellect bows before the Most High. Not like a slave who bends his body because he must—but like the angel who prostrates himself because he loves to adore his Maker. His intellect is as fond of God as his imagination. "Oh," he says, "My God, I bless You that You are, for You are my highest treasure,

my richest and my rarest delight. I love You with all my intellect. I have neither thought, nor judgment, nor conviction, nor reason which I do not lay at Your feet and consecrate to Your honor.

And once again, this love to God is to be characterized by *activity*. For we are to love Him with all our heart, heartily—with all our soul, that is, to the laying down of our life—with all our mind, that is mentally. And we are to love Him with all our *strength*, that is, *actively*. I am to throw my whole soul into the worship and adoration of God. I am not to keep back a single hour, or a single farthing of my wealth, or a single talent that I have, or a single atom of strength, bodily or mental from the worship of God. I am to love Him with all my strength.

Now what man ever kept this Commandment? Surely none. And no man ever can keep it. Hence, then, the necessity of a Savior. Oh, that we might, by this Commandment, be smitten to the earth—that our self-righteousness may be broken in pieces by this great hammer of “the first and great Commandment!” But oh, my Brethren, how may we wish that we *could* keep it! For, could we keep this command intact, unbroken, it would be a Heaven below. The happiest of creatures are those that are the most holy and that unreservedly love God.

3. And now, very briefly, I have just to state *God’s claim* upon which He bases this Commandment. “You shall love Him with all your heart, soul, mind, strength.” Why? First, because He is the Lord—that is, Jehovah. And secondly because he is your God.

Man, the creature of a day, you ought to love Jehovah *for what He is*. Behold, Him whom you can not behold! Lift up your eyes to the seventh Heaven. See where in dreadful majesty the brightness of His garments makes the angels veil their faces, lest the light, too strong for even them, should smite them with eternal blindness. See Him who stretched the Heavens like a tent to dwell in and then did weave into their tapestry, with golden needle, stars that glitter in the darkness. Mark Him who spread the earth and created man upon it. And hear what He is. He is all-sufficient, eternal, self-existent, unchangeable, omnipotent, omniscient! Will you not reverence Him? He is good, He is loving, He is kind, He is gracious. See the bounties of His Providence. Behold the plenitude of His grace! Will you not love Jehovah, because He is Jehovah?

But you are most of all bound to love him *because He is your God*. He is your God *by creation*. He made you. You did not make yourself. God, the Almighty, though He might use instruments, was nevertheless the sole creator of man. Though He is pleased to bring us into the world by the agency of our progenitors, yet is He as much our Creator as He was the Creator of Adam when He formed him of clay and made him man. Look at this marvelous body of yours. See how God has put the bones together so

as to be of the greatest service and use to you. See how He has arranged your nerves and blood vessels. Mark the marvelous machinery which He has employed to keep you in life! O thing of an hour! Will you not love Him that made you? Is it possible that you can think of Him who formed you in His hand and molded you by His will and yet will you not love Him who has fashioned you?

Again, consider, he is *your* God, for *He preserves you*. Your table is spread but He spread it for you. The air that you breathe is a gift of His charity. The clothes that you have on your back are gifts of His love. Your life depends on Him. One wish of His infinite will would have brought you to the grave and given your body to the worms. And at this moment, though you are strong and hearty, your life is absolutely dependent upon Him. You may die where you are—you are out of Hell only as the result of His goodness. You would be at this hour sweltering in flames unquenchable had not His sovereign love preserved you. Traitor though you may be to Him, an enemy to His Cross and cause, yet He is your God, so far as this, for He made you and He keeps you alive.

Surely, you may wonder that He should keep you alive when you refuse to love Him. Man, you would not keep a horse that did not work for you. Would you keep a servant in your house who insulted you? Would you spread bread upon his table and find livery for his back, if instead of doing your will and good pleasure he would be his own master and would run counter to you? Certainly you would not. And yet here is God feeding you and you are rebelling against Him. Swearer, the lips with which you cursed your Maker are sustained by Him. The very lungs that you employ in blasphemy are inspired by Him with the breath of life, else you had ceased to be. Oh, strange that you should eat God's bread and then lift up your heel against Him!

Oh, amazing that you should sit at the table of His Providence and be clothed in the livery of His bounty and yet that you should turn round and spit against high Heaven and lift the puny hand of your rebellion against the God that made you and that preserves you. Oh, if instead of our God we had one like unto ourselves to deal with, my Brethren, we should not have patience with our fellow creatures for an hour. I marvel at God's long-suffering towards men. I see the foul-mouthed blasphemer curse his God. O God, how can You endure it? Why do You not smite him to the ground?

If a gnat should torment me, should I not in one moment crush it? And what is man compared with his Maker? Not one half so great as an ant compared with man. Oh my Brethren, we may well be astonished that God has mercy upon us, after all our violations of this high command. But I stand here today His servant and for myself and for you I claim for

God, because He is God, because He is our God and our Creator—I claim the love of all hearts, I claim the obedience of all souls and of all minds and the consecration of all our strength.

O people of God, I need not speak to you. You know that God is your God in a special sense. Therefore you ought to love Him with a special love.

II. This is what the Commandment says to us. I shall be very short, indeed, upon the second head, which is, **WHAT HAVE WE TO SAY TO IT?**

What have you to say to this command, O man? Have I one here so profoundly brainless as to reply, “I intend to keep it and I believe I can perfectly obey it and I think I can get to Heaven by obedience to it”? Man, you are either a fool, or else willfully ignorant. For surely, if you do understand this Commandment, you will at once hang down your hands and say, “Obedience to that is quite impossible. Thorough and perfect obedience to that no man can hope to reach!” Some of you think you will go to Heaven by your good works, do you? This is the first stone that you are to step upon—I am sure it is too high for your reach.

You might as well try to climb to Heaven by the mountains of earth and take the Himalayas to be your first step. For surely when you had stepped from the ground to the summit of Chimborazo you might even then despair of ever stepping to the height of this great Commandment. For to obey this must ever be an impossibility. But remember, you cannot be saved by your works if you cannot obey this entirely, perfectly, constantly, forever.

“Well,” says one, “I dare say if I try and obey it as well as I can, that will do.” No, Sir, it will not. God demands that you perfectly obey this and if you do not perfectly obey it He will condemn you. “Oh,” cries one, “who then, can be saved?” Ah, that is the point to which I wish to bring you. Who then can be saved by this Law? Why, no one in the world! Salvation by the works of the Law is proved to be a clean impossibility. None of you therefore will say you will try to obey it and so hope to be saved. I hear the best Christian in the world groan out his thoughts—“O God,” says he, “I am guilty. And should you cast me into Hell I dare not say otherwise. I have broken this command from my youth up, even since my conversion. I have violated it every day.

“I know that if You should lay justice to the line and righteousness to the plummet, I must be swept away forever. Lord, I renounce my trust in the Law. For by it I know I can never see Your face and be accepted.” But hark, I hear the Christian say another thing. “Oh,” says he to the Commandment, “Commandment I cannot keep you but my Savior kept you and what my Savior did, He did for all them that believe. And now, O Law, what Jesus did is mine. Have you any question to bring against me? You

demand that I should keep this Commandment wholly—lo, my Savior kept it wholly for me and He is my Substitute.

“What I cannot do myself my Savior has done for me. You can not reject the work of the Substitute, for God accepted it in the day when He raised Him from the dead. O Law, shut your mouth forever! You can never condemn me! Though I break you a thousand times, I put my simple trust in Jesus and in Jesus only. His righteousness is mine and with it I pay the debt and satisfy your hungry mouth.”

“Oh,” cries one, “I wish I could say that I could thus escape the wrath of the Law! Oh that I knew that Christ did keep the Law for me!” Stop, then and I will tell you. Do you feel today that you are guilty, lost and ruined? Do you with tears in your eyes confess that none but Jesus can do you good? Are you willing to give up all trusts and cast yourself alone on Him who died upon the Cross? Can you look to Calvary and see the bleeding Sufferer, all crimson with streams of gore? Can you say—

***“A guilty, weak and helpless worm,
Into Your arms I fall.
Jesus be You my righteousness,
My Savior and my All”?***

Can you say that? Then He kept the Law for *you* and the Law cannot condemn whom Christ has absolved. If Law comes to you and says, “I will damn you because you did not keep the Law,” tell him that he dares not touch a hair of your head. For though you did not keep it, Christ kept it for you and Christ’s righteousness is yours. Tell him there is the money and though you did not coin it Christ did. And tell him when you have paid him all he asks for, he dares not touch you. You must be free, for Christ has satisfied the Law.

And after that—and here I conclude—O child of God I know what you will say. After you have seen the Law satisfied by Jesus you will fall on your knees and say, “Lord, I thank You that this Law cannot condemn me, for I believe in Jesus. But now, Lord, help me from this time forth forever to keep it. Lord, give me a new heart, for this old heart never will love You! Lord, give me a new life, for this old life is too vile. Lord, give me a new understanding—wash my mind with the clean water of the Spirit. Come and dwell in my judgment, my memory, my thought. And then give me the new strength of Your Spirit and I will, by Your grace, love You with all my new heart, with all my new life, with all my renewed mind and with all my spiritual strength, from this time forth, even forever.”

May the Lord convict you of sin, by the energy of His Divine Spirit and bless this simple sermon, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

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FOR THE CANDID AND THOUGHTFUL NO. 1517

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
PREACHED AT THE THURSDAY EVENING LECTURE
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And when Jesus saw” (“saw him,” so it should be) “that he answered discreetly, He said unto him, You are not far from the kingdom of God.”
Mark 12:34.***

THIS man began with Christ as a foe and he ended as a friend. It does not quite appear from Mark, but it is plainly stated by Matthew that the scribe asked a question of the Savior, “tempting Him.” He was, therefore, an enemy. Put the mildest sense you like on the word, “tempt,” and it will retain the idea of an unfriendly testing. Yet nothing could be more hearty in the end than the verdict with which he commended our Lord’s answer, “Well, Master, You have said the truth.” Our Lord Jesus Christ has an almighty power over men’s minds. He possesses irresistible charms by which He turns adversaries into advocates. He has a secret key which fits the wards of human hearts and He can open that which seems to be the most securely closed against Him. “Never man spoke like this Man,” for in His voice, even in His humiliation, there were traces of the eternal fiat which of old spoke the primeval midnight into noon.

It strikes me that this scribe was half-hearted in the work of tempting our Lord, even at the first. I should imagine him to have been a very superior man among his fellows, a man of greater light and discernment than the rest and of greater ability in statement and discussion. Possibly for this cause his brother scribes selected him and put him forward to ask the testing questions. Now, it will sometimes happen that a man is thrust forward by others to do what he would never have thought of doing on his own accord and, quite unwillingly, he acts as the mouthpiece of a set of people whom he half despises. Our Lord Jesus Christ is a ready reader of human hearts and He very soon discovers whether what a man does is being done of himself or whether he is acted upon by a power behind.

He discerns the difference between the malicious adversary and the less guilty victim of circumstances. These words of mine may be reaching persons who have opposed a religious movement or fought against a gracious Truth of God, not because they, themselves, would have done so if they had been left alone, but others have egged them on and made use of them and thus they have been drawn or driven into a false position. The people whom they have been accustomed to lead have led them—it is too often the fate of leaders. The circle of which they have been the center and the head has imprisoned its own apparent master and made him captive so that he fights against that which, in his heart he half suspects to be right. If, even now, he could be set free from his surroundings, he would side with the right.

Friend, my blessed Master can read your heart and understand the pressure under which you are acting! I pray that as He reads your inmost soul He may see what of good there remains among the evil and deliver

you out of the false and dangerous position into which you have drifted. Jesus can set you right, my Friend—can take you away from the entanglements of your surroundings, sever you from those who are making a fool of you, but who are, at the same time, sinking you down to their own level. Jesus can bring you to be His own Friend and lift you up to His own standard so that you, too, shall be the champion of everything that is good and true and shall go forward with Him as your Master, bearing His Cross and looking to wear His crown! Although the scribe in the narrative before us appeared, first, under the aspect of an antagonist and tried to tempt our Lord, yet before long the great Teacher had put him into such a mental condition that Jesus said of him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.”

At this time I shall first notice the commendation which is here expressed. And then, in the second place, I shall dwell for a little while upon the question which is here suggested—suggested, I think, by no idle curiosity, but very naturally suggested—Did this man, who was so near to the kingdom, actually enter it, or did he not?

I. May the Holy Spirit instruct and impress us while, first, we consider the COMMENDATION EXPRESSED—“You are not far from the kingdom of God.” I am not going to use this text after the usual fashion. It has been made the heading of a catalog of characters who are supposed to be not far from the kingdom of God. It is a very proper thing to address hopeful persons and to give descriptions of conditions about which there is much that is cheering and yet much to create anxiety, but the text, itself, does not deal with many cases—it deals with but *one* whom Jesus judged to be not far from the kingdom of God, of whom it gives us such information that we see why he was thus spoken of.

It speaks of one particular individual—“*You* are not far from the kingdom of God” and it tells us that Jesus said this because He saw that the scribe answered discreetly. We may infer without fear of mistake that any man who would answer as this man answered is not far from the kingdom of God. Let us read his answer—“Master, You have said the truth; for there is one God and there is none other but He; and to love Him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the soul and with all the strength and to love his neighbor as himself is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices.”

With care let us investigate this reply and see how far it might be our own language. The first point in which our Savior saw that the scribe was not far from the kingdom of God was this—he possessed candor and possessed so much of it that he rose superior to party considerations. He was a scribe and naturally he took the side of the scribes and Pharisees, but he was not so much a scribe and Pharisee that he would follow them against the Truth of God. He kept himself open to conviction and, as soon as the Savior had given a fitting answer to the question, he did not, as other Pharisees would have done, sneer at Him and continue to pick fresh holes in His coat, but, like a candid man, he said, “Well, Master, You have answered rightly.” And thus he did, as it were, separate himself from the unjust and bigoted party for whom he had been the temporary spokesman. He did not declare himself to be a disciple of Christ, yet he gave the great Teacher His due and said of Him what he felt bound to say, namely, that He had answered rightly.

Now, my Brothers and Sisters, there is always some hope for a man who is candid and there is more hope, still, for one who, being placed by circumstances among the bigoted and prejudiced, nevertheless breaks away from bondage, keeps a clear conscience, preserves his eyes from total blindness, is willing to see light if light is to be had and is anxious to know the Truth of God if the Truth can be brought before him. It gives me great delight to meet with such persons, even though they confess that they are of a skeptical turn of mind, when it is clear that they are ready to yield to evidence and are not mere quibblers. Time is wasted upon men who have made up their minds, or who have no minds to make up—but enquirers are worth the trouble—and those who will admit right and the Truth of God when they see it are among the most hopeful of hearers!

We do not wish people to open their mouths and shut their eyes and swallow everything that we may like to give them, yet the mouth ought to be open, or at least *willing* to be opened, as well as the eyes, or our service at the Gospel feast will be a weary task. When hearers are willing to receive the Truth of God as well as to examine what they hear, they are in a good state. They will not only “prove all things,” which a great many will do, but they are ready, also, to “hold fast that which is good,” which some will not do. Among such persons was the scribe. I will suppose that I am addressing one who has been brought up under a system which makes little of Christ. Perhaps your form of religion makes much of the *priest* and of *sacraments*, but it does not say much of the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are faiths which make more of human things than of our Divine Savior, the blessed Redeemer of sinners, and it may be that you profess one of these. Or you may have, up to now, lived under a religion which makes much of your good works and doings and feelings and so on. It may be that the Lord will enable you to rise superior to the influence of creeds, of education and of associations and to say, “I only wish to know God’s way of salvation. My desire is to be guided by what the Lord has revealed. I am prepared to accept whatever is plainly taught in the Word of God, even should it reverse all my former beliefs and deprive me of my most cherished consolations. With a sincere heart I ask enlightenment from the Divine Spirit.” Now, when we meet with a man of that kind and see him hearing the Gospel, we may say of him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.”

These are the kind of people who feel the force of the Truth of God and are converted to the faith of Jesus. These are straightforward people, these hearty lovers of that which is good. The Savior called some men, “honest and good ground,” and they were such even before the Seed of the Word fell upon them. Of course even this natural openness and sincerity of character is God’s *gift*, but assuredly these are the people upon whom the heavenly work takes most effect. Your tricksters, shufflers, players, make-believes and men without principle or heart are seldom converted. I speak from wide observation. I have seen scores of blustering blasphemers who were downright in their profanity, brought to Jesus’ feet—but I do not remember seeing a deceitful person brought there.

Your deeply lying character—I will not say that it is beyond the power of Grace to save him, but I will say this—it is the rarest thing under Heaven for a man who has long been a liar to be converted. I will say nothing in

the praise of human nature, nor give any reason for the absolutely free election of Grace, but still I notice that, for the most part, there is a sort of honest openness and freedom from trickery about those whom the Lord calls to Himself. I notice that a characteristic of the first fishermen Apostles—who were no doubt ignorant and weak—was that they were as transparent as glass and as free from guile as Nathanael. Even in their follies and their sins and their blunders they were always open-hearted and so, in general, are those upon whom the Lord looks with an eye of love.

Tricksters come in like Judas, but they go out again, for they are not of us. They experience no change from their association with godliness, or from their knowledge of the Truth of God, but would pick the purse of Christ, Himself, and sell their Redeemer for pieces of silver. Far otherwise is it with a man of candid and thorough spirit, for he is glad to receive the Gospel and it soon displays its gracious power in him. We may say of the candid man as Christ did of this scribe, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.”

A second point is, perhaps, even more clear. This man also possessed *spiritual* knowledge. It is a great error to suppose that ignorance can do anybody any good. There is a religion which prefers to have ignorant people to deal with, but we have learned the Truth of what Solomon said—“The soul without knowledge, it is not good.” To be ignorant of the Law of God is to be far off from the kingdom! And to be ignorant of the Gospel is also to be, in a measure, far off from the kingdom. But this man knew the Law and knew it well. He had a *spiritual* appreciation of its range, meaning and spirituality. Notice how he puts it, for he puts it well. He says, “To love God with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the soul and with all the strength—this is the First Commandment.”

Here we see, first, that he mentions *sincere* love, in the words, “to love Him with all the heart.” God is to be loved, not in name, not with lip language, not with mere pretense, but with the heart! God requires, by His Law, the hearty obedience of His creatures. Next, the scribe puts it, “With all your *understanding*.” That is, God deserves and demands the intelligent love of His creatures. He does not ask blind love of them—He desires them to know something of Him and of His works and of His claims upon them, so as to love Him because He *deserves* their affection. The understanding must justify and impel the affections.

Then he puts it, “with all your soul.” That is, with the *emotional* nature. Love God with feeling—not coolly—but with the whole force of your feeling. Love Him with your soul, for soul-love is the soul of love. And then he adds, “and with all your strength.” That is to say, intensity is to be thrown into our love to God. We are to serve Him with all our might and throw all our energy into His worship! Thus he gives us, under four heads, a description of the kind of love which the Law of God requires of us—*sincere*—“with all your heart.” Intelligent—“with all your understanding.” Emotional—“with all your soul.” Intense and energetic—“with all your strength.” This the scribe knew and it was most valuable knowledge.

Beloved, when a man begins intelligently to grasp the doctrines of the Law and the Gospel; when we perceive that he is no stranger to Divine things but that he can give a *reason* for his beliefs and can state them to others—although we dare not conclude, because of this knowledge, that

such a man is actually in the kingdom of God—we may safely conclude that he is not far from it! Give us candor and let that candor be attended with enlightenment and we are sure that the possessor of these things is not far from the kingdom of God! A third point is more remarkable, still, because it is to be feared that hundreds of professed Christians are nothing like so near to the kingdom of Heaven as this man was. This scribe knew the superiority of an *inward* religion over that which is external, for he declares, “To love Him with all your heart is more than whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

Thousands at this hour are publicly teaching us that the principal point of religion is that you shall be duly and properly baptized and confirmed and shall reverently and properly receive the sacraments. They lay stress upon your *receiving* before you have your breakfast and upon the breaker of the sacred bread having been duly touched on the head by a bishop and I do not know what else of mere outward circumstance! Books have been written about how the service is to be performed and how it is *not* to be performed and a great noise has been made about a piece of bread which was brought before a court of law. I believe a very great dignitary has been so weak as to certify that this baked dough has been “reverently consumed” and yet this is not a heathen country, nor are we worshippers of fetishes!

Great importance is attached to the style of garment which should be worn by priests on Holy Monday, or Good Friday. Colors vary according to the almanac and the age of the moon. I must confess I need all my gravity when I think of vestments and girdles and surplices and gowns being matters of serious discussion! Surely these poor dupes of superstition are far—very far—from the kingdom of God, which is not meat and drink, nor clothing, nor posture, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit! Their whole line of thought is alien to the mind of God who is a Spirit and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth! In the whole business of exhibition religion, what is there to content the soul? What can there be in it to please God? If our God were a royal puppet, I could conceive of His being pleased with ceremonies!

Or if He were like the heathens’ idiotic deities, I could understand that mummeries, masquerades, postures, processions, robes and round-robins might please Him—but seeing that He is God, the Only Wise—far be it from me to *dream* of such a thing! Such child’s play can scarcely be borne by full-grown men! For that glorious Mind that fills all immensity to be thought to be concerned about the cut and color of a *vestment* seems to me to be little short of blasphemy! When the thing was typical of the Truth of God yet to be revealed, it was important! But now that the true Light has risen and the shadows have departed, no such explanation is possible! Can it really be true that courts of law and assemblies of the church discuss the question of men’s turning to the east or to the west when they pray? Is it thought to be of some consequence how men shall turn and twist and bend? What god is this that they serve? What being is this that they adore?

Certainly not Jehovah, the God of Heaven, whom we worship, for He “dwells not in temples made with hands.” That is to say, of this building! And He has abolished all rubrics save this—“they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” Only *spiritual* worship is worship and

only as the *heart* adores does God accept the homage which is offered to Him. This scribe knew that even whole burnt offerings, though God had ordained them and they were, therefore, right and sacrifices—though the Law had settled them and they were, therefore due—he knew, I say, they were *nothing* when compared with loving God with all the heart and with all the soul! He expresses most plainly that, “to love God with all the heart is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

And look how broadly he puts it—“*All* whole burnt offerings and sacrifices” put together! If they could slay all the bullocks upon a thousand hills and set Lebanon, itself, on fire, making it one huge altar upon which the holocaust should smoke! And even if they should pour out rivers of oil and, side by side with it ran streams of blood of fat beasts, yet all would be *nothing*! Who has required this at their hands? The Lord’s demands are not of this sort. “Sacrifice and offering You would not.” What God asks is that we should love Him, first of all, and our neighbor as ourselves. Now, a man who has come so far as to shake off the superstition of confidence in external worship is not far from the kingdom of God! He who knows that if saved it will be by a *spiritual* change and not by going to a place of worship, not by repeating prayers, not by joining a Church, not by being baptized, not by taking the sacraments knows more than many!

And he who also knows that loving God with all his heart is an absolutely necessary evidence of his being a child of God—and longs to feel that love—is not far from the kingdom! A sense of the value and necessity of spiritual religion is a most hopeful sign. I do not say that it is a *sure* sign of saving Grace, but I am sure it is a token of being very near the kingdom. Oh that the man would take the one step which is now needed by turning his knowledge into practice! Oh that he would *believe* with all his heart and live!

Another point is manifest in this man’s confession—He saw very plainly the supremacy of God over the whole of our manhood. It was clear to him that there was but one God and that man was made on purpose to be one and undivided in His service. He perceived that man should love, honor and serve that one God with all his heart, with all his understanding, with all his soul and with all his strength. Do you know that, dear Friend? Come now, if you are not a saved man, I will ask you—do you recognize this to be true—that it is your bounden *duty* to serve your God with all your heart and understanding and soul and strength? Do you admit this? If you do and if you are an honest man, you are not far from the kingdom of God because honest men earnestly endeavor to pay their debts—and when they find that they *cannot*, they are distressed.

If you are in distress of mind because you cannot meet your obligations to God, then you are not far from the kingdom! I rejoice in your discovery of shortcoming, failure and inability, for these lie near that hearty penitence which is the sister of saving faith and the sure herald of joy and peace! When a man feels his own inability to do as he ought. When he trembles before the Law which, nevertheless, he honors and admits to be just and right—he is not far from self-renunciation and from accepting that matchless righteousness which Jesus Christ has come to bring! A consciousness of the supremacy of the Sovereignty of God over us, so that He ought to have every thought, every breath, every pulse is the work of the Spirit who thereby convicts us of sin and it is a sweet sign of dawn in

the once darkened soul. Admit that God ought to be heartily loved and you are not far from loving Him! Feel that you are guilty for not loving and the seeds of love are in your heart!

Once more only. Although this hopeful scribe recognized the value of spiritual religion and the need of heart-work and of the heart being wholly given to God, he did not despise outward religion so far as it was commanded of God. He says that to love God is better than whole burnt offerings and sacrifices—which was an admission that these things were good in their places. He was no rejecter of ceremonies which are commanded because of the superstition of will-worshippers who invent ceremonies. We are not to give up the Baptism of Believers because of the unscriptural rite of infant sprinkling, nor to forsake the Lord's Supper because of the popish "mass." Ordinances of God are good in their places—what is to be dreaded is the perversion of them by thrusting them into the place of better and more important matters. Thus the scribe showed a well-balanced mind all round and proved himself not far from the kingdom of God.

My dear Friend, are you prepared to lay hold of the Truth of God wherever you find it? Are you prepared to break away from party ties and family prejudices? Are you prepared to believe that the inward and spiritual part of religion is infinitely superior to the external part of it, be it right or be it wrong? Do you also admit the Divine supremacy of God and His right to you in all respects? And are you willing to take ordinances, such as He has ordained in their place and not out of it? Then, if all these things are in you, your character resembles that of this scribe of whom Jesus said, "You are not far from the kingdom of God."

I am right glad to meet with you, for you are not far from submitting to the Divine authority since you are already found admitting its right to you. I trust you are not far from entering into the realm of spiritual religion, for you already value it. You are not far from the privilege of being wholly renewed in heart since you see the need of it. How glad I am that you should be now listening to the Gospel! Happier, still, shall I be if God shall help me to say the right words to you at this good hour. The Lord send it!

II. Our second point is THE QUESTION SUGGESTED—this man came so near to the kingdom. Did he ever enter it? We do not know. If anybody were to assert that he did *not* I should be ready to question his statement. If anybody were to declare that he *did* I should at once demand his authority for the assertion. We receive no information from the Scriptures and it is always better, where the Word of God is silent, to be silent ourselves. We should also observe another very good rule if you have to judge of a man's state and know but little of it, always judge it favorably. Judges usually give a prisoner the benefit of the doubt and when a man is not a prisoner, when he has come so far towards Grace as this scribe, let us, at any rate, *hope* that he did enter into the kingdom!

I see no reason why he should not have done so and that is my first answer to the question. He should have done so. Having come so far, there were many doors by which, God's Spirit being with him, he might have entered into the kingdom. I mean doors of thought by which the Holy Spirit would readily have led his candid mind into the faith of Christ. I will show you one. There was in later years another scribe, a rabbi—you will remember his name—who said, "I consent unto the Law, that it is good; but

I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

You see the process of thought. It is a very simple one. This scribe sees the Law of God to be a *spiritual* Law, demanding the obedience of his heart, his understanding, his soul and his strength. If he had thought awhile, he would, as a candid man, have said, “I have not kept this Law. What is more, I *cannot* keep it. If I try to keep it I find something within me against which I struggle, but which, nevertheless, brings me into captivity to another law—a law of selfishness, a law of sin.” Then, as a man anxious to be right, he would have said, “How can I be delivered? Oh that I might be set free to keep the Law of God! I cannot abide in this bondage. I ought to keep this Law. I shall never be happy till I love God with all my heart, for He ought to be so loved and I perceive that there can be no Heaven to a heart which does not love God intensely, for this is one of the essentials of peace and rest. How can I get at it?”

In such a condition as that, if he had heard the sweet invitation of our Lord, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest,” would he not have leaped at the sound? Do you not see the simple doorway for such a man as that to become a Christian? He had come so far that surely he should come a little farther. Let us trust that he did. At any rate, if any of you have come so far, may God’s sweet Spirit lead you to take those other steps and to enter into the kingdom, submitting to the sweet sovereignty of Prince Immanuel whose scepter is of silver and whose servitude is an honor and a delight to all His subjects!

That is one door, now follow with me another track. Suppose this man had really loved God with all his heart and understanding and soul and strength—I will not say *perfectly*, for that would be supposing an impossibility—but supposing that he had truly and sincerely loved God? He could not have been an hour in the company of the Lord Jesus without feeling the deepest union of heart to Him! Would he not have exclaimed, “This Man, too, loves God with all His heart”? He must have perceived it, for the zeal which Christ had for the Father was immeasurable! It flashed in every gleam of His eyes! It tintured every word that fell from His lips! Jesus lived for God and glorified the Father with all His heart and soul and any person who truly loved God would soon have perceived that fact.

“Ah,” he would have exclaimed, “*here* is One who loves God better than I do! Here is One who honors God more than I do! Here is One who is more consecrated, more devoted, more godlike than I am!” By that door he would have been led to admiration of Jesus, to communion with Him and ultimately to belief in Him as the Messiah. Let us hope that the scribe was so led, for the way is plain enough. At any rate, if God, in His Grace, has led any man here to love the Father, I am persuaded that he will love the Son, for he that loves Him that begat, loves Him, also, that is begotten of Him.

My Hearer, you are certainly not far from the kingdom of God if you have come so far as to love God, even though you know little as yet of His only-begotten Son. God help you to take that one other step. Here is another door. You notice that he said that to love God was more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices. Now, suppose that with that in his mind,

he had sat down and said, "This loving God is the main thing. Why, then, is the Law encumbered with burnt offerings and sacrifices? If they really are inferior to the moral precepts and especially to the *spiritual* precepts, why are they there at all?" Then I think he would have seen that they must be there for a *spiritual* purpose. And suppose he had begun to try and read the meaning of the paschal lamb, or of the daily lamb, or of the sin-offering? Why, I think if he turned to that blessed 53rd chapter of Isaiah and began to read it in order to understand the sacrifices of the old Law, it would have happened to him as it did to the eunuch when Philip opened to him the Scriptures—he would have seen Jesus in them all!

And if you, dear Friend, have come to see the right place of Gospel ordinances through candidly searching out their meaning, you have seen that their whole teaching is Christ Jesus, the Sacrifice for sin! There is nothing in the two great Gospel ordinances but Christ! Christ's sufferings, death, burial and Resurrection set forth in Baptism! Christ's death set forth until He comes at the communion table—life given us by our Savior's death and life sustained by the same means. Jesus is the Body of the ordinances of the Old Testament and the Soul of those of the New. If you are but candid enough to desire to push through the veil and get at the real meaning of every outward ordinance, you will see Jesus before long.

There is another road by which the scribe might have been led to the Savior. Think again. Suppose that he had continued to glow and burn with love to God. As that love grew, the understanding would also become enlightened with it and the soul would rise towards God. You know why that would be? It must be because the Holy Spirit was in the man, for no man loves God or strives to love God with all his heart and understanding and soul and strength without there being, in secret and unknown to him, a Divine power at the back impelling him in that direction.

Now, do you think that the Holy Spirit would thus work in the man and not reveal Christ to him for his salvation? I cannot believe it! I am persuaded that, coming as that man did under the Gospel of Christ, he would be, by his candor, by his love of God, by the influence of the Divine Spirit, in such a state of mind that, as when sparks fall upon dry tinder they ignite at once, so would the Words of Jesus fall upon a mind prepared by the Spirit of God! That scribe was, therefore, not far from the kingdom of God! I hope that there are some such hearts present at this hour. Some of you, I trust, can say, "Oh that I had Christ! I would give my eyes for Him." If you mean that, why do you not have Him? He is to be had for nothing.

"Oh," says another, "I would die if I might have Him and be saved." Why not live and be saved? "Oh, but I would give anything." Why not leave off the idea of *giving* and *take* freely what Jesus presents to you? But yet that very desire of yours—that longing of yours—*proves* that you are not far from the kingdom of God! My heart's desire is that as you have come so far, you may now yield yourselves up to Jesus. That is the way of salvation—have done with self-salvation and let Jesus save you! When a man is in the water, if he kicks and struggles, he will drown. But if he lies still, he will float. When another comes to help, if he will be passive, he will be saved—all that he can *do* will hinder his deliverance. Be passive in the hands of Christ till He gives you life to be active! Be *nothing* and let Him be everything! Trust Him wholly and alone. Drop into His arms and let

Him bear the weight of your sins and sorrows and it shall not be said of you any longer that you are not far from the kingdom of God, but it shall be sung on earth and in Heaven—"He has returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of souls, glory be to God!"

Still, as I have said, there is the dark supposition that perhaps the scribe never did enter the kingdom. He may have been so near to the kingdom and yet he may have lacked the one thing necessary. If it were so, it was a grievous fact and all we can do now is to profit by it. What could have been the reason why he did *not* enter the kingdom? I cannot tell, we know so little of him, but if we might infer from the little we do know, I should suppose that if he did not enter it was from the unworthy motive of being swayed by his fellow men. We judged that when he came to Christ to put the question, he came not of his own mind and motion. We began by thinking that he seemed half-hearted in his opposition and so he the more readily turned from a questioner into a candid admirer.

It is, however, just possible that being the spokesman for others, he had grown fond of taking the lead. And if he did not really enter the kingdom, it may have been because he would have lost his place in the front rank of the scribes and Pharisees and this was too great a price to pay for truth and righteousness. I have known a man deeply impressed with religious things and feeling his way aright—but a little company of half a dozen whom he met in the evening, of whom he was the leading spirit, have sufficed to hold him in bondage. They invite him to come again. They miss his genial society; his jest; his song; his merry talk. He cannot face it out and tell them that he has a call elsewhere, a call to nobler things. He has not the resolute will to lead them in another direction and dreads even to make the attempt.

He wants to be the leading man and so he gives up what his conscience suggests to him rather than not be the leader of men whom, in his heart, he must know to be unworthy of such a homage. In his own mind he thinks them fools, but still he is afraid that they should think *him* so and, therefore, he becomes a greater and more guilty fool than they. Oh, that fear of men, that fear of men! You may meet with, here and there, a man of the better sort who begins to feel, "Yes, there is the light there—light worth having." He breaks away from his party and its surroundings and, for a while, is eager for the Truth of God which he has half discovered—but he fears the cold shoulder which society would give him. He dreads the jeer of, "Sir John," and the sneer of, "My Lord." The half-opened eye is closed with saddest determination from fear of other children of darkness who would mock at its better sight.

This is a sight which might make an angel weep! Jesus is sold, but not for as much as clinked in the hand of Judas! He is bartered for a fool's smile and for the company of the vain and frivolous! Ah me, that ever the sun should behold so dread a sight! Multitudes who know the Truth and are not far from the kingdom of God, nevertheless, never enter it because of the fear of *man*, the love of approbation, the horror of being laughed at and jested at! With such vile fetters, immortal souls are bound for execution and held back from everlasting blessedness! There is something very beautiful about many a young man of enquiring mind and if you could transplant him and set him in another soil, you might make something of him—but not in that shop where all his fellows would make him the butt

of their jokes if he were really a Christian! Not in that work room where all the artisans would swear and chaff if he were but to acknowledge his half-formed convictions!

Lack of courage—lack of self-denial—is that fatal flaw which ruins what otherwise would have been a gem in the Redeemer's crown! All brave hearts mournfully pronounce that he is justly lost who is not bold enough to acknowledge his Savior and the Truth of God—

***“I had as life not be, as live to be
In awe of such a thing as I myself.”***

Afraid of another man! Am I then, myself, a man? Or am I but the mere mockery of manhood? Oh, Sirs, let your manhood come to the rescue! God grant you Grace to say, “What can it matter to me what men say as long as I am right?” They cannot break bones with their jests. And if they did, there have been Christians who have not only suffered the breaking of their bones, but the burning of their whole bodies for Christ's sake sooner than deny His sacred claims. What did Jesus say? “He that loses his life for My sake shall find it.” He who, to gain the whole world, would keep back a solitary Truth of God, is a huge loser for his pains. He is mean and base and not worthy to be numbered among those who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. Oh, if I speak to one who hesitates, let me remind him that however it may look to-night to be a daring step to be decided for Christ, it will soon look very differently when the great trumpet shall sound and ring over earth and sea and the dead shall rise and the Judgment Seat shall be set and the Great White Throne shall be unveiled!

Then it will be seen to be a far more desperate daring to *deny* the Lord even to save life itself. What will the cowards do in that day who, to please men, forsook their Lord? What will they do who denied the Truth of God and stifled conscience when the Shepherd begins to divide the goats and the sheep from each other? Yes, what will they do who find themselves driven with the goats, though once they half decided to be numbered with the sheep? They were near the fold, but never entered. What will they feel when He shall say, “Depart! Depart! I know you not. You knew not Me in the day of My humiliation. You were ashamed of Me in the world. You blushed at My name. You covered up what was in your conscience in order to avoid man's laughter and rebuke. You knew not Me and now I know not you. Depart! Depart!”

In proportion to the light against which you have shut your eyes will be your horror when that light shall blind you into eternal night! In proportion to the violence which you have done to your consciences will be the terror which your awakened conscience will work in you! In proportion to the nearness of the kingdom within which you came shall be the dreadful distance to which you will be driven! I was thinking that, if the Lord were to pay men in their own coin, what an awful thing it would be if those who are now not far from the kingdom were told by the Lord, “You shall stay there forever. You who heard the Gospel and did not accept it must stay where you are.” Stop, Sir! Not a step more! Close to the gates of Heaven—you must stop there! To hear its music forever and to gnash your teeth forever because you cannot join in it! To hear the songs of the righteous, while you wail forever! To know the brightness of bliss, but to be in the black darkness forever!

To be within an *inch* of Heaven and yet in Hell! The Living Water flowing at your feet and yet your tongue forever parched! The Bread of Life near at hand and yet you cannot eat! Oh, think of it! Eternally not far from the kingdom! If you would not wish to be so, oh, be not out of Christ another minute! May God's Spirit enable you to leap right away from your undecided condition into living faith and loving obedience to Christ—

***“So near to the Kingdom! Yet what do you lack?
So near to the Kingdom! What keeps you back?
Renounce every idol, though dear it may be
And come to the Savior now pleading with thee.”***

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON

DEAR FRIENDS—Nothing remains to report to you but my hope of being in my own pulpit on February 8. I beg you to join with me in thanks to the healing Lord for this restoration. The Lord brings down to the grave and raises up again and to Him be praise forever. It would be a great favor to me, personally, and a means of good to many if the readers of the sermons would aid in increasing their circulation. They are already very widely scattered, but if twice the number could be sent abroad, we might look for double fruit. After standing the test of 25 years, the Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit may be pardoned if it asks those who profit by the sermons to introduce them to others. May future discourses be more full of unction and power and so may you, dear Readers, reap a harvest from my pains and sicknesses.

Yours ever heartily,

C. H. SPURGEON

Mentone, January 22, 1880

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

NEAR THE KINGDOM, OR IN IT? NO. 2989

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 24, 1906.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 24, 1875.

*“You are not far from the Kingdom of God.”
Mark 12:34.*

IN certain respects, all men are alike—alike fallen and alike needing the Savior. Hence we have not 20 gospels, but only one—and we have not the Gospel graduated to scale to suit different classes of society, or different conditions of morality. We have the same Christ to set before sinners of every sort as their only hope—and the same message to proclaim to everyone of them, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.”

At the same time, we would make a very great mistake if we dealt with everybody in precisely the same way, for all human beings are not exactly alike and our Savior, Himself, drew distinctions concerning those who came to Him while He was upon the earth. He uttered very strong language to some of the scribes, but He used a very different tone in addressing the particular scribe to whom He said, “You are not far from the Kingdom of God.”

There is no doubt that there are some sinners who are very far from the Kingdom of God—by their wicked works, they have gone away even further than they were by nature. They have added to the original sin which was theirs by birth, all the corruptions which have come of evil habits and, with their backs to the Light of God, they have gone further and further into the darkness of the night of sin. There are others, who through the restraining Grace of God, have never done this. They are fallen creatures, it is true, but still, there are many beautiful points in their character. Indeed, they are so amiable that even Jesus, when looking upon one such young man, loved him, though He had to say even to him—“One thing you lack.” The lack of that one thing was fatal! Still, Christ recognized the good that there was in him and I feel sure that He would have His ministers and all who try to bring souls to Him, act in the same way. Besides, a point is gained with a man if you frankly recognize whatever there is about him that is satisfactory—and he will be the more likely to listen to you when you point out his defects and show him wherein his character still falls short of what it ought to be. Fully believing that I have many in this congregation who are “not far from the Kingdom of God,” I shall speak especially to them, or, rather, I pray that the Holy Spirit will speak to them through me, for it is HE who speaks with power to the heart and conscience!

I shall first *describe the condition in which this man was*. Then, secondly, *point out its dangers*. And, thirdly, *note its encouragements*.

I. First, then, let me DESCRIBE THE CONDITION IN WHICH THIS MAN WAS. “You are not far from the Kingdom of God.”

Christ spoke thus to him and, as He was able to read the man’s heart, he could tell, with absolute accuracy, the condition in which the man was. And He is able to read all our hearts at this moment. Looking down from the Throne of Glory, He knows, dear Friend, exactly what your position is in relation to His Kingdom—how far you have come and how far short you still fall. Trusting in His unerring knowledge, I pray Him to send His Spirit, that the Word of God spoken may meet your particular case, and so come home to you that you may perceive that God, Himself, is speaking to you and calling you to come into the Kingdom towards which you have come so near.

Let us first look at this scribe’s case and see why it was that he was so near to the Kingdom. I think the first hopeful sign about him was that *he had evidently been and was a man of candid spirit*. He was not so prejudiced as most of the other scribes were. His mind and heart were open to conviction. When he read the ancient Scriptures, he did not read them with his eyes shut, or gazing through colored Rabbinical spectacles as so many of the scribes read them. He went to them desiring to know the Truth of God that was in them and, when he saw the Truth, he did not rebel against it, but yielded himself to it. It is evident that he had been a candid student of the Law of God, for he had arrived at the conclusion that its greatest commandment was love to God and to one’s neighbor, whereas I have no doubt that many of his fellow scribes had given the first place to matters that were purely ceremonial—something to do with circumcision, perhaps, or with the eating of unleavened bread—matters that were important enough in their proper sphere, yet not to be regarded as the weightiest things in the Law. But this man had read with an evident determination to know the Truth and so far, he had found it out.

He showed his candor, not only by his diligent search for the Truth, but also by being a candid controversialist. He had heard the questions which had been put to Christ and he had noted how wisely Christ had answered them. And he had also noticed that not one of the questioners had had the courtesy to say that Christ had answered them well. They were so ashamed of themselves for putting the questions to Him, that they had evidently retired into the background. But this man, as soon as he received the answer to his enquiry, seemed to recognize the wisdom of the great Teacher and he expressed the opinion that Christ had answered him wisely. I do not know how he could have put it better than he did when he said, “Well, Master, you have said the truth.” You know that when men are arguing, and their blood is hot, it very often happens that the one disputant will not admit that the other has spoken the truth. Though he is quite sure that it is so, he will not acknowledge it—and it is an evidence of a really candid spirit when, in the midst of a debate, a man confesses that his opponent has got the better of him. It shows that he is not merely fighting for the victory, but is seeking the truth. And there is always something hopeful about a man of that sort. My dear Friend, I do not know where you are, nor what your particular opinions may be, but if you are firmly resolved to follow truth wherever

she may lead you, I think I may say to you, as Christ said to this scribe, "You are not far from the Kingdom of God." Do not be self-confident, nor rely too much upon your own judgment, but let your mind lie open to conviction. Above all, let it be open to the heavenly Light of God! And if you do, I shall have hope concerning you, notwithstanding a thousand mistakes that you may make. An honest seeker after the Truth of God will not be long before Truth finds him and he finds Truth!

Another favorable point in this scribe's character was that *he evidently had some degree of spiritual perception*—not much, perhaps, but still, as things went, a good deal for that time. He had found out, through reading the Law of God, that God attached more importance to matters of moral practice than to mere matters of ceremony, and much more importance to that which concerned the heart than so many outward actions. "To love the Lord with all one's heart, and soul, and strength, and to love one's neighbor as one's self," said this scribe, "is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." He had advanced further than many a Romanist has, for the Romanist would hardly say as much as he did. "The outward ceremonies of the church are so exceedingly important," he would say, "that, I could not put anything else before them." But this man had been taught to feel that real heart-work and true love to God were more important than all the ceremonies of the Law, *even though they were ordained by God, Himself*. He had advanced further than some of our very doctrinal friends, to whom orthodoxy seems to be both the first thing and the last thing, though, as you very well know, what they call orthodoxy is simply their own doxy! But if people only hold that doxy, that is about all they care for—all the rest is a very secondary matter to them. This scribe, however, had advanced further than that and he would, doubtless, have said that to love God with the whole of one's heart was more important than believing all the dogmas that were ever formulated by all the doctors of divinity in the world!

This scribe had also advanced further than the mere moralist, who teaches that if you do what *you* think is right, that is all you need trouble yourselves about. But this scribe expressly spoke of loving the Lord "with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength." He could see that the entire man must be given up to love God, for, if he were not, all the outward profession of living according to the letter of the Law would not suffice. Now, dear Friend, if you have been enabled to break through your former attachment to mere external ceremonies—if you have fully comprehended that true religion is not a matter of mere externals—you are "not far from the Kingdom of God." You are one of those who are learning that "God is a Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeks such to worship Him." I hope He is seeking you and that, before long, you will not only be *near* the Kingdom, but actually in it! It is a grand thing when a man is brought so far as to be able, from deep inward conviction, to say with Dr. Watts—

***"Not all the outward forms of earth,
Nor rites that God has given,
Nor will of man, nor blood, nor birth,***

Can raise a soul to Heaven.”

If we are to be saved there must be the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit within the soul to make it spiritual and capable of spiritual worship! And he who really knows this is “not far from the Kingdom of God.”

Another admirable point in this scribe’s character was that *he evidently had a considerable knowledge of the Law*. To know the Law of the Lord is the next thing to knowing the Gospel. It is not everybody who understands this Truth of God, but it really is so. Old Robby Flockhart, an evangelist who used to preach in the streets of Edinburgh, sometimes said to his hearers, “I will preach the Law of God to you tonight, and nothing but the Law of God, for it is the sharp needle without which I cannot get the silken thread of the Gospel into your hearts.” And he spoke the truth. Paul wrote to the Galatians, “The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.” When the Law condemns a man, he flies to Christ to seek forgiveness—but until he has received the sentence of the Law in his own soul, he will never fly to Jesus Christ and His atoning Sacrifice to be set free from sin. If the Law is rightly used, it drives the sinner to the Savior—and there was hope concerning this scribe because he evidently knew the requirements of the Law of God. He did not sum that up in a mere outward morality, but he knew that the Law was spiritual and that it made demands upon man of a spiritual character. It would not have taken anyone long, I should think, to convince that man that he had fallen short of those demands. And when he had been thus convinced, he was well on the way to seeing the preciousness of the Atonement that could meet the demands of that broken Law of God—so that his knowledge of the requirements of the Law helped him to be “not far from the Kingdom of God.”

Once again, *this scribe was evidently teachable*. He was in such a frame of mind that he was willing to hear what the great Teacher had to say. I do not think he came to Christ as a quibbler. He probably came to test Christ, but not to quibble with Him after he had tested Him and, having tested Him, he was willing to learn more of Him. It is a hopeful sign when we are willing to sit on the children’s seat, remembering our Lord’s words to His disciples, “Except you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.” Some people are much too big to go through Heaven’s gate. They are so wise, in their own estimation, that they are not willing to be taught even by Infinite Wisdom. Their judgment is so accurate, their intelligence is so clear, that they will not submit to be instructed by Him who is the very Wisdom of God. They think that they have within themselves the power to draw an Infallible distinction between right and wrong, between the Truth of God and error—and they will not allow even the Almighty to dictate to them, and to be the Arbiter of their lives. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, this is a sad state for anyone to be in! But it is a hopeful sign when we are teachable. If you are so, you are “not far from the Kingdom of God.”

Now I will leave this scribe, in order that I may take notice of some others who are “not far from the Kingdom of God.” There are many persons who, from their youth up, have always had a great horror of that

which is wrong. And they have felt—not to perfection, but to a considerable extent—a delight in that which is true and good. They do not feel themselves to be true or good, but they wish they were. Their first associations in life were with godly people and they have always loved godly things. They do not find family prayer to be irksome or, if they do, they realize how wrong they are for being in such a state of mind. They would be very sorry if the ordinances of religion were neglected in the place where they live. The Sabbath is a delight to them and they love to go up to God's House. They hardly know why they feel thus, for they are afraid they have no part nor lot in the matter, but still, they like to go there—if there is anything good to be heard, they wish to have a share in it. If anybody speaks against good things, or good men, they are very grieved. Horror takes hold of them if they ever hear God's name blasphemed. They have had, from their very childhood, a bias in the direction of that which is right—but it is natural rather than spiritual. They are not, as yet, distinctly out and out for Christ—they have not believed in Him as their Savior, they have not yielded themselves up completely to Him. I am persuaded that we have large numbers of young people who are very accurately described by that expression, "not far from the Kingdom." Of course, I am speaking of their best side and I am well aware that there is another side to their character—but there is still much about them that is hopeful.

I know some who are even nearer to the Kingdom than those whom I have been describing, for they are under a very deep sense of their sinfulness. Not one of them would ever be so foolish and so wicked as to say, "God, I thank You that I am not as other men are." Often, while they are sitting here listening to a sermon that is full of comfort, they feel that they are not entitled to have it for themselves. Oh, how they wish they could believe and that they were really saved! One thing they do realize—that is, they are lost, and ruined, and undone. This fact has caused them much sorrow of heart, but they are not yet sufficiently awake to make the desperate effort which decides the matter. Realizing that they are condemned, they cannot feel at ease and, sometimes, floods of tears flow down from their eyes because of their transgressions. Ah, my dear Friend, if that is your condition, you are, truly, "not far from the Kingdom of God."

There are others who are in this further hopeful condition, that they are very attentive hearers of the Word. They come to the House of Prayer on purpose that they may hear the Gospel and, after a fashion, they pray that the Gospel may be a blessing to them. I like preaching to people of that sort! One might wish to preach all day and all night if one could only have throngs of such hearers—everyone of whom would be praying, "O my God, bless me! O my God, save me!" I remember that when I was in this condition, I used to pray all through a sermon, "O Lord, meet with me, meet with me tonight!" And, my dear Friend, you are "not far from the Kingdom" if that is how you are now praying.

I know some who have advanced still further, for they have kept on praying wherever they have been, though they themselves hardly know whether they have been praying rightly. You know, dear Friend, that you went home last Sabbath and fell on your knees, and cried, "Lord, save

me!” And, during the past week, you have got away alone as often as you could that you might have a little time of prayer. Even when you have been at work—you do not know whether others have noticed it or not—there has been the heaving of a sigh or the upward glancing of the eyes. Sometimes you have almost wished that you had never been born, for you have had the dreadful fear that you might never find the Savior! At other times, you have had a little hope that perhaps you might and, at any rate, you are a true seeker—and I believe you are “not far from the Kingdom.”

Besides that, I should not wonder if you read the Scriptures very earnestly to try to find out how you can obtain eternal life. And you also study good books with the same view—those very books which you once thought so dull and even horrible! You read them now at every spare moment that you can get. You would rather read them than the most fascinating romantic novel that was ever written, for you are earnestly seeking eternal life. You certainly are “not far from the Kingdom of God.”

II. Now, secondly, I want you to NOTICE THE PECULIAR DANGER OF YOUR CONDITION if you are “not far from the Kingdom.”

The great danger of it is that *though you are not far from the Kingdom, you are not in it*. A man was in a sinking ship. He almost leaped into the lifeboat, but just missed it and was drowned. The manslayer was fighting for his life and the avenger of blood was close behind him. He had almost reached the City of Refuge, but he was overtaken by his adversary just outside the gate—and so was slain. Almost saved is altogether lost! There are many in Hell who once were almost saved, but who are now altogether damned. Think of that, you who are not far from the Kingdom. It is being in the Kingdom that saves the soul, not being *near* the Kingdom. If you are just upon the border, yet if you have not actually entered, you are not secure. Those five foolish virgins were almost in the banqueting hall—there was only the thickness of a door between them and the wedding feast—but they only heard the awful sentence, “Too late! Too late! You cannot enter now.” Your great danger is that you will get to be content with being *near* the Kingdom, although not actually in it. I have known some people remain in that perilous position for months and years till, at last, it got to be their chronic condition and they made no effort to take the decisive step. They appeared to be in a very hopeful state, yet I fear that, by-and-by, we shall have to give them up as utterly hopeless. Oh, these hopelessly hopeful people—what can we do with them? They are, for a time, hopeful, yet never more than hopeful and, at last, we have to admit that their apparent goodness is only superficial and that all the hopes they raised within us are delusive. They mock us and we also fear that they mock God!

We are also very much afraid that you who are “not far from the Kingdom,” *may get into your heads the notion that there is something good in you* and that there being something good in you, it will help to save you. If so, you will be really further away from the Kingdom than if you were liberally far off! I know of nothing that will more effectually keep you out of the Kingdom of God than the notion that you are good enough to stay out—the idea that, surely, God will not condemn such excellent persons as you are! And, besides, you are so near that you can slip in

any day. If you get that notion into your head, I am afraid you will never slip in, but that you will perish in your present lost condition. Oh, may God graciously deliver all of you from such fatal self-righteousness!

I should like to point out to you one thing and that is this—*how very terrible it would be if you should be lost after having been so near to the Kingdom of God!* The manslayer is overtaken by the avenger of blood and falls a mangled corpse upon the very threshold of the City of Refuge—does not that seem truly dreadful? One step more and he would have been safe! But he could not make that step, so he was slain. I always feel mortified if I got to a railway station just as the train, which I want to catch, moves from the station. If it had gone ten minutes earlier, I would not have minded missing it so much—but to be so near as to see it go seems to aggravate my disappointment and, certainly, it will be the greatest aggravation of all to you if you are lost after having been so very near to the Kingdom of God! I can almost imagine other souls that are lost speaking to you in that tone of tension which Isaiah applied to the king of Babylon, “Hell from beneath is moved for you to meet you at my coming...They shall go and say unto you, Have you also become weak as we? Have you become like us? How are you fallen!” What horror must have seized the guilty tyrant when he came into the midst of those whom he had oppressed and crushed! And if some of you who have been so near to the Kingdom, are lost, I can imagine the swearer in Hell saying to you, “Ah, you rebuked me for my oaths, but where are you now?” And another will say, “You used to help reclaim drunks, but where are you now? You were one of those who used to sit in the Tabernacle and listen to sermons. I never went there, but you did—and how much the better are you for going?”

And some of them will say, “Oh, if we had only had your opportunities, if we had but heard the Gospel as you heard it! If we had been placed under the holy, hallowed influences which surrounded you, surely we would not have acted so foolishly as you have done!” I need not draw any fancy pictures of what may happen, for you know what our Lord Jesus Christ said to those who heard Him and yet repented not—“I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the Day of Judgment, than for you.” If you have heard the Gospel and the Kingdom of God has come near unto you, and you have come near unto it, and yet, through lack of the decided act of faith in Jesus Christ, you perish in your sin, your doom will be more terrible even than that of Tyre and Sidon, or Sodom and Gomorrah—

***“So near to the Kingdom! Yet what do you lack?
So near to the Kingdom! What keeps you back?
Denounce every idol, though dear it may be,
And come to the Savior now pleading with thee!
So near, that you hear the songs that resound
From those who believing, a pardon have found!
So near, yet unwilling to give up your sin
When Jesus is waiting to welcome you in!
To die with no hope! Have you counted the cost?—
To die out of Christ and your soul to be lost?
So near to the Kingdom! Oh come, we implore!
While Jesus is pleading, come enter the door!”***

III. I will not say more upon that sad part of my subject. I feel far more at home in trying to speak, for only a minute or two, on the last point, namely, **THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE NOT FAR FROM THE KINGDOM OF GOD.** May God, in His Infinite mercy, grant that you may enter the Kingdom this very night! May He not allow another morning's sun to rise from the East and look upon you as unconverted men or women!

For, first, *think how much God has already done for you.* You might have been born in one of the back slums of London, or you might even have been born as Hottentots or a cannibal islander! Perhaps upon that matter of your birth depends the fact that you are sitting in this House of Prayer and are not in the gin palace, the prison, or in Hell itself! It may be simply the dispensation of Divine Providence that has made this difference between you and the very worst of men. Be very thankful to God for what He has already done for you—for this vantage ground on which His Providence and the kind instructions of Christian parents and friends have placed you.

And, next, *as He has done so much for you, should not this encourage you to ask Him for still more?* If He has, by His Grace, brought you so near to the Kingdom, would it not be wise for you to say to Him, "My God, You have done much for me. Will You not now give me that which will make all this end in my salvation? Will You not give me a new heart and a right spirit? Will You not give me the new birth which will enable me to believe in Jesus Christ this very night, so that I may pass from death unto life?" Do you not think that the message of the Gospel should very much commend itself to you? You are a candid hearer, if I understand you rightly, and you have some love to good things. Now, was there ever a more Divine message than this? God has sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into this world. He took upon Himself the sin of guilty man. He suffered in the place of the guilty and He bids us now proclaim this Gospel of free, Sovereign Grace, that "whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Christ has endured the full penalty of sin. Jesus has bowed His back to carry the intolerable burden of human guilt and He *has* carried it and cast it into the depths of the sea, where it shall never be found, to be again laid by the charge of any soul that believes in Him. You are not asked to do anything, you are not even asked to *feel* anything—you are simply asked to trust yourself in the hands of the Incarnate God. Was anything ever simpler, more full of Grace, more full of compassion to your lost and helpless condition? It is all put into this simple message, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." This is the message from Christ in the highest heavens! "Look, look, look," is all He bids you do—simply look unto Him, Trust in Him, depend upon Him! Surely you cannot desire anything that is more worthy of God than this Gospel of His Grace which we proclaim unto you in His name!

Well, my dear Friend, you have come near to the Kingdom, *but is it not very clear to you that you need something more than you can find in yourself?* You have come as far as you can, yet, as far as that is compared with where others are, how little it really is! I said that you had begun to pray, but what sort of prayer is yours? I said that you were an

attentive hearer of the Word—so you are—yet how small a thing will take you off from the pursuit of the blessed realities of Grace! You know that although you are somewhat softened, your heart is still hard. There is still much unbelief in your soul, though there is a gleam of what looks like faith now and then. In fact, to put the matter very plainly, you are in such a condition that you will be in Hell unless the mercy of God shall prevent it, for you are certainly not yet saved! Do you know that it is so? Do you really feel this? Then, can you not, (may God help you to do it), by one desperate effort of faith, throw yourself at the feet of Jesus and say to Him, “Never will I go from You, O You blessed Savior, till You pronounce me clean! I now put out the tip of my finger, feeble and weak as my faith is, and I touch You. If You can save a sinner, Jesus, save me! I trust You to do so!” Friend, you are saved! That simple touch of the finger has brought virtue out of Christ unto you and He has bid you go in peace!

I remember how it seemed to me, when I was under conviction of sin—as though Christ stood before me with a sharp sword in each of His hands! And I felt, “I can but be lost. I will fling myself into His arms notwithstanding those swords.” And so I did, by a desperate plunge. I felt, “I have done with all attempts at self-salvation! Christ is my only Savior. I see that He finished my salvation on the accursed tree. I depend upon Him, I lean on Him with all my weight and all my might. Guilty and black and vile—and foul as I am by nature—I wash in the fountain filled with His precious blood and am clean every whit, even in the sight of the Most High God!” Oh, that you, dear Friend, would do the same! I believe that you are doing it, that God is helping you to do it. I feel sure that He is and that you are letting go all your foolish confidence, all trust in your own prayer, or even in your own faith, or your own anything! And you are going to trust yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ, whether you sink or swim!

Faith is very much like learning to swim. I have often thought that I could easily swim, but I never could induce myself to take the last toe off the ground—and there is no swimming till one does that. You must trust yourself wholly to the water. So must you trust yourself to Jesus. But you are afraid to take that last toe off the ground—you cannot give up just a little confidence in yourself. Oh, for the glorious plunge of faith! You fear that you will drown, but you will not, for you will swim. The everlasting love of Jesus will buoy up the biggest sinner out of Hell if he will but rest himself upon the finished work of Jesus Christ, whom God has set forth to be the Propitiation for the sins of man! Only trust Him and He will save you! May God give you the Grace to trust Him, and He shall have all the glory. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 12:12-44.**

Verse 12. *And they sought to lay hold on Him, but feared the people: for they knew that He had spoken the parable against them: and they left Him, and went their way.* Christ’s enemies could not injure Him, then, partly because the people heard Him gladly, and were ready to protect

Him, but still more because the appointed time for His suffering and death had not fully come.

13, 14. *And they sent unto Him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians to catch Him in His words. And when they were come, they said unto Him, Master, we know that You are true, and care for no man: for You regard not the person of men, but teach the way of God in truth.* They meant “to catch Him in His words,” if they could, so they baited their trap with flattery. Whenever a man begins to flatter you, be on your guard against him. If he tries to commence a conversation with you by uttering words of excessive admiration, depend upon it that he admires something that you have got more than he admires you! And, therefore, be on the watch against him. Our Savior must, in His heart, have utterly despised men who were so foolish as to imagine that they could entrap Him by their flattering words. After that preface, they asked the questions which they thought would impale Him upon the horns of a dilemma—

14, 15. *Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give?* They knew very well that if Christ said, “Do not give tribute to Caesar,” the Romans would have taken him up and imprisoned him for preaching sedition, but, on the other hand, if He said, “Pay tribute to Caesar,” the Jews would have said that He was their enemy, and not a true patriot, or else He would not have admitted that the chosen people were bound to pay taxes to their Roman conquerors.

15-17. *But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt you Me? Bring Me a penny, that I may see it. And they brought it. And He said unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto Him, Caesar’s. And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s. And they marvelled at Him.* He had answered them with matchless wisdom without committing Himself in either way!

18-23. *Then came unto Him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection, and they asked Him, saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man’s brother dies and leaves his wife behind him, and leaves no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were seven brothers and the first took a wife, and dying, left no seed. And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed: and the third likewise. And the seven had her, and left no seed. Last of all the woman died also. In the resurrection, therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them, for the seven had her to wife.* No doubt they thought that they had completely entangled Him that time! How could He answer such a difficult question as that? But, you see, they had based their enquiry upon the erroneous supposition that things are to be in another state as they are here—so Jesus was able at once to answer them as effectively as He had just answered the Pharisees and Herodians.

24-27. *And Jesus, answering said unto them, Do you not therefore, err, because you know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God? For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in Heaven. And as touching the dead, that they rise: have you not read in the book of Moses, how in the*

bush God spoke unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living; you therefore do greatly err. His answer carried the war into the enemies' camp! They professed to believe in Moses, yet they denied the existence of spirits and the fact of the resurrection. But Jesus Christ proved to a demonstration that God cannot be the God of the dead! If, therefore, He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are still alive! And if He is your God, and my God, dear Friends, we need not fear extinction—we will live, and we will live forever!

28-34. *And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered Him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel. The Lord our God is one Lord: and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind, and with all your strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is none other commandment greater than these. And the scribe said unto Him, Well, Master, You have said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but He; and to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, He said unto him, You are not far from the Kingdom of God. And no man after that dared asked Him any question. He had so decidedly put all His questioners to the rout that no other man had the audacity to court defeat at His hands! The Infallible Wisdom of Christ had put all His accusers and tempters to flight.*

35, 36. *And Jesus answered and said, while He taught in the Temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Spirit.*

In Psalm 110:1—

36, 37. *The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool. David therefore himself calls Him Lord; and from where is He then his son? They could not answer that riddle, but we can. We know that Jesus is both David's son and David's Lord—a man like ourselves, of the great human race, yet, “very God of very God,” blessed be His holy name!*

37-40. *And the common people heard Him gladly. And He said unto them in His doctrine, Beware of the scribes which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplace, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts: which devour widows' houses, and for a presence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.* We often hear foolish people say “You must always preach in love and not say anything against anybody! Jesus did not denounce anybody.” Oh, dear! Then what about this denunciation of the scribes? Were Jesus here today, He would not be the soft-shelled creature that some people want us to be! He had a backbone and a conscience—and a very heavy right hand—and He brought that hand down like a sledgehammer upon cant and hypocrisy and error! And if we would be like Christ, we must be manly, bold and outspoken! They tell us this in

order that we may easily glide through the world and that all men may speak well of us. But so did their fathers to the false prophets—and do you suppose that we who preach God’s Word are going to keep back any part of our testimony because it will bring us into ill repute with the ungodly? God forbid! We live for something higher and nobler than being fed upon the breath of evil men! If there is error in high places, if there is vice *anywhere*, it is the duty of the minister of Christ, in His Master’s name, to attack it with all his might! Here we find our Lord and Master plainly declaring that the scribes, the great masters of the Law of God, were a set of pretentious hypocrites who robbed even the widow and the fatherless and who would, in due time, “receive greater damnation.” Even so must the Truth of God still be spoken, whoever may be offended by it!

41, 42. *And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow. Doubly poor, because she was not only a widow, but in poverty—“a certain poor widow.”*

42-44. *And she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And He called unto Him His disciples, and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow has cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury: for all they did cast in of their abundance. Christ measures what we really give by what we have left—by the proportion which what we give bears to what we possess—“For all they did cast in of their abundance.”*

44. *But she of her need did cast in all that she had, even all her living. So she gave more than any or all the others did!*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”——645, 658.

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

TO LOVERS OF JESUS—AN EXAMPLE

NO. 1834

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 12, 1885,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON NOVEMBER 2, 1884.

“She has worked a good work for Me.”
Mark 14:6.

THIS holy woman had *displeased the disciples*. She must have been very sorry to do that. She would not have willfully grieved the least servant of her Lord. But she did so without the slightest blame on her part—it was the unexpected consequence of a most blessed action and the fault lay with those who complained of her holy deed—not with her. I do not know whether all the disciples felt grieved, but we are told by Matthew that, “they had indignation,” and he seems to speak of them as a body, from which I gather that those who love Jesus much must not measure their conduct by that of Christ’s ordinary disciples. Indeed, it might fare ill with them even if Apostles became their judges! They must not tone down the fervor of their zeal to the lukewarmness of the general order of Christian men. They must not measure the consecration of their lives by the little which many professors present upon the altar to God. No, my Brother, or Sister, you must not be too much distressed if the best of the household misjudge you, for it has happened to many favored sons before you.

You, O man, greatly beloved, can not abide to be lukewarm, but be not surprised if the lukewarm cannot agree with you! Count it no strange thing if, in your ardor, you should come to be accused of fanaticism, lack of prudence, rashness, forwardness. Do not break your heart over it if they should even call you mad, or suspect that you have more zeal than knowledge, for Mary, whom we would be glad to imitate, came under this kind of censure! And David, and your Lord, the Son of David, were each thought to be madmen!

This honored woman performed a notable act which is to be rehearsed wherever the Gospel is preached and yet, she thereby stirred the wrath of the brotherhood of the disciples—of how small account is the judgment of men!

Chiefly, she called down upon her head the censure of Judas. As far as Judas was known to his brethren, he was reckoned among the *best* of them. They never suspected him of playing the traitor or they would not have approved of his being their treasurer—they once had indignation at James and John—but the shrewd Judas had their respect. I should think he was the most businesslike man of the whole company—which is not saying much for business, is it? He was a leading spirit among that little band. He was one who would be selected because of his prudence—and that is not saying much for prudence, is it?

Doubtless Judas abounded in that cool, calculating shrewdness which makes a man fit to deal with moneys and purchases. He had far more business ability than impetuous Peter, or affectionate John, or thoughtful Thomas. He was the right man in the right place, if he had but happened to have been an honest man. Wonderful it was that he could conceal the deep meanness of his spirit from all his fellows during the years in which they lived together. But he had done so and, therefore, his opinion carried weight with it. Among the Apostles the censure of Judas meant the calm condemnation of a judicious person. His judgment was not what you and I would esteem it to be, for we should think nothing of his censure, now, because we know that he betrayed his Lord—but the disciples could not foresee this—and, in their judgment, that which Judas would condemn must be very censurable. At least it must not be businesslike; it must lack common sense; it must be imprudent and wasteful. Was not Judas the perfect model of economy? Was he not the sort of man who, in these days, many a father would point out to his boy as an example? Hear him say, “Boy, if you want to get on in the world, imitate Judas Iscariot. He is the model man. He is a Christian and yet he has a keen eye for his own advantage and is a sharp man of business.”

It was a hard thing for a timid woman to bear such a censure from one so highly respected in the college of Apostles—but she had this solace, which I will guarantee you put quite out of her mind all care about the censure of disciples, even of the biggest of them—she pleased her Master! She could see, by the very look of Him, that He accepted what His followers condemned. She knew in her conscience that she had the approbation of the Lord, even though she had the disapprobation of the servants. And oh, Brothers and Sisters, let us always carry our case into the highest court and live before the Lord and not as the slaves of men! If we are conscious that we have sincerely done what we have done as unto the Lord and if we feel sure that *He* has approved our service, it is of the smallest possible consequence what men shall say about us! Let us never provoke our Brothers and Sisters to be ill-tempered with us, neither let

us do anything that can be rightly censured—but if we have gone somewhat beyond common custom in the fervor of our spirit, let us reply with young David to his envious brethren, “Is there not a cause?” The opinions of other men are no rule to us—we have our own obligations to discharge and, as our debt of love is larger than usual, let us take liberty to be as full of love and zeal as we can be—only regretting that we cannot go *still further* in the way of sacred service.

“Well,” says one, “but do those who love Christ encounter the frowns of men at this time?” Oh, yes, and of their own Christian Brethren, too! If you consort with the common Brethren and travel on the road to Heaven so slowly that it is a question whether you are going there at all, then you will escape criticism! If you keep with those who practice the snail’s march, they will call you a good, easy man—a right respectable person! But if you *run* for it. If you put out all the energy of your nature and are determined to live at a high pitch for Christ, you will get the cold shoulder, even from many of His disciples, for you will be practically condemning their half-heartedness—and who are *you* to be such a troubler in Israel?

The more prudent among your Brethren will say that your pride and the naughtiness of your heart make you so forward and presumptuous—and they will try to put you down, or put you out! You cannot commit a greater crime against some people than to be more useful than they are! When a person reckons *himself* to be the standard of *holiness*, he looks upon one who excels him as guilty of a kind of blasphemy. If you outrun others, do not reckon upon smiles, but count upon black looks. You will be called impudent and thought impertinent. Bear it all and fret not! Go to your Lord and tell Him that you have done and are doing all you can as unto Him and entreat Him to smile upon you. Crave *His* acceptance of your poor doings and then go about your business, working till He shall come. Sow the seed of duty and care not whether, in human judgment, it shines or rains. “He that regards the clouds shall not reap.” If you regard not the clouds at all, you will do your sowing and your reaping with the comfort of true faith—and God will bless you.

I am going to talk about this blessed woman at this time with this hopeful desire—that you and I may imitate her ever-memorable example. I shall have nothing to say but to open up the meaning of our Lord, as far as I know it, when He said, “She has worked a good work for Me,” or, “in Me.” The passage might be rendered thus—only the translators do not like to use the term—“She has worked a beautiful work for Me”—a comely work. “A thing of beauty is a joy forever.” This was a thing of beauty which is a joy forever to the Church of God, in that constant me-

morial of her which is blended with the preaching of the Gospel of Christ, for as long as the Gospel is proclaimed, this Mary of Bethany shall have a memorial because of what she did. What was there beautiful about her work—the breaking of the alabaster vase, and the pouring out of the liquid nard? What was there beautiful about that? I will try to show you.

I. There were seven beauties in it and the first and chief beauty, perhaps, was that IT WAS ALTOGETHER GLORIFYING OF JESUS. She meant, when she poured that ointment on His head, to honor Him *personally*— every drop of it was for Him, out of reverence for His actual personality.

She was not so much thinking of His deeds of love, or of His words of Truth, as of His own unrivalled and most precious Self. She had seen His deeds of love when Lazarus was raised. She had heard His Words of Truth when she sat at His feet. But now she felt an adoring reverence for His thrice blessed Person and she brought that box of precious spikenard and offered it to Him as her Teacher, her Friend, her Lord, her All. Suggestion was made that she should have sold it and given it to the poor, but she longed to present one offering *to Him*, direct, and not by any roundabout method. Doubtless she was not behindhand in her gifts to the poor, but she felt that when she had done *that*, she had not satisfied the cravings of her grateful heart towards *Him* who had become poorest of the poor for her sake.

She wanted to give something *to Him*—something suitable for such an One as she conceived Him to be—something suitable for the time and circumstances then present with regard to Him. I think this holy woman knew more about our Lord than all His Apostles put together! Her eyes had peered within the veil. You remember that only a day or two after this, He rode in triumph through Jerusalem a proclaimed King. Should He not first be anointed? And who would visibly anoint Him to the kingdom with oil but this consecrated woman? She was come to give Him a royal anointing preparatory to His proclamation in the streets of His capital city! At any rate, her spikenard must be poured out only *for Him*. She forgot the poor, just then, as she quite forgot the disciples. Martha was busy at the table waiting upon them all, disciples and Master, but Mary had concentrated all her thoughts on Jesus. She “saw no man save Jesus only.” Blessed exclusiveness of vision! What she did must not be for Peter and James and John *with* Jesus, but it must be for *Him*, alone, who indeed *is* alone, above and beyond all others, worthy of a homage all His own! Because she had a love for Him beyond all others that she had ever heard of, her heart must find expression in a deed of love which must be entirely, wholly, only towards Himself.

Now, this is, as we have read the text, a beautiful thing. It will be beautiful on your part and mine if, having taken care of the poor according to our ability, having discharged the claims of our relationships to our fellow men, we then feel that we must do something for Jesus—distinctly for our Lord. Do you ask me what you shall do for Him? Yes, but, Sister, I must not tell you—your own heart must originate the thought, as your own hand must carry it out. “Oh,” cries a Brother, “tell me what I can do for Jesus!” Yes, but, Brother, I must not tell you! The better part of the whole matter will lie in the hallowed ingenuity of your spirit in inventing something for Him out of your own fervent soul. The holy woman’s deed would have been somewhat spoiled if there had been a command for her to bring the alabaster box and pour the ointment on His head—her *love* commanded her—and that was better than a formal precept. Her deed had not possessed half its worth if Simon had suggested to her, “I have not sufficient spikenard to anoint our guests. Fetch a box from your home.” The very glory of it lay in the spontaneous suggestion of her own heart that she must do something which should be all for Jesus.

She must do it herself, personally, and not by proxy. And she must do it unto Him distinctly, directly, openly. Others might smell the spikenard. That she did not wish to prevent, but still, the perfume was never meant for them, but for Him exclusively. She poured it on *His* head. She poured it on *His* feet. She would anoint *Him* from head to foot with this token of her intense and reverent gratitude and her boundless love. She felt wrapped up in *Him*, her Lord and her God, and so her willing offering was for Him and for Him, alone. What a joy to be permitted to do anything for Him whose great love holds us fast! I feel as if I would gladly, at once, retire from all of you to indulge my heart in this rare luxury.

Alas, good Lord, how little have You of this devotion in these calculating days! Instead of, “all for Jesus,” how seldom we do anything for Jesus! Brothers and Sisters, when you sing your hymns, do you “sing a hymn to Jesus”? When you are in prayer, do you pray *to* Jesus and *for* Jesus? Is it not written, “Prayer, also, shall be made for Him continually, and daily shall He be praised”? When you come to this communion table, I pray that you may forget all that are with you in this assembly and cry, “I will remember *You*.” In the chief place, at any rate, let Jesus fill your thoughts. Set Him, alone, upon the Throne, and think only of eating His flesh and drinking His blood—and receiving Him into your very self, that there may be a vital union between the Christ of God and your own souls.

To my mind this is the beauty of our fellowship in the Holy Supper, that we feed only on Jesus. Let us make Him our soul's sole meat and drink—and then let us live for Him. My heart craves, now, to know what I shall do that I may imitate her who gave to “Jesus only” that box of spikenard, very costly. Oh, you lovers of my Lord who have been washed in His precious blood, who owe your all to Him, think of His matchless beauties, now, and as you look up into that face where shines your Heaven, think to yourselves, “What can we do for Him—for Him absolutely, directly and personally?” There is the first beauty of this woman's act of homage—it was for Jesus, for Jesus only, for Jesus wholly.

II. A second beauty lay in this, that IT WAS AN ACT OF PURE LOVE, altogether of love to Jesus. The other woman—blessed was she, also, among women—I refer to that woman who was a sinner—she also came and brought an alabaster box and did much the same thing as this Mary of Bethany. But she did what Mary did *not* do—she mingled weeping with her ointment—she washed His feet with tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. That was a beautiful act in its own way, but Mary's deed is a beautiful thing in another way. In this lies the distinction—there does not seem to have been, in Mary's act, any remembrance of personal sin, though, doubtless, that feeling was in her heart and had brought her to the higher stage of adoration of her pardoning Lord. Her sin was put away long ago.

Mary had sat at Jesus' feet and had chosen the good part. The matter of pardon for sin had been transacted a long while before and now, although in her heart there is deep gratitude for it, and for the raising of her dear brother, Lazarus, yet it seems to be quite absorbed in the deeper thought of her *soul*, for she had attained to an all-consuming love of Jesus. She never would have known that kind of love if she had not learned to sit at His feet. To sit long, there, has a wonderful operation on the human mind—it causes even things that are good in themselves to be overshadowed by matters that are less and less in relation to self. It is a blessed thing to love Christ because we escape from Hell by Him. It is a blessed thing to love Christ because He has opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all Believers. But it is a still *higher* thing to forget yourself and to contemplate with delight the ineffable perfections of Him whom Heaven and earth acknowledge to be chief among 10,000 and altogether lovely! “We love Him because He first loved us.” Here we begin and this beginning always remains, but on it we pile tier after tier of precious stones of love which are crowned with pinnacles of inexpressible affection for the great Lord, Himself! He in Himself has won our hearts and carried our spirits by storm! And now we must do something which will express

our love to Him. That love is not only a gratitude for benefits received from Him, but an intense affection for His glorious, adorable Person.

Come, dear Friends, do you feel that kind of emotion in your hearts at this time? Do you, even now, feel that so perfectly has Christ won the verdict of your understanding, so completely has He bound, in silken fetters, every movement of your affections that you need to be doing something which shall have but this one aim—to express your love to Him who has made you what you are? Indulge the emotion! Crown it with *action* and continue it through life! In this point be not slow to be imitators of the sister of Martha and Lazarus. O sweet love of Jesus, come and fill our souls to the brim and run over in delicate personal service!

III. The third beauty of the action was that IT WAS DONE WITH CONSIDERABLE SACRIFICE. There was an expense about it and that of no trifling character to a woman who was neither queen nor princess. I shall always feel obliged to Judas for figuring up the price of that box of costly ointment. He did it to *blame* her, but we will let his figures stand and think more of her for his calculations. I would never have known what it cost, nor would you, either, if Judas had not marked down in his pocket-book that it, “might have been sold for much.” How he grudged that, “much”! He calculated the value at 300 pence. He did well to put it in pence, for his sordid soul reveled in small moneys which make up the pounds. Pence, indeed, when the expense is for Him to whom the silver and the gold belong!

Yet I like his calculation in pence, for it is suggestive, since a Roman penny was a day’s wages. Take a day’s wages now—say 4s—and you get some £60. It was a large sum of money for a woman in her state of life in Bethany. It was £10 of their money, but money, then, was of a different value from what it is now, and it was a great sum for her to expend in one single deed of love. Her gift was costly, but the Lord Jesus deserved to be served at the best rate and at the highest cost. There was a woman who served the Lord at a higher rate than this—she only spent two mites in the doing of it, but then, you know it was all that she had. I do not know how much Mary had, but I feel persuaded that it was pretty well all she had and that all she could get together seemed to her to be far too little for the Lord Jesus Christ!

If His head was to be anointed, plenty of ordinary oil might have been procured at Bethany. The Mount of Olives was close by. But she would have scorned the thought of pouring common olive oil on Him—she must find an imperial ointment such as Caesar might have accepted! If Jesus is to be anointed, there is ointment to be bought in the bazaars at Jerusalem at a very reasonable rate. Why must you, Mary, seek after this liquid

ointment of the East, this oil distilled from myriads of roses, of which it needs leagues of gardens to make a *drop*? Why must you buy the “very precious” ointment and spend such a large amount of money upon that which will only last half an hour, and then the wind will have carried it away, and its perfume will have vanished?

Yes, but the glory of service to Christ is to serve Him with the best of the best! He deserves, if we serve Him with sermons, that we preach the best discourses mind can frame or tongue deliver! Or if we serve Him with teaching in the class, He deserves that we teach in the most tender fashion and feed His lambs with the best nourishment! Or if we serve Him with the pen, that we write not a line that may need to be erased! Or if we serve Him with money, that we give with liberality of the best we have and much of it! We must see to it that in *everything* we do not serve Christ with the lean sheep of the flock, or with such as are wounded, broken, or torn by beasts—but that He has the fat of our offerings! We should not be content, if we are rich, to give Him out of our estate the cheese-parings and candle-ends such as we dare not keep back for very shame.

Usual donations have little beauty in them—those moneys dragged out of people by importunity—that guinea dribbled out by custom because it is a respectable amount. There is nothing to satisfy love in the slender oblations which come forth like an unwilling taxation—which a miser could scarcely withhold. But oh, to give to the Lord Jesus freely, richly, whatever it is with which He has entrusted us, whether it is gold or genius, time or words—whether it is the minted coinage of the purse, or the living courage of a loving heart, or the labor of an earnest hand! Let us give our Well-Beloved the best we have and He will call it beautiful! Mary’s gift was all for Him and all for love. And it was done at great expense and, therefore, it was beautiful.

IV. Next, remember that part of the beauty of Mary’s action lay in this, that IT WAS DONE WITH PREPARATION. We are told by John what we should not, otherwise, have known, “Against the day of My burying has she kept this.” “*Kept* this.” It was not that seeing Jesus there at the feast and being seized with a sudden thought, she rushed back to her stores and fetched out the little vase of spikenard—and broke it in a passion of affection which, in cooler moments, she might regret. Far from it! She was now consummating the long thought of weeks and months. We have known warm-spirited Brothers and Sisters both say and do and give grandly, under a certain spur and impulse, what they would never have thought of doing when they entered into the assembly.

I shall not blame them. Rather do I commend them for obeying gracious impulses, but it is not the best way of doing service to our ever-blessed Master. Passion seldom gives so acceptably as principle. Mary did not perform a thoughtless action under a tempestuous force of unusual zeal. No, she had kept this. She had kept this choice ointment on purpose till a fitting time should come for putting it to its most appropriate use. My own belief is that when she sat at Jesus' feet, she learned much more than any of the disciples had ever gathered from His public preaching. She had heard Him say that the Son of Man would be delivered to the scribes and Pharisees and that He would be spat upon and scourged—and they would put Him to death and the third day He would rise again—and she believed it. She thought it over and she studied it—and made out more of the meaning of it than any one of the Apostles had done.

She said to herself—He is going to die as a Sacrifice at the hands of wicked men and I will, therefore, render Him special honor. I should not wonder if she began to read the Old Testament with that light, "This is He whom God has sent, upon whom He has laid the iniquities of us all, and He shall be given up to judgment, and He shall bear the sin of man." Then she thought within herself, "If that is so, I will get the spikenard ready to anoint Him for His burial." Perhaps she intended as much as that, for so the Lord, Himself, interpreted the deed. At any rate, she thought, "Alas, for my Lord! If He dies, He will need to be embalmed and I will be ready to aid in His burial." Therefore she kept this.

"Against the day of My burying has she kept this." Brothers and Sisters, there is great beauty in an action which is the outcome of a long time of loving, careful consideration. It is ill to delay a good deed which might be done at once, but if a deed *must* be delayed, it is well to be doing it at once by preparing for it. When a person feels, "The time is not yet, but I will be prepared when it does come," it shows that the *heart* is occupied with a love of a very engrossing character. We sing—

**"Oh, what shall I do
My Savior to praise?"**

And it were well if the question were constantly in our minds. Let each man resolve in his heart—"I will not offer my Lord the hasty fruit of impulse, or that which shall cost me nothing, but I will consider what I can do for Him. Of what will there be a need? In what direction can I do Him homage where He might lack that honor? I will turn it over and meditate and consider—and then I will perform."

This last the preacher would repeat with emphasis, for oh, my Brothers, it is a custom with many of us to get a grand thought and then, as

we turn it over, to let it evaporate without its leaving even a drop of practical result behind! This holy woman was no mere planner and purposer, but a *doer* of holy deeds! She could keep her alabaster box as long as was prudent and yet she did not arrive at the tempting conclusion to keep it altogether. She allowed her heart to weigh the project and the more she weighed it, the more resolved she became to *do* it—to do it when the due time came. When she believed that the hour had come, she did not delay for an instant! She was as prompt as she had been thoughtful. The Passover was drawing very near. It was within six days and so she brought out what she had held in reserve. Blessed are the punctualities of service which are the result of earnest endeavor to honor the Lord in the best possible way!

There is something beautiful in seeing, as we have seen, some poor woman saving her little bits and putting them by for years till she could accomplish a secret purpose by which Jesus would be glorified. It is striking to see, as you and I did see, a woman of moderate wealth discarding all the comforts of life, that she might save enough that there might be an orphanage in which children might be cared for—not, as she said, for the children's sake—but for Christ's sake, that He might be glorified. The Stockwell Orphanage is the alabaster box which a devout woman presented to her Lord! Her memory is blessed. Its perfume is recognized in all parts of the earth at this moment, to the glory of the Lord she loved.

Such a thoughtful deed is what Jesus would call a beautiful thing. Let us abound in such beautiful things! For a man to say, "There will come a crisis when I shall have to stand out for God and His Truth and it will be a serious loss to me." And then to ponder it so as to be almost eager for the occasion is a beautiful thing. To feel like the Lord Jesus, "I have a baptism to be baptized with and how am I straitened till it is accomplished!" is a beautiful thing. A courageous, self-sacrificing decision for the Truth of God is a beautiful thing, when its action is well considered and carried out with enthusiasm. God give us to mix thought and impulse, reason and affection, and thus serve Him both with the mind and the heart!

V. There is a fifth point of beauty. MARY DID HER GREAT DEED WITHOUT A WORD. Dear Sisters, you will pardon me for commending this holy woman for her wise and fitting silence all through her gracious act. She did not talk about it beforehand. She said not a word while she did it and she said nothing afterwards. Martha was the worker and the talker, too, but I think that all you will find Mary saying is, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother had not died." And she was so scant of words

that she had to borrow those from Martha. Martha said a great deal more than that, but Mary was quite satisfied to be as brief as possible. She was a great thinker, a great sitter at Jesus' feet and a great learner—but not a great talker. When the time came, she was a great worker, for it is very curious, though Martha bears the palm for work in our ordinary talk, yet Mary, the thinker, did more than Martha, the worker!

“She,” said Christ, “has worked a good work for Me,” which He never said of Martha, good as Martha was. He censured, a little, the elder sister for being cumbered with much serving. But Mary's work He commended and decreed that it should be remembered as long as the world stands. Though she does not bear the name of a worker in the vulgar judgment, yet is she the queen in the kingdom of good works! Yet, I remind you, she did not say a word. There is such a thing as spoiling what you do by making so great a fuss, before you do it, that when the mouse is born, people are only astonished that such a small creature should be the only fruit of the dreadful throes of the mountain! Moreover, there is such a thing as talking so much afterwards of what we *have* done that it spoils it all. It seems as if we must let all the world know something about ourselves—whereas the joy and bliss of it all is not to let yourself be seen, but to let the oil go streaming upon the Master till *He* is anointed with perfume and we, ourselves, sink back into our natural insignificance. Silent acts of love have musical voices in the ears of Jesus! Sound no trumpet before you, or Jesus will take warning and be gone!

If we could all *do* more and *talk* less, it might be a blessing to ourselves and, perhaps, to others. Let us labor in our service for the Lord to be more and more hidden! As much as is the proud desire to catch the eye of man, let us endeavor to avoid it. “I should like to know,” says one, “how to do holy work.” Go and do it and consult not with flesh and blood! “I have done my work and now I should dearly like to hear what you think of it.” You should rise above such idle dependence upon man's opinion! What matters it to you what your fellow servant thinks? To your own Master you stand or fall! If you have done a good thing, do it again! You know the story of the man who comes riding up to the captain, and says, “Sir, we have taken a gun from the enemy.” “Go and take another,” said the matter-of-fact officer. That is the best advice which I can render to a friend who is elated with his own success!

So much remains to be accomplished, that we have no time to consider what has been done. If we have done holy service, let us do it a second time and do it a third time—and continue to do it, always praying the Lord to accept our persevering service. In any case, let our consecrated life be for our Lord's eyes, only, a spring shut up, a fountain

sealed! Anything like sounding a trumpet before us is hateful to the lowly Lord! Secrecy has a charm for Jesus and the more carefully we preserve it, the better.

VI. Next, and sixthly, there was this beauty about the action of Mary—that SHE DID IT IN REFERENCE TO OUR LORD'S DEATH. The Disciples shrank from thinking of that sad subject. Peter said, "That be far from You, Lord." But Mary, bearing her Master's heart very near her own, and sympathizing with Him in His glorious enterprise, instead of drawing back from the thought of that death, performed her work in connection with it. I am not certain to what degree she was conscious that it was so, but there is the fact—the anointing had reference to the burial of the Lord. It seems to me that the best and most tender duty that Christians do for their Lord Jesus is that which is touched with the blood-mark—which bears the stamp of the Cross.

The best preaching is, "We preach Christ crucified." The best living is, "We are crucified with Christ." The best man is a crucified man. The best style is a crucified style—may we drop into it! The more we live beholding our Lord's unutterable griefs and understanding how He has fully put away our sin, the more holiness shall we produce. The more we dwell where the cries of Calvary can be heard, where we can view Heaven, earth and Hell all moved by His wondrous passion—the more noble will our lives become! Nothing puts life into men like a dying Savior! Get close to Christ and carry the remembrance of Him about you from day to day and you will do right royal deeds.

Come, let us slay sin, for Christ was slain. Come, let us bury all our pride, for Christ was buried. Come, let us rise to newness of life, for Christ has risen. Let us be united with our crucified Lord in His one great objective—let us live and die with Him and then every action of our lives will be very beautiful.

VII. The seventh beauty, to my mind, is this—you may think it a little far fetched, but I cannot help mentioning it, for it touches my heart. I believe that MARY HAD, IN THIS ANOINTING OF THE SAVIOR, SOME LITTLE GLIMPSE OF HIS RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD and of His later existence. For I would ask of you—Why do nations at all embalm their dead? Why not consume them in the fire? A mysterious something makes the ordinary Christian shudder at the thought of cremation. That must surely be an acquired taste—unsophisticated Nature does not court the furnace, or covet the flame—we prefer to lie beneath the green hillock with our fathers. Many nations of antiquity, and especially the Egyptians and other Orientals, took great care to anoint the bodies of the departed with precious perfumes and to lay them asleep in gums and fine linen.

Why? Because there darkly shone upon their minds some thought of the hereafter. There remained with man, long after the Fall, a glimmering, undefined belief in immortality. That truth was so universally received that the Old Testament takes it for granted. The existence of God and the immortality of the soul lie at the basis of Old Testament teaching. The after-life of the body was accepted, also, in a manner more or less clear. Immortality was not brought to light, but there it was, and they who reject that doctrine go back into a darkness denser than that in which the heathens, themselves, dwelt! Why did the Egyptian king embalm his father and lay him in spices, but that he thought that somehow or other there was another life and he would, therefore, take care of the body? They would not have wasted precious linen, gems and spices, if they had thought that the body was mere rottenness for worms to consume forever.

Mary had deeper and clearer thoughts than that, for she expected that something would happen to that blessed body after Christ had died and she must, therefore, anoint it and bring the most precious spices that she could procure for His burial. At any rate, let your service of the Lord Jesus be the service of a risen Christ! Come not here to worship One who died years ago—a hero of the past—but come to adore the ever-living Jesus!—

“He lives, your great Redeemer lives.”

He will certainly come in His own Person to reward His saints. And before He comes, He sees what you are doing. “We live,” said one, “in the great Taskmaster’s sight.” I care not for that title. I have no Taskmaster! It is far more an impulse to my life that I live within the sight of Him whom, having not seen, I love, because He loved me and gave Himself for me! If this does not quicken you, what will? If this does not nerve you to tireless diligence in holy service, what can? Our Lord Jesus Christ lives! Let us find some way of anointing His dear and reverend head—some way of crowning Him who wore the crown of thorns for our sake! Ours it is to know that He lives and that we live in Him. On Him would we expend the full force of our being, counting it all joy to spend and to be spent for His sake.

I am not going to stir you up, my fellow Christians, to do anything for Christ, for I fear to spoil the freeness of your love’s life. I do not want to be pleading with you to enter into His service more fully, for the work of pressed men is never so much prized as that of happy volunteers. Yet as I love you, I would have you love your Lord more and more. It is so sweet to belong to Christ, that the more fully we can belong to Him, the more free we are! I like that saying of Paul, where he calls himself the *doulos* of

Christ, the *slave* of Jesus! He says exultingly, “Let no man trouble me. I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus,” as if he gloried to think of himself as the branded slave of His Lord! He had been beaten and scourged and he retained upon his back the marks of his lashings and, therefore, he was known to say to himself—and smile all the while—“these are my Master’s marks. I am branded with His name.” Oh, sweet service, in which if it were *slavery* it would be joy! I would not have a hair of my head that was not my Lord’s if I could help it, nor a drop of my blood that did not flow for Him if I could help it. My liberty—and I speak for you all—my liberty, if I might choose it, would be liberty never to sin again; freedom to do Christ’s bidding and that alone! I would gladly lose my free will in His sweet will and find it again as I never found it before in having yielded it up completely to His command!

I will not, therefore, so much intrude upon the sanctity of your heart’s love as to suggest what you can do for Jesus. As the best juice flows from the cluster with the least pressure, so shall the best service be that which is most spontaneous. Do not let me push you on, or draw you on, or drag you on—be eager on your own account! Say to the Lord, Himself, “Draw me: I will run after You.” Have you not a certain private reason why you should love your Lord better than any other of His redeemed? I repeat it, I will not pry into your sacred secrets, but leave you to commune with your own heart and with your Lord. Only let us so love Him that when we look at Him, He shall say, “You have ravished My heart, My sister, My spouse; you have ravished My heart with one of your eyes, with one chain of your neck.” Then shall we know what to do for our Well-Beloved, and, what is better, we shall *do* it without further exhortation.

There I leave it. May the Holy Spirit bless the word! As for you that do not love the Lord Jesus, God be merciful to you! I will not pronounce upon you an Anathema Maranatha, but I tremble lest it fall upon you. I am sorely grieved for your sakes. I am, moreover, sorely vexed for Christ’s sake that He should be deprived of your love and service. What has He done that you should slight Him? Oh, blind eyes that cannot see His beauties, and deaf ears that cannot hear the charms of His voice! God be merciful to you and help you to trust your Savior—and then you will love Him for His salvation! It is no wonder that the saved ones love their Lord—it is a marvel that they do not love Him 10,000 times more! The Lord be with you for Christ’s sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark 14, John 12.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—797, 788.**

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

DEAR FRIENDS—When this letter reaches you, I hope I shall have returned to my family and my people much refreshed. I can hardly hope to be very long quite free from the disease which afflicts me, yet I do confidently expect a few months of steady service. And I am anxious that upon these the Divine blessing may richly descend. I beseech you pray for me.

For more than 30 years these sermons have been published week by week—may I not entreat your supplications that I may be enabled to maintain their freshness, fullness and power? For this I shall need great help from on high. My own resources are slender enough, but the Divine Fountain can never run dry.

The Church over which I preside is large beyond all precedent, containing more than 5,000 members. I entreat your prayers that wisdom and Grace may be given me as the Pastor of such a flock. I tremble as I think of my responsibility. Who is sufficient for these things?

Beside all this—there are the Orphanage with its hundreds of little ones; the College with its students for the ministry; the Colportage with its book-selling missionaries; the Evangelists traveling from place to place and proclaiming the living Word of God, and many other minor enterprises. The burden is too great for me unless the Lord's own power be revealed in my weakness. For these institutions I need money in large measure and Grace beyond all measure! Those who profit by these sermons would act kindly if they would help me with their prayers and their contributions. I need both, and both at this time in a special manner.

On my return I shall have to prepare for the gathering of the clan in the form of the College Conference. A great host of ministers will come together to spend a week in holy fellowship and united devotion. If the Lord is with us, it will be a soul-refreshing season and the Brothers will return to their flocks prepared for a great blessing. But without the Spirit of the Lord all will be in vain. By the love of Jesus I implore the special prayers of faithful Brothers and Sisters! O Lord, send prosperity! Revive Your work! Revive our own souls, for Jesus' sake!

Your servant for Christ's sake,
Mentone, April 5, 1885.

C. H. SPURGEON.

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WANTED, A GUEST CHAMBER!

NO. 785

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 15, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“The Master says, Where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the Passover with My disciples?”
Mark 14:14.***

As far as we know, out of the many thousands who had come to Jerusalem from the utmost ends of the earth to keep the Passover, none were left unaccommodated with a guest chamber except our Lord Jesus Christ. Jerusalem, at the time of the Passover, was one great inn—the whole of the houses were occupied not only by the regular tenants, but by their friends from the country parts of Judea. Each one had invited his own friends and all the houses were filled. But there was found no one to invite the Savior and He had no dwelling of His own. He who received sinners, was excluded by all. The Friend of man was houseless, and at the national festival He was no man's guest. He would have been left in the streets, if by His own supernatural power He had not found Himself an upper room in which to keep the feast.

It is so even to this day—Jesus is not received among the sons of men save only where by His supernatural power and Grace He makes the heart anew. Every pursuit has its eager followers, every art its votaries, every object its devotees, but Jesus is uncared for and neglected. Art, science, poetry, literature, mechanics, politics, wealth—all these obtain a willing homage. Men need no renewal of their minds to follow after these! But to the natural man the Lord Jesus has no form nor comeliness and He, therefore, is despised and rejected. “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.” Like the Levite in the days of the Judges, “There was no man that took him into his house to lodging.”

All doors are open enough to the Prince of Darkness, but Jesus must clear a way for Himself or lodge in the streets. I think I hear Him crying even to His own Church, “Open to Me, My sister, My love, My dove, My undefiled—for My head is filled with dew and My locks with the drops of the night.” Doubtless one reason for this may be found in the fact that it was dangerous to receive Christ at that season. The rulers were hunting Him—thirsty for His blood—and they had issued the command that if any man knew where He was, he should tell them, that they might take Him. In the first place, to harbor Christ was to run the risk of being put out of the synagogue, to become the object of public contempt. In the second, and perhaps in conclusion, to meet with a sudden and violent death!

Therefore, prudent, careful men closed their doors against Him and argued that they could not expose their families to so much peril. They might in their hearts admire Him. In their souls they might lament that He was so harshly dealt with, but they could not run the risk of declaring themselves to be on His side by entertaining Him at that moment of ex-

citement. So is it at this hour, men always have a good reason, as they think, for that most unreasonable of all unkindnesses—the rejection of Jesus, their best Friend. The farm, the merchandise, the newly-married wife—all these are the transparent, weak excuses for not coming to the Gospel supper.

Preoccupation of mind with some other pursuit, or the self-denials which Christianity would involve, or the difficulties which are supposed to beset a consistent Christian profession—any, or all of these, and worse than these—serve to satisfy the human conscience with the shadow of an excuse. Jesus Christ is kept on the cold side of the door and our worst enemies are welcomed! Though it is the highest honor that man can have to entertain Him, yet a cruel refusal is given Him and any excuse in the world is thought to be sufficient. Yet there was *one* who was willing to entertain the Savior, and the Lord knew Him and where to find Him according to that ancient saying, “The Lord knows them that are His.”

There shall never be a time in the world’s history so dark but surely the Lord will have His chosen stars shining brightly amid the gloom. Christ shall never be so much despised but what there will be found here and there elect souls, hearts that the Lord has touched, who will say, “Come in and welcome most sweet Lord! We rejoice to render You the hospitality of our loving hearts.” Be of good courage, my Brothers and Sisters! Piety may be at a low ebb, but it shall never run dry! The lamp may flicker, but it cannot be extinguished! Our ranks may be thinned, but the host shall hold the battlefield! There are a few names even in Sardis! There is one Lot, at least, even in Sodom! And in the raging Sanhedrim a Nicodemus holds a seat!

In the worst times of superstition God raises up witnesses for His Truth. We need never fear for the Church—an imperishable seed is in her and nothing shall destroy her. The gates of Hell shall not prevail against her. Though her ministers may fall and many of her professed members may apostatize, yet the Lord will keep up the succession of the saints, and Jesus shall not lack a man to bear up the standard of the Cross! So long as the earth remains, the everlasting kingdom of the Son of David shall stand!

I shall now call your attention to the whole incident of our Lord’s finding a guest chamber in which to keep the Passover. I shall regard the question which I have selected for a text, first, as the mighty word of the Master’s effectual Grace, and next, as the affectionate enquiry of the servant’s obedient solicitude.

I. First, the Master says, “Where is the guest chamber?” This question may be regarded as THE MIGHTY WORD OF THE MASTER’S EFFECTUAL GRACE. Our Lord intended to celebrate the Passover in the large upper room belonging to the person to whom He sent Peter and John. The message which He sent by their lips was all-powerful—the man at once yielded up his furnished parlor without difficulty or demur, because there went a power with the word which the man was unwilling and unable to resist.

Viewing this as a symbolical representation of the way in which hearts are won for Jesus, we observe, in the first place, that the time and the circumstances were all *appointed*. Two Apostles were commanded to go to

the city and when they should come to the city, Providence would be there working before them—they were to meet a man just at the entrance of the city. He was to be there at the very moment of their arrival—he and none but he. This man must bear a pitcher—the pitcher must be filled with water. The water carrier must proceed to a certain house, and to no other. This house must contain an upper room, large enough to receive Christ and 12 others. This room must be in the possession of a person who would be perfectly willing to receive the Master and His disciples, and the good man of the house must be home to show the room and give the messengers admittance at once.

Here were several very unlikely things to meet together at one particular juncture, and yet they did so meet! Providence arranges that when the Apostles are at the city gates, the tankard-bearer is there, too, with his pitcher full of water. He goes to the house, the house is the right habitation—the man who possesses it shall be the right man, and Christ shall be entertained. Beloved, there are quite as many notable circumstances to be observed in the conversion of each one of God's people! I do not doubt that the Lord has settled, concerning every one of His elect, the *exact* time when they shall pass from death unto life. He has determined the precise instrumentality by which they shall be converted. He has determined the exact word that shall strike with power upon their mind, the period of conviction which they shall undergo, and the instant when they shall burst into the joyful liberty of a simple faith in Christ!

It is all settled, all arranged and predetermined in the Divine purpose. If the very hairs of our head are all numbered, much more the circumstances of the most important of all events which can occur to us! This may not seem to be a very practical Truth of God, and yet I think it is. I may go, for instance, a journey by rail. It is left to my option at what time to start, and in what carriage I shall ride. Yet I select a particular hour and carriage, and soon a person is thrown in my way whom I have never seen before. The conversation is directed towards holy things. That person is already anxious, and my conversation is so consoling that it seems to him that I am sent for the very purpose of relieving his anxiety!

As we converse upon Divine things he is led to see what he never saw before—the way of salvation by the Substitutionary Sacrifice is opened up to him and he casts himself into the hands of the Savior! Now, who shall say but what there was an arrangement there which God Himself, in His infinite wisdom, saw fit to make for the designed end?

You have two ways, today, of going home from the Tabernacle. You know not why, but you select one of the two, and in that street, if you are on the alert as you should be—and anxious to deliver souls from going down to the pit—you may meet with an individual whom you would not have seen if you had taken the other route. And it may be that you, by a few words concerning eternal salvation, shall direct that person into the way of peace and lead him to lay hold on eternal life. He who observes Providence shall never need a Providence to observe. And he who watches Providence with the view of discovering occasions for usefulness will find himself surrounded with golden opportunities for soul-winning.

I would have you, therefore, respect the workings of Divine Providence by being upon your watchtower to avail yourselves of them. You know

nothing of the secret decree of God but you can see what the decree brings forth. And if you are wise, you can benefit your neighbors by it. Believe firmly that God has a purpose to serve by *everything* that occurs and that He would have you, His servants, watchful for all opportunities that you may bring men to a knowledge of the Truth. I hope, this morning, that there are some here who scarcely know why they are in the Tabernacle and the secret is that eternal purposes of Divine Grace towards them are now ripe for fulfillment!

Remarkable circumstances may have worked together to bring them here! Possibly had it been finer weather, the crowd would have filled the place earlier, and they would have been excluded for lack of room—this wet weather gave them a chance of admission where the Gospel is preached, and so the very drops of rain may have been God’s messengers of mercy to them, indirectly working for their salvation! There may be circumstances which I cannot *pretend* to guess, which revolve round some of you concerning which God has said, “Thus and thus it shall be, that I may bring this man to the spot where I intend to arrest him by Divine Grace, and make him a saved soul.” I do trust this may be the case and that miracles of mercy may be worked by our Redeemer according to the counsel of His will.

Note further a second thing, albeit the circumstances were all foreordained, yet Christ’s entrance into this man’s house was worked by *instrumentality*. Had our Lord pleased to do so, He could have remained where He was. He could have secretly sent forth His Spirit into the householder’s mind to constrain him to lend his upper room. Certainly there was no need why Peter and John should go as pioneers, for, if the Lord had gone Himself in Person, at once He would, of course, have obtained quite as ready admission as His servants.

But He chose to work by *means*. So it is in conversion! The Lord could save souls, if He willed, without ministers, without teachers, without prayerful parents, without even the written Word! But He does not choose to do so. There are a few instances in which men have been suddenly impressed where no cause for the impression was apparent beyond the immediate operation of the Holy Spirit. Apart from instrumentality men have been awakened and aroused in the midst of their sins, like Saul of Tarsus, who was struck down while on the road to persecute the saints in Damascus. The most obstinate have been suddenly subdued, but the general rule is that “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” And men do not hear without a preacher, but God sends the preacher and the hearing ear, and then gives the willing heart by His effectual Grace.

So, Beloved, we must never fall into the delusion that the purposes of God set aside the use of means. I have heard thoughtless or critical talkers say, “If God works out His purposes, then there is no need for preaching or any other means.” Ah, simpleton that you are, if we teach you that God works out His purposes by *means*, how crazy must you be to charge us with thinking lightly of the means! If God accomplishes His eternal purposes by *preaching*, then the more need for preaching! And the more encouragement in it, for what were the use of preaching if God had not purposed to bless it? What were the use of plowing and sowing if God had not predestinated a harvest by such means?

We do not believe in a decree which ordains effects without causes—the ordinance of God is comprehensive, and takes in all things—instrumentality is as much in the decree as is the *result* of such instrumentality. God, who determined to save, determined also to save by means—He determined to save no man without *faith*, and to give no man faith except through the knowledge of the Truth. The *means* are as much in the decree as in the *result*, and in using the means we hope to see the result following according to the will of God.

The Apostles who were sent to the householder afford us a few instructive lessons. Mark carefully that all the disciples were quite willing to go. You observe it is said, “His disciples said unto Him, Where will You that we go and prepare that You may eat the Passover?” So *every* Christian should be *anxious* and *willing* to win souls to God—as well the Sisters as the Brothers! As well the weak as the strong! As well the babes as the full-grown men—we should all stand prepared to evangelize the world, and all be anxious to have our Master’s blessing upon our work! Let everyone here this morning who knows Christ in his heart, be saying, “Lord, what will You have me to do?” Let us each be in the spirit of Isaiah when he cried “Here am I; send me!”

At the same time, the Master did not employ the whole of the 12 in this case, but preferred to send Peter and John. So in the conversion of His people, He more frequently blesses His chosen servants—His ministers of Truth—these turn many to righteousness and bring many captives to the Captain. He chooses His Peters and his Johns who have had the most familiar acquaintance with Himself and are best adapted to deliver His gracious message. And upon these He puts special honor, thus manifesting His Sovereignty in the distribution of both gifts and Graces. Let every man who seeks to preach the Gospel learn to do his Lord’s work in the style of Peter and John who went not without being *sent* and commissioned.

No man has any right to aspire to the Christian pastorate without a call from the Most High. There must come to us a setting apart, an ordination not of man, but by the Eternal Spirit making us to be vessels of mercy unto the nations. When we obtain this anointing and appointment, we must take care that we go about our work in our Master’s way. These men were not to go blundering into the city, hurrying to knock at the first door they might hit upon! They must look out for the man with the water pot, and follow him. I think I see them. How anxiously they look around! And when they see the man they ask no questions of him—*that* was not in the command—they *follow* blindly where he leads.

I mark the holy joy in their faces as they see the water carrier stop at a door and put down his load! How confidently they enter the house and enquire for the landlord! The Master has given them the sign, they see the countersign and feel that all is well. The story reminds you of Eleazar, the servant of Abraham, when seeking a wife for Isaac. He, too, had an appointed sign—the damsel shall say, “Drink, and I will give your camels drink also.” And lo, Rebekah came, and just what he had asked she might do, she did! And then the man lifted up his heart to God and blessed the God of his Master Abraham for giving him good speed on his errand.

If we would seek souls we must follow the indications of God’s will! We must be like the handmaidens whose eyes watch their mistresses. We

must be anxious to detect the first sign of Divine Grace, to observe the kindling of the new-born life in the awakened soul, to discover the first incomings of the Divine light into the thick darkness of the natural heart. And *then* we must follow our Master's will—not inventing this clap-trap, and that excitement as new methods of revival, not fashioning new gospels of our own—but keeping close to the all-perfect Gospel of our blessed God! We must preach the Truth of God simply after the Apostolic precedent, believing that in this way, and in this way only, we may expect to see the revival which we seek. The Master's word of power comes to men, then, by *instrumentality*.

Dear Hearers, you who are not converted, never neglect the means of Divine Grace, because it is through the *means* that God's blessing will be most likely to come to you. "Being in the way, the Lord met with me." I have heard of a young lad who was observed to be especially attentive to the sermon, and when he was asked the reason, he said, "Because I believe that if there is anything likely to do me good, Satan is sure to prevent my hearing it if possible, and therefore I listen with all my heart in the hope that I may hear to my soul's profit." You will not listen long in vain, if you listen so.

In the pools of the Gospel, men mostly catch what they fish for, and if you come to hear the Word desiring salvation, you will, I trust, soon obtain it. If you resort to the place of worship merely to pass the time away, or to hear a popular preacher, you cannot expect a blessing from God. But if you come here breathing the prayer, "Lord, meet with me. Jesus, save me today," I do not doubt that whoever the preacher may be, God will visit you through him and hear your prayer.

In the third place, although we are now speaking of Christ's *effectual* power, yet the man's will *was* consulted. Peter and John said to him, "The Master says, Where is the guest chamber?" They did not push themselves into the guest chamber and say to the owner, "We take possession of this parlor in the Master's name whether you like it or not. We have come here, and we mean to stop here. Our Master sent us, and we shall not go away." Nothing of the kind! The man's chamber was his own, and the Lord Jesus Christ respects the man's household rights by calling him "the good man of the house"—the master, the proprietor, the landlord of it.

So it is in conversion. Men are brought to God by the effectual power of Divine Grace, but Grace never violates, though it subdues, the human will. They make a great mistake who think that God treats men as if they were logs—God knows they are *not* logs, and never treats them so. He has made them in His own image, to be free, intelligent agents and He acts upon them as free agents. It is difficult for some men to understand how Grace can be effectual and almighty, and yet man can still be a free agent. Now, if persons cannot see this, we are not bound to give them understandings, but the two things are consistent enough—prejudice creates the difficulty—and there is none, really.

A man may be free enough, and yet he may be so overwhelmingly persuaded to a certain course that he cannot do otherwise. Such moral power does not at all interfere with true liberty. If we taught that men were saved against their wills, and that physical force was put upon them to make them Christians, we should deserve to be denounced as talking

nonsense, or worse! But the power which we speak of is *moral, spiritual*, persuasive, and operates in strict accordance with the usual laws of mind. The Grace of God does no violence to the will, but sweetly overcomes its obstinacy, making it a willing captive. The force that we speak of at any time when we speak of the power of Divine Grace, must be understood by you all to be a force in consistency with the original constitution of manhood. And evermore, although our Lord works upon men according to His own will, yet He always so works upon them as thinking, judging, willing men, and not as substances which are to be hammered, broken, or twisted by brute force.

My Hearers, you must not expect that you will be lugged into Heaven by the ears, or whirled into salvation by the hair of your heads! If you are ever saved, the *heart* must be changed, and your whole being must freely consent to the rule of Grace. If you are ever born again, you will be made willing in the day of God's power. His Grace will come to you to remove your prejudices, to overcome your obstinacy, and to make you willingly obedient to the Divine sway. How anxiously I wish that you had such a will this morning! May the Lord bow your will by the Divine power of His love, and may you say today, "Lord, I will to be saved. I am willing to renounce sin and lay hold on eternal life." You shall never find God's will behind yours. Where He *gives* a willing mind, think it to be the indication of His own merciful willingness. When Grace has brought you to be *willing* to accept Christ, then be not afraid, but believe at once!

But now, in the next place, although his will was consulted, yet, through a mysterious power exerted by our Lord, the householder raised no question but at once cheerfully and joyfully opened his guest chamber. He was not compelled to give up his upper room, but yet he did it as surely as if force had been used. We do not observe the slightest hesitation. He acted as if he had said, "Come in, and welcome. I owe too much to your Master to refuse." Perhaps this man had seen his child raised to life. Perhaps he had been a leper, and been healed. Perhaps he had been lame and been restored. At any rate, he was a friend of Christ.

Who he was, and what he was, we do not know, but he joyfully accepted the honor which the Redeemer proposed to confer upon him. By this shall we know, today, who are the Lord's chosen and who are not. For when the Gospel comes to some, they fight against it and will not have it. But where men receive it, welcoming it, and blessing God that it has come to them, this is a sure indication that there is a secret work going on in the soul and that God has chosen them unto eternal life. Are you willing, dear Hearer, to receive Christ? Are you this day content to take Him and hold Him to be your All in All? Then there is no difficulty in the way—you may have Him—His own power is working with you, making you willing, and the invitation is, "Whoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."

As for this man, I may say in conclusion that he had the unspeakable honor of entertaining Christ in his upper room at the last supper at which our Savior sat before His death! And, O Brethren, if you and I receive Christ into our hearts, what an honor to entertain the Son of God this side the stars! The Heaven of heavens cannot contain Him! All the glories of Paradise are too little for the splendor of His Person and the dignity of

His merits, and yet He condescends to find a house within our narrow hearts!

We are not worthy that He should come under our roof, but what an unutterable privilege when He condescends to enter, for then He makes a feast and causes our souls to feast with Him upon such royal dainties as Solomon, in all his glory, could not spread! We sit at a banquet where the viands are immortal, and give immortality to those who feed on them. If you have ever feasted with the Well-Beloved, I am sure you will wish the festival would never break up. You will long for the time when you may eat the bread of Heaven in Heaven, and drink the wine of the kingdom new in Glory and go no more out, but abide with the Father world without end. Happy, thrice happy is the man who entertains the angels' Lord.

Thus have I outlined the story of effectual Grace. Christ's Grace comes to us while we are yet dead in sin—we are called by it. Instrumentality is used, yet the secret power of God does it all, and as a result of it, we, by entertaining the Savior, are greatly honored and eminently blessed. Now, is there not here, for Believers, a theme for earnest praise? Brethren, if Christ has entered into your hearts and mine, and that entrance was effected wholly through His Grace, let us magnify Him exceedingly!—

**“’Twas the same love that spread the feast
That sweetly forced us in,
Else we had still refused to taste,
And perished in our sin.”**

Let us extol the amazing love which has worked in us so mightily to redeem us from our natural hardness of heart! Let those refuse to sing who have never known their obligations to Sovereign Grace! But those of us who feel our debt must praise the lavish hand which has dealt so bountifully with us!

And ought not this, moreover, to encourage every worker for God? Brethren, if the Master can thus find a banqueting house when He seems to be altogether destitute, and find it with but a *word*, let us never despair of the salvation of any man! Let us go forth to our labor for souls believing that the Lord will still find Himself a lodging within men's hearts! What if nine out of 10 of the unconverted here should say, “We will not admit the Savior,” yet there is a remnant according to the election of Grace who will welcome Him! We may be content to be rebuffed with a 100 negatives if but *one* soul is obedient to our message!

If we had to preach to thousands year after year, and never rescued but one soul, that one soul would be a full reward for all our labor, for a soul is of countless price! Let us be of good courage, the Master may give us all our hearers as our hire if He wills to do so! He can subdue the most hard heart with a *word*, and make our ministry, which has been barren up to this moment, suddenly become fruitful to His glory! God grant that many this day may learn what effectual Grace is, and Christ shall have all the praise.

II. During the second part of our discourse we shall regard the question of the text as the AFFECTIONATE ENQUIRY OF THE LORD'S SERVANTS. We have not, this morning, any verbal direction as to any special person in this house. I am not told to speak especially to that young man, or to yonder young woman. I am not directed to address the appeals of the

Gospel to those who may be sitting in this area, or to those in the galleries. I am not at all directed, as were Peter and John—still the directions to the Gospel-preacher are very sufficient and plain.

Here they are, “Go you into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.” I am not called to preach to the elect alone—I do not know them. I know that my message will be of no service to any but the chosen, but, in order that it may come to these, it is our work to address it to *all*. We cast the net into the sea and the Lord sends us what fish He wills. To one and all, therefore, of you who have not known Christ, I have this question to ask—“The Master says, Where is the guest chamber?”

I will explain the question first. Christ Jesus would have entertainment in the human heart. He says, “Where is the heart in which I may dwell? Where is the soul that is ready, this morning, to open its gates that I may enter in and dwell there?” Now, observe that I am not asking you the question, “Where is Christ?” for your answer would be a very distressing one—you have not found Him! There are, I hope, many scores and hundreds here who have admitted Him into the inner chamber of their spirits, and are now enjoying fellowship with Him. But to you unconverted ones I put no question as to that matter, for you are strangers to communion with Jesus.

Nor am I asking, “Where is there a feast for the Master? Where will He find a festival of virtue and good works?” No, but, “Where is there room for Him?” *He* will bring the feast—the *chamber* is all He asks. Christ asks nothing good from you—he only asks the empty room in which He may spread the good things which He will bring with Himself. The Master asks you not to prepare the feast, for you are penniless in your natural estate. You have absolutely nothing upon which He can feed, for you have not even food for your own soul! And you have spent your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfies not. He asks an empty chamber—this is all. Room for the Savior! Room for the Savior! Room for the Savior to enter and dwell!

It is not your *virtues*, your *excellencies*, nor *anything* good of you that He asks for, but simply the empty room in which you are willing to entertain Him. The question is, simply and alone, “Where is the guest chamber?” Not, Where is the guest chamber that is sumptuously decorated and made fit for the great King? Not, Where is the chamber that is glittering with gilded panels and pavements of mosaic? Jesus seeks no lofty chamber in which to lodge! No, if there is one of you that has a heart lofty and proud, Christ will not come to you—for all the splendor of your pretended goodness are faded and stained in His sight. He dwells not with the proud, nor with the great.

But if you have a broken heart and a contrite spirit, “to this man will I look, and with this man will I dwell, says the Lord.” Are you guilty? Well, that need not keep the sin-atonement Priest away. Is the guest chamber of your heart all soiled and foul? Is it full of evils? Jesus Christ does not enquire concerning that! He only asks you if you are *willing* that He should come in and dwell there, and if you say, “Yes,” it will be His business to cleanse the chamber and fit it for Himself. Only, “Where is a guest chamber?” Is there a heart here, this morning, that is open to Jesus? Is there a man or woman who has room for the Lord of Glory?

Still further explaining the question, let me remark that some offer Christ a room which He cannot accept as a guest chamber. Yes, they will receive Christ into their *heads*, they have no objection to *believe* the Truths taught in the Bible concerning Him with a notional faith. My Lord will not eat the Passover there. No, you may be very orthodox, indeed, and exceedingly sound in doctrine, but when Jesus comes into the house He will have the best parlor, namely, the *heart*. Not here in the cold attic of the brain, but there in the warm parlor of the heart—*there* must Jesus dwell! Are you willing this day to have Christ to be your Lord and Savior?

Soul! Soul, are you willing to trust Christ with your eternal interests? Are you willing, now, to hang upon Him as the vessel hangs upon the nail, having no other dependence? Are you willing to become His servant, to do what He bids you? Are you willing to be His friend, to find your best solace in fellowship with Him? Are you willing now, all guilty and defiled as you are, to accept *His* righteousness as *your* righteousness, and His blood as your cleansing? Does your mind bring out the keys of the heart's castle and offer them to the King, and do you say, "Come in, my Lord, come in! I have too long stood out against You and resisted all the invitations of Your Grace, but now lift up your heads, O you gates, and be you lift up, you doors of my spirit, that the King of Glory may come in"?

That is all I ask of you. No merits am I sent to seek after! Nothing good am I bid to seek in you! Only if you are *willing* and *obedient*, you shall eat the good of this land. If you are willing to trust Him, then I have found out the man with whom Christ is predestinated to dwell! God has given the will—He will surely work the way. He has made you cheerfully to be His host—He is equally willing to be your guest. Where is the guest chamber? I cannot very well come round to all of you and take you by the hand and say, "Is there a guest chamber, my Friend, in your heart?"—it might take too long a time to pass from pew to pew to put to you the question, but I do desire to put it (and to press it very earnestly) to each one, "The Master says, Where is the guest chamber?"

Did you notice, when I read the passage in Luke just now, that it ran a little differently from what it does in Mark?—"The Master says unto *you*, Where is the guest chamber?" I trust He says that to some of you in the singular, and with singular power. The Master says to *you*, this morning, this day of Grace, this hour of love which you have been spared to see, though you might well have been cut down in your sins—the Master says unto you, "Mary, John, Where is the guest chamber?" Take my advice and give a speedy affirmative answer to that question, and may this be the day when Jesus shall enter in triumph into your soul!

I will tell you in a minute or two why it is that I feel earnest to press this question, "The Master says, Where is the guest chamber?" I press it, first, for His sake—yes, all His true servants long to get Him entertainment in human hearts. Sometimes I have thought upon my own ministry, and I have said, "Yes, during the time in which I have been pastor of the Church, we have carried out many great works. We have built a vast house for prayer, erected houses for alms-women, orphanages for the young and carried on the college. But what would all this be if these were the *only* results of gathering this people together, and preaching to them from Sunday to Sunday? *The only success that is worth having is the win-*

ning of souls! If we do not see souls brought to Christ to bow at His feet, and own Him as King, we go back to our closet, crying, “Who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?”

Christ must be crowned in men’s hearts or we pine with grief! We cannot be satisfied to see Him stand in the street, His head wet with dew, and His locks with the drops of the night—we must have the Son of God entertained, for oh, it grieves us even unto brokenness of heart—it troubles us exceedingly that He should be used so ill who loved us so well! That He should be rejected who gave up Heaven and all its glories that He might redeem us from going down to Hell! By the wounds of Christ, and by the bloody sweat that covered Him when He redeemed us from our sins, we do beseech you listen to this voice, “Where is the guest chamber?” and reply, “Lord, that guest chamber is in my soul today.”

We press this upon you also for our own sake. We are afraid lest we shall be found unprofitable servants. If you can be won to Christ, so much the more joy and rejoicing to us, for what is our crown of rejoicing? Is it not *you*, in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ? But most of all, we press this upon you for your own soul’s sake. O Beloved, if you do but entertain Christ, you will have entertained Heaven! You will be no losers by loving Christ, but unspeakable gainers! Trust in Jesus and your sins are forgiven you, a bright future is secured and the vile past is blotted out! Get Christ, and if you are ever so poor, or ever so full of pain, yet are you to be envied!

But oh, if you live and die without Christ, we scarcely dare to picture the scene around your dying bed—imagination refuses to lift the curtain and to view your soul in a disembodied state driven forever from hope! We recollect that dreadful text, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment.” We cannot bear it that you should know the eternity of God’s wrath! That you should have to feel the perpetual flame of the Divine anger! Oh, for your own sake, if you have any true self-love and would be delivered from eternal misery, open wide your heart that Jesus Christ may enter in!

Do you still ask, “But what do you mean by ‘Where is the guest chamber?’ ” I will answer it yet again. Jesus Christ deserves from you a simple, personal, immediate, undivided faith in Himself. Wherever Christ comes, He comes to be trusted—you must trust Him *wholly*—rejecting all confidences of your own. Trust Him at this moment and do not postpone or put off faith to a more convenient season. If Jesus Christ is to be the Guest in the guest chamber of your heart, you must now give yourself up wholly to Him, for—

***“Know, nor of the terms complain,
To reign, and with no partial sway—
Where Jesus comes, He comes to reign,
Lusts must be slain that disobey.”***

If you trust Christ, you must then *obey* Christ. In the power of the Spirit sin will have to be cast out, for Christ will not eat the Passover with sin reigning in the chamber. All the lusts of the flesh must be renounced. He will make you to renounce them, for Christ will not feast with you while you enjoy the dainties of sin. Christ will have no fellowship with Belial. He will not sit at the same table as the devil. Are you willing now? It is

all I ask. Has His Spirit made you willing by His power to give up favorite sins, to renounce secret lusts, to be molded and fashioned by the Divine hand, and made to be vessels fit for Divine use? Are you willing to have Christ for your Master and your Savior?

Where, where is the guest chamber? My Master, You know! Would God some voice would say, "Here it is." For, remember (and then I have done), if you entertain not Christ now, the day will come when you will wish you had, but wish in vain! In the day you shall see Him upon His Throne and He shall say to you, "You rejected Me, and now I reject you. You heard the Gospel—you were invited, you were pleaded with—but you had no ear to all My invitations." In that day, when *He* has no ear for *you*, but when He deals out the thunderbolts of His just anger, you will wish that you had hearkened to Him!

Oh, I would to God I could make men look upon their Sabbaths and the sermons they hear as they will look upon them another day. How many there are today wringing their hands in torment, and crying, "O that we could hear the Gospel again! O for another invitation to come to Christ! But it is past now. The hour of mercy is struck, and we have come into the eternity of vengeance where there are no acts of pardon passed, and no hopes held out for souls to escape from their everlasting misery!" O be wise, now! "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Today, while yet His Spirit pleads with men, make your souls guest chambers for Him, and, if you admit Him now, you will now rejoice exceedingly in that day when He comes in His glory!

It will be no mean joy to the Believer to say, when He sees His Lord in the clouds of Heaven, "By His effectual Grace I have known Him before. I received Him into my heart when men spoke evil of Him—when He was rejected, I accepted him. When He walked through the streets, and they were miry, and He was clothed in rags, I took Him in. He was hungry and I fed Him. He was sick and in prison, and I visited Him, and ministered to Him."

Oh, it will be a joy unspeakable for the soul to hear Him say, "Inasmuch as you did it unto one of the least of these My Brethren, you did it unto Me. You have been with Me in My temptations, you shall be with Me in My glory. You shared My tribulations and humiliations, and now you shall partake in all My triumphs. You shall sit on My right hand forever and ever." Be this the portion of every person within these walls, and may God be glorified in each one of us, not in His justice, but in His mercy, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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CHRIST IN GETHSEMANE

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A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane.”
Mark 14:32.

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon “Christ in Gethsemane,” are #493, Volume 9—GETHSEMANE; #693, Volume 12—THE GARDEN OF THE SOUL; #1199, Volume 20—THE AGONY IN GETHSEMANE and #494, Volume 9—THE BETRAYAL—Read/download all the sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

OUR Lord had been sitting at the table of happy fellowship with His disciples, talking to them in a very solemn and impressive manner. He then delivered those choice discourses which are recorded by John and offered that wonderful prayer which deserves to always be called, “The Lord’s Prayer.” Knowing all that was to befall Him, He and His disciples left the upper room and started to go to His usual place of quiet retreat, “a place which was named Gethsemane.” You can easily picture their descent into the street. The moon was at the full on the Paschal night and it was very cold, for we read that the high priest’s servants had kindled a fire and warmed themselves, because it was cold. As Jesus walked along the narrow streets of Jerusalem, He doubtless still spoke to His disciples in calm and helpful tones. And before long they came to the Brook Kidron over which David passed when Absalom stole away the hearts of the people from his father. So now, “great David’s greater Son” must go the same way to the olive garden where He had often been before with His disciples. It was called Gethsemane, “the olive press.” As we think of Christ in Gethsemane, I want you who love Him not only to adore Him, but to learn to imitate Him, so that when you are called to “drink of His cup,” and to be baptized with the baptism wherewith He was baptized, you may behave as His true followers should and come forth from your conflict victorious as He came forth from His!

At the very outset, there is one fact that I wish you to observe very particularly. Sudden changes from joy to grief have produced extraordinary results in those who have been affected by them. We have often read or heard of persons whose hair has turned white in a single night—such an extreme convulsion of mind has happened to them that they have seemed to be hurried forward into premature old age—at least in appearance, if not in fact. Many have died through unusual excitements of spirit. Some have dropped down dead through a sudden excess of joy and others have been killed by a sudden excess of grief. Our blessed Master must have experienced a very sudden change of feeling on that memorable night. In that great intercessory prayer of His, there is nothing like distress or tumult of spirit. It is as calm—as a lake unruffled by

the zephyr's breath. Yet He is no sooner in Gethsemane than He says to the three especially favored disciples, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death: tarry you here and watch with Me."

I do not think that this great conflict arose through our dear Master's fear of death, nor through His fear of the physical pain and all the ignominy and shame that He was so soon to endure. But, surely, the agony in Gethsemane was part of the great burden that was already resting upon Him as His people's Substitute—it was this that pressed His spirit down even into the dust of death. He was to bear the full weight of it upon the Cross, but I am persuaded that the passion *began* in Gethsemane. You know that Peter writes, "Who His own Self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." But we are not to gather from that passage that His substitutionary sufferings were limited to the tree, for the original might bear this rendering—that He bore our sins in His own body *up to the tree*—that He came up to the tree bearing that awful load and still continued to bear it on the tree! You remember that Peter also writes, in the same verse, "by whose stripes you were healed." These stripes did not fall upon Jesus when He was upon the Cross—it was in Pilate's Judgment Hall that He was so cruelly scourged! I believe that He was bearing our sins all His life, but that the terrible weight of them began to crush Him with sevenfold force when He came to the olive press, and that the entire mass rested upon Him with infinite intensity when He was nailed to the Cross—and so forced from Him the agonizing cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

I. In meditating upon this commencement of our Savior's unknown agonies, let us think first of THE CHOICE OF THE SPOT where those agonies were to be endured. Let us try to find out why He went to that particular garden on that dread night of His betrayal.

First, the choice of Gethsemane *showed His serenity of mind and His courage*. He knew that He was to be betrayed, to be dragged before Annas and Caiaphas, Pilate and Herod—to be insulted, scourged and, at last to be led away to be crucified—but (mark the words), "He came out, and went, as He was known to do, to the Mount of Olives." It was His usual custom to go there to pray, so He would not make any change in His habits although He was approaching the supreme crisis of His earthly life. Let this courageous conduct of our Lord teach a lesson to all who profess to be His disciples. Whenever some trouble is about to come upon you, especially if it is a trouble that comes upon you because you are a Christian, do not be perturbed in spirit. Neglect no duty, but do as you have been known to do. The best way of preparing for whatever may be coming is to go on with the next thing in the order of Providence. If any child of God knew that he had to die tonight, I would recommend him to do just what he would do on any other Sabbath night, only to do it more earnestly and more devoutly than ever he had done it before! Blessed is that servant who, when his Master comes, shall be found discharging his duty as a servant—waiting upon his Master's household with all due orderliness and care. To go and stand outside the front door and stare up into the sky to see if the Master is coming, as some I know seem to do, is not at all as your Lord would have you act! You know how the angels rebuked the disciples for doing this—"You men of Galilee, why do you

stand gazing up into Heaven?" Go and preach the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit and then, whether Christ comes sooner or later, you will be in the right posture to welcome Him! And He will commend you for carrying out, as far as you can, His last great commission to His disciples!

Christ's courage is also evident from the fact that "Judas, also, who betrayed Him, knew the place, for Jesus often resorted there with His disciples." Nothing would have been easier than for our blessed Lord to have escaped from Judas if He had desired to do so, but He had no desire to escape, so He went boldly and deliberately to the place with which "the son of perdition" was well acquainted—the very place, indeed, to which the traitor at once conducted the officers who had been ordered to arrest the Master! May the Lord give to us similar courage whenever we are placed in a position in any respect like His was then! There are certain trials which, as a Christian, you cannot escape, and which you should not wish to escape. You do not like to think of them, but I would urge you to do so, not with fear and terror, but with the calm confidence of one who says, "I have a baptism to be baptized with and I am straitened until it is accomplished. I have a cup of which I must drink, I am eager to drink it. I do not court suffering, but if it is for Christ's sake, for the glory of God and the good of His Church, I do not wish to escape from it, but I will go to it calmly and deliberately, even as my Lord went to Gethsemane, though Judas knew the place where Jesus often resorted with His disciples."

But, next, in the choice of this spot, our Lord also *manifested His wisdom*. For, first, it was to Him a place of holy memories. Under those old olive trees, so gnarled and twisted, He had spent many a night in prayer. And the silver moonbeams, glancing between the somber foliage had often illumined His blessed Person as He knelt there and wrestled and had communion with His Father. He knew how His soul had been refreshed while He had spoken there, face to face with the Eternal—how His face had been made to shine—and He had returned to the battle in Jerusalem's streets strengthened by His contact with the Almighty. So He went to the old trysting place, the familiar spot where holy memories clustered thick as bees about a hive, each one laden with honey. He went there because those holy memories aided His faith. And, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, when your time of trial comes, you will do well to go to the spot where the Lord has helped you in the past—and where you have enjoyed much hallowed fellowship with Him. There are rooms where if the walls could tell all that has happened within them, a heavenly brightness might be seen because God has so graciously revealed Himself to us there in times of sickness and sorrow! One who had long lain in prison for Christ's sake, used to say, sometimes, after he had been released, "Oh, take me back to my dungeon, for I never had such blessed seasons of communion with my Lord as I had within that cold stone cell!" Well, if you have such a place, dear to you by many hallowed memories, go to it as your Master went to His sacred oratory in the Garden of Gethsemane, for there you will be likely to be helped even by the associations of the place.

Our Lord's wisdom, in choosing that spot is also evident from the fact that it was a place of deep solitude and, therefore, most suitable for His prayers and cries on that doleful night. The place which is now called the Garden of Gethsemane does not, according to some of the best judges, deserve that name. It is in far too exposed a position. But one always thinks of Gethsemane as a very quiet, lonely spot. And let me say that in my judgment, there is no place so suitable for solitude as an olive garden—especially if it is in terrace above terrace as in the South of France. I have frequently been sitting in an olive garden, and friends whom I would have been glad to see, have been within a few yards of me, yet I have not known that they were there! One beautiful afternoon, as two or three of us sat and read, we could see, a long way down, a black hat moving to and fro, but we could not see the wearer of it. We afterwards discovered that he was a brother minister whom we were glad to invite to join our little company. If you want to be alone, you can be so at any time you like in an olive garden—even if it is near town. What with the breaking up of the ground into terraces, the great abundance of foliage and the strange twisted trunks of the old trees, I know no place in which I would feel so sure of being quite alone as in an olive garden! And I think our Master went to Gethsemane for a similar reason. And burdened as He was, He needed to be in a solitary place. The clamorous crowd in Jerusalem would have been no fit companions for Him when His soul was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death.

It seems to me, also, that there is about an olive garden, either by day or by night, something congruous with sorrow. There are some trees that seem conducive to mirth—the very twinkling of their leaves would make one's heart dance with delight! But about the olive there is always something, not suggestive, perhaps, of absolute melancholy, but a matter-of-fact soberness as if in extracting oil out of the flinty rock, it had endured so much suffering that it had no inclination to smile, but stood there as the picture of everything that is somber and solemn. Our dear Master knew that there was something congenial to His exceeding sorrow in the gloom of the olive garden and, therefore, He went there on the night of His betrayal. Act with similar wisdom, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, when your hour of trial is approaching! I have known some people rush into gay society to try to forget their grief, but that was folly. I have known others, in seasons of sorrow, seem to surround themselves with everything that is sad—that was also folly. Some, who have been in great trouble, have tried to hide it in frivolity, but that was still greater folly. It is a good thing, in times of grief, not to let your surroundings be either too somber or too bright, but to seek, in your measure, to be as wise as your Master was in His choice of Gethsemane as the scene of His solitary supplication and subsequent betrayal.

II. Now, secondly, let us consider THE EXERCISE OF THE SAVIOR UPON THAT SPOT. Every item is worthy of attention and imitation.

First, *He took all the precautions for others.* He left 8 of His disciples at the entrance to the Garden, saying to them, "Pray that you enter not into temptation." Then He took Peter, James and John a little further into the Garden, saying to them, "Tarry you here, and watch with Me." There ought, thus, to have been two watching and praying bands. If they had

all been on the watch, they might have heard the footfalls of the approaching band and they would have seen in the distance the lights of the lanterns and torches of these who were coming to arrest their Lord. Probably our Master took these precautions more for the sake of His disciples than for His own sake. He bade them pray as well as watch, that they might not be taken unawares, nor be overcome with fear when they saw their Master captured and led away as a prisoner. From this action of our Lord, we may learn that we, also, in our own extremity, should not forget to care for others and shield them from harm as much as we can.

Next, *our Savior solicited the sympathy of friends*. As a Man, He desired the prayers and sympathies of those who had been most closely associated with Him. Oh, what a Prayer Meeting they might have held—watching for the coming of the enemy and praying for their dear Lord and Master! They had a noble opportunity of showing their devotion to Him, but they missed it. They could not have kept Judas and the men who came with him away from their Lord, but they might have let their Master know when Judas was coming. It was almost the last service that any of them could have rendered to Him before He died for them—yet they failed to render it and left Him, in that dread hour of darkness—without even the slight consolation that human sympathy might have afforded Him. In our times of trial, we shall not do wrong if we imitate our Lord in this action of His—yet we need not be surprised if, like He, we find all human aid fail us in our hour of greatest need.

Then, leaving all His disciples, and going away alone, *Jesus prayed and wrestled with God* and, in our time of trouble, our resort must be to prayer. Restrain not prayer at any time, even when the sun shines brightly upon you, but be sure that you pray when the midnight darkness surrounds your spirit. Prayer is most needed in such an hour as that, so be not slack in it, but pour out your whole soul in earnest supplication to your God and say to yourself, “Now above all other times I must pray with the utmost intensity.” For consider how Jesus prayed in Gethsemane.

He adopted the lowliest posture and manner. He fell on His face and prayed, saying, O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.” What an extraordinary sight! The eternal Son of God had taken upon Himself our nature and there He lay as low as the very dust out of which our nature was originally formed! There He lay as low as the most unrighteous sinner or the most humble beggar can lie before God. Then He began to cry to His Father in plain and simple language, but oh, what force He put into the words He used! Thrice He pleaded with His Father, repeating the same petition—and Luke tells us that, “being in an agony He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” He was not only in an agony of suffering, but in an agony of prayer at the same time!

But while our Lord’s prayer in Gethsemane was thus earnest, intense and repeated, it was, at the same time, balanced with a ready acquiescence in His Father’s will! “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.” So, suffering one, you whose spirit has sunk within you. You who are depressed and well-near distracted with grief, may the Holy Spirit help

you to do what Jesus did—to pray, to pray alone, to pray with intensity, to pray with importunity, to pray even unto an agony—for this is the way in which you will prevail with God and be brought through your hour of darkness and grief. Believe not the devil when he tells you that your prayer is in vain! Let not your unbelief say, “The Lord has closed His ears against you.” “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, neither His ears heavy, that they cannot hear.” Yet mind that you also imitate your Lord’s submission and resignation, for that is not acceptable prayer in which a man seeks to make his own will prevail over the will of God! That is presumption and rebellion—not the cry of a true child of God. You may beseech Him to grant your request, “if it is possible,” but you may not go beyond that! You must still cry, with your Lord, “Nevertheless not as I will, but as You will.”

I have already reminded you that our Lord sought human sympathy while in Gethsemane, but I want again to refer to that fact so that we may learn the lessons it is intended to teach us. In our little griefs we often go to our fellow creatures, but not to God—that habit is apt to breed dependence upon man. But in our greatest griefs, we frequently go to God and feel as if we could not go to man! Now, although that may look like honoring God, there is a good deal of pride mixed with it. Our Lord Jesus Christ neither depended upon men nor yet renounced the sympathy of men. There were three of His disciples within call and eight more a little further away, but probably still within call. He prayed to His Father, yet He asked of His disciples such sympathy as they might have shown to Him. Still, He did not depend upon their sympathy for, when He did not get it, He went back to His praying to His Father! There are some who say that they will trust in God and use no means—others say that they will use the means, but they fall short in the matter of trusting God. I have read that one of Mahommed’s followers came to him and said, “O prophet of God, I shall turn my camel loose, tonight, and trust it to providence.” But Mahommed very wisely answered, “Tie your camel up as securely as you can—and then trust it to providence.” There was sound common sense in that remark—and the principle underlying it can be applied to far weightier matters. I believe that I am following the example of my Lord when I say, “I trust in God so fully that if no man will sympathize with me, He, alone, will enable me to drink all that is in this cup that He has placed in my hand. Yet I love my fellow creatures so much that I desire to have their sympathy with me in my sorrow, although if they withhold it, I shall still place my sole dependence upon my God.”

When our Lord came to His disciples and found them sleeping instead of watching, you know how prompt He was to find an excuse for them—“The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.” His rebuke of Peter was very gentle—“Simon, do you sleep? Could you not watch one hour? Are you sleeping, you who so recently boasted that you would go with Me to prison and to death and that though all others should deny Me, you would not? Ah, Simon, you had better watch and pray, for you know not how soon temptation may assail you and cause you to fall most grievously.” Yet Peter was included with the rest of the disciples in the excuse which their Lord made for the willing but weak sleepers who ought to have been watchers. What a lesson this is to us! We do not make half the

excuses for one another that Jesus makes for us! Generally, we are so busy making excuses for *ourselves* that we quite forget to make excuses for others. It was not so with our Lord. Even in His own overwhelming trouble, no sharp or unkind word escaped from His lips! When we are very ill, you know how apt we are to be irritable to those about us. And if others do not sympathize with us as we think they should, we wonder what they can be made of to see us in such sorrow and not to express more grief on our account! Yet there was our Master, all stained with His own blood, for His heart's floods had burst their banks and run all over Him in a gory torrent! But when He came to His disciples, they gave Him no kind word, no help, no sympathy, for they were all asleep. He knew that they were sleeping for sorrow, so their sleep was not caused by indifference to His grief, but by their sorrow at His sorrow. Their Master knew this, so He made such excuse for them as He could. And, Beloved, when we are suffering our much smaller sorrows, let us be ready to make excuses for others as our Lord did in His great ocean of suffering!

III. Now, thirdly, let us consider THE TRIUMPH UPON THAT SPOT. It was a terrible battle that was waged in Gethsemane—we shall never be able to pronounce that word without thinking of our Lord's grief and agony—but it was a battle that He won, a conflict that ended in complete victory for Him!

The victory consisted, first, *in His perfect resignation*. There was no rebellion in His heart against the will of the Father to whom He had so completely subjected Himself. But unreservedly He cried, "Not as I will, but as You will." No clarion blast, nor firing of cannons, nor waving of flags, nor acclamation of the multitudes ever announced such a victory as our Lord achieved in Gethsemane! He there won the victory over all the griefs that were upon Him and all the griefs that were soon to roll over Him like huge Atlantic billows! He there won the victory over death and even over the wrath of God which He was about to endure to the utmost for His people's sake! There is true courage, there is the highest heroism, there is the declaration of the Invincible Conqueror in that cry, "Not as I will, but as You will."

With Christ's perfect resignation, there was also *His strong resolve*. He had undertaken the work of His people's redemption and He would go through with it until He could triumphantly say from the Cross, "It is finished!" A man can sometimes dash forward and do a deed of extraordinary daring, but it is the long-sustained agony that is the real test of courageous endurance. Christ's agony in Gethsemane was broken up into three periods of most intense wrestling in prayer—with brief intervals which could have given Him no relief as He turned in vain to the sleeping disciples for the sympathy that His true Human Nature needed in that hour of dreadful darkness! But, as He had before steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem though He well knew all that awaited Him there, He still kept His face set like a flint toward the great purpose for which He had come from Heaven to earth. It is the wear and tear of long-continued grief that has proved too much for many a truly heroic spirit, yet our Lord endured it to the end! And so He left us an example that we shall do well to follow.

A part of our Savior's victory was that *He obtained angelic help*. Those prayers of His prevailed with His Father, "and there appeared an angel unto Him from Heaven, strengthening Him." I know not how he did it, but in some mysterious way the angel brought Him succor from on high. We do not know that angel's name and we do not need to know it—but somewhere among the bright spirits before the Throne of God there is the angel who strengthened Christ in Gethsemane. What a high honor for him! The disciples missed the opportunity that Christ put within their reach, but the angel gladly availed himself of the opportunity as soon as it was presented to him.

Last of all, the victory of Christ was manifest in *His majestic bearing towards His enemies*. Calmly He rose and faced the hostile band. And when the traitor gave the appointed signal by which Jesus was to be recognized, He simply asked the searching personal question, "Judas, do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" How that enquiry must have cut the betrayer to the heart! When Jesus turned to those who had been sent to arrest Him and said to them, "Whom do you seek," He did not speak like a man whose soul was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death. And when they answered Him, "Jesus of Nazareth," He said, "I Am," and at the very sound of that great Jehovah's name, "I Am," "they went backward and fell to the ground." There was a majestic flash of His Deity even in the hour of the abasement of His Humanity—and they fell prostrate before the God who had thus confessed that the name of Jehovah rightly belonged to Him! Then He went with them quietly and without the slightest resistance after He had shown His care for His disciples by saying—"If, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way"—and after He had healed the ear of Malchus, which Peter had so rashly cut off! Then, all the while that Christ was before Annas and Caiaphas, and before Pilate and Herod, and right on to the last dread scene of all upon the Cross, He was calm and collected—and never again endured such tossing to and fro as He had passed through in Gethsemane!

Well now, Beloved, if the Lord shall bring us into deep waters and cause us to pass through fiery trials—if His Spirit shall enable us to pray as Jesus did, we shall see something like the same result in our own experience! We shall rise up from our knees strengthened for all that lies before us and fitted to bear the Cross that our Lord may have ordained for us. In any case, our cup can never be as deep or as bitter as His was—there were in His cup some ingredients that never will be found in ours. The bitterness of sin was there, but He has taken that away for all who believe in Him. His Father's wrath was there, but He drank that all up and left not a single drop for any of His people. One of the martyrs, as he was on his way to the stake, was so supremely happy that a friend said to him, "Your Savior was full of sorrow when He agonized for you in Gethsemane." "Yes," replied the martyr, "and for that very reason I am so happy, for He bore all the sorrow for me." You need not fear to die, if you are a Christian, since Jesus died to put away your sin—and death is but the opening of your cage to let you fly, to build your happy nest on high! Therefore, fear not even the last enemy, which is Death. Besides, Christ could not have a Savior with Him to help Him in His agony, but you have His assurance that He will be with you! You shall not have merely an an-

gel to strengthen you, but you shall have that great Angel of the Covenant to save and bless you even to the end!

The most of this sermon does not belong to some of you, for you do not belong to Christ. O dear Friends, do not give sleep to your eyes or slumber to your eyelids till you belong to Him! As surely as you live, you will have sorrows at some time or other, you will have a bitter cup of which you must drink—and then what will you do if you have no Divine consolation in the trying hour? What will you do when you come to die if you have no Christ to make your pillow soft for you, no Savior to go with you through that dark valley? Oh, seek Him and He will be found of you, even now! The Lord help you to do so, for Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 10:1-30.**

Verse 1. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that enters not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.* The positiveness of our Lord's teaching is noteworthy. Whatever may be said about dogmatically teaching, now, it is certain that His teaching is of that character! He does not raise questions, but He solves them. He does not suggest probabilities, but He declares certainties. This might be taken as the key-word to all the Savior's teaching, "Verily, verily." He makes a strong statement. He speaks as one having authority, not as the scribes who only claimed to have authority, but as the Sent One of the Father who really has it! "Verily, verily, I say unto you." Whatever comes to us with the imprimatur of the, "Verily, verily," of the Son of God is not to be questioned or doubted by us for a single moment! "He that enters not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." Christ Himself entered by the door. He came according to the ancient types, symbols and prophecies. He came as God said that He would come. He entered by the door. There is no irregularity about Christ's office as the Shepherd of His sheep. It is confirmed to Him by the sanction of the Holy Spirit. The witness of the Father is borne to Him—"This is My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased: hear you Him." We rejoice to think that Jesus our Savior is also Christ the Anointed. He is Jesus to us, but He is the Anointed of the Father. He comes by right as the appointed Shepherd of the sheep entering in by the door!

2, 3. *But he who enters in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter opens.* To Him John the Baptist, as the porter, opened the door. He pointed to Him and said, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." And every God-sent minister is a porter to Christ, opening the door to Him! That is our office—to stand and open the door that Christ may come forth among you—and that you may come in to Him and find the spiritual pasture on which your souls can feed. "To him the porter opens"—

3. *And the sheep hear his voice.* Those who are really chosen of God hear and heed the voice of Christ but those who are not Christ's chosen ones will not heed His discourse, but will listen to the many voices which

attract the ears and the hearts of sinful men. The elect of God are known by this mark—that they hear the voice of Christ! Just as you can find out in a heap of ashes, whether there are any pieces of steel there by simply thrusting in a magnet, so can you find out God’s chosen people by the mighty magnet of Christ’s voice!

3. *And he calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out.* [See Sermon #2359, Volume 40—PERSONAL AND EFFECTUAL CALLING—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Sometimes He leads them out from the midst of the world’s flocks. And sometimes He calls them by name when they are in His fold and leads them out to even higher and better pastures, calls them and leads them out to higher Truths of God than they have before received.

4. *And when he puts forth his own sheep, he goes before them.* Christ never *drives* His sheep, He leads them. As the Eastern shepherd always goes before his sheep, so does the Savior go before His flock. “He goes before them”—

4. *And the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.* Christ’s sheep are marked in various ways. They are marked on the foot—“the sheep follow Him.” And they are marked in the ear, “for they know His voice.” They follow the track of their Shepherd and they give heed to the voice of their Shepherd—and by these tokens they are known to be His sheep.

5. *And a stranger they will not follow.* There are strangers constantly coming into our different churches. We know they are strangers, for they preach strange doctrines and do not keep to the old paths. Those that are *not* Christ’s sheep follow them directly. “Here is a very clever man,” they say, and off they go after him! But of God’s elect it is written, “A stranger they will not follow”—

5. *But will flee from him.* They are frightened at the very sight of him! They cannot tell what deadly pasture he is preparing for them, so they “flee from him”—

5. *For they know not the voice of strangers.* They know the voice of their Shepherd, but they know not the voice of strangers, so they flee from them.

6. *This parable spoke Jesus unto them but they did not understand the things He spoke unto them.* They thus proved that they were not His sheep, for they did not understand His words!

7, 8. *Then Jesus said unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. And all who came before Me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.* There were many false christs that rose up before Jesus Christ appeared—and there were many persons who followed those false christs. “But the sheep did not hear them.” They still waited with holy Anna, with patient Simeon and the rest of the faithful who waited for the appearing of the true Shepherd, and were not misled by the pretenders who were only “thieves and robbers.”

9. *I am the Door. If anyone enters by Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.* [See Sermon #2752, Volume 47—THE DOOR—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Christ is the Door just as truly as He is the Shepherd and as He is everything that is necessary and good for His people! If I come to Christ, I must come to Him by Christ. Any of us who will but enter in by Christ, who is the Door

of His Church, shall find salvation and more than that—we shall find liberty—for we “shall go in and out.” Our daily pathway shall be a safe one and we shall have abundant supplies for all our daily needs. We “shall go in and out and find pasture.”

10. *The thief comes not but to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.* [See Sermon #1150, Volume 20—LIFE MORE ABUNDANT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] I trust that the first purpose of Christ’s coming has been fulfilled to many of us, for we “have life” through Him—but ought we not to be encouraged to hope that we may reach a higher standard of that life—and so have it more abundantly? We do not want to have just enough life to enable us to breathe, but we want life enough for usefulness, for joy, for triumph, for likeness to Christ, for communion with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ!

11-13. *I am the Good Shepherd: the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep, and flees: and the wolf catches them, and scatters the sheep. The hireling flees, because he is an hireling, and cares not for the sheep.* Christ is the Good Shepherd and, therefore, He never fled as the hireling flees. He cared for the sheep, for they were His own. The wolf might come, but the Good Shepherd was ready to meet him. He would not have His sheep scattered, but He would gather them in the cloudy and dark day, and in every time of danger He would be the center around which they might rally.

14, 15. *I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep.* [See Sermon #1877, Volume 32—OUR OWN DEAR SHEPHERD—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Our translators have ruined this passage by putting a full stop where there should not be one, and by breaking it into two verses. It should run thus—“I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine as the Father knows Me and I know the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep.” Christ here sets forth the intimate knowledge that there is between Himself and all His people—as much as there is between the Father and the Son! It is wonderful teaching, full of depth and spiritual power. As the Father knows the Son, and the Son knows the Father, so certainly does Christ know His Church—and His Church knows Him—or shall do so in the future.

16. *And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold.* [See Sermon #1713, Volume 29—OTHER SHEEP AND ONE FLOCK—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] They are of this flock, but they are not of this fold. The flock is divided, and lies down in different fields for the present—“Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold”—

16-18. *Them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold, and one Shepherd. Therefore does My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself.* Christ’s death was to be the act of His own free will, as well as of the violence of wicked men.

18-21. *I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father. There was a division,*

therefore, again among the Jews for these sayings. And many of them said, He has a devil, and is mad, why listen to Him? Others said, These are not the words of one that has a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind? Christ's sayings always cause a division between those who hear them. There must always be two opinions, just as there are some who are His sheep and some who are not. When you go and try to speak for Christ, do not be at all astonished if people ridicule you. What did they say of the Master, Himself? "He has a devil, and is mad." They will not say anything worse than that of you. And when they have said it, what does it matter? Hard words break no bones. So have courage enough to bear opposition and you may, like your Master, yet find some who will defend you—for there may be those who will say—"These are not the words of one that has a devil."

22-26. *And it was at Jerusalem the Feast of Dedication, and it was winter. And Jesus talked in the Temple in Solomon's porch. Then came the Jews round about Him and said to Him, How long do You make us to doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you and you didn't believe Me: the works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me. But you believe not because you are not of My sheep, as I said unto you.* "You are not My chosen people—there has been no work of Divine Grace in your hearts and, therefore, you do not believe." What a brave way that was of putting the Truth of God! Some would have said, "Because you do not believe, you are not my sheep;" but Jesus puts it the other way, "Because you are not My sheep, therefore you do not believe."

27-30. *My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, who gave them to Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are One.* [See Sermon #2120, Volume 35—THE SECURITY OF BELIEVERS—OR, SHEEP WHO WILL NEVER PERISH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] This great Truth of God angered the Jews so much that they "took up stones again to stone Him." They proved, by thus treating the Good Shepherd, that they were not His sheep!

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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JOHN MARK—OR, HASTE IN RELIGION NO. 3023

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 17, 1907.

*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
IN THE YEAR 1864.*

*“And they all forsook Him, and fled. And there followed Him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him: and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.”
Mark 14:50-52.*

THIS little episode in the narrative of the Evangelist is very singular. One wonders why it is introduced, but a moment's reflection will, I think, suggest a plausible reason. It strikes me that this “certain young man” was none other than Mark, himself. He was probably asleep and, awakened by a great clamor, he asked what it was about. The information was speedily given, “The guards have come to arrest Jesus of Nazareth.” Moved by sudden impulse, not thinking of what he was doing, he rises from his bed, rushes down, pursues the troopers, dashes into the midst of their ranks as though he, alone, would attempt the rescue when all the disciples had fled. The moment the young men lay hold upon him, his heroic spasm is over—his enthusiasm evaporates, he runs away, leaves behind the linen cloth that was loosely wrapped about his body—and makes his escape. There have been many, since then, who have acted as Mark did. And it seems to me that this digression from the main narrative is intended to point a moral.

First, however, you will ask me, “Why do you suppose that this certain young man was Mark?” I grant you that it is merely a supposition, yet it is supported by the strongest chain of probabilities and will sufficiently account for the manner in which he has inserted it. Calvin, following Ambrose and Chrysostom, thinks it was John, albeit few modern critics attach much weight to that conjecture. I find that the more perplexing critics of the modern school ascribe this transaction to Mark for these reasons—it was usual, among the Evangelists, to relate transactions in which they themselves took part without mentioning their names. This commonly occurs in the case of John, for instance. He bashfully keeps back his name when there is anything to his credit and he does the same when it is to the reverse. I could quote one or two instances of this practice in the Gospel of Luke and it is not at all remarkable that such a thing should have occurred in the case of Mark. Whoever it was, the only person likely to know it, was the man himself! I cannot think that anyone else would have been likely to tell it to Mark and, therefore, I conceive it to have been he—for he might scarcely have thought it worthy of recording if it had been told him by someone else! And it is not likely that anyone to whom it had occurred would have felt it was much to his

credit—and been likely to relate it to Mark with a view to its being recorded!

Again, we know that such a transaction as this was quite in keeping with Mark's general character. We gather his character partly from the Book which he has written—the Gospel of Mark is the most impulsive of all the Gospels. You are aware and I have frequently mentioned it to you, that the word *eutheos*, translated, “straightway,” “forthwith,” “immediately,” is used a very great number of times by this evangelist in his Book. He is a man who does everything straightway—he is full of impulse, dash, fire, flash—the thing must be done and done at once. His Gospel is of that description. You do not find many of Christ's sermons in Mark. He gives you just a sketch, an outline. He had not perseverance enough to take the whole down and he scarcely finishes the narration of the death of Christ. His Book seems to break off abruptly, yet he is the most picturesque of all the Evangelists. There are pieces of imagination and there are Hogarthian touches in the sacred Biography he writes, that are not to be found in Matthew, or Luke, or John. The man is a man of fire! He is all enthusiasm. Poetry has filled his soul and, therefore, he dashes at the thing. He lacks perseverance and will hardly finish what he takes in hand, yet there is a genius about him not altogether uncommon to Christian men in this age—and there are faults in him exceedingly common at the present time.

Once more, the known life of John Mark tends to make it very probable that he would do such a thing as is referred to in our text. When Paul and Barnabas set out on their missionary enterprise, they were attended by Mark. As long as they were sailing across the blue waters and as long as they were on the island of Cyprus, Mark stuck to them. No, while they traveled along the coast of Asia Minor, we find they had John Mark to be their minister—but the moment they went up into the inland countries, among the robbers and the mountain streams—as soon as ever the road began to be a little too rough, John Mark left them! His missionary zeal had oozed out. At a later period, Mark was the cause of a sharp contention between Paul and Barnabas. Paul would not have Mark with him any longer. He could not tame him—he did not believe in these impulsive people who could not hold on under difficulties. But Barnabas, knowing him better—for Mark was his sister's son—and feeling a kinsman's lenity to his faults, insisted upon it that they should take John Mark. The altercation grew so violent between Paul and Barnabas that they separated on this account and would not proceed together on their Divine mission! Yet Barnabas was right, but I think that Paul was not wrong. Barnabas was right in his mild judgment of Mark, for he was a sound Believer at bottom and, notwithstanding this fault, he was a real, true-hearted disciple. We find him afterwards reconciled entirely to the Apostle Paul. Paul wrote to Timothy, “Take Mark, and bring him with you, for he is profitable to me for the ministry.” And we find Paul affectionately mentioning, “Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas,” which shows, on the one hand, the Apostle's Christian candor and

kindness and, on the other hand, that Mark had retrieved his character by perseverance.

Tradition says that Mark became the Bishop of Alexandria. We do not know whether that was correct or not, but it is likely enough that he was. Certainly he was with Paul at Rome and the latter part of his life was spent with Peter at Babylon. See what a man he is. He goes to Rome, but he cannot stay there long. He has done his work in Rome. He is one of your fidgety people who do things all of a sudden, so away he goes to Alexandria! But I think he must have found a very congenial friend in Peter. He would be a blessing to Peter and Peter would be a blessing to him, for Peter's disposition was cast in something of the same mold as his own. You may have noticed that Mark gives the most explicit account of Peter's fall. He enters very fully into it. I believe that he received it from Peter *viva voce*, and that Peter bade him write it down. And I think the modest spirit of Mark seemed to say, "Friend Peter, while the Holy Spirit moves me to tell of your fault and let it stand on record, He also constrains me to write my own as a sort of preface to it, for I, too, in my mad, hare-brained folly, would have run, unclothed as I was, upon the guard to rescue my Lord and Master, yet, at the first sight of the rough legionaries—at the first gleam of their swords—away I fled, timid, faint-hearted and afraid that I should be too roughly handled." For these reasons the supposition that this "certain young man" was John Mark appears to me not to be utterly baseless. There is no hypothesis in favor of any other man that is supported by equal probabilities. Very well, then. We will assume that he was the man and use the incident as the groundwork of our discourse. We have some counterparts of him, here, and we shall try to expose them and make use of Mark's blunder for their correction, in respect both to *hasty following* and *hasty running away*.

I. First, here is HASTY FOLLOWING.

John Mark does not wait to robe himself, but, just as he is, he dashes out for the defense of his Lord. Without a moment's thought, taking no sort of consideration, down he goes into the cold night air to try and deliver his Master! Fervent zeal waited not for chary prudence. There was something good and something bad in this—something to admire as well as something to censure.

Beloved, *it is a good and right thing for us to follow Christ and to follow Him at once*. And it is a brave thing to follow Him when His other disciples forsake Him and flee. It is a bold and worthy courage to take deadly odds for Christ and to rush, one against a thousand, for the honor of His dear hallowed name. Would that all professors of religion had the intrepidity of Mark! Would that all who have been careless about religion might emulate his haste and be as precipitate in flying to Christ by faith as he was in running to the rescue in that hour of assault! The most of men are too slow—fast enough in the world, but, ah, how slow in the things of God! I declare that if corporations and companies were half as concerned about worldly things as the Church of God is about spiritual things, instead of a railway accident every three or four months, we would have one every hour! And instead of a revolution every one or

two centuries, it would be well if we did not have one every year, for, of all the lazy things in the world, the Church of Christ is the most sluggish! Of all people that dilly-dally in this world, I think the professed servants of God are the most guilty.

How slothful are the ungodly, too, in Divine things! Tell them they are sick and they hasten to a surgeon. Tell them that their title-deeds are about to be attacked and they will defend them with legal power—but tell them, in God’s name, that their soul is in danger—and they think it matters so little and is of so small import that they will wait on, and wait on, and wait on, and doubtless continue to wait on till they find themselves lost forever! Let me stir up those who have not believed on the Lord Jesus Christ to look diligently to their eternal state. You have tarried long enough. The time that you have been out of Christ is surely long enough for the lusts of the flesh. What fruit have you gathered in your impenitence and sin? How much have you been bettered by neglecting Christ and minding worldly things? Has it not been all a dreary toil? It may have been decked out with a few transient pleasures, but, putting the ungodly life into the scale, what does it come to? “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” Do you not confess this? Why, then, tarry any longer? Have you got any happiness in being an enemy to God? Then why not be reconciled to Him? Oh, that the Spirit of God would make you see that the time past has sufficed you to have worked the will of the flesh!

Besides, *how little time you have to spare!* Even if you have much, Jesus demands that you repent now. “The Holy Spirit says, Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” The Gospel invitation is not for tomorrow, but for today. The warnings of the Gospel all bid you shun procrastination. Is not this Satan’s great net in which men, like the silly fishes of the deep, are taken to their eternal destruction? O you dove, pursued by the hawk, tarry not, but fly at once to the dovecote—to the wounds of Jesus and find shelter there! Jesus calls you. Come to Him while He calls you. Why will you delay? His cause needs you. Young men, there are some of you who will spend the best of your days in Satan’s cause—and when we get you, as we hope we shall—we shall have to baptize into Christ your shriveled ego, your palsied weakness! Let it not be so, I pray you. In these days of error and sin, Christ needs for His Kingdom men who are strong and vigorous, young men who are strong, as John says, and “have overcome the Wicked One.” Gladly would I turn recruiting sergeant and enlist you for my Master! Oh, that you were on His side now! You cannot be too hasty here. If now the weapons of your rebellion are thrown down. If now you “kiss the Son, lest He be angry,” you will have waited already too long! You will not—you cannot come to Christ too soon. Hark! Hark! I hear the chariot wheels of Death! He comes! He comes! And the axles of his chariot are hot with speed. He stands aloft, driving his white horse. The skeleton rider brandishes his awful spear and you are the victim! God has spared you up till now, but He may not bid you spend another Sabbath here. I hear the mowers scythe everywhere, as I pass along, making ready to cut down the grass

and the flowers thereof. Death's scythe is being sharpened! He reaps his harvest every day and, whether you are prepared or not, you must be cut down when God's time shall come!

Fly, then, I pray you! And though you are, like John Mark, unfit and unprepared, remember that you may come to Christ naked, for He can clothe you! You may come to Christ filthy, for He can wash you! You may come all unholy and defiled to Jesus, for He can put away your sin! Come! The Spirit of God seems to me to say to you, "Come." I pray that He may bid you to come and "lay hold on eternal life." I do not know how it is, I sometimes feel for many of my Hearers—especially for those of you whose faces I have seen for years—an awful earnestness even when I am not in this pulpit. And I think then that if I could get at your ear, I would plead with you. Think how many like you I have buried! How often do I stand at the grave's mouth, till sometimes, when, week after week and twice each week, I stand there, I fancy myself talking to dying men, and not to living men at all—talking to a company of shadows that come and go before me—and I stand still, myself a shadow, soon to flit like the rest. Oh, that I could talk to you as I then feel, and pour out my soul to you! We need a Baxter to bring men to immediate decision—Baxter with weeping eyes and burning heart—Baxter who says, "I will go down on my knees to entreat you to think upon eternal things." Baxter, who cries and groans for men till they cry and groan for themselves! Why will you die? Why will you let that fatal procrastination kill you? Why will you put off seeking the Savior until your day is over? Why will you still waste the candle which is so short? Why will you let the day go when the sun already dips beneath the horizon? By the shortness of time, by the sureness of death, by the certainty of eternal judgment, I beseech you to fly to Jesus and to fly to Jesus now, even though it should be in the hurry of John Mark!

Now I change my note, for there is a haste that we must reprove. The precipitate running of Mark suggests an admonition that should put you on your guard. He came all of a sudden by his religion and there are some people who do this who might as well have no religion at all. That, however, was not the case with Mark. He was a genuine Christian character, yet, with nine out of ten of these people, I am afraid it is far otherwise. Let me address some here who have all of a sudden come to Christ. I do not want to throw doubts in their way as to their sincerity, but I do want to incite them to examine themselves.

I am afraid *some people make a hasty profession through the persuasion of friends*. You walk with your friend and he says, "I have joined the church—why don't you do so?" He is not wise enough to put to you pointed questions which would let him see whether you are converted or not, but he unwisely presses you to make a profession when there is no Grace in your heart. I pray you, as soon as you know Christ, speak out for Him and come out and show your colors. But I also beseech you never profess to follow Christ merely through the persuasion of friends! I trust no pious mother would ever recommend you to do so. I am sure no wise father would ever urge it upon you. They would bid you

fly to Christ at once, but, as to making a profession of faith, they would have you see first whether the root of the matter is in you—and when they are persuaded and you are persuaded that it is—they will throw no stumbling blocks in your way.

Young people, I pray you, do not be deceived in this matter. How many have we seen, in revival times, who have been induced to come forward to “the penitent form,” as it is called. That night, oh, how much they felt because their natural sensibilities were strongly worked upon! But the next morning, oh, how little have they felt! When the agencies that stimulated them have been withdrawn—when the meetings that stirred the embers, and the preacher that fanned the flame no longer exert any transient spell over them—their disenchanted souls sink down into a profound stupor! In many churches there are so few making profession of religion that there is not much danger of this evil—but here, where we receive so many every week, there is need for wise discrimination! I do beseech you never to sit down with a religion that comes to you merely through your being talked to by your acquaintances—

**“True religion’s more than notion—
Something must be known and felt.”**

Nor are there a mere few *who get their religion through excitement*. This furnishes another example of injudicious haste. They hear religion painted as being very beautiful. They see the beauty of it. They admire it—they think what a lovely thing it must be to be a Christian. Feeling this and misled by a sort of excitement in their minds, they conclude that this is repentance. A false confidence they write down as faith! They eagerly infer that they are the children of God, whereas, alas, they are but the dupes of their own emotion—and still “the children of wrath, even as others.” Beware, I pray you, of a religion which lives upon excitement! We ought to be filled with enthusiasm. A fervent love should make our hearts always glow. The zeal of God’s House should be our master-passion. Men never do much in politics till they grow warm upon a question and, in religion, the very highest degree of excitement is not only pardonable, but praiseworthy. What, then, is it, which we deprecate? Not the emotions of spiritual life, but an exclusive dependence upon impulse! If you try to live upon the spell of a man’s words, upon the imposing grandeur of a multitude assembled together, upon the fascination of congregational singing, or even upon the heart-thrilling fervor of Prayer Meetings, you will find the lack of substantial food and the danger of an intoxicated brain! As it was with the quails which the children of Israel ate in the wilderness, God’s bounties may be fed upon to your injury. No, dear Friends, there must be the real work of the Holy Spirit in the soul or else the repentance we get will be a repentance which needs to be repented of!

I well know a town where there was a certain eminent revivalist whom I greatly respect. It was said that half the population had been converted under his ministry, but I do not think that if the numbers were counted at the present moment, there would be found a dozen of his converts. This revival work, where it is real and good, is God’s best blessing, but where it is flimsy and unreal, it is Satan’s worse curse! Revivalists are

often like the locusts. Before them, it may not be quite an Eden, but certainly, behind them, it is a desert when the excitement is over. I like rather to see the Word so preached that men are brought under its power by the force of the Truth, itself, and not by excitement—by the Truth of God being laid down in so clear a manner as to enlighten the judgment, rather than by perpetual appeals to the passions, which ultimately wear out the sinews of mental vigor and make men more dull in religion than they were before.

Beware, I pray you, of getting the mere religion of poetry, enthusiasm and rhapsody. Many profess Christ and think to follow Him without counting the cost. They fancy the road to Heaven is all smooth, forgetting that the way is rough and that there are many foes. They set out, like Mr. Pliable, for the Celestial City, but they stumble into the first bog and then they say that if they can but get out on the side nearest to their own house, Christian may have the brave country all to himself for them! Oh, the many we have seen, at divers times, that seemed to run well, but they ran in the strength of the flesh and in the mists of ignorance! They had never sought God's strength. They had never been emptied of their own works and their own conceits and, consequently, in their best estate they were vanity! They were like the snail that melts as it crawls—not like the snowflake upon the Alps which gathers strength in its descent till it becomes a ponderous avalanche! God make you to be not meteors, but stars fixed in their place! I want you to resemble not the *ignis fatuus* of the morass, but the steady beacon on the rock! There is a phosphorescence that creeps over the summer sea, but who is ever lighted by it to the port of peace? And there is a phosphorescence which comes over some men's minds—very bright, it seems, but it is of no value—it brings no man to Heaven.

Be as hasty as John Mark, if it is a sound haste, but take care that it is not a spasm of excitement—a mere fit—otherwise, when the fit is over, you will go back to your old haunts and your old habits with shame. You will be like Saul among the Prophets one day and hating the anointed king the next! So much, so earnestly would I warn you against hasty followings of Christ!

II. It only remains for me to notice briefly THE HASTY RUNNING AWAY.

I do not know that the persons who are readiest to run away are always those who were the fastest to make their profession. I am inclined to think not. But some who do run well at first, have hardly breath enough to keep the pace up and so turn aside for a little comfortable ease—and do not get into the road again. Such are not genuine Christians—they are only men-made, self-made Christians—and these self-made Christians never hold on, and never *can* hold on because time wears them out and they turn back to their former state.

There are two kinds of desertion which we denounce as hasty running away—the one temporary, the other final. To the members of the Church, let me speak upon the former. My dear Brothers and Sisters, especially you who are young in years and have lately been added to our number, I

pray you watch against temporary running away from the Truth of Christ. Think what a fool Mark made of himself. Here he comes. Here is your hero. What wonders he is going to do! Here is a Samson for you. Perhaps he will slay his thousand men. But no, he runs away before he strikes a single blow. He has not even courage enough to be taken prisoner and to be dragged away with Christ to the judgment seat and bear a patient witness there! He turns tail at once and away he flies! How simple he looked! How everybody in the crowd must have laughed at the venturesome coward—the dastardly bravo! And what a fool will you seem if, after uniting yourself with the Church and seeming to be a servant of God, you shall give way under temptation! Some young man in the same shop laughs at you and says, “Aha, aha, you are baptized, I hear!” And you tremble, like Peter, under the questioning of the little maid, or your employer sees something wrong and he makes some rough remark to you, “Well, this is a fine thing for a Christian soldier!” Cannot you face the enemy for the first time? “If you have run with the footmen and they have wearied you, then how can you contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, wherein you trusted, they wearied you, then how will you do in the swelling of Jordan?”

A religion that cannot stand a little laughter must be a very rotten one. We know some people whose religion is on so unsound a basis—whose profession is so hollow and whose position is so shaky—that they make a great noise when we touch them! Their system is of human construction and rotten—and they know it—therefore are they angry if we do but allude to it! Were it sound and good, then whatever we might say would never frighten them. But, Sirs, how many who have made a fair show in the flesh have been personally and individually tried and found wanting? “Tekel” has been written on the wall concerning them! Their first setting out was hasty and they have been turned aside through a little laughter.

Do you not see, dear Friends, that this will always render you very untrustworthy? If you shrink in this way, the Church will never trust you. I hope you will be a leader in God’s Israel one day, young man. We are looking to you, if not to be a preacher, yet to be a Church officer one day. But who will ever ask you to do anything when you cannot keep steadfast and hold your own position? He who has not Grace enough to prevent his running away in the time of tribulation is not at all likely to be made a leader of God’s host. The Church will retain you, as it retained Mark, but it will always look upon you with a sort of suspicion. We shall always say, “Where is So-and-So? We know where he was yesterday, but where is he today?” Therefore, abstain from these inconsistencies for your own character’s sake.

Besides, how much damage you do the church with which you are connected! All the persecutors and infidels outside the church’s walls can never harm us so much as inconsistent people inside. “Ah,” they say, “there is one of the people who go to the Prayer Meeting,” when they see a man in the pot-house who sits at the Communion Table. “Ah, there is one of your religious people! He can cheat as well as anybody else. He knows how to thumb the yard measure. He knows how to give short

weight! He knows how to promise to pay on a certain day and then get into the Bankruptcy Court! The servants of Christ are no better than other people. They make a great fuss about their purity, but see what they will do!”

And then see what harm this will do to Christ’s Church, itself. How many who love God will sit down and weep when they see such inconsistencies in you! Good captains can endure wounds—they can even bear defeat—but they cannot bear to see cowardice on the part of their troops. They cannot bear to see their men running away. If “the men of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turn back in the day of battle,” then their leader weeps, for the glorious Cross of Christ is dishonored, the escutcheon is sullied and the banner is trailed in the mud! May the Lord so keep us that our garments shall be always white. That though before God we may have many sins to confess, we may stand like Job and say, “Lord, You know that I am not wicked.” May your testimony be so clear concerning the religion of Christ that those who watch for your stumbling and who hate you with a perfect hatred may, nevertheless, find nothing against you, but may be constrained to say, “These are the servants of the living God and they serve Him, indeed, and of a truth.”

I urge you not to flee or to flinch. Some of us have had much lying and slander to bear in our time, but are we a whit the worse? No, and if we had to choose whether we would bear it again, would we not do so? We may have had to be laughed at and caricatured, but all that breaks no bones and should not make a brave man wince! Who can be afraid or alarmed when his war cry is, “The Lord of Hosts,” and when the banner of God’s own Truth waves over his head? Be of good courage, my Brothers and Sisters, and you shall yet win the victory! In the world you shall have tribulation, but in Christ you shall have peace! Value the Holy Spirit above all things. Realize your entire dependence upon Him. Pray for fresh Grace. Venture not into the world without a fresh store of His hallowed influence. Live in the Divine Love. Seek to be filled with that blessed Spirit and then, my Brothers and Sisters, even if the strong man armed shall lay hold of you, you will not flee away—shame shall not overtake you, dismay shall not frighten your souls—and you shall stand in unblemished integrity to the end as the true servants of Jesus Christ!

And now, in concluding, *what am I to say of a final apostasy?* None of God’s people ever pursue their wanderings to this terrible issue! No vessel of mercy was ever finally wrecked! No elect souls can run to this fatal length of wickedness! But there are many in the visible church who do draw back to Perdition. Many who profess to belong to Christ are branches that bear no fruit and, therefore, are cut off and cast into the fire! That may be the condition of some here present. It may be the lot of some of you who “have a name to live, and are dead.” Let me plead with you. Oh, what a dreadful thing it will be if you apostatize after all! Shall I live to see you go back into the world? I would sooner bury you! Shall I live to see some of you who have professed to find the Lord under my ministry, at last sinning with a high hand and an outstretched arm—and

living worse than you did before? God spare us this evil thing! Let Him chastise His servant in any way He thinks fit but, O Lord, if possible, let not this be the rod—to see professors become false!

Remember that if you do apostatize, you have increased your guilt by the profession you have made—and impressed your character with a more terrible defilement! When the unclean spirit went out of the man and afterwards returned, he brought with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself. And they entered in and dwelt there—and the last state of that man was worse than the first! It would have been better for you never to have known the way of righteousness than having known it, to turn aside to those crooked paths. Think what the dying bed of an apostate must be. Did you ever read “The Groans of Spira?” That was a book, circulated about the time of the Reformation—a book so terrible that even a man of iron could scarcely read it. Spira knew the Gospel, but yet went back to the Church of Rome. His conscience awoke on his dying bed and his cries and shrieks were too terrible to be endured by his nurses! And as to his language—it was despair written out at full length in capital letters! My eminent predecessor, Mr. Benjamin Keach, published a like narrative of the death of John Child, who became a minister of the Gospel, but afterwards went back to the church from which he had seceded—and died in the most frightful despair. May God keep you from the deathbed of any man who has lived as a professing Christian, yet who dies an apostate from the faith!

But what must be the apostate’s doom when his naked soul goes before God? How can he bear that awful sentence, “Depart, you cursed one; you have rejected Me, and I reject you; you have departed from Me—I also have cast you away forever and will not have mercy upon you”? What will be this poor wretch’s shame at the Last Great Day when, before the assembled multitudes, the apostate shall be unmasked? I think I see the profane and open sinners who never professed religion, lifting themselves up from their beds of fire to point at him. “There he is,” says one, “will he preach the Gospel in Hell?” “There he is,” says another, “he rebuked me for cursing, yet he was a hypocrite himself.” “Aha,” says another, “here comes a Psalm-singing Methodist, one who was always at his meetings! He is the man who boasted of his religion, yet here he is!” No greater eagerness will ever be seen among Satanic tormentors than in that day when devils drag the hypocrite’s soul and the apostate’s spirit down to Hell! Bunyan pictures this with massive but awful grandeur of poetry when he speaks of the back way to Hell. The devils were binding a man with nine cords and were taking him from the road to Heaven—in which he had professed to walk—and thrust him through the back door of Hell. Mind that back way to Hell, professors! You professors of religion who have been in the church for years, “examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith.” Examine yourselves, whether you are deceived. Look well to your state. See whether you are really in Christ, or not. It is the easiest thing in the world to give a lenient verdict when you, yourself, are to be tried! But oh, I implore you, be just and true here! Be just to all, but be especially rigorous in judging yourself. Remember, if it is not a

rock on which you build, your house will fall and great will be the fall of it! Oh, may the Lord give you sincerity, constancy and firmness—and in no day, however evil, may you be tempted to turn aside! Rather, may you hold fast by God and His Truth—by Christ and His Cross, come what may!

My soul longs, however many years God may spare me to walk in and out among you, to find you as earnest for God, and as loving towards Christ as you are this day. I glory in you among all the churches. God has given you the spirit of faith and prayer, of earnest zeal and a sound mind. Unto Him be the Glory! But, as a Church, do not backslide. Let not our fervor diminish! Let not our zeal die out! Let us love one another more tenderly than ever. Let us cling fast to one another. Let us not be divided! Let no root of bitterness springing up trouble us. Firm and steadfast, shoulder to shoulder, like a phalanx of old, let us stand fast and so repel the foe and win the kingdom for Jesus Christ our Lord! “Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the Presence of His Glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be Glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”

PUBLISHERS’ NOTE: No Exposition of the passage of Scripture read by Mr. Spurgeon before he preached the foregoing Sermon appears to have been preserved and the subject on which he spoke was so unusual that no other Exposition would have been appropriate to accompany it. As the preacher, in his introduction, referred to various portions of the New Testament where allusion is made to Mark or Marcus, it has been deemed advisable to reprint all the references to John Mark, so that readers may examine them in the light of Mr. Spurgeon’s message. Under the circumstances, they are printed without note or comment—

Acts 12:11-25. *And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews. And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying. And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda. And when she knew Peter’s voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in and told how Peter stood before the gate. And they said unto her, You are mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel. But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished. But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go show these things unto James and the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place. Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter. And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judaea to Caesarea, and there abode. And Herod*

was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him and, having made Blastus, the king's chamberlain, their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king's country. And upon a set day Herod arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man! And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost. But the Word of God grew and multiplied. And Barnabus and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.

Acts 13:5. *And when they were at Salamis, they preached the Word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John as their minister.*

Acts 13:13. *Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphilia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.*

Acts 15:35-41. *Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the Word of the Lord, with many others also. And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; and Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the Grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.*

Colossians 4:10-11. *Aristarchus my fellow prisoner salutes you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom you received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him) and Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellow workers unto the Kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me.*

2 Timothy 4:11. *Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with you: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.*

Philemon 23, 24. *There salute you Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus; Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellow laborers.*

1 Peter 5:13. *The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, salutes you; and so does Marcus my son.*

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BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And they all condemned Him to be guilty of death.”
Mark 14:64.*

THIS one sentence is selected because custom demands a text. But in reality we shall follow the entire narrative of our Lord's trial before the High Priests. We shall see how the Sanhedrin arrived at their unrighteous sentence and what they did afterwards, and so, in a sense, we shall be keeping to our text. We have just been reading three passages—John 23:12-24; Mark 14:53-65 and Luke 22:66-71. Please carry these in your minds while I rehearse the mournful story. The narrative of our Lord's grief, if it is carefully studied, is harrowing in the extreme. One cannot long think of it without tears. In fact, I have personally known what it is to be compelled to leave my meditations upon it from excess of emotion.

It is enough to make one's heart fully break to realize the sufferings of such an One, so lovely in Himself and so loving toward us. Yet this harrowing of the feelings is exceedingly useful and the after result of it is truly admirable. After mourning for Jesus we are raised above our mourning! There is no consolation under Heaven at all like it, for the sorrows of Christ seem to take the sting out of our own sorrows till they become harmless and endurable. A sympathetic contemplation of our Lord's grief so dwarfs our griefs that they are reckoned to be but light afflictions, too petty, too insignificant to be mentioned in the same day. We dare not write ourselves down in the list of the sorrowful at all when we have just seen the sharp pains of the Man of Sorrows. The wounds of Jesus distil a balm which heals all mortal ills.

Nor is this all, though that were much in a world of woe like this, but there is a matchless stimulus about the passion of the Lord. Though you have been almost crushed by the sight of your Lord's agonies, you have risen from them strong, resolute, fervent, consecrated. Nothing stirs our hearts' depths like His heart's anguish. Nothing is too hard for us to attempt or to endure for One who sacrificed Himself for us. To be reviled for His dear sake who suffered such shame for us becomes no great affliction—even reproach, itself, when borne for Him, becomes greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt! To suffer in body and in mind, even unto death, for Him, were rather a privilege than an exaction—such love so swells our hearts that we vehemently pant for some way of expressing our indebtedness. We are grieved to think that our best will be so little, but we are solemnly resolved to give nothing less than our best to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

I believe, also, that full often careless hearts have been greatly affected by the sufferings of Jesus. They have been disturbed in their indifference, convinced of their ingratitude, weaned from their love of sin and attracted to Christ by hearing what He bore on their behalf. No loadstone can draw human hearts like the Cross of Christ. His wounds cause even hearts of stone to bleed! His shame makes obstinacy, itself, ashamed. Men never so plentifully fall before the great bow of God as when its arrows are dipped in the blood of Jesus. Those darts which are armed with His agonies cause wounds such as never can be healed except by His own pierced hands. These are the weapons which slay the sin and save the sinner—killing, at one stroke, both his self-confidence and his despair—and leaving him a captive to that Conqueror whose glory it is to make men free!

This morning I would not only preach the doctrines that come out of the Cross, but the Cross, itself. I suppose that was one of the great differences between the first preaching of all and the preaching after the Reformation. After the Reformation we had clearly ringing out from all pulpits the Doctrine of Justification by Faith and other glorious Truths of God which I hope will be made more and more prominent. But the first fathers of the Church set forth the same Truths in a less theological fashion. If they dwell little upon Justification by Faith they were wonderfully full upon the blood and its cleansing power, the wounds and their healing efficacy, the death of Jesus and our eternal life.

We will go back to their style for a while and preach the facts about our Lord Jesus Christ rather than the doctrinal inferences from them. Oh, that the Holy Spirit would so bring the sorrows of our Lord near to each heart, that every one of us may know the fellowship of His sufferings and possess faith in His salvation and reverent love for Him!

I. We will begin our narrative, this morning, by first asking you to think of THE PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION OF OUR BLESSED LORD AND MASTER BY THE HIGH PRIESTS. They brought in our Lord from the garden, bound, but they also kept fast hold upon Him, for we read of, "the men that held Him." They were evidently afraid of their prisoner, even when they had Him entirely in their power. He was all gentleness and submission, but conscience made cowards of them all and they, therefore, took all a coward's care to hold Him in their grasp. As the court had not yet gathered in sufficient numbers for a general examination, the High Priest resolved that he would fill up the time by personally interrogating his prisoner.

He commenced his malicious exercise. The High Priest asked Jesus concerning His disciples. We cannot tell what were the questions, but I suppose they were something like these—"How is it that You have gathered about You a band of men? What did they do with You? What was Your ultimate intention to do by their means? Who were they? Were they not a set of fanatics, or men discontented and ready for sedition?" I do not know how the crafty Caiaphas put his questions, but the Savior gave no reply to this particular enquiry. What could He have said if He had attempted to answer? Ah, Brothers and Sisters, what good could He have said of His disciples? We may be sure He would say no ill. He might have said, "Concerning My disciples, one of them has betrayed Me. He has still

the blood-money in his hands which you gave him as My price. Another of them, down in the hall there, before the cock crows will deny that he ever knew Me and add oaths and cursing to his denial. And as for the rest, they have all forsaken Me and fled.”

Therefore our Lord said nothing concerning His disciples, for He will not become the accuser of His own, whom He came not to condemn, but to justify. The High Priest also asked Him concerning His doctrine. I suppose he said to Jesus, “What new teaching is this of Yours? Are we not sufficient to teach the people—the Scribes so learned in the Law, the Pharisees so attentive to ritual, the Sadducees so philosophical and speculative? Why need you intrude into this domain? I suppose You to be little more than a peasant's son—what is this strange teaching of Yours?” To this enquiry our Lord did answer and what a triumphant reply it was! Oh that we could always speak, when it is right to speak, as meekly and as wisely as He!

He said, “I spoke openly to the world; I always taught in the synagogue and in the Temple, where the Jews always resort and in secret I have said nothing. Why ask you Me? Ask them which heard Me what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I have said.” Oh, Brothers and Sisters, no reply to slander can be compared with a blameless life! Jesus had lived in the full blaze of day, where all could see, and yet He was able to challenge accusation and say, “Ask them which heard Me.” Happy is the man who has no need to defend himself because his works and words are solid testimonials to his uprightness and goodness! Our Savior answered His interrogator very gently, but yet most effectually, by His appeal to facts.

He stands before us the mirror of meekness and the paragon of perfection, with slander like a wounded snake writhing at His feet. What a delight to have this triumphant Pleader for our Advocate, to urge His own righteousness in our defense! None can impugn His absolute perfection and that perfection covers all His saints this day! Who shall accuse us, now that Jesus has undertaken to plead for us? This overwhelming answer, however, brought the Savior a blow from one of the officers of the court who stood by. Was not this a most shocking deed? Here was the first of a new order of assaults. Up to now we have not heard of strokes and blows—but now it is fulfilled—“They shall smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon His cheek.”

This was the first of a long series of assaults. I wonder who the man was that struck the Master? I could wish that the Master's reply to him may have influenced his heart to repentance. But if not, it is certain that he led the van in personal assaults upon our Lord's Person—his impious hand first struck Him. Surely if he died in impenitence, the memory of that blow must remain as a never-dying worm within him. Today he cries, “I was the first to smite Him! I struck Him on the mouth with the palm of my hand.” The old writers upon the Passion give us various details of the injuries inflicted upon the Savior by that blow, but we attach no importance to such traditions and, therefore, will not repeat them, but simply say that there was general belief in the Church that this blow was a very grievous one and caused the Savior much pain.

Yet while He felt that blow and was, perhaps, half staggered by it, the Master did not lose His composure, or exhibit the least resentment. His reply was everything it ought to be. There is not a word too much. He does not say, "God shall smite you, you whited wall," as did the Apostle Paul. We will not censure the servant, but we will far more commend the Master. He meekly said, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why did you strike Me?" Enough, surely, if there remained any tenderness in the heart of the aggressor, to have made him turn his hand upon his own breast in penitential grief! One would not have wondered had he cried out, "Forgive me, O You divinely meek and gentle One, and let me, from now on, be Your disciple!"

Thus have we seen the first part of our Lord's sufferings in the house of the High Priest. And the lesson from it is just this—Let us be meek and lowly in heart as the Savior was, for herein lay His strength and dignity. You tell me I have said that before. Yes, Brothers and Sisters, and I shall have to say it several more times before you and I have learned the lesson well. It is hard to be meek when falsely accused. It is difficult to be meek when roughly interrogated. It is hard to be meek when a cunning adversary is on the catch, or when smarting under a cruel blow which was a disgrace to a court of justice.

You have heard of the patience of Job, but it pales before the patience of Jesus! Admire His forbearance, but do not stop at admiration—copy His example! Write under this headline and follow every stroke. O Spirit of God, even with Christ for an Example, we shall not learn meekness unless You teach us! And even with You for a Teacher, we shall not learn it unless we take His yoke upon us and learn of Him, for it is only at His feet; and under Your Divine anointing that we shall ever become meek and lowly of heart—and so find rest unto our souls. The preliminary examination is therefore over and it has ended in no success whatever for the High Priest. He has questioned Jesus and he has struck Him, but the ordeal brings nothing to content the adversary. The prisoner is supremely victorious, the assailant is baffled.

II. Now comes a second scene, THE SEARCH FOR WITNESSES AGAINST HIM. "The chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put Him to death; and found none." A strange court that meets with the design to find the prisoner guilty, resolved in some way or other to compass his death! They must proceed according to the forms of justice and so they summon witnesses, though all the while they violate the spirit of justice, for they ransack Jerusalem to find witnesses who will perjure themselves to accuse the Lord!

Every man of the council is writing down somebody's name who may be fetched in from the outside, for the people have come from all parts of the land to keep the Passover and surely some may be hunted up who, in one place or another, have heard Him use an objectionable mode of speech. They fetch in, therefore, everyone that they can find of that degraded class who will venture upon perjuring themselves if a bribe is forthcoming. They scour Jerusalem to bring forth witnesses against Jesus—but they had great difficulty in accomplishing their design because they were bound to examine the witnesses separately and they could not make them agree!

Lies cannot be easily made to pair with each other, whereas truths are cut to the same pattern.

Moreover, many sorts of witnesses that they could readily find, they did not dare to bring forward. Witnesses were forthcoming who could testify that Jesus had spoken against the tradition of the elders, but in that, some who were in the council, namely, the Sadducees, were agreed with Him to a large extent! It would never do to bring forward a charge about which they would not be unanimous. His denunciations of the Pharisees could not be the charge, for these pleased the Sadducees! Neither could they allege His outcry against the Sadducees, for in this the Pharisees were agreed with Him! You remember how Paul, when brought before this Sanhedrin, took advantage of their division of opinion and cried, "I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question"—and in this manner created a dissension among the conclave, which, for a time worked in his favor.

Our Lord took higher and nobler ground and did not stoop to turn their folly to His own benefit. Yet, they being conscious of their internal feuds, cautiously avoided those points upon which they were not in harmony. They might have brought forward their old grievance that the Lord Jesus did not observe the Sabbath after their fashion, but then it would have come out more publicly that He had healed the sick on the Sabbath. It would not do to publish *that* fact, for who would think of putting a person to *death* for having opened the eyes of one born blind, or having restored a withered arm on the Sabbath? That kind of witness was, therefore, set aside.

But might they not have found some witnesses to swear that He had talked about a kingdom that He was setting up? Might not this readily have been made to mean sedition and rebellion? Yes, but then that was rather a charge to allege against Him before Pilate's *civil* court, whereas theirs was an *ecclesiastical* tribunal. Moreover, there were Herodians in the council who were very restive under the Roman yoke and could not have had the face to condemn anyone for being a patriot. And besides, the people outside would have sympathized with Jesus all the more if they had supposed that He would lead them on a rebellion against Caesar. Therefore they could not urge that point.

They must have been greatly puzzled to know what to do! Especially when even on those points which they decided to bring forward the witnesses, they no sooner opened their mouths than they contradicted each other! At last they had it. There came two whose evidence was somewhat agreed and they asserted that on a certain occasion Jesus Christ had said, "I will destroy this Temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands." Here was blasphemy against the holy and beautiful House of the Lord! This would serve their turn. Now, the Savior *had* said something which was a little like the testimony of these false witnesses and a misunderstanding had made it more like it. But still their statement was a lie and none the less a lie because a shadow of truth had fallen upon it, for the worst kind of lie is that which is manufactured out of a truth—it does a great deal more mischief than if it were a falsehood from stem to stern.

The Savior had not said, "I will destroy this Temple." He said, "Destroy this Temple," that is to say, "You will destroy it and you may destroy it." He had not referred to the Jerusalem Temple at all—this spoke He concerning the Temple of His body which would be destroyed. Christ has never said, "Destroy this Temple which is made with hands, and I will build another without hands." In His language there is no allusion to hands at all. These refinements were of their own inventing and His language gave no color for them. He had not said, "I will build another." He had said, "I will raise it up," which is quite a different thing! He meant that His body, after being destroyed, would be raised up, again, on the third day. They had altered a word here and a word there, the mood of one verb and the form of another—and so they made out our Lord to say what He never thought of.

Yet even on that charge they did not agree! One said one thing upon it and another said another, so that even this paltry accusation could not be brought against the Savior. Their patched-up falsehood was made of such rotten stuff that the pieces would not hold together! They were ready to swear to *anything* that came into their perjured imaginations, but they could not be gotten to swear, any *two* of them, to the same thing! Meanwhile the Lord Himself stands silent. Like the sheep before her shearers, He is dumb and opens not His mouth. And I suppose the reason was partly that He might fulfill the prophecy, partly because the grandeur of His soul could not stoop to contend with liars, but most of all because His innocence needed no defense!

He that is in some measure guilty, is eager to apologize and to extenuate—his excuses usually suggest, to men of experience, the belief that there may be some ground for the accusation. He that is perfectly innocent is in no haste to answer his slanderers, for they soon answer one another! Our Lord did not desire to get into a vain jangle with them and so to lead them on to utter still more falsehoods. If speech can do no good then, indeed, silence is wise! When the only result would have been to provoke His enemies to add to their iniquities, it was magnanimous compassion which led the slandered Savior to hold His tongue.

We must not refrain from noticing the comfort which, in some degree, had been ministered to our Lord by the accusation which came most to the front. He stands there and He knows they are about to put Him to death, but they, themselves, remind Him that their power over Him has no longer lease than three days. And at the end of that short time He will be raised up again, no more to be at their disposal! His enemies reminded Him of the Resurrection! I say not that His memory was weak, or that He would possibly have forgotten it and His sorrows, but yet our Lord was human and modes of comfort which are valuable to us were also useful to Him. When the mind is tortured with malicious falsehoods and the whole man is tossed about by pains and griefs, it is good for us to be reminded of the consolations of God.

We read of some who were "tortured, not accepting deliverance," and it was the hope of Resurrection which sustained them! Our Lord knew that His soul would not be left in the abodes of the dead and neither should His flesh see corruption—and the false witnesses brought this vividly be-

fore His mind. Now, indeed, could our Redeemer say, "Destroy this Temple and in three days I will raise it up." These ravens have brought the Savior bread and meat! In these dead lions our glorious Samson has found honey! Sustained by the joy that was set before Him, He despises the shame! Strange that out of the mouths of those who sought His blood there should come the memory of one of His greatest glories!

Now, Brothers and Sisters, here, again, we learn the same lesson as before, namely, let us gain meekness and by it our power to hold our tongues. Eloquence is difficult to acquire, but silence is far more difficult to practice. A man may much sooner learn to speak well than learn not to speak at all. We are in such a hurry to vindicate our own cause that we damage it by rash speech! If we were calm, gentle, quiet, forbearing as the Savior was, our pathway to victory would be much easier. Observe, again, the armor with which Christ was clad—see the invulnerable shield of His holiness! His life was such that slander could not frame an accusation against Him which would last long enough to be repeated. So frail were the charges that, like bubbles, they vanished as soon as they saw the light! Our Lord's enemies were utterly baffled. They hurled their darts against Him, but, as if they fell upon a shield of blazing diamond, every arrow was broken and consumed!

Learn, also, this other lesson that we must *expect* to be misrepresented. We may reckon that our words will have other meanings to ungracious ears than those which we intended. We may expect that when we teach one thing which is true, they will make us out to have stated another which is false. But let us not be overwhelmed by this fiery trial as though it were some strange thing! Our Lord and Master has endured it and the servants must not escape it! Therefore endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ and be not afraid! Amid the din of these lies and perjuries, I hear the still small voice of a Truth of God most precious, for like as Jesus stood for us at the bar and they could not cause an accusation to abide upon Him, so when we shall stand in Him at the Last Great Day, washed in His blood and covered with His righteousness, we, too, shall be clear!

"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" If Satan should appear as the accuser of the Brethren, he will be met by the voice, "The Lord rebuke you, O Satan, even the Lord that has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!" "Is not this a brand plucked out of the burning?" Yes, Beloved, we, too, shall be cleared of slander. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father! The glorious righteousness of Him who was falsely accused shall deliver the saints and all iniquity shall stop her mouth!

III. But I must not dwell too long even on such themes as these and, therefore, I pass on to THE PERSONAL INTERROGATION which followed upon the failure to bring forward witnesses. The High Priest, too indignant to sit still, rises and stands over the Prisoner like a lion roaring over his prey and begins to question Him again. It was an unrighteous thing to do. Should the judge who sits to administer law set himself to prove the prisoner guilty? Or, what is worse, shall he try to extort a confession from the

accused which may be used against him? It was a tacit confession that Christ had been proven innocent up till then.

The High Priest would not have needed to draw something out of the accused One if there had been sufficient material against Him elsewhere. The trial had been a dead failure up to that point and he knew it! And he was red with rage. Now he attempts to bully the Prisoner that he may extract some declaration from Him which may save all further trouble of witnesses and end the matter. The question was forced home by a solemn adjuration and it effected its purpose, for the Lord Jesus *did* speak, though He knew that He was, thereby, furnishing a weapon against Himself. He felt under bond to answer the High Priest of His people when He used such adjuration, evil man as that High Priest was. And He could not draw back from a charge so solemn lest He should seem, by His silence, to deny the truth upon which the salvation of the world is made to hinge.

So when the High Priest asked Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" How distinctly and outspoken was the Master's reply. Though He knew that His death would thus be compassed, He witnessed a good confession. He plainly said, "I am," and then He added to that declaration, "You shall see the Son of Man"—so He brings out His humanity as well as His Deity—"sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of Heaven." What a majestic faith! It is wonderful to think that He should be so calm as to confront His mockers and assert His Glory while He was in the depths of shame! He did as good as say, "You sit as My judges, but I shall soon sit as your Judge! I seem to you to be an insignificant peasant, but I am the Son of the Blessed! You think that you will crush Me, but you never will, for I shall speedily sit at the right hand of the power of God and come in the clouds of Heaven."

He speaks boldly, as well became Him. I admire the meekness that could be silent. I admire the meekness that could speak gently, but I still wonder more at the meekness that could speak courageously and still be meek! Somehow or other, when we awaken ourselves to courage, we let in harshness in the same door, or if we shut out our anger, we are very apt to forget our firmness. Jesus never slays one virtue to make room for another. His Character is complete, full-orbed, perfect, whichever way we look at it. And surely, Brothers and Sisters, this must have brought another sweet consolation to our divine Master's heart. While smarting under that cruel blow; while writhing under those filthy accusations; while enduring such contradiction of sinners against Himself, He must have felt satisfied from within in the consciousness of His Sonship and His power—and in the prospect of His Glory and triumph!

A well of water springs up within His soul as He foresees that He shall sit at the right hand of God and that He shall judge the quick and the dead and vindicate His redeemed. It is a wise thing to have these consolations always ready to hand. The enemy may not see their consolatory power, but we see it. To us, from beneath the altar, there issues forth a stream whose gentle flow supplies our spirits with a quiet gladness such as all earth's waters can never rival. Even now we also hear the Father say, "I am your shield and your exceeding great reward." Notice, before we pass away from this point, that, practically, the trial and the interrogation

ended in our Lord's being condemned because of His avowal of His Deity. They said, "You have heard the blasphemy: what do you think? And they all condemned Him to be guilty of death."

I cannot make out at all those people who call themselves Unitarians and deny our Lord's Deity. Unitarians we also are, for we believe in one God, and only one God—but they tell us that this blessed Christ, our Master, is not God! And yet they admit that He was the most excellent of men, the most perfect of human beings! I cannot see it myself. He seems to me to be a blasphemer and nothing else, if He is not God—and the Jews evidently held that opinion and treated Him accordingly. If he had not said that God was His Father, they would not have been so enraged against Him. They put Him to death because of the assertion of His Deity—and the declaration that He would sit at the right hand of power and judge the world.

Today multitudes are willing to take Christ as a teacher, but they will not have Him as the Son of God. I do not doubt that the Christian religion might be received in many places if it were shorn of its Strength—if, in fact, its very soul and heart were torn out of it by setting forth Jesus as one of the Prophets and nothing more. Hear how our wise men talk of Him as one of a line of great reformers, such as Moses, Samuel, Elijah—and they often add Confucius and Mohammed. Do we give place to this? No, not for an instant! He is verily the Son of the Blessed. He is Divine or false! The accusation of blasphemy must lie against Him if He is not the Son of the Highest!

IV. We must now pass on and linger for a second or two over THE CONDEMNATION. They condemned Him out of His own mouth—but this, while it wore the semblance of justice, was really unjust. The Prisoner at the bar has affirmed that He is the Son of God. What next? May He not speak the truth? If it is the truth, He must not be *condemned*, but adored! Justice requires that an enquiry be made as to whether He *is* the Christ, the Son of the Blessed, or not. He has claimed to be the Messiah. Very well, all those in the court are expecting the Messiah—some of them expect Him to appear very speedily. May not this be the Sent One of the Lord?

Let an enquiry be made into His claims! What is His lineage? Where was He born? Have any Prophets attested Him? Has He worked miracles? Some such enquiries are due to any man whose life is at stake! You cannot justly condemn a man to die without examining into the truth of his defense, for it may turn out that his statements are correct. But, no, they will not hear the Man they hate! The mere claim condemns Him—it is blasphemy and He must die. He says He is the Son of God. Come, then, Caiaphas and council, call for witnesses for the defense! Enquire whether blind eyes have been opened and the dead raised up! Ask whether He has worked miracles such as no man ever worked in the midst of Israel throughout all time! Why not do this? O no, He must be taken from prison and from judgment—and none shall declare His generation. The less enquiry the more easy to condemn Him unjustly!

He has said He is the Christ and the Son of God—He is therefore guilty of death. Alas, how many there are who condemn Christ's doctrine with-

out making due enquiries into it—condemn it on the most trivial grounds! They come to hear a sermon and perhaps find fault with the mannerism of the preacher, as if *that* were sufficient reason for denying the Truth of God which he preaches! Or else they say, “This is so strange—we cannot believe it.” Why not? Are not strange things sometimes true and is not many a truth wondrously strange until you get familiar with it? These men will not condescend to hear Christ’s proof of claim—they will make no enquiry! In this, like the Jewish priests, they practically cry, “Away with Him! Away with Him!”

He is condemned to die and the High Priest tears his clothes. I do not know whether he wore, at that time, the robes in which he ministered, but doubtless he wore some garb peculiar to his sacerdotal office—and this he tore. Oh, how significant! The house of Aaron and the tribe of Levi had their garments torn and the Temple, within a few hours, tore its veil from the top to the bottom—for priests and temple were, alike, abolished! They little knew it, but in all they did there was a singular significance—those torn garments were an index of the fact that now the Aaronic priesthood was forever torn—and the great Melchisedec priesthood had come in, for the true Melchisedec, then and there, stood before them in all the majesty of His patience!

Observe that they were all agreed. There was no dissention—they had taken care, I have no doubt—not to let Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea know anything about this meeting of theirs. They held it in the night and they only rehearsed it in the early morning for the sake of keeping their old Rabbinical Law that they must try prisoners by daylight. They hurried up the trial and any that might have spoken against their bloodthirsty sentence were kept out of the way. The assembly was unanimous! Alas for the unanimity of ungodly hearts against Christ! It is amazing that there should be such quarrels among Christ’s friends and such unity among His foes, when the point is to put Him to death! I never heard of quarrels among devils, nor did I ever read of sects or denominations in Hell—they are all one in their hatred of the Christ and of God!

But here are we split up into sections and parties and often at war with one another. O Lord of Love, forgive us! King of Concord, come and reign over us and bring us into a perfect unity around Yourself. The sentence was “death.” I say nothing of it but this. Death was the sentence due to *me*, the sentence due to *you*—and they laid it upon our Substitute. “Worthy of death”—they said—all of them. All hands were held up. All voices said, “Yes, yes” to the verdict. Yet there was no fault in Him! Say rather, there was every excellence in Him! As I hear Jesus condemned to die, my soul falls at His feet and cries, “Blessed Lord, now have You taken my condemnation. There is, therefore, none for me. Now have You taken my cup of death to drink, and from now on it is dry to me. Glory be to Your blessed name, from now on and forever.”

V. I am almost glad that my time is so far advanced, for I must set before you the fifth and most painful scene. No sooner have these evil men of the Sanhedrin pronounced Him guilty of death, than the servants, the guards and those that kept the High Priests’ hall, eager to please their masters, and all touched with the same brute-like spirit which was in

them, straightway began to abuse the Infinite Majesty of our Lord. Consider THE ABUSE. Let me read the words—"Some began to spit on Him." "Began to spit on Him!" Thus was contempt expressed more effectively than by words. Be astonished, O heavens, and be horribly afraid! His face is the Light of the universe! His Person is the Glory of Heaven—and they "began to spit on Him!"

Alas, my God, that man should be so base! Some went further and they, "covered His face." It is an Eastern custom to cover the face of the condemned, as if they were not fit to see the light, nor fit to behold their fellow men. I know not whether, for this reason, or in pure mockery, they covered His face so that they could not see it, and He could not see them. How could they thus put out the sun and shut up bliss? Then when all was dark to Him, we read that they began to say, "Prophecy, Who is he that struck You?" Then another did the same and many were the cruel cuffs they laid about His blessed face. The mediaeval writers delighted to talk about the teeth that were broken, the bruises on the checks, the blood which flowed, the flesh that was bruised and blackened—but we dare not thus imagine.

Scripture has cast a veil and there let it abide. Yet it must have been an awful sight to see the Lord of Glory with His face stained by their accursed spit and bruised with their cruel fists. Here insult and cruelty were combined—ridicule of His prophetic claims and dishonor to His Divine Person. Nothing was thought bad enough. They invented all they could of shame and scorn—and He stood patient—though a single flash of His eyes would have consumed them in a moment! Brothers, Sisters, this is what *our sin* deserved! A shameful thing are you, O Sin! You deserve to be spit upon! This is what sin is constantly doing to Christ! Whenever you and I sin, we do, as it were, spit in His face. We also hide His eyes by trying to forget that He sees us and we also hit Him whenever we transgress and grieve His Spirit.

Talk not of cruel Jews. Let us think of *ourselves* and let us be humbled by the thought! This is what the ungodly world is always doing to our blessed Master. They also would hide His eyes which are the Light of the world. They also despise His Gospel and spit upon it as an utterly worn out and worthless thing. They also do despite to the members of His body through His poor afflicted saints who have to bear slander and abuse for His dear sake. And yet over all this I seem to see a light most blessed. Christ *must* be spit upon, for He has taken our sin. Christ *must* be tortured, for He is standing in our place. Who is to be the executioner of all this grief? Who shall take upon himself the office of putting Christ to shame? Our redemption was being worked out this way—who shall be the judge to perform this miserable work?

Fling in the clusters richer than the grapes of Eshcol! Fling them in, but who shall tread them out and laboriously extract the wine, the generous wine which cheers God and man? The feet shall be the willing feet of Christ's own adversaries—they shall extort from Him that which shall redeem us and destroy all evil! I rejoice to see Satan outwitted and his malice made to be the means of his own overthrow! He thinks to destroy Christ and by that deed he destroys himself! He pulls down evil upon his

own head and falls into the pit which he has dug. Thus shall all evil always work for the good of the Lord's people! Yes, their greatest good shall often come out of that which threatened their ruin and worked in them the utmost anguish. Three days must the Christ suffer and die and lie in the grave. But after that He must bruise the serpent's head and lead captivity captive! And that by the means of the very suffering and shame which He is now enduring! In the same manner shall it happen to His mystical body and Satan shall be bruised under *our* feet shortly.

I leave this subject, hoping that you will pursue it in your meditations, Here are three observations. First, how ready should we be to bear slander and ridicule for Jesus' sake. Do not get into a huff and think it a bad thing that people should mock you. Who are you, dear Brothers and Sisters? Who are you? What can you be if compared with Christ? If they spat upon Him, why should they not spit upon you? If they buffeted Him, why should they not buffet you? Shall your Master have all the rough of it? Shall He have all the bitter and you all the sweet? A pretty soldier, you, to demand better fare than your Captain!

How earnestly, next, ought we to honor our dear Lord. If men were so eager to put Him to shame, let us be 10 times more earnest to bring Him glory! Is there anything we can do, today, by which He may be honored? Let us set about it! Can we make any sacrifice? Can we perform any difficult task which would glorify Him? Let us not deliberate, but at once do it with all our might! Let us be inventive in modes of glorifying Him, even as His adversaries were ingenious in the methods of His shame.

Lastly, how surely and how sweetly may all who believe in Him come and rest their souls in His hands. Surely know that He who suffered this, since He was verily the Son of the Blessed, must have ability to save us! Such griefs must be a full atonement for our transgressions! Glory be to God, that spit on His face means a clear, bright face for me! Those false accusations on His Character mean no condemnation for me! That putting Him to death proves the certainty of our text last Sunday morning, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believes on Me has everlasting life."

Let us sweetly rest in Jesus and if ever our faith is agitated, let us get away to the hall of Caiaphas and see the Just standing for the unjust, the Faultless One bearing condemnation for sinners! Let us, in the High Priest's hall, judge and condemn every sin and every doubt—and come forth glorying that the Christ has conquered for us—and that we now wait with delight for His appearing! God bless you, Brothers and Sisters, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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FOUNTAINS OF REPENTANT TEARS

NO. 2735

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 14, 1901.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“And when he thought about it, he wept.”
Mark 14:72.

TRUE repentance is always the gift of God and the work of the Holy Spirit in the soul. Man, left to himself, continues in sin. If he turns from his iniquity, it is because God turns him. By nature, his mind is set on mischief and if that mind is changed, as it is in genuine repentance, it must be because the Lord Himself has changed it. That repentance which a man works in himself, without the Spirit of God, will turn out to be a repentance that needs to be repented of! But that godly sorrow for sin which the Spirit of God produces in the heart is a sure indication of spiritual life and the constant attendant of saving faith. Whoever truly repents of sin and believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, is a saved man—he shall be among the blessed ones in that day when Christ comes to judge the quick and the dead—and he shall be forever among the glorified!

Yet, while repentance is worked in men by the Spirit of God, He generally makes use of means to produce that result. In the case of Peter, the agency employed was thought—thought about his sin—“When he thought about it, he wept.” There is no doubt that multitudes of sinners have been led to repentance in this way and, in some respects, this must be the universal way by which the Spirit of God conducts men to the goal of true penitence. As long as they live carelessly and thoughtlessly, they go on in their evil ways, but if they are stopped in their mad career, if they are made to consider, if they begin to think over their sin—if God, the Holy Spirit, convinces them of the guilt of it—He uses that thought and conviction to lead them to trust in Jesus Christ. The remembrance of sin committed is the Holy Spirit's frequent, if not constant method of bringing men to weep over their wrong-doing and to turn from it.

I find that the Greek word, which is here rendered, “he thought about it,” is rather difficult to translate in order to give the full meaning of the original. There is, in the expression used by Mark, some idea of throwing or casting, so that some have even read the passage, “When he muffled up his face,” as though they thought it was implied that he cast something over himself so as to hide his face for shame at his great transgression. But others, and I believe much more correctly, think that our translation comes near enough to the idea of the writer, who wanted to convey

the impression that Peter cast his thoughts concerning what he had done, one upon another—brought before his mind the circumstances in which he stood and heaped them up, one upon another and, as he did this, and considered his sin in detail, and brought out its true and gross guiltiness—then it was that he began to weep. Without, however, insisting upon the absolute accuracy of this particular translation, we take the text as it stands—“When he thought about it, he wept.”

I. First, LET US STUDY PETER’S CASE AND USE IT FOR OUR OWN INSTRUCTION. The details of this sad story are familiar to you, yet I may remind you of them in order that we may see in how many points we have been like Peter was.

As Peter heard the cock crow, he thought, first, that he had actually done what Christ had said he would do—*he remembered that he had denied his Lord*. That which had seemed impossible to him had, nevertheless, been done three times! He would not believe even his dear Lord and Master when He told him that it would be so, but now it was literally the fact that Peter, one of the first to follow Christ, one who had even walked on water to go to Jesus, one who had seen Christ’s miracles—Peter, the most earnest and enthusiastic of Christ’s followers, always to the front, ready to brave anything for his Lord—Peter, who, with his sword, cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest—he realizes that he is the very same man and that he has actually denied his Master, declaring positively that he was not one of Christ’s disciples. “When he thought about it, he wept,” as well he might! Ah, what castles in the air had vanished! What self-confidence had passed away!

Then, as he looked to the end of the hall where he could see his Master, *he reflected upon the excellence of the Master whom he had denied*. Ah, Peter! You have denied the best, the most loving, the most lovely, the most tender, the most generous, the most compassionate, the most self-denying, the most pure, the most heavenly of leaders! If there had been some fault in Him, if He had played you false, if He had been unkind to you, if He had promised you a wage and had not paid you, or if He had lied to you, and you had found Him out, or if you had seen some infirmity or imperfection about Him when you watched Him privately, you might be excused. But to deny such a Master—well may you weep and cover your face for very shame! He is perfection, yet He permitted you to follow Him—you who are such a poor untrustworthy creature! How could you say, “I am not His disciple”—and say it three times over, so positively and so plainly, when, but a little while ago, it was your joy, your glory, your delight to humbly follow in His footsteps and to call Him Master and Lord?

Then, next, *he recollected the position in which his Lord had placed him*. Peter, you are not only a disciple, you are one of the 12 Apostles! Your Master singled you out, at least on one occasion, and spoke to you words that put you in a place of great eminence in His Church. You were endowed with the power to work miracles, you were exalted above the 70 evangelists and called to be one of the 12 pillars of the future Church to be built upon Christ Jesus. Yet you have denied Him! Oh, how this

thought must have struck his heart, like the point of a dagger, for, by so much as Christ trusts us, by so much is it a shameful thing for us to betray that trust! By so much as Christ puts honor upon us by using us, by just so much is it an intolerable shame that we should put Him to shame and grieve Him by denying that we are His! We can do this by our actions as well as by our words. You can deny Christ quite as much by acting inconsistently as by standing up and boldly saying, "I know not the Man!" O Brothers and Sisters, if Christ has highly favored any of us, and used us in His service in any degree, and yet we have denied Him, the recollection of our sin ought to cut us to the quick!

Moreover, *Peter remembered that his Lord had favored him with very special communion with Himself.* Christ took only three of His followers into the silent chamber where the daughter of Jarius lay dead. When he took the damsel by the hand and said to her, "Talitha cumi," and the maid arose, there were only three pairs of eyes, out of all His disciples, that saw that miracle, for "He suffered no man to follow Him, save Peter, and James, and John." Then, up on the mountain where the Lord was Transfigured and His garments became whiter than any fuller could make them, and the Glory of the Lord shone upon the Well-Beloved, there were only three disciples who were permitted to be there—and Peter was one of those who "were with Him in the holy mount."

And in the Garden of Gethsemane, when eight of the Apostles were left as a picket to watch at the gate, there were three who accompanied the Savior to within a stone's throw of the place where He agonized and, "His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground." And among the three who constituted the innermost body-guard of their suffering King was Peter. Yet, with the memories of Tabor and Gethsemane upon him, he had denied that he even knew Christ! Do you wonder that, as he thought about it, he wept? Ungodly men, if they make a confession of sin, speak of it in the mass, as Pharaoh did when he said to Moses, "I have sinned." But godly men are not content to act like that. They enter into details and in their confession they dwell upon the minute particulars of their guilt. They seek out that which will aggravate the sin or, rather, will set it in its true light when they are making confession of it before God! And I have no doubt that Peter mentioned this as a great aggravation of his iniquity, that he had seen the Savior in those choicer moments when only the elect out of the elect, the very *elite* of the Apostolic band were permitted to be present—and yet he had denied his Lord!

There was still more for Peter to think of—he *recollected that he had been solemnly forewarned by his Master.* Jesus had said to him, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." And He had also said to him, "Verily I say unto you, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crows twice, you shall deny me thrice." No warning could be more explicit than that! If a man plunges into a ditch when he is told where it is, or puts his foot into a trap when it is pointed out to him, or, being warned of his weakness in a particular direction, nevertheless takes no heed, he really doubles the guilt of his offense, for he has

sinned against special light. You do not often have the full light of the bull's eye lantern turned upon a weakness as Christ turned it upon Peter's. He told him plainly what he was going to do—yet the boastful man declared that he would not do it and then went straight ahead and did it!

This thought might well make him weep! The tones of his confident affirmation that he would never deny his Master must have still lingered in his ears yet he could also hear the sad echo of the denial which he had so grievously made and, therefore, “when he thought about it, he wept.” Why, it must have come to his mind that he had flatly contradicted Christ and that he had put himself before all his brethren and claimed to be better, more steadfast than they were—“Though all men shall be offended because of You, yet will I never be offended,” and, further, he said, “Though I should die with You, yet will I not deny You.” He had to eat his own words and to confess that he had proved false to his own most solemn declarations—and that might well cause him to weep as he thought over it.

Yet there was something even worse than this—*Peter mourned that he should have denied his Master under such circumstances*—that he should have left Him when He most needed a friend and companion. When everybody else forsook Christ, Peter not only forsook Him, but he *denied that he even knew Him*. If a man is really a friend, he certainly will stand by his friend when others turn away from him—yet there stands the blessed Lamb of God, buffeted, mocked, delivered up by cruel men to be crucified, and it is at such a time that Peter denies Him! He denies Him when He is about to lay down His life for Peter and for all His loved ones—denies Him when He is acknowledging us as His own and standing before the tribunal in our place to suffer for our sins! O cruel Peter, if you meant to deny your Master, why did you do it just now when He has no one to cling to Him? Surely, it would have been more noble on your part to have said, “I am one of His followers. Nail me to a cross at His side, and let me die faithful to my Lord.” That would have been a speech more worthy of Peter at his best!

He also thought of the repetitions and aggravations of his offense and this made him weep. In addition to denying his master, he told a positive lie and repeated it again and again. He said to the damsel, “I know not what you say.” And twice he said, “I know not the Man.” Now, that was an altogether unnecessary lie because I would think that a very large majority of the Jews knew Christ. Jesus of Nazareth must have been so famous as a Teacher and as a Miracle Worker that many a man who was not one of His followers, could not have said, “I do not even know Him.” It was bad enough for Peter to deny that he was Christ's disciple, but to say, “I know not the Man,” was a needless aggravation of the lie that he had uttered! What is worst of all, “he began to curse and to swear.” Liars generally seem to think that they will not be believed upon their bare word. So they imagine that if they will swear, then they will be believed. This is not the case, by any means, for, if you are wise, the moment you hear a man swear, you will know that he is telling a lie, for a profane

swearer practically says, "I need not mind telling a lie to man, for I am not afraid to swear in the Presence of God."

You never need believe a man who swears—you may know that he also lies. But Peter, having the common notion that to blaspheme and to use strong language would be convincing, began to curse and to swear. Do not alter these words, so as to make it appear that Peter used gentle and polite expressions. He did nothing of the kind—he used the strongest form of cursing that he could, for the Greek word is tantamount to "anathema." He anathematized himself, invoked upon himself the heaviest curses—as profane people usually do—in order that those who stood around might believe him when he said that he did not know Christ.

This cursing and swearing shows how very low Peter had fallen. When a man swears, you may, as a rule, be quite sure that he does not know Christ. Peter may have thought within himself, "There never was a disciple of Christ yet who took to swearing, so, if I swear, they will think at any rate that I am not one." So he borrows, out of the mouth of the profane language which did not belong to him—and he utters it in order that they may really think that he is no disciple of Christ. When the cock crew, and he thought of all this, he might well weep. Why, this is the man who said, on the Mount of Transfiguration, "Lord, it is good for us to be here: if You will, let us make here three tabernacles." This is the man who said to Jesus, across the stormy sea, "Lord, if it is You, bid me come unto You on the water." This is the same man, yet he has been cursing, and swearing, and denying Christ! When he turned all that over in his mind, it is no wonder that he wept.

II. Now, in the second place, LET US STUDY OUR OWN LIVES AND USE THE EXERCISE FOR OUR FURTHER HUMILIATION.

I will begin with *the backslider*. There are, alas, many who have denied Christ in this way. After having followed Him for years, they have gradually grown cold and have turned aside from Christ, their Lord and Master. I want you, dear Friend, once a member of this Church, yet now a backslider, to turn this matter over very carefully and prayerfully. You were converted in a very remarkable manner. You were, by Divine Grace, kept for years from sins into which you had formerly plunged. You had much joy and peace in believing and, sometimes, in the services of the Lord's House and especially at the Communion Table, you have felt as if you could sit and sing yourself away to everlasting bliss. You have often talked to your friends and kinsfolk about the bliss that dwells in the name of Jesus, your Savior—yet now you are a backslider! I cannot go into the details of your sins—perhaps it would not be right or profitable to mention such matters in public—but will you think on them? I pray you, my Brother—my Brother Peter—think of them! Turn over all the details in your mind. This may seem to you to be a very bitter task, but one day the result of it will be sweet. You do not like to remember your sins, but if you remember them, God will forget them—whereas, if *you* forget them, God will remember them against you!

Possibly you were not only a member of the Church, but you were a teacher in the Sunday school. Do you remember how earnestly you used

to teach the children, how anxious you were to lead the little ones to the Savior, and the intense joy with which you heard their first expressions of confidence in Christ? You remember what zeal and devotion to your Lord and His service you manifested in those happy days which have long gone by? But what a change has come over you! Surely, as a wife treacherously departs from her husband, so have you departed from Christ—and in going astray from Him, you have turned aside from happiness and from peace. You know that you are not happy. You also know that you can never be happy while you continue in your present condition. You have tasted so much of the joy of true religion that you are quite spoiled for the world. A man who lives in sin and loves it, may get some sort of pleasure out of it, but if, by Divine Grace, you have once been brought out of the City of Destruction, you cannot go back to it—the place would be a house of bondage to you.

There is nothing for you but to go forward because, as John Bunyan says, there is no armor for the Christian warrior's back—and if you turn round, you will quickly be wounded by the great adversary. You must go forward! There is something within you which tells you that you must, and I believe you will find that it will help you to go forward if you think over the sins that led to your departure from the right road, and that have made you, who used to teach others, now need to be taught yourself!

Is there, in this great throng, one who used to be a preacher of the Gospel, a minister of Christ, and who has turned aside? Such men are not as rare as one could desire. I can, at this moment, recall one who used to be prominent in Christ's service, but who now spends his life in serving Satan. We sometimes meet with men who have the drunkard's brand upon their face and they tell us that they were formerly ministers at such-and-such places. O my Brother, my Brother Peter! How sad it is that after having preached Christ, you have denied Him! Were you sincere in your preaching, or was it a lie? Did you do it for the sake of the loaves and fishes? God have mercy upon you if you were a whitewashed hypocrite! But now have the whitewash removed and appear in your true colors! Possibly, however, you can say, "Yes, I did serve the Lord sincerely. I did long to do good in His name." Then, how did you get down to your present condition? A more important question is—Do you not wish to get out of that sad state? Oh, I beseech you, seeing that you have disgraced the name of Christ and put Him to open shame—come back to Him at once!

May He make you to hear the cock crow this very hour, awakening your slumbering conscience, and may you go out to weep bitterly over your terrible sin! It is by that watergate that many find entrance into the Haven of Peace. It is by deep conviction of guilt and by true contrition of heart that they come, at last, to the feet of Jesus and find salvation. Out of such a congregation and such a Church as this, it is not possible for anyone to know all that goes on, but we cannot help hearing of one here and another there who gradually turn aside. Gray hairs are upon them, but they perceive them not, and at last they slip back almost impercepti-

bly, and, by-and-by, they fall into some open sin. Return, O backsliding daughter! Return, O weeping one, to your Savior! Return, O prodigal child! Come back to your Father's House and heart! The door of His House is open to receive you, and His heart is waiting to welcome you! Return, return, return!

But now I must speak to another class of persons, *those who never did come to Christ*. I wish I had the power to make them think of their past lives until they wept over them. Shall I try to recall some things to the remembrance of careless ones who are still unconverted? I should have to go back a long way with some of you—back to the old house at home, and to your dear mother—oh how she prayed for you and pleaded with you while you were a curly-headed boy! You remember the name that was written in your Bible, and the request that you would read a portion out of it every day when you first went away from home? You little thought, then, that you would ever be a swearer, that you would grow up to be a drunk, that you would be a Sabbath-breaker and a companion of the wicked! If anybody had foretold that concerning you, in those days, you would have said, with Hazael, “Is your servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?” You would have been shocked—yet you have done it!

Do you remember the feelings you had in your early days, those childish prayers that were sincere in their way—those simple hymns that you delighted to sing—the time when you used to get alone and cry out to God? In those days, if you had had a portrait of yourself as you now are, shown to you, and it had been said, “That is what you will grow to be,” you would not have believed it, would you? They were happy days, but they are gone, never to return. For years after that, you had a very tender conscience, had you not, my Brothers and Sisters? I want you to remember that fact if it was true in your case. Then, when you first went into overt sin you were very frightened and alarmed—but now you can do a great deal that is evil without being at all troubled—but it was not so with you then—you could not feel easy while engaged in wrong-doing.

Why, sometimes you have been sitting in the playhouse when there has been some lewd word or action, and you have felt that you ought not to be there! You have wondered that the place did not tumble about your ears! But you do not feel like that now. Remember, too, how you used to start in your sleep through some alarming dream, and how you awakened in terror and sat up in bed, and wondered how you could live as you did, without God and without Christ, and in constant jeopardy of being cast into Hell. I want you to recall all this and to remember how you seared your conscience, as with a hot iron, till you had burnt out of it the possibilities of sensibility.

I want you also to recollect another thing—and that is, *God's mercy to you*. Try and think about that for a little while. God has been very gracious and kind to some of you. You have prospered in business beyond all your expectations, or you have been helped in times of trouble when you could not have thought that God would aid you. For which of these things do you now neglect Him? What has God done to you, or for you,

that you should remain His adversary? You remember that long sickness, when you were brought very low? “Don’t talk about it,” you say. But I must talk about it, because there was something that happened, then, which ought not to be forgotten. In the middle of that illness, you vowed that if ever you got well again, you would lead a very different life. You recollect that you promised that? God registered the vow, though you have broken it!

I do not know how to say all that I have in my heart because there are certain things which I want some of you to think about, yet I can only just mention them in the public service. Remember the sins which you committed in which others were involved—sins which have ruined their souls, and which you never can undo. A man may sometimes sin by himself, as Peter did, but some men sin with others, and drag down others as they sink themselves. It is sad enough to go to Hell alone, without having one’s arms clasped about others to be the means of their ruin, also. Yet there are some men, and some women who have dragged scores down to Hell with them. O God, have mercy on them for this dreadful crime! If any here have been so guilty, I entreat them to think of their great sin, to look it steadily in the face till their eyeballs burn—and to keep on looking at it until the blessed drops of penitential grief shall distil from their eyes.

Why should you not think of what you have done? Do you fancy, because you forget it, and draw a veil over it, that it is destroyed? No, Sirs—you may blot out your memory of the crime, but it is as fresh in God’s Book of Remembrance as if it had been committed only yesterday! “But,” you say, “this wrong was done 50 years ago.” That does not make any difference—in the sight of God it is just as though you did it tonight—and it will be the same with you, one of these days, when stern Justice, like a grim chamberlain with black hands shall draw back the curtains of the bed on which you now securely sleep—and wake you up to see that your sin, unless Christ has buried it in His tomb—is still alive to curse you forever! Oh, may God help us to think over our sin until we shall realize its guilt and bow before the thrice-holy Jehovah in true penitence!

Some of you, who have been *living* in sin, and living without God, are *doubly guilty, because you have sinned against light and knowledge*. You are not like the ignorant multitude, for you have been well-taught and trained from your very childhood. Moreover, many of you have been endowed by God with good common sense and sound judgment, and it has been a difficult matter for you to continue in your evil course while your own conscience was accusing you. Think of this, because it aggravates your sin and makes you more guilty than those who have not had such privileges! Some of you have heard the Gospel till you know all about it. I cannot tell you anything fresh and I never try to do so. When we have seen the old Truths of God exercising all their possible power over our hearers, then will be time enough to think of something fresh—but they have not reached that point yet, so we still continue telling “the old, old story.” Oh, that the Lord would cause you to remember the sermons that you have heard, the Prayer Meetings you have attended, the revival ser-

vices you have passed through—and the resistance to your own conscience and to the Holy Spirit which some of you have dared to carry on! O my God, I cannot break the rock! I cannot make the water flow from it, either with a rod or by speaking to it! You must do the work, O blessed Spirit, if it is to be accomplished! Will You now constrain these people to think of their past lives until they shall go out of this building to seek a quiet place where they may weep in penitence before the Lord?

III. I have set before you the example of Peter and have tried to transfer it to your own experience. I must now close by asking you to OBSERVE THE RESULT OF THESE THOUGHTS UPON YOURSELVES.

Alas, *there are some who can think of sin without emotion.* I have tried to make you think of your past sin. Do you find that such thoughts lead you to repentance? Has God blessed this meditation to the breaking of your heart and the humbling of your spirit? If you answer, “No.” If you can think over all your past life and still say, “No, I do not weep. I do not repent,” I am afraid that you are like Judas rather than Peter! I fear lest I have met with the son of perdition and not an heir of Glory!

What can be said for the man who is aware of his sin, but who tries to pass it upon somebody else? I have known some who have charged the guilt of their wrong-doing to their constitution. They were so constituted, they say, that they could not help sinning as they did—this is trying to pass upon God the guilt of their transgression. “Oh,” says one, “it is my trade that has made me sin! If you had been in my position, you would have been no better than I am.” Perhaps so, but you mean that you are not the sinner, it is your *trade* that is guilty? It does not appear that you are one of those whom Christ came to save, for He came to save sinners, the lost. He came not to call the righteous, but sinners, and I do not think His call will be extended to your *trade*—it is you, yourself, who must be saved—and none but Christ can save you!

“Oh!” says one, “my sin is the result of my circumstances.” Whatever your circumstances may have been—whether you were rich or poor, or whatever your condition may have been—if you try to lay the blame of your guilt on your circumstances, I have little hope concerning you. There is no mercy for you and there will be no forgiveness for you until you take the blame of your sin upon yourself. “Oh, but I was so tempted!” Yes, I know—that was the old excuse of Adam and Eve. “The woman gave me the fruit of the tree,” said Adam. “The serpent beguiled me,” said Eve. Perhaps you also lay the guilt of your evil-doing upon the devil—he is a beast of burden that carries many saddles that never belonged to his back. But I must tell you that as long as you lay your sin at the devil’s door, there is no mercy for you! Plead guilty, I implore you, for you *are* the guilty party, and then shall you receive the pardon of your transgression! It is the sign of a sad condition of heart when a man, instead of confessing his sin, and admitting, straight away, that he is guilty of it, and lamenting before God that he should have been so wicked, turns round and casts the blame upon chance, or upon anyone but himself!

I hope, however, that I am addressing *some who are moved to penitence by thinking of their sin.* I hear one say, “As I think over my sin, I am

moved to great sorrow. I desire to have that sin put away, for I long to be wholly delivered from it and I do want to be reconciled to God." I am glad to hear you say that and I will tell you something that ought to move you even more than the thought of your sin, something that ought to make your heart leap within you. Do you ask, "What is that?" Why, it is this—that, though you have denied Christ, as Peter did, with many aggravations of your guilt, He still loves you and He bids you come to Him, for He has blotted out all your transgression! God told Jeremiah to say that when a wife treacherously departs from her husband, when she commits adultery and falls into all manner of wickedness, he cannot be expected to receive her back again—yet God says to the soul that has gone astray from Him, "I am married unto you, says the Lord; come back to Me and I will forgive you, however much you have defiled yourself."

It was not many days after Peter had denied his Master, that the Master, having died and risen from the dead, sent a special message to him. The angel said to the women, "Go your way, tell His disciples and Peter that He goes before you into Galilee: there shall you see Him, as He said unto you." And it was not many days after that that Peter stood by the seashore and his Master said to him, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?" And Peter was able to answer, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Christ had always loved him, and He loves you, too, poor penitent soul! You have denied Him, but He has never denied you. No, backslider, you have been false to Christ, but He has never been false to you. Come back to Him who still loves you! The marriage tie is not broken! The Covenant of Peace is not cancelled, though you have so grossly transgressed!

What a mercy it was for Peter that, within a short time of his great fall, his Master gave him work to do! And that same Peter who had shamefully denied his Lord was standing up in Jerusalem, filled with the Holy Spirit, preaching to the multitudes and bearing the standard of the Cross in the very front of the battle, the bravest of the brave! And Peter ended his career by dying for his Master, as Christ foretold that he would, by being crucified upside down, thinking himself unworthy to die in the same position as his Lord had done, and asking as a favor that if he must be crucified, it might be in that fashion. Peter yielded up his whole being, in life and in death, to Christ out of intense loyalty to his Lord who had so freely forgiven him his great transgression.

That same Master is here, at this moment, seeking you poor prodigals! And He would have you come to Him and receive this gracious message from His lips—"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me, for I have redeemed you. Behold, I have cast all your transgressions behind My back, and will remember them against you no more forever. Go forth and serve Me, and rejoice in Me all your days. Love Me much, for you have had much forgiven." God grant that many of you may have Grace given to you to enable you to obey that blessed word, and to the name of Jesus shall be praise for evermore! Amen.

**EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 14:27-31; 53, 54; 66-72; JOHN 18:15-18; 25-27.**

Mark 14:27-29. *And Jesus said unto them, All you shall be offended because of Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee. But Peter said unto Him, Although all shall be offended, yet I will not.* There was love in that utterance and so far it was commendable. But there was also much self-trust in it. And there was great presumption, for Peter dared even to contradict his Master to His face and, at the same time, he contradicted the Inspired Scripture, for Jesus had told the disciples that it was written that the sheep should be scattered! Yet Peter boldly denied both what God had written and what Christ had said. Alas, there is nothing of evil which proud self-confidence will not make us do! God save us from such a spirit as that!

30, 31. *And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto you, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crows twice, you shall deny Me thrice. But he spoke the more vehemently, If I should die with You, I will not deny You in any wise.* See how positive he was, how reliant upon the strength of his own love! It was well to feel such love, but it was ill to mix with it such self-confidence.

31. *Likewise also said they all.* Whenever a man who is called to be a leader, goes astray, others are pretty sure to follow him. It was so on this occasion, for when Peter made his boastful speech, “Likewise also said they all”—all the rest of his brethren chimed in and so shared in his sin—but Peter was chief in the wrong-doing, for he led them all. In the 53rd verse we read what happened after Christ’s agony and betrayal in Gethsemane.

53, 54. *And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes. And Peter followed Him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire.* Meanwhile, Christ was being put to the utmost derision and contempt. In the 66th verse, we are told more concerning the boastful Apostle.

66-70. *And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there came one of the maids of the high priest: and when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And you also were with Jesus of Nazareth. But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what you say. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew. And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them. And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely you are one of them: for you are a Galilean, and your speech agree thereto.* He could not hold his tongue, you see. He was always fast and forward in speech—and no sooner did he begin to speak than the people said, “That is the Galilean’s brogue! You come from that part of the country, your speech betrays you.”

71, 72. *But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this Man of whom you speak. And the second time the cock crew. And Peter*

called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, you shall deny Me thrice. And when he thought about it, he wept.

John 18:15. *And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. That is John, of course. He never mentions his own name if he can help it.*

15, 16. *That disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door outside. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spoke unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter. I always fancy that John had a greater tenderness for Peter because he was the means of getting Peter into the palace of the high priest. Peter could not have got in if he had been alone, but John was known to the high priest, and so secured his admission. He must always have felt sorry that he took Peter into a place where he was so strongly tried. Hence John sought him out after his great fall when, perhaps, the other Apostles were inclined to leave him by himself. John cheered him up and brought him back to the faith.*

17, 18. *Then said the damsel that kept the door, unto Peter, Are not you also one of this Man's disciples? He said, I am not. And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself. That was a very dangerous place for Peter to be—he would have been safer out in the cold.*

25. *And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. Twice over, we are told that while his Master was being buffeted, Peter stood in the midst of the ribald throng and warmed himself.*

25-27. *They said therefore unto him, Are not you also one of His disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not. One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, said, Did not I see you in the Garden with Him? Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew. Thus was Christ's prediction literally fulfilled and thus, by what seems the humble instrumentality of a cock crowing, was Peter brought to repentance. There is many an eloquent divine who has missed the mark when he has been preaching, but God has spoken by a very humble voice. You, dear Friend, though you have no gifts of speech, may go and tell the story of Jesus Christ to someone and God may bring him to repentance through you, as he brought Peter back to himself through the agency of this bird. May God make us all useful and keep us from falling into transgression as Peter did! Amen.*

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE GREAT CROSS-BEARER AND HIS FOLLOWERS NO. 1683

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 8, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And when they had mocked Him, they took off the purple from Him,
and put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him.”
Mark 15:20.*

*“And He, bearing His Cross, went forth.”
John 19:17.*

*“And they compelled one Simon, a Cyrenian who passed by,
coming out of the country, the father of Alexander
and Rufus, to bear the Cross.”
Mark 15:21.*

WHEN our Lord had been condemned to die, the execution of His sentence was hurried. The Jews were in great haste to shed His blood. So intense was the enmity of the chief priests and Pharisees, that every moment of delay was wearisome to them. Besides, it was the day of the Passover and they wished to have this matter finished before they went, with hypocritical piety, to celebrate the festival of Israel's deliverance! We do not wonder at their eagerness, for they could not bear themselves while He lived, since His very Presence reproved them for their falsehood and hypocrisy.

But at Pilate, we do wonder, and herein he is much to be blamed. In all civilized countries there is usually an interval between the sentencing of the prisoner and the time of his being put to death. As the capital sentence is irreversible, it is well to have a little space in which possible evidence may be forthcoming which may prevent the fatal stroke. In some countries we have thought that there has been a cruelly long delay between the sentence and the execution, but with the Romans it was usual to allow the reasonable respite of 10 days.

Now, I do not say that it was incumbent upon Pilate, according to Roman Law, to have allowed 10 days to a Jew, who had not the rights of Roman citizenship, but I do say that he might have pleaded the custom of his country and so have secured a delay—and afterwards he might have released his prisoner. It was within his reach to have done so and he was blameworthy, as he was all along, in thus yielding to the clamor for an immediate execution for no other reason than that he was “willing to content the people.”

When once we begin to make the wishes of other men our law, we know not to what extremity of criminality we may be led. And so the Savior's hasty execution is due to Pilate's vacillating spirit and to the insatiable

blood-thirstiness of the scribes and Pharisees. Being given over to death, our Savior was led away and, I suppose, the painters are right when they put a rope about His neck or His loins, for the idea of being led in an open street would seem to imply some sort of bond—"He was led as a sheep to the slaughter." Alas, that the Emancipator of our race should be led forth as a captive to die!

The direction in which He is led is outside the city. He must not die in Jerusalem, though multitudes of Prophets had perished there. Though the Temple was the central place of sacrifice, yet the Son of God must not be offered there, for He was an offering of another kind and must not lie upon their altars. He must be led outside the city because, by the Jews, He was treated as a flagrant offender who must be executed at the Tyburn of the city, in the appointed place of doom known as Calvary or Golgotha. When Naboth was unjustly condemned for blasphemy, they carried him forth out of the city and stoned him with stones that he died. And afterwards Stephen—when they cried out against him as a blasphemer, they cast him out of the city and there they stoned him.

Our Savior, therefore, must die in the ordinary place of execution, that in all respects He might be numbered with the transgressors. The rulers of the city so loathed and detested their great Reprover that they rejected Him and would not suffer Him to die within their city walls! Alas, poor Jerusalem, in casting out the Son of David, you did cast out your last hope—now are you bound over to desolation! He was led outside of the city because, from that time on, no acceptable sacrifice could be offered there. They might go on with their offering of daily lambs and they might sacrifice their bullocks and burn the fat of fed beasts—but from that day the substance of the sacrifice had gone away from them and Israel's offerings were vain oblations.

Because the true Sacrifice is rejected of them, the Lord leaves them nothing but a vain show. Still more forcible is the fact that our Lord must die outside the city because He was to be consumed as a sin-offering. It is written in the Law, "And the skin of the bullock, and all his flesh, with his head, and with his legs, and his inwards, and his dung, even the whole bullock shall he carry forth outside the camp unto a clean place, where the ashes are poured out, and burn him on the wood with fire." There were several sorts of offerings under the Law—the sweet-savor offerings were presented upon the altar and were accepted of God, but sin-offerings were burnt outside the camp, or gate, because God can have no fellowship with sin.

Once let sin be imputed to the sacrifice and it becomes abhorrent to God and must not be presented in the tabernacle or the Temple, but burned outside the circle wherein His people have their habitations. And here let our hearts gratefully contemplate how truly our Lord Jesus became a Sin-Offering for us and how, in every point, He followed out the type. With His face turned away from His Father's House, He must go to die—with His face turned away from what were once His Father's people, He must be led forth to be crucified. Like a thing accursed, He is to be hung up where felons suffer deserved punishment. Because we were sin-

ners and because sin had turned our backs to God—and because sin had broken our communion with God’s accepted ones—therefore must He endure this banishment.

In that sorrowful march of the Cross-bearing Savior, my soul, with sorrow, sees herself represented as deserving thus to be made to depart unto death. And yet joy mingles with this emotion, for the glorious Sin-Bearer has thus taken away our sin and we return from our exile! His Substitution is infinitely effectual! Well may those live for whom Jesus died! Well may those retain in whose place the Son of God was banished! There is entrance into the Holy City, now! There is entrance into the Temple, now! Now there is access unto God, Himself, because the Lord has put away our sin through Him who was led to be crucified outside the city gate!

Nor do I think that even this exhausts the teaching. Jesus dies outside Jerusalem because He died, not for Jerusalem, alone, nor for Israel, alone. The effect of His Atonement is not circumscribed by the walls of a city nor by the boundaries of a race. In Him shall all the nations of the earth be blessed! Out in the open He must die to show that He reconciled both Jews and Gentiles unto God! “For He is the propitiation for our sins,” says Paul, who was, himself, a Jew, “and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” Had He been the Savior of Jews, only, seclusion in the place of His offering would have been appropriate, but as He dies for all nations, He is hung up outside the city.

And yet, once more, He suffered outside the gate that we might go forth unto Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. “Come you out from among them; be you separate, touch not the unclean thing,” from now on becomes the command of God to all His sons and daughters! Behold the Son of sons, His Only-Begotten, leads the way in nonconformity to this present evil world, being, Himself, officially severed from the old Jewish church, whose elders seek His life! He dies in sacred separation from the false and corrupt corporation which vaunted itself to be the chosen of God! He protested against all evil and for this He died, so far as His murderers were concerned.

Even so must His followers take up their cross and follow Him wherever He goes, even though they are to be despised and rejected of men. See what instruction is found in the choice of the place wherein our great Redeemer offers Himself unto God!

I. Let us draw near to our Lord for a while and carefully observe each instructive detail. Our imagination pictures the Blessed One standing outside the gate of Herod’s palace in the custody of a hand of soldiers with a centurion at their head. And we begin, at once, to observe HIS DRESS. That may seem a small matter, but it is not without instruction. How is He dressed? Our text tells us that when they had mocked Him, they took off the purple from Him and put His own clothes on Him. But we are not told that they took off the crown of thorns and, therefore, it has been currently believed that He continued to wear it to the Cross and on the Cross.

Is not this highly probable? Surely if the thorny crown had been withdrawn, this would have been the place to have said, “They took off the purple from Him and removed the crown of thorns.” But it is not so writ-

ten and, therefore, we may believe that the sorrowful coronet remained upon Him. Pilate wrote upon his accusation, “the King of the Jews,” and it was not unfitting that He should continue to wear a crown. Jesus died a crowned monarch, King of the curse! The Lord God in justice said to rebel man, “Cursed is the ground for your sake: thorns, also, and thistles shall it bring forth to you.” And lo, the Man by whom we are redeemed is crowned with that product of the earth which came of the curse—

**“O sacred head surrounded
By crown of piercing thorn!
O bleeding head, so wounded,
Reviled and put to scorn.”**

Probably also, as I have said, He was bound, for they led Him as a sheep to the slaughter. But this binding was probably more abundant than that which we have hinted at, if it is, indeed, true that by Roman custom criminals were bound with cords to the cross which they were doomed to carry. If this was the case, you may picture our Lord with His Cross hound to Himself and hear Him say, “Bind the Sacrifice with cords, even to the horns of the altar.” But the chief point to be noted is that Jesus wore His own clothes, the usual garments which He was accustomed to wear and this, no doubt, for identification, that all who looked on might know that it was the same Person who had preached in their streets and had healed their sick. They were under no misapprehension—they knew that it was Jesus of Nazareth—the keen hate of the scribes and Pharisees would not have permitted any substitution of another. It was none other than He and His garments were the ensigns of that truth.

He wore His own clothes, also, for another reason, namely, that there might be a fulfillment of prophecy. It may not strike you, at first, but you will soon see it. Our Lord must not go to die in the purple—He must march to the Cross in that vestment which was without seam and woven from the top throughout, or else the Word of God could not have been fulfilled, “They parted My garments among them, and upon My vesture did they cast lots.” Other raiment could readily have been torn and divided, but this garment, which was peculiar to the Savior, could not have been so torn without destroying it and, therefore, the soldiers cast lots for it! Little did they who put it on Him dream that they were thus accessory to the fulfillment of a prophecy!

Does it not strike you as strange that the Pharisees, who were so full of hatred to Christ, did not carefully draw back from the fulfillment of so many types and prophecies? Their rabbis and teachers knew the prophecy of Zechariah, that the Messiah should be sold for 30 pieces of silver—why did it not occur to them to make their bribe to Judas 29 or 31 silver pieces? Why, again, did they cast the price unto the potter by buying from him the field of blood? Could they not, so to speak, thereby have balked the prophecy? Here were voluntarily fulfilled, by themselves, prophecies which condemned them! I shall have to show you the same thing further on, but, meanwhile, observe that if it had been their objective to fulfill type and prophecy, they could not have acted more carefully than they did. So they put His own garments on Him and unwittingly furnished the

possibility for the fulfillment of the Prophet's words—"They parted My garments among them, and cast lots upon My vesture."

To me there occurs one other thought touching His wearing His own garments. I do not know if I can express it, but it seems to me to indicate that our Lord's passion was a true and natural part of His life. He died as He lived. His death was not a new departure, but the completion of a life of self-sacrifice, and so He had no need to put on a fresh garb. Look! He goes to die in His ordinary, everyday garments! Does not it almost seem as if people put on their Sunday clothes because they regard religion as something quite distinct from their common life? Do you not wish to see godliness in work-day clothes? Religion in its shirt-sleeves? Grace in a smock-frock? Do you not almost cry concerning some loud talkers—"Put his own clothes on him and then lead him out and let us see him"?

It should be an integral part of our life to live and to die for our God. Must we become other men if we are to be God's men? Can we not wear our own clothes, habits, characteristics and peculiarities and serve the Lord? Is there not some suspicion of unnaturalness in services which require men to put on a strange, outlandish dress? Surely they find their worship to be on another level than their life—they must step out of their way and dress up to attend to it! It is evil for a man, when he cannot lead his fellows in prayer till he has gone to the wardrobe! Time was when vestments meant something, but ever since our great High Priest went up to His one Sacrifice wearing His common clothes, all types are fulfilled and laid aside.

Now, we pray not officially, or we should need the robe—but we pray personally and our own clothes suit us well. Jesus continued the unity of His life as He approached its close and did not, even in appearance, change His way. He lived to die a Sacrifice—this was the climax of His life, the apex of the towering pyramid of His perfect obedience! No mark is set, no line is drawn between His passion and all the rest of His life, nor should there be a screen between our life and death. Somehow, I dread a death which is meant to be pictorial and exhibitional. I am not an admirer of Addison's death, as some are, who praise him because he sent for a young lord and cried, "Come, see how a Christian can die!"

I like better, Bengel's wish, when he desired to die just as a person would slip out from company because someone beckoned him outside. Such a person modestly thinking his presence or absence to be of small account in a great world, quietly withdraws and only friends observe that he is gone. Death should be part of the usual curriculum, the close of the day's work, the entrance into harbor which ends the voyage. It is well to feel that you can die easily because you have done it so many times before! He who dies daily will not fear to die! Bathe in the Jordan often and you will not dread the fording of it when your hour has come.

Our blessed Lord lived such a dying life that He made no show of death. He did not change His tone and spirit any more than His garments, but died as He lived. They put His own clothes on Him—He had not, Himself taken them off—it was no wish of His to wear the purple even, for an hour, either in reality or in mockery. He was evermore the same and His

own vesture best beseemed Him. Truly, blessed Master, we may well say, "All Your garments smell of myrrh and aloes and cassia"—even though they take You not out of "the ivory palaces wherein they have made You glad"—but out of the common guardroom, where they had made You to be despised and mocked and spit upon. Come from where You may, Your vesture has a fragrant smell about it, and all Your Brothers and Sisters rejoice therein.

II. Brethren, I beg you, for a few minutes, to look at HIS COMPANY. Who were they that were with our Lord when He came to die? First and nearest to Him were the rough Roman soldiers—strong, muscular, unfeeling men—ready to shed blood at any moment. In them, human affection was kept down by stern discipline. They were the iron instruments of an empire of iron. They would do what they were bid and feeling and sympathy were not allowed to interfere. I do but bid you look at these guards to remind you that from beneath their eagle, our Savior won a trophy, for their centurion at our Lord's death uttered the confession, "Certainly this was the Son of God." This was a blessed confession of faith and I delight to think of our Lord as thus becoming the Conqueror of His conquerors by taking one out of them to be His disciple and witness, as we would gladly believe he was. Surely after openly making the clear confession which the Evangelist has recorded, we may number him with Believers!

Next to these guards were two malefactors, led out with Him to execution. That was intended to increase His scorn. He must not be separated from the basest of men, but He must be led forth between two thieves, having previously had a murderer preferred to Him. They seem to have been very hardened scoundrels, for they reviled Him. I mention them because our Lord won a trophy by the conversion of one of them, who, when dying, said, "We suffer justly, but this Man has done nothing amiss," and then prayed, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom." This dying thief has brought more Glory to Christ than hundreds of us, for in every place wherever this Gospel has been preached, this has been told as a memorial of him and as a comfort to the guiltiest to look to Jesus! In the act of death, he believed in Christ and believed when the Lord, Himself, was in the act of death—and that day he was with Him in Paradise!

How have You conquered, O You despised of men! How have You won, by Your gentleness, both Roman legionnaires and Jewish thieves! Beyond the prisoners were the scribes, Pharisees and High Priests. I could not picture their faces, but surely they must have been about the worst lot of humans that were ever seen, as with a fiendish delight they stared at Jesus! He had called them, "hypocrites." He had spoken of them as "making clean the outside of the cup and platter," while their inner part was wickedness—and now they are showing their venom and silencing His reproofs. But their hate was so insatiable that it was accompanied with fear and that night it was seen that Christ had conquered *them*, for they crouched before Pilate and begged a guard to prevent their Victim from leaving the tomb.

In their heart of hearts they feared that, after all, He might really be the Son of God! Thus were they, also, vanquished—though to them the Lord Jesus was a savor of death unto death—yet they could not but be affected by Him and vanquished by His death. Their hate brought with it alarm, fear and agitation—they trembled before the Nazarene. Look at the scene! Though the despised and sorrowful One is bowed down beneath His Cross, you can see at a glance the majesty which dwells in Him! But as you look at them—the mean, wretched seed of the serpent—they seem to go upon their bellies and dust is their meat! Jesus is all truth and openness and they are all cunning and craft. You can see, at a glance, that as an angel is to the fiends of Hell, so is the Christ to His persecutors! That face stained with spit and blackened with blows, and punctured with thorns, wears a more than imperial Glory, while their faces are as the countenances of slaves and criminals!

Around these there is a great rabble and if you look into the mob, you see with surprise that they are the same crowd who, a week ago, shouted “Hosanna! Hosanna!” They have changed their note and cry, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” For a few pence they were bribed to do so—they were an ignorant, fickle mob. When such do hiss at you for doing right, forgive them. When they point the finger of scorn at you for being a Christian, regard them not. It little matters what they may say or do. They yelled at Him who was their host Benefactor and ours. The Lord Christ endured the popular scorn as He had once *received* the popular acclamation! He lived above it all, for He knew that men of low degree are vanity. Vanity of vanities! All that comes of vain man is vanity!

Yes, but there was a little change for the better in the company—there was just a streak of light in that cloud—for kindly *women* were in the throng. These were not all His disciples, perhaps few of them were such, for otherwise He would not have bid them weep over a woe which His disciples escaped—but they were tender-hearted women who could not look upon Him without tears. It is said by Luke that they bewailed and lamented Him. They knew how innocent He was and how kind He had been. Perhaps some of them had received favors at His hands and, therefore, they wept sorely that He should die. It was well done of them. In all the Evangelists there is no instance of a woman that had any hand in the death of Christ. As far as they are connected with the matter, they are guiltless—they rather oppose His death than promote it.

Woman was last at the Cross and first at the sepulcher and, therefore, we can never say a word about her being the first in the transgression. Oh, kind eyes that gave the Lord of Love the tribute of their pity! Blessed are you of compassionate Heaven! But the Savior desired not, at that time, that human sympathy should be spent upon Him, for His great heart was big with sorrows not His own. He knew that when the children of those women had grown up and while yet some of the younger women would still be alive, their awful woe would make them exclaim, “Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bear, and the paps that never gave suck.” When they saw the slain of the Romans and the slain of their own contending factions, then would they mourn! The Master, therefore said—

***“Weep not for Me! Oh! Weep not, Salem’s daughters,
Faint though you see Me, stay the bursting tear!
Turn the sad tide—the tide of bitter waters—
Back on yourselves for desolation near.”***

It was well on the woman’s part; it was better, still, on His, that He gently set the draught of sympathy to one side because their coming sorrow oppressed Him more deeply than His own.

We must now leave the company, but not till we have asked, Where are His disciples? Where is Peter? Did he not say, “I will go with You to prison and to death”? Where is John? Where are they all? They have fled and have not yet returned to speak a word to Him or for Him. Holy women are gathering, but where are the *men*? Though the women are brave and act like men, the men are fearful and act as women! We are poor helpers to our Master. Had we been there, we should have done the same as they did, if not worse, for they were the flower of our Israel. Ah, me, how little are we worth for whom the Ever-Blessed paid so much! Let us give clearer proof of loyalty and follow our Prince more closely.

III. But now, come closer to the Savior—break through the company and hear my third talk with you while you look a little on HIS BURDEN. May the good Spirit teach me how to depict my Lord. We are told by John that our Savior, “went forth bearing His Cross.” We might have supposed, so far as the other three Evangelists are concerned, that Simon the Cyrenian had carried the Cross all the way, but John fills up the blank space in their accounts. Our Lord carried His own Cross at the commencement of the sorrowful pilgrimage to Calvary. This was done, first, by way of increasing His shame. It was a custom of the Romans to make felons bear their own gallows and there is a word in the Latin, *furcifer*, which signifies, “gallows bearer,” which was hissed at men in contempt, just as nowadays a despised individual might be called a “gallows-bird.” Nothing was more disgraceful and, therefore, that must be added to the Redeemer’s load of shame. He made Himself of no reputation for our sakes.

Note, next, its weight. Usually only one beam of the cross was carried—it may have been so here. It does not look so, however, for the expression, “bearing His Cross,” would naturally mean the whole of it. It is highly probable that, although that load could easily be borne by the rough, coarse criminals who ordinarily suffered, yet not so readily by the tender and more exquisite frame of our Divine Lord. It is difficult to find any other reason why they should have laid the Cross on Simon, unless it is true, as tradition says, that Jesus fainted beneath the burden. I care nothing for tradition, nor even for conjecture, but still, there must have been a reason and as we cannot believe that these people had any real mercy for Christ, we think they must have acted upon the cruel wish that He might not die on the road, but might at least live to be nailed to the tree. “The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.” This I leave.

And now I call your attention to the fact that there was a typical evidence about this. If Simon had carried Christ’s Cross all the way, we should have missed the type of Isaac, for Isaac, when he went to Mount Moriah to be offered up by his father, carried the wood for his own sacrifice. I think if I had been a Jew, full of hate to Jesus Christ, I would have

said, "Do not let Him carry His Cross—that will be too much like Isaac carrying the wood." No, but knowing the type, they wantonly fulfill it! It is their own will that does it and yet, the predestination of the Eternal is fulfilled in every jot and tittle—and our great Isaac carries the wood with which He is to be offered up by His Father! How marvelous it is that there should be a fixed decree and yet an altogether unlimited free agency!

The spiritual meaning of it, of course, was that Christ, in perfect obedience, was then carrying the load of our disobedience. The Cross, which was the curse, for, "Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree," is borne on those blessed shoulders which were submissive to the will of God in all things. Our Lord's Cross-bearing is the representation of His bearing all our sin and, therefore, in it we rejoice. It also has a prophetic meaning—that Cross which He carried through Jerusalem shall go through Jerusalem again. It is His great weapon with which He conquers and wins the world—it is His scepter with which He shall rule—governing the hearts of His people by no more forceful means than by the love manifested on His Cross!

"The government shall be upon His shoulder." That which He bore on His shoulder shall win obedience and they who take His yoke upon them shall find rest unto their souls.

IV. I wish I had an hour during which I might speak upon the last head which bristles with points of interest, but I must give its lessons to you rather in rough remarks than in studied observations. The last thing to consider is HIS CROSS-BEARER. We are not told why the Roman soldiers laid the Cross on Simon. We have made a conjecture; but we leave it as a conjecture, although a highly probable one. If it is true, it lets us see how truly human our Master was. He had been all night in the garden, sweating, as it were, great drops of blood in His anguish. He had been before the Sanhedrin. He had been before Pilate, then before Herod, then before Pilate, again! He had endured scourging; He had been mocked by the soldiers and it would have been a great wonder if His human frame had not shown some sign of exhaustion.

Holy Scripture, by its example, teaches us great reticence about the sufferings of Jesus. Some of the medieval writers and certain good people who write devotional books are too apt to dilate upon every supposed grief of our Master, so as to harrow up your feelings, but it is the part of wisdom to imitate the ancient painter who, when he depicted Agamemnon as sacrificing his daughter, veiled the father's face. It is indelicate and almost indecent to write as some have done who would seem to be better acquainted with anatomy than awed by Divinity. Much that Jesus endured must forever remain veiled to us—whether He fainted once or twice or three times—or did not faint at all, we are not informed. And, therefore, we leave the idea in the obscurity of probability and reverently worship Him who was tender in body and soul and suffered even as we do. Oh, love surpassing knowledge which could make Him suffer so!

There was a great singularity in the Providence which brought Simon upon the scene just when he appeared. The right man came forward at the right moment. That Simon did not come, at first, and that they did not

place the Cross on him from the beginning was for the fulfillment of the type of Isaac to which allusion has been made. Thus Providence arranges all things wisely. Observe that Simon was pressed into this duty. The word used signifies that the person is impressed into the royal service. Simon was a pressed man and probably not a disciple of Christ at the time when he was loaded with the Cross. How often has a burden of sorrow been the means of bringing men to the faith of Jesus! He was coming in from the country about some business or other and they compelled him to bear His cross, impressing him into the service which otherwise he would have shunned, for, "he passed by," and would have gone on if he could.

Roman soldiers were not accustomed to make many bones about what they chose to do. It was sufficient for them that he came under their notice—and carry the Cross, he must. His name was Simon—but where was that other Simon? What a silent, but strong rebuke this would be to him! Simon Peter, Simon son of Jonas, where were you? Another Simon has taken your place! Sometimes the Lord's servants are backward where they are expected to be forward and He finds other servitors for the time! If this has ever happened to us, it ought gently to rebuke us as long as we live. Brothers and Sisters, keep your places and let not another Simon occupy it! It is of Judas that it is said, "His bishopric shall another take," but a true disciple will retain his office.

Remember that Word of our Lord, "Hold that fast which you have, that no man take your crown." Simon Peter lost a crown here and another head wore it! Simon was a Cyrenian—an African—I wonder if he was a black man? In the Acts of the Apostles, at the 13th chapter, we find mention of a Simeon that was called Niger, or black. We do not know whether he was the same man or not, but he was an African, for Cyrene lies just to the west of Egypt, on the southern coast of the Mediterranean. Surely the African has had his full share of cross-bearing for many an age! Oh that the pangs of his sorrow may bring forth a birth of joy! Blessed be he, whether African or Englishman, or who he may, that has the honor of bearing the Cross after Christ!

He was coming in from the country. How often the Lord takes into His service the unsophisticated country people who, as yet, are untainted by the cunning and the vice of the city! Some young man is just come up from the country this very week and is commencing his apprenticeship in London. How I wish my Master would impress him at the city gates and do it in that Divine way of His to which the will of the impressed person yields a sweet consent! Would God you would come at once and take up the Cross of Jesus just at the city gate, before you learn the city's sin and plunge into its dangers! Happy is the Simon coming in from the country who shall, this day, be led to bear Christ's Cross! Good Master, fulfill our heart's desire and lay Your Cross on some unaccustomed shoulder even now!

We are told he was the father of Alexander and Rufus. Which, my Brethren, is the greater honor to a man—to have a good father—or to be the father of good sons? Under the Old Testament rule, we usually read of

a man, that he is the son of such an one, but here we come to another style and find it to a man's honor that he is the *father* of certain well-known Brothers—"the father of Alexander and Rufus." Surely, Mark knew these two sons, or he would not have cared to mention them. They must have been familiar to the Church, or he would not have thus described their father. It was their father who carried the Cross. It is exceedingly likely that this Rufus was he of whom Paul speaks in the last chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, for Mark was with Paul and by this means knew Simon and Rufus.

Paul writes, "Salute Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine." His mother was such a motherly person that she had been a mother to Paul as well as to Rufus. Surely, if she was a mother to Paul, she was another disciple of Jesus, and it would look as if this man, his wife and his two sons all became converts to our Lord after he had carried His Cross! It is certainly not the most unlikely circumstance that has been accepted by us on the ground of probability. Oh, what a blessing to a man to be known by his sons! Pray, dear Christian Friends, you that have an Alexander and a Rufus, that it may be an honor to you to be known as their father! "Him they compelled to bear His Cross"—perhaps the heavier end of it, if it was really bound to Christ, as they say, or, as I judge, the whole of it.

It matters little how it was, but Simon is the representative of the Church which follows Christ bearing His Cross. Here we may recall the language of Paul—"I fill up that which is behind." May I paraphrase it?—I take the hind end—"of the sufferings of Christ for His body's sake, that is the Church." Everyone that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution. Jesus said, "Whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me, cannot be My disciple." Here is a representative, then, of all the godly—this Simon bearing Christ's Cross! Mark, it was not a cross of his own making, like those of monks and nuns who put themselves to pains of their own inventing! It was Christ's Cross and he carried it not *before* Christ, as some do who talk of their poverty as though it would get them to Heaven, instead of resting on Christ's Cross. He carried it *after* Christ in its right place.

This is the order—Christ in front bearing all our sin and we, behind, enduring shame and reproach for Him and counting it greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt! There is Simon and we will view him as a lesson to ourselves. First, let Simon be an example to us all and let us readily take up the cross after Christ. Whatever is involved in being a Christian, rejoice in it! If there is any shame; if there is any contumely; if there is loss; if there is any suffering—even if it were martyrdom—yet gladly take up the cross! Behold, the Father lays it upon you for Christ's sake!

The next is advice to any of you that have been compelled to suffer as Christians though you are not Christians. I wonder whether there is anybody here who is only a press-man and yet has to bear the cross? A working man became a teetotaler—he did not mean to be a Christian, but when he went to work, his mates tempted him to drink and, as he would not join them, they attacked him as a Christian and said, "You are one of

those canting hypocrites, those Wesleyans, those Presbyterians, or those Spurgeonites!” This is not true of you, but thus, you see, the cross is forced on you! Had you not better take it up and bear it joyfully? They have *pressed* you into this service—take it as an index of the will of Providence, and say, “I will not be a press-man only—I will be a volunteer and I will cheerfully carry Christ’s Cross.”

I know a man who merely comes to this place of worship because he is somewhat interested with the preaching, though he has no idea of being a converted man. Yet in the street where he lives nobody ever goes to a place of worship and, therefore, they set him down as a pious man and some have even ridiculed him for it. Friend, you are in for it because you attend here and you put me in for it, too, for if you do anything wrong, they are sure to lay all the blame on me! They say—“That is one of Spurgeon’s people.” You are not—I do not acknowledge you as yet—but the outsiders have pushed you into the responsibilities of a religious profession and you had better go in for its privileges! They have laid the Cross of Christ upon you! Do not throw it off! Come on and bring that dear motherly wife with you, and Alexander and Rufus, too. The Church will be glad to take you all in and, then, as a volunteer, you shall bear Christ’s Cross! It is, however, a remarkable thing that some should first of all be forced into it and then become willing followers.

Last of all, if you and I are cross-bearers, here is a sweet thought. Are we carrying a cross which presses us heavily just now? You know you are to be like your Master and if so, there will be someone found to help you bear your cross. They found Simon to bear the Cross of Jesus and there is a Simon somewhere to help you. Only cry to the Lord about it and He will find you a friend. If Simon is not forthcoming, I will tell you what to do. Imitate Simon. If Simon was what I think he was, he became a converted man and, before long, found himself in trouble through it. And so he at once went to the Lord in prayer, and said, “Lord Jesus I am resting in You, alone. You did give me the honor to carry Your Cross once, now, I beseech You, carry mine!”

This is what I want you to do with your crosses at this time. You that have to endure hardness for Christ and are glad to do it, ask Him to bear your burden for you! He has borne your sins and, if you will but commit your troubles to Him, joy and peace through believing shall stream into your souls by His Holy Spirit. God bless you, for Christ’s sake.

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UP FROM THE COUNTRY AND PRESSED INTO SERVICE NO. 1853

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 2, 1885,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And they compelled one Simon, a Cyrenian, who passed by,
coming out of the country, the father of Alexander
and Rufus, to bear His Cross.”
Mark 15:21.*

JOHN tells us that our Savior went forth bearing His Cross (John 19:17). We are much indebted to John for inserting that fact. The other Evangelists mention Simon the Cyrenian as bearing the Cross of Christ, but John, who often fills up gaps which are left by the other three, tells us that Jesus set out to Calvary carrying His own Cross. Our Lord Jesus came out from Pilate's palace laden with His Cross, but He was so extremely emaciated and so greatly worn by the night of bloody sweat that the procession moved too slowly for the rough soldiers and, therefore, they took the Cross from their prisoner and laid it upon Simon. Or, possibly they laid the long end upon the shoulder of the strong countryman, while the Savior still continued to bear, in part, His Cross till He came to the place of doom. It is well that we should be told that the Savior bore His Cross, for if it had not been so, objectors would have had ground for disputation. I hear them say—You admit that one of the most prominent types in the Old Testament, of the Sacrifice of the Son of God, was Abraham's offering up his son Isaac. Now Abraham laid the wood upon Isaac, his son, and not upon a servant. Should not, therefore, the Son of God bear the Cross Himself?

Had not our Lord carried His Cross, there would have been a flaw in His fulfillment of the type—therefore, the Savior must bear the wood when He goes forth to be offered up as a Sacrifice. One of the greatest of English preachers has well reminded us that the fulfillment of this type appeared to have been in eminent jeopardy, since, at the very first, our Lord's weakness must have been apparent and the reason which led to the laying of the Cross upon the Cyrenian might have prevented our Lord's carrying the Cross at all. If the soldiers had put the Cross upon Simon a little earlier, which they might very naturally have done, then the prophecy had not been fulfilled! But God has the minds of men so entirely at His control that even in the *minutest* circumstance, He can order all things so as to complete the smallest jots and tittles of the prophecy! Our Lord was made to be, in all points, an Isaac and, therefore, we see Him going forth bearing the wood of the burnt-offering. Thus you see that it was important that Jesus should, for a while, bear His own Cross.

But it was equally instructive that someone else should be made a partaker of the burden, for it has always been part of the Divine counsel that for the salvation of men from sin, the Lord should be associated with His Church. So far as Atonement is concerned, the Lord has trod the wine-press alone and of the people there was none with Him. But as far as the conversion of the world and its rescue from the power of error and wickedness is concerned, Christ is *not* alone. We are workers together with God. We are to be, in the hands of God, part bearers of the sorrow and travail by which men are to be delivered from the bondage of sin and Satan and brought into the liberty of truth and righteousness. Hence it became important that in the *bearing* of the Cross, though not in the death upon it, there should be yoked with Christ one who would follow closely behind Him.

To bear the Cross after Jesus is the office of the faithful. Simon the Cyrenian is the representative of the whole Church of God and of each Believer in particular. Often had Jesus said, "Except a man take up his cross daily and follow Me, he cannot be My disciple." And now, at last, He embodies that sermon in an actual person. The disciple must be as his Master—he that would follow the Crucified, must himself bear the cross—this we see visibly set forth in Simon of Cyrene with the Cross of Jesus laid upon his shoulder—

***"Shall Simon bear the Cross alone,
And all the rest go free?
No, there's a cross for everyone,
And there's a cross for me."***

The lesson for each one of us is to take up our Lord's Cross, without delay, and go with Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach.

That many among this vast and mixed congregation may imitate Simon is the anxious desire of my heart! With holy expectancy I gaze upon this throng collected from all parts of the earth and I long to find in it some who will take my Lord's yoke upon them this day.

I. I will begin with this first remark, that UNEXPECTED PERSONS ARE OFTEN CALLED TO CROSS-BEARING. Like Simon, they are pressed into the service of Christ. Our text says—"They compelled one Simon, a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear His Cross." Simon did not volunteer, but was forced into this work of cross-bearing. It would seem, from another Evangelist, that he speedily yielded to the command and lifted the burden heartily, but at first he was compelled. A rude authority was exercised by the guard who, being upon the Governor's business, acted with high-handed rigor and forced whomever they pleased to do their bidding. By the exercise of such irresponsible power, they compelled a passing stranger to carry Christ's Cross. It was especially singular that the man to have this honor was not Peter, nor James, nor John, nor any one of the many who had, for years, listened to the Redeemer's words, but it was a stranger from Northern Africa who had been, in no way connected with the life or teachings of Jesus of Nazareth.

Notice, first, that *he was an unknown man*. He was spoken of as, "one Simon." Simon was a very common name among the Jews, almost as common as John in our own country. This man was just, "one Simon"—

an individual who need not be further described. But the Providence of God had determined that this obscure individual; this certain man—or I might better say, this *uncertain* man—should be selected to the high office of Cross-bearer to the Son of God! I have an impression upon my mind that there is, “one Simon” here, this morning, who has to bear Christ’s Cross from this time forward. I feel persuaded that I am right. That person is so far unknown that most probably he does not recognize a single individual in all this throng and neither does anybody in this assembly know anything of him. Certainly the preacher does not. He is one John, one Thomas, or one William, or perhaps, in the feminine, she is one Mary, one Jane, one Maggie. Friend, nobody knows you except our Father who is in Heaven—and He has appointed you to have fellowship with His Son! I shall roughly describe you as, “one Simon,” and leave the Holy Spirit to bring you into your place and service.

But this “one Simon” was a very particular “*one* Simon.” I lay the emphasis where there might seem to be no need of any—he was one whom God knew, chose, loved and set apart for this special service. In a congregation like the present, there may be somebody whom our God intends to use for His Gory during the rest of his life. That person sits in the pew and listens to what I am saying and, perhaps, as yet he does not begin to inquire whether he is that, “one Simon,” that one person. And yet it is so and, before this sermon is ended, he *shall* know that the call to bear the Cross is for him. Many more unlikely things than this have happened in this house of prayer. I pray that many a man may go out from this house a different man from the man he was when he entered it an hour ago. That man Saul, that great persecutor of the Church, became such a mighty preacher of the Gospel that people exclaimed with wonder, “There is a strange alteration in this man.” “Why,” said one, “when I knew him, he was a Pharisee of the Pharisees! He was as bigoted a man as ever wore a phylactery and he hated Christ and Christians so intensely that he could never persecute the Church sufficiently.”

“Yes,” replied another, “it was so, but he has had a strange twist. They say that he was going down to Damascus to hunt out the disciples and something happened. We do not know exactly what it was, but evidently it gave him such a turn that he has never been himself since. In fact, he seems turned altogether upside down and the current of his life is evidently reversed—he lives enthusiastically for that faith which once he destroyed.” This speedy change happened to “one Saul of Tarsus.” There were plenty of Sauls in Israel, but upon this *one* Saul, electing Love had looked in the counsels of eternity and for that Saul, redeeming Love had shed its heart’s blood! And in that Saul, effectual Grace worked mightily Is there another Saul here, today? The Lord grant that he may now cease to kick against the pricks and may we soon hear of him, “Behold, he prays.”

I feel convinced the counterpart of that “one Simon” is in this house at this moment. And my prayer goes up to God—and I hope it is attended with the prayers of many thousands, besides—that he may, at once, submit to the Lord Jesus.

It did not seem likely that Simon should bear the Cross of Christ, for *he was a stranger who had newly come up from the country*. He probably

knew little or nothing of what had been taking place in Jerusalem, for he had come from another continent. He was “one Simon, a Cyrenian” and I suppose that Cyrene could not have been less than 800 miles from Jerusalem. It was situated in what is now called Tripoli, in Northern Africa, in which place a colony of Jews had been formed long before. Very likely he had come in a Roman galley from Alexandria to Joppa and there had been rowed through the surf and landed in time to reach Jerusalem for the Passover. He had long wanted to come to Jerusalem. He had heard of the fame of the Temple and of the city of his fathers—and he had longed to see the great Assembly of the tribes and the solemn Paschal feast. He had traveled all those miles and had hardly yet got the motion of the ship out of his brain—it had never entered into his head that he should be impressed by the Roman guard and made to assist at an execution! It was a singular Providence that he should come into the city at the moment of the turmoil about Jesus and should have crossed the street just as the sad procession started on its way to Golgotha.

He passed by neither too soon nor too late! He was on the spot as punctually as if he had made an appointment to be there and yet, as men speak, it was all by mere chance. I cannot tell how many Providences had worked together to bring him there in the nick of time, but so the Lord would have it and so it came about! He, a man there in Cyrene, in Northern Africa, must, at a certain date, at the tick of the clock, be at Jerusalem in order that *he* might help to carry the Cross up to Mount Calvary—and *He was there!*

Ah, my dear Friend, I do not know what Providences have been at work to bring you, here, today—perhaps very strange ones. If a little something had occurred you had not taken this journey. It only needed a small dust to turn the scale and you would have been hundreds of miles from this spot, in quite another scene from this. Why you are here, you do not yet know, except that you have come to listen to the preacher and join the throng. But God knows why He has brought you here! I trust it will be read in the annals of the future—

***“Thus the eternal mandate ran,
Almighty Grace, arrest that man!”***

God has brought you here, that on this spot, by the preaching of the Gospel, you may be compelled to bear the Cross of Jesus. I pray it may be so. “One Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country,” is here after a long journey, and this day he will begin to live a higher and a better life!

Further, notice, *Simon had come for another purpose*. He had journeyed to Jerusalem with no thought of bearing the Cross of Jesus. Simon was probably a Jew far removed from the land of his fathers and he had made a pilgrimage to the Holy City to keep the Passover. Every Jew loved to be present at Jerusalem at the Paschal feast. So, to put it roughly, it was holiday-time—it was a time for making an excursion to the capital—it was a season for making a journey and going up to the great city which was “beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth.” Simon, from far-off Cyrene, must, by all means, keep the feast at Jerusalem. Maybe he had saved his money for months, that he might pay his fare to Joppa and he had counted down the gold freely for the joy which he had in going to the City of David and the Temple of his God.

He came for the Passover and for that only. And he would be perfectly satisfied to go home when once the feast was over and once he had partaken of the lamb with the tribes of Israel. Then he could say throughout the rest of his life, "I, too, was once at the great feast of our people, when we commemorated the coming up out of Egypt." Brothers and Sisters, we propose one way, but God has other propositions! We say, "I will step in and hear the preacher," but God means that the arrows of His Grace shall stick fast in our hearts! Many and many a time, with no desire for Grace, men have listened to the Gospel and the Lord has been found of them that sought Him not. I heard of one who cared little for the sermon till the preacher chanced to use that word, "eternity," and the hearer was taken prisoner by holy thoughts and led to the Savior's feet.

Men have even stepped into places of worship with evil designs and yet the purpose of Grace has been accomplished! They came to scoff, but they remained to pray! Some have been cast, by the Providence of God, into positions where they have met with Christian men and a word of admonition has been blessed to them. A lady was, one day, at an evening party and there met with Caesar Malan, the famous Divine of Geneva, who, in his usual manner, enquired of her whether she was a Christian. She was startled, surprised, vexed and made a short reply to the effect that it was not a question she cared to discuss. Whereupon, Mr. Malan replied, with great sweetness, that he would not persist in *speaking* of it, but he would pray that she might be led to give her heart to Christ and become a useful worker for Him. Within a fortnight she met the minister, again, and asked him how she must come to Jesus. Mr. Malan's reply was, "Come to Him just as you are." That lady gave herself up to Jesus—it was Charlotte Elliott, to whom we owe that precious hymn—

***"Just as I am—without one plea
But that Your blood was shed for me
And that You bid me come to You—
O Lamb of God, I come."***

It was a blessed thing for her, that she was at that party, and that the servant of God from Geneva should have been there and should have spoken to her so faithfully! Oh for many a repetition of the story "of one Simon, a Cyrenian," coming, not with the intent to bear the Cross, but with quite another mind and yet, being enlisted in the cross-bearing army of the Lord Jesus!

I would have you notice, once more, that this man was, at this particular time, not thinking upon the subject at all, for *he was, at that time, merely passing by*. He had come up to Jerusalem and whatever occupied his mind, he does not appear to have taken any notice of the trial of Jesus, or of the sad end of it. It is expressly said that he "passed by." He was not even sufficiently interested in the matter to stand in the crowd and look at the mournful procession. Women were weeping there right bitterly—the daughters of Jerusalem to whom the Master said, "Weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children." But this man passed by! He was anxious to hurry away from so unpleasant a sight and to get up to the Temple. He was quietly making his way through the crowd, eager to go about his business, and he must have been greatly surprised and distressed when a rough hand was laid upon him—and a stern voice

said, "Shoulder that Cross." There was no resisting a Roman centurion when he gave a command—and so the countryman meekly submitted, wishing, no doubt, that he were back in Cyrene tilling the ground.

He must necessarily stoop his shoulder and take up a new burden and tread in the footsteps of the mysterious Person to whom the Cross belonged. He was only passing by and yet he was enlisted and commanded by the Romans and, as I take it, commanded by the Grace of God for life—for whereas Mark says he was the father of Alexander and Rufus—it would seem that his sons were well known to the Christian people to whom Mark was writing. If his son was the same Rufus that Paul mentions, then he calls her, "his mother and mine." And so, it would seem that Simon's wife and his sons became Believers and partakers of the sufferings of Christ. His contact with the Lord, in that strange compulsory way, probably worked out for him another and more spiritual contact which made him a true cross-bearer. O you that pass by this day, draw near to Jesus! I have no wish to call your attention to myself—far from it—but I do ask your attention to my Lord! Though you only intended to slip into this tabernacle and slip out again, I pray that you may be arrested by a call from my Lord!

I speak as my Lord's servant and I would constrain you to come to Him. Stand where you are, a while, and let me beg you to yield to His love which even now would cast the bands of a man around you. I would compel you, by my Lord's authority, to take up His Cross and bear it after Him. It would be strange, you say. Yes, so it might be, but it would be a glorious event! I remember Mr. Knill, speaking of his own conversion, used an expression which I should like to use concerning one of you. Here it is—"It was just a quarter past twelve, August 2nd, when twang went every harp in Paradise, for a sinner had repented!" May it be so with you! Oh that every harp in Paradise may now ring out the high praises of Sovereign Grace as you now yield yourself to the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls! May that Divine impression which is imaged in the text by the compulsion of the Roman soldier take place in your case at this very moment! And may it be seen, in your instance, that unexpected persons are often called to be cross-bearers!

II. My second observation is—CROSS-BEARING CAN STILL BE PRACTICED. Very briefly let me tell you in what ways the Cross can still be carried. First, and chiefly, *by your becoming a Christian*. If the Cross shall take you up, you will take up the Cross! Christ will be your hope! His death your trust, Himself the object of your love. You never truly become a cross-bearer till you lay your burdens down at His feet who bore the Cross and curse for you.

Next, you become a cross-bearer *when you make an open acknowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ*. Do not deceive yourselves—this is expected of each one of you if you are to be saved. The promise, as I read it in the New Testament, is not to the Believer alone, but to the Believer *who confesses his faith*. "He that with his heart believes and with his mouth makes confession of Him shall be saved." He says, "He that confesses Me before men, him will I confess before My Father; but he that denies Me"—and from the connection it should seem to mean, he that does not confess Me—"him

will I deny before My Father which is in Heaven.” To quote the Inspired Scripture, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” There should be, there *must* be the open acknowledgement, in Christ’s own way, of the secret faith which you have in Him. Now this is often a cross. Many people would like to go to Heaven by an underground railway—secrecy suits them. They do not want to cross the channel—the sea is too rough. But when there is a tunnel made, they will go to the fair country. My good people, you are cowardly and I must quote you a text which ought to sting your cowardice out of you—“But the fearful and unbelieving shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone.” I say no more and make no personal applications, but, I beseech you, run no risks! Be afraid to be afraid! Be ashamed of being ashamed of Christ! Shame on that man who counts it any shame to say before assembled angels, men and devils, “I am a follower of Christ.” May you who have, up to now, been secret followers of the Crucified Lord become manifest cross-bearers! Do you not even now cry out, “Set down my name, Sir”?

Further, some have to take up their cross by *commencing Christian work*. You live in a village where there is no Gospel preaching—preach, yourself! You are in a backwoods town where the preaching is very far from being such as God approves—begin to preach the Truth of God, yourself! “Alas,” you say, “I would make a fool of myself.” Are you ashamed to be a fool for Christ? “Oh, but I would break down.” Break down—it will do you good and, perhaps, you may break somebody else down. There is no better preaching in the world than that of a man who breaks down under a sense of unworthiness—if that breakdown communicates itself to other people, it may begin a revival! If you are choked by your earnestness, others may become earnest, too. Do you still murmur, “But I would get the ill-will of everybody”? For Christ’s sake, could you not bear that? When the good monk said to Martin Luther, “Go home to your cell and keep quiet,” why did Martin not take the advice? Why, indeed? “It is very bad for young people to be so forward! You will do a great deal of mischief, therefore be quiet, Martin. Who are you to interfere with the great authorities? Be holy for yourself and don’t trouble others. If you stir up a reformation, thousands of good people will be burnt through you. Do be quiet.”

Bless God, Martin did not go home and was not quiet, but went about His Master’s business and raised Heaven and earth by his brave witness-bearing! Where are you, Martin, this morning? I pray God to call you out and, as you have confessed His name and are His servant, I pray that He may make you bear public testimony for Him and proclaim the saving power of the Savior’s precious blood! Come, Simon, I see you shrink, but the Cross has to be carried, therefore bow your back! It is only a wooden Cross, after all, and not an iron one. You can bear it! You must bear it! God help you!

Perhaps, too, some Brother may have to take up his cross by *bearing witness against the rampant sin which surrounds him*. “Leave all those dirty matters alone. Do not say a word about them. Let the people go to the devil, or else you will soil your white kid gloves.” Sirs, we will spoil our hands as well as our gloves, and we will risk our characters, if necessary,

but we will put down the devilry which now defiles London! Truly the flesh shrinks and the purest part of our manhood shrinks with it when we are compelled to bear open protest against sins which are done of men in secret. But, Simon, the Master may yet compel you to bear His Cross in this respect, and if so, He will give you both courage and wisdom—and your labor shall not be in vain in the Lord.

Sometimes, however, the cross-bearing is of another and more quiet kind and may be described as *submission to Providence*. A young friend is saying, “For me, to live at home I know to be my duty, but father is unkind and the family generally imposes upon me. I wish I could get away.” Ah, dear Sister, you must bear Christ’s Cross and it may be the Lord would have you remain at home. Therefore bear the Cross! A servant is saying, “I would like to be in a Christian family. I do not think I can stay where I am.” Perhaps, good Sister, the Lord has put you where you are to be a light in a dark place. All the lamps should not be in one street, or what will become of the courts and alleys? It is often the duty of a Christian man to say, “I shall stay where I am and fight this matter through. I mean, by character and example, with kindness and courtesy and love, to win this place for Jesus.” Of course the easy way is to turn monk and live quietly in a cloister—and serve God by doing nothing—or to turn nun and dwell in a convent and expect to win the battle of life by running out of it!

Is not this *absurd*? If you shut yourself away from this poor world, what is to become of it? You men and women that are Christians must stand up and stand out for Jesus where the Providence of God has cast you! If your calling is not a sinful one and if the temptations around you are not too great for you, you must “hold the fort” and never dream of surrender! If your lot is hard, look upon it as Christ’s Cross and bow your back to the load. Your shoulder may be raw, at first, but you will grow stronger before long, for as your day, your strength shall be. “It is good for a man that he bears the yoke in his youth.” But it is good for a man to bear the Cross in his old age as well as in his youth! In fact, we ought never to be rid of so blessed a burden. What wings are to a bird and sails to a ship, the Cross becomes to a man’s spirit when he fully consents to accept it as his life’s beloved load. Truly did Jesus say, “My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” Now, Simon, where are you? Shoulder the Cross, man, in the name of God!

III. Thirdly, TO CROSS-BEARING, THERE ARE NOBLE COMPULSIONS. Simon’s compulsion was the rough hand of the Roman legionary and the gruff voice in the Latin tongue, “Shoulder that Cross.” But we hear gentler voices which compel us, this day, to take up Christ’s Cross.

The first compulsion is this—“*the love of Christ constrains us.*” He has done all this for you and, therefore, by sweet but irresistible compulsion, you are made to render Him some return of love. Does not Jesus appear to you in a vision as you sit in this house? Do you not see that thorn-crowned head, that visage crimsoned with the bloody sweat, those hands and feet pierced with the nails? Does He not say to you pointedly, “I did all this for you; what have you done for Me”? Startled in your seat, you cover your face and inwardly reply, “I will answer that question by the rest of my life. I will be first and foremost a servant of Jesus—not a trader, first,

and a Christian, next, but a Christian, first, and a business man afterwards." You, my Sister, must say, "I will live for Christ as a daughter, a wife, or a mother. I will live for my Lord, for He has given Himself for me and I am not my own, but bought with a price."

The true heart will feel a compulsion arising from a second reflection, namely, *the glory of a life spent for God and for His Christ*. What is the life of a man who toils in business, makes money, becomes rich and dies? It winds up with a paragraph in the *Illustrated London News*, declaring that he died worth so much—the wretch was not worth anything, himself—his *estate* had value but *he* had none! Had he been worth anything, he would have sent his money about the world doing good. But as a worthless steward, he laid his Master's stores in heaps to rot. The life of multitudes of men is self-seeking! It is ill for a man to live the life of swine! What a poor creature is the usual ordinary man! But a life spent for Jesus, though it involve cross-bearing, is noble, heroic, sublime! The mere earthworm leads a dunghill life. A life of what is called pleasure is a mean, beggarly business. A life of keeping up respectability is utter slavery—as well be a horse in a pug-mill! A life wholly consecrated to Christ and His Cross is life, indeed—it is akin to the life of angels—yes, higher still, it is the life of God within the soul of man! O you that have a spark of true nobility, seek to live lives worth living, worth remembering, worthy to be the commencement of eternal life before the Throne of God!

Some of you ought to feel the Cross coming upon your shoulders, this morning, when you think of *the needs of those among whom you live*. They are dying, perishing for lack of knowledge! Rich and poor, alike, ignorant of Christ! Multitudes of them wrapped up in self-righteousness! They are perishing and those who ought to warn them are often dumb dogs that cannot bark! Do you not feel that you ought to deliver the sheep from the wolf? Have you no heart of compassion? Are your hearts turned to steel? I am sure you cannot deny that the times demand of you earnest and forceful lives. No Christian man can now sit still without incurring awful guilt. Whether you live in London or in any other great town amidst reeking sin, or dwell in the country amidst the dense darkness which broods over many rural districts, you are under bonds to be up and doing! It may be a cross to you, but for Jesus' sake you must lift it up and never lay it down till the Lord calls you Home!

Some of you should bear the Cross of Christ *because the cause of Christ is at a discount where you dwell*. I delight in a man in whom the lordlier chivalry has found a congenial home. He loves to espouse the cause of the Truth of God in the cloudy and dark day. He never counts heads, but weighs arguments. When he settles down in a town, he never enquires, "Where is the most *respectable* congregation? Where shall I meet with those who will advantage me in business?" No, he studies his conscience rather than his convenience. He hears one say, "There is a Nonconformist Chapel, but it is down a back street. There is a Baptist Church, but the members are nearly all poor and no gentlefolk are among them. Even the Evangelical Church is down at the heel—the best families attend the high church." I say he hears this and his heart is sick of such talk! He will go where the Gospel is preached and nowhere else! Fine architecture has

scant charms for him—and grand music is no part of his religion! If these are substitutes for the Gospel, he abhors them. It is meanness, itself, for a man to forsake the Truth of God for the sake of respectability!

Multitudes who ought to be found maintaining the good old cause are recreant to their convictions if, indeed, they ever had any! For this cause the true man resolves to stick to the Truth of God through thick and thin and not to forsake it because its adherents are poor and despised. If ever we might temporize, that time is past and gone. I warn yonder man, this morning, who has long been a Christian but has concealed half his Christianity in order to be thought respectable, or to escape the penalties of faithfulness! Come out from those with whom you are numbered, but with whom you are not united in heart! Be brave enough to defend a good cause against all comers, for the day shall come when he shall have honor for his reward who accepted dishonor that he might be true to his God, his Bible and his conscience. Blessed is he that can be loyal to his Lord, cost him what it may—loyal, even, in those matters which traitors call little things. We would compel that Simon, the Cyrenian, this day, to bear the Cross because there are so few to bear it in these degenerate days.

Besides, I may say to some of you, you ought to bear the Cross because you know you are not satisfied—*your hearts are not at rest*. You have prospered in worldly things, but you are not happy. You have good health, but you are not happy. You have loving friends, but you are not happy. There is but one way of getting rest to the heart and that is to come to Jesus! These are His Words—“Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” If, after this, you need a further rest for other and higher longings, then you must come, again, to the same Savior and hearken to His next Words—“Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” Some of you professors have not yet found perfect rest and the reason is because you have looked to the Cross for pardon, but you have never taken to cross-bearing as an occupation. You are hoping *in* Christ but not living *for* Christ! The finding of rest unto your soul will come to you in having something to do or to bear for Jesus. “Take My yoke upon you: and you shall find rest unto your souls.” There are many ways, then, of bearing the Cross for Christ, and there are many reasons why some here present should begin, at once, to carry the load.

IV. To close, bear with me a minute or two while I say that CROSS-BEARING IS A BLESSED OCCUPATION. I feel sure that Simon found it so. Let me mention certain blessings which must have attended the special service of Simon. First, *it brought him into Christ's company*. When they compelled him to bear His Cross, he was brought close to Jesus. If it had not been for that command, he might have gone his way, or might have been lost in the crowd. But now he is in the inner circle, near to Jesus! For the first time in his life, he saw that blessed form and, as he saw it, I believe his heart was enamored with it. As they lifted the Cross on his shoulders, he looked at that sacred Person and saw a crown of thorns about His brow. And as he looked at his fellow sufferer, he saw all down

His cheeks the marks of bloody sweat and black and blue bruises from cruel hands. As for those eyes, they looked him through and through!

That face, that matchless face, he had never seen its like. Majesty was therein blended with misery; innocence with agony and love with sorrow. He had never seen that Countenance so well, nor marked the whole form of the Son of Man so clearly if he had not been called to bear that Cross! It is wonderful how much we see of Jesus when we suffer or labor for Him. Believing Souls, I pray that this day you may be so impressed into my Lord's service that you may have nearer and dearer fellowship with Him than in the past! If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine. They see Jesus best who carry His Cross most.

Besides, *the Cross held Simon in Christ's steps*. Do you catch it? If Jesus carried the front part of the Cross and Simon followed behind, he was sure to put his feet down just where the Master's feet had been before. The Cross is a wonderful implement for keeping us in the way of our Lord. As I was turning this subject over, I was thinking how often I had felt a conscious contact between myself and my Lord when I have had to bear reproach for His sake—and how, at the same time, I have been led to watch my steps more carefully because of that very reproach! Brothers and Sisters, we do not want to slip from under the Cross. If we did, we might slip away from our Lord and from holy walking. If we can keep our shoulder beneath that sacred load and see our Lord a little ahead of us, we shall be making the surest progress! This being near to Jesus is a blessed privilege which is cheaply purchased at the price of cross-bearing! If you would see Jesus, bestir yourselves to work for Him! Boldly acknowledge Him! Cheerfully suffer for Him and then you shall see Him—and then you shall learn to follow Him, step by step! O blessed Cross which holds us to Jesus and to His ways!

Then Simon had this honor, that *He was linked with Christ's work*. He could not put away sin, but he could assist weakness. Simon did not die on the Cross to make expiation, but he did live *under* the Cross to aid in the accomplishment of the Divine Purpose. You and I cannot interfere with Jesus in His passion, but we can share with Him in His commission. We cannot purchase liberty for the enslaved, but we can tell them of their emancipation. To have a finger in Christ's work is glory! I invite the man that seeks honor and immortality, to seek it thus. To have a share in the Redeemer's work is a more attractive thing than all the pomp and glitter of this world and the kingdoms thereof. Where are the men of heavenly mind who will covet to be joined unto the Lord in this ministry? Let them step out and say, "Jesus, I, my cross have taken. From now on I will follow You. Come life or death, I will carry Your Cross till You shall give me the crown."

While Simon was carrying the Cross through the crowd, I doubt not that the rough soldiery would deal him many a kick or buffet—but I feel equally sure that the dear Master sometimes stole a glance at him. *Simon enjoyed Christ's smile*. I know the Lord so well that I feel sure He must have done so—He would not forget the man who was His partner for the while. And oh, that look! How Simon must have treasured up the remembrance of it! "I never carried a load that was so light," he says, "as that

which I carried that morning, for when the Blessed One smiled at me amidst His woes, I felt myself to be strong as Hercules.” Alexander, his first-born, and that red-headed lad, Rufus, when they grew up, both felt it to be the honor of the family that their father carried the Cross after Jesus. Rufus and Alexander had a patent of nobility in being the sons of such a man! Mark recorded the fact that Simon carried the Cross and that such-and-such persons were his sons. I think when the old man came to lie upon his deathbed, he said, “My hope is in Him whose Cross I carried. Blessed burden! Lay me down in my grave. This body of mine cannot perish, for it bore the Cross which Jesus carried and which carried *Him*. I shall rise, again, to see Him in His Glory, for His Cross has pressed me and His love will surely raise me.”

Happy are we if we can, while yet we live, be co-workers together with Him, that when He comes in His Kingdom, we may be partakers of His Glory! “Blessed is the man that endures temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to them that love Him.” God bless you and especially you who have come out of the country. God bless you. Amen and amen!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Mark 15:1-38*.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—122, 670, 660.**

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THE DETERMINATION OF CHRIST TO SUFFER FOR HIS PEOPLE NO. 2443

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, DECEMBER 15, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

*“And they gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but He received it not.”
Mark 15:23.*

OUR Savior, before He was nailed to the Cross, and on the Cross, several times had drinks of different sorts offered to Him. While they were nailing Him to the Cross, they endeavored to make Him drink wine, or vinegar as it is called, mingled with gall. But when He had tasted of it—He *did* taste it—He would not drink it. When He was on the Cross, the soldiers, mocking Him, offered Him vinegar, or their weak drink of which they ordinarily partook, pledging Him in their cups with scorn. And once more, when He said, “I thirst,” they took a sponge filled with vinegar, dipped it in hyssop and put it to His lips.

This occasion of offering the wine mingled with myrrh is, I believe, different from all the rest. This wine mingled with myrrh was given to Him as an *act of mercy*. Matthew Henry seems to think that it was prepared by those holy women who were known to attend to the necessities of our Lord. They had followed Him in all His footsteps wherever He went. It was by their bounty that the bag which Judas kept was generally as full as it was required to be, so that out of the store they could go and buy food for their Master and for His disciples. It was these holy women who prepared the spices to embalm Him at His burial. And Matthew Henry thinks that these women, prompted by their compassion for Him, prepared this cup of wine mingled with myrrh that He might be strengthened for His miseries, and that those miseries might, in some degree—be alleviated by the partial stupefaction which a strong draught of wine and myrrh would give Him.

This time our Savior positively declined the cup—“He received it not.” The wormwood He tasted, but this He received not at all. He would have nothing to do with it. Why? The answer is not to be found in our Savior's abstemiousness, for He was not abstemious—He was never self-indulgent, but He certainly was never abstemious. He was “the Son of Man” who “came eating and drinking.” He felt no repugnance to wine—He, Himself, made it, He Himself drank it. He even earned for Himself the name—“a gluttonous Man and a winebibber”—not deservedly, but because, in contrast to John, who abstemiously refrained from ordinary food, Jesus Christ sat down with publicans and sinners, feasted with the feasters and ate and drank like other men.

Nor do I think the reason is to be found in any love of pain that Christ had, nor in any heartless bravado which would lead Him to say, "I will suffer and I will put the cup away from Me." Far be that from Christ! He never thrust Himself in the way of suffering when it was unnecessary. He did not go to give Himself up into the hands of His enemies before His hour was come. He avoided persecution when the avoidance of the persecution would not be an injury to His cause. He withdrew out of Judea and would not walk in that land because of Herod, who sought to slay Him. I believe that if our Savior had not been the atoning Sacrifice—if His sufferings had been merely those of a martyr—He would have quaffed to the very dregs the cup that was offered Him and would not have left any of it! The reason why He refused the cup, I think, is to be found in another thing altogether.

There is a glorious idea couched in the fact that the Savior put the myrrhed wine cup entirely away from His lips. On the heights of Heaven, the Son of God stood of old, and He looked down and measured how far it was to the utmost depths of misery. He cast up the sum total of all the agonies which a man must endure to descend to the utmost depths of pain and misery. He determined that to be a faithful High Priest and, also, to be a *suffering* One, He would go the whole way, from the highest to the lowest, "from the highest throne in Glory to the Cross of deepest woe." This myrrhed cup would have stopped Him within a little of the utmost limit of misery and, therefore, He said, "I will not stop half-way, but I will go all the way. And if this cup can mitigate My sorrow, that is just the reason why I will not drink it, for I have determined that to the utmost lengths of misery I will go, that I will do, and bear, and suffer all that Incarnate God can bear for My people, in My own mortal body."

Now, Beloved, it is this fact that I wish to bring out before you—the fact that Jesus Christ came into the world to suffer—and that because the myrrhed cup would have prevented Him from reaching the lowest step of misery, "He received it not." I shall have to show you, first, that this was very frequently the case throughout His life—that He would not take a step which would have diminished His miseries because *He was determined to go the whole length of suffering*. Secondly, I shall try to show you *the reason for this determination*. Then, thirdly, I shall close up by speaking of *the lesson that we may learn from it*.

I. OUR SAVIOR WOULD GO THE WHOLE LENGTH OF MISERY—He would suffer in every respect like as we suffer. He would bear the whole of the tortures of Atonement without even the slightest shadow of mitigation or alleviation. Now, I think I can show you that on many occasions in Christ's life He determined to be tempted in every point in which men are tempted and to be tempted to the utmost limit of the power of temptation. Nor would He accept anything which would have limited the force of the temptation upon man. I will give you some proofs of this.

First, *Christ knew that you and I would be exposed to peril*. He, therefore, determined that He would be exposed to peril, too, and that He would not by any means, when it was in His power, escape from the peril. Let me show Him to you high up there, on the pinnacle of the Tem-

ple. There stands our Master and a fiend by His side, on a giddy eminence, with but little beneath His feet. He stands poised aloft. He looks down the hill on which the Temple is built into the depths below—and the enemy says, “Cast Yourself down, commit Yourself to the care of the angels.” It was like this myrrhed cup—“Do not stand in this peril, cast Yourself upon that promise and risk Yourself upon the angels’ wings, for they shall bear You up in their hands, lest You dash Your foot against a stone.” But like as He would not receive this cup, so neither would He receive this deliverance from His peril! So there He stood erect, confident in His God, not using the means of deliverance which the tempter wished Him to exercise, even as He would not drink this cup!

Take another case—*Jesus Christ knew that many of His people would have to suffer bodily needs, poverty and woe.* He therefore hungered. After forty days’ fast, when He might have delivered Himself from His hunger by turning stones into bread, one would have said, “It would have been a very innocent act to turn stones into bread and feed Himself.” But, “No,” says Christ to the gnawing pangs of hunger, “I will let you go as far as you can. I will not turn these stones into bread. I will let hunger exercise all its power upon Me. I will let My body be gnawed by its fierce teeth! I will not mitigate its misery.” He would not receive that wine mingled with myrrh that the devil offered Him in the wilderness when he tempted Him to make the stones into bread—He would not take the lessening of His misery!

I will tell you another instance. Many men have attempted to have their lives cut short because they have so much misery and no more hope of being happy. They, therefore, have wished for death. They have wished that they might be as the untimely birth, that they might be forever shut up in the bowels of the earth. *They have longed for death and desired it*—and if an opportunity had cast itself in their way in which they might have died with honor, without having the disgrace of suicide—how many would have accepted the alternative of death! Here is our Savior in the same condition, for He is dragged to the brow of the hill of Nazareth. O Son of Man, Your wisest choice is to be dashed down the sides of the hill on which the city is built! If You are wise, You will let them hurl You headlong—that would be an end of all Your misery, for there are years before You through which You will be roasted at the slow fire of persecution! And afterwards You will have to pass through floods of deepest misery! Do you not think the temptation started up in His mind, “Let Yourself be cast down”? He knew all about it. Had He been cast down, He would have died an honorable death like the death of a Prophet slain in his own country—but no, “passing through the midst of them, He went His way,” because, as He refused the wine cup, so He refused a hasty death which would have delivered Him from His miseries.

Do you not observe that I have only just given you specimens? You will find that *all through the Savior’s life it was just the same.* You will not find Him in one instance working a miracle to lessen His own bodily fatigue, or to alleviate His own bodily needs and necessities, but always letting the ills of this life wreak themselves upon Him with all their fury! He

hushed the winds, once, but it was for His disciples, not for Himself. He lay asleep in the boat and let the waves toss Him up and down as much as they pleased! He multiplied the loaves and fishes, but it was for the multitude, not for Himself. He could find money in a fish's mouth, but it was to pay the tribute, not for Himself. He could scatter mercies wherever He went—open men's eyes, and deliver many of them from pains—but He never exercised any of His skill upon Himself. If the wind blew, He let it spend itself upon His cheeks and crack them. If the cold was bitter, He let the cold come round Him as it did in the Garden of Gethsemane. If journeying was troublesome, He journeyed where He might have traveled as His Father did—as old Thomas Sternhold says in his fine translation of the Psalms—

***“The Lord descended from above,
And bowed the heavens most high,
And underneath His feet He cast
The darkness of the sky.
On cherub and on cherubim
Full royally He rode,
And on the wings of mighty winds
Came flying all abroad.”***

So might Jesus, if He pleased, but He journeyed on in weariness. He might have made the water leap out of the well to His hands, but there He sat and thirsted, while He had power to make fountains gush even from the stone on which He sat! On the Cross, “I thirst,” was His cry and yet, if He pleased, He might have opened in Himself rivers of living water—He had them for others, but He had none for Himself. You will observe this fact that in all the history of Christ, never once did He take anything which could have lessened His miseries—He went the whole length—and as on this occasion He refused the wine drugged with myrrh and, so never did He receive anything that had a tendency to prevent Him from going to the requisite lengths of suffering.

II. Now let me show you THE REASON FOR THIS. Was it out of any love to suffering that He thus refused the wine cup? Ah, no, Christ had no *love* of suffering. He had a love of *souls*, but like we, He turned away from suffering. He never *loved* it. We see He did not, for even in the garden He said, “Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.” It was His *Human Nature* struggling against suffering, as human nature rightfully does—God has made us so that we do not naturally love suffering—and it is not wrong for us to feel some repugnance to it, for God has implanted that repugnance in us. Christ did not suffer because He loved suffering. Why, then, did He suffer? For two reasons—because this suffering to the utmost was necessary to the completion of the Atonement, which saves to the utmost, and because this suffering to the utmost was necessary to perfect His Character as “a merciful High Priest” who has to care for souls that have gone to the utmost of miseries themselves—that He might know how to succor them that are tempted.

First, I say it *was necessary to make the Atonement complete*. I think that if our Savior had drunk this myrrhed cup, the Atonement would not have been valid. It strikes me that if He had drunk this wine mingled with myrrh, He could not have suffered to the extent that was absolutely

necessary. We believe Christ did, on the Cross, suffer just enough, and not one particle more than was necessary for the redemption of His people. If, then, this wine cup had taken away a part of His sufferings, the ransom price would not have been fully complete—it would not have been fully paid. And if it had but taken away so much as a grain, the Atonement would not have been sufficiently satisfactory. If a man's ransom is to be paid, it must be *all* paid, for though but one single farthing is left unpaid, the man is not fully redeemed and he is not yet totally free. If, then, this drinking of the wine cup had taken out the smallest amount from that fearful price of agony which our Savior paid, the Atonement would have been insufficient only to a degree, but even insufficiency to a degree, however small, would have been enough to have caused perpetual despair, yes, enough to have shut the gates of Heaven against all Believers! The utmost farthing must be paid! Relentless Justice has never yet omitted so much as a fraction of its claim! Nor would it, in this case, have relented in any measure—Christ must pay it all! The wine cup would have prevented His doing that, therefore He would suffer and go the whole length of suffering! He would not stop, but would go through it all.

Again, I say it was *that He might be made a compassionate High Priest*. Someone might have said, "When my Master died, He did not suffer much. He suffered somewhat, but the wine cup prevented much suffering. I dare not touch the wine cup—at least, I dare not take it so as to alleviate my sufferings at all—then I must suffer more than He, for that drugged wine I must not drink. Surely, then, my Master cannot sympathize with *me*, if I, for conscientious motives, bear suffering without accepting alleviations which some think are wrong." "No," said the Master, "no, you shall never say that! If you have to suffer without a comfort, I will let you know that I suffered without a comfort, too." You say, "Oh, if I had some myrrh given me which could mitigate my woe, it would all be well!" "Ah," says the Savior, "but I have had it offered to Me and I will not drink it in order that you may see that I suffered woe without the comfort, without the cordial, without the consolation which you think would enable you to endure it."

O blessed Lord Jesus, You were "tempted in all points like as we are"! Blessed be Your name! This myrrh cup could have put a plate of steel upon Your breast! It would have blunted many darts of suffering and, therefore, You put it aside that You might, naked, suffer every shaft to find its target in Your heart! This myrrh cup would have steeled Your feelings so that You could not be torn by the whips of anguish and, therefore, You would not take its steeling influence, its hardening qualities. You, who did stoop to become a poor, weak worm, "a worm and no man," did bear the agony without making the agony less, or strengthening Your own body to bear it, O blessed High Priest!

Go to Him, you tried and tempted ones! Go to Him and cast your burdens on Him—He can bear them! He has borne burdens heavier than yours! Cast your burden on the Lord, as His shoulders can sustain it! And His shoulders, that have borne trouble without comfort, can bear

your troubles, though they are comfortless ones, too! Do but tell them to your Master and you shall never find a lack of sympathy in Him.

III. And now, what have we to say by way of A LESSON for this short discourse?

When Christ was offered this cup, He would not receive it. Sometimes, Beloved, it is in your power to escape from sufferings for Christ's sake—and you may rightly do so if you can escape from them without injuring the mission upon which your Father has sent you—for as He sent His Son into the world, even so has He sent *you* into the world. You have your mission and there are times when the acceptance of a cordial, or the reception of an escape from peril, would be a degradation to your high dignity, an injury to your office and, therefore, there are times when you should decline even the cup of consolation, itself. You and I are called to hold fellowship with Christ in His sufferings. Perhaps our business places us where we have to hold fellowship with Christ in the suffering of contempt. The finger is pointed at us. The lips are sometimes protruded in derision. Sometimes an expression is used towards us, calling us a hypocrite, a cant, a formalist. You may be apt to think, "Oh, that I could avoid all this! I wish I could escape." Can you avoid it and serve your Master, as well? If you can, then drink the myrrh cup, and avoid the misery! But if you cannot—and if it is *proven* that your position is one of duty and one in which you can honor your Master—it is at your peril that you exchange your situation for an easier one, if you exchange it for one less useful!

"Oh," says one, "I work among wicked men and I have to bear a testimony for the Truth of God in their midst. May I not leave the place at once? I feel that I am doing good, there, but the jeers and taunts are so hard to bear that the good I do seems to be always counterbalanced by the misery I suffer." Take care, take care, lest you let the flesh prevail over the spirit! It would be like a myrrh cup to you, for you to leave your job and go to another! It would be the removal of your pain, but ponder a long time before you do it, weigh it well. If your Maker has put you there, to suffer for His name's sake, come not down from the cross to which He has nailed you by a daily crucifixion till you have suffered all! And take not the myrrh cup of an escape until you have borne all for Christ. I think it was holy Polycarp who, when the soldiers came to him to take him to prison, made his escape. But when he found, afterwards, that his doing so had dispirited some Christians and had been attributed to his cowardice—when next the soldiers presented themselves and he had an opportunity to escape, "No," he said, "let me die." It had been foolhardy of him if he had run into the teeth of men, the first time, in order to be put to death. But when he saw that he would serve His Master better by His death than by His life, it would have been an unrighteous thing if He had drunk of the wine cup—if he had made his escape and not died for his Master's sake.

O my Brothers and Sisters, I think that there are many cordials which the world, too, has to offer to the Christian which he must not drink because if his Master wishes him to have fellowship with Him in His suffer-

ing, it is his to suffer so far as his Master wills! You are, perhaps, a man or a woman of a sorrowful spirit. You are given to solitude and loneliness. There are certain amusements which some men say are harmless—they tell you that they are meant for you and ask you to go and take them. You think, “Well, in my low state, surely I might take these things. If I were happy and joyous, I should not need them, but surely my Father, ‘like as a father pities his children,’ will pity me. And if I do these things, I do them merely for *temporary* comfort, for my heart seems as though it would break if I had not this little temporary excitement.”

Take care, take care that it is not the wine cup that prevents you, my Friends! If your Master gives you the wine cup, the golden wine cup filled with the precious wine of the Covenant, the strong promises and sweet fellowship in Christ, drink it without a moment’s hesitation! Drink it and be glad, for God has said, “Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish,” and this is the strong drink He gives to you in the golden wine cup of the Savior’s fellowship. Drink it and be happy! But if *men* offer it to you, look long and hard before you drink it! It may be you may be right in drinking it—it may not be a wrong thing—but it may be, too, that even a thing that is innocent to others, may be wrong to you! And the taking of that amusement and pleasure into your hands might be like our Savior’s taking the myrrh cup and drinking it. It would be a stultifying of you, a preventing you from learning all the lessons of your misery, from going in all the steps of your Redeemer who wishes us to follow Him through all the miseries which He has ordained for us, that they may be the means of fellowship with Him in His suffering.

This is the only lesson I desire to give you at this time. If the Lord impresses it on our minds, it may be of use to us. Only let me say how many there are who would have drunk this wine cup if it had been offered to them! Your Savior has taken from you the desire of your eyes with a stroke! He has robbed you of one who is dear and near to you. Say, Christian, if you had had the myrrh cup put before you, if it had been said, “If you like, that loved one of yours shall live.” If it had been offered to you that the life that has been taken away should be spared—could you, with fortitude, have said, “Not my will, but Yours, be done”? Could you have put it away and said, “No, my Master, if this cup may not pass from me except I drink it, Your will be done. And what is more, if it may pass from me, if I need not the suffering, yet if I can honor You more by suffering, and if the loss of my beloved one will serve You and please You, then so let it be. I refuse the comfort when it comes in the way of Your honor. I reject the favored mercy if it comes in the teeth of Your Glory. I am willing to suffer—I care not for Your consolations if I can honor You better without them”?

There are some among you in the time of mourning. Let me just, in conclusion, note a very beautiful thought of a good man on a passage of Scripture. Jesus says in His prayer, “Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am.” Do you know why good men die? Do you know why the righteous die? Shall I tell you what it is that kills them? It is Christ’s prayer—“Father, I will that they be with Me.” It

is that that fetches them up to Heaven! They would stay here if Christ did not pray them to death! Every time a Believer mounts from this earth to Heaven, it is caused by Christ's prayer. "Now," says this good old Divine, "many times Christ and His people pull against one another in prayer. You bend your knees in prayer and say, 'Father, I will that they whom You have given me be with me where I am.' Christ bends His knees and says, 'Father, I will that they whom You have given Me be with Me where I am.'"

So, you see, one gets hold of him, and the other, too. He cannot be in both places! The beloved one cannot be with Christ and with you, too! Now, what shall be the answer? Put the prayers side by side. You are praying, "Father, I will that they whom you have given me be with me where I am." And there is your Savior, praying that they may be with Him where He is. Now, if you had your choice—if the King should step from His Throne and say, "Here are two supplicants. They are praying opposite to one another—their prayers are clearly contrary to each other—I cannot answer them both." Oh, I am sure, though it were agony, you would start from your feet, and say, "Jesus, not my will, but Yours be done." You would give up your prayer for your sick husband's life, for your sick wife's life, for your dying child's life, if you could realize the thought that Christ was praying in the opposite direction, "Father, I will that they whom You have given Me be with Me where I am."

And now we come to the Supper of our Master! Oh, may the Master give us fellowship with Him! Poor sinners that know not Christ, I have hardly a moment in which to address you, but remember, the separation which will be made between you and the Church, tonight, is but a picture of an awful separation which shall be made between you and the Church at the Last Great Day! You will sit upstairs, some of you, to look down upon the solemnity—remember, you may look upon it *here*, but you will not look upon it in Heaven unless your hearts are made new by Christ and unless you are washed in His precious blood!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 15:15-39; LUKE 23:27-49.**

We will read two short passages from the Gospels this evening. May the blessed Spirit, who taught the Evangelists to record the sad story of our Lord's sufferings and death, help us to fully enter into the blessed meaning of it while we read it! First turn to Mark 15, verse 15.

Mark 15:15, 16. *And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas to them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged Him, to be crucified. And the soldiers led Him away into the hall, called Praetorium. The guard room of Herod's palace, where the Praetorian guards were known to gather.*

16-20. *And they called together the whole band. And they clothed Him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about His head, and began to salute Him, Hail, King of the Jews! And they smote Him on the head with a reed, and spit upon Him, and bowing their knees worshipped*

Him. And when they had mocked Him. To the utmost, and gone the full length of their cruel scorn!

20-23. *They took off the purple from Him, and put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him. And they compelled one Simon, a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear His Cross. And they brought Him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull. And they gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but He received it not. They did for Him what they did for others who were crucified— they gave Him myrrhed wine, as a stupefying draught—“but He received it not.” He came to suffer and He would bear, even to the end, the full tale of His suffering.*

24-27. *And when they had crucified Him, they parted His garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take. And it was the third hour, and they crucified Him. And the superscription of His accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS. And with Him they crucified two thieves; the one on His right hand, and the other on His left. They gave Him the place of eminence, as if He were a greater offender than either of the two thieves!*

28. *And the Scripture was fulfilled, which says, And He was numbered with the transgressors. Sinners to the right of Him, sinners to the left of Him, sinners all round Him—compassed about with those who sinned in the very highest degree by putting Him to death. “He was numbered with the transgressors.” Oh, that sweet word! It is the hope of transgressors, now, that He was counted with them! And for His sake all the blessings of Heaven now descend upon transgressors who accept Him as their Substitute and Savior!*

29. *And they that passed by railed on Him. Not only those who sat down to gloat their cruel eyes upon His miseries, but even the passers-by, “They that passed by, railed on Him.”*

29, 30. *Wagging their heads and saying, Ah, You that destroys the Temple, and builds it in three day, save Yourself, and come down from the Cross. He never said He would destroy the literal Temple. He did, however, say concerning the Temple of His body, “Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up,” and He did raise it up in three days after they had destroyed it!*

31. *Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; Himself He cannot save. What they said in bitter scorn was true, for mighty love had bound His hands from self-salvation. Infinite in love, found guilty of excess of love to men, “He saved others; Himself He could not save.”*

32, 33. *Let Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the Cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with Him reviled Him. And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. A supernatural darkness which could not have occurred according to the laws of Nature. It did, as it were, “set a tabernacle for the sun”—the Sun of Righteousness was canopied for a while in darkness, that no longer might those horrible eyes gaze upon His terrible anguish!*

34. *And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?* There was a denser darkness over His spirit than was over all the land—and out of that darkness came this cry of agony!

35. *And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, He calls Elijah.* Ah, me! This was either a cruel jest upon our Savior's prayer or an utter misapprehension of it!

36. *And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink, saying, Let Him alone; let us see whether Elijah will come to take Him down.* Jesus did receive this vinegar and so fulfilled Psalm 69:21—"In My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink."

37, 38. *And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. And the veil of the Temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom.* Even as the flesh of Christ, which is the veil of the Incarnate God, was rent, so now was the veil of mystery taken away! The Temple in her sorrow rent her veil. The old Ceremonial Law passed away with this token of grief by the rending of the veil! It was a strong—I might say, a *massive* veil—it could not have been torn by any ordinary means, but when the hand of God takes hold upon the veil of Jewish *types*, they readily tear and, into the innermost mystery of the Holy of Holies, we may gaze, yes, and through it we may enter!

39. *And when the centurion, which stood over against Him, saw that He so cried out, and gave up the ghost, He said, Truly this Man was the Son of God.* Convinced by the Cross! Oh, the triumphs of Christ! The last word He speaks won this testimony from the centurion in charge of the Crucifixion! Now we will read part of Luke's narrative.

Luke 23:27-31. *And there followed Him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented Him. But Jesus, turning unto them, said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?* Our Savior, even amidst the greatest sufferings, seemed almost to forget His suffering in the deep sympathy that He had for the people around Him! He pictured in His mind's eye that awful siege of Jerusalem. Who can read it, as Josephus describes it, without feeling the deepest horror? Oh, the misery of the women and of the children in that dreadful day when the zealots turned against each other within the city and fought to the death! And when the Roman soldiers, pitiless as wolves, at last stormed the place! Truly did the Savior say of it that there would be no day like it—neither was there—it was the concentration of human misery and our Lord wept because He foresaw what it would be. And He bade these poor women reserve their tears for those awful sorrows.

32, 33 *And there were also two others, malefactors, led with Him to be put to death. And when they were come to the place, which is called Cal-*

vary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. O blessed Master they did not spare You any scorn! There was no mode of expressing their contempt which their malignity did not invent! Truly, "He was numbered with the transgressors." You could not count the three sufferers on Calvary without counting Him—He was so completely numbered with the others that He must be reckoned as one of them!

34. *Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.* It was all that He could say in their favor, and He did say that. If there is anything to be said in your favor, O my fellow Sinner, Christ will say it! And if there is nothing good in you that His eyes can light upon, He will pray on His own account—"Father, forgive them for My sake."

34. *And they parted His raiment, and cast lots.* His garments were the executioners' perquisites. Pitilessly they took them from Him and left Him naked in His shameful sorrow.

35. *And the people stood beholding.* There was no pity in their eyes. Not one of them turned away his face because he could not look upon so disgraceful a deed.

35. *And the rulers also with them derided Him, saying, He saved others; let Him save Himself, if He is Christ, the chosen of God.* I have already reminded you that there was a deep truth hidden away in what these cruel mockers said, for Jesus must give Himself up as a ransom if we were to be redeemed.

36-38. *And the soldiers also mocked Him, coming to Him, and offering Him vinegar, and saying, If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself. And a superscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew,* For these were the three languages known to the throng, and Pilate invited them all to read in "Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew."

38, 39. *THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.* *And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him, saying, If You are Christ, save Yourself and us.* Poor man, even though he is dying a felon's death, he must be in the swim with the multitude! He must keep in with the fashion so strong, so powerful—it is the popular current with all mankind!

40-42. *But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Do not you fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation? And we, indeed, justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man has done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom.* It was strange that Christ should find a friend dying on the cross by His side. Nobody else spoke to Him about a Kingdom. I am afraid that even His former followers began to think that it was all a delusion. But this dying thief cheers the heart of Jesus by the mention of a Kingdom and by making a request to Him concerning that Kingdom even when the King was in His death agony!

43. *And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto you, Today shall you be with Me in Paradise.* The Master, you see, uses His old phraseology. In His preaching He had been accustomed to say, "Verily, verily," and here He is, even on the Cross, still the same Preacher, for there was such as-

surance, such confidence, such Truth, in all His words, that He never had to alter His style of speaking! “Verily I say unto you, Today shall you be with Me in Paradise.” Well does our poet put it—

***“He that distributes crowns and thrones,
Hangs on a tree and bleeds and groans.”***

He was distributing these crowns and thrones even while hanging on the tree! “Tell it among the nations that the Lord reigns from the tree,” may not be an exact translation of the Psalm, but it is true, Psalm or no Psalm!

44. *And it was about the sixth hour.* About noon, when the sun was at its height.

44. *And there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.* Three o’clock in the afternoon.

45. *And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the Temple was rent in the midst.* As if the great light of Heaven and the pattern of heavenly things were both disturbed. The sun puts on mourning and the Temple rends her veil in horror at the awful deed enacted on the Cross!

46. *And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father—*Is it not sweet to see how Jesus begins and ends His prayers on the Cross with, “Father”?

46-48. *Into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost. Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous Man. And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts and returned.* A strange ending to that day, was it not? The three hours’ darkness and the death cry of the Christ had not converted them, but it had *convicted* them of sin. They felt that a great and heinous crime had been committed and, though they had come together as to a mere show or sight, they went away from the spectacle impressed as they had never been before—“All the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned.”

49. *And all His acquaintances and the women that followed Him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.* In these doings on Calvary you and I have a share—in their guilt, or else in their merit. Oh, that we may not be condemned with those who were guilty of His death, but may we be cleansed by that precious blood which puts away the sin of all who believe on Him!

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY
TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

JOSEPH OF ARIMATHAEA

NO. 1789

A SERMON PREACHED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 6, 1884,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Joseph of Arimathaea, an honorable counselor, who also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus. And Pilate marveled if He were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether He had been any while dead. And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph. And he bought fine linen, and took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen, and laid Him in a sepulcher which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulcher.”
Mark 15:43-46.

IT was a very dark day with the Church of God and with the cause of Christ, for the Lord Jesus was dead, and so the sun of their souls had set. “All the disciples forsook Him, and fled.” “You shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone,” were the sad words of Jesus—and they had come true. He was dead upon the Cross and His enemies hoped that that was the end of Him—while even His friends feared that it was so. A few women who had remained about the Cross, true to the very last, were found faithful unto death, but what could they do to obtain His sacred body and give it honorable burial? That priceless flesh seemed to be in danger of the fate which usually awaited the bodies of malefactors—at any rate, the fear was that it might be hurled into the first grave that could be found to shelter it.

At that perilous moment, Joseph, of Arimathaea, a city of the Jews, of whom we never heard before, and of whom we never hear again, suddenly made his appearance. He was the very man needed for the occasion—a man of influence, a man possessing that kind of influence which was most potent with Pilate—a rich man, a counselor, a member of the San-drehin, a person of weight and character. Every Evangelist mentions him and tells us something about him. And from these we learn that he was a disciple, “a good man and just; who also, himself, waited for the kingdom of God.” Joseph had been retiring and probably cowardly, before, but now he came to the Cross and saw how matters stood and then went in boldly unto Pilate, craved the body of Jesus and obtained it.

Let us learn from this that God will always have His witnesses. It matters not though the ministry should forsake the Truth of God, though they that should be leaders should become unfaithful, the Truth of God will not fail for lack of friends! It may be with the Church as when a

standard-bearer faints and the host is ready to melt with dismay—but there shall be found other standard-bearers and the banner of the Lord shall wave over all! As the Lord lives, so shall His Truth live! As God reigns, so shall the Gospel reign, even though it is from the Cross! “Tell it out among the heathen that the Lord reigns from the tree.” Such is a singular version of a verse in the Psalms and it contains a glorious Truth of God! Even while Jesus hangs on the Cross in death, He is still keeping possession of the Throne—and He shall reign forever and ever!

Let this be remembered for your encouragement in the cloudy and dark day. If you live in any place where the faithful fail from among men, do not wring your hands in grief and sit down in despair, as though it were all over with the cause you love! The Lord lives and He will yet keep a faithful seed alive in the earth. Another Joseph of Arimathaea will come forward at the desperate moment—just when we cannot do without him, the man will be found! There was a Joseph for Israel in Egypt and there was a Joseph for Jesus on the Cross. A Joseph acted to Him a father’s part at His birth, and another Joseph arranged for His burial. The Lord shall not be left without friends!

There was a dark day in the Old Testament history when the eyes of Eli, the servant of God, had failed him, and worse still, he was almost as blind mentally as physically, for his sons made themselves vile and he restrained them not. It seemed as if God must forsake His Israel! But who is this little boy who is brought in by his mother? Who is this tiny child who is to be left in the sanctuary to serve his God as long as he lives? Who is this pretty little man who wears the little coat which his mother’s hands have lovingly made for him? Look, you that have eyes of faith, for the Prophet Samuel is before you! He is the servant of the Lord, by whose holy example Israel shall be led to better things and delivered from the oppression which chastised the iniquities of Eli’s sons!

God has, today, somewhere, I know not where, in yon obscure cottage of an English village, or in a log hut far away in the backwoods of America, or in the slums of our back streets, or in our palaces, a man who in mature life shall deliver Israel, fighting the battles of the Lord! The Lord has His servant making ready and when the time shall come, when the hour shall *need* the man, the man shall be *found* for the hour! The Lord’s will shall be done, let infidels and doubters think what they please! I see in this advent of Joseph of Arimathaea exactly at the needed time, a well of consolation for all who have the cause of God laid upon their hearts. We need not worry our heads about who is to succeed the pastors and evangelists of today—the Apostolic succession we may safely leave with our God.

Concerning this Joseph of Arimathaea, the honorable counselor, I want to speak this morning, praying that I may speak to your souls all along. As I have already said, we hear no more of Joseph than what is recorded here. He shines out when he is needed and then he disappears—his record is on high. We need not mention the traditions about him, for I think that even the quotation of legends has an evil tendency and may turn us aside from the pure, unadulterated Word of God. What

have you and I to do with *tradition*? Is not the Scripture enough? There is probably no truth in the silly tales about Joseph and Glastonbury—and if there were, it could be of no consequence to us! If any fact had been worthy of the pen of Inspiration, it would have been written. And because it is *not* written, we need not desire to know. Let us be satisfied to pause where the Holy Spirit stays His pen.

I shall use Joseph of Arimathaea, this morning, in four ways. First, as *our warning*—he was a disciple of Jesus, “but secretly, for fear of the Jews.” Secondly, for *our instruction*—he was, at last, brought out by the Cross concerning which holy Simeon had declared that by the death of the Lord Jesus the thoughts of many hearts should be revealed. Thirdly, for *our awakening*—there was an occasion for Joseph to come forward and there is occasion, now, for all the timid to grow brave. And lastly, for *our guidance*—that we may, if we have been at all bashful and fearful, come forward in the hour of need and behave ourselves as bravely as Joseph of Arimathaea did on the eve before the Paschal Sabbath.

I. First, then, I desire to look at Joseph of Arimathaea as OUR WARNING. He was a disciple of Christ, but secretly, for fear of the Jews. We do not advise any of you to imitate Joseph in that. Fear which leads us to conceal our faith is an evil thing. Be a disciple, by all means, but not secretly—you miss a great part of your life’s purpose if you are. Above all, do not be a disciple secretly because of the fear of *man*, for the fear of man brings a snare. If you are the slave of such fear it demeans you, belittles you and prevents your giving due glory to God—

**“Fear Him, you saints, and you will then
Have nothing else to fear.”**

Be careful to give honor to Christ and He will take care of your honor.

Why was it that Joseph of Arimathaea was so backward? Perhaps it was owing to *his natural disposition*. Many men are, by nature, very bold. Some are a little too much so, for they become intrusive, self-assertive, not to say impudent. I have heard of a certain class of persons who “rush in where angels fear to tread.” They are fearless because they are brainless! Let us avoid fault in that direction. Many, on the other hand, are too retiring—they have to screw their courage up even to say a good word for the Savior whom they love. If they can do so, they fall into the rear rank. They hope to be found among the victors when they divide the spoil, but they are not overly ambitious to be among the warriors while they are braving the foe!

But some of these are true-hearted, notwithstanding their timidity. It was found in the martyr days that certain of those who endured most bravely at the stake were naturally of a fearful mind. It is noted by Foxe that some who boasted of how well they would bear pain and death for Christ turned tail and recanted, while others, who in prison trembled at the thought of the fire, played the man in death—to the admiration of all that were round about them. Still, dear Friends, it is not a desirable thing if you are troubled with timidity to foster it at all. Fear of man is a plant to be rooted up and not to be nurtured! I would set that plant, if I could, where it would get but little water and no sunshine. And mean-

while I would beg a cutting from a better tree. Would it not be well to often brace ourselves with such a hymn as this—

***“Am I a soldier of the Cross,
A follower of the Lamb?
And shall I fear to own His cause,
Or blush to speak His name?
Must I be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease;
While others fought to win the prize,
And sailed through bloody seas?”***

If you know that your temptation lies in the direction of fear, watch and strive against it—and always school yourselves to dauntless courage by the help of the Holy Spirit.

I am afraid, too, that what helped to intimidate Joseph of Arimathaea was the fact that he was a *rich man*. A sad truth lies within our Lord’s solemn exclamation, “How difficult shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God.” Riches do not strengthen the heart or make men daring for the good cause. Albeit wealth is a great talent which may be well used by the man who has entered into the Kingdom of Heaven, yet it brings with it snares and temptations. And when a man has not yet entered into the Kingdom, it is, in many ways, a terrible hindrance to his entrance. “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom.” The fishermen of the Galilean Lake readily left their bits of boats and their fishing tackle, but Joseph of Arimathaea was a rich man and was, therefore, slow to leave all for Christ’s sake.

The tendency of great possessions is seen in the case of the young man who turned away in sorrow from the Lord Jesus when put to the unusual test of selling all he had. Strong swimmers have saved their lives, when the ship has struck a rock, by casting aside every weight. While others have gone straight down to the bottom because they have bound their gold around their waists! Gold sinks men as surely as lead! Take care, any of you that are well to do in this world, that you do not permit the liberality of God to be a cause of disloyalty to Him. Beware of the pride of life, the lust for rank, the desire to hoard—for any of these may prevent your service to your Lord. Riches puff men up and prevent their stooping to find the pearl of great price. A poor man enters a humble village sanctuary where Christ is preached and he finds eternal life. Another man under concern of soul in the same village does not like to go down to the poor conventicle and remains unblessed. He keeps away because he puts to himself the question, “What will the people say if the squire goes to hear the Gospel? What a stir there will be if the son of a lord is converted!”

Joseph of Arimathaea’s wealth made him unduly cautious and possibly, without his knowing it, prevented his casting in his lot with the common sort of people who followed the Lord Jesus. His heart was for the prize, but the heavy weight of his substance hindered him in his race. It was an instance of abounding Grace that he was helped to run well at the last. Possibly, too, he may have been checked by the fact that *he was in office and that he was honorable in it*. It needs great Grace to

carry human honor and, truth to tell, it is not particularly much worth carrying when you have it. For what is fame but the breath of men's nostrils? Poor stuff to feed a soul upon! If a man could so live as to gain universal plaudits—if he could write his name across the sky in letters of gold—so what? What is there in the applause of a thoughtless multitude?

The approbation of good men, if it is gained by persevering virtue, is better to be desired than great riches. But even then, it may become a temptation, for the man may begin to question, "What will people say?" rather than, "What will *God* say?" And the moment he falls into that mood, he has introduced a weakening element into his life. The, "Well done, good and faithful servant," of the Master's own lips is worth 10,000 thunders of applause from senators and princes! Honor among men is, at best, a peril to the best! Joseph was honored in council and this is apt to make a man prudently slow. The tendency of office is towards caution rather than enthusiasm. I would have those placed in high positions remember this and candidly judge themselves as to whether their shrinking from the public acknowledgement of Christ may not be a cowardice unworthy of the position in which the Lord has placed them.

It seems clear that all the earthly things which men covet may not be so desirable as they appear to be—and that which men would give their eyes to procure, they might, if their eyes were opened, think far less of. I would lovingly enquire of you at this time, (for the sermon is meant to be personal all the way through), if any of you who love my Lord and Master are doing so secretly because of the fear of men? You have never openly confessed your faith and why not? What hinders your taking up a decided position on the Lord's side? Are you wealthy? Are you honorable? Do you occupy an enviable position in society? And are you such a mean-spirited creature that you have become proud of these glittering surroundings, like a child that is vain of its new frock?

Are you so cowardly that you will not cast in your lot with the followers of the Truth and Righteousness of God because they are persons of low degree? Are you really so base? Is there no holy chivalry in you? Can it be that because God has dealt so well with you and trusted you so generously, you will repay Him by denying His Son, violating your conscience and turning your back on His Truth—and all for the sake of being in fashion? I know it may seem hard to receive the cold shoulder in society, or to have the finger of scorn pointed at you, but to bow before this selfish dread is scarcely worthy of a man and utterly *disgraceful* of a Christian man! "Oh, but I am so retiring in disposition." Yes, but do not indulge it, I pray you, for, if all were of such a mind, where were the noble advances of Truth, her reformations, her revivals? Where would have been our Luther, or our Calvin, or our Zwingli? Where would have been our Whitefield, or our Wesley if they had thought it to be the main object of desire to walk at ease along the cool sequestered vale of life?

Come forth, my Brothers and Sisters, for the truth and for the Lord! Remember that what is right for you would be right for the rest of us! If you do not join the Christian Church, for instance, every one of us might also neglect that duty, and where would the visible Church of Christ be?

And how would the ordinances of our holy faith be kept up as a witness among the sons of men? I charge all concealed Believers to think over the inconsistency of their concealment and to quit that cowardly condition! I feel sure that Joseph of Arimathaea was a great loser by his secrecy, for, you see, he did not live with Jesus, as many other disciples did. During that brief but golden period in which men walked and talked—and ate and drank with Jesus—Joseph was not with Him! He was not among the 12 as possibly he might have been if he had possessed more courage and decision.

Joseph lost many of those familiar talks with which the Lord indulged His own after the multitudes had been sent away. He missed that sacred training and strengthening which fitted men for the noble lives of primitive saints. How many opportunities he must have missed, too, of working for the Master and with the Master! Perhaps we hear no more of him because he did no more. Possibly that one grand action which has redeemed his name from forgetfulness, is all that is recorded because it really was all that was worth recording! Joseph must have been a weaker, a sadder, a less useful man for having followed Christ afar off. I would to God that such reflections as these would fetch out our beloved, truly faithful and honorable Christian men who, up to now, have hidden away among the stuff and have not come to the front to stand up for Jesus.

II. Secondly, having viewed Joseph of Arimathaea as a warning, I shall go on to speak of him as a lesson for OUR INSTRUCTION. Joseph did come out, after all, and so will you, my Friends. If you are honest and sincere, you will have to acknowledge your Lord sooner or later! Do you not think it would be better to make it sooner rather than later? The day will come when that shame which you are now dreading will be yours. As surely as you are a sincere Believer, you will have to encounter that reproach and derision which now alarm you—why not face them at once and get it over with? You will have to confess Christ before many witnesses—why not begin to do so at once? What is the hardship of it? It will come easier to you and it will bring you a larger blessing—and it will be sweeter in the recollection afterwards—than if you keep on postponing it.

What was it that fetched Joseph of Arimathaea out? *It was the power of the Cross!* Is it not a remarkable thing that all the *life* of Christ did not draw out an open acknowledge from this man? Our Lord's miracles, His marvelous discourses, His poverty and self-renunciation. His glorious life of holiness and benevolence. All may have helped to build up Joseph in his *secret* faith, but it did not suffice to develop in him a bold *declaration* of faith! The shameful *death* of the Cross had greater power over Joseph than all the beauty of Christ's life! Now let us see, you timid, backward ones, whether the Cross will not have the same influence over you, today! I believe it will if you carefully study it. I am sure it will if the Holy Spirit lays it home to your heart!

I suppose that to Joseph of Arimathaea, Christ's death on the Cross seemed such a *wicked thing* that he must come out on behalf of One so evilly treated. He had not consented to the deed of the men of the San-

drehtin when they condemned Jesus to death—probably he and Nicodemus withdrew themselves from the assembly altogether—but when he saw that the crime was actually committed and that the innocent Man had been put to death, then he said, “I cannot be a silent witness of such a murder! I must now side with the Holy and the Just.” Therefore he came out and was found the willing servant of his crucified Master. Come what may of it, he felt that he must declare himself to be on the right side, now that they had maliciously taken away the life of the Lord Jesus. It was late, it was sadly late, but it was not too late.

Oh, secret disciple, will you not quit your hiding? Will you not hasten to do so? You who are quiet and retiring, when you hear the name of Jesus blasphemed, as it is in these evil days, will you not stand up for Him? When you hear His Deity denied; when His Headship in the Church is given to another; when His very Person is, by lewd fellows of the baser sort, set up as the target of their criticism, will you not speak up for Him? Will you not be shocked by such evil conduct into an open acknowledgement? His cause is that of truth and righteousness and mercy and hope for the sons of men, therefore He must not be abused while you sit by in silence! Had others favored Him, you might, perhaps, have been somewhat excused for holding back—but you cannot keep back without grievous sin, now that so many deride Him. Jesus is worthy of all honor and yet they heap scorn upon Him—will you not defend Him? He is your Savior and Lord! Oh, be not slow to admit that you are His! The Cross laid bare the heart of Joseph. He loathed the wickedness which slew the Holy and the Just and, therefore, he girded himself to become the guardian of His sacred body.

But, next, it may have been in part *the wonderful patience of the Master's death* which made Joseph feel he could not hide any longer. Did he hear Him say, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do”? Did he mark Him when those blessed lips said, “I thirst”? Do you think he observed the ribaldry and scorn which surrounded the dying Lord? And did he feel that the stones would cry out if he did not show kindness to his best Friend? Since Jesus spoke not for Himself, but was dumb as a sheep before her shearers, Joseph is bound to open his mouth for Him! If Jesus answered not, but only breathed out prayers for His murderers, the honorable counselor must acknowledge Him! The sun has acknowledged Him and veiled his face in sackcloth! The earth has recognized Him and trembled to her very heart at His sufferings! Death has acknowledged Him and yielded up the bodies which the sepulcher had up to now detained! The Temple has acknowledged Him and in its horror has torn its veil, like a woman that is utterly broken in heart by the horrors she has seen! Therefore Joseph must acknowledge Him—he cannot resist the impulse! Oh, Brothers and Sisters, if you have been backward, let some such motive lead you unto the van of the host!

Then there were all *the wonders of that death* which he saw and to which I have already alluded. They sufficed to convince the centurion that this was a righteous man. They convinced others that He was the Son of God—and he who was already a disciple of Christ must have been

greatly confirmed in that conviction by what he saw around the Cross. The time was come when he must boldly act as Christ's disciple. Have there been no wonders of conversion around you? No answers to prayer? No Providential deliverances? Should not these lead the secret ones to declare themselves? I do not suppose he fully understood *the design of our Lord's death*—he had some knowledge of it, but not such a knowledge as *we* have, now that the Spirit of God has appeared in all His fullness and taught us the meaning of the Cross.

Oh, listen, Sirs, you that are not upon His side openly; you that have never worn His livery, nor manifestly entered on His service—He died for *you!* Those wounds were all for *you!* That bloody sweat, of which you still may see the marks upon the Countenance of the Crucified, was all for *you!* For *you* the thirst and fever! For *you* the bowing of the head and the giving up of the ghost—and can you be ashamed to acknowledge Him? Will you not endure rebuke and scorn for His dear sake who bore all this for *you?* Now speak from your soul and say, “He loved me and gave Himself for me.” If you cannot say that, you cannot be happy! But if you can, then what follows?

Must you not love Him and give yourself for Him? The Cross is a wondrous magnet, drawing to Jesus every man of the true metal. It is as a banner lifted on high to which all who are loyal must rally. This fiery Cross, carried through all lands, will awaken the valiant and speed them to the field! Can you see your Lord suffering to the death for you and then turn your backs? I pray you may no longer hesitate, but may at once cry, “Set down my name among His followers; for I will fight it out even to the end, till I hear Him say—

***‘Come in, come in!
Eternal glory you shall win.’***

Thus much by way of instruction taken from the life of Joseph of Arimathaea. If the Cross does not bring a man out, what will? If the spectacle of dying love does not quicken us into courageous affection for Him, what can?

III. So I have to mention, in the third place, something for OUR AWAKENING. Perhaps you are saying in your heart that the season in which Joseph lived was one which imperatively demanded that he should leave his hiding place and should go to Pilate, but that you are under no such demand. Listen, Friends, many people are not true to their occasions, whatever they may be. They do not consider that they have come to the Kingdom of God for such a time as this. The Lord Jesus is not hanging on a Cross, today, needing to be buried. But other stern necessities exist and call for your exertions. This hour's necessities imperiously demand that every man who is right at heart should acknowledge his Lord and do Him service! Every man that loves Christ should, at this hour, prove it by his actions!

A buoy off the Mumbles in South Wales bears a bell which is meant to warn mariners of a dangerous rock. This bell is quiet enough in ordinary weather, but when the winds are out and the great waves rush in towards the shore, its solemn tones are heard for miles around as it swings to and fro in the hands of the sea. I believe there are true men who are

silent when everything is calm, who will be *forced* to speak when the wild winds are out. Permit me to assure you that a storm is raging right now and it is growing worse and worse. If I rightly read the signs of the times, it is meet that every bell should ring out its warning note lest souls be lost upon the rocks of *error*. You that have fallen behind because the fight did not seem to require you, must quit your positions of ease. I summon you in the Master's name to the war! The Lord has need of you! If you come not to His help against the mighty, a curse will light upon you. You must either be written across the back as *cowards*, or else you will, today, solemnly espouse the cause of Jesus!

Shall I tell you why? I will tell you why Joseph was needed, and that was just because *Christ's enemies had at last gone too far*. When they hunted Him about and took up stones to stone Him, they went a very long way. When they said He had a devil and was mad, they went much too far. When they asserted that He cast out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils, that was a piece of blasphemy. But now, now they have overstepped the line most fatally—they have actually taken the King of Israel and nailed Him up to a Cross and He is dead! And therefore Joseph cannot stand it any longer. He quits their company and joins himself to the Lord Jesus.

Look how far men are going in *these* days. In the outside world we have infidelity of so gross, so brutish a character, that it is unworthy of the civilization, much less of the Christianity, of our age! Now, you fearful ones, come out and refuse to be numbered with the unbelieving world! Besides, in the outward Christian Church we see men who, having already taken away every doctrine that we hold dear, are now assailing the Inspiration of God's own Word! They tell us plainly that they do not believe what the Scriptures say further than they choose to do. The Bible to them is a fine book, but rather out of date. Now, if you can be quiet, I cannot! The citadel of Christendom is now attacked. Let no brave man shrink from its defense. If you can hold your tongues and see the faith torn to pieces, I cannot! Why, it is enough to make every man gird on his weapon and rush to the fight!

Years ago, when they talked of the French invading England, an old lady grew very indignant and threatened deadly resistance. When she was asked what the women of England could do, she said they would rise to a man. I have no doubt whatever that they would do their best in any such emergency. Every iron in the fireplace, whether it is a poker or shovel, would be grasped to defend our hearths and homes! And just so, now, when error knows no bounds, we must stand up for the defense of the Truth of God! Since they push error to extremes, it becomes us to hold to every particle of the faith. I will not, for my own part, give up a corner of my creed for any man! Even if we might have been prepared to modify expressions had the age been different, we are not in that mood, now. A generation of vipers shall have a naked file to bite at. We will modify nothing!

If the Truth of God bears a stern aspect, we will not veil it. If there is an offense in the Cross, we will not conceal it. This shall be my answer to

those who would have us attune ourselves to the spirit of the age—I know no Spirit but one, and He is unchanging in every age! Your extravagance of doubt shall have no influence over us except to make us bind the Gospel more closely to our hearts! If we gave you an inch, you would take a mile and so no inch shall be given you! Our resolve is to live for the Book as we read it, for the Gospel as we rest in it, for the Lord as He made Atonement, for the Kingdom as it rules over all. I beg every trembling Christian to take heart, put on his Lord's livery, and advance to the fray. Come out, now, if you never have before! Come out, if there is any manliness in you, in these days of blasphemy and rebuke—

***“You that are men, now serve Him,
Against unnumbered foes;
Your courage rise with danger
And strength to strength oppose.”***

When Joseph of Arimathaea revealed himself as our Lord's disciple, *our Lords friends had mostly fled*—we might almost say they had *all* departed. Then Joseph said, “I will go in and beg for the body.” When everybody else runs away, then the timid man grows brave! And I have often noticed, that when there has been a wide desertion from the faith, then the feeble have become strong. Those poor souls who had said, “You hardly know whether we are the people of God at all, we are so unworthy,” have crept out of their dens and have waxed valiant in fight, putting to flight the armies of the aliens! A Sister was asked to tell her experience before the Church and she could not do it. But, as she went away, she turned round and said, “I cannot *speak* for Christ, but I could *die* for Him.” “Come back,” said the minister, you are welcome here!” They do gloriously, those hidden ones, in days of which we are apt to fear that no witness for the Truth of God will remain alive! Oh, that you who live where religion is declining may be all the more resolved to serve the Lord Jesus faithfully!

And then, you know, in Joseph's time *the people that were true to the Lord Jesus were such a feeble company*. Those that were not absolutely poor—the women that could minister to Him of their substance—were, nevertheless, unable to go in unto Pilate and beg for the Lord's body. He would not have received them and if he would, they were too timid to have sought an interview. But Joseph is rich and a counselor and, therefore, he seemed to say, “These dear good women need a friend. They cannot get that precious body down from the Cross alone. I will go to the Roman governor. Together with Nicodemus, I will provide the linen and the spices—and the women shall help us take Jesus down from the tree and lay Him in my new tomb and swathe His limbs in linen and spices, so as to embalm Him honorably.”

Some of you live in country towns where those who are faithful to God are very poor and have not much ability among them. If anything should move you to be the more decided, it should be that fact. It is a brave thing to help a feeble company—any common people will follow at the heels of success—but the true man is not ashamed of a despised cause when it is the cause of truth! You who have talent and substance should say, “I will go and help them. I cannot leave the Master's cause to this

feeble folk. I know they do their best and, as that is little, I will join them and lay myself out to aid them for my great Master's sake."

Can you not see my drift? My only desire this morning is to induce any of you who have, for a moment, faltered to "stand up, stand up for Jesus," and everywhere—in every place as wisdom may suggest—avow His dear and sacred name. Perhaps you are flowers that cannot bloom till the light is darkened, like the night-blooming cereus or the evening primrose. Now is your hour! The evening is already come! Bloom, my dear Friends, and fill the air with the delightful fragrance of your love! When other flowers are closed, take care to open to the dew. In these dark hours, shine out, you stars! The sun has gone, otherwise might you lie hidden, but now let us see you! Joseph and Nicodemus had never been seen in the daylight when Jesus was alive—but when the sun was set through His death—then their radiance beamed at its fullest. Oh, my hesitating Brother, now is your time and your hour—boldly avail yourself of it, for our great Master's sake!

IV. Lastly, there is something in this subject for OUR GUIDANCE. Somebody says, "Well, what do you mean by my coming out? I can see what Joseph did, but what am *I* to do? I do not live at Arimathaea and there is no Pilate in these days." Joseph, in acknowledging His Lord, *put himself under personal risk*. A Christian slave, whose master was executed for being a Christian, went to the judge and begged the body of his master that he might bury it. The judge replied, "Why do you wish for your master's body?" "Because he was a Christian and I am one." Upon this confession he was, himself, condemned to die. It might have been so with Pilate, for the Jewish rulers must have hated Joseph and longed for his death. He had been backward a long time, but now he put his life in his hand and went in boldly to Pilate. We read, "He craved the body of Jesus," but, as a commentator well says, he was not a craven, though he craved the body. He simply asked for it, begged for it, implored to have it and the procurator yielded to his wish.

Now, do you think that if it were necessary for you to jeopardize your best earthly interests for Christ, you could do it? Could you lose your character for culture and courage by avowing the old faith in these apostate days? Can you leave all for Jesus? Should it separate the fondest connection, should it break up the brightest prospects—could you take up the Cross and follow your Lord? It is due to Him who died for you that you should count the cost and reckon it little enough for His dear sake if you may but do Him honor!

Remember, again, that this good man, Joseph of Arimathaea, when he took the body of Jesus, brought upon himself *ceremonial pollution*. It may seem little enough to *you*, but to a Jew it was a great deal, especially during the Passover week. He handled that blessed body and defiled himself in the judgment of the Jews. But, oh, I guarantee you he did not think it any defilement to touch the blessed Person of his Lord, even when the life was gone out of that matchless frame! Nor was it any pollution. It was an *honor* to touch that Holy Thing, that body prepared of God. Yet they will say to you, if you come out for Christ and unite with

His people that you lower yourself. They will point at you, give you some opprobrious name and charge you with fanaticism! Take upon yourself this blessed shame and say, as David did, "I will be yet more vile." Dishonor for Christ is honor—and shame for Him is the very top of all glory! You will not stand back, I trust, but you will come forward and declare your faith, though you thus become as the offscouring of all things.

And then, this man, having risked his life and given up his honor, was content to be *at great cost for the burial of Christ*. He went and bought the fine linen and that rock-hewn sepulcher which it was the ambition of every Israelite to possess, he cheerfully resigned, that the Lord might lie there. Now, whenever you do own Christ, own Him practically. Do not keep back your purse from Him, or think that you are to say, "I am His," and do nothing for Him! I was reading the story of a good old deacon in Maine, in America, who came in to a meeting after there had been a missionary collection. The minister then and there asked "our good Brother Sewell" to pray.

Sewell did not pray, but thrust his hand in his pocket and stood fumbling about. "Bring the box," he said. And when the box came and he had put his money into it, the minister said, "Brother Sewell? I did not ask you to give anything, I only wished you to pray." "Oh," he said, "I could not pray till I had first given something." He felt obliged, first, to do something for the great mission work—and having done that—he could pray for it. Oh, that all Christ's people felt the justice of that course of conduct! Is it not most natural and proper? Joseph could not, when the Savior needed burying, have been true to Him without burying Him! And now that the Savior does not need burying, but wants, in all His living power, to be preached among the sons of men—if we love Him we must do all that lies in us to spread the knowledge of His name!

Come out then, come out then, you that are hidden among the stuff! Some of you strangers from the country who have lived in the village and attended the services, but never joined the Church—do not let another Sunday dawn till you have sent in your name to be classed with the people of God! And any of you that have come often to the Tabernacle and say that nobody has spoken to you, *you* speak to somebody and acknowledge what the Lord has done for you! Joseph of Arimathaea, where are you? Come forward, man! Come forth! Your time has come! Come forth *now*! If you have followed Christ secretly, throw secrecy to the winds! From now on, be the bravest of the brave among the bodyguards of Christ who follow Him wherever He goes! Have no fear nor *thought* of fear, but count it all joy if you fall into manifold trials for His name's sake, who is King of kings and Lord of lords, to whom be glory forever and ever! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SECTION—John 19:23-42.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—138, 670, 674.**

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BELIEF IN THE RESURRECTION

NO. 3452

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***“He is risen.”
Mark 16:6.***

OUR Lord always told His disciples that He would rise. They were astonished to hear that He would die at all—they did not think it possible that He could die by the terrible death which He often hinted at. Had they understood and really believed that He would rise again, they might not have been so surprised at His death. But as often as He spoke of it, their minds seemed to have been like their eyes, on some occasions—held back that they should not see! And if they perceived His meaning, it ran so contrary to all their ideas of a Kingdom for a Messiah, that they could not grasp it as a reality!

Now one of the first things that strikes the reader of the Chapter before us shall furnish us with our first head of contemplation tonight—

I. THE ALMOST UNIVERSAL POWER OF UNBELIEF IN THE CHURCH.

This is a good instance to illustrate a general fact, for our Savior had told them in plain terms that He would rise again. Yet on the third day not one that we know of expected Him to rise! When they were informed that He had risen, by eyewitnesses—persons whom they had been accustomed to treat as deserving of all credence, persons with whom they had been long acquainted—they, everyone of them, were incredulous! They could not believe it, though it were testified to them again and again. As you read this Chapter through, you meet with first one instance and then another of this general incredulity about a thing on which all ought to have been sound believers! You find, first, the women—very tender, very loving, always accustomed to minister to Christ’s necessities in the days of His flesh—now their very love leads them to an unbelieving act! If He is risen and He said He would rise, what need of grave cloths? What need of precious ointments, and spikenard, and spices in which to embalm Him? ‘Twas love that said, “Embalm Him,” but ‘twas unbelieving love that made them think the thing was necessary to be done! All through those tender hearts, wherein so much of heavenly ardor for Christ was found, there was also found this leaven of mischief. But the men—the stronger sex, will not they, also, their hearts being full of love and having walked with Christ, having strong judgments, many of them, having noticed and weighed what He said—will not they believe? No! Peter and John, though they went to the sepulcher, went there with heavy hearts, evidently with

no expectation such as would have been excited by the belief that Christ had risen. The whole brotherhood of the disciples appear to have gone altogether over to an unbelief of the thought that Jesus Christ would rise! But there were some favored ones—there were the eleven. These were the elect out of the elect, the spiritual lifeguard, the very bodyguard of the Savior! Surely, if faith is extinct everywhere else, we shall find it in them! They were in the Garden at His Passion, some of them were on Tabor at His Transfiguration, three of them, at any rate. They were in the chamber where He raised the dead. They had seen His miracles, they had, themselves, distributed the bread which by a miraculous power He had multiplied for the feeding of the multitude. They had seen Him walk the sea—one of them had, himself, walked on the liquid wave and found it marble beneath his feet when Christ had bid him come. They had marked the tempest hushed, they had seen devils expelled, many marvelous displays of Divine Power had they, all of them, beheld! These choice ones, especially those three mighty, those chosen three, would surely believe! Yet they also were tinctured with this same evil—they had not such a faith in their Master as they should have had. And now this was but, I think, a portrait of what has been, ever since—the great mischief in the Church of God. This sin of sins—unbelief—is still at this very hour too common among the people of God. Suppose I talk to the mass of God’s people, the quiet, humble people, who go about their business and serve God in their households. Shall I find them all full of faith, giving glory to God? No, I am not long with some of them but I hear their doubts as to whether they are His or not! I hear some of them singing—

**“Do I love the Lord or no;
Am I His, or am I not?”**

True, I see many of them happy and joyful, contented and trustful, but not always so, even they. Sometimes even these seem to give way to fears and suspicions—and they half think that He has forgotten to be gracious—will be mindful of them no more! Truly is it written, “If the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith upon the earth?” He may look for it, and look for it long, for among His own believing people, yet is faith all too rare a thing—hard to be found! It is true it is in its essence always in the Church, but yet so feeble that oftentimes the fire is rather that which trembles in the smoking flax and almost expires, than the spark that seeks the Sun, the Father, the flame from which at first it came! Now suppose I turn away from the mass of Christians and select for myself those that take office in Christ’s Church, appointed by Him, gifted, and given, as the result of the ascension, to the Church as the Church’s treasure? My Brothers, what shall I say about deacons, Elders, and such like in the Church of God? How do I find you? Do I not discover oftentimes in church officers a slackness of enterprise, a fear lest this should be too great a thing or that too venturesome? Have I not heard—though certainly I may say I have, by God’s Grace, not *experienced*—have I not heard that sometimes those that should lead the Church have held her back, and those that should be first and foremost to sustain the Christian min-

istry in every holy effort, have they not been, sometimes, a very drag upon the wheels to hinder it? And if it is so in their official acting, I fear it is not much better in their own private capacity before God. Alas, O Israel, your captains are weak! Your mighty men tremble!

But suppose I select those God has especially favored and made the winners of souls? Do I find these at all times confident in the God whose Gospel they proclaim? Are they always calmly reliant upon that eternal power which has ordained them to their work? We must, each man, speak for himself, but I fear the most of us might take up a wailing for ourselves and confess that we, also, too often must say, "Lord, I believe. Help You my unbelief." The prayer of the Apostles is a suitable prayer for ministers, "Lord increase our faith," for if our faith is not increased, we cannot expect that the faith of the multitude will be! Christ's ministers ought to be to Christ's army a sort of spiritual Uhlans that ride on ahead to investigate the country—to take hold of it before the main body comes up. They should be the men to lead the forlorn hope! They should be first in the trenches whenever a citadel is to be taken by storm. Their hearts should never fail them—they should be men of large conceptions and bold designs—men to fall back upon the Infinite and rely upon the unseen! Are we always such, or such to such a degree as we ought to be? No, I fear that the chapter of Church history which is being now written is, in the sight of God, much blotted by the unbelief of all His people. Faith there is—I bless God for it—and in some cases very eminent faith, but taking us all round, alas, we must make up a sorrowful confession of our shortcomings in the matter of our faith in the living God. Now, turning to the Chapter again, we shall get our second point of consideration—

II. THE GREAT CURE WHICH OUR LORD PRESCRIBED FOR THE MATTER OF UNBELIEF.

As far as this Chapter goes, it lies in the fact that He is risen. He is risen from the dead! You will observe everywhere here, where we meet with the unbelief of man, we meet with the fact of the Resurrection of Christ brought in like light to subdue the darkness. Here are the women in difficulties—it is the Resurrection of Christ that removes the difficulty! Who shall roll away the stone? The stone is rolled away because Christ is risen! The angel has taken away the stone door of the prison house because it was time that the Captive should go free. Now here the Lord seems to tell us that the best and grandest cure of all our fear about difficulty lies in this, "The Lord is risen." You serve a living Savior. What is the difficulty? Is it a Providential one? He is the Master of Providence, for "the government shall be upon His shoulders, and His name shall be called Wonderful, The Counselor, The Mighty God." That difficulty, then, which would obstruct you in your pathway to Heaven, if you trust in Him, must vanish because Jesus lives! If the Captain of the Host were dead, it would be an ill thing for us to be serving a dead Captain, but since He lives, girt with Omnipotence, difficulties must vanish before Him! Does it happen that the difficulty which troubles us is one concerning our service to our Lord? Have we a hard heart to deal with in the

child whose conversion we seek in our class, in the Sabbath school, or have we prejudices that stop our way in the congregation that we address week by week—and that we hope to convert to Jesus by His Spirit? Are we called to plow an unthankful soil that breaks the plowshare? Is there something just now before us that looks like a gate of brass and a wall of iron? Here is the one comfort concerning it all—the Lord lives! “He is not here; He is risen.” He is not dead! His power lies not paralyzed in the tomb! He lives and goes before you, leading the van of all the noble, of those who died for His crown and glory! On with you, then, in the name of God! Be this your might that Jesus lives! From now on, let difficulties be only rejoiced in as things to be overcome, as opportunities for glorifying Him by the exercise of our faith in Him, which will be followed by the revelation of His power! If unbelief raises difficulties, “The Lord is risen” is the cure for them all!

Suppose our unbelief takes the shape of fright? It does sometimes. It did in the case of these good women—they were frightened, we are told, in the 5th verse. We are told again in the 8th verse that they fled from the sepulcher, for they trembled. Now we may be frightened at a great many things. Some persons are so timid that they are frightened at nothing—their own shadow will frighten them! But there may be real matters that will cause us to tremble if we had not something better to fall back upon than ourselves. Now a frightened Christian is like a man out of his wits—he is pretty sure to do something that will make his danger greater! Self-possession, calm composure, a quiet mind—these have often saved lives and have frequently prevented the destruction of a cause that was just then in peril. If you can be calm amidst bewildering circumstances, confident of victory in the end, that will win half the battle, itself. If you can rest in the Lord, or, to use the words of Moses, “stand still and see the salvation of God,” you will surely come out unscathed from the evil. Now the best cure for fright is the fact that Jesus is risen! Why, how am I to be afraid when He who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords is my Shepherd and will surely interpose for my protection? If my Lord were dead, then were I unsafe, but while Jesus lives I am secure. “Because I live, you shall live also.” Oh, what a grand sentence is that! “I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hands.” Who are you, then, that you should be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man that is but as the moth? Rest in your living Savior! “Fear not. I am with you—I am with you—be not dismayed, for I am your God.” “I will strengthen you. Yes, I will help you. I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness. When you pass through the rivers, I will be with you; the floods shall not overflow you. When you go through the fire, you shall not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon you.” “I am God, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.” Come back, then, if you are tempest-tossed, terrified, trembling and frightened and, because Jesus lives, be quiet and in patience possess your souls.

I notice in the Chapter that *the next form of unbelief is amazement*. These good women, in addition to being afraid, were amazed—could not make it out. It was too great a mystery. How could it be? It troubled them—it troubled them. Now in all times of our amazement about great Gospel Truths, we shall always find the best way to get out of the amazement is to hold fast by faith to the veracity and truthfulness of God—and to hold fast to what we can understand—to a fact that has been proved better than other facts of history have been proved—the fact that the Lord Jesus is risen from the dead! It is generally when you are in trouble about some great Doctrine—a bad thing to argue about that Doctrine while you are troubled about it. Think more of what you do believe, of what you are sure of, than just now of that matter which staggers you. You will find that if you receive the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and rest in that as being a guarantee of *your resurrection*, you have the key of many other precious Truths of God! And as one Doctrine draws on another as the links of a chain, you will find your amazement at some of the most stupendous mysteries of the faith will be cured by your grasping the first simplicity and fundamental Doctrine of the faith of the Gospel, that the Lord Jesus, who suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, and dead, and buried, and the third day rose again in very flesh and blood—and ever lives, sitting at the right hand of God, reigning in exceeding power. You will not be amazed nor frightened. You will not be made to tremble, or be bewildered if you keep close to this—“He lives! He lives! This I know, and on this I rest.”

Further, it seems that these good women were much *prevented in doing their duty by their unbelief*. They were told to go and speak to the disciples, but, at any rate, for a time they did not do so, for it is written, “Neither said they anything to any man, for they were afraid.” Those tongues that, by-and-by, in calmer moments would bear such a sure testimony were, through their fears which sprang of their unbelief, quite dumb! They could not speak. Oh, and this is a complaint that is very common in the Church! I know some who could preach, but do not—and it is unbelief that silences them. And you today, perhaps, were in society where you ought to have spoken a loving and an earnest word, but you did not, and it was a wrong timidity that kept you quiet. And you have been many times in your life cast into positions where usefulness would have been very easy, but at the same time you found it difficult because you forgot that Jesus lives—you forgot that He lives to watch His people, lives to render them assistance when they are in the path of service! Oh, if we knew He lived—yes, knew that He was here—knew that He was close to us, that His heart never forgot us and His eyes were never closed upon us—we would be swift in the ways of duty and a stammering tongue would begin to speak! And the now unhallowed silence which spoils the Church and robs her of many a triumph, would be broken by our willing testimony and by our cheerful song! The best cure for the dumb devil that sometimes possesses us, is a belief in the living and pleading Savior!

Further on, as your eye glances down the Chapter, you will see *unbelief connecting itself with wounded affection*. When Mary Magdalene came to the disciples, she found them weeping, weeping for sorrow, men and women of God, a very mournful company, all weeping, weeping for a dead Savior—the dearest Friend they had ever had, who first had given them spiritual conceptions and lifted them out off their former groveling state. He was gone—He was dead and they could not but weep. But they left off weeping, or would have done if they had known or believed that He was risen. It was the last thing they should have done, to be weeping. He rising, and they weeping! All the harps of Heaven ringing out melodious praise—and those most concerned in the glorious fact still weeping! Every angel in Heaven bending from the sacred battlements to look down upon a risen Savior with admiring gaze, and yet His own dear people who had known and loved Him, sitting down and weeping amidst the universal festival! It was very strange. Now oftentimes the same mischief happens to us. We lose a friend. Who among us has not? We lose a husband, a wife, a child. Very dear are these associations and when the ties are snapped, our heart bleeds, and sometimes we weep, and weep, and weep again until there is a lack of submission to the Savior's will, there is a lack of resignation to His Divine Purpose and Decree. Now if we remembered that He lives, we would also remember that they, also, who sleep in Jesus shall God bring with Him, for if Jesus rose from the dead, so must all His people! We sorrow not as those without hope! We commit our precious dust to the earth, but it is only for a while. We lay it low, but we thank God it can go no lower! Corruption shall not consume, but refine this flesh until, when the trumpet sounds, the very body that we wept over shall rise again in sacred luster, fashioned in the image of Christ's own glorious body! Death is robbed of all its sting when we remember this—the soul is in the company of the living Savior! The body, like Esther, is bathing itself in spices to make it ready for the embrace of the all-glorious Lord! The old, worn-out vesture is laid aside awhile, until God makes it fit to be worn in the high festivals of Heaven! Oh, if Jesus lives, we wipe away the tears and we carry not our dead to their graves with sound of weeping and with the noise of lamentation, but with the sound of holy Psalms and shouts of victory! We lower the conquering champion into his rest in sure and certain hope that he shall rise to participate in His great Captain's everlasting victory! "Christ is risen" is the cure for wounded affections when the wound rankles through unbelief.

Further, remark that this blessed Doctrine, that Christ is risen, cures us of the *difficulties we have as to conversation with heavenly things*. It is earlier in the Chapter, though I mention it last. The angel appeared unto the women—two angels appeared to certain other women, according to Luke, and instead of speaking to the angels, they ran away. They were afraid and amazed. "Fear not," said the angels, "for we know that you seek Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here, for He is risen." Now I think if you and I were in a state of full faith in the risen Savior, if we met an angel, we would not be amazed. If we saw an angel—if once again the

spirits could put on the semblance of bodies and soon appear to the organs of our vision, I think if we were full of faith, we would avail ourselves of the opportunity to learn something about them, and about the Heaven they dwell in and, most of all, about their Lord! Oh, I think I would like an hour with some bright spirit to question him about some of those mysteries that, as yet, eye has not seen. If it were lawful for him to utter what, perhaps, he might not tell—if it were lawful for him to tell of some of the glories within the veil, and some of the mysteries of those streets of gold, and those walls of twelve foundations of precious stones, our inquisitiveness might take a holy turn! At any rate, if we might not ask questions, we would hold fellowship. We would be glad to see these spirits that are so near akin to us, for even now—*even now*—we are not strangers to them! They bear us up in their hands lest we dash our foot against a stone, and we are come to the general assembly and Church of the Firstborn—we are come to the host of angels and to those whose names are written in Heaven! We are come to that innumerable company, even now, by faith, and if we could get a glimpse of them, we would not be afraid.

Now it is a fact that Christ is risen that makes an open door between us and the spiritual world. A Man in flesh and blood is gone into the skies! A Man who ate a piece of broiled fish, and of a honeycomb—a Man that said, “Handle Me and see that it is I, Myself”—a Man of whom it is written, “He showed them His hands and His side”—a Man who said to one of His acquaintances, “Reach here your finger. Behold My hands, and reach here your hand and thrust it into My side”—such a Man is gone into the excellent Glory and He has opened a living way by which our union with angels and with the angels’ Master is complete! Oh, here-in there is subject for spiritual minds to greatly rejoice—and the difficulties which unbelief would put in our way are swept away by the full conviction that the Lord is risen—is risen indeed!

But I must not dwell longer on that. The great power of unbelief receives its antidote in the blessed and well-ascertained fact that Jesus is risen. Now let us see still further—

III. SOME OTHER CONSEQUENCES OF OUR LORD’S RISING. We observe in the Chapter that one of the first consequences of His rising was a more general, a more intense, *a more universal activity in the Church*. He said to them, “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.” We see again, “He was received up into Heaven, and sat at the right hand of God, and they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them.” From which I gather that if we did more fully perceive that Christ is risen, we should be, all of us, more active! It is very hard to get up enthusiasm for an idea—certainly in England it is—it may not be in some more mercurial clime among a more sensitive and responsive people—but here we do not generally get into a state of enthusiasm for an idea. But what men are there that are not moved to enthusiasm for a person? A man, a person, will always command more fully the activity of human hearts than will a mere Doctrine

or dogma! Bring before me in history the leading principles, and you will generally find that the principles did little or nothing until they were embodied in a man—and when some bold man represented the principles, then the principles opened the man’s way to human hearts! It is so in the Church. I suppose some people are enthusiastic about creeds and about dogmas. I don’t know, but I know this—the most enthusiastic people in all the Church are those that know Him, love Him, live with Him and serve Him! The enthusiasm of Heaven seems to be about them. They cast their crowns at His feet and they sing, “Hallelujah,” when they behold God and the Lamb! There is an adoration of persons, and their souls are moved by the Presence of blessed and Divine Persons, and so in the Church it should be. We have a living Savior, a living Captain! He is not out of the fight. He still looks down upon us. He is still fighting with us in the grand old cause. Oh, who of us will be a laggard when the Captain’s eyes are upon him? Jesus is looking on—Jesus, the Author and the Finisher of our faith, is looking on the course! Let us run with patience because we look at and are looked upon by Him. May this principle his Master!

But, in addition to this cause, we find that the Presence of Christ *gave to the Church at that time miracles*. The risen Savior endowed them with unknown tongues, and they spoke, though they were uninstructed men, so that men understand them from every clime! They began to work wonders. Our faith leads us not to these, nor will it. This is wisely denied us. At the same time, though we work not miracles in the outer world, all true preaching is miracle working! Commonly to declare a Doctrine, commonly to speak a thing well—all this may be no preaching as God would call it—eloquence, oratory, refinement, the putting of words well together—this is common to all mankind. After their measure, all may speak—after some sort. This is not God’s work. But true preaching, *soul-saving preaching*, the Spirit’s voice speaking through man—this is miracle working! You know, my Brothers, there are some who cannot preach—they say they cannot preach the Gospel. I mean this—they will preach sermons to God’s living people, to God’s quickened ones, and then they say, “As for you that are dead in sin, I have nothing, to say to you.” That is their notion. They are very candid. *God never sent them to preach the Gospel and they acknowledge they cannot do it*. Well, it is a pity that they should try, but another man whom God sends knows, as the other did, that the hearer who is unconverted is dead in trespasses and sins. He knows that ordinarily to speak to such people would be a very idle thing. He knows he dare not attempt it in his own strength, and that to say to the dead, to the spiritual dead, “Live,” is, in itself, the extreme of folly. But he feels that God is with him, that God has sent him—and looking like Ezekiel of old, upon the congregation of sinners, as in the valley full of dry bones, he does not say—“I have nothing to say to you, you are dead.” But bursting out in His Master’s name, he says, “You dry bones, hear the Word of the Lord! Thus says the Lord, ‘you dry bones, ‘Live!’” God sent the man and while he prophesies thus upon the

bones, they come together, bone to his bone and live! The two Apostles at the beautiful gate of the Temple did not say to the lame man. "You are lame. We trust in God's name you will get cured of your problem—we have nothing to say to you." No, they said, "In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" They bid the man do what he could not do, but as they bade him do it, the strength came to him to do it! And while we say to the sinner, "Believe and live," God sends the power of the Gospel command, and they do repent, do believe, do live, do fly for refuge to the hope set before them in the Gospel! And to this day each Christian is a miracle worker in his own sphere, in the sphere of spiritual things! He opens blind eyes by God's power, and unstops deaf ears by Jesus' might. He, too, raises the dead. He, too, casts out devils, still in the higher realm, the realm of mind, the realm of spirit! And our ascended Lord has given us this—this power—we receive it entirely from Him because all power is given unto Him in Heaven and in earth! Therefore, we go and teach all nations—and that teaching works results!

I must not detain you longer, except to notice that in consequence of our Lord's Resurrection, *there is Divine Power, the highest degree of Power concentrated in the Person of Jesus Christ*. He was always God and now as God—Man Mediator—all Divine Power is concentrated in Him. And this Power is not laid up there to be idle—not as so much stored up ammunition never to be expended, for notice the last verse, "The Lord working with them." Is it not a delightful thought that Jesus is not a Sufferer, but He is still a Worker? "The Lord working with them." Redeeming work is done! Saving work is going on! "The Lord is working with them." We do not see it, but He is working. Often that power which is least seen is most mighty, and certainly in the Church that which is not perceptible by the senses is the strongest! Believer, if the conversion of the world rested with the Church—if the gathering of the elect depended upon us—it would never be done! But God makes us work for this end and so He first works *in* us, and then He works *with* us. How this ought to encourage us to work! This little arm, what can it do? But that Eternal Arm, what can it *not* do? This tongue, how feebly can it speak—but the voice of Him who spoke as never Man spoke, how persuasively can it speak? Our spirits, narrow and limited, what can they effect? But His unbounded Spirit, what cannot He perform? Oh, let everyone here who has been serving his Master, bid farewell to everything like a discouraging or desponding thought! The great army of God is not defeated! It never can be—in the long run it must conquer! And even those parts of the Divine Strategy of our great Commander which looked like retreat, are only portions of His perpetual victory! He is fighting on, and will win the battle, even to the end!

It is a great consolation to the Believer to know that Jesus lives, and lives in triumph! I remember, and I cannot help repeating what I have told you before—I remember when in an hour of the most overwhelming sorrow through which a mind could pass, this one thing restored and comforted me! After that dreadful catastrophe in the Surrey Gardens,

when my mind gave way and my sorrow was extreme—when I had almost lost my reason for some three weeks and was desponding and brokenhearted—I was alone, walking in solitude, mourning, and weeping as I did day and night. And all of a sudden there came into my mind, as though it dropped from Heaven, this text, “Him has God highly exalted and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.” You know the rest. The thought that crossed my mind was this, I am one of His soldiers and I am lying in a ditch to die. It does not matter—the King has won the victory—Christ has won the victory—Christ is to the fore. If I die like a dog, I care not! The crown is on His head! He is safely exalted.” In a moment I was happy! My trouble was gone! I found myself perfectly restored! I fell on my knees in a solitary place, praising God who, in Infinite Mercy, had made that text to be a balm to my spirit!

Now there may be someone here who feels much as I did—disconsolate, cast down. If you really love Jesus, there is not a nobler balm for your care than this—He reigns! He is glorious! The government is not taken from His shoulders. Our King is no captive! Our Emperor has not yielded up His sword! Our Prince Imperial is not banished! Our Empire never fails, the city of Jerusalem is not besieged! There shall be no lack of bread in her streets! “God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved. God shall help her and that right early.” Let the heathen rage! Let the people and nations be moved. Let the whole earth rock and reel, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea—God is our refuge and strength—our very present help in time of trouble. God reigns and the Kingdom of Jesus is settled by an unchangeable decree. Therefore lift up your heads, you saints, for your redemption draws near, and even now clap your joyful hands and go back, again, to the conflict of life until your Master calls you Home like true heroes, that henceforth you shall know no fear, and shall never turn your backs in the day of battle! God grant it may be so for His name’s sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 16.**

Though it is not without profit to sit over against the sepulcher of our buried Lord, we cannot leave Him there, even in thought. So let us go and look at the empty tomb and read of His Resurrection.

Verse 1. *And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him.* To finish the funeral which had been hurriedly undertaken just at the close of the day.

2. *And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun.* Came to do needless action—to embalm One who was no longer dead—but since their love suggested it, their Lord accepted it. I have no doubt there is many a thing done by gracious people, or thought to be done, that may be, in itself, quite su-

perfluous, but yet our Lord often accepts what His own people ridicule. So long as the heart sincerely meant to pay a loving homage, even though it is mistaken in some respects—even though it should bring spice and aloes for One who is not dead—yet is it accepted. “They came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun.” Another sun had risen. The Sun of suns had dawned upon the earth!

3. *And they said among themselves, Who shall roll away the stone from the door of the sepulcher for us? We often trouble ourselves about difficulties that do not exist.*

4, 5. *And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away, for it was very great. And entering into the sepulcher, they saw a young man. An angel in that form.*

5-7. *Sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment: and they were frightened. And he said unto them, Be not frightened. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified: He is risen: He is not here: behold the place where they laid Him. But go your way. After you have satisfied your own eyes, go your way.*

7. *Tell His disciples and Peter that He goes before you into Galilee: there shall you see Him, as He said unto you.* There are some beautiful touches in that short speech. “Tell His disciples and Peter”—the one that denied that he was His disciple—tell *him*—if you omit anybody else, do not forget poor Peter! And then that other word, “As He said unto you.” Christ’s words are always fulfilled, and if even an angel should come from Heaven to tell God’s people of some choice blessing that was coming to them, it would only be a blessing that Christ had already promised! “As He said unto you.”

8-9. *And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulcher; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they anything to any man; for they were afraid. Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils. A wonder, therefore, of mercy! It is no surprise that she was first at the sepulcher, and no wonder that Christ should first appear to her. I believe that there are some who have risen up from the lowest estate who feel so much the power of love in their hearts because of what the Lord has done for them, that they are among the first to see Jesus when He is to be seen—and He appears to them first.*

10, 11. *And she went and told them that had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that He was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not. It was what He said would be. It was what she declared had been. But they will make Mary Magdalene mistaken. Their own Sister, whom they knew to be truthful, they would not believe!*

12, 13. *After that He appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them. Well, it was a hard thing to believe that the Crucified Christ had really risen from the dead, but surely with two more witnesses, they ought to have been ready to believe!*

14. *Afterward He appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them who had seen Him after He was risen. When He had upbraided them for their unbelief, He spoke to them in many ways, which the other Evangelists mention.*

15, 16. *And He said unto them, Go you into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.* There stands the commission, then—the grand summary of Christ’s message to a perishing world! We must never alter it. We must not leave out the baptism, or put it before the believing, or leave out the solemn sentence with which it closes—though there are some that burn and hate very dreadfully when they get there! The Lord clear their throats and help them to preach the Gospel as He bade them preach it—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believes not shall be damned.”

17, 18. *And these signs shall follow them that believe: In My name shall they cast out devils: they shall speak with new tongues: they shall take up serpents: and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.* And so they did. So long as the age of miracles lasted, their faith was proved to the world by such miracles as this! That age lasted long enough to convince the world when it could be so convinced. Now is there space for faith, and if we have less of evidence, day by day, yet have we all the evidence of all the ages to look back upon!

19, 20. *So then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into Heaven, and sat at the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with signs following. Amen.*

—Adapted from the *C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE MESSAGES OF OUR LORD'S LOVE

NO. 2060

BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 5, 1888.

“Go your way, tell His disciples and Peter that He goes before you into Galilee: there shall you see Him, as He said unto you.”
Mark 16:7.

SEE, Brethren! Jesus delights to meet His people. He is no sooner risen from the dead than He sends a message by an angel to say that He will meet His disciples. His delight is in them. He loves them with a very tender love and He is happiest when He is in their midst. Do not think that you will have to entreat and persuade your Lord to come to you. He delights in near and dear fellowship. The heavenly Bridegroom finds solace in your company if you are indeed espoused to Him. Oh, that you were more anxious to be with Him!

Our Lord knows that to His true people the greatest joy they ever have is for Him to meet them. The disciples were at their saddest. Their Lord, as they thought, was dead. They had just passed the dreariest Sabbath of their lives, for He was in the tomb. And now, to comfort them, He sends no message but this—that He will meet them. He knew that there would be magic in that news to cheer their aching hearts. He would meet them—that would be all-sufficient consolation—“Go into Galilee. There shall you see Him.”

If all the sorrows of God's people could be poured out in one vast pile, what a mountain they would make! How varied our distresses! How diverse our depressions! But, Beloved, if Jesus will meet us, all the sadness will fly away and all the sorrow will grow light. Only give us His company and we have all things. You know what I mean, many of you. Our Lord has made our hearts to leap for joy in sorrowful times. When we have been filled with physical pain, His company has made us forget the body's weakness.

And when we have newly come from the grave and our heart has been ready to break through bereavement, the sight of the Savior has sweetened our bitter cup. In His Presence we have felt resigned to the great Father's will and content to say, “It is the Lord: let Him do what seems Him good.” Until the day break and the shadows flee away forever we want nothing but our Well-Beloved's company. “Abide with me! Abide with me!”—this is our one prayer. And if we have that fulfilled, all other desires may wait their turn.

My subject is chosen with a view to our coming, as we always do on the first day of the week, to this table of communion. I want every child of God here to seek after, no, to gain full fellowship with Christ. I long to enjoy it myself that I may preach a Savior in whose Presence I live. I long for you to enjoy it—that you may hear not my voice—but His voice, which is

sweeter than the music of angels' harps. Oh, that those who do not know our Lord may now come, by His Grace, hungering after His surpassing sweetness! He is willing to come to you. A prayer will find Him. A tear will draw Him. A look of faith will hold Him fast. Cast yourself on Jesus and His open arms will joyously receive you.

But now to the text. I shall take it just as it stands and make five observations upon it.

I. The first is—JESUS, THAT HE MAY MEET HIS PEOPLE, ISSUES INVITATIONS AND THE INVITATIONS ARE VERY GRACIOUS—"Go, tell His disciples and Peter." "Tell His disciples." The invitation is most gracious as directed to them—for "they all forsook Him and fled." On that night, that doleful night when He most needed company, they slept. And when He was taken off to the hall of Caiaphas, they fled—yes, every one of them. There was not a steadfast spirit among them. They all fled. "Shame on them!" you say? Yes, but Jesus was not ashamed of them. For in one of the first speeches of His glorious life on earth He specially mentions them.

"Tell My disciples"—not picking and choosing here and there a heart more faithful than the rest but mentioning the whole cowardly company, He says, "Tell My disciples." Brethren, disciples of Christ, Jesus would meet us now. Let us hasten to His Presence. Not one among us dares plume himself upon his fidelity. We have all at times played the coward. We may each one of us hide our faces when we think of our Lord's most faithful love to us. We have never acted towards Him according to His deserts. If He had banished us—if He had said, "I will no more acknowledge this dastardly company," we could not have wondered.

But He invites us all, all who are His disciples—invites us to Himself. Will you stay away? Will any of you be satisfied without beholding that dear Countenance, more marred than that of any man and yet more lovely than the face of angels? Come, all who follow Him, for He bids you come. Hear the address of the message—"Tell My disciples."

But the bounty and beauty of His Grace lay in this—that one had been worse than the rest and, therefore, for him there is a special finger to beckon him, a special word to call him—"Tell my disciples AND PETER." He that denied his Lord—he that cursed as he denied, he who, after boisterous self-confidence, trembled at the jest of a maid—is *he* to be called? Yes, "Tell My disciples *and Peter*." If any of you have behaved worse to your Master than others, you are peculiarly called to come to Him now. You have grieved Him and you have been grieving because you have grieved Him. You have been brought to repentance after having slid away from Him and now He seals your pardon by inviting you to Himself.

He bids you not to stand in the background but to come in with the rest and commune with Him. Peter, where are you? The crowing of the cock is still in your ears and the tear is still in your eyes—yet come and welcome—for you love Him. He knows you do. You are grieved that a doubt should be put upon your love. Come, He has forgiven you. He has given you tokens of it in your broken heart and tearful eye. Come, Peter! Come, if nobody else should come. Jesus Christ invites you by name before any other. In this place may be Believers who have acted strangely

and have even forsaken the Lord and they are now bemoaning themselves. Go on with your holy sorrow but come to your Lord. Be not content till you have seen Him, till you have laid hold upon Him by a fresh grip of faith and till you can say, "My Beloved is mine and I am His."

Most tender, then, are the invitations which Jesus issues. Part of the tenderness now lies in the lips which deliver the message on the Lord's behalf. The women said—Jesus has said to us, by an angel, He will go before us into Galilee and there shall you see Him. I am always thankful that God has committed the ministry of the Word not to angels but to us poor men. As I told you a little while ago, you may grow tired of me and my stammering. But yet they are more suitable for you than nobler strains might be. I have no doubt that if you had an angel to preach to you there would be a very great crowd and for a time you would say, "It is wonderful."

But it would be so cold from lack of human sympathy that you would soon weary of the lofty style. An angel would try to be kind—as became his heavenly nature—but he would not be kin and you must necessarily miss the kindness which comes of kinship. I speak to you as bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh—I speak to you as Teacher, for I am a teacher. I speak to you as a disciple, for I am a disciple and I dare not think myself greater than the least of you. Let us come hand in hand to our dear Savior and all together let us pray Him to manifest Himself to us as He does not unto the world. This, then, is my first point—His invitations are gracious.

II. Secondly, we see in our text that JESUS KEEPS HIS PROMISE. "I will go before you into Galilee." If you turn to Mark 14:27, 28, you will see that He told them before He died, "All you shall be offended because of Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered. But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee." He will be where He says He will be. Jesus never breaks a promise. It is a great vexation, especially to us who are very busy, when somebody says, "will you meet me at such-and-such a place?" "Yes, at what hour?" The hour is appointed. We are there. Thank God we never were a half minute behind time when it was possible to be punctual.

But punctuality is a lesson which very few persons as yet have learned. We wait and wait wearily and perhaps we leave the place to let our dilatory friends know that if they are in eternity we are in time and cannot afford to lose any of it. Many people make an engagement and break it—as if it were just nothing at all to be guilty of a practical lie. It is not so with Jesus—He says, "I will go before you into Galilee." And into Galilee He will go. When He promises to meet His people He will meet with them without fail and without delay.

Let us dwell on this appointment for a minute. Why did our Lord say that He would go to Galilee? Was it because it was His old haunt and being risen from the dead, He desired to go back to the spot where He had been accustomed to be—to the lake and to the hillside? Surely there is something in that. It was their old haunt, too—they were fishermen on that lake and He would take them back to the place where a thousand

memories would be awakened by their voices, like echoes which lie asleep among the hills. Besides it would provide witnesses to His identity, for the Galileans knew Him well—since there He had been brought up. He would go where He was known and show Himself in His former places of resort.

Perhaps, too, it was because the place was despised. He has risen and He will go to Galilee. He is not ashamed to be called the Galilean and the Nazarene. The Risen One does not go to the halls of princes but to the villages of peasants and fishermen. There was no pride in Jesus—not even the smell of that fire had passed upon Him. He was ever meek and lowly in heart. Did he not also go to Galilee because it was some little distance from Jerusalem so that those who would meet Him might have a little trouble getting there? Our Beloved would be sought after. A journey after Him will endear His society.

He will not meet you at Jerusalem, perhaps—at least, not the whole company of you. But He will show Himself by the sea in distant Galilee. Do you think He went to Galilee because it was “Galilee of the Gentiles”—that He might get as near to us Gentiles as His mission allowed? He was sent as a Preacher only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But He traveled to the very edge of His diocese to get as near to the Gentiles (I mean to ourselves) as He could. Oh, happy word for us aliens!—“I will go before you into Galilee.” So He said. And when He left the tomb, He kept His Word.

Now, Beloved, we have His Word for it that He will come and meet us where we are met together. “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.” And does He not keep His Word? How many times in our assemblies, great and small, have we said, “The Lord was there!” How frequently have we forgotten preacher and fellow worshippers, feeling ourselves in the Presence of a Greater than mortal man! Our eyes of faith have seen the King in His beauty, revealing His love to us. Oh, yes! He keeps His promise. He comes to His people and He never disappoints them. I think this is particularly true of the table of communion.

How often He has met us here! I am compelled to repeat my personal testimony. I have never omitted being at the Lord's Table on any Sabbath of my life for many years past, except when I have been ill, or unable to attend. And I am therefore able to answer the question—does not frequency diminish the solemnity of the ordinance? I have not found it so. But instead it grows upon me. That broken bread, that poured out wine, the emblems of His flesh and blood—these bring Him very near. It seems as if sense lent aid to faith. And through these two windows of agates and gate of carbuncle, we come very near to our Lord.

What have we here but Himself under instructive emblems? What do we do here but remember Him? What is our business here but to show His death until He comes? And so, though we may not have seen Him in converse by the way—for our eyes have been dimmed—yet we have seen Him in the breaking of bread. May it be always so! May we prove that Jesus keeps His pledge. He will be with us even now. Suppose Jesus had said that He would come into this place tonight in literal flesh and blood—

you would be all sitting in expectation and saying to each other—"When will He come?"

The preacher would be waiting to drop back, or fall upon his knees in adoration, while His Master stood in the front. You will not see Him so. But may your faith, which is much better than eyesight, realize Him as the present Christ near to each one of you. If He were here in the flesh, He might stand here and then He might be near to me but far off from my friends yonder. But coming in spirit He can be equally near to us all and speak to each one of us personally—as though each one were the only person present

III. My third observation is, JESUS IS ALWAYS FIRST AT EVERY APPOINTED MEETING. So runs the text—"He goes before you into Galilee." Remember that promise, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I"—not "there will I be." Jesus is there *before* His disciples reach the place. The first to reach the house is He who is first in the house. *We come to Him*—it is not that we meet and then He comes to us. But He goes before us and we gather to Him.

Does it not teach us that He is the Shepherd? He said, "Smite the Shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered. But after I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee." He would take up the shepherd's place again and go before the flock. And the sheep would take up the position of the flock again—no longer scattered but following at the Shepherd's heel. Great Master, come tonight—call Your sheep to Yourself! Speak to us, look upon us—and we will arise and follow You.

Is He not first, next, because He is the center? We gather to Him. You must choose a center before you can mark the circumference. When Israel traveled through the wilderness, the first place to pitch upon for an encampment was the place where the tabernacle and the ark should rest and then the tents were set around it. Jesus is our Center. He must therefore be first and we rejoice to hear Him say, "I will go before you into Galilee." He will take the first place and we will cluster about Him as bees around their queen. Do you always gather to the name of Christ, Beloved? If you gather to the name of any minister, or any sect, you gather amiss. Our gatherings must be unto the Lord Jesus—He must be the center and He alone. Let us take note of that.

Next, He goes before us naturally—because He is the Host. If there is to be a feast, the first person to be there is the one who provides it—the master or mistress who sits at the head of the table. It would never do for the guests to be there first and then for the master to come hurrying home, crying, "Excuse me—I quite forgot that you were to be here at six o'clock!" Oh no, the host must be first! When Jesus bids us come to Him and says He will sup with us and we with Him, He will be sure to be first, so as to prepare the feast. He goes before us into Galilee.

But surely, the reason why He is first is this—that He is more ready for us than we are for Him. It takes us time to get ready for communion, to dress our souls and collect our thoughts. Are you all ready for the Lord's Supper tonight? Some of you, perhaps, have come carelessly here and yet you are members of the Church and mean to stay for the Supper. Beloved,

try to come with a prepared heart—for the communion will be to you very much what you make it. And if your thoughts and desires are not right, what can the outward emblems be to you? On our Lord's part all things are ready and He waits to receive you and to bless you. Therefore He is first at the appointed meeting place.

I may also add that He is much more eager to have fellowship with you than you are to have fellowship with Him. It is a strange thing that it should be so but so it is. He, the great Lover of our souls, burns with a passionate desire to press His people to His heart. And we—the objects of such a matchless love—stand back and reward the ardor of His affection with lukewarmness. It must not be so on this occasion. I have said to my Lord, "Let me either feast upon You or hunger after You." I pray that you may have such a burning thirst for Jesus at this hour that you must drink of His cup or pine with thirst for Him.

IV. The fourth observation is this—THE LORD JESUS REVEALS HIMSELF TO HIS PEOPLE. How does the text run? "He goes before you into Galilee. There shall you see Him." The main object is to *see* Him. He will go to Galilee on purpose that He may reveal Himself to them. My dear Brethren, this is what they needed beyond all else. Their sorrow was because they thought Him dead. Their joy would be because they *saw* Him alive.

Their griefs were multiform but this one consolation would end them all. If they could but see Jesus they would look their fears away. What have you come here for tonight, children of God? I trust that you can answer, "Sir, we would see Jesus." If our Master will come and we shall feel His Presence, it will not matter how feebly I speak, or how poor the service may be in itself. You will say, "It was good to be there, for the Lord drew near to us in all the glory of His love." His Presence is what you want. And this is what He readily gives. Jesus is very familiar with His people.

Some worship a Savior who sits enthroned above in the stately dignity of indifference. But our Lord is not so. Though reigning in Heaven, He is still conversant with His people below. He is a Brother born for adversity. Spiritually He communes with us. Do you know what the company of Christ is? Are you altogether taken up with *doctrines* about Him, or with *ceremonies* that concern Him? If so, yours is a poor life. The joy of the inner life is to *know* and to *speak* with and to *dwell* with the Lord Jesus. Do you understand this? I charge you—be not satisfied till you come to *personal* and *intimate* fellowship with your Lord. Short of this, you are short of the privilege which He sees you need—for this is His great promise, "There shall you see Me."

What is more, this sight of Him is what our Lord effectually bestows. Jesus not only exhibits Himself but He opens our eyes that we may enjoy the sight. "There shall you see Me." He may be manifest and yet blind eyes will not see Him. Blessed Master, come and take the scales away and make our hearts capable of spiritual perception! It is not everybody that can see God and yet God is everywhere. The eye must first be cleansed. Jesus says, "There shall you see Me." And He knows how to open our eyes so that we do see Him. Our Lord can make this to be the absorbing occu-

pation of His people. "He goes before you into Galilee"—and what then? "There shall you see Him."

Why, they went fishing, did they not? Yes but they were called off from that. "There shall you see Him." They took a great haul of fish, did they not? Yes, yes, yes. But that was a mere incident—the grand fact was that they *saw* Him. I pray the Lord to make the one occupation of our lives the SEEING of HIM. May all the lower lights grow dim. Where are the stars at midday? They are all in their places but you only see the sun. Where are a thousand things when Christ appears? They are all where they should be but you only see *Him*. May the Lord cause all other loves to vanish and Himself, alone, to fill our hearts—so that it may be true of us, "There shall you see Him"!

I have thus far proceeded, crying to the Holy Spirit for help and now comes the fifth observation, with which we close.

V. OUR LORD REMEMBERS HIS OWN PROMISES. It was before He died that He said He would go before them into Galilee and now that He has risen from the dead, He says, by the mouth of His angel, "There shall you see Him, as He said unto you." The rule of Christ's action is His own Word. What He has said He will perform. You and I forget His promises but He never does. "As He said unto you" is the remembrance of all that He has spoken. Why does our Lord remember and repeat what He has so graciously spoken? He does so because He spoke with foresight and forethought and care.

We make promises and forget them because we did not consider well the matter before we spoke. But if we have thought, calculated, weighed, estimated, and come to a deliberate resolve before we speak—then we earnestly remember what we resolved upon. No promise of our Lord Jesus has been spoken in haste to be repented of afterwards. Infinite wisdom directs infinite love. And when infinite love takes the pen to write a promise, infallible wisdom dictates every syllable.

Jesus does not forget, because He spoke the promise with His whole heart. It is not every tongue that represents a heart at all. But even though true people, we say many things which we mean but there is no depth of feeling, no potent emotion, no stirring of the heart's center. Our Lord, when He said, "You shall be scattered. But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee," spoke with a heavy heart, with many a melting sigh. And His whole soul went with the promise which closed the mournful scene. He has purchased what He promised—purchased it with His blood—and therefore He speaks most solemnly and with His whole heart. There is no trifling on Christ's part with one to whom He makes a promise—and therefore He never forgets.

And once more—His honor is bound up with every promise. If He had said that He would go to Galilee and He had not gone, His disciples would have felt that He had made a mistake, or that He had failed. Brethren, if Christ's promises were to fail, what should we think of them? But He will never jeopardize His faithfulness and veracity—

***"As well might He His being quit,
As break His promise or forget."***

Let the words of man be blown away like the chaff. But the words of Jesus must stand—for He will not tarnish His Truth—which is one of the choicest of His crown jewels.

I want you to turn over this thought in your quietude. Jesus remembers all that He has spoken. Let not our hearts forget. Go to Him with His Covenant bonds and gracious promises—He will recognize His own signature. He will honor His own promises to the utmost and none that trust in Him shall complain of His having exaggerated.

I have done when I have said just this—I am very anxious that at this time we should come into real fellowship with Christ at the table. Jesus, You have made us hunger after You—will You not feed us? You have made us thirst after You—will You not supply that thirst? Do You think that our Beloved means to tantalize us? Our hunger is such that it would break through stone walls—shall we find His heart hard as a stone wall? No. He will clear the way and we on our part will burst through all obstacles to come to Him.

“But,” says one, “how can *I* come to Him? Poor unknown, unworthy one that I am?” Such were the disciples at the lake. They were fishermen—and when He came to them they had been toiling all night. Are you working for Him? Then He will come to you. Expect Him now. “Ah,” says one, “I have been working without success”—you are a poor minister whose congregation is falling off, whose Church is not increased by conversions—you have toiled all the night and taken nothing. Or you are a Sunday school teacher who cannot see her girls converted. Or a Brother who mourns that his boys are not coming to Christ.

Well I see who you are. You are just the sort of people that Jesus came to—for they had toiled all night in vain. Are you hungry? Jesus cries, “Children, have you any meat?” He comes to you and enquires about *your* hunger—while on the shore He has a fire of coals and fish and bread laid thereon. “Come and dine,” says He. The table is spread. Come to Himself! He is your food, your hope, your joy, your Heaven. Come to Him—give Him no rest till He reveals Himself to you and you know for sure that it is your Lord who embraces you. So may He do, to each of us just now, for His sweet love's sake! Amen.

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

JESUS APPEARING TO MARY MAGDALENE

NO. 625

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 16, 1865,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils.”
Mark 16:9.*

THE doctrine of a risen Savior is exceedingly precious. The Resurrection is the cornerstone of the entire building of Christianity. It is the keystone of the arch of our salvation. It would take us many a discourse to set forth all the streams of living water which flow from this one sacred source—the Resurrection of our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But to know that He has risen and to have fellowship with Him as such—communing with the risen Savior by possessing a risen life! Seeing Him leave the tomb by leaving the tomb of worldliness ourselves—this is even more precious!

The doctrine is the basis of the experience, but as the flower is more lovely than the root, so is the experience of fellowship with the risen Savior more lovely than the doctrine itself. I would have you believe that Christ rose from the dead so as to sing of it and derive all the consolation which it is possible for you to extract from this well-ascertained and well-witnessed fact. But I beseech you rest not content even there.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I bid you aspire to see Christ Jesus by the eye of faith, and though you may not touch Him, yet may you be privileged to converse with Him and to know that He is risen—you yourselves being risen in Him to newness of life. To know a crucified Savior as having crucified all my sins is a rich kind of knowledge. And to know a risen Savior as having justified me and to realize that He has bestowed upon me new life, given me to be a new creature through His own newness of life—this is a high style of experience. Short of it, none of us ought to be satisfied to rest.

In fine, I would have you this morning, like the blessed Magdalene, among those to whom Jesus Christ should manifest Himself after His Resurrection, as He does *not* unto the world. Let us come at once to the consideration of this first appearance of the Savior after He had left the tomb. He appears to Mary Magdalene. There must have been some reason for the choice. We shall notice first of all, who she was. Then, how she sought. And, thirdly, how she found.

I. First we shall have to take into consideration this morning who SHE WAS. Jesus “appeared first to Mary Magdalene.” Why? One answer might be because He chose to do so. For in His sovereignty He may reveal Himself to whomever He wills and He may withhold Himself from whomever He shall please. “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will

have compassion on whom I will have compassion,” may be a very grating truth to human ears, but it is a Truth of God for all that and he who does not acknowledge it scarcely puts God into His true place as sitting upon the Throne and doing as He wills with His own.

I should be content to know that He appeared to Mary Magdalene first and not to ask another question if I thought it unwise to ask it, for “He is the Lord and let Him do what seems Him good.” And if He will reveal Himself first to her, let it be so. Here I see His Grace and say, let His name be magnified in the sovereignty of His love. But we may go a little further into the matter, I think, and perhaps find some reasons. He revealed Himself first to Mary Magdalene, a woman. Was it not most meet that a woman should first see the risen Savior? She was first in the transgression—let her be first in the justification.

In yon garden she was first to work our woe—let her in that other garden be the first to see Him who works our weal. She takes the apple of that bitter tree which brings us all our sorrow—let her be the first to see that mighty Gardener who has planted a tree which brings forth fruit unto everlasting life! A woman let it be, for woman was last at the Cross and last at the sepulcher—let her be earliest to return. The Marys embalmed the Savior and put Him into the tomb—let one of their company be selected to be the first to see Him. Sisters in Christ Jesus, there is a curse which falls more heavily on you than on others—a curse which is peculiar to you. But here you have reason to rejoice since, “Unto you a Child is born, unto you a Son is given.”

It is by that child-bearing which brings you sorrow that we have been delivered—even through the birth of Him, the Messiah, Emmanuel, God with us—whom you are privileged first to see because He is peculiarly yours. “The Seed of the woman who shall bruise the serpent’s head.” The text seems to indicate that the particular reason why He appeared to this woman first was because out of her He had cast seven devils. Perhaps no person mentioned in the Scripture has been more singularly slandered than Mary Magdalene. It has been supposed that she was a harlot and her name has been appended to societies which have the merciful object of endeavoring to reclaim the fallen.

In that sense let me say Magdalene never was a “Magdalen.” She was not an unchaste woman. I think I can show you that it is quite impossible that she could have been. She was a woman of substance and ministered to Christ’s necessities. She was possessed of wealth and property and spent what she had upon the Savior and was not likely, therefore, to have been one who earned her living by the pitiful trade of her sin. Moreover, she had seven devils and that, of itself, rendered her utterly incapable, one would think, of having been guilty of the sins of the flesh. A woman, a demoniac, mad with seven devils! Who would dream that a poor creature under so dreadful a torture as this could have been a harlot?

The thing is clearly impossible to any thoughtful mind. But mark you, I believe if Magdalene were here herself, she would not regret that her pure name has been appended to these poor fallen ones. Here she has communion with her Lord and Master who was, “numbered with the transgressors,” and who gave Himself and all that He had in order that He

might lift poor sinners from the degradation into which they had fallen. "No," Magdalene would say, "do not blot my name off from yonder building. Do not take it from that Rescue Society. I, though I have been kept from this iniquity, am well content to be the patron of all those who seek to win sinners from their sin."

Nevertheless, there is this about it—and here is where the mistake first arose—the possession of a devil is typical, in the Word of God, of sin. When we want to translate the miracle into spiritual meaning we are always compelled to use the indwelling of a devil to be the metaphor—the picture of the indwelling of sin. Now as Mary Magdalene had seven devils, though she was not, therefore, any the greater sinner for she could not help the devils being there, yet she was thereby the more polluted. She was sevenfold polluted and she becomes most rightly the type of the great sinner, the representative, in fact, of the very class of sinners to whom her name has been given.

She was not *literally* such a sinner, but she was *typically* so, for in her there were seven devils. Typically she stands at the head of those who are the greatest of all sinners against the Law and goodness and Grace of God, but she was not so except as a type. Now I think you see some reason why she should be selected as the first one to be seen by Christ, because she had been a special trophy of Christ's delivering power. In her He had won a special and signal victory over the hosts of Hell—a perfect number of those evil spirits had been entrenched within her and Christ's victorious arm had driven them all out. She would ever be regarded as a most illustrious specimen of what the great Savior can achieve. In this sense, I say, she was fitted to be the first that Jesus Christ should look upon and speak to. Out of all His disciples who were daily with Him I know not of one who had experienced such a cure as that which had fallen to her lot.

Let us learn from this, that the greatness of our sin before conversion should never make us think that we may not be specially favored with the very highest grade of fellowship. If Magdalene were not a harlot, yet I say she stands as the type of those who are possessors of seven sins and deadly and damnable sins, too. And inasmuch as this woman is taken into the most intimate communion with Christ and has the priority even above Peter and James and John, there is no reason, poor fallen Sinner, why *you* should not have as rich a feast at the banquet of Divine mercy as the very best and most chaste, the most upright, pure and clean!

If you come to Christ, if the seven devils are cast out of you, all these things shall never be mentioned against you! No, but you shall stand on a par with those who were preserved by Providence and restraining Grace from going into gross sins. When the prodigal came back he was not told that he might eat his father's bread, but it must be in the kitchen. He was not told that he might sit at the table, but it must be at the far end, below the salt. No, he sits at the table as the most honored guest and his father feasts with him as if he had never gone astray! So is it forevermore with my God, to the chief of sinners.

You shall not be permitted to eat the crumbs that fall from the table, but the daintiest viands shall be yours! Yes, and if you wish it and will

press forward and seek it, you shall have Benjamin's mess—you shall have more than others. Oh, though you have been black and vile, He can make you so white and fair that He will not blush to treat you as the man in the parable did his little ewe lamb. You shall drink of His cup and sleep in His bosom and be very, very dear to Him, sinner though you have been. This seems to be upon the very surface of the text, that Mary Magdalene was selected to be the first to see the Savior because she was a woman—a woman out of whom seven devils had been cast—a type of a great sinner.

Again, she was a woman in whom mighty Grace had proved its power. It is a well known fact that devils never went out of men willingly in the Savior's day. They had always to be *cast* out. You find them foaming at the mouth as soon as Christ is seen and when He says, "I command you to come out of him," the devil tears the man, rolls him in the dust and subjects him to unusual spasms of pain and agony before he will depart. Thus seven devils had been driven out of Mary—*forced* out of her. Mary was no free-willer. Her deliverance was achieved by *irresistible*, eternal, sovereign Grace. And surely those are privileged to see most of Christ who know that their salvation is not *of* man, neither *by* man, but by the will and power of the gracious God alone!

My Brothers and Sisters, there may be some of you who think that the devils went out of you—I know they did not go out of me. They had to be *driven* out with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. There may be some who boast of the freeness of their wills who think that they can come to Christ of themselves—but Mary did not—for no demoniacs ever sought to find Christ. They rather shunned the Presence of the Savior, and cried, "What have we to do with You? Are You come to torment us before the time?" We rather hated Divine Grace and despised Christ. Offers of mercy were lost upon us. Proclamations of pardon, though honestly given, we trampled under foot. It was only when the mighty Jesus, dressed in robes of love, came forth in the greatness of His strength that we were compelled to yield and our captivity was led captive by His might!

I think that Mary Magdalene was thus selected because she was a choice instance of Irresistible Grace. As soon as the devils were cast out of Mary she appears to have left whatever her earthly position may have been and to have become a constant attendant on the Savior. If you will kindly turn to the eighth chapter of Luke you will see that our Lord was attended not only by men, but by women. "It came to pass afterward, that He went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him and certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities—Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna and many others, which ministered unto Him of their substance."

It appears, then, that Magdalene was one who abode with Christ Jesus—His perpetual and constant companion. Some heard Him occasionally—she heard Him always. Mary and Martha and Lazarus entertained Him with a feast now and then—she was always giving Him of her substance. There were many like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea who were on Christ's side, but did not take up Christ's Cross—she did. In all

His afflictions she was afflicted. When He was “despised and rejected of men,” so was she. She was with Him, bearing His Cross and suffering His reproach.

I like the thought of her being with the Savior. How much she must have seen! She saw the most of His miracles. How much she must have heard! She heard, with her own ears, His choice words. Yes, and in the secret conclave where He opened up His parable to His favored disciples, Mary was privileged to be there with a few other honorable women. I suppose her to have been a woman of ripe years, as probably most of the others were—a matron. She was neglecting no household duties. It is clear she never had any—a woman with seven devils could not have had domestic duties.

One would think her friends must have been exceedingly glad to have her under the teaching of our Lord. And so long as they knew that she was in health with the Savior, they probably thought her to be in the place most fitting for her, as mad people are supposed to be most fitly attended when they are accompanied by their keeper or their physician. Having been a demoniac, she was happily freed from all household ties and bonds. And now what if I say that Christ was her father, her brother, her husband, her friend, her children, her everything? He was her family and there was she, daily with Him.

We read that when Christ preached a certain Truth, “many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him.” Not so the Magdalene. Let Him preach whatever He might, the woman of Magdala still hung upon His lips. To her, every word was honey, every syllable was a pearl. She treasured all, she fed upon all—she abided with Jesus. O dear Friends, I wish *we* could get into this position—when our calling should be to serve Christ and when our place should be always with Christ. I do not wonder that Christ appeared first to her when I recollect that Christ had so long been her first, her chief delight. She had nothing in the world but Christ.

It strikes me that very likely her being a demoniac had so separated her from all human sympathy that there were none that loved her, none that cared for her except the disciples and the society she had found through being a follower of Christ. And Jesus, pitying her, would not send her away as He did the most of those whom He cured.

One thing we must not pass over—she spent her substance in relieving His needs. The bag was not often full, while Judas had the keeping of it. And while there were so many poor and Christ had such a tender heart, I will be bound to say that no surplus was ever allowed to mold there. But this woman and the other Marys took care that it should never be quite empty and that there should be something for the Savior when He needed it. She was not the woman who broke the alabaster box of precious ointment over Christ’s head, but her whole life long her constant income was her alabaster box and she spent what she had in ministering to the needs of her Lord.

Brothers and Sisters, if we would see much of Christ, let us *serve* Him. Depend upon it, you that live unto yourselves—that save your wealth when you ought to give it—you are not indulged with that fellowship with Jesus which others have who have consecrated themselves and their sub-

stance wholly to the Lord. I am sure that by not giving you miss infinite pleasure. I speak not now concerning your *safety*—I believe you are saved through faith in Christ Jesus—but if you do not devote yourselves and all that you have to the Master's cause, you never will be admitted to those choicer joys, to those more intimate fellowships which belong to those who live close to their Savior in consecration.

Find me the happiest Christians and I am sure they are those who are most attached to their Lord. Tell me who they are that sit most often under the banner of His love and drink the deepest draughts from the cup of communion and I am sure they will be those who give most, who serve best, and who abide closest to the bleeding heart of their dear Lord. Perhaps for this reason Mary was privileged by the Grace of God to be the first to see the risen Savior.

II. The second enquiry was, HOW SHE SOUGHT. If any of us would have fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, how are we to obtain it? We will use her as our guide. And first Mary sought the Savior very early in the morning, by which we learn when we must, many times, begin to seek our Lord. If you can wait for Christ and be patient in the hope of having fellowship with Him by-and-by, you will never have fellowship at all—for the heart that is fitted for communion is a hungry and a thirsting heart.

If a man is hungry, you cannot say to him, "Be patient. Wait!" "My hunger craves," he says, "give me food. I shall die if I am not fed." "But you must not be impatient. You must curb your appetite. Wait, be still." But the poor man replies, "I cannot! My hunger is so sharp. Oh, give me bread or I famish! I will die!" You may reason with him, but there is no reasoning with a hungry stomach. And when a man's soul begins to hunger and thirst after Christ, it is not, "To-morrow I will see Him," but, "now! Now! Now!" Today, which God calls, "the accepted time," the Christian thinks to be the most acceptable time. I would have fellowship with Jesus *now*.

While standing on this platform my eyes desire to see Him. My head longs to place itself upon His bosom. My soul would cry with the spouse, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, for His love is better than wine." If, then, you want Jesus to reveal Himself to you, seek Him *now*, where you are. This pew may be as good as the garden. Your own little quiet room, when the service is over, will be quite as near to the Savior as was the sepulcher—only seek Him at once and suffer no delays. Come, Jesus come, for the night is far spent! Arise great Sun of Righteousness and chase my gloom away!

She sought Him also, as you will observe, with very great boldness. It is said she stood at the sepulcher. The disciples had fled. Read the eighth verse, "They went out quickly and fled from the sepulcher, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid." But Mary, we are told in John's account, "stood" at the sepulcher. "They may run who will," she said. "Nothing can frighten me when I seek the Lord." There go the women—Mary and Susanna the wife of Chuza. There they go, all frightened. There is Peter, the bold Peter—he takes to his heels! And even John, the loving John, follows after him!

But Mary stands still. "No," she says, "let the worst come that can, nothing can be worse than losing my Master—if death itself should drag me away it can only take me into the sepulcher where my Savior went and perhaps I might find Him there. And if so, death were welcome!" Consider how many fears this timid woman must have had. It is not always safe to go abroad early in the morning. Certainly it was not in the city of Jerusalem, when the city was crowded, for a feeble woman to rise early in the morning and go out to the tomb! And yet she was not afraid.

Let the shadows of the morning be still on the earth—she heeds them not. The shadows in her own soul are worse to her. You might have supposed she would have fears of the angels. She was not. She had had dealings with devils and she was not to be frightened by angels. Seven devils at once dwelt in her. She knew too much of the supernatural to be frightened at the fall of a leaf or any noise that might make her weaker companions turn pale. If, then, you would have Christ to be with you, seek Him boldly, Beloved. Let nothing hold you back. Defy the world! Dare its pleasures! Laugh at its threats! Despise its promises. Count that "the reproach of Christ is greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." Press on where others flee! Be like a lion where others turn their backs and Christ will then show Himself to you.

She stood at the sepulcher. She sought Christ very faithfully. Some find it hard to stand by a living Savior, but she will stand by a dead one. All the disciples forsook Him and fled when He was only in captivity—but she cleaves to Him when His body is in the sepulcher. Brave woman! You will not only stand by the Master, but by the Master's sepulcher. True heroine! You love even the couch where His dead form sleeps. I would that we sought Christ after this mode, willing to stand by the very form of sound words which has been delivered to us—standing by the doctrine as well as by the Person—cleaving and clinging to the very least thing that has to do with Christ and feeling that if He has sanctioned it, it is ours to die for the sepulcher as well as for the Man.

Oh, if we sought Christ with such faithfulness we should not long lack the comfort of His Presence! Still note further that John tells us she, "stood outside the sepulcher weeping," which makes me remark that she sought Jesus very earnestly, for as she stood there, not finding Him, she wept. I do not read that the others did this. They loved the Savior, but they did not love Him as much. At any rate, they had not her sensitiveness and delicacy of soul. She wept. I think I know why she wept. "My Savior is gone," she said, "I cannot find Him." Then the thoughts of His sad death came rushing full upon her soul.

She thought she saw that dreadful scene over again that had made her heart ache and throb. She fancied she saw Him again dragged through the howling populace, abused and despised with His poor back all covered with gore. She thought she beheld once more that blessed body torn with the nails. She marked again the anguish of the fever which came upon Him as He hung upon the tree. She had been the last to watch Him. She stood and watched Him with the other women and now she cannot bear the thought of all that He has suffered and the fear that He has gone, gone, gone forever! She weeps.

And the Savior could not bear to see her weep. I think those teardrops were as spells that bound the Savior captive and made Him come forth and show Himself to her. If you want Christ's Presence, you are sure to get it if you weep after it! If you have gone so far that you cannot be happy unless He comes and says to you, "You are My beloved"—if you cannot be content without a kiss from those dear lips—you will have it. He cannot deny those tears—those are heart-breakers to Him—those drops shall burn their way into His soul! You shall look into the face bedewed with tears and see the loveliness and beauty of Him who was "despised and rejected of men," if you stand outside at the sepulcher weeping.

Nor have I quite done. Mary sought him perseveringly, for as she wept she stooped down and looked into the sepulcher. She had been in it and found nothing—what made her look again? Have you not, when you have been seeking for something which you felt you must find, pulled out a drawer and looked through it carefully, turning over everything and yet, being exceedingly anxious, you have gone to it once more? You were certain the object was not there and yet you were so anxious to find it that you looked again and again. And perhaps you returned six or seven times to the place which you had searched thoroughly at first, for you were so desirous to find it.

It was so with her. She thought, "perhaps my eyes may have been blinded—possibly I may not have looked in the right corner—I will look again." And so she stooped down and looked into the sepulcher—the tears still flowing from her eyes. This showed her perseverance. Yes, and if we would know Christ, He is not to be found by those who merely call upon Him once. Cry to Him by the hour together if He comes not to you. If going into your chamber once does not give you a sight of Jesus, go again, go again, go again! For mark me, if you should be kept waiting seven years for an interview with the great King—if you should once be favored to see Him—if He shall stretch out the silver scepter to you, you will think yourself all too well rewarded!

A thousand—a million years of seeking would be well repaid by one glance from His eyes and one look from His face. Therefore seek perseveringly, patiently and anxiously—desiring that the risen Savior would manifest Himself to you. We have almost done upon this point but we must note that she sought the Savior *only*. All her thoughts were concentrated upon Him. I think if I had been there, I should have been greatly gratified with a sight of the angels. It strikes me that I should have been observing what were the forms of beauty which angelic spirits bear. But she seems to have taken no note of them at all. She says to them, "They have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid Him."

What cared she for angels? If as many had come as the seventy thousand chariots of God they could not have turned away Mary's thoughts from Him. To the gardener, her speech is all full of her Lord, "Sir, if you have borne Him from here, tell me where you have laid Him and I will take Him away." Mary's heart was set on one object. Like an arrow shot from the bow she sped right on to the target of her heart's desire. And, oh, if Christ is your one and only love, if your heart has cast out all rivals, if

your spirit seeks Him and cries out for the Lord—even for the living God—you shall soon come and appear before God.

To close this point let me say there was much ignorance in Mary. How was it that she sought the living among the dead? There was very little faith in Mary, for faith would have told her that He had risen again on the third day according to His own words. But, oh, there was much *love* and Jesus overlooked her want of knowledge and overlooked her weakness of faith because of the strength of her love! It seems to me that she loved more than John did, for John says, “Then went in that other disciple and he saw and believed.” That is right, John! You have most faith. He believes and then he goes away expecting he should see what he believed. But Mary, though she has far less faith, you will perceive has so much love that she will not go away from the sepulcher! She just keeps her place there, watching at the post of His door, not satisfied till she can see Him.

What love was this! Brothers and Sisters, if we would see Jesus, we must love Him much. I would God I loved Him as my heart desires to love Him. I hope you can say—

**“Yes, I love You and adore You.
Oh for Grace to love You more!”**

Let us wake ourselves up to greater intensity of affection. He loved us before the stars were made. He loved us with His whole heart. He loved us to perfection. He loved us unto death. Oh, my cold Heart, why do you not melt? Oh, my adamant Heart, why do you not dissolve? For such love as this we ought to give Jesus our warmest affection—blazing like coals of juniper! And if we did we should not be long without finding Him—for love would find Him out and fetch Him to our arms and we should see Him and rejoice in Him!

III. The last point now comes and that is, HOW SHE FOUND HIM. He was present but she could not see Him. Christian, Christ is present here this morning though you cannot, perhaps, perceive Him. You have not to cry to the Savior to come from Heaven to visit you—“Where two or three are met together in My name,” He says, “there am I in the midst of them.” Jesus is here! In these aisles and pews, in this area and these galleries—Jesus is here. If you have no communion with Him, Believer, it is because unbelief darkens your eyes—or grief, or care, or sin makes you blind.

But Jesus Christ was discovered to Mary by a word. I want you to notice that it was not a sermon, it was *one* word. It was not a long discourse, but just one word of two syllables and that not a word of mystery, but a simple word—a word, however, which had this about it—it came from Jesus’ lips! It was personal and went home to her. This is all *you* want, Beloved, this morning. Fifty thousand words from me would only weary you! But listen to one word from the lips of the Savior, a personal word, waking the recollections of your spirit, proving that He remembers you—and cheerfully on the strength of that word your soul may stay on earth and finish her threescore years and ten.

That one word was her own name—“Mary.” It was spoken just as she had heard it in the days gone by. And oh, if He would speak to me as He has spoken at the hill Mizar. If He would say of Himself as He has done in days never to be forgotten, “I am your salvation,” we should not want any more! One word would be enough! Oh, Beloved, keep on seeking Christ

and you will find Him in a moment! Do not complain if you have not an edifying ministry, or because, perhaps this morning the discourse seems dull to you. Do not complain because you are lax in prayer and have not that enlargement you ought to have in Divine things.

One word will take you up as on the wings of an eagle and give you joy and peace! Notice that as soon as the one word was given, her heart owned allegiance by another word. She did not make a long speech. The Master's heart was too full to say more than one word and so was hers. That one word would naturally be the most fitting for the occasion. What, then, is the word which suggests itself as being best adapted to a soul in the highest state of devotion? It is a word implying obedience. She said, "Master."

You can never get into a state of mind for which this confession of allegiance will be a word too cold. No, when your spirit glows the most with heavenly fire, then you will say, "I would serve You living, dying. Your love has bound me with cords to the horns of the altar. I am Your servant—I am Your servant—You have loosed my bonds." If you can say, "Master," this morning, you can say much. If your soul feels that His will is *your* will, that His Law is your love—that you would, if you could—in all things be conformed to His image, then, whether you have ecstasies or no ecstasies, whether you have joys or no joys—you stand in a happy, holy place!

He must have said, "Mary," or else she could not have said, "Rabboni." After she had confessed allegiance, the next impulse was to seek close fellowship. But she made a mistake as most of us would have done—she wanted a manifest, carnal fellowship. So she began to clasp Him and to hold Him by the feet. And then He said, "Touch Me not." We are apt to seek for communion with Christ in a *sensuous* way. Let us be *spiritual*, Brethren. We shall never have Christ say to us, "Touch Me not," if the touch is a touch of faith and love. He only says, "Touch Me not," when we want to handle Him with these hands and see Him with these eyes. Let us walk by faith and not by sight.

And then we may take Him in our arms and keep Him there and hold Him and not let Him go. And the more endearing we can be with Him spiritually, the better He will like it. We must shake off all those gross ideas which strive to mix with high and heavenly enjoyment. If you feel a panting this morning after near and close communion, do not restrain it! Press forward! Put your hands into His side and your finger into the print of the nails. I know that worldlings will not understand me, but Believers will. Let me assure you there is a communion with Christ which is quite as real as if we had the privilege which Thomas had.

My own *soul* has seen the Savior and talked with Him, though these eyes cannot see Him, though these lips cannot speak with Him and these ears cannot hear Him! Yet my soul's mouth has kissed Him and my soul's ears have heard Him and my heart's mouth has blessed Him ten thousand times! And I hope to do it yet again and will never be satisfied until I can do it continually. Press on, Beloved—you may say as the Divine Song does, "Oh that You were as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! When I should find You outside, I would kiss You." Oh, Beloved,

hold communion with Him! Feed on Him for His flesh is meat, indeed, and His blood is drink, indeed.

Further, we may notice as the result of her finding the Savior, she entered in His service, for He said, "Go, tell My Brethren." And away she went to tell others that she had found the Savior! If you have the privilege of seeing Christ, do not eat the morsel behind the door. Have you found honey? Taste it yourself, but go and tell others. You cannot have seen much of the Savior unless you desire to let others see Him. Your piety is a sham, a flash in the pan, a will-o'-the-wisp if it does not lead to practical *service*.

Are there not some Mary Magdalenes here who have had seven devils cast out of them? You have felt the power of Divine Grace in your heart. You love your Savior. You long for communion with Him. My dear Sister, as soon as you have fellowship, let me charge you, in the Master's name—do not be afraid to speak to others what the Lord shall say in private to you. We do not want women to enter the pulpit—that is a violation both of Divine Grace and Nature—it is as much an offense to good manners as it is to God's own Law. But you have your own sphere, you have your own place of work—you can gather your own sex about you. There are your children, your servants. You have multitudes of opportunities.

Tell others that Jesus has risen, that there is a risen life—that you know it and that you pant and long that others, too, should rise from the grave of sin to the new life in Jesus! As for you, men and Brothers, to whom it pertains more particularly to be teachers and pastors, I charge you, whatever you have found within the circle of fire where the closest communion is. Whatever you have seen in the deep mines of mystery, whatever Christ has revealed to you in hours of retirement when you have come nearest to Him—tell it to His family, feed His flock with it—bring forth these things as choice dainties where the beloved of the Lord may feast even to the full. "Go, tell my Brethren," said Christ, and so say we.

When the two disciples had journeyed to Emmaus, and at the evening meal after the toil of the day's journey was over, were resting themselves, you remember that the mysterious stranger who had so enchanted them with His holy words took bread and broke it. And then it was known to them in the breaking of the bread—but He vanished out of their sight! Well, what happened then? They had constrained Him to enter in and abide with them because the day was far spent, but though now, much later, their love was a lamp to their feet! Yes, wings also, for they forgot the darkness and their despair. Their weariness was all gone and immediately they began to journey back the threescore furlongs to tell the glad-some news of a risen Lord who had appeared to them by the way!

They reach the body of Christians in Jerusalem and are received by a burst of joyful news—before they can tell their own tale. Now, Brethren, these early Christians were all on fire to speak of Christ's Resurrection and to proclaim what they knew of the Lord. They made common property of their experiences. And so ought we to do. John's account of the sepulcher needs to be supplemented by Peter, and Mary can speak of something further still. Combined, we have a full testimony and nothing can be spared. Thus we have all peculiar gifts and special manifestations, but the

one object God has in view is the benefit of the whole body of Christ. We must therefore bring our possessions and lay them at the Apostles' feet and make distribution unto all of what God has given to us.

Keep back no part of the precious Truth of God, but speak what you know and testify what you have seen. Let not the toil, or darkness, or possible unbelief of your hearers weigh one moment in the scale. Up and be marching to the place of duty and there tell what great things God has shown to your soul! And if you hear the sweet words of Christ, I can promise you a holy flame of bright and beaming joy as you speak of the Truth of God to benefit the souls of others.

Finally, if there are any enquirers here, as I hope there are—if you are seeking Jesus this morning and want to be saved by Him and through Him—remember, poor Enquirer, that Jesus is near you now. There is *nothing* for you to do! No climbing to Heaven, no going down to the depths to bring Him up. He is near you now. If you believe that Jesus is the Christ, if you trust your soul to Him, you are saved! Jesus is here to everyone who will simply give himself up to Him to be saved by Him. Jesus calls you this morning by your name—He gives you a special invitation to come to Him. Listen to that name! Respond this morning—say, “Master.”

Take Jesus to be your Lord—He deserves it. You are not your own, but you are bought with a price. Give yourself, as a blood-bought one, up to Him. He asks you as He asks Mary, “Woman, why do you weep?” He asks of each of you who are seeking Him, “whom do you seek?” Do you know what it is you seek? Do you seek some strange *feeling*? Do you seek signs and wonders, dreams and visions? Seek them no longer! Jesus is what you want! Take Him and be blest. There, close at your side, is the food your hungry spirit wants—look not up to Heaven—look not down to earth! There is in Jesus all you need!

Feed on, Beloved—faith shall fill your mouth. Love shall enjoy the sweet dainty and your whole body, soul and spirit shall be sanctified by the Divine repast. May God bless you, dear Friends, all of you, by giving you, like Mary Magdalene, to seek the Lord.

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MARY MAGDALENE

NO. 792

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 26, 1868,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils.”
Mark 16:9.

EXPERIMENTAL preaching, when truthful, is almost always profitable. As the spouse of old desired to see the footsteps of the flock, so souls in distress are always happy to observe the proofs that others have trod that same pathway before. It may be, and I trust it shall be, that while we are speaking upon the life of Magdalene and showing how the Lord was pleased to lead her up from the depths of mental distress to the heights of spiritual joy, some who may be in like circumstances may be led to hope that for them, also, there may be deliverance. And others who have already received like favors may have their grateful recollections refreshed, and may be made to bless the Lord who brought them up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay, and has now set their feet upon a rock. We shall begin with Mary of Magdalene here. God began with her in a way of effectual Grace.

I. Mary Magdalene furnishes us, in the first place, with A MELANCHOLY INSTANCE OF SATANIC POWER. She does not appear to have been a great sinner. It is scarcely possible, and certainly very improbable., that she could have been a transgressor in the sense in which the term “Magdalene” is generally understood. Custom has attached the title of Magdalene to those who have forfeited their good name by open sins against the Seventh Commandment. Mistaken though it is, let the name always remain as the sole treasure of fallen women, for, if we can give them one honorable designation to act as a shield, pray let them have it, for the world is cold enough and scornful enough towards such offenders.

It is worth while, however, to declare for the honor of Mary Magdalene, that she was no Magdalene in the modern sense. It could scarcely have been so. She was probably a raving demoniac, therefore not at all likely to fall into the sins of the flesh. We are never told of her that she was a great sinner, in fact not a word is said against her personal character. We are simply informed that she was possessed with seven devils, which is an *affliction* rather than a crime. I do not deny that sin may have prepared her for the Satanic possession and was, no doubt, also occasioned by it, but she is not brought before us in Scripture as a transgressor, nor is she the representative of great offenders, but rather the type of a class of persons who for years are sorely vexed in heart, greatly depressed in spirit, heavily burdened with despondency, bound with chains of melancholy, subject to distracting forebodings, to alarms of coming wrath and to a despair insuperable.

Mary Magdalene represents those who have come under the tormenting and distracting power of Satan, and whose lamp of joy is quenched in ten-

fold night. They are imprisoned not so much in the dens of sin as in the dungeons of sorrow—not so criminal as they are wretched—nor so depraved as they are desolate. We do not, with any certainty, understand the precise nature of being possessed with the devil. Holy Scripture has not been pleased to acquaint us with the philosophy of possessions, but we know what the *outward* symptoms were. Persons possessed with devils were unhappy. They found the gloom of the sepulcher to be their most congenial resort. They were unsocial and solitary. If they were permitted, they broke away from all those dear associations of the family circle which give half the charms to life—they delighted to wander in dry places, seeking rest and finding none—they were pictures of misery, images of woe.

Such was the seven times unhappy Magdalene, for into her there had entered a complete band of devils. She was overwhelmed with seven seas of agony, loaded with seven manacles of despair, encircled with seven walls of fire! Neither day nor night afforded her rest. Her brain was on fire and her soul foamed like a boiling caldron. Miserable soul! No dove of hope brought the olive branch of peace to her forlorn spirit. She sat in the darkness and saw no light—her dwelling was in the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Among all the women of Magdala there was none more wretched than she, the unhappy victim of restless and malicious demons.

Those who were possessed with these evil spirits were defiled thereby, as well as made unhappy—for a heart cannot become a kennel for the hounds of Hell without being rendered filthy and polluted. I suppose that in addition to the natural corruptions which would be in Mary as well as in ourselves, there would be more than human nimbleness to evil, a vivacity, an outspokenness about all her sinful propensities which only the indwelling fiend could give. Satan being within would be sure to stir up the coals of impure thoughts and evil desires, so that the fire of sin would burn vehemently. Her inner self may have been sorely troubled with such excess of wickedness, but she was without power to dampen the furnace of her mind. She would be incessantly assaulted by unearthly profanities and hideous suggestions—not as with us, proceeding from the devil *without*, who is a dreaded antagonist—but from seven devils *within* who had entrenched themselves upon a dreadful vantage ground.

She was in that sense, no doubt, greatly polluted, although it would be difficult to say how far she was *accountable* for it, on account of the dislodgment of her reason. In addition to the unhappiness and the defilement occasioned by Satanic possession, these persons were frequently dangerous to others and to themselves. Sometimes, we read, they were cast into the fire, and others into water. Some cut themselves with knives or sharp stones. Others tore their garments in pieces, and even when bound in chains—according to the old-fashioned method of controlling lunatics—they burst their bonds. Such persons must have been very undesirable inhabitants of any house, however remote their chamber.

It must frequently have been necessary to confine them apart, for in their madness they were not to be trusted. As is often the case, those who had been nearest and dearest to them became the first objects of their enmity. To give a spiritual turn to the subject, let me remark that it is one of the most dreadful things about some of those who are plunged in *unbe-*

lief, that the mischief of their misery is not confined to themselves but extends to their families and connections. Their example drips like the upas tree, with poison. They are like the clouds, that gathered over Sodom, full of fiery hail. They bring sadness and sorrow wherever their influence is felt.

The man who has laid in beds of spices spreads perfume on all sides. But the man who is familiar with horrors, like one fresh from the morgue, bears all the seeds of death about him in the gloom and melancholy which he spreads abroad. To sum up much in a few words, there is no doubt that Mary Magdalene would have been considered by us to be demented—she was, practically, a maniac. Reason was unshipped and Satan stood at the helm instead of reason. And the poor ship was hurried here and there under the guidance of demons. What a dreadful state to be in! And yet, dear Friends, though actual Satanic possession is unknown among us now, we have seen several cases extremely like it, and we know at this hour some who baffle altogether all attempts to comfort them, and make us feel that only the Good Physician can give them rest.

I remember a man of excellent character, well beloved by his family and esteemed by his neighbors, who was for 20 years enveloped in unutterable gloom. He ceased to attend the House of God, because, he said it was of no use. And although always ready to help in every good word and work, yet he had an abiding conviction upon him that, personally, he had no part nor lot in this matter and never could have. The more you talked to him, the worse he became. Even prayer seemed but to excite him to more fearful despondency. In the Providence of God I was called to preach the Word in his neighborhood. He was induced to attend, and, by God's gracious power, under the sermon he obtained a joyful liberty! After 20 years of anguish and unrest, he ended his weary roaming at the foot of the Cross, to the amazement of his neighbors, the joy of his household, and the glory of God! Nor did his peace of mind subside, for until the Lord gave him a happy admission into eternal rest, he remained a vigorous Believer, trusting and not being afraid.

Others are around us for whom we earnestly pray that they, also, may be brought out of prison to praise the name of the Lord. Magdalene's case was a perfectly helpless one. *Men* could do nothing for her. All the surgery and medicine in the world would have been wasted upon her singular malady. Had it been any form of physical disease or purely mental derangement, help might have been attainable, but who is a match for the crafty and cruel fiends of the pit? No drugs can lull them to sleep, no knife can tear them from the soul. The loving friend and the skillful adviser stood equally powerless, nonplussed, bewildered, dismayed.

Mary was in a hopeless condition. There was nothing known by any, even the wise men of the East, of any method by which seven evil spirits could be dislodged. However expensive the remedy, her relatives would have resorted to it. But who can cope with devils? Doubtless all who knew her thought that death would be a great relief to her, and would relieve her family of wearisome anxiety and fear. Although willing to help, they could not aid in the slightest degree and had the hourly sorrow of seeing her endure an agony which they could not alleviate. Magdalene was the

victim of Satanic influence in a most fearful form—sevenfold were the spirits which possessed her!

And there are men and women nowadays who are tempted by the great enemy of souls to a most awful degree. Some of us have endured temporary seasons of frightful depression which have qualified us to sympathize with those who are more constantly lashed by the fury of the infernal powers. We, too, have had our horror of great darkness. We have groaned with David, “I am troubled. I am bowed down greatly. I go mourning all the day long. . . I am feeble and sorely broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart. My heart pants, my strength fails me. As for the light of my eyes, it also is gone from me.” We have been, though only for a few days or hours at a time, reduced to such an utter prostration of heart that our soul chose strangling rather than life, for the sorrows of death compassed us, and the pains of Hell got hold upon us—we found trouble and sorrow.

Believe me, Brothers and Sisters, this is no child’s play, but a thing to turn the hair gray, and plow the furrows of the brow. It is no trivial sorrow to lament with the weeping Prophet, “Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by? Behold, and see if there is any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord has afflicted me in the day of His fierce anger. From above has He sent fire into my bones, and it prevails against them: He has spread a net for my feet, He has turned me back: He has made me desolate and faint all the day. The yoke of my transgressions is bound by His hands: they are wreathed, and come up upon my neck: He has made my strength to fall, the Lord has delivered me into their hands, from whom I am not able to rise up.”

It is a melancholy fact that some persons continue for months and years to drink this cup of trembling. John Bunyan’s case is to the point, for he floundered in the Slough of Despond as long as any of the pilgrims whom he has so graphically described. In his instance, those succeeding shadows, those variations of unbelief, those recurring glooms all arose from the same fruitful source of ill—Satan was afraid that he was about to lose a bond slave, and therefore aroused himself to prevent his captive’s escape. Like the city of Mansoul when besieged by the troops of Immanuel, when Diabolus was loath to leave, the Evil One barricades the doors and strengthens the walls so that there may be no entrance for the Word of Truth.

Moreover, as we are told in the Revelation, the devil has great wrath when he knows that his time is short, and he takes care, like a bad tenant, to do all the mischief he can before he is ejected. I may be addressing some such persons here, or in after days my words may meet the eye of poor tortured souls. O that they might find rest! It is painful in the extreme to meet with such unhappy minds—they are the great difficulty of a pastor’s work—so great, indeed, is the difficulty, that workers with little faith are ready to give up the task and to leave the matter as impracticable. We have known those who have felt that they could pray no longer for their inconsolable friends. Verily, Beloved, we must not yield to so heartless a suggestion!

As we said the other Sabbath morning, [Sermon #789, Vol. 14, *Lingers Hastened*, preached January 12, 1868] until the gate of Hell is shut upon a man, we must not cease to pray for him! And if we see him hugging the very doorposts of damnation, we must go to the Mercy Seat and beseech the arm of Grace to pluck him from his dangerous position. While there is life there is hope, and, although the soul is almost smothered with despair, we must not despair for it, but rather arouse ourselves to awaken the almighty arm. The case of the Magdalene is a mirror in which many souls wrung with anguish may see themselves.

II. Secondly, Mary Magdalene became A GLORIOUS TROPHY OF DIVINE GRACE. She is described in the text as, "Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils." Sovereign Grace is resplendent in Mary's history. In the first place, because this cure was unsought by her. Others who were sick sought the healing hand of Jesus, but no person possessed of an evil spirit ever did or ever *could* cry for deliverance to the Son of David. Their friends might bring them, but they never came of themselves. The evil spirit drives men as far as possible away from Christ and clamors against Jesus as a tormentor. It never guides men into the pathway of the merciful Savior.

Even thus is it with us all and especially with desponding souls. If we are saved, it is not because we have the first motions of desire towards Christ, but because eternal love casts its cords around us and draws us towards the Lord Jesus. There may be disputes about this as matter of doctrine, but I do not believe it can be questioned as a fact in experience. All Believers unite in the song—

***"Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God."***

We all feel that, if we are converted, the power which turned us is from above—

***" 'Tis not that I did choose You,
For, Lord, that could not be.
This heart would still refuse You,
But You have chosen me.
You from the sin that stained me
Washed me and set me free,
And to this end ordained me,
That I should live to You."***

If we have repented, our repentance was not a plant indigenous to the barren soil of our corrupt hearts—the seed of it was sown within by a gracious hand! If we have believed in Jesus, our faith was not fashioned on our own anvil but bestowed upon us from the armory of God! Faith is as much the *gift* of God as salvation itself. Brothers and Sisters, we cannot, in our own cases, do otherwise than ascribe all the glory to Sovereign Grace. "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you." "I am found of them that sought Me not." No sinner is beforehand with God, but God's preventive Grace outruns the sinner's first desire. Yes, Divine Grace comes to dead souls when as yet they are not capable of a right emotion.

Mary's case, as it illustrates this principle, may help us to see clearly the great love with which Jesus loved us, even when we were *dead* in sins. Poor trembling soul, Jesus can come to you if you cannot come to Him. Even if your miseries have shut you up, they cannot shut Him out. Your

extremity is God's opportunity, therefore be of good cheer! It is most likely that Mary resisted the healing hand, for so it was with other demoniacs: "What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God?" The devil was no sooner aware of Christ's Presence than he began to cry out against his Conqueror. If it were not so with Mary, it certainly is so with us, and especially with the subjects of despair!

How we resisted conscience! We used what means we could to strangle it so that its cries might not alarm us. How we labored to quench the Holy Spirit! We had no heart to leave the ways of flesh-pleasing lust—we held to our iniquities as the leech to the flesh. We were willing to run all risks of Hell, and lose the glories of Heaven. We chose our delusions and hugged our destructions—we were in darkness and we *loved* darkness rather than light—because our deeds were evil. Our corrupt heart was enmity against God and was not reconciled to him, neither, indeed, could it be. Strange to say, despair is often voluntary and men resolve to remain in it, being as fond of the position as the poor wretch who after years of confinement found liberty to be a pain.

Like David's fool, we abhor all manner of meat, though dying for lack of it. We blow out the candles lest we should see the light, and we contend with the mercy which comes to our rescue. Great Lord, what a madman a sinner is! How irrational are those who pine in despondency and yet thrust hope away with both their hands! It is a hard task for the surgeon when his patient tears open the veins which he labors to bind up. His skill must be great if he can heal a patient who struggles in his arms and refuses his affectionate care. Brethren, since, in a measure, we have all acted thus, let us admire the dear patience and precious love which bore with our ill manners and would not let us die!

How shall we magnify, sufficiently, effectual Grace which without violating the freedom of our will, led our captivity captive, making us willing in the day of His power? Let the highest and sweetest notes of all believing psalmody be to Omnipotent Grace which worked in us according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand! Glory be to God, though a legion of devils possessed the heart, the power of Jesus is able to cast them out of him, yes, and to set aside the present mad unwillingness which makes the sinner despise his own mercy and hasten to his own ruin.

Those possessed with devils were healed by a word from Jesus! Beloved, if we have been saved, the instrument which the Holy Spirit used was the Word, either read in private or heard from the lips of God's minister. "He sent His Word and healed them." The Word is the living and incorruptible Seed. The ordinance of preaching can scarcely be too much prized for "it has pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" "For the preaching of the Cross is to them that perish, foolishness. But unto us which are saved it is the power of God." You who are desponding, I pray you, do not forsake the gathering of yourselves together! Although despair may hang about you, still resort to the place where the Word is dispensed, and before long, like that daughter of Abra-

ham whom Satan had bound for 18 years, who yet went up to the synagogue, you shall, like she was, be made whole!

While the Word of God is within your reach, there may yet be a love-word for you, even for *you*. While earnest lips are telling about the love of Jesus, wait with the hope that as the small rain drops upon the tender herb, Divine Grace may drop lovingly upon you. "Faith comes by hearing." Why may it not come to you? The Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come in His temple—He may tarry, but to every sincere seeker His coming is sure. She was healed instantaneously, for the cures of our Lord were always such. He said, "Come out of her," to the unclean spirit, and out came the spirit without delay, so that in a single moment, poor demoniac Mary was made to sit at Jesus' feet in peace, and in her right mind.

My Brothers and Sisters, what a change it must have been for her! Her soul had been like the lake of Galilee when lashed with a storm—but Christ had said, "Peace, be still," and now there was a great calm! She had been ready to tear herself and hurt others, but now she was obedient to the Master's command and ministered to Him with joy! She drank in the Words of Truth and told them out to others. Defiling influences were cast out of her and she sought after holiness. Had you met her after her cure you would not have known her to be the same woman. Those disheveled locks no longer remained to betoken the maniac, and those straining eyes and that tortured brow, and all the air and mien of a distraught one—all these were changed. She was admitted into society as a reasonable being. She was taken into the family circle as a welcome member—Jesus became her teacher, and His Apostles her friends.

What a miracle of love! Let us entertain hope for our friends in their worst estate, that the same may happen to them. Perhaps God may permit some of His people to fall into this desperate condition that He may exhibit illustrious instances of what conversion can do. In Heaven there is joy over a sinner's repentance—angels do not rejoice in extraordinary conversions merely, but "over one sinner that repents." Still, as far as you and I are concerned, when we sit at Church meetings and hear of cases of conversion, the more remarkable ones give us greatest joy. When we hear of a sinner brought to Christ, or of another being comforted who had been in dreadful depression of spirit, we are all filled with wonder and delight! It sheds a luster over the Lord's work and acts like a tonic to our spirits. It refreshes the doubting ones, and those who have become dispirited in service, take courage and say, "We shall never doubt again, for after such an instance as this, we must believe that all things are possible with God."

I think the Lord suffers these Magdalenes to be here and there discovered that they may be proof to all the world that He can do whatever He wills and that none are beyond His power. Do I address one who is in such a state? I cannot pass on without the hope that such a troubled mind may speedily look to Jesus. Friend, He can heal you! I know the devil within you says, "You are cast out forever," but Satan is the father of lies, therefore care not for his suggestions. Did you notice how the text declares that Jesus cast out the seven devils? The evil ones did not go out themselves! Magdalene did not drive them out, but *Jesus* cast them out

with force and power. The Evil One is strong, but Christ is stronger than he, and drives him out speedily when he comes to claim dominion.

“Ah,” you say, “if He ever gets the devil out of me, I will praise Him.” That’s the very reason why I think He will do it, in order that He may win your heart, and make you, as long as you live, to wonder, and adore, and admire.

III. After she had thus obtained her healing, she became AN ARDENT FOLLOWER OF CHRIST. We are informed by Mark and by Luke that Mary Magdalene and other holy women followed Jesus into Galilee upon His memorable preaching tour. And when He came up from Galilee to Jerusalem, we find Mary still at the head of that blessed company. I suppose that she had no family, most probably no children, and that her relatives may have come to feel as if she was not one of them at all, through her having been so long possessed. She probably possessed some small property which yielded her sufficient income for her needs.

When she was restored, her friends, though exceedingly glad to hear it, might feel as if she had never been one of the family and therefore did not wish her to return to them, especially when she had become a Christian. Everything leads us to suppose that she had no one near who claimed her personal care, and having a little income she resolved to devote her life to listening to the Man who had delivered her from her terrible disease. A wise resolve! Happy was she to be allowed to hear His gracious Words and see His mighty deeds. She not only listened to Him, but she *followed* Him. Whoever might turn away, the Magdalene was always close at His side. Through floods and flames, if He was pleased to lead, she had resolved to go.

In addition to this, we are told that she ministered unto Him of her substance. That bag which Judas carried would always have been empty had it not been for this woman of Magdala, and for the wife of Herod’s steward (and perhaps Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus). But these generous hearts, knowing that the laborer is worthy of his hire, were glad to contribute of their temporal goods to Him who so greatly enriched them in spiritual things. So Magdalene gave *herself*, her ears, her feet, her heart, her substance, her *all* to Jesus. It was not an unusual thing in the Jewish nation for great rabbis to be followed both by men and women in their tours of instruction throughout the country, so that she was not outraging the customs of her people. No doubt our Lord would have said to Mary, “Go home to your friends,” if duty required her there, but as she had no other duties to demand her attention, she was allowed to give up all her time to sacred study and to hallowed service.

Now, it is not desirable that you or I should leave our kindred and forsake our vocations, but we can, nevertheless, abide with Jesus as closely as the Magdalene. If we have been delivered from great sin or from great despair, should we not say in our souls, “Now, from this day I will be the constant student of Jesus Christ’s teaching. The Gospel has done so much for me that I will seek to know all of it that can be known this side of the grave. I will pry into its mysteries, press into its spiritualities, and learn its precepts. And while I am a learner I will also be a follower. Where Christ is I will go. His example shall be Law to me. I will pray to have His

Spirit. I will ask to be conformed to His image, and what the Master was, that shall the servant be.

“I will give to Him of my substance. If I can, I will give much, but if I have not much, I will give in fair proportion. I will make a system of offering to God—He shall have a set portion of all my income, and that I will put aside so that when there is a call for it, I shall not imagine that I am giving from my own purse, but I will give my Lord’s money, which has already been consecrated. Then I shall not feel us if I were giving, but as if I were only a *steward*, handing out what belonged to Christ before”? Where persons *love* little, *do* little, and *give* little, we may shrewdly suspect that they have never had much affliction of heart for their sins and that they think they owe but very little to Divine Grace. He who has received much, if his heart is right, is sure to give much to the Lord, and to say—

***“And if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call,
I love my God with zeal so great
That I would give Him all.”***

Behold and admire the difference between the poor demoniac and the faithful follower of Christ—the woman possessed with seven devils—and now the honorable Christian woman ministering unto the Lord of angels! What cannot Grace do? No doubt Mary of Magdala had to suffer much in thus following Christ, for all the disciples had to partake in Christ’s Cross. They were all thought to be madmen and fools in taking up with the Man of Nazareth, but we never read that Mary shrank. “From that time many went back, and walked no more with Him,” but Magdalene was true. Again we read, “Many were offended at Him because of this saying.” But we find not that the woman of Magdala was offended! She held to her Lord in holy faith. She knew the Shepherd’s voice, and she followed Him where ever He might be pleased to lead.

Happy are those who from their earliest days have been led to see their indebtedness to Christ and are now resolved to cleave to Him, to serve Him with heart, and soul, and strength—to sit at His feet to catch His words, and then to go abroad and practice what they have learned! I wish we could all attain to a high state of spirituality, that we were more strict in our obedience, more close in our communion, more consecrated in our actions. Perhaps it is because we think we have had little forgiven, or owe but little that we are such little doers and little lovers. O Holy Spirit, out of the great sinners of this wicked city, out of the midst of horrible blasphemers, or out of the midst of those who are far gone in horrible despair, call men and women who shall become enthusiasts, flaming with vehement devotion to the Lord!

IV. Magdalene appears to us farther on in Scripture as a FAITHFUL ADHERENT TO HER MASTER UNDER TRIAL. It was a dark day for the disciples when Christ was crucified amid mocking and jeering enemies. We are told by Mark that Magdalene and Mary, the wife of Cleophas, stood afar off and watched our Lord. But we are informed by John that, among others, there stood at the *foot* of the Cross, Mary Magdalene.

I suppose that at the first, when our Lord was nailed to the tree, the disciples could not get into the inner ring. The priests and the Jews were so mad and the Roman soldiers were so rough that a woman, however

brave, might not venture there. Therefore, as they could not do what they would, they did what they could—they stood at a distance and sobbed and sighed until their eyes were red and their hearts were swollen with anguish at the sad sight of Him whom they loved, mocked and despised, and shamefully put to death.

But by-and-by the crowd grew tired of their cruel amusement, and suddenly there was a darkness over all the land—and it may be that *then* these timid doves mustered courage and flew to the foot of the tree. They may have passed unnoticed through the soldiers and the crowd, and stood at His feet. And though they could not help Him on the Cross, yet they could rally round His Cross. If they must not *feel* the nails and bleed as He did, yet their hearts were bleeding and the nails went through their souls. Where was Peter? Where was James? Philip and Andrew, and Nathanael, where were they? I do not know, but I know where Magdalene was—she was at the tree of doom there, hard by her Lord—glad to confess a persecuted Christ!

Here is the test of true love. To follow Christ in peaceful times is easy, but to follow hard after Him when He is despised and rejected of men—here is the pinch. Ah, some of you young people profess to be Christians when you are with Christian people, but will you bear it when your companions sneer at you as a cant and a hypocrite? Can you follow your Lord? Can you follow your Lord when the many turn aside? Can you witness that He has the Living Word, and *none upon earth* beside? Can you stand for Him when you have to suffer loss and reproach and when His name is the drunkard's song and the fool's proverb? If you can, then blessed be the Divine Grace that has taught you to practice so hard a lesson! If there are any who can do this readily, surely they are such as once passed through the deepest waters of soul trouble!

We find Mary, lastly, at the sepulcher, viewing the place where the body was laid, and how it was laid. And they spent the evening till the Sabbath hour approached in preparing the spices. Then they rested, like devout women, upon the seventh day. It was deep love that made the Magdalene follow the corpse of the Well-Beloved right to the tomb. Of that lifeless body every limb was dear to her. He had worked so great a thing in her that she could not but feel her heart melt at the thought of His corpse being treated with disrespect. She must see whether they laid it tenderly, whether they put it into its rest with gentleness and honor. She was *first* at the sepulcher, and was the *first* to whom Christ appeared! She was faithful to the end. She won the commendation of those of whom it is said, "He that endures to the end the same shall be saved." Be it yours and mine, my Brothers and Sisters, to cling to the Truth, even though, like Elijah, we have to say, "I, only I, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away." To keep to a dead cause and an expiring Church. To cling to Christ when His cause is rolled in the mire. To be ready to be *drowned* with Christ, to *sink* with Christ, and *rise* with Christ—this is genuine affection. This was the Magdalene's love, and let it be ours!

Another sorrow afflicted her after the death of her Lord—it was the fact that the Lord was lost to her. She would have had some melancholy satisfaction if she could have found His body, but in the morning she came to

the tomb and found it empty. The Beloved body was gone! She wept as one utterly inconsolable. Angels spoke to her, but what were angels to her—she wanted *Him!* They would have cheered her, but she turned her back—she cared for nothing but her Lord. Those who can worship angels have not Magdalene's spirit, for she turned her back on them. For Christ she sighed. She must have Him or die! You and I may expect times when Jesus will be hidden from us. If we love Him much, we shall weep till we see Him again!

They who can rejoice when Christ is absent have little of His love in their hearts, for where the beams of the Sun of Righteousness are not at the full, there ought to be a winter in the soul. We should sigh and cry till our Lord withdraws the veil, crying out in our hearts, "O that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to His seat! It is a fine point in Magdalene that she knew how to persevere. She continued to wait and to watch, and while John and Peter had gone home and could be satisfied without seeing Christ, she could not—she must see her Lord. The whole earth could not compose her mind, nor Heaven's angels give her comfort till she saw Him whom her soul loved. O Heart, are you thus hungering and thirsting after Him? You shall be well satisfied! Meanwhile, count it a great honor to hunger and thirst, for you would not do so if you had not loved Him and received much at His hands.

V. I must conduct you one step further. This woman became ONE OF THE MOST FAVORED BEHOLDERS OF CHRIST, for while she sighed and wept, Jesus revealed Himself to her! And after this manner was the revelation—He called her by her name, "Mary." It has always been thought to be a high distinction when God has called a man by his name. When he spoke and said, "Moses, Moses," then it was a sign that Moses had found favor in His sight. When Jesus said, "Mary," I can imagine that the word brought up all her history before her mind—her demoniac days, when her distracted mind was tossed on fiery billows—her happy days, when she sat at her Master's feet and caught His blessed words. The times when she had seen His miracles and wondered. When she had given Him of her substance and been too glad to minister unto Him.

If we love Jesus much, and cannot be content without Him, we, too, may expect to hear Him in the secret of our soul calling us by our name. He will say, "I have called you by your name: you are Mine." Then Mary Magdalene had such a manifestation of Christ's glory as no other woman ever had. It has been beautifully remarked by one of our dear Brethren in the ministry, that that expression, "Touch Me not," shows to us that Mary had gone farther in communion than most of us ever think of going, because she had drawn as near to Jesus as she might be allowed to go. Jesus said, "Touch Me not."

You and I need not be afraid of His saying *that* to us—we do not make it necessary. We are at such a distance that He had need to say, "Come near, and nearer still." But as for Mary, her heart was so knit to Christ that she approached so near to Him in love, that the Lord knew she could not bear any more, and that her higher joys must be reserved for a higher sphere. And therefore He bade her pause. Besides, He would have her know that He was her Lord and Master as well as her Friend. Affection

must not degenerate into familiarity—Jesus must be revered as well as loved.

Very different was His dealing with Thomas. He *commands* him to touch. Thomas is such a weak thing. He *needs* that help, but Mary does not need it. Her heart is knit to Him—it leaps for joy, and Jesus, having given her as much joy as she could stand, stays her hand. Surely she was like good Mr. Walsh who said, when he was full of the Lord's Presence, "Stop, Lord! Remember I am an earthen vessel, and if You give me more I small die, therefore stay Your loving hand." So was it in the case of Mary. She had very near, and dear, and close communion with her Master because she had followed Him and kept close to Him all the days of her life.

VI. Lastly, Mary became AN HONORED MESSENGER OF CHRIST TO THE APOSTLES. I feel it no small privilege to be the means of bearing God's message to this congregation. It pleases me when I know that many gray-headed Believers, who know far more of experimental Truth than I can be supposed to know, have nevertheless been comforted by the message which my Master has sent to them by me. But what an honor to have a message to the Apostles! Oh, the power of Divine Grace! Mary, once a *demoniac*, becomes a preacher to preachers! I dub her Doctor of Divinity, indeed, for she has to instruct these mightiest of messengers in the faith!

Note the message. Did ever man preach a better sermon than this woman preached? Had ever minister a more weighty text than this Magdalene had to handle—"I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God"? Angels told of the incarnation, but Magdalene told of the *ascension*. She must be made to do, alone, what a company of angels had been made to do before—to proclaim another step in the Savior's pathway to redemption! My dear Friends, you who are so low and distressed this morning, does not this history of Magdalene make you feel like Mercy in the "Pilgrim's Progress" who laughed in her sleep?

Christiana said, "Why did you laugh?" She replied, "Because of my dream." Does not it make your heart leap to think that you—you, a poor distracted wretch on the very brink of Hell, may yet see Jesus over and above what others ever see of Him—and may be able to tell angels, and principalities, and powers what you have tasted and handled of the good Word of God? Surely this should breathe hope into you! If you have known my Master, any of you, and have been saved by Him, continue to keep close to Him. If you lose His company, sigh after it, but when you find Him again, make it your delightful business to tell His Brothers and Sisters that He has returned to you, and make their hearts glad as the Lord Jesus has made yours!

I shall leave the matter in the hands of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord raise many a Mary Magdalene in the midst of this Church, for His name's sake. Amen.

Rev. Moody Stuart, to whose book, entitled, "The Three Marys," we refer our readers.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 20:1-18.

A SAD INTERIOR AND A CHEERY MESSENGER NO. 2518

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 23, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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*“And she went and told them that had been with Him,
as they mourned and wept.”*

Mark 16:10.

Some of you, dear Friends, have seen those small pictures by famous Dutch artists where, with many little touches—very lifelike, very suggestive, very homely—they depict an interior. Now Mark is that kind of painter. He delights to give us interiors. He is best pleased when he can record something which nobody else seems to have described, or when he can take a description by somebody else and fill in the details, the finishing touches that have been omitted. I do not remember that we are told by Matthew, or Luke, or John, how the disciples behaved themselves while their Lord was in the grave. It is left to us to imagine their feelings, with this exception—that Mark tells us that “they mourned and wept.”

Remember, this was on the morning of the third day after our Lord's death. They had had the Jewish Sabbath for quiet reflection and, no doubt, for lamentation and mourning. But this is the morning of our own Lord's-Day, the first day of the week, and when Mary Magdalene comes into the room, she tells them that she has seen the risen Lord! And what is the scene which is presented to her eyes? In two or three words, Mark stipules it in thus, “as they mourned and wept.” They were mainly men, I suppose. If Mary came only to the eleven, they were all men, yet this is how they are occupied—“They mourned and wept.” We know most of them. We have read so much of them and they stand out in such clear light—these early leaders of the Church of Christ, these first few chosen men—that I seem to be almost able to see them all in my imagination just now. They were not grouped around a table as they are in that celebrated picture of the Last Supper, but sitting together in the room and not able to restrain their emotions. They are all mourning, and most of them are expressing those emotions in a way not usual to men. “They mourned and wept.”

There were sighs, cries and salt tears. It was a scene of sad sorrow which Mary came in upon. You can almost picture her as she stands at the door with her hand upon the latch. She pauses a moment before she can communicate the news—they are so unhappy, they are so broken down, it is such a funeral gathering—that she can scarcely find her tongue! At last she breaks out, “Christ has risen! I have seen Him! He

has risen from the dead! Cease your mourning. An angel has descended from Heaven and has spoken to me and said, 'He is not here: for He is risen, as He said.'" After she has delivered her message, she stands still, almost petrified, because she finds herself not believed. Perhaps nobody speaks. It may be no one says, "Mary Magdalene, you are mad! We do not believe you!" They weep on. They look around as much as to ask one another, "Do you believe it?" And each one seems to say, "I do not believe it. myself," and their eyes give themselves again to their copious weeping—and their hearts yield themselves, still, to their perpetual mourning. "She went and told them that had been with Him, as they mourned and wept."

I want, at this time, to speak first about *the sorrowing assembly*—that mourning and weeping band of disciples to whom Mary came. Then I will say something about *the consoling messenger* whose message ought to have transformed that mourning and weeping into the opposite, namely, into joy and gladness. And, in the last place, I will tell you of *the reassuring reflection* that I see in this narrative.

I. First, let me take you to this interior which Mark has so beautifully painted, and bid you look at the sorrowing assembly. "She went and told them that had been with Him, as they mourned and wept."

What made them weep? What makes men weep about the death of Christ? It does make them weep—we are not all turned to stone, we are not all brutish. There are times with some of us—we wish they were more frequent—when the Cross of Christ seems to touch our inmost heart and makes the rock that lies within our nature stream with living floods of tears. Why do we mourn over Christ crucified?

First, *because, like these disciples, we have some faith in Him.* They had been with Him and they had been with Him because they had believed in Him. They had so believed in Him that they had left all and followed Him and been subjected to reproach for His dear sake. They had heard Him preach and the power of His teaching had won their hearts. They believed that He was the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God, the Deliverer of men! Yet now He was dead and the very fact that they had believed made them feel intense sorrow of heart as they looked back upon what He had been to them. If they had had no faith in Him, they would have said, "He was an impostor and He is put away. That is the end of Him and it is always a blessing when an impostor, at last, comes to his end." But because they had believed in Him, therefore they sorrowed to think that He was gone.

You and I, dear Friends, who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ at this present moment, cannot, without deep sorrow think of Him as dead. When once we have vividly realized that the Son of God died upon the Cross, and mark how He died in utter and extreme anguish, we cannot but grieve. We ask, "Why should He die? Why should He thus be put to death?" And we begin to cry and sorrow because of this great crime of crimes. O You Christ of God, were You despised and rejected of men? O You Lover of men, were You hated and cast out, and crucified? O You who came to save the guilty, did man put You to death?—

"Alas, and did my Savior bleed?"

***And did my Sovereign die?
Would He devote that sacred head
For such a worm as I?"***

In proportion as we believe in Him, we feel that we would melt away in tears of grief to think that He should die. Shall such brightness be eclipsed? Shall such glory be dishonored? Shall such immortality be dragged down to the gates of death? We cannot but mourn that Christ should die—and if we dwell upon that thought we shall get into that vein in which the disciples were when they mourned and wept.

No doubt they mourned and wept, principally, *because they loved Him and, therefore, lamented for His loss.* Was Christ really gone? “Alas,” they said, “our Head is taken from us, our Master and our Lord, our perfect Teacher, our complete Example, our blessed Friend, our tender Comforter.” They had lost more than she who loses her husband, or than he who has lost his spouse, or than the child that is bereaved of its mother. They had lost “every precious name in one.” And, Brothers and Sisters, if we were to always think of Christ as dead. If we were so unwise as to forget that He always *lives*, it would seem, indeed, to be the greatest loss that Heaven or earth could sustain, for the Son of God thus to be put to death! As it is, we love Him so that we cannot think of His being put away from the sons of men—being rejected by them and put to death by them—without feeling our hearts breaking that He should suffer so! Love to Him and our valuation of Him go to deepen the tides of our grief.

And the more is this the case *when we think of the sorrows He endured.* I fancy that I hear John saying across the table, “And I saw them pierce His side and forthwith there came out blood and water.” And I hear James say, “And I saw them offer Him vinegar.” And I hear Peter say, “And I saw them scourge Him.” And I hear Bartholomew say, “And I heard from the distance His cry, ‘I thirst.’” And then they would break into a chorus of weeping again. It was not only that He was gone and that they had lost Him, but that He had died in such a way as He did. They could not, without tears, contemplate His being put to the death of a felon in such extreme agony, deserted of the Father and crying, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” without saying to themselves, “How could it be? This is an affliction that cannot be borne, a deep sorrow that cannot be fathomed, that He should die, and die so!” I do admit I have sometimes felt within myself as if I would have stopped His dying if I could. What? Has He died to save *my* soul? The ransom price is altogether too great!

Have you never heard of the two brothers, one of whom must die? Each was eager to suffer instead of his brother and they contended with each other—as though they were rivals in love with death—which should die that the other might live. And, sometimes, when love is strong upon us, we seem to say to the great Master, “It were better that I should die and perish than that You should be nailed to the Cross.” He never left it to our choice! He bought us with His precious blood before we had an opportunity to debate with Him in a discussion of love! He bore our sins in His own body on the tree and gave that matchless unequalled life that

He might redeem you and me from going down into the Pit. We cannot think of His suffering and grief without mourning and weeping.

Then, dear Friends, I should think that the eleven, as they sat together, must have mourned and wept as *they thought of how they had treated this dear Lord of theirs*. If even a friend dies and we have ever been unkind to that friend, how our unkindness comes home to us when it is too late to atone for it! An undutiful son, when his mother dies, must feel a sore fretting of heart to think of his unkindness. But what must these disciples have felt as they remembered how they had treated their blessed Lord? They said to one another, "Oh, how we must have grieved Him when we disputed among ourselves which of us should be the greatest, while He was talking about being delivered into the hands of wicked men, and being scourged, and put to death upon the Cross!" "Hold your tongues, all of you," cries poor Peter, "say nothing, for it is I who deserted Him and denied Him. With oaths and curses I denied that I even knew Him." And when Peter wept, they would all weep, I am sure, as each would say, "But, Brother Peter, we all forsook Him and fled."

"I," says John, "was asleep in the garden that night when He said, 'Could you not watch with Me one hour?'" And each one would be willing to confess his own wrong-doing towards the Blessed One and all together would say, "Why did we not rally around Him? Why did we not stay with Him when they took Him away and bound Him, and scourged Him? Why did we not bare our shoulders and put ourselves between the Roman licitors and His blessed flesh? At least, why did we not stand around the Cross and whisper comfort if we could not help Him, and quote, at least, some promises of the Father to Him, or remind Him that there were some who loved Him even if others were jibing and jeering at Him?" Then they wept and mourned afresh.

And when you and I think of the death of Christ, must we not feel much the same as these disciples did?—

***"Twas You, my sins, my cruel sins,
His chief tormentors were!
Each of my crimes became a nail
And unbelief the spear."***

It was our sins that drew the vengeance down upon His guiltless head, yet we have not treated Him as we ought to have treated Him, for even we who have known Him longest and who have loved Him best—what poor friends we have been to Him! He shows His wounds again to our penitent gaze and He says, "These are the wounds which I received in the house of My friends." Oh, how little have we given to Him, how little have we done for Him, how few hours have we spent with Him in solitude, how feeble have been our testimonies for Him, how slack our prayers for His coming and for the triumph of His Kingdom! I, for one, feel ashamed, and say—

***"Well might the sun in darkness hide,
And shut its glories in,
When God, the mighty Maker died
For man, the creature's sin.
Thus might I hide my blushing face
While His dear Cross appears,
Dissolve my heart in thankfulness,
And melt my eyes to tears."***

I cannot keep on with this sorrowful subject. That terrible passion of our Master is enough to wring the last drop of grief out of our hearts. If we could once get into true sympathy with it, it would be, tonight, in this Tabernacle as it was in that upper room at Jerusalem—we would be mourning and weeping because our Lord was dead. I had many things to say to you upon this sacred theme, but if you could bear to hear them, I cannot bear to speak them.

II. So, I prefer to ask you to look at THE CONSOLING MESSENGER who came to the disciples and said, concerning their Lord and ours, “He is not dead: He is risen!”

It is very important that we should have right views concerning the resurrection as well as the death of our Lord. If I go down my garden, early tomorrow morning, with my spirit drooping and disconsolate, and say to myself, “Alas, the world is in a very bad state and the Church is almost as bad as the world! Everything is going wrong, everything is wretched, sad and miserable.” Why, even the very birds might begin to say, “What is that man doing? He is out of tune with us.” And if I look at the flowers, surely they, also, might well begin to chide me and say, “Master, what are you doing?” But if I go forth with many burdens and many cares all cast upon the Lord, and with all the outlook, dreary as it is, still say, “The Lord lives, and blessed be my Rock, and let the God of my salvation be exalted!” then surely the mountains and the hills shall break forth before me into singing and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands! God means His people to rejoice, and the world, wilderness as it is, is to rejoice with them! “The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.” God fill your souls with sunlight, all of you who are His people! If there is any Truth of God that can flood our souls with joy, surely it is contained in the cheering message which Mary brought to the weeping disciples!

You and I, Beloved, by our sins, slew the Christ of God! He died the accursed death of the Cross, but He is not dead! He is not dead now! Some professing Christians go through a kind of practical charade of the life of Christ, acting it all over again throughout what they call the Holy Year. And then they must necessarily have the “three hours’ agony” on what they call, “Good Friday.” Well, now, if I believed that Christ died on Good Friday, I would celebrate it with joy from the first dawn of the morning to the setting of the sun at night! It seems to me that there is much of unbelief, after all, at the back of any attempt to go, even in imagination, through the three hours’ agony—the agony that was endured once and for all by Him who said, “It is finished.” If it were *not* finished, I would help to go through it, but if it is finished, what have I to do with it but to rejoice in the sweet fruit of it and triumph and be glad that He is not here, for He is risen and gone into the Glory of the Father? That message of Mary Magdalene has changed the whole aspect of affairs, and though we have wept and mourned, now we will begin to rejoice!

What did Mary say? *She came with the best of news*, for she said, “I have seen our risen Lord! First I saw an angel and he told me that Christ was not there, for He was risen. And I ran to tell you that good tidings

and on the road I saw *Him*. I did not know Him at first, but He called me, 'Mary,' and I said to Him, 'Rabboni,' and I tried to touch Him, but He said, 'Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father: but go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God.' I am sure that it was none other than the Christ. I am not deceived, for the tones of His voice are well known to me. I am an eyewitness that He is risen, for I saw Him and I heard Him."

Brothers and Sisters, that our Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead is a great fact of history, testified by eye-witnesses—hundreds of faithful men and women saw Him after He rose from the dead! They could not have been deceived—they knew Him too well. They were not impostors, for they lost everything by the witness that they bore. Many of them died in consequence of bearing this witness, but they could not help it. They were so sure that they had seen Him, that they told it though they died for it! Yes, Beloved, the Lord Christ, whom you and I slew by our sins, is risen from the dead! He is not on the Cross, He is not in the grave! It is true that He is not here in bodily Presence, for He has gone up on high. A cloud has received Him, but He still lives. He lives triumphant in the skies at His Father's right hand! Let that Truth of God be the great joy and comfort of our hearts as we believe it.

Let us also, like Mary, tell the glad news to others as often as suitable occasions arise. This is an age of infidelity and we are very glad of any arguments that are used to prove the Inspiration of Scripture and the truth of its teaching, but, after all, the defense of the external bulwarks of the city of Truth is but a poor affair. The real defense is from within, where men can speak of what they know and testify what they have seen. Do not merely say to your children and neighbors, "Christ is risen," but tell them what He has done for you! Tell what a gracious influence His death and resurrection have had upon your own heart to renew you, to comfort you, to guide you, to make you "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." There is no getting over personal evidence. One eye-witness is better than 20 ear-witnesses. Men will believe what you have seen if they do not believe what you have heard. Be not slow, therefore, to bear your witness, for, "Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness" and who, Himself, has said, "You are My witnesses." If the risen Christ has been revealed to you, be sure to testify concerning Him as you have opportunity.

But, alas, *at first, the disciples did not believe the good news*. They had the common and sad failing of unbelief upon them and they dishonored the King's messenger by doubting her word. Worse still, they dishonored their Lord and Master by doubting His assurance when He told them that the third day He would rise again from the dead. Let us not doubt the great Truth of God that He is risen. Dear Friends, Mary Magdalene fell asleep 1,800 years ago, but her testimony is as true today as it was that first Lord's-Day morning, for the Truth of God is always true! And those hundreds of people who saw Christ after His resurrection, just as certainly saw Him as if they had seen Him only yesterday, for if they saw Him 1,800 years ago, it was a fact—and a fact is as much a fact after two

thousand years as it was at the first! Christ is risen! We must believe this glorious fact! If we do believe it, what then?

In the first place, the sin of Christ's murder is condoned. All that sin of ours which occasioned His death is condoned. If He has risen from the dead, He has forgiven us the sin of putting Him to death! Let your penitent spirits rejoice that the evil which you thought to do Him has been turned to good account. He is no longer dead—neither are you condemned to die if you believe in Him, nor shall you be forever and forever—

***“The Lord is risen indeed!
The grave has lost its prey.
With Him is risen the ransomed seed,
To reign in endless day.”***

Listen. Inasmuch as Christ rose from the dead, all the sins of those who trust Him are put away. You have often heard me explain this wondrous story, how Christ became the Surety for His people and how He paid their debt, otherwise it should not be all paid. He was kept in the prison house of the tomb till a full search had been made and it was proved that He had suffered the whole penalty, and that the debt of His people was paid. To do this leisurely, three days and nights were spent, and when, in Heaven's high court, it was declared that the Messiah had finished transgression and made an end of sin, “Go, Gabriel,” said the Father. And like a flash of flame the angel descended, bearing the warrant that the debt was paid and that the Surety must go free! There He lay, sleeping that grand sleep of death for us! When He woke, He unwound the napkin and the grave clothes, and laid the napkin in one place and the grave clothes in another, for He was in no hurry. He folded them up and laid each in its proper place and then, when all was quite finished, He, in the splendor of His resurrection life, went to the open doorway where stood His servant who had opened the gate for his Lord—and out He came in the majesty of His resurrection body! He was risen from the dead and in that moment God set His seal to the clearance of every soul for whom Christ was the Substitute! All of us who believe in Christ may know for sure that He died for our sins and that He was raised, again, for our justification, that is, for our clearance.

As the Cross paid the debt, resurrection took the bond and tore it in pieces. And now there is nothing standing in the records of eternity against any soul that believes in the Lord Jesus Christ! His rising from the dead has made us clear from every charge. “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather, that is risen again.” That rising again has cleared us from all the sins that can ever be laid to our charge!

Nor is that all. Those poor disciples thought, when Jesus died, and remained awhile in the tomb, that all was over with His Kingdom. The King was dead and so far as they could see, there was no one to occupy the vacant throne. He had taken the scepter of Sovereignty in His hand and ruled mankind in love—but that scepter had dropped from His dead fingers. He had preached righteousness in the great congregation, but His powerful voice was silent. But when they knew that Christ was risen, they understood that His resurrection meant a living King and a trium-

phant cause, and that the Truth of God would conquer and righteousness rule—and that the race of mankind should not go down into perdition! O dear Friends, dry up your tears! While you think of how your Lord died, you may well let them flow, but, as He lives, and reigns, there is now no cause for sorrow! Tell it out among the nations that the Lord has risen from the dead, and by His rising He has brought to all His people life, light, joy, hope, purity and everlasting redemption!

III. Finally, Beloved, there is, in this resurrection of Christ from the dead, A REASSURING REFLECTION to all who believe in Him.

It should relieve our worst grief to know that *Christ was the Representative of His people*. When He died, we who believe died in Him. And when He rose again, we rose in Him. “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” Therefore, if you believe in Jesus, have no fear of death! Dread it not for yourselves and lament it not for those who have already fallen asleep in Christ. It seems to us a very painful thought that this poor body, which has been the companion of our souls so long, must gradually grow feeble and worn out—its senses by degrees ceasing to assist the mind and the whole fabric, at length, decaying and turning to a handful of dust—lying moldering beneath yonder dark grass in the cemetery far away from the place where it was known to work and live. Ah, but, concerning even this mortal body, we have good news, for He who died and rose again, did not merely live as to His soul, but He lived as to His body, too! When His disciples “were terrified and frightened and supposed that they had seen a spirit,” He said to them, “Why are you troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see I have.” Then He took a piece of broiled fish and a honeycomb, and did eat before them, to let them see that it was His corporeal Self, His very body that died upon the Cross, that was alive again! Every Believer can say with Job, “Though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another.” Therefore is there no fear of death for us—for sin—the sting of death, is taken away and we can cry even to the last enemy, “O Death, where is your sting? O Grave, where is your victory?”

And, further, Christ being the Representative of His people, *they, also, shall live again*. When our Lord Jesus said to Martha, “Your brother shall rise again,” she answered, “I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” You may say the same concerning your brother, or father, or mother, or child, or sister, or husband, or wife! They who have fallen asleep in Jesus have only gone over into the better country where we will follow them in the Lord’s good time. We will not sit and mourn and weep, for the woman stands with her hand on the door and she looks at us while we are mourning and weeping, and she says, “Christ is risen! I saw Him in His resurrection glory.” To me, the very hinge of the Gospel is the resurrection of Christ. Whenever I get to doubting, I always fall back on that great Truth of God—He did rise from the dead! The disciples saw Him. The best witnesses that could be found saw Him, heard Him, touched Him. He did rise from the dead! Then there is a

future state, there is a resurrection! I am in Christ, I am trusting in Him, I shall rise and I shall live in Him. He has said, "Because I live, you shall live also," so I shall live and, with the Psalmist, I can say, "Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices: my flesh also shall rest in hope." Though my body shall see corruption, yet it shall be raised in glory, and power, and incorruption, like that risen body of my Lord!

There is the Gospel. Perhaps some of you will say, "We do not understand that to be the Gospel," but it is. This is the Gospel—that Jesus Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, and that He rose from the dead the third day, and that whoever believes in Him has everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation.

My dear unconverted Hearers, do you think that our Sabbaths are mere days of sport, and that when we get to our congregations, we do it just to while away the time? If so, you think very unworthily of high and holy things! No, Sirs, preaching the Gospel is to us a matter of life and death! We throw our whole soul into it. We live and are happy if you believe in Jesus and are saved! And we are almost ready to die if you refuse the Gospel of Christ. Do not let any preacher be to you what Ezekiel was to the people of the age in which he prophesied. The Lord said to him, "You are unto them as a very lovely song of one that has a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument, for they hear your words, but they do them not." Oh, that the Spirit of God would come to close grips with you and make you feel that the Lord's message is not sent to be criticized, but to be accepted and obeyed! God grant it, for His mercy's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: MATTHEW 28.

Verse 1. *In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher.* While the Jewish Sabbath lasted, they paid to it due respect. They did not even go to the sepulcher to perform the kindly offices of embalment. But when the old Sabbath was dying away and the new and better Sabbath began to dawn, these holy women found their way back to their Lord's tomb. Woman must be first at the sepulcher as she was last at the Cross. We may well forget that she was first in the transgression—the honor which Christ put upon her took away that shame! Who but Mary Magdalene could be the first at the tomb? Out of her, Christ had cast seven devils, and now she acts as if into her He had sent seven angels. She had received so much Grace that she was full of love to her Lord. "In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher." You can just see them in the gray light of the dawn. It is not clear enough to make out their form and shape, but in the twilight they are coming into the garden and finding their way to the new sepulcher.

2. *And, behold, there was a great earthquake.*—The women must have wondered as they felt that tremor beneath their feet. If you have ever felt an earthquake, you will never forget it. And this was a great one, not one

of an ordinary kind—"a great earthquake." Death was being heaved up and all the bars of the sepulcher were beginning to burst. When the King awoke from the sleep of death, He shook the world! The bedchamber in which He rested for a little while trembled as the heavenly Hero arose from His bed—"Behold, there was a great earthquake." Nor was the King unattended in His rising.

2. *For the angel of the Lord.*—It was not merely one of the angelic host, but some mighty presence angel—"the angel of the Lord."

2. *Descended from Heaven and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.* Jesus was put in the prison of the tomb as a hostage for His people. Therefore He must not break out by Himself, but the angelic sheriff's officer must bring the warrant for His deliverance, and set the captive at liberty. He was imprisoned because of human debt, but the debt is paid, so He must go free. Like a flash of fire, the angel descends from the right hand of God! He stands at the mouth of the tomb. He touches the great stone, sealed as it was, and guarded by the soldiers—and it rolls back! And when he has rolled back the stone from the door, he sits upon it, as if to defy earth and Hell ever to roll it back again! That great stone seems to represent the sin of all Christ's people, which shut them up in prison! It can never again be laid over the mouth of the sepulcher of any child of God. Christ has risen and all His saints must rise, too! The angel "rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it." I think I see there one of the grandest sights that ever man beheld, for one greater than an earthly king is sitting on something better than a throne!

3. *His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow.* Dazzling in its purity, like the raiment worn by Christ upon the Mount of Transfiguration, whiter than any fuller can make it!

4. *And for fear of him, the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.* First a palsy of fear and then a stiffening of fright fell upon them, for they had never seen such a sight as this before. They were Roman soldier, who knew nothing of the meaning of cowardice—yet at the sight of this messenger of God, "the keepers did shake, and became as dead men."

5. *And the angel answered and said unto the women.*—We had almost forgotten them! We had been thinking of the earthquake and the angel, and the flaming lightning, and the frightened soldiers. But this angel's thought is all about the women. He whose countenance was like lightning and whose garments were white as snow, said to the women.—

5-7. *Fear you not, for I know that you seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead.* Notice the angel's words. First, "See," and then, "Go." You cannot tell the message till you know it. You who would serve God must first be instructed yourselves. "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." And then, "Go quickly." If you have seen, then go. Do not sit down and admire the sight, and forget the thousands who have never seen it! But come, see the place where the Lord lay, and then go and, "go quickly."

7. *Behold, He goes before you into Galilee; there shall you see Him: lo, I have told you.* That is a very beautiful touch of condescension on the Savior's part—that He would go before His disciples into Galilee. Why, Galilee was the very opposite of a classic region—it was a district that was much despised! The clod-hoppers, the boors, the illiterate people of no account lived in “Galilee of the Gentiles.” “Yet,” says Christ, “I will meet you there.” It was the King's own rendezvous—not in the courts of earthly monarchs, nor in the palaces of the priests, but away down in Galilee! What cares He for the grandeur of men and their empty pomp and boasted wisdom? He goes to places that are despised, that He may lift them up by the glory of His light! “Behold, He goes before you into Galilee; there shall you see Him: lo, I have told you.”

8. *And they departed quickly from the sepulcher with fear and great joy.* That seems a strange mixture, “fear and great joy.” Yet there was plenty of reason for both emotions! Who would not fear that had felt an earthquake and seen an angel, and marked the tomb broken open? Yet who would not rejoice that had had such a cheering message and such an assurance that the crucified Christ had risen from the dead? Experience is the best explanation of experience! You must feel for yourself these two emotions working together before you can understand how they can live in anyone at the same time. “They departed quickly from the sepulcher with fear and great joy.”

8. *And did run to bring His disciples word.* Good women! “They did run.” These staid matrons did run and who would not run to tell of a risen Lord?

9. *And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them.*—Happy are the ministers who meet their Lord when they are going up the pulpit stairs! Blessed are the teachers who meet Jesus when they are going to the class! They will be sure to preach and teach well when that is the case. “As they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them.”

9. *Saying, all hail. And they came and held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him.* These holy women were not Unitarians! Knowing that Jesus was the Son of God, they had no hesitation in worshipping Him. Perhaps these timid souls clung to their Lord through fear that He might be again taken from them. So, “they held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him.” Fear and faith striving within them for the mastery.

10. *Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell My Brethren to go into Galilee, and there shall they see Me.* Note how Jesus dwells upon this despised district of Galilee. I should like to dwell upon it, too. He said nothing about classic Corinth, or imperial Rome, or proud Jerusalem! His message is, “Tell my Brethren to go into Galilee, and there shall they see Me.” If we will be humble. If we will cast aside the pride of life, there shall we meet Him who is meek and lowly of heart!

11-13. *Now when they were going, behold, some of the guards came into the city, and reported unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large sums of money to the soldiers, saying, Say you, His disciples came by night, and stole Him away while we slept.* You must often have noticed what a mixture of falsehood this was. “You were

asleep. Are you sure that you were asleep?” “Yes.” “Yet you say that the disciples came—you knew they were the disciples though you were asleep? And they stole Him away? You know how they did it? You can describe the stealthy way in which they took away the body of Jesus? You were the witnesses of it, although you were sound asleep all the while?” Go, Sirs, it is worse than trifling to listen to the lying of a witness who begins by swearing that he was fast asleep all the time! Yet this was the tale that the soldiers were bribed to tell. And many a worse lie than this has been told to try to put the Truth of God out of countenance. The modern philosophy which is thrust forward to cast a slur upon the great Truths of Revelation is no more worthy of credence than this lie put into the mouths of the soldiers! Yet common report gives it currency and among a certain clique it pays. But the soldiers naturally said, “We shall be put to death for sleeping while on duty.” So the chief priests said.

14. *And if this come to the governor’s ears, we will persuade him, and secure you.* “We can give some more of those arguments that have been so telling in your hands—and they will prevail with the governor as they have prevailed with you.”

15. *So they took the money and did as they were told.*—Plenty still do this and I have no doubt they will continue to do so as long as the world is what it is. “They took the money and did as they were told.”

15-17. *And this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day. Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw Him, they worshipped Him: but some doubted.* Where will not Mr. Doubting and other members of his troublesome family be found? We can never expect to be quite free from doubters in the Church, since even in the Presence of the newly-risen Christ some doubted! Yet the Lord revealed Himself to the assembled company, although He knew that some among them would doubt that it was really their Lord who was risen from the dead.

18-20. *And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth. Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.* And we say, “Amen,” too! May He be most manifestly with us here even now, for His sweet love’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—317, 301, 286.

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY
TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

UNBELIEVERS UPBRAIDED

NO. 2890

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 30, 1904.

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“He...upbraided them with their unbelief.”
Mark 16:14.

I SHALL not dwell so much upon this particular instance of the disciples' unbelief as upon the fact that the Lord Jesus upbraided them because of it. This action of His shows us the way in which unbelief is to be treated by us. As our loving Savior felt it right to upbraid rather than to console, He taught us that on some occasions unbelief should be treated with severity rather than with condolence.

Beloved Friends, let us never look upon our own unbelief as an excusable infirmity, but let us always regard it as a sin—and as a great sin, too. Whatever excuse you may at any time make for others—and I pray you to make excuses for them whenever you can rightly do so—never make any for yourself. In that case, be swift to condemn. I am not at all afraid that as a general rule we shall err on the side of harshness to ourselves. No, we are far too ready to palliate our own wrong-doing, to cover up our own faults and to belittle our own offenses. I very specially urge every Believer in Jesus to deal most sternly with himself in this matter of unbelief. If he turns the back of the judicial knife towards others, let him always turn the keen edge of it towards himself. In that direction use your sharpest eye and your most severely critical judgment. If you see any fault in yourself, you may depend upon it that the fault is far greater than it appears to be—therefore deal more sternly with it. It is a very easy thing for us to get into a desponding state of heart and to mistrust the promises and faithfulness of God and yet, all the while, to look upon ourselves as the subjects of a disease which we cannot help—and even to claim pity at the hands of our fellow men—thinking that they should console us and try to cheer us. Perhaps they should, but, at any rate, we must *not think that they should*. It will be far wiser for each one of us to feel, “This unbelief of mine is a great wrong in the sight of God. He has never given me any occasion for it and I am doing Him a cruel injustice by thus doubting Him. I must not idly sit down and say, ‘This has come upon me like a fever, or a paralysis which I cannot help.’ But I must say, ‘This is a great sin in which I must no longer indulge. I must confess my unbelief with shame and self-abasement, to think that there should be in me this evil heart of unbelief.’”

Notwithstanding what I said, just now, concerning our dealings with others, I must give very much the same advice with regard to them as to ourselves, though in a somewhat mitigated form. When we see any of our friends falling into sin and unbelief, we must seek to deal wisely with them—always kindly—never harshly. Let us reserve all our severity for ourselves as I have already urged you. Still, I am sure that it is quite possible for us to be doing our fellow Christians serious harm by excusing their unbelief and by pitying them for it instead of pointing out to them, tenderly, yet faithfully, the great sin they are committing by this doubting.

Have you ever seen a “coddled” lad? I have seen one who ought to be in the open air at play, shut in a room because his parents were fearful that he was delicate and unable to do as other lads do. He ought to have been taking part in various healthy exercises that would have developed and strengthened the muscles in his body, but, instead of that, he was sitting down, tied to his mother’s apron strings and so was being made weaker than he was before! He was kept in an atmosphere which was not fit for him to breathe because his foolish parents were afraid the fresh air might be too trying for him—and long before he was ill, he was dosed and treated until he really became ill! Many a child has been murdered by being thus coddled, or, if he has lived to grow up to manhood, he has been a poor, feeble, effeminate creature because the abundant love which had been lavished upon him had been linked with equally abundant folly.

You can easily treat Christians—and especially young converts—in the same senseless fashion! If they are unbelieving, you can keep back from them the stern Truth of God about the sinfulness of such a state of heart and mind because you fear that they will be discouraged if you deal faithfully with them. That is quite as wrong as saying to the unconverted, over and over again, “Only believe,” without ever mentioning the need of repentance and regeneration! There is a way of misapplying even the promises of God to unbelieving hearts and of giving the consolations of the Gospel to those who are not in a condition to receive them as one might give sweetmeats to sick children and do them harm. People who are thus unwisely treated are apt to remain in the same sad state until their unbelief becomes chronic—and their unhappiness becomes a life-long burden to them. Sometimes when a man is in great pain, it is wise to give him something that will afford him even temporary relief, but the better course is, if possible, to strike at the root of his disease and eradicate it once and for all. That should be our method of dealing with the unbelief of our Brothers and Sisters in Christ. We must make it clear to them that unbelief is no trifle and that it is a thing for which its owner is not to be pitied, but to be blamed—and to be severely blamed—for it is a most grievous fault and sin. Our Savior dealt thus with the 11 when He upbraided them because of their unbelief. He did not excuse them, or comfort them, but He upbraided them! Upbraiding does not seem to be in harmony with the usual character of Jesus, does it? Yet you may depend upon it that it was the right thing for Him to do—and the kind thing, too—otherwise, He would not have done it.

Jesus upbraided these disciples of His because of their unbelief upon a very special point on which they ought to have been the first to believe. Many persons had seen their Lord after He had risen from the dead. And the 11 Apostles who ought, by reason of their greater spiritual advantages and their more intimate companionship with Christ, to have been the readiest to believe the good tidings, were not so and, therefore, Christ “upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He had risen.” Yet these eyewitnesses—Cleopas and his companion, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, the other Mary and the rest of the holy women—who had come to the eleven, were their own Brothers and Sisters in the faith! So Christ might well say to them—and I daresay He did—“Why did you doubt their testimony? You did them an injustice by acting in such a manner. They are honest and truthful and they have told you the truth. You have not been accustomed to doubt their word, so, as you have believed their witness concerning other matters, why did you not believe them in this instance? Moreover,” our Lord might well say, “there were many of them—it was not merely one who might have been mistaken, but a considerable number saw Me and I spoke with them and they came and told you that it was even so—yet you did not believe them. The number of the witnesses and their well-known character are sure signs that you must have been in a wrong state of heart and mind not to be able to receive such clear evidence as theirs and, therefore, you are blameworthy for your unbelief.”

In the case of these Apostles, unbelief was peculiarly sinful, for they had the promise of their Lord to back up the testimony of His disciples. He had often told them that He would rise again from the dead—and had even foretold the very day of His Resurrection, so that the unbelief of the Apostles was altogether inexcusable. Yet this very fact which was a cause of stumbling to the Apostles appears to me to give point and power to the appeal which I make to myself and to you against our unbelief. We all believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. We have no difficulty in accepting that great fundamental Doctrine of the Christian faith. All of us who are Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ fully endorse Paul’s words to the saints in Rome and say that our Lord, “was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification.” Well, then, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, if we believe that Jesus rose from the dead, the ground is completely cut from under the feet of unbelief, for His promise is, “Because I live, you shall also live.” If He lives, then the Gospel is true and the promises of the Gospel are sure to all who believe in Him! If He lives, then He lives to intercede for us and, through his intercession, every Covenant blessing is certain to come to us! Therefore if we harbor unbelief in our hearts, we are doubly guilty—and if the Savior were here in bodily Presence, though His face would still beam with Infinite Love to us, I am quite sure that He would, even in sterner tones than He used towards those 11 Apostles, upbraid us because of our unbelief!

If Thomas will not believe that Christ is risen until he has put his finger into the print of the nails in His hands and thrust his hand into his Savior’s wounded side, that is bad enough—but it is worse if you who do believe that He is risen and who do not doubt any one of the doctrines

that He has taught you—still have unbelief mingled with the faith which you possess! Whether that supposed faith is all true, or not, is more than I can say, but, with so much faith as you profess to have, how can you still continue to doubt?

I want, in this discourse, to upbraid myself and you, also, for any unbelief that we may have harbored, by noticing, first, *the evil of unbelief in itself* and then, *the evils that surely flow out of unbelief*.

I. First, then, I have to say to any of God's children who have given in to unbelief in any degree—YOUR UNBELIEF IS AN EVIL THING IN ITSELF.

This truth will come very closely home to you if you will just *think how you would feel if others disbelieved you*. If anyone were to question your veracity, you would be very vexed and if you made a promise to any man and he expressed a doubt as to the fulfillment of it, you would feel hurt. And if those with whom you are most closely connected were to disbelieve you, you would feel still more grieved, for you expect absolute confidence from them. If mutual trust were taken away from any family, how unhappy the members of that family would be—the children suspecting the sincerity of their parents' love—the wife doubting the reality of her husband's affection—the husband dubious of his wife's faithfulness! Try to conceive, if you can, what it would be if those who now call you friend, or child, or husband, or wife, or brother, or sister should no longer accept what you say as being true. Suppose, also, that you were perfectly conscious that you had never broken your word to them—that you had faithfully kept every promise that you had made to them and had been in all things honest, true and sincere—would you not feel their doubts and suspicions most acutely? I am sure you would—they would touch the very apple of your eye and cut you to the quick—you could not endure such treatment from them! Then how can you mete out to the Lord Jesus Christ such treatment as would be so painful to yourself? And further, how can you expect your child to trust you when you doubt your Savior? How can you even look to your wife for confidence in you when, if there is some little trouble, or things go somewhat awkwardly, you straightway begin to mistrust your God and Savior?

Remember, too, that *the sin of your unbelief may be measured by the excellence of the person whom you mistrust*. I said, just now, that if you were conscious of your absolute sincerity, you would be the more deeply wounded by the suspicion of those who doubted you. What do you think, then, of the sin of doubting Christ, who cannot lie, who is "the Truth" itself? I know, Beloved, that you have a very high opinion of your Lord and Savior—do you not worship Him as Divine? Do you not also feel His truly human sympathy? You know that there is no clause in His Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure, which He has not already fulfilled or which He will not fulfill at the appointed time. His Incarnation, His life here below, His shameful sufferings, His vicarious death—all these He promised to undergo and all these He performed in due season. And He will go right through, to the end, with the great work of your eternal salvation! By the mouth of His servant Jeremiah, the Lord asked, long ago, "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? A land of darkness?"

And the Lord Jesus might well say to His professed followers, "Have I been as the barren fig tree was to Me when I found on it nothing but leaves?" As He points to the long list of His favors to us, He may well ask, "For which of them do you thus misjudge and mistrust Me?"

And when He spreads out the whole roll of His life and work before you, He may well enquire, "Upon which part of My life or work do you base your suspicions? What is there in My Nature, as Divine and Human—what is there in My Character—what is there in My life below, or in My life above—that should lead you to question My faithfulness to you, My power to help you, My readiness to sympathize with you, My willingness to bless you?" Why, you are doubting Him whom the angels adore and worship! You have felt, sometimes, as if you would like to wash His feet with your tears. How, then, can you ever insult Him with your doubts? You have even said that you could die for Him! And it has been your great ambition to live for Him, yet you cannot trust Him? If you have run with the footmen in the matter of these minor trials of your faith—and they have wearied you—what would you do if you had to contend with horsemen as many others have had to do in the day of martyrdom? And if, in the favorable circumstances in which you have been placed, you have doubted your Savior, what are you likely to do when you are in the swellings of Jordan? Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, when you think of unbelief as aiming her darts at Jesus Christ, the Well-Beloved of our soul, surely you will say that it is a shameful sin and a disgraceful crime against Infinite Love!

Then, *remember, Beloved in the Lord, the relationship in which Jesus Christ stands to you.* You know that the more closely we are allied to a person, the more painful any suspicion on the part of that person becomes. I have repeatedly used in this connection the figure of a child's trust in a parent, a husband's trust in his wife and the wife's trust in her husband—and you have readily accepted the comparisons because you have felt that the nearness of the relationship would involve a corresponding degree of trust. How near—how very near—we are in kinship to Christ! Are we not married to Him? Has He not espoused us unto Himself forever? There is a conjugal union between Christ and His Church of which the marriage bond on earth is but a feeble type. Then can you who have been renewed in heart by the Holy Spirit and washed in the blood of the Lamb, doubt Him whom your soul loves? Can you distrust Him to whom you are so closely allied? Oh, shame, shame, shame, that lack of confidence should come in to mar such a wondrous union as that!

But we are even more closely knit to Christ than the marriage union implies, for "we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones." I cannot explain that secret, mystical union of which the Scripture speaks, but it is a true union, whatever mystery there may be about it. Then shall there be such disunion among the members of the body that the eye shall begin to doubt the heart and the hand to mistrust the foot? It would be pitiful if such a state of things could prevail in our bodies! Then what must it be if such a state of things prevails among the members of the mystical body of Christ? Beloved, may God render this unbelief impossible by sending such life floods of Grace through all the members of

Christ's body that never more shall a single thought of mistrust of our glorious Covenant Head enter our minds even for a single instant!

Consider next, I pray you, dear Friends, *how many times some of us have doubted our Lord*. The sin of unbelief becomes all the greater because it is so frequently committed. God be thanked that it is not so with all Christians—there are some who walk in faith and dwell in faith. I suppose that as birds fly over everybody's head, doubts fly around all good men's minds, but our old proverb says, "You need not let birds build in your hair," although there are some people who let doubts come and lodge in their minds and even dwell in their hearts! We know some persons of this kind who seem to be very easily led into despondency, doubt and mistrust of Christ. Well now, if a man has done this only once, I think he might well say to himself, "I did once question the everlasting Truth of God. I did once stain the spotless robe of Infinite Veracity with a dark blot of suspicion"—and I think that he might find it difficult to forgive himself for having done so vile a thing even once! But when it comes to many times and when it comes to long periods of doubt and mistrust, it is still worse. I want to press this point home upon all whom it concerns and I want your consciences to be wide awake so that as you recall the many times in which you have thus sinned against your Heavenly Father, and against His blessed Spirit, and against His Divine Son you may recollect that each distinct act of unbelief is a sin—each act of mistrust is another wounding of the Lord! God grant that we may truly repent as we think of the many times in which we have been thus guilty!

Then there is this further point—*some of these actions have been repetitions of former ones*. For instance, a man is in trouble and he has doubts concerning the Providence of God. But he is delivered, God is gracious to him and helps him out of his difficulty. Well now, if he falls into a similar trouble and if he is again guilty of harboring doubt, this is far worse! If a man should doubt your word the first time you speak to him, you might say, "Well, he does not know me." The second time you might say, "When he has proved me more, he will trust me." But what shall I say of those whose hair has a sprinkling of gray in it and whose Christian experience extends to a score of years or more—perhaps two score—possibly, three score? Oh, if you doubt the Lord now, it will be a crying shame! It will not be too surprising if some of us act thus, for so did Israel for 40 years in the wilderness—but that does not excuse the evil in our case. It is a desperately evil thing that God should be mistrusted over and over again—and that He should have to say, "How long will it be before you believe Me?"

I scarcely like to linger on such a sad theme, yet it does our hearts good to be thus upbraided. So, remember that *oftentimes our unbelief has come in the teeth of our own assurance to the contrary*. Do you not sometimes catch yourself saying, after a very great mercy, "Well, I can never doubt the Lord again"? When you have had an answer to prayer of a very memorable kind, you have said, "Oh, I must believe in the power of prayer now! For me to ever think that the Lord will deny me would be impossible." Yes, in that respect, also, we are just like the Israelites who promised to keep the Covenant, yet speedily broke it.

There is also this aggravation of your sin—*although you do not trust the Lord as you should, you do trust your fellow creatures*. You can believe that lie of the old serpent—

***“The Lord has quite forsaken you—
Your God will be gracious no more”—***

yet you cannot so readily believe the oath and promise of God! If an earthly friend were to say to you, “I will help you,” how readily you would jump at his offer! If there is an arm of flesh near, how cheerfully you lean upon it and, though perhaps there is nothing for you to rest yourself upon but a broken reed, you think it is a strong staff and throw all your weight upon it! It is quite true that ungodly men who have no faith generally have any amount of credulity. They cannot believe the truth, but they can believe lies to any extent! So is it, alas, with God’s own people when they get off the track of faith. They seem to become credulous concerning the things seen, which are temporal, in proportion as they become dubious of the things unseen, which are eternal! Is not this a sin of the greatest blackness? You cannot trust your husband, but you can trust a flatterer who deceives you! You cannot trust your God, but you make idol gods unto yourself and trust them! You cannot rest yourself on Jehovah, but you can on Egypt! You can rest yourself on the promise of man who is but as a moth which is soon crushed, but as for Him who made the heavens and the earth and all things that are, you cannot rely upon Him! I feel as if I could sit down and cover my face for shame when I think of those occasions wherein I have been guilty of this sin. Perhaps the best thing we could all do would be to go home, fall on our knees and ask our blessed Savior to wash away all this unbelief—and not to believe us when we talk about doubting—but only to believe that as He knows all things, He knows that, after all, we do trust Him.

II. Now, with great brevity I have to speak upon the second point which is **THE MANY EVILS WHICH COME OUT OF UNBELIEF TO THOSE OF US WHO LOVE THE LORD.**

Brothers and Sisters, it is enough of evil—if there were no more—that *unbelief is so cruel to Christ and grieves His Holy Spirit so much*. I should but repeat myself if I reminded you how mistrust grieves you and, speaking after the manner of men, in the same fashion it grieves the Holy Spirit. He dwells in you—shall He dwell in you to be grieved by you? He relieves your grief—will you cause Him grief? Your vexations vanish because He is the Comforter—will you vex the Comforter? And what can vex Him more than suspecting the ever-faithful heart of Christ? That is evil enough—to wound Christ and the Holy Spirit!

Next, remember—though this is a more selfish argument—*how much unrest and misery unbelief has caused to yourself*. You have never had half as many trials from God as you have manufactured for yourself. Death, which you so much dread, is nothing compared with the thousand deaths that you have died through the fear of death. You make a whip for yourself and you mix bitter cups for yourself by your unbelief. That is quite enough trial for you to bear and God will help you to bear it, but you put away the helping hand when you are unbelieving and then you increase your own burden! Oh, you can sing, even by the rivers of

Babylon, if you have but faith! You may lie on your sick bed and feel great pain, yet your spirit shall not smart, but shall dance away your pain if your heart is but looking in simple confidence to Christ. And you shall die, as the Negro said his master died—"full of life"—if you have true faith in Jesus. But if faith shall fail you, oh then you are distressed when there is no cause for distress—and full of fear where there is no fear!

And then, *how much you lose in other things besides happiness!* A thousand promises are missed because there is not the faith to claim them. There are the cases and you have the keys—yet you do not put the keys into the locks to open them. There are Joseph's granaries and you are hungry—but you do not go to Joseph and show your confidence in him by asking for what you need. You are not straitened in God, but in yourselves! If you believe not, you shall not be established—neither shall your prayers prevail, nor shall you grow in Grace. If you believe not, your experience shall not be of that high and lofty kind that otherwise it might have been. We live down here in the marsh and the mist when, had we faith, we might live in the everlasting sunshine! We are down below in the dungeons, fretting under imaginary chains when the key of promise, which will open every door in Doubting Castle, is in our bosom! If we will but use it, we may get away to the tops of the mountains and see the New Jerusalem and the land which is very far off.

Further, *unbelief weakens us for all practical purposes.* What can the man who is unbelieving do? O Brothers and Sisters in Christ, it is a terrible thing to think how much work there is that falls flat because it is not done in faith! You saw the trees when they were covered with blooms—there seemed to be a promise of much fruit—but there were chilling winds, sharp frosts and so, perhaps, only one in a hundred of the blossoms ever turned to fruit. The tree of the Church seems, at times, covered with beautiful blossoms—what can be more lovely to the eyes? But the blossoms do not knit—faith is the bee that carries the pollen—it is faith that fructifies the whole and makes it truly fruitful unto God. What might my sermons not have done had I believed my Master more? You Sunday school teachers may say, "Had I taught in greater faith, I might have won my scholars." Or you may say, "Had I gone to my visiting of the poor and the sick in the strength of the Lord, who knows what I might have done for Him?"

Faith is the Nazarite lock of Samson—if it is shorn away, Samson is weak as other men. Then, as to suffering, wonderful is the power of faith there. If you are trusting your Heavenly Father, believing that all is right that seems most wrong, that everything that happens is ordered or permitted by Him and that His Grace will sweeten every bitter cup, you can suffer patiently and, as your tribulations abound, so will your consolations abound in Christ Jesus! Like the Ark of Noah, as the waters deepen you will rise upon them and get nearer to Heaven in proportion as the great floods increase.

Unbelief in any Christian, no doubt, *has a very injurious effect upon other Christians.* There are some who are like sickly sheep which—

"Infect the flock,

And poison all the rest.”

Especially is it so, dear Brothers, if you happen to be in office in the church, or to be doing any prominent work for Christ. If the commander-in-chief trembles, the army is already conquered! If the captain begins to fear, fear will take possession of every soldier's heart in his company. Was it not grand of Paul, in the shipwreck, when all others were dismayed and thought they would go to the bottom, when he said, "Have no fear, Sirs," and he bade them eat, as he ate—calmly giving thanks to God before them all? Why, Paul saved them all by his calm confidence in God! If we have but faith, we shall strengthen our Brothers and Sisters! But if we have it not, we shall weaken them.

I am sure, too, that *the influence of unbelief in Christians upon the unconverted is very serious, indeed.* If we do not play the man in times of trial—if we do not show them what faith in God can do—they will think that there is nothing in it. And suppose, Brothers and Sisters, you should make anyone think there is nothing in religion? How sad that would be! When the devil needs a friend, surely he could not find one more able to do him service than a child of God who is full of mistrust. The children say, "Our father only trusts God for bread when there is plenty in the cupboard." And the servants say, "The master is only happy in the Lord when he is in good health." And those who know our business affairs say, "Oh, yes! So-and-So is a great believer, but he has a big balance at his banker's—you should see him when trade is bad! You should see him when there are bad debts! Then you will find that he is not a bit more a believer in Jesus Christ than any of the rest of us! He is a fair-weather Christian—he is like the flowers that open when the sun shines. But take away the summer prosperity and you will see but little of his religion!" Let it not be so with any of us, but may God deliver us from this tremendous evil of unbelief!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HEBREWS 11:1-13, 32-40.**

Verses 1, 2. *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report.* So it was written, in the olden time, that Believers "obtained a good report." And this second verse shows that they obtained it by their faith. The best part of the report about them is that they believed their God and believed all that was revealed to them by His Word and His Spirit.

3. *Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.* The facts about Creation must be the subject of faith. It is true that they can be substantiated by the argument from design and in other ways, but still, for a wise purpose as I believe, God has not made even that matter of the creation of the universe perfectly clear to human reason—so there is room for the exercise of faith. Men like to have everything laid down according to the rules of mathematical precision, but God desires them to exercise faith and, therefore, He has not acted according to their wishes.

4. *By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it, he being dead, yet speaks.* The first of the long line of martyrs triumphed by faith! And if you are to be strong to bear witness for God, you must be made strong by the same power which worked so effectually in Abel. If, like his, your life is to be a speaking life—a life which shall speak even out of the grave—its voice must be the voice of faith.

5. *By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death, and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.* It is faith that muzzles the mouth of death and takes away the power of the sepulcher. If any man who had *not* been a Believer had been translated as Enoch was, we should have been able to point to a great feat accomplished apart from faith. It has never been so, for this which was one of the greatest things that was ever done—to leap from this life into another and to overleap the grave altogether—was only achieved “by faith.”

6, 7. *But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not as yet seen.* These are the things with which faith always deals—not with the things that are seen or are apprehensible by the senses or the feelings.

7. *Moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.* So you see that faith has a condemning power towards an ungodly world. You do not need to be constantly telling worldlings that they are doing wrong—let them see clearly the evidence of your faith, for that will bear the strongest conceivable witness against their unbelief and sin, even as Noah, by his faith, “condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.”

8. *By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing where he went.* That is, surely, the very masterpiece of faith! God bade Abraham go forth from his native land. He believed that God knew where he was to go though he did not himself know. So he left the direction of his wanderings entirely in the Lord’s hands and obeyed—and “went out, not knowing where he went.” We are not to ask for full knowledge before we will be obedient to the will of the Lord, but we are to obey God in the dark, even as Abraham did.

9. *By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise.* It is one of the great evidences of true faith for her to keep on, to continue, to abide without any visible signs or tokens of what she knows is hers. The *life* of faith is wonderful, but so, also, is the *walk* of faith. Her walk has much about it that is mysterious. She knows that the land she treads on belongs to her and yet, in another sense, she cannot claim a solitary foot of it. She knows that she is at home, even as Abraham was in his own land—yet like he, she knows herself to be a sojourner in a strange land, but is quite content to be so.

10. *For he looked for a city which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God.* What a depth of meaning there is in those five words, “a city which has foundations”—as if all other cities had none! They come and they go as if they were molehills raised on the surface of the earth, or little mounds of sand made by the children’s wooden spades upon the seashore which the next tide will wash away! What vast numbers of cities have already been destroyed! We are constantly picking up the relics of them, but there is, blessed be the name of the Lord, “a city which has foundations,” a city founded on eternal power—and we are, I hope, on our way to that city.

11, 12. *Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed and was delivered of a child when she was past age because she judged Him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.* Perhaps the reference is to Abraham who was as good as dead, being so old—or to Isaac, who was as good as dead, for he was laid upon the altar and was practically “offered up” as a sacrifice unto the Lord. There were many deaths to work against the life of faith, yet life triumphed over death after all.

13. *These all died in faith.* That is the epitaph which God has carved over the resting place of His faithful ones—“These all died in faith.” Will this be the record concerning all of us, “These all died in faith”?

13. *Not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.* The chapter is a very long one so I must condense it, as the Apostle, himself, did when he came to the 32nd verse. There was so much to be said that he added—

32. *And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the Prophets.* There are some names in this chapter which we would hardly have expected to see there—the characters mentioned having been so disfigured by serious faults, flaws and failings—but the distinguishing feature of faith was there in every instance—and especially in the case of Samson. Perhaps there was no more childlike faith in any man than there was in him. Who but a man full of faith would have hurled himself upon a thousand men with no weapon in his hand but the jawbone of an ass? There was a wondrous confidence in God in that weak, strong man, which though it does not excuse his faults, yet nevertheless puts him in the ranks of the Believers. Happy is the man or woman who believes in God! There were multitudes of others beside those whom the Apostle named—

33. *Who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness.* Is that as great an exploit as subduing kingdoms? Yes, that it is—to have, by faith, preserved a holy character in such a world of temptation as this is a far grander achievement than to have conquered any number of kingdoms by force of arms!

33, 34. *Obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong,* Do you notice how, every now and then, there is the men-

tion of a feat which seems altogether beyond you, but then there follows one in which you can be a partaker with these heroes and heroines of faith? It may be that you have never “quenched the violence of fire” yet, often enough, it has been true of you that, by faith, “out of weakness” you have been “made strong.” Others—

34, 30. *Waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance: that they might obtain a better resurrection.* What wondrous faith it was which sustained the saints under the awful tortures to which they were subjected! The story flusters one’s heart to even read it—what must it have been actually to endure?

36-39. *And others had trial of cruel mocking and scourging, yes, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented, (of whom the world was not worthy): they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise.* These worthies lived before Christ came, but, since then, equally noble exploits have been performed by the heroes and heroines of faith. The Christian martyrs have shown the extremity of human endurance when they have been sustained by faith and the roll of Christian heroes, since their Lord ascended to Heaven, is longer and even brighter than that of the faithful ones who came before them in the earlier dispensation!

40. *God having provided some better thing for us, that they, without us, should not be made perfect.* The new dispensation is necessary to complete the old—the New Testament is the complement of the Old Testament—and New Testament saints join hands with Old Testament elders. Let us all be worthy of our high pedigree and may God grant that if the saints of these latter days are to perfect the history of the Church of Christ, the end may not be less heroic than the beginning was! A true poem should gather force as it grows and its waves of thought should roll in with greater power as it nears its climax. So should the mighty poem of faith’s glorious history increase in depth and power as it gets nearer to its grand consummation—that God may be glorified yet more and more through all His believing children. So may it be! Amen.

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

BAPTISMAL REGENERATION

NO. 573

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 5, 1864,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON**

***“And He said unto them, Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. But he that believes not shall be damned.”
Mark 16:15-16.***

In the preceding verse our Lord Jesus Christ gives us some little insight into the natural character of the Apostles whom He selected to be the first ministers of the Word. They were evidently men of like passions with us and needed to be rebuked even as we do. On the occasion when our Lord sent forth the eleven to preach the Gospel to every creature He, “appeared unto them as they sat at meat and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen.” From which we may surely gather that to preach the Word, the Lord was pleased to choose imperfect men! Men, too, who of themselves were very weak in the Grace of faith in which it was most important that they should excel. Faith is the conquering Grace and is of all things the main requisite in the preacher of the Word. And yet the honored men who were chosen to be the leaders of the Divine crusade needed a rebuke concerning their unbelief. Why was this?

Why, my Brethren, because the Lord has ordained evermore that we should have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us. If you should find a perfect minister, then might the praise and honor of his usefulness accrue to *man*. But God is frequently pleased to select for eminent usefulness men evidently honest and sincere but who have some manifest infirmity by which all the Glory is cast off from them and laid upon Himself and upon Himself alone. Let it never be supposed that we who are God’s ministers either excuse our faults or pretend to perfection. We labor to walk in holiness, but we cannot claim to be all that we wish to be. We do not base the claims of God’s Truth upon the spotlessness of our characters, but upon the fact that it comes from Him.

You have believed in spite of our infirmities and not because of our virtues. If, indeed, you had believed our word because of our supposed perfection, your faith would stand in the excellency of man and not in the power of God. We come unto you often with much trembling, sorrowing

over our follies and weaknesses, but we deliver to you God's Word as God's Word and we beseech you to receive it not as coming from us poor sinful mortals, but as proceeding from the Eternal and Thrice Holy God. And if you so receive it and by its own vital force are moved and stirred up towards God and His ways, then is the work of the Word sure work, which it could not and would not be if it rested in any way upon man.

Our Lord, having thus given us an insight into the character of the persons whom He has chosen to proclaim His Truth, then goes on to deliver to the chosen champions their commission for the Holy War. I pray you mark the words with solemn care. He sums up in a few words the whole of their work and at the same time foretells the result of it, telling them that some would doubtless believe and so be saved, and some, on the other hand, would *not* believe and would most certainly, therefore, be damned, that is, condemned forever to the penalties of God's wrath. The lines containing the commission of our ascended Lord are certainly of the utmost importance and demand devout attention and implicit *obedience*—not only from all who aspire to the work of the ministry—but also from all who hear the message of mercy.

A clear understanding of these words is absolutely necessary to our success in our Master's work, for if we do not understand the commission it is not at all likely that we shall discharge it aright. To alter these words were more than impertinence—it would involve the crime of *treason* against the authority of Christ and the best interests of the souls of men. O for Grace to be very jealous here! Wherever the Apostles went they met with obstacles to the preaching of the Gospel, and the more open and effectual was the door of utterance, the more numerous were the adversaries.

These brave men wielded the sword of the Spirit as to put to flight all their foes. And this they did not by craft and guile, but by making a direct cut at the error which impeded them. Never did they dream for a moment of adapting the Gospel to the unhallowed tastes or prejudices of the people, but at once, directly and boldly, they brought down with both their hands the mighty sword of the Spirit upon the crown of the opposing error.

This morning, in the name of the Lord of Hosts, my Helper and Defense, I shall attempt to do the same. And if I should provoke some hostility—if I should, through speaking what I believe to be the Truth of God—lose the friendship of some and stir up the enmity of more, I cannot help it. The burden of the Lord is upon me and I must deliver my soul. I have been loath enough to undertake the work, but I am forced to it by an awful and overwhelming sense of solemn duty. As I am soon to appear before my Master's bar, I will this day, if ever in my life, bear my testimony for

His Truth and run all risks. I am content to be cast out as evil if it must be so, but I cannot, I *dare* not, hold my peace.

The Lord knows I have nothing in my heart but the purest love to the souls of those whom I feel imperatively called to rebuke sternly in the Lord's name. Among my hearers and readers a considerable number will censure, if not condemn me, but I cannot help it. If I forfeit your love for Truth's sake I am grieved for you, but I cannot, I dare not, do otherwise! It is as much as my soul is worth to hold my peace any longer and whether you approve or not I must speak out. Did I ever court your approbation? It is sweet to everyone to be applauded. But if, for the sake of the comforts of respectability and the smiles of men any Christian minister shall keep back a part of his testimony, his Master at the last shall require it at his hands.

This day, standing in the immediate Presence of God, I shall speak honestly what I feel, as the Holy Spirit shall enable me. And I shall leave the matter with you to judge concerning it, as you will answer for that judgment at the Last Great Day. I find that the great error which we have to contend with throughout England (and it is growing more and more), is one in direct opposition to my text—well known to you as the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. We will confront this dogma with the assertion that BAPTISM WITHOUT FAITH SAVES NO ONE.

The text says, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved," but whether a man is baptized *or not*, it asserts that, "he that believes not shall be damned." So that Baptism does not save the unbeliever. No, it does not in any degree exempt him from the common doom of all the ungodly. He may have Baptism, or he may not have Baptism—if he believes not—he shall be in any case most surely damned. Let him be baptized by immersion or sprinkling—in his infancy, or in his adult age—if he is not led to put his trust in Jesus Christ—if he remains an unbeliever, then this terrible doom is pronounced upon him—"He that believes not shall be damned."

I am not aware that any Protestant Church in England teaches the doctrine of baptismal regeneration except one and that happens to be the corporation which with none too much humility calls itself the Church of England. This very powerful sect does not teach this doctrine merely through a section of its ministers who might charitably be considered as evil branches of the vine. No, it openly, boldly and plainly declares this doctrine in her own appointed standard, the Book of Common Prayer, and that in words so express that while language is the channel of conveying intelligible sense, no process short of violent wresting from their plain meaning can ever make them say anything else.

Here are the words—we quote them from the Catechism which is intended for the instruction of youth and is naturally very plain and simple, since it would be foolish to trouble the young with metaphysical refinements. The child is asked its name and then questioned, “Who gave you this name?” “My godfathers and godmothers in my Baptism, wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven.” Is not this definite and plain enough? I prize the words for their candor. They could not speak more plainly. Three times over the thing is put, lest there should be any doubt in it.

The word “regeneration” may, by some sort of juggling, be made to mean something else, but here there can be no misunderstanding. The child is not only made “a member of Christ”—union to Jesus is no mean spiritual gift—but he is made in Baptism, “the child of God,” also. And since the rule is, “if children, then heirs,” he is also made “an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven.” Nothing can be more plain! I venture to say that while honesty remains on earth the meaning of these words will not admit of dispute. It is clear as noonday that, as the rubric has it, “Fathers, mothers, masters and dames are to cause their children, servants and apprentices,” no matter how idle, giddy, or wicked they may be, to learn the Catechism and to say that in Baptism they were made members of Christ and children of God.

The form for the administration of this Baptism is scarcely less plain and outspoken, seeing that thanks are expressly returned unto Almighty God because the person baptized is regenerate. “Then shall the priest say, ‘Seeing now, dearly beloved Brethren, that this child is regenerate and grafted into the body of Christ’s Church, let us give thanks unto Almighty God for these benefits, and with one accord make our prayers unto Him, that this child may lead the rest of his life according to this beginning.’ ” Nor is this all, for to leave no mistake we have the words of the thanksgiving prescribed, “Then shall the priest say, ‘We yield You hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it has pleased You to regenerate this infant with Your Holy Spirit, to receive him for Your own child by adoption and to incorporate him into Your holy Church.’ ”

This, then, is the clear and unmistakable teaching of a Church calling itself Protestant. I am not now dealing at all with the question of *infant* Baptism—I have nothing to do with that this morning. I am now considering the question of *baptismal regeneration*, whether in adults or infants, or ascribed to sprinkling, pouring, or immersion. Here is a Church which teaches every Lord’s Day in the Sunday school and should, according to the rubric, teach openly in the Church, that all children were made members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of Heaven when they were baptized! Here is a professedly Protestant Church, which,

every time its minister goes to the font, declares that every person there receiving Baptism is then and there, “regenerated and grafted into the body of Christ’s Church.”

“But,” I hear many good people exclaim, “there are many good clergymen in the Church who do not believe in baptismal regeneration.” To this my answer is prompt. Why, then, do they belong to a Church which teaches that doctrine in the plainest terms? I am told that many in the Church of England preach against her own teaching. I know they do, and herein I rejoice in their enlightenment. But I question, *gravely* question, their morality. To take an oath that I sincerely assent and consent to a doctrine which I do not believe would, to my conscience, appear little short of perjury, if not absolute downright perjury! But those who do so must be judged by their own Lord. For me to take money for defending what I do not believe—for me to take the money of a Church and then to preach against what are most evidently its doctrines—I say for me to do this (I judge others as I would that they should judge me) for me, or for any other simple, honest man to do so, were an atrocity so great that if I had perpetrated the deed I should consider myself out of the pale of truthfulness, honesty and common morality!

Sirs, when I accepted the office of minister of this congregation I looked to see what were your articles of faith. If I had not believed them I should not have accepted your call. And when I change my opinions, rest assured that as an honest man I shall resign the office—for how could I profess one thing in your declaration of faith and quite another thing in my own preaching? Would I accept your pay and then stand up every Sunday and talk against the doctrines of your standards? For clergymen to swear or say that they give their solemn assent and consent to what they do not believe is one of the grossest pieces of immorality perpetrated in England! It is most pestilential in its influence since it directly teaches men to lie whenever it seems necessary to do so in order to get a living or increase their supposed usefulness! It is in fact an open testimony from priestly lips that, at least in ecclesiastical matters, falsehood may express truth and the Truth of God, itself, is a mere unimportant nonentity.

I know of nothing more calculated to debauch the public mind than a want of straightforwardness in ministers. And when worldly men hear ministers denouncing the very things which their own Prayer Book teaches, they imagine that words have no meaning among ecclesiastics and that vital differences in religion are merely a matter of tweedle-dee and tweedle-dum—and that it does not much matter what a man does believe so long as he is charitable towards other people. If Baptism does regenerate people, let the fact be preached with a trumpet tongue and let no man be ashamed of his belief in it! If this is really their creed, by all

means let them have full liberty for its propagation. My Brethren, those are honest Churchmen in this matter who, subscribing to the Prayer Book, believe in baptismal regeneration and preach it plainly.

God forbid that we should censure those who believe that Baptism saves the soul because they adhere to a Church which teaches the same doctrine. So far they are honest men—and in England, where else—let them never lack a full toleration. Let us oppose their teaching by all Scriptural and intelligent means, but let us respect their courage in plainly giving us their views. I hate their doctrine, but I love their honesty. And as they speak but what they believe to be true, let them speak it out and the more clearly the better. Out with it, Sirs, be it what it may! But do let us know what you mean! For my part I love to stand foot to foot with an honest foeman. To open warfare, bold and true hearts raise no objection but the ground of quarrel. It is covert enmity which we have most cause to fear and best reason to loathe.

That crafty kindness which lures me to sacrifice principle is the serpent in the grass—deadly to the incautious wayfarer. Where union and friendship are not cemented by *truth* they are an unhallowed confederacy. It is time that there should be an end put to the flirtations of honest men with those who believe one way and swear another. If men believe Baptism works regeneration, let them say so! But if they do *not* so believe it in their *hearts* and yet subscribe and even more—get their livings by subscribing to words asserting it—let them find congenial associates among men who can equivocate and shuffle, for honest men will neither ask nor accept their friendship!

We ourselves are not dubious on this point. We protest that persons are *not saved* by being baptized. In such an audience as this, I am almost ashamed to go into the matter because you surely know better than to be misled. Nevertheless, for the good of others we will drive at it. We hold that persons are not saved by Baptism for we think, first of all, that it seems out of character with the spiritual religion which Christ came to teach, that He should make salvation depend upon mere *ceremony*. Judaism might possibly absorb the ceremony by way of type into her ordinances essential to eternal life, for it was a religion of types and shadows. The false religions of the heathen might inculcate salvation by a physical process, but Jesus Christ claims for His *faith* that it is purely spiritual, and how could He connect regeneration with a peculiar application of aqueous fluid?

I cannot see how it would be a spiritual Gospel, but I can see how it would be mechanical if I were sent forth to teach that the mere dropping of so many drops upon the brow, or even the plunging of a person in water could save the soul. This seems to me to be the most mechanical relig-

ion now existing, and to be on a par with the praying windmills of Tibet, or the climbing up and down of Pilate's staircase to which Luther subjected himself in the days of his darkness! The operation of water-Baptism does not appear, even to my faith, to touch the point involved in the regeneration of the soul. What is the necessary connection between water and the overcoming of sin? I cannot see any connection which can exist between sprinkling, or immersion and *regeneration*, so that the one shall necessarily be tied to the other in the absence of faith.

Used by faith, had God commanded it, miracles might be worked. But without faith or even consciousness, as in the case of babes, how can spiritual benefits be connected necessarily with the sprinkling of water? If this is your teaching, that regeneration goes with Baptism, I say it looks like the teaching of a spurious Church which has craftily invented a mechanical salvation to deceive ignorant, sensual, and groveling minds—rather than the teaching of the most profoundly spiritual of all Teachers who rebuked Scribes and Pharisees for regarding outward rites as more important than inward Grace. But it strikes me that a more forcible argument is that the dogma is not supported by facts. Are all persons who are baptized children of God?

Well, let us look at the Divine family. Let us mark their resemblance to their glorious Parent! Am I untruthful if I say that thousands of those who were baptized in their infancy are now in our jails? You can ascertain the fact if you please, by application to prison authorities. Do you believe that these men, many of whom have been living by plunder, felony, burglary, or forgery are regenerate? If so, the Lord deliver us from such regeneration! Are these villains members of Christ? If so, Christ has sadly altered since the day when He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. Has He really taken baptized drunkards and harlots to be members of His body? Do you not revolt at the supposition? It is a well-known fact that baptized persons have been hanged. Surely it can hardly be right to hang the inheritors of the kingdom of Heaven!

Our sheriffs have much to answer for when they officiate at the execution of the children of God and suspend the members of Christ on the gallows! What a detestable farce is that which is transacted at the open grave, when "a dear Brother" who has died drunk is buried in a "sure and certain hope of the resurrection of eternal life," and the prayer that "when we shall depart this life we may rest in Christ, as our hope is that this, our Brother, does." Here is a regenerate Brother, who having defiled the village by constant uncleanness and bestial drunkenness, died without a sign of repentance—and yet the professed minister of God solemnly accords him funeral rites which are denied to unbaptized innocents and

puts the reprobate into the earth in “sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life.”

If old Rome in her worst days ever perpetrated a grosser piece of imposture than this, I do not read things aright. If it does not require a Luther to cry down this hypocrisy as much as Popery ever did, then I do not even know that twice two make four. Do we find—we who baptize on profession of *faith* and baptize by *immersion* in a way which is confessed to be correct, though not allowed by some to be absolutely necessary to its validity—do we who baptize in the name of the sacred Trinity as others do—do we find that Baptism regenerates? We do not! Neither in the righteous nor the wicked do we find regeneration worked by Baptism. We have never met with one Believer, however instructed in Divine things, who could trace his regeneration to his Baptism.

And on the other hand we confess with sorrow, but still with no surprise, that we have seen those whom we have ourselves baptized, according to Apostolic precedent, go back into the world and wander into the foulest sin and their Baptism has scarcely been so much as a restraint to them because they have not believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. Facts all show that whatever good there may be in Baptism, it certainly does not make a man “a member of Christ, the child of God and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven,” or else many thieves, whoremongers, drunkards, fornicators and murderers are members of Christ, the children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of Heaven.

Facts, Brethren, are against this Popish doctrine! And facts are stubborn things. Yet further, I am persuaded that the performance styled Baptism by the Prayer Book is not at all likely to regenerate and save. How is the thing done? One is very curious to know when one hears of an operation which makes men members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of Heaven, how the thing is done! It must, in itself, be a holy thing truthful in all its details and edifying in every portion. Now, we will suppose we have a company gathered round the water, be it more or less, and the process of regeneration is about to be performed. We will suppose them all to be godly people. The clergyman officiating is a profound Believer in the Lord Jesus and the father and mother are exemplary Christians and the godfathers and godmothers are all gracious persons.

We will suppose this—it is a supposition fraught with charity, but it *may* be correct. What are these godly people supposed to say? Let us look to the Prayer Book. The clergyman is supposed to tell these people, “You have heard also that our Lord Jesus Christ has promised in His Gospel to grant all these things that you have prayed for: which promise He, for His part, will most surely keep and perform.” Why, after this promise made by Christ, this infant must also faithfully, for his part, “promise by you that

are his sureties (until he comes of age to take it upon himself) that he will renounce the devil and all his works and constantly believe God's holy Word and obediently keep His Commandments."

This small child is to promise to do this, or more truly, others are to take upon themselves to promise and even vow that he shall do so. But we must not break the quotation and therefore let us return to the Book. "I demand therefore, do you, in the name of this child, renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same and the carnal desires of the flesh, so that you will not follow, nor be led by them?" Answers: "I renounce them all." That is to say, on the name and behalf of this tender infant about to be baptized, these godly people, these enlightened Christian people, these who know better, who are not dupes, who know all the while that they are promising impossibilities—renounce on behalf of this child what they find it very hard to renounce for themselves—"all covetous desires of the world and the carnal desires of the flesh, so that they will not follow nor be led by them."

How can they harden their faces to utter such a false promise, such a mockery of renunciation before the presence of the Father Almighty? Might not angels weep as they hear the awful promise uttered? Then in the presence of high Heaven they profess on behalf of this child that he steadfastly believes the creed, when they know, or might pretty shrewdly judge that the little creature is not yet a steadfast Believer in anything, much less in Christ's going down into Hell. Mark, they do not say merely that the babe shall believe the creed, but they affirm that he *does*, for they answer in the child's name, "All this I steadfastly believe." Not *we* steadfastly believe, but *I*—the little baby there—unconscious of all their professions and confessions of faith!

In answer to the question, "Will you be baptized in this faith?" they reply for the infant, "That is *my* desire." Surely the infant has no desire in the matter! Or at the least, no one has been authorized to declare any desires on his behalf. But this is not all, for then these godly intelligent people next promise on the behalf of the infant, that "he shall obediently keep all God's holy will and Commandments and walk in the same all the days of his life." Now, I ask you, dear Friends, you who know what true religion means, can you walk in all of God's holy Commandments yourselves? Dare you make this day a vow on your own part that you would renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world and all the sinful lusts of the flesh? Dare you, before God, make such a promise as that?

You *desire* such holiness, you earnestly *strive* after it, but you look for it from God's promise—not from your own. If you dare make such vows I

doubt your knowledge of your own hearts and of the spirituality of God's Law. But even if you could do this for yourself, would you venture to make such a promise for any other person? For the best-born infant on earth? Come, Brethren, what do you say? Is not your reply ready and plain? There is not room for two opinions among men determined to observe the Truth of God in all their ways and words. I can understand a simple, ignorant rustic, who has never learned to read, doing all this at the command of a priest and under the eye of a squire. I can even understand persons doing this when the Reformation was in its dawn and men had newly crept out of the darkness of Popery.

But I cannot understand gracious, godly people standing at the font to insult the all-gracious Father with vows and promises framed upon a fiction and involving practical falsehood! How dare intelligent Believers in Christ to utter words which they know in their conscience to be wickedly aside from Truth? When I shall be able to understand the process by which gracious men so accommodate their consciences, even then I shall have a confirmed belief that the God of Truth never did and never will confirm a spiritual blessing of the highest order in connection with the utterance of such false promises and untruthful vows!

My Brethren, does it not strike you that declarations so fictitious are not likely to be connected with a new birth worked by the Spirit of Truth? I have not done with this point. I must take another case and suppose the sponsors and others to be *ungodly* and that is no hard supposition—for in many cases we know that godfathers and parents have no more thought of religion than that idolatrous hollowed stone around which they gather. When these sinners have taken their places, what are they about to say? Why, they are about to make the solemn vows I have already recounted in your hearing! Totally irreligious they are, but yet they promise for the baby what they never did and never thought of doing for themselves—they promise on behalf of this child, “that he will renounce the devil and all his works and constantly believe God's holy Word and obediently keep His Commandments.”

My Brethren, do not think I speak severely here. Really, I think there is something here to make mockery for devils! Let every honest man lament that ever God's Church should tolerate such a thing as this, and that there should be found gracious people who will feel grieved because I, in all kindness of heart, rebuke the atrocity! Unregenerate sinners promising for a poor babe that he shall keep all God's holy Commandments which they themselves wantonly break every day! How can anything but the long-suffering of God endure this? What? Not speak against it? The very stones in the street might cry out against the infamy of wicked men and women promising that another should renounce the devil and all his

works while they, themselves, serve the devil and do his works with greediness!

As a climax to all this, I am asked to believe that God accepts that wicked promise and as the result of it, regenerates that child! You cannot believe in regeneration by this operation, whether saints or sinners are the performers. Take them to be godly, then they are wrong for doing what their conscience must condemn! View them as ungodly and they are wrong for promising what they know they cannot perform. And in neither case can God accept such worship, much less infallibly append regeneration to such a Baptism as this!

But you will say “Why do you cry out against it?” I cry out against it because I believe that Baptism does not save the soul and that the preaching of it has a wrong and evil influence upon men. We meet with persons who, when we tell them that they must be born again, assure us that they were born again when they were baptized. The number of these persons is increasing, fearfully increasing, until all grades of society are misled by this belief. How can any man stand up in his pulpit and say you must be born again to his congregation, when he has already assured them, by his own “unfeigned assent and consent” to it, that they are themselves, every one of them, born again in Baptism? What is he to do with them? Why, my dear Friends, the Gospel, then, has no voice! They have rammed this ceremony down its throat and it cannot speak to rebuke sin!

The man who has been baptized or sprinkled says, “I am saved, I am a member of Christ, a child of God and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven. Who are you, that you should rebuke me? Call me to repentance? Call me to a new life? What better life can I have? I am a member of Christ—a part of Christ’s body. What? Rebuke *me*? I am a child of God. Cannot you see it in my face? No matter what my walk and conversation is, I am a child of God! Moreover, I am an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven. It is true, I drink and swear and all that, but you know I am an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven, for when I die, though I live in constant sin, you will put me in the grave and tell everybody that I died ‘in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life.’ ”

Now, what can be the influence of such preaching as this upon our beloved England? Upon my dear and blessed country? What but the worst of ills? If I loved her not, but loved myself most, I might be silent here, but, loving England, I cannot and dare not. And having soon to render an account before my God, whose servant I hope I am, I must free myself from this evil as well as from every other or else on my head may be the doom of souls. Here let me bring in another point. It is a most fearful fact that in no age since the Reformation has Popery made such fearful strides in England as during the last few years.

I had comfortably believed that Popery was only feeding itself upon foreign subscriptions, upon a few titled perverts and imported monks and nuns. I dreamed that its progress was not real. In fact, I have often smiled at the alarm of many of my Brethren at the progress of Popery. But, my dear Friends, we have been mistaken, grievously mistaken! If you will read a valuable paper in the magazine called, "Christian Work," those of you who are not acquainted with it will be perfectly startled at its revelations. This great city is now covered with a network of monks and priests and sisters of mercy and the conversions made are not by ones or twos, but by scores, till England is being regarded as the most hopeful spot for Romish missionary enterprise in the whole world!

And at the present moment there is not a mission which is succeeding to anything like the extent to which the English mission is. I covet not their money! I despise their sophistries! But I marvel at the way in which they gain their funds for the erection of their ecclesiastical buildings. It really is an alarming matter to see so many of our countrymen going off to that superstition which as a nation we once rejected and which it was supposed we should never again receive. Popery is making advances such as you would never believe, though a spectator should tell it to you. Close to your very doors, perhaps even in your own houses, you may have evidence before long of what a march Romanism is making.

And to what is it to be ascribed? I say, with every ground of probability, that there is no marvel that Popery should increase when you have two things to make it grow—first of all the falsehood of those who profess a faith which they do not believe—which is quite contrary to the honesty of the Romanist who does through evil report and good report hold his faith. And then you have, secondly, this form of error known as baptismal regeneration and commonly called Puseyism, which is not only Puseyism, but Church-of-Englandism, because it is in the Prayer Book, as plainly as words can express it! You have this baptismal regeneration preparing steppingstones to make it easy for men to go to Rome. I have but to open my eyes a little to foresee Romanism rampant everywhere in the future, since its germs are spreading everywhere in the present.

In one of our courts of legislature but last Tuesday, the Lord Chief Justice showed his superstition by speaking of "the risk of the calamity of children dying unbaptized"! Among Dissenters you see a veneration for structures, a modified belief in the sacredness of places which is idolatry—for to believe in the sacredness of anything but of God and of His own Word is to idolize—whether it is to believe in the sacredness of the men, the priests, or in the sacredness of the bricks and mortar, or of the fine linen, or what not, which you may use in the worship of God. I see this coming up everywhere—a *belief* in ceremony, a *resting* in ceremony, a

eneration for altars, fonts and Churches—a veneration so profound that we must not venture upon a remark, or straightway of sinners we are chief.

Here is the essence and soul of Popery, peeping up under the garb of a decent respect for sacred things. It is impossible but that the Church of Rome must spread, when we who are the watchdogs of the fold are silent, and others are gently and smoothly preparing the road and making it as soft and smooth as possible that converts may travel down to the nethermost Hell of Popery. We want John Knox back again! Do not talk to me of mild and gentle men, of soft manners and squeamish words—we want the fiery Knox and even though his vehemence should “ding our pulpits into blads,” it were well if he did but rouse our hearts to action. We want Luther to tell men the Truth of God unmistakably, in homely phrase.

The velvet has got into our ministers’ mouths of late, but we must unrobe ourselves of soft raiment, and the Truth of God must be spoken and nothing but Truth. Of all lies which have dragged millions down to Hell, I look upon this as being one of the most atrocious—that in a Protestant Church there should be found those who swear that Baptism saves the soul! Call a man a Baptist, or a Presbyterian, or a Dissenter, or a Churchman—that is nothing to me. If he says that Baptism saves the soul, out with him! Out with him! He states what God never taught, what the Bible never laid down and what ought never to be maintained by men who profess that the Bible and the whole Bible is the religion of Protestants.

I have spoken thus much and there will be some who will say—spoken thus much *bitterly*. Very well, be it so. Medicine is often bitter, but it shall work well and the physician is not bitter because his medicine is so. Or if he is accounted so, what will it matter, so long as the patient is cured? At all events, it is no business of the patient whether the physician is bitter or not—his business is with his own soul’s health. There is the truth and I have told it to you. And if there should be one among you, or if there should be one among the readers of this sermon when it is printed, who is resting on Baptism, or resting upon ceremonies of any sort, I do beseech you, shake off this venomous faith into the fire as Paul did the viper which fastened on his hand. I pray you do not rest on Baptism—

**“No outward forms can make you clean,
The leprosy lies deep within.”**

I do beseech you to remember that you must have a new heart and a right spirit and Baptism cannot give you these. You must turn from your sins and follow after Christ. You must have such a faith as shall make your life holy and your speech devout or else you have not the faith of God’s elect, and into God’s kingdom you shall never come. I pray you never rest upon this wretched and rotten foundation, this deceitful inven-

tion of Antichrist! O, may God save you from it and bring you to seek the true Rock of Refuge for weary souls.

I come with much brevity, and I hope with much earnestness, in the second place to say that FAITH IS THE INDISPENSABLE REQUISITE TO SALVATION. "He that *believes* and is baptized shall be saved. But he that *believes* not shall be damned." Faith is the one indispensable requisite for salvation. This faith is the *gift* of God. It is the *work* of the Holy Spirit. Some men believe not on Jesus. They believe not because they are not of Christ's sheep, as He Himself said unto them. But His sheep hear His voice—He knows them and they follow Him—He gives to them eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of His hand.

What is this believing? Believing consists in two things. First there is an accrediting of the testimony of God concerning His Son. God tells you that His Son came into the world and was made flesh. That He lived upon earth for men's sake. That after having spent His life in holiness He was offered up as a Propitiation for sin. That upon the Cross He then and there made Expiation—so made Expiation for the sins of the world that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. If you would be saved you must accredit this testimony which God gives concerning His own Son.

Having received this testimony, the next thing is to confide in it—indeed here lies, I think, the essence of saving faith—to rest yourself for eternal salvation upon the Atonement and the righteousness of Jesus Christ—to have done, once and for all, with all reliance upon *feelings* or upon works and to trust in Jesus Christ and in what He did for your salvation. This is faith, receiving the Truth of Christ—first knowing it to be true and then acting upon that belief. Such a faith as this—such *real* faith as this makes the man, therefore, hate sin. How can he love the thing which made the Savior bleed? It makes him live in holiness. How can he but seek to honor that God who has loved him so much as to give His Son to die for him?

This faith is *spiritual* in its nature and effects. It operates upon the entire man. It changes his heart, enlightens his judgment and subdues his will. It subjects him to God's supremacy and makes him receive God's Word as a little child, willing to receive the truth upon the ipse dixit of the Divine One. It sanctifies his intellect and makes him willing to be taught God's Word. It cleanses within. It makes clean the inside of the cup and platter and it beautifies without. It makes clean the exterior conduct and the inner motive so that the man, if his faith is true and real, becomes, from then on, another man to what he ever was before.

Now that such a faith as this should save the soul, is, I believe, reasonable. Yes, more, it is certain, for we have seen men saved by it in this very House of Prayer. We have seen the harlot lifted out of the Stygian ditch of

her sin and made an honest woman. We have seen the thief reclaimed. We have known the drunkard in hundreds of instances to be sobered. We have observed faith to work such a change that all the neighbors who have seen it have gazed and admired, even though they hated it! We have seen faith deliver men in the hour of temptation and help them to consecrate themselves and their substance to God. We have seen, and hope still to see yet more widely, deeds of heroic consecration to God and displays of witness-bearing against the common current of the times which have proved to us that faith does affect the man, does save the soul!

My Hearers, if you would be saved, you must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! Let me urge you with all my heart to look nowhere but to Christ Crucified for your salvation! Oh, if you rest upon any *ceremony*, though it be *not* Baptism—if you rest upon any other than Jesus Christ—you must perish as surely as this Book is true! I pray you believe not every spirit, but though I, or an angel from Heaven, preach any other doctrine than this, let him be accursed, for this and this alone, is the soul-saving Truth of God which shall regenerate the world—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.”

Away with all the tag-rags, wax candles, and millinery of Puseyism! Away with all the gorgeous pomp of Popery! Away with the fonts of Church-of-Englandism! We bid you turn your eyes to that naked Cross where hangs as a bleeding Man, the Son of God—

**“None but Jesus, none but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good.”**

There is life in a look at the Crucified! There is life at this moment for *you!* Whoever among you can believe in the great love of God towards man in Christ Jesus, you shall be saved. If you can believe that our great Father desires us to come to Him—that He pants for us—that He calls us every day with the loud voice of His Son’s wounds. If you can believe, now, that in Christ there is pardon for transgressions past and cleansing for years to come. If you can trust Him to save you, you have already the marks of regeneration! The work of salvation is commenced in you, so far as the Spirit’s work is concerned—it is finished in you so far as Christ’s work is concerned.

O, I would plead with you—lay hold on Jesus Christ! This is the Foundation—build on it! This is the Rock of Refuge—fly to Him. I pray you fly to Him now! Life is short—time speeds with eagle’s wings. Swift as the dove pursued by the hawk, fly, fly poor Sinner, to God’s dear Son! Now touch the hem of His garment! Now look into that dear face, once marred with sorrows for you! Look into those eyes, once shedding tears for you. Trust Him and if you find Him false, then you must perish. But false you never will find Him while this Word stands true, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. But he that believes not shall be damned.”

God give us this vital, essential faith without which there is no salvation! Baptized, re-baptized, circumcised, confirmed, fed upon sacraments and buried in consecrated ground—you shall all perish except you believe in Him! The Word of God is express and plain—he that believes not may plead his Baptism, may plead anything he likes, “But he that believes not shall be damned”—for him there is nothing but the wrath of God, the flames of Hell, eternal perdition. So Christ declares and so must it be.

But now to close, there are some who say, “Ah, but Baptism is in the text! Where do you put that?” That shall be another point and then we shall have done. THE BAPTISM IN THE TEXT IS ONE EVIDENTLY CONNECTED WITH FAITH. “He that BELIEVES and is baptized shall be saved.” It strikes me there is no supposition here that anybody would be baptized who did not *believe*. Or, if there is such a supposition, it is very clearly laid down that his Baptism will be of no use to him, for he will be damned, baptized or not, unless he *believes*.

The Baptism of the text seems to me, my Brethren—if you differ from me I am sorry for it, but I must hold my opinion and out with it—it seems to me that Baptism is connected with, no, directly *follows* belief. I would not insist too much upon the order of the words, but for other reasons I think that Baptism should *follow* believing. At any rate it effectually avoids the error we have been combating. A man who knows that he is saved by believing in Christ does not, when he is baptized, lift his Baptism into a saving ordinance.

In fact, he is the very best protester against that mistake because he holds that he has no right to *be* baptized until he is saved. He bears a testimony against baptismal regeneration in his being baptized as professedly an already regenerate person. Brethren, the Baptism here meant is a Baptism connected with FAITH, and to this Baptism I will admit there is very much ascribed in Scripture. Into that question I am not going. But I do find some very remarkable passages in which Baptism is spoken of very strongly.

I find this—“Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” I find as much as this elsewhere—I know that Believer’s Baptism, itself, does not wash away sin—yet it is so the *outward sign* and *emblem* of it to the Believer, that the thing visible may be described as the thing signified. Just as our Savior said—“This is My body,” when it was *not* His body, but bread. Yet, inasmuch as it *represented* His body, it was fair and right according to the usage of language to say, “Take, eat, this is My body.” And so, inasmuch as Baptism to the Believer represents the washing of sin, it may be called the washing of sin—not that it *is* so, but that it is to saved souls the outward symbol and repre-

sentation of what is done by the power of the Holy Spirit in the man who believes in Christ.

What connection has this Baptism with faith? I think it has just this—Baptism is the avowal of faith. The man was Christ's soldier, but now in Baptism he puts on his regimentals. The man believed in Christ, but his faith remained between God and his own soul. In Baptism he says to the baptizer, "I believe in Jesus Christ." He says to the Church, "I unite with you as a Believer in the common truths of Christianity." He says to the onlooker, "Whatever *you* may do, as for *me*, *I will serve the Lord.*" It is the avowal of his faith.

Next, we think Baptism is also to the Believer a *testimony* of his faith. He does, in Baptism, tell the world what he believes. "I am about," says he, "to be buried in water. I believe that the Son of God was metaphorically baptized in suffering. I believe He was literally dead and buried." To rise again out of the water sets forth to all men that he believes in the Resurrection of Christ. There is a showing forth in the Lord's Supper of Christ's death and there is a showing forth in Baptism of Christ's burial and Resurrection. It is a *type*, a sign, a symbol, a mirror to the world—a looking glass in which religion is, as it were, reflected. We say to the onlooker, when he asks what is the meaning of this ordinance, "We mean to set forth our faith that Christ was buried and that He rose again from the dead. And we avow this death and resurrection to be the ground of our trust."

Again, Baptism is also Faith's taking her proper place. It is, or should be, one of her first acts of *obedience*. Reason looks at Baptism and says, "Perhaps there is nothing in it. It cannot do me any good." "True," says Faith, "and therefore will I observe it. If it did me some good my selfishness would *make* me do it, but inasmuch as to my sense there is no good in it and since I am *bid* by my Lord thus to fulfill all righteousness, it is my first public declaration that a thing which looks to be unreasonable and seems to be unprofitable, being commanded by God, is Law—is Law to me. If my Master had told me to pick up six stones and lay them in a row I would do it, without demanding of Him, 'What good will it do?' Cui bono? is no fit question for soldiers of Jesus. The very simplicity and apparent uselessness of the ordinance should make the Believer say, 'Therefore I do it because it becomes the better test to me of my *obedience* to my Master.' "

When you tell your servant to do something and he cannot comprehend it, if he turns round and says, "Please, Sir, what for?" You are quite clear that he hardly understands the relation between master and servant. So when God tells me to do a thing, if I say, "What for?" I cannot have taken the place which Faith ought to occupy, which is that of simple *obedience*

to whatever the Lord has said. Baptism is *commanded* and Faith obeys because it is commanded and thus takes her proper place.

Once more, Baptism is a refreshment to Faith. While we are made up of body and soul as we are, we shall need some means by which the body shall sometimes be stirred up to co-work with the soul. In the Lord's Supper my faith is assisted by the outward and visible sign. In the bread and in the wine I see no superstitious mystery, I see nothing but bread and wine—but in that bread and wine I do see to my faith an assistant. Through the sign my faith sees the thing signified. So in Baptism there is no mysterious efficacy in the baptistery or in the water. We attach no reverence to the one or to the other. But we do see in the water and in the Baptism such an assistance as brings home to our faith most manifestly our being buried with Christ and our rising again in newness of life with Him.

Explain Baptism thus, dear Friends and there is no fear of Popery rising out of it! Explain it thus and we cannot suppose any soul will be led to trust to it—but it takes its proper place among the ordinances of God's House. To lift it up in the other way and say men are saved by it—ah, my Friends—how much of mischief that one falsehood has done and may do, eternity alone will disclose. Would to God another George Fox would spring up in all his quaint simplicity and rude honesty to rebuke the idol-worship of this age—to rail at their holy bricks and mortar, holy lecterns, holy alters, holy surplices, right reverend fathers and I know not what! These *things* are NOT holy. GOD is holy! His Truth is holy!

Holiness belongs not to the carnal and the material, but to the spiritual. O that a trumpet tongue would cry out against the superstition of the age! I cannot, as George Fox did, give up Baptism and the Lord's Supper, but I would infinitely sooner do it, counting it the smaller mistake of the two, than perpetrate and assist in perpetrating the uplifting of Baptism and the Lord's Supper out of their proper place. O my beloved Friends, the comrades of my struggles and witnessing—cling to the salvation of faith and abhor the salvation of priests! If I am not mistaken, the day will come when we shall have to fight for a simple spiritual religion far more than we do now. We have been cultivating friendship with those who are either unscriptural in creed or else dishonest—who either believe baptismal regeneration, or profess that they do—and swear before God that they do when they do not.

The time is come when there shall be no more truce or parley between God's servants and the timeservers! The time is come when those who follow God must follow God! And those who try to trim and dress themselves and find out a way which is pleasing to the flesh and gentle to carnal desires must go their way. A great winnowing time is coming to God's saints

and we shall be more clear, one of these days, than we now are from union with those who are upholding Popery under the pretense of teaching Protestantism. We shall be clear, I say, of those who teach salvation by Baptism instead of salvation by the blood of our blessed Master, Jesus Christ.

O may the Lord gird up your loins. Believe me, it is no trifle. It may be that on this ground Armageddon shall be fought. Here shall come the great battle between Christ and His saints on the one hand, and the world and forms and ceremonies on the other. If we are overcome here, there may be years of blood and persecution and tossing to and fro between darkness and light. But if we are brave and bold and flinch not here, but stand to God's Truth, the future of England may be bright and glorious. O for a truly reformed Church in England and a godly race to maintain it! The world's future depends on it under God, for in proportion as the Truth of God is marred at home, Truth is maimed abroad.

Out of any system which teaches salvation by Baptism must spring infidelity—an infidelity which the false Church already seems willing to nourish and foster beneath her wing. God save this favored land from the brood of her own established religion! Brethren, stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free and be not afraid of any sudden fear nor calamity when it comes, for he who trusts to the Lord, mercy shall compass him about and he who is faithful to God and Christ shall hear it said at the last, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter you into the joy of the Lord."

May the Lord bless this word for Christ's sake. Amen.

[Note. Having been informed that the whole of the burial service is not usually read at executions, I have, for the sake of fairness, altered the passage upon page 318 (in the author's edition), although it strikes me that I might justly have retained it, since the rubric of the Church, and not the practice of some of its ministers is that with which we must deal. The rubric says, "The office ensuing is not to be used for any that die unbaptized, or excommunicate, or have laid violent hands upon themselves." The victim of our capital punishment is not by this rubric shut out from the privileges (?) of the Anglican burial service, unless his condemnation may be viewed as tantamount to excommunication, which I can hardly think is the case, since many condemned persons receive the sacrament. I have also altered an incorrect expression on page 316, which has been pointed out to me by both friends and foes. May God grant that the controversy which this sermon has commenced may lead to the advancement of His Truth and the enlightenment of many.]

PREACH, PREACH, PREACH EVERYWHERE! NO. 900

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And He said unto them, Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.”
Mark 16:15, 16.***

BEFORE our Lord gave His disciples this commission He addressed them in tones of serious rebuke. You will observe that appearing unto the Eleven as they ate meat, “*He upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen.*” So honorable an estimation did He set upon testimony—so marked a censure did He pronounce upon those who neglected it! The reprimand they received on such an occasion may well serve as a caution to us for unbelief unfits the Christian for service. It is in proportion to our personal faith in the Gospel that we become competent witnesses for the teaching of it to others. Each one of us who would get credit for sincerity must say with David, “I believed, therefore have I spoken,” or else a need of faith of ourselves will effectually deprive our speech of all its power over our fellow men.

There can be little doubt that one reason why Christianity is not so aggressive now as it once was and exerts not everywhere the influence it had in Apostolic times is the feebleness of our faith in Christ as compared with the full assurance of faith exercised by the men of those days. In vain you hide a timid heart behind a modest face, when the attitude we should show and the living force that should constrain us is a bold reliance upon the power of the Holy Spirit and a deep conviction of the might of the Truth of God which we are taught to deliver. Brethren, if there is to be a revival of religion it must begin at home! Our own souls must first of all be filled with holy faith and burning enthusiasm and then shall we be strong to do exploits and to win provinces for the scepter of King Jesus.

Having thus made a note upon the context, I want you to refer to a parallel passage in Matthew. There we learn that in delivering this commission our Lord assigned a remarkable reason for it and one that intimately concerned Himself. “*All power,*” He said, “*is given unto ME in Heaven and in earth, go YOU, therefore, and teach all nations.*” These words were adapted to strengthen the faith of His disciples, of whom it had just been observed that “some doubted.” Do you not see the point of this an-

nouncement? Jesus of Nazareth, being raised from the dead, tells His Apostles that He is now invested with universal supremacy as the Son of Man. Therefore He issues a decree of Divine Grace, calling on all people of every nation and kindred to believe the Gospel with a promise of personal salvation to each and every one that believes.

With such authority is this mandate clothed and so imperative the duty of all men everywhere to repent, that they who do not believe are threatened with a certain penalty of damnation! This royal ordinance He will have published throughout the whole world—but He enjoins it on all the messengers that those who bear the tidings should be thoroughly impressed with the Sovereignty of Him that sends them. Let the words, then, ring in your ears, “Go *you, therefore.*” They sound like the music of that glad acclaim which hails the Redeemer installed with power, holding the insignia of power in His possession, exercising the full rights of legitimate power, and entrusting His disciples with a commission founded on that power, “Go *you into all the world.*”

Yet another remark before we proceed to the text. The commission we are about to deal with was *the last which the Lord gave to His disciples before He was taken away from them.* We prize greatly the last words of His departing servants—how shall we sufficiently value the parting words of our ascending Master? Injunctions that are left us by those who have gone to Glory have great weight upon our spirits. Let obedient lovers of Christ see to it that they act according to the last will and testament, the last desire expressed by their risen Lord! I claim for my text peculiar attention from every disciple of Jesus, not, indeed, as if it were a mournful entreaty, but rather as a solemn charge.

You remember Christ’s own parable, “The *kingdom of Heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants and delivered unto them his goods.*” Look at this as the last direction which Jesus gives to His stewards before “He *went into a far country to receive for Himself a kingdom and to return.*” It seems to me that as when the mantle of Elijah fell upon Elisha, Elisha would have been much to blame if he had not caught it up. So when these words fell from our ascending Savior before the clouds concealed Him from the disciples’ sight, we ought to take them up with holy reverence. Since He has left them as His parting mantle they ought to be lovingly cherished and scrupulously obeyed.

Come we, then, to invite your earnest heed to the command which the Savior here gives—“Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.” It was given to the Apostles *representatively.* They represent the whole body of the faithful. To every converted man and woman this commission is given. I grant you there is a specialty to those gifted and called to surrender themselves wholly to the work of the ministry, but their office in the visible Church offers no excuse for the discharge of those functions that pertain to every member of the body of Christ in par-

ticular. It is the universal command of Christ to every Believer: “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.”

I. In thinking over this command, let us first consider WHAT IT IS THAT WE HAVE TO CARRY TO EVERY CREATURE—THE GOSPEL. There may be no need, my Brethren, for me to tell *you* what the Gospel is, but to complete our subject we must declare it. The “Gospel,” which is to be told to “every creature,” it seems to me, is the great Truth of God that “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” And that He “has committed unto us the word of reconciliation.”

God has looked in pity upon sinful man. He has sent His Son to take upon Himself the nature of man. His Son has come in the flesh. He has worked out a perfect righteousness by His obedient life. He has died upon the tree, the Just for the unjust, that whoever trusts in Him might be forgiven. Then come the Gospel’s point and barb—believe in Him and be baptized and you shall be saved. Reject Him and your peril is imminent, for God declares it—you must be damned. When we preach the Gospel, then, we must declare to the sons of men that they are fallen, they are sinful, they are lost—but Christ has come to seek and to save that which was lost—that there is in Christ Jesus, who is now in Heaven, sufficient Grace to meet each sinner’s need.

When we preach the Gospel, then, we must declare that whoever believes in Him shall be forgiven all his sins and shall receive the Holy Spirit, by which he shall be helped to lead a new life, shall be preserved in holiness and shall be brought safely to Heaven. To preach the Gospel is to preach up Christ. It is not, as I believe, to preach any form of Church government, or any special creed, although both of these may be necessary to those who have heard and received the Gospel. The *first* message we have to preach to every creature is that there is a Savior—“Receive, for a look at the Crucified One, life at this moment,” for all who look to Him. This is the Gospel which we have to preach.

Now, what is meant by the word “preach”? I take its meaning in this place to be very extensive. Some can *literally preach*—that is, act as heralds, proclaiming the Gospel as the town crier proclaims in the street the message which he is bid to cry aloud. The town crier is, in fact, the world’s preacher and the preacher of the Gospel is to be a crier, crying aloud and sparing not the Truth of Christ. I do not believe that Christ tells us to go and play the orator to every creature. Such a command would be impracticable to most of us and useless to any of us. Of all the things that desecrate the Sabbath and grieve the Spirit, attempt at high-flown oratory and gorgeous eloquence in preaching, I believe, are about the worst. Our business is just to speak out the Gospel simply and plainly to every creature.

We do not actually preach the Gospel to a man if we do not make him understand what we are talking about. If our language does not come down to his level, it may be the Gospel, but it is not the Gospel to *him*. The preacher should adopt language which shall be suitable to all his congregation. In preaching he should strive to instruct, to enforce, to explain, to expound, to plead and to bring home to every man's heart and conscience, as in the sight of God, as far as his ability goes, the Truths of God which beyond all argument or quibble, have the seal and stamp of Divine Revelation. Though all the members of a Church cannot literally preach in this ordinary acceptation of the term, yet if this command is for all, then must all bear that testimony to the world in some other outspoken manner.

Their preaching may be in various ways. Some must preach by their holy lives. Others must preach by their talking to the ones and twos, like the Master at the well, who was as much preaching when He conversed with the woman of Samaria as when He addressed the multitude on the banks of the lake of Gennesaret and uttered doctrine as sublime in that little village of Sychar as He proclaimed at the beautiful gate of the Temple. Others must preach by distributing the Truth printed for circulation—and a right noble service this is—especially when the pure Word of Life, the Bible itself, is sown broadcast in this and other lands. If we cannot speak with our own tongue, we must borrow other men's tongues. And if we cannot write with our own pens, we must borrow other men's pens—but we must do it in some way or other.

The gist of this command is that we must make the Gospel known to every creature by some means or other—throw it in his way, make him know that there is a Gospel and challenge his very curiosity to learn what it means. You cannot make him *accept* it, or *believe* it—that is God's work—but you can and *must* make him know *of* it and plead with him to receive it and do not let it be your fault if he does not welcome it. Do all, as much as lies within you, to make every creature know what the Gospel is, so that if he will not accept it, yet he shall have had the kingdom of God brought near to him. The responsibility of his accepting or rejecting it shall then be his business and none of yours. This, then, is the commission of Jesus Christ to His disciples—"Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature."

Lest we should make a mistake about what I just now called the point and barb of the arrow, the force and pith of the Gospel, Christ has put it in plain words, "He that *believes* and is baptized shall be saved." That is to say, if a man would participate in the bounteous salvation which Christ has worked, he must *believe* in Christ. He must *trust* Christ. He must believe Christ to be God's appointed Savior and to be able to save him. He must act on that belief and trust himself in the hands of Jesus and if he does that he shall be saved. Further, the text says he *must be baptized*.

Not that there is any virtue whatever in Baptism, but it is a small thing for Christ to expect that the man or woman trusting to be saved by Him should own and avow their attachment to Him.

He that wishes to have Christ as his Savior should be prepared openly to acknowledge that he is on Christ's side. Baptism thus becomes the *badge* of discipleship, the outward token of faith by which a man says to all who look on, "I confess myself dead to the world. I confess myself buried with Christ. I declare myself risen to newness of life in Him." Make what you will of it and laugh at it as much as you like, yet in the faith of Jesus as my Lord, I have taken leave of all else to follow Him. It is a point of obedience. Sometimes one has said in his heart, "What a pity it is that Baptism should have been introduced into this place. It makes a block of wood into which men may drive their ritualistic hook." But then the Son of God Himself has put it here and we cannot alter it. If it were not here in His Word I would not have put it here. But it is here and being here, it is at your soul's hazard to leave it out.

I believe with all my heart that if you believe in Jesus Christ you will be saved, whether you are baptized or not, but I would not like to run the risk, mark you, for I have not got that in my text. It is, "He that believes *and is baptized* shall be saved," and I would take the *two* commands together and obey my Master's will throughout and not leave out that which did not suit my inclination and accept only that which did. I am bound to leave out neither of them, but to take the two together. With your heart you must believe and with your mouth make confession—and if you do these sincerely you shall be saved.

II. Having, then, clearly before us what our work is—to publish and make plain to every creature the Gospel of Jesus Christ—let us solemnly consider (for it is a very solemn business, being incumbent upon every professor of Christ here) WHAT THE EXTENT OF THIS COMMISSION IS. Judging from the fact that there is no mention made of *time*, I gather that *as long as there is a Church in the world* the obligation to preach the Gospel will remain and if that Church should ever come to consist of but one or two, it must still, with all its might, go on promulgating the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Preaching is to be for all time. And until Jesus Christ Himself shall come and the dispensation shall close, the mission of the Church is to go into all the world—all of you—and preach the Gospel to every creature. I will not, however, dwell upon that, because it is not so much a practical point, but just notice that *there is no limit to be put as to where this Gospel is to be preached*. It is to be preached in "all the world"—in Labrador, in Africa—where the Southern Cross shines high, or where Arcturus with his suns leads on the night. Everywhere, in every place. No nation is to be left out because too degraded. No race is to be forgotten because too far remote. The mission of the Church deals with the center of Africa, with men

who have never yet looked a pale man in the face. It deals with learned nations, as the acute and skeptical Hindu and with the degraded tribes, as the Hottentot in his kraal, the Bechuana and the Bushman. There is to be no omission anywhere.

Our great Commander's marching orders to His troops are—"Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." Even this is not so practical a point as the one I want to insist upon. It is the duty of the *Church*, according to this command, to make known the Gospel to *every creature*. Any one of you individually, of course, cannot make it known to *every* creature, but each one, at home and abroad, according to his sphere of action and his capacity, is to be striving at that. As soon as ever they can understand, you are to be ready with this Gospel of Jesus Christ for them. *The Sunday school* does not need a direct text for its institution or foundation. It is a marvel that it was not instituted long before it was, for the very spirit of Sunday school work lies in the words here—"every creature."

You are not, in looking after the children, to include only some privileged classes and exclude the ragged and the depraved—the City Arab is at least a "creature," and you are as much bound to preach the Gospel to him as to your own dear child who is the object of your most tender love. It is to *every* creature. Then the Christian Church ought to aim at the *rich*. The rich need the Gospel, perhaps, more than any other class in the community. They seldom hear it and what they do hear of the Gospel is poor diluted stuff. Their sins are not often told them to their face, neither are they rebuked as the poor are. They are to be sought for by the Church, and though it is difficult to get at them, yet we have not done our duty till we have done what we can for them.

And the *poor* are to be looked after. Their poverty must never make us say that it is not worthwhile to teach them. It is the Glory of the Gospel that the poor should have the Gospel preached to them. Rich and poor are both creatures and therefore the Church has its duty concerning both. The Gospel ought to be preached to those who habitually assemble on the Sabbath. It is a pleasure to remember that there are so many who are willing to come and listen to the Gospel, but the responsibility of the minister and the Church does not end with those who voluntarily congregate within four walls. We are to preach the Gospel to *every* creature—therefore to those who lie in bed on Sunday mornings, to those who read Sunday newspapers, to those who take their walks in the evening with listless indifference—to those who do not know, perhaps, what Christian worship means.

You have not done what your Master has told you to do till you have reached them and made them know—*forced* them to know—what the Gospel is. He would be a poor sportsman who should sit in his house and expect the game to come to him. He that would have it must go abroad for

it and he that would serve the Master must go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in! I need not say here, Brethren, that I hope the Christian Church is now alive to looking after every class of society, but what I want to bring home personally to ourselves is just this—that we, as a Church here, with so many advantages, so many in numbers—have at least a part in this commandment, and must extend our efforts to as many of “*every creature*” as we can.

Oh, we cannot discharge the work for which God has put us here until we have looked into these alleys, these lanes, these courts, these dark places, and have tried our best to take Jesus Christ’s Gospel to every dweller in it! I know you have your Sunday schools and I am thankful you are doing your work there, but do not confine your aspirations to that class. I know I have with this congregation work enough. Still I am not bound to limit myself to any parish or to any locality, but if I can, I must, as much as lies in me go in all directions and in all manner of places to make known the Gospel to every creature! Have you been the means of the conversion of fifty? That is not “*every creature*,” press on! Were there a 100 added to this Church the other day? That is not “*every creature*”! There are millions yet to whom Christ is not known! Preach the Gospel everywhere, then.

The majesty of this command overwhelms me! Such a commission was never given before or since. O Church of God! Your Lord has given you a work almost as immense as the creation of a world! No! It is a greater work than that! It is to re-create a world! What can you do in this? You can do nothing effectively, unless the Holy Spirit shall bless what you attempt to do. But that He will do, and if you gird up your loins and your heart is warm in this endeavor, you shall yet be able to preach Jesus Christ to every creature under Heaven! I must not enlarge, for time flies too quickly. It will suffice if I have put the thought into your hearts, that to the servant girl and the duchess, the chimney-sweep and the peer, the man in the poor house or in the palace, we must account ourselves debtors for Christ’s sake to present the Gospel to them according to our ability, never limiting the sphere of our enterprise where an opportunity can be found to carry the Gospel to every creature!

III. But now, thirdly, some of you will be asking the INDUCEMENTS TO ENLIST IN THIS SERVICE AND OBEY THIS COMMAND. It shall be sufficient answer to many of you to say that the reason for preaching the Gospel to every creature is *that God has said it*.

Oh, it was a grand shout—if it had been for a better purpose—when the hundreds of thousands gathered together listening to the burning eloquence of the hermit, when he bade them charge home against the Saracens and deliver the holy sepulcher and the sacred places from the infidel! Then the shout went up, “*Deus vult*,” “God wills it,” and in the strength of that belief, that God willed it, “a forest huge of spears was couched,” and

ten thousand swords were unsheathed and men dashed on to battle and to death.

Oh, if the Christian Church could but feel “Deus vult,” “God wills it,” that now, even in this year of Grace, 1869, every creature should hear the Gospel! I believe we have enough Christians here in London to make London hear the Gospel. I mean, we have enough converted men and women, if all bestirred themselves, to make London ring from end to end, as once did Nineveh. One man awoke Nineveh with his monotonous cry, “Yet 40 days and Nineveh shall be destroyed.” Surely the thousands might yet be as firebrands in the midst of corn, if we were but in earnest about this great command. “Deus vult,” Believer! God *demands* this of you, is not this enough?

But, if we seek arguments, let us remember that *the preaching of the Gospel is everywhere a delight to God*. Papists tell us that the offering up of what they call a “sacrament,” is an acceptable oblation to God. They miss their mark. The preaching of Christ—*that* is the true oblation. God smells a sweet savor wherever the name of Jesus is rightly proclaimed. Listen unto these words, “We are unto God a sweet savor of Christ as well in them that perish as in them that are saved.” Wherever Christ is preached, God is glad. He is honored and Christ is honored. Even if no result should come, (impossible supposition!) yet still, the mere preaching of Christ is like the smell of evening incense which goes up unto God and He accepts it.

Moreover, remember that you are bid to preach to every creature, each of you, as far as you can, *because it is by this means that the elect are to be gathered out from among the sons of men*. You know not who they are, therefore tell of Christ to everyone. You know not who will accept it. You know not whose heart will be broken by the Divine hammer. It is yours to try the hammer of Truth on the hard heart. You are not the discoverer of God’s chosen, but the *Gospel* is, and as the Gospel is preached it will attract to itself, by its own power, through the Holy Spirit, such as God has ordained unto Eternal Life.

Brothers and Sisters, I pray you preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, *for your own sakes*, if there were no other reason. Depend upon it, your own spiritual vigor will be very much enhanced by your labors of love and your zeal for the service of Christ. I have remarked it is an invariable thermometer by which to gauge the spirituality of a man’s heart. Whether he is either doing or not doing something for Christ will tell upon his life and conversation. The tree is not only known by its fruit, as to what kind of tree it is, but also as to what its degree of life is. “If you keep His commandments and bring forth much fruit, you are disciples, indeed,” but if there is only a little fruit shriveled there on the topmost bough, scarcely worth the gathering, why, then, you are His disciples, but you can scarcely say that you are His disciples, indeed!

Did you ever feel *the joy of winning a soul for Christ*? If so, you will need no better argument for attempting to spread the knowledge of His name among every creature! I tell you, there is no joy out of Heaven which excels it—the grasp of the hand of one who says, “By your means I was turned from darkness to light, rescued from drunkenness, or reclaimed, perhaps, from the grossest vices, to love and serve my Savior!” To see your spiritual children around you and to say, “Here am I and these whom You have given *me*.” Oh, the trials and griefs of life sit lightly upon a heart where the triumphs of Divine Grace are present! A man might well endure to stand and preach upon a bonfire, if he could be sure that the burning of his body would secure the salvation of his congregation! Do, for your own happiness’ sake, seek to teach to others what the Lord has first taught you.

I might multiply these reasons, but it will, perhaps, be best to come back to the first one of all—*your Master wills it and therefore preach His Gospel to every creature*. The day is coming when His Gospel shall be known throughout the world. Many things have hindered it. Nights of darkness, years of oppression have lasted long and the minds of men have been sitting in the valley of the shadow of death. But, as surely as God is God, better days are coming. “The light that shines from Zion’s hill” shall gild the top of every mountain. Every land shall yet behold the feet of them that bring glad tidings and that publish salvation. In spite of the prophecies of certain men in these days, I still cling to the old faith of the Church that there shall be a universal triumph of our holy faith before yet the world is given up to the dissolving element.

The gods of the heathen shall be shaken from their pedestals. The dispensation shall not end till those things which men have worshipped shall be thrown to the moles and to the bats. God will yet drag the harlot of the Seven Hills from her bloodstained throne and make the kings of the earth burn her as with fire. The day of the vengeance of our God for martyrs’ blood shall yet come and Christ will not end this conflict till He has brought down the two-edged sword upon the very head of His adversary and has laid him prone in the dust. Have patience, Brothers and Sisters, have patience! Things are progressing well enough just now. Our hearts may well be encouraged. We have seen what God’s right hand has done for freedom in this, our land. Even now the great pulse of time beats heartily and soundly and by God’s good Grace and His gracious, overruling Providence, it shall, by-and-by, be seen that—

***“The day of freedom dawns at length,
The Lord’s appointed day.”***

But, if it is ever to come, according to the past, it must come through the efforts of God’s children, for He ever works by *means* and will do so, still. Up, you servants of God and do your duty diligently, perseveringly, continuing to preach the Gospel to every creature, for you are workers to—

gether with God! You are God's husbandry, His friends and fellow helpers. Oh, if you would wish to share the joy of those brighter ages! If you would, with blissful eyes, look down the vista of time and foresee the swords beaten into plowshares, all prescient of the day when the oppressors' thrones shall crumble in the dust—you cannot look with hopeful eyes, with a strong nerve, on all this unless you stretch forth your hands and say, "I will have a share in that! I will have a share in it today! I will put my little ounce of power into the Church! I will throw my little bit of might into her mission and seek to tell every creature of the Gospel of Jesus Christ!"

IV. But now, closing up this address, we have our work before us and our God to help us and we accept the challenge. Brothers and Sisters, I call you together just as a master workman, when he has a work to do, calls together his comrades and says, "Now, this is what we have to do. **WHAT POWERS HAVE WE TO WORK WITH, AND HOW CAN WE DO IT?**" Those of us who are specially called to preach the Gospel must take our part and go on preaching it with all our might. Oh, it is blessed employment and angels might well envy us, that we have such an office committed to us as to preach the Gospel!

But, Brethren, you must not lay all the labor or all the responsibility on one man. A one-man ministry is, indeed, a curse to any Church, if that is the only ministry of the Church. All ministries must be used. *Are there not many of you who could preach?* Let me earnestly entreat you, if you can, to do so. Let no man who has gifts keep them back. There are the streets, if you can find no other places, and let me say that there is no better work done in London than that which is done in the streets by the open air services. There are some who hear the Gospel there who never would have heard it if the 12 Apostles had been preaching in any of our places of worship! Use your ability in other places if you can, but let every tongue that can speak, do so.

But all have not the ability to preach. We have *some who can teach the young*. Are all who can teach the young engaged in that work? Any night there are schools all around here where there will be twice as many children as the teachers there present can instruct. It is not so with any institution of ours, but there are dozens of schools around that are inefficient simply for need of teachers. Our people are always engaged in their schools. I have always said, "Never mind what sect it is. If you can, go and teach there." But I must repeat that over and over again, for I do not like to see these schools empty for lack of teachers. It is a very happy thing to hear a sermon, but if you can teach children, it is not your duty to prefer your pleasure to your class.

Could not some of you do good in your own houses? Cottage meetings, parlor meetings, drawing room meetings—these are all means of usefulness. Have you tried them? "How many loaves have you?" So said my

Master. I want to count the loaves and tell my Master, and I am of an opinion that there are some loaves never brought out of the baker's basket, yet—some opportunities that have never yet been put to His service. Search and see. How much good could some of you do by writing letters to others concerning Christ? How many of you might do good by circulating the printed word—Bibles and Gospel tracts and such sermons as will be most likely to profit certain people if they read them. To some of you, it, may be, there is committed the talent of money. If you have not the golden tongue, be thankful that you have the golden purse. Speak with that! You are as much bound to speak with that as others with the golden mouth.

Whatever gift you may have, put it out at interest, like a good steward, for your Master. Some of you may not be able to speak *or* to give, but let your holiness and every power you have, according to your ability and opportunity, contribute to the great result of the Gospel being preached to every creature. My joy and crown, my hope and my delight before God, are you in the Lord, when I can perceive an earnest heart in you, O you, the people of my charge! There are some here of whom I am not ashamed to speak, whose piety is Apostolic, whose generosity and zeal are like those of the early Church. But there are others of whom we may well speak with hesitation, for if they are consecrated to Christ at all, the consecration seems to have taken but small effect.

They are diligent enough in business, but as for fervency of spirit, where is that? In what respects can they be said to serve the Lord? Let each one begin to question himself, "What have I done to carry out the Master's command?" And if you make up a sorrowful total, do not sit down and waste the time in vain regrets, but be humbled and pray God that no man's blood may be laid at your door. I do urge you—oh, how I would do it if my tongue had language such as I desire to possess! But let me urge you, every one of you—in the future be putting out the fullness of your strength for Him whose bloody sweat and Cross and passion have made you debtors to Him for your very lives! By Him who died on yonder tree, accursed for you—by Him who went away to prepare a place for you, and who stands pleading, still, at God's right hand with never-ceasing zeal for you—I come in *His* name and at *His* command to entreat and to exhort you to spend and be spent to glorify His name among the sons of men!

Search out and see what you can do, and whatever your hands find to do, do with all your might, for the grave will soon open for you and there is no work nor service in the grave where you are hastening. "Up, guards, and at them!" was said in the day of battle and I may still say it to every Christian. In these days, when popery gathers her might and infidelity shoots forth her poisoned arrows, let none of us be lacking in the day of battle, lest the angels should say, as said the Angel of the Lord, "Curse you, Meroz, curse you bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

The best thing to do for truth and righteousness is to promote personal piety and it will bring forth the outgrowth of personal effort. We shall not bless the world by big schemes, mighty theories, gigantic plans. Little by little grows the coral reef on which afterwards gardens are to be planted. Little by little must the kingdom come, each man bringing his mite and laying it down at Jesus' feet. So breaks the light! Beam by beam it comes. One by one come the arrows from the bow of the sun and at last darkness flies. So must break the everlasting work. But let us be glad. If the work is slow it is sure. God will see the work accomplished and when the morning comes the night shall not succeed it, but it shall scatter the darkness forever. The Sun of Righteousness goes no more down. The day of the world's morning shall not tarry. The time of her halcyon days shall come, when the light of the sun shall be as the light of seven days and the Lord God shall dwell among men and manifest His Glory to the sons of men!

This last moment shall be just used for us to say that there are some here whom we cannot tell to go and preach the Gospel, for they do not know it themselves. And unto the wicked God says, "What have you to do to declare My statutes?" To such we say, incline your ear and listen. Jesus Christ has suffered that sinners might not suffer. He is God's Son. He took the sins of Believers. He was punished in their place and if you will trust Him you shall be saved. Trust Him, Sinner, trust Him! May the Holy Spirit persuade you and give you faith and unto the Lord Jesus shall be the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Romans 10.

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BAPTISM ESSENTIAL TO OBEDIENCE

NO. 2339

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORDS'S-DAY, DECEMBER 17, 1893.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 13, 1889.**

***“He who believes and is baptized shall be saved.”
Mark 16:16.***

IF our congregations were what they ought to be, it would be a very simple matter to preach, for a sermon would then only need to be like the orders given by a commanding officer to his troops—short, sharp, plain, clear, distinct! Our hearers would not need illustrations and metaphors—they would simply ask to be told what they must do to be saved—and the more plainly they could be told, the better pleased would they be. I am going to try, this evening, to preach that kind of sermon, sinking the preacher into the teller of good news, plainly speaking of the way of salvation. If you want to be saved, listen to my message. If you do not care for salvation, yet, perhaps, while you hear it, you may be set a-longing, and God may bless you. My text is preceded and followed by other important words, “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.”

The Gospel, then, is for “every creature.” Wherever there is a man, woman, or child—an intelligent creature—the Gospel is to be preached to such a person. You who are gathered tonight are clearly within that description and, therefore, the Gospel is to be preached to you. But if we are commanded to preach it, it is *implied* that you are commanded to *hear* it! To hear it without attention—to hear it without resolving to *obey* it—will be useless work. Hear it, therefore, as I desire to preach it, remembering that Christ stands here to hear me preach and to mark how you accept the message from Himself that I am to deliver.

This Gospel is sent to every creature because every creature needs it. Whether the creature knows it or not, he is lost—lost by nature and lost by practice, too—so much lost that he cannot save himself! He needs to be saved. Will you all believe that? If you have not believed in Christ, you are lost, and you cannot save yourself. Begin by believing that fact. But then rejoice that there is sent to you a Gospel which can save you, a Gospel which is adapted and meant for the salvation of just such a person as you are, for to you God says—“He who believes and is baptized shall be saved.”

My fellow Christians, you who have believed in Christ, it is time for us to bestir ourselves, for we have not preached the Gospel to every creature, yet, by any stretch of the imagination! Some persons have never preached it to *anybody*—some, I mean, of the very persons who are commanded to preach it to every creature! A quaint preacher says that if some of God’s people were paid ten dollars an hour for all that they have done for their Lord, they have not earned enough, yet, to buy a gingerbread cake, and I am afraid that statement is true. So very little have some persons done for the spread of the Gospel that the world is none the better for their being in it! Do I speak too severely? If I do, you can easily pass over what I say, but if not, if it is so that any here have never yet fairly and squarely spoken of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, begin at once!

When you get home, tonight, speak of the Gospel to your nearest relative, and go out, tomorrow, to your next door neighbor, or to the friend whom you can most easily reach, and tell them of the good news that your Lord has revealed to you, and so help to preach the Gospel to every creature! An army chaplain once said to the Duke of Wellington, “Do you think that it is of any use our taking the Gospel to the hill tribes in India? Will they ever receive it?” The duke replied, “What are your marching orders?” That was the only answer he gave! Stern disciplinarian as that great soldier was, he only needed marching orders and he obeyed—and he meant that every soldier of the Cross must obey the marching orders of Christ, his great Commander. Go you, therefore, as far as your position and capabilities allow you, and tell to every creature the word of the Gospel as it is recorded in my text, “He who believes and is baptized shall be saved.”

I want to do my part, tonight, as far as my feeble voice will permit me. And I will speak a few words, first, *concerning belief*. Secondly, *concerning Baptism*. And, thirdly, *concerning being saved*. We shall get the whole text clearly in considering those three points.

I. First, CONCERNING BELIEVING. This is the main point. This is the hinge of salvation, for he that believes in Christ is not condemned—he that believes in Him has everlasting life.

Now, concerning believing, let me, ask, first, *What is to be believed?* Well, you are to believe that you have broken the Law of God and that, consequently, you are under condemnation. But that God, in His infinite mercy, has sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world that you might live through Him. His Divine Son—His only-begotten Son—was born of Mary, as a Man of the substance of His mother, feeling as we do and was, in all respects, most truly Man. Being here, He obeyed His Father’s will and, when the time came, He gave Himself up as a Sacrifice for guilty men. He died, “the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” Himself being without sin, He took upon Himself the sin of His people—“Who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree.” Being found with human sin imputed to Him, He suffered in the place of those whose sins He bore. On the Cross His blood was shed—for without the shedding of

blood there is no remission of sin—and by that shedding of blood He blotted out the iniquity of all those who put their trust in Him. This is what you have to believe, that—

***“He bore, that you might never bear,
His Father’s righteous ire.”***

He was laid in the grave and on the third day He came forth from the tomb, rising, again, for the justification of His people as He was crucified for their offenses. After a while He went up into the highest Heaven and He is now enthroned there, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. He sits at the right hand of God, even the Father, and there He pleads and makes intercession for sinners. Believe this—“Through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.” He is exalted on high, a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance and remission of sins. That is what is to be believed. I might go into a great many details, but I shall not do so tonight. The essence of what is to be believed is that Jesus Christ is given of God unto us, that by His death He might put away sin and we might be reconciled to God—and that *whoever* believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life!

That I may answer this question better, let me correct it, or turn it into another, and then answer that. The question is not so much what is to be believed, as *Who is to be believed?* For, in very deed, the believing of a certain thing to be true, though that may be helpful, is not the whole of the matter. I, believing a thing to be true, trust myself to that truth—there is *faith*, the act of *trust*. But if we would be saved, we must trust a Person! We must trust the Lord Jesus Christ. You are not so much saved by believing a doctrine as by *trusting* a Person—you must believe the dogma, or you will not trust the Person, but, believing the doctrine, you then come, and put your trust in the Person about whom that doctrine is taught. If you would be saved, trust yourself with Jesus Christ! He, who died, lives, and, “He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.” Saving faith is trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ—trusting Him truly, wholly, solely, constantly—trusting Him now! Behold Him, then, the Son of God, enthroned in Glory! Lay your soul and all its sins at His dear feet and trust in Him to save you—and He will do it!

Many will ask a third question—*Why is He to be trusted?* I should like to answer that by another—*Why is He not to be trusted?* When one said to me, the other day, “I cannot trust Christ,” I enquired, “Can you trust *me?*” And when the quick reply was, as it ought to be from a hearer to a minister, “Yes, Sir, I do trust you,” I said, “Well, then, you certainly can trust the Lord Jesus Christ, for He is infinitely more worthy of being trusted than ever I can be.” Cannot trust Christ? That is a wonderful piece of Satanic delusion! I can say, tonight, that I can not only trust my soul to Christ, but that if I had as many souls as there are grains of sand on the seashore, I could implicitly trust them all to Him! Why should I not? He is “God over all, blessed forever,” and He is Man, tender and gentle—therefore He ought to be trusted. O my Hearer, can you look the Crucified

Christ in the face and say that you cannot trust Him? Can you see the bloody sweat in the garden? Can you gaze upon the nailed hands and feet and pierced side of this suffering Man, who is, at the same time, very God of very God, and can you then say that it is hard to trust Him? Oh, no! He is so true, so noble, so generous, so faithful that I beseech you to trust Him, and to trust Him now!

That raises another question—*When is Christ to be trusted?* And the answer is, NOW! He was never more worthy to be trusted than He is tonight and you never more needed a Savior than you do tonight. You are, perhaps, talking about trusting Christ at some future time. You tell me that you do not trust So-and-So, but that you hope to trust him one of these days. I will not give a penny for such a hope as that! No, Friend, if at any future time you should deem Christ worthy of your confidence, He is worthy of your trust, tonight, for He is the same yesterday, today and forever. Just as you are, in that pew, or sitting in the aisle, Christ deserves your confidence—and I pray you to give it to Him. Cast your guilty soul on Him this very moment! Live not another second in unbelief, for that unbelief is a slander on my Lord, a grievous injury to His dear, faithful love. Now, while the word is leaving my lips—as it reaches your ears—say and mean it, “I do believe. I will trust Jesus. I yield myself to Christ and take Him to be my Savior.”

“If I do that,” says one, “*When will the blessing come?*” The text says, “He who believes and is baptized shall be saved,” and the blessing will come at once! Swift as the lightning flash is the act which saves the soul! One moment a man may be black with accumulated sin—the next moment he may be white as the driven snow. It takes no time for God to blot out iniquity. We pass in an instant from death to life, from darkness into marvelous light! I am praying that while I speak to you in feebleness, God may work with His almighty power—with that right hand that tore the Red Sea in two—that the ransomed of the Lord might cross over dry-shod! May He come and save the people made ready by His Grace for this night of His glorious power, leading them immediately to believe and giving them, at once, as the result of their faith, reconciliation to God and justification by Christ Jesus!

Here let me correct a mistake into which some people fall. They say, “Do you exhort us to believe?” I do, indeed, with all my heart. “But, Sir, faith is the work of the Spirit of God.” Yes, did I ever say that it was not? I insist upon it continually that, wherever there is any faith, it is worked in us by the Spirit of God. But listen. Did I ever tell you the Spirit of God believed *for* us, or did you ever read anything in Scripture approximating to that statement? No, the Spirit of God *leads* us to believe, but we distinctly believe—and it is our faith that saves us—it is not that the Holy Spirit believes instead of us and we lie still, like a man under the surgeon’s knife. Oh, dear, no! Every faculty is awakened and awakened by the Spirit of God! We see that Christ can save and we believe it. We believe that He will

save and we trust Him to save us. It is our own act and deed—it cannot be anybody else’s act and deed. You cannot believe for another! There can be nothing like sponsorship, here, and the Holy Spirit, Himself, cannot believe for you! It is not written, “Let the Holy Spirit believe for you.” That would be absurd! But it *is* written, “Believe you.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” With your own proper mind and heart you must believe in Jesus Christ if you would be saved.

I do not know that I need say more concerning believing. I have often tried to explain it, but I am afraid that I have not always made it as plain as I have intended. Only let me warn you *not* to say, “I understand the plan of salvation very well. Dear Sir, I am sure I do! I do not need it explained to me, I understand it perfectly.” My dear Friend, it is one thing to understand the *plan* of salvation and quite another thing to *believe in Jesus Christ to the salvation of your soul*. It is a pitiless night, the rain is pouring down and here is a man, sitting out in the street, exposed to the ill weather, and he has got a plan of a house down there on the wet pavement. And He says, “I am all right! I understand the plan of a house quite well.” You see, he is looking at the *plan*—he has a view of the front of the house—he knows where the windows and doors should be. And he has a ground plan, too! He can see where the kitchen is and the passage to the kitchen. And he knows the arrangement of all the rooms. But, my dear Fellow, you are getting wet through and through from the raging storm—why do you not go into the house for shelter? “Do not talk to me,” he says, “I understand the plan of a house very well.” The man is a fool if he talks like that! Everybody concludes that he is out of his mind and what is he who is satisfied with understanding the plan of salvation, but who does not come to Christ and put his trust in Him? Come to Him now, I beseech you! You who do not know so much about the plan of salvation, come to Jesus—come and trust Him—trust Him now!

II. Now, in the second place, a little CONCERNING BAPTISM—“He who believes and is baptized shall be saved.”

Please observe that I did not make the text. Perhaps if I had made it, I should have left out that piece about Baptism—but I have had no hand in making the Bible—I am obliged to take God’s Word as I find it. And here I read these words of our Lord Jesus Christ, “He who believes and is baptized shall be saved.” “Do not dwell on the Baptism,” says one—“leave that out.” That is what *you* say, my dear Sir. I cannot see your face, but I do not believe that you are my master. My Master is the Lord who taught holy men to write this Book and I can only go by the Book! The Book has the Baptism in it, so I must stick to the Truth of God as it is in the Book—“He who believes and is baptized shall be saved.”

First, let me remind you that our Savior’s words teach us that *Baptism follows faith*—“He who believes and is baptized.” Never neglect the order of things in the Bible! If God puts them one, two, three—do not you put them three, two, one. You never had a servant, I hope, who twisted your

orders out of order. Did you ever say to her, “Mary, now go and sweep the parlor, and afterwards take the duster and dust the table, and the shelves and the books”? Did she come to you, some time later, and say, “Madam, I have done as you commanded me. I dusted the table, the shelves and the books, and then I swept the room”? Every good housewife here knows what would happen from turning the orders upside down in that fashion!

Now, a great many in the Christian Church at the present day have put it thus—“He that is baptized and believes.” I am not one of those maidservants. I dare not turn my Master’s orders upside down! You have no right to baptize people till they have believed in Christ as their Savior. Remember how Philip put it to the Ethiopian eunuch when that worthy man said, “See, here is water; what does hinder me to be baptized?” Philip answered, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” And if you do not believe with all your heart, you ought not to be baptized—you have no right to this ordinance of Christ unless you are a Christian! “He who believes and is baptized”—that is the Scriptural order. Read the New Testament impartially and you will always find that those who were baptized were Believers. They believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and *then* they were baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Next, I would have you notice that this matter of *Baptism is often linked with faith*. Over and over again it is put so in the New Testament! There are passages which I will not quote tonight, in which Baptism has a peculiar prominence given to it in connection with the work of salvation. It might have been put, “He who believes and comes to the Communion Table shall be saved,” but it is not so written. Some churches have exalted what they call, “The Holy Eucharist,” into a very elevated position, indeed—far beyond what Scripture has ever accorded to it—yet the Lord’s Supper has never had given to it in the Word of God the position of being put side by side with faith as Baptism is in this and other passages. I am not going to dwell upon that point, tonight. I merely tell you what is the teaching of the New Testament. You shall give your own account of it if you please, but our appeal is, “to the Law and to the Testimony!”

This much, also, I must say, that *it is not possible that there can be anything saving in the Baptism, itself*. The act of applying water in anyway whatever cannot wash away a single sin! That would be going back to the old Covenant of Works, the old ceremonies of the Mosaic Law. All the washings under the law—and they were very many—never washed one sin away! Nor can any washing in water take away the sin of any man. Even the tears of Christ are never spoken of as putting away sin—it is His precious *blood*, alone, that cleanses away the sin of men. In my text, while it says, “He who believes and is baptized shall be saved,” yet, when the condemnation is announced, it is simply, “He who *believes not* shall be damned,” and the matter of Baptism is not mentioned, for there are many who believe, but who are not baptized, and who cannot be—as the dying thief, for instance—yet are they assuredly saved. Nevertheless, here

stands my text and I cannot alter it, "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved."

Why do you suppose that Baptism is put into this prominent position? I think that it is for this reason—*Baptism is the outward expression of the inward faith*. He who believes in Christ with his heart confesses his faith before God and before the Church of God by being baptized. Now, the faith that speaks thus is not a dumb faith. It is not a cowardly faith. It is not a sneaking faith. Paul puts the matter thus, "If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

But why is confession so necessary to prove true faith? I answer that it is necessary to the very existence of the Church of God, for, if I may be a Believer and never confess my faith, you may be a Believer and never confess your faith—and all round we should thus have a company of men believing, but none of them confessing! And where would be the outward ordinances of the Church of Christ at all? Where would be any minister? Where would be the setting up and growing of the Kingdom of Christ? For a hundred reasons, it is absolutely necessary for Christ's Kingdom that the Believer should openly confess his faith. Do you not see that? And therefore, Baptism being *God's way of our openly confessing our faith*, He requires it to be added to faith that the faith may be a *confessing* faith, not a cowardly faith—that the faith may be an open faith, not a private faith—that so the faith may be a working faith, influencing our life and the life of others, and not a mere secret attempt for self-salvation by a silent faith which dares not acknowledge Christ. Remember those words of the Lord Jesus, "Whoever, therefore, shall confess Me before men, Him will I confess, also, before My Father which is in Heaven. But whoever shall deny Me," (and in that place it means, "He who does not confess Me"), "before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in Heaven." There is, therefore, no regenerating efficacy about water, or about immersion, or about Baptism in any shape or form—but it is necessary as the outward visible expression of the inward spiritual faith by which the soul is saved!

And, dear Friends, once more, *Baptism is often the test of obedience*. He who believes in Christ takes Him to be his Master as well as his Savior. And Christ, therefore, says to him, "Go and do so-and-so." If the man refuses to do it, he thereby proves that he does not intend to be the disciple of the Master. "Oh!" says one, "you know that Baptism is a nonessential." Have I not begged you to cease such idle and wicked talk as that? Have you a servant? Do you go to business early in the morning? Do you like a cup of tea at six o'clock, before you start for the city? The maid does not bring it to you and you ask, "Why have I not had my tea brought to me?" "Oh," she answers, "it is non-essential. You can do your business very well without that cup of tea." Let such a reply as that be repeated, or let it

be given only once, and I will tell you what will be non-essential! It will be non-essential for you to keep that girl any longer in your house! You will want another servant, for you will say, "Clearly she is no servant of mine! She sets herself up as the mistress of the house, for she begins to judge my commands and to say that this one is essential, and that one is not essential."

What do you mean by, "non-essential"? "I mean that I can be saved without being baptized." Will you dare to say that wicked sentence over again? "I mean that I can be saved without being baptized." You evil creature! So you will do nothing that Christ commands if you can be saved without doing it? You are hardly worth saving at all! A man who always needs to be paid for what he does—whose one idea of religion is that he will do what is essential to his own salvation—only cares to save his own skin and insinuates Christ may go where He likes! Clearly, you are no servant of His! You need to be saved from such a disreputable, miserable state of mind—and may the Lord save you!

Oftentimes, I believe that this little matter of Believers' Baptism is the test of the sincerity of our profession of love to Him. It would have been all the same, it may be, if the Lord Jesus Christ had said, "Pick up six stones off the ground and carry them in your pocket and you shall be saved." Somebody would have said, "That stone-picking is a non-essential." It becomes essential as soon as Christ commands it! It is in this way that Baptism, if not essential to your salvation, is essential to your *obedience* to Christ. If you have become His disciple, you are bound to obey all your Master's commands—"Whatever He says unto you, do it."

III. Now, lastly, CONCERNING BEING SAVED—"He who believes and is baptized shall be saved."

What is this being saved? Well, it means, of course, what everyone wants it to mean, *salvation from the punishment of sin*. "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved." His transgressions shall be forgiven him, his iniquity shall be blotted out, he shall not be brought into condemnation—and in the Last Great Day he shall be justified in Christ. No, he is justified *now*, as the Apostle says, "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." That is certainly a part of this being saved.

It means, next, that he that believes and is baptized shall have *salvation from the dominion of his old nature*. When you believe in Christ, there shall suddenly spring up in you a new life, a new principle—a well shall be dug within your being and a fountain of Living Water shall begin to bubble up within you unto life everlasting! A miracle shall be worked upon you—there shall come into your heart the Holy Spirit who shall dwell there to re-create you, to set up within your soul a new throne whereon shall reign a new King! The old dominion of sin shall be broken as with a rod of iron and there shall be a new order of things within your heart—righteousness shall begin to reign there by Jesus Christ.

“He who believes and is baptized shall be saved.” That is, he shall have *salvation from his old sins*. He shall no longer be the slave of drunkenness. He shall get the love of swearing by the throat. He shall have his lying, his anger, his passion under his feet. “He who believes and is baptized” shall see all his old adversaries put to the rout and what he could not do, through the weakness of his flesh, shall be done for him by the power of the Spirit of God! And by Divine Grace he shall master his sins. He shall begin to live unto God, under new impulses, strengthened with a new power and so he shall be delivered from his old sins.

Listen again, for this is wonderful. “He who believes and is baptized shall be saved”—he shall have *salvation from going back to his old sins*. If it were not for the Final Perseverance of the Saints, I should think my Gospel a poor Gospel to preach, but he who truly believes in Christ shall have such a change worked in him that the blessed work shall never be undone! My Lord shall light such a candle in your heart that the devil, himself, shall never be able to blow it out! Christ shall come to you with such power and authority and set up His eternal Throne in your soul with such Divine majesty and might that you shall be His in time and throughout eternity. We preach about no temporary salvation, no work of Grace that, by-and-by, will grow feeble and lose its power! We tell of a work of Grace that shall enable you who believe to go on from strength to strength, from glory to glory, till every sin in you shall be driven out and you shall be made perfectly like your Lord! Then shall you behold His face in righteousness and be with Him forever and ever.

Once more, “He who believes and is baptized shall be saved”—he shall have *salvation from the age in which he lives*. “But,” says one, “I do not want to be saved from *that*.” You don’t? “No.” But if you go with the age and go with the world, you will go down the Niagara which this age is just now shooting—down to the destruction to which this world is doomed! Cherish not the friendship of the world that slew your Lord, for the world and the works that are in it shall be burned up. You remember how Peter said, on the day of Pentecost, “Save yourselves from this untoward generation”? That is what I want you to do tonight! “With many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, “Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” A man who wishes to be a man and who desires to be a *saved* man, has to take up arms against this evil age! He who would prove himself to be alive unto God must swim against the current of the times! Dead fish go down stream—can’t you see them? I see the white bellies of the dead fish floating down by myriads! But the living fish goes up the stream, against the current, and finds his way to purer waters! Beloved, he who believes in Jesus Christ with all his heart shall be made to play the man where men are now so few—and to stand fast for God and His Truth where others yield to the Satanic power—and to be holy where ungodliness, like a mighty torrent, now sweeps down our streets! “He who believes and is baptized” into the adorable name of Jesus, swears, as a

Red Cross Knight, to follow Christ, and Christ, alone—believing in Him though every man is a liar—and resolving for Him to live, for Him to die and in Him to find hope here and eternal happiness hereafter! He is the man who shall be saved from this present evil age to the Glory of God the Father.

All this great work is worked by faith in Christ—that is the one way of salvation! “He who believes on the Son has everlasting life.” Believe in Him, as men sometimes say, “up to the hilt.” Believe in His Manhood sympathizing with you. Believe in His Godhead able to help you. Believe in His blood cleansing you. Believe in His eternal life bringing everlasting life to you. God bless you, everyone, for His dear Son’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 3:1-18.**

If you were called in to see a person who was dying and wished to read a chapter from the Word of God, but you were afraid that the sick one did not know the way of salvation, you could not select a better portion than the one we are about to read. I have chosen it in the hope that some may now learn from it what they must do to be saved.

Verses 1, 2. *There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night.* Perhaps he was very busy during the day. It is better to come to Jesus at night than not to come to Him at all. All hours are convenient to Christ—you may come to Him when you are at home tonight. When everybody else is asleep, Jesus is still awake. In all probability, however, Nicodemus did not wish to commit himself by coming to Christ by day. He had not yet tried and tested Him, so he would not be thought to be Christ’s follower till he had, first, had a quiet private talk with Him. As a ruler of the Jews, he was wise in acting thus discreetly.

2. *And said unto Him, Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that You do, except God is with him.* He admitted the truth as far as he could see it. The miracles of Christ proved Him to be a Divinely-commissioned teacher. Always be willing to go as far as you can go in the pursuit of the Truth of God. If you cannot see everything at once, see all that you can see. Be not of a caviling spirit—be frank and teachable as this man was.

3. *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.* It is such a mystery, a thing of such a marvelous character, that his old nature cannot see it. He must have new eyes. He must be a new man. He must be born again before he can “see the Kingdom of God.” Have you caught this idea, my dear Hearer? Do you understand that you cannot polish yourself up to a certain point and then see the Kingdom of God? You *must* be born

again! There must be a radical change in you, a new birth, a birth from above, if you are even to see the Kingdom of God.

4, 5. *Nicodemus said unto Him, How can a man be born, when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man is born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* At first Jesus said that a man could not see the kingdom of God except he was born again. Now He tells Nicodemus that a man cannot *enter* the Kingdom except he is born of water and of the Spirit. There must be a cleansing—he must be “born of water.” There must be a spiritual life—he must be “born of the Spirit,” or he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.

6. *That which is born of the flesh is flesh.* Nothing more. However godly your father, however gracious your mother, all that is “born of the flesh is flesh.”

6. *And that which is born of the spirit is spirit.* There must be, then, a Spirit-birth, or else you have no spirit—you belong not to the spiritual realm—and you cannot see and you cannot enter the *spiritual* Kingdom.

7, 8. *Marvel not that I said unto you, You must be born again. The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound thereof.* The sounding of the wind blowing through the trees—

8. *But cannot tell from where it comes, and where it goes.* Where it begins, where it goes, or where it comes to an end, you cannot tell.

8. *So is everyone that is born of the Spirit.* You do not know where the spirit-life begins and you cannot tell to what it will lead. There are heights to which the spirit-life can carry you, of which you have never dreamed—this is a mystery beyond your understanding.

9. *Nicodemus answered and said unto Him, How can these things be?* He did not deny that they might be, but he asked how they could be. Ah, many a man has asked the same question! “How may I be made anew? How may I become a new creature?” Only He that makes all things can make all things new! The new birth is as great a wonder as creation, itself, and there is as much—and a great deal more—to be worked upon you to make you a Christian as has been worked upon you to make you a man.

10. *Jesus answered and said unto him, Are you a master of Israel, and know not these things?* These truths lie on the very doorstep of our holy religion! There are deeper and higher mysteries than these.

11, 12. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, We speak what We know, and testify what We have seen; and you receive not Our witness. If I have told you earthly things.* Commonplace things, the lower things of faith. “If I have told you these”—

12. *And you believe not, how shall you believe if I tell you of heavenly things?* There are mysteries in our holy religion which we would not tell to everybody. It would be casting pearls before swine to mention them to unregenerate men. Christ tells Nicodemus that the primary Truths of God must be believed before the more advanced doctrines can be revealed.

13. *And no man has ascended up to Heaven but He that came down from Heaven, even the Son of Man which is in Heaven.* It is Christ who knows everything! He understands all mysteries! He can teach all Truth, for He has been in Heaven. He came down to earth and He has gone back again to Heaven. Now, perhaps, some of you will be saying, “How are we to be saved? If there is no salvation without the new birth, how can we obtain the new birth?” Listen. The same chapter which tells you of the mystery of regeneration, tells you of the simple way of salvation by faith in Christ!

14, 15. *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.* “Whoever.” If you believe in Christ, you are born again! If you trust Him, you have the new life! This simple way of salvation is not contradictory to the way of salvation by the new birth—it is the *same thing* stated in a form that we can comprehend!

16. *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* This text has saved thousands of souls! The constellation in the heavens called the Great Bear, has in it the two pointers which direct the eyes of the observer to the pole star—and this verse points to Christ so clearly, so distinctly, that many have found Him by it and have lived! Let me read it again: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

17, 18. *For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world, through Him, might be saved. He who believes on Him is not condemned: but He that believes not is condemned already.* Not, “shall be condemned at the last,” though that, also, is true, but “He that believes not is condemned already”—

18. *Because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.* May the Lord bless to us the reading of this very simple Gospel chapter, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

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CHRIST AND HIS CO-WORKERS

NO. 2467

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 31, 1896,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 10, 1886.**

***“And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word through accompanying signs. Amen.”
Mark 16:20.***

THE previous verse tells us that “after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into Heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.” It was expedient for His disciples that He should go away and He had gone to the best place for helping them in their work. He could survey the field better from an eminence, so the Captain ascends on high. He could best send to them succor from the Throne, so the Lord ascends to His Glory. He could better lead them by the Holy Spirit than by His own personal bodily Presence, so He was in the best place when, “He was received up into Heaven.” The disciples were in their best place on earth. We do not always think so—we are sometimes eager to go Home. We have often thought, concerning a convert, that if the first day it is said of him, “Behold he prays,” we could also say, “Behold he sings in Heaven,” it would save us a world of care and trouble and disappointment. Yet, all things considered, for the Glory of God and for the working out of the Divine purpose, the saints would not be best if they were immediately received up into Heaven. No, it is better to read concerning them, “They went out and preached everywhere.” Christ is best up there, but it is expedient for us and for God’s Glory that we should remain a while here.

I like the thought of Christ being taken up to Heaven because *His work* was done and His people being left on earth because there was still work for them to do. If we could steal away to Heaven, what a pity it would be that we should do so while there is a single soul to be saved! I think that if I had not brought to Christ the full number of jewels that He intended me to bring to adorn His crown, I would ask to come back even from Heaven. He knows best where we can best serve Him, so He ordains that while He sits at the right hand of God, we are to abide here and to go forth to preach everywhere, the Lord working with us and confirming the Word with accompanying signs, even as He did with His first disciples.

I am going to say just a few practical words upon the fact, first, that *they worked*—“They went out and preached everywhere.” Secondly, *the Lord worked with them*—“the Lord working with them.” Thirdly, *the two workings were in delightful harmony*, for when the Lord worked, He confirmed the Word with accompanying signs and, as the writer of this verse has put, “Amen,” at the end of it, we will say, “Amen,” and feel, “Amen.”

Lord, make Your people work! “Amen.” Lord, work yourself! “Amen.” Lord, make the two workings to be but one sweet monotone after all! “Amen.”

I. First, then, THEY WORKED—“They went out and preached.”

The disciples did not say, “Well, the Master has gone to Heaven, so the eternal purposes of God will be quite sure to be carried out. It is not possible that the designs of Infinite Love should fail, the more especially as He is at the Father’s side, therefore let us enjoy ourselves spiritually. Let us sit down in the happy possession of Covenant blessings and let us sing to our hearts’ content because of all that God has done for us and given to us. He will effect His own purposes and we have only to stand still and see the salvation of God.” No, Brothers, it was not for them to judge what they ought to do. When they were told to tarry at Jerusalem, they tarried at Jerusalem. There are times of tarrying, but, inasmuch as the Master had commanded them to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, they also, when the hour had struck, went into all the world and began to preach *everywhere* the Gospel they had learned at Jesus’ feet! It is not for us to judge what would seem most reasonable, much less what would be most comfortable—it is for us to do *as we are told, when we are told and because we are told*, for are we not servants and not masters? It is not wise to map out the proceedings even of a single day, but to take our cue from Him who is our Guide and Leader, and to follow Him in all things.

I would like you to notice concerning the working of these disciples that *all of them* worked. “*They went out and preached everywhere.*” They might not all formally preach—some of them might not feel that they could stand before a large assembly—but they all actually preached in the sense of proclaiming, announcing, delivering the Truth of God before witnesses. The women were as good witnesses as the men, for some of them had seen more than the men had! They beheld the risen Lord even before the very first of the Apostles beheld Him and, inasmuch as they could all bear witness to the fact that He was risen from the dead, their duty was to go and tell the news that He who had been crucified in weakness had been raised in power and was now to be proclaimed as the Savior of men, that, “whoever believes in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life.” “They went forth,” not merely some of them, but *all* of them.

Next, notice that this work of the disciples was *aggressive*—“they went forth.” Some of them were bound to stay for a while at Jerusalem though that old nest was eventually pulled down—not a stick of it was left and the very tree on which it was built was cut down. Persecution drove forth the bulk of them further and further. We do not know where they all went. There are *traditions*, which are not very valuable, to show where each of the *Apostles* went, but it is quite certain that they all went somewhere or other. Starting from the one common center, they went in various directions preaching Christ. I think a strong Church is a very valuable institution, but I have always deprecated the idea that all of you should sit here, Sunday after Sunday, and listen to me. And I have spoken to some of you to such purpose that I do not often see you now. Nor do I *want* to see you, because I know you are serving the Master else-

where. There are some of our Brothers and Sisters who only come here to the Communion Table—why? Because they are always at work for Christ in some way or other. They are the best members we have and we shall not cross their names off the roll because they are not in attendance! They are at work in some mission station, or trying to open a new room for preaching, or doing something or other for the Master. The Lord bless them!

I do not want you all to go out at one time, but I do want you all to feel that it is not the end, though it may be the beginning, of Christian life to come and hear sermons! Scatter as widely as you can the blessing which you get for yourself—the moment you find the Light of God and realize that the world is in the dark, run away with your match and lend somebody else a light! Be glad of the Light, yourself, but, depend upon it, if God gives you a candle and all you do is lock yourself up in a room and sit down and say, “Sweet light! Sweet light! I have got the light while all the world is in the dark! Sweet, sweet light!” your candle will soon burn out and you, also, will be in the dark! But if you go to others and say, “I shall have none the less light because I give some to you,” by this means God the Holy Spirit will pour upon you fresh beams of light and you shall shine brighter and brighter even to the perfect day.

“They went forth.” Oh, that some people I know of could have their chapels burnt down! They have been stuck in a hole down a back street for the last hundred years! They are good souls and so they ought to be—they ought to be matured by now after so much storage—but if they would only go out in the street, they might do much more good than at present. “Oh, but there is an old deacon who does not like street-preaching!” I know him very well! He will be gone to Heaven soon. Then, as soon as you have had his funeral sermon, turn out into the street and begin, somehow or other, to make Christ known! Oh, to break down every barrier and get rid of every restraint that hides the blessed Gospel! Perhaps we must respect these dear old Believers’ feelings just a little, but not so much as to let souls die! We must seek to bring sinners to Jesus whether we offend men or whether we please them!

Then notice, dear Friends, that these disciples went forth *promptly*, for though there is not a word, here, about the *time*, yet it is implied that as soon as the hour had struck and the Holy Spirit had descended from Christ, and rested upon them, “they went out and preached the Word everywhere.” Alas, too often we are “going” to do something! If about a tenth part of what we are going to do were only done, how much more might be accomplished! “They went forth.” They did not *talk* about going forth, but, “they went forth.” They did not wait until they received directions from the Apostles where they were to go, but Providence guided each man and each man went his own way, preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

You believe the Gospel. You believe that men are perishing for lack of it. Therefore, I pray you, do not stop to consider, do not wait to deliberate any longer! The best way to spread the Gospel is to spread the Gospel. I believe the best way of defending the Gospel is to spread the Gospel! I was addressing a number of students, the other day, upon the apologies for the Gospel which are so numerous just now. A great many learned

men are *defending* the Gospel—no doubt it is a very proper and right thing to do—yet I always notice that when there are most books of that kind, it is because the Gospel, itself, is not being preached. Suppose a number of persons were to take it into their heads that they had to defend a lion, a full-grown king of beasts! There he is in a cage and here come all the soldiers of the army to fight for him. Well, I would suggest to them, if they would not object and feel that it was humbling to them, that they should kindly stand back, open the door, and let the lion out! I believe that would be the best way of defending him, for he would take care of himself—and the best “apology” for the Gospel is to let the Gospel out! Never mind about defending Deuteronomy or the whole of the Pentateuch—preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified! Let the Lion out and see who will dare to approach Him! The Lion of the tribe of Judah will soon drive away all His adversaries! This was how Christ’s first disciples worked—they preached Jesus Christ wherever they went! They did not stop to apologize, but boldly bore their witness concerning Him.

Note, once more, that they served their Master *obediently*—“They went out and preached.” Suppose they had gone out and had “a service of song”? Suppose they had gone out and held a meeting that was partly comic, with just a little bit of a moral tacked on to the end of it? We would have been in the darkness of heathendom to the present day! There is nothing that is really of any service for the spreading of the Gospel but preaching! I mean, by *preaching*, as I have already said—not merely the standing up in a pulpit and delivering a set discourse, but *talking about Christ*—talking about Him as risen from the dead, as the Judge of the quick and dead, as the great atoning Sacrifice, the one Mediator between God and men. It is by preaching Jesus Christ that sinners are saved! “It pleased God by the foolishness of *preaching* to save them that believe.” Whatever may be said outside the Bible about preaching, you have only to turn to the Word of God, itself, to find what a Divine ordinance it is and to see how the Lord makes that to be the main means of the salvation of men. Keep on with it, my Brothers. This is the gun that will win the battle, though many have tried to silence it. They have had all sorts of new inventions and contrivances, but when all their inventions shall have had their day and proved futile, depend upon it, the proclaiming of Jesus Christ’s name, Gospel and work among mankind will be found to be effectual when all things else have failed!

“They went forth and preached.” It is not said that they went forth and argued, or that they went out and wrote apologies for the Christian faith. No, they went out and *proclaimed*—told out the Truth of God as a Revelation from God! In the name of Christ they *demand*ed that men should believe in Him—and left them, if they would not believe—with this distinct understanding, that they would perish in their unbelief! They wept over them and pleaded with them to believe in Jesus. And they felt sure that whoever did believe in Him would find eternal life through His name. This is what the whole Church of Christ should do, and do at once—and keep on doing with all its might—even until the end of the age!

There is only one more word left, and that is this very wide word, “*everywhere*.” One of our great writers, in a very amusing letter which he has written to a person who had asked for a contribution towards the re-

removal of a chapel debt, wants to know whether we cannot preach Christ behind hedges and in ditches. Of course we can, and we must do so, provided it does not rain too hard. Can we not preach Jesus Christ at a street corner? Of course we can! And many of our friends will be preaching at the corners of the streets after this service is over. Yet in such a climate as ours, we often need buildings in which we can worship God, but we must never get into the idea of confining our preaching to the building. "They went out and preached everywhere."

Mr. John Wesley, as you know, was complained of for not keeping to his parish, but he insisted that he did, for all the world was his parish—and all the world is every man's parish! Do good everywhere, wherever you may be. Some of you are going to the seaside for a holiday—do not go without a good stock of tracts, and do not go without seeking an opportunity, when you are sitting on the sands, to talk to people about the Lord Jesus Christ! There used to sit, in this left-hand gallery, a man who brought many persons, in the course of the year, whose conversion, under God, was due to him and to me. He had nothing particular to do except to go and sit down on a seat in Hyde Park and there talk with ladies and gentlemen who came and sat there. He would tell them that he had a pew at the Tabernacle and he would lend them his ticket, so that they might have a comfortable place. And then he took care, after the sermon, to talk to them about Christ. And this Church has in it, now, some excellent members whom that good Brother brought to the Savior in that way. He said, "I cannot, myself, preach, but I can *bring people* to hear my minister, and I can pray God to bless them when they come."

Only this week I saw another Brother, who leaves his home at 8 o'clock on Sunday morning. There are, or there were, members of this Church who walked 12 miles every Sunday morning to hear the Gospel here, and walked back to their homes at night. This Brother lives a long way from here and he starts at 8 o'clock in the morning and puts one of my sermons into each of the letter-boxes in a certain district as he comes along. So he utilizes a long walk and, in the course of the year, circulates many thousands of sermons! What a capital way he has found of spending Sunday morning! When he gets here, after having done that service for his Lord, he enjoys the Gospel all the better because of what he has, himself, done in making it known to others!

Oh, Beloved, it is sweet to think that Christ is preached in the workhouse, or in the infirmary and to remember that the poor and the sick are not left without the Gospel! Let Christ be preached in the darkest slum, in the worst house that there may be in this neighborhood, and God knows that there are no worse houses than we have all round about us in this region! Oh, that Christ were talked of everywhere, to ones, and twos, and half-dozens, till the whole district should be saturated with blessed testimony for the Lord Jesus Christ! No place is so bad that we may not preach Christ—and no place is so good that it does not need to hear of Jesus!

II. I have taken too much time on that first division—*they worked*. So now we must turn to the second point, which is that THE LORD WORKED WITH THEM. That was the very root of the matter—"the Lord working with them."

Is not this *wonderful condescension*? You remember the passage in which we are said to be laborers together with God? Is it not gracious and kind on the Lord's part to let us come and work with Him? Yet it seems to my mind more condescending for God to come and work with us, because ours is such poor, feeble, imperfect service! Yet so He does—"the Lord working with them." The Lord is working with that dear Sister who, when she takes her class, feels that she is quite unfit for it, and with that Brother who, when he preaches, thinks that it is not preaching at all and is half inclined never to try again. Oh, yes, "the Lord working with them," such as they were—fishermen, humble women and the like! This was wonderful condescension!

In those days the Lord worked with them by *miracles*. These miracles called attention to the Gospel and they also proved that God was with the preachers. Men need, sometimes, proofs of the existence of God and of His Presence with His servants. So these first disciples were entrusted with miraculous powers.

Besides all this, God was working at that time very wonderfully by *Providence*. The whole world was evidently just ready for the advent of Christianity. From Caesar's throne down to the slave who worked at the mill, everybody seemed to be in a condition of preparation for the Gospel! The general state of society was such that all were expecting great changes and thus, God was working with the disciples when they went out and preached everywhere.

And, above all, *the Holy Spirit was with them* and that is the point I am now going to dwell upon, because that is what we need most of all. The Holy Spirit made what they said to be Divinely powerful! However feebly they uttered it, according to the judgment of men, there was an inward secret power that went with their utterances and compelled the hearts of men to accept the blessed summons of God and, dear Friends, I believe that when we are seeking to serve Christ, we little know how often God is working with us very wonderfully! I had an instance of that only this week. I will not mention the place, but there was a certain district of which I heard that there was great need of the Gospel and that there were many people in that district who were as ignorant of the way of salvation as Hottentots. And the various places of worship seemed to affect a very small proportion of the people.

A Brother visited the neighborhood for me and I prayed very earnestly that his visits might be blessed. It is a very curious thing that while I was thinking about that district, there were certain Christian people close to it who were thinking about me—and longing for the Gospel to be carried to their neighbors! And after I had moved ever so little in the matter, I received a letter from them saying how much they needed somebody to come and labor for the Lord among them. I said to myself, "This is strange. I have known this district for years, yet I have never noticed that anybody wanted me or my message. But the moment I begin to move towards the people, they begin to move towards me." You do not know, my Brother, that you may not have a similar story to tell! There is that street you feel moved to go and work in—God has been there before you! Do you not remember how, when His children had to go and destroy the Canaanites, the Lord sent the hornet before them? Now, when you have to

go and preach to sinners, God sends some preparatory work before you, He is sure to do so!

When people come into the place of worship to hear the Gospel, if a man is preaching it in earnest, God works upon them to make them ready before they come. And something they thought of on the road, or some sickness they have had, or a death bed scene they have witnessed, or some movement of conscience awakened, perhaps, before they get into the building, renders them ready to receive the Gospel of the Grace of God! The Lord works with us, my Brothers! We always have a picked congregation—whoever comes! Some come who never thought of coming, but the right people come—and often they come in the right state of mind because they have been prepared by God's Spirit for the message they are to hear!

Some do not come in that way, but God works with the minister while he is preaching. If he does not take his sermon and read it, he is guided by God in what to say. He says the right thing, though perhaps it never occurred to him till the moment he utters it. And it tallies so exactly with what is going on in the mind that he is addressing, it fits so wonderfully that often, after a sermon, a person has said, "Somebody told the preacher all about me." It has frequently been my lot in the vestry after service to have persons demand of me who had told me about them—persons whom I had never seen or heard of till that moment! The preacher's word is blessed to them because God is working while the sermon is being delivered and they are made to receive the Truth of God!

In other cases God works afterwards. Sometimes, *immediately* afterwards—at other times, *years* afterwards. There are different sorts of seeds in the world. The seeds of some plants and trees, unless they undergo a peculiar process, will not grow for years. There is something about them which preserves them intact for a long time, but in due season the life-germ shoots forth. And there are certain kinds of men who do not catch the Truth at the time it is uttered—it lies hidden away in their souls till, one day, under peculiar circumstances, they remember what they heard—and it begins to affect their hearts.

Dear Friends, if we work and God works with us, what is there that we may not expect? Therefore I put it to you that the great need of any working Church is for God to work with them and, therefore, this ought to be our daily confession, that we need God to work with us. We must always realize that we are nothing apart from His working. We must not pretend to compliment the Holy Spirit by now and then talking about Him, as though it were the proper thing to say that of course the Holy Spirit must work! It must be a downright matter of fact with us that the Holy Spirit must work, as much as it would be with a sailor that his sails could not go round without the wind. And then we must act as the sailor does—he sets his sails and tries to catch the wind from whatever quarter it blows. And we must try to work in such a way that the Holy Spirit is likely to bless us. I do not think the Holy Spirit will bless some service that is done even by well-meaning people, because if He did, it would seem as if He had set His seal to a great deal that was not according to the mind of the Lord. Let us so act, dear Brothers and Sisters, in our work, that there is never the smudge of a dirty thumb across the page—nothing of pride,

or self-seeking, or hot-headedness—but that all is done humbly, dependently, hopefully and always in a holy and gracious spirit, so that we may respect the Holy Spirit to acknowledge and bless it. That will, of course, involve that everything must be done *prayerfully*, for our Heavenly Father gives the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. And we must *ask* for this greatest of blessings—that God the Holy Spirit may work with our work.

Then we must *believe* in the Holy Spirit and believe to the highest degree, so as never to be discouraged or think anything difficult. “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” Can anything be difficult to the Holy Spirit? It is a grand thing to often get into deep water so as to be obliged to swim! But we like to keep our feet touching the sand. What a mercy it is to feel that you cannot do *anything*, for then you *must* trust in God and God alone—and feel that He is quite equal to any emergency! Thus trusting and thus doing His bidding, we shall not fail. Come, Holy Spirit, and work, now, with all Your people! Come and awaken us to work and when we are bestirred to a holy energy, then work with us! Eternal arm that never wearies, to which nothing can be difficult, be stretched out to work with Your Church at this time to Your own praise!

III. Finally, Brothers, and very briefly, THE TWO WORKINGS ARE IN HARMONY. They are really one, they blend, they unite—“God working with them, and confirming the Word through accompanying signs.”

I get a little afraid of some people who say very glibly, “The Lord told me this, the Lord told me that.” You had better mind where that notion may lead you because what God has to say He has already said in the Bible! You will find that anything which comes to you with power and is really His Truth, is here in the Book. We do not get new Revelations nowadays—we shall get all kinds of fanaticisms and follies if we expect such Revelations! For instance, a man meets me at the bottom of the stairs and he says that God has revealed to him that he is to preach here one Sunday. I say, “I do not believe the Lord has revealed anything of the kind! At any rate, He has not revealed to *me* that I am to let you preach, and I shall not let you till He does.” I do not believe in lopsided Revelations, but there are numbers of people led into all sorts of extravagances by the notion that the Lord has spoken this and that to them. What God does is not to give us a *new* Word, but to confirm the Word that He has already given. That which He has revealed is for us to speak out and God, in *His working*, will confirm the Word that He has given.

The harmony of the two workings is manifested thus—*the first working springs out of the second*. No man really goes and preaches Christ without being moved by the Spirit of God to do it. It is the Spirit of God who taught us about Christ and all that we can preach that is worth preaching, comes of the Holy Spirit in that very act!

Then, secondly, *the first implies the second*. No man who truly preaches Christ can do it except by the Holy Spirit and, in his ministry he must teach the necessity of the working of the Holy Spirit. “You must be born again, and born again of the Holy Spirit,” must be his constant cry.

So the first of the two workings implies the second and then, next, *the second confirms the first*, that which we have taught out of God’s Word,

God, the Holy Spirit, bears witness in the understanding and conscience of men that this is the very Truth of God.

And, finally, *the second is promised to the first*. Where we work, God will work with us. It is not as some put it, "Paul may plant and Apollos may water, but only God can give the increase." There is no such text as that in the Bible, nor anything like it! Paul's testimony is, "I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase." And when *we plant* and *we water*, the increase will come! It is not God who is tardy, it is we who are tardy! If we had but faith as a grain of mustard seed, we would not find that God would fail that faith. And when we get the faith which can move mountains, we shall not find that God's Omnipotence has evaporated and that our faith has outrun His power! Believe that, my Brother, and labor on the strength of that belief. Believe that, my Sister, and speak of Christ, for, in doing so you *cannot*, you *shall not fail!*

Perhaps for the moment you may seem to do so, but in the long run—and God can afford to wait, remember, though you *think* you cannot—in the long run there was never a lost testimony, never a Word of God that returned to Him void. The snowflakes fall into the sea—are they not gone? Not *one* of them, for they help to feed the mighty deep! The showers fall on the wilderness—are they not lost? If they drop on the sand of the Sahara? Not a *drop* of them, for they shall be evaporated and used somewhere else! See, they come up in clouds and, at length, they fall where God has ordained. If the Lord is working with you, you cannot fail, you shall not fail! Only keep on working, relying on God to help you and looking up to the Lord to work with you.

O poor Sinners, all this sermon is about you! Our wish is to see you saved! Our prayer is that you may be brought to Christ! Oh, that you were as willing to come as we would be to lead you to the Savior—as willing to come as God is to receive you! Come and try Him, now, and you shall praise Him forever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: MARK 16.

Verse 1. *And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him.* We know that, "Him," whose name is not given here. There is scarcely need to mention that it was Jesus whom the women came to anoint. Oh, how gladly would we also anoint "Him" whose name is The Anointed One! But not as a *dead* Christ, for, "He is risen!" Our sweet spices must henceforth be for that Living One whom we anoint with our living joy and consecration! Or, rather, we must receive our anointing from Him, for He is the Christ and we the Christians who get our very name and life from Him! As He was supposed to be dead and still lying in the tomb, these holy women came to anoint Him.

2. *And very early in the morning the first day of the week, at the rising of the sun they came to the sepulcher.* We often lose a great blessing by not rising early for devotion. While yet the flowers are wet with dew, it were well if our souls had the dew of Heaven resting upon them.

3, 4. *And they said among themselves, Who shall roll away the stone from the door of the sepulcher for us? And when they looked, they saw*

that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. Which was, I suppose, the reason for their thinking about the stone. But still, I cannot help reading it as a *reason* why it was rolled away. At all events, this was the argument that David used when he prayed, “For Your name’s sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great.” As if the greatness of the sin had in it some reason for pardon. So the greatness of the care may be some reason why we might expect a great God to come to our relief. It was a very great stone, therefore God, who knew that poor feeble women could not move it, had it rolled away Himself.

5, 6. *And entering into the sepulcher, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were frightened. And he said to them, Be not frightened.* They were afraid of an angel. “Conscience does make cowards of us all” and even good men and good women are apt to be afraid of anything celestial and bright. The angel said to the women, “Be not frightened”—

6, 7. *You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified: He is risen; He is not here: behold the place where they laid Him. But go your way, tell His disciples and Peter that He goes before you into Galilee: there shall you see Him, as He said to you.* Does not that last clause drop out very sweetly? Yet there is somewhat of a rebuke in it—“as He said to you.” “Did He not tell you that He would rise from the dead? Did He not say that He would meet you in Galilee?” And the day shall come, Beloved, when you, also, shall rejoice in your Deliverer and your deliverance! And you shall not wonder so much, then, as you do, now, for you shall see that the deliverance was what you ought to have expected—“as He said to you.” Poor seeking Sinner, if you have found the Savior, you are full of amazement, but the day will come when you will see it in another light—you will be equally grateful, but you will say—“I ought to have had faith to expect this, as He said to me.” It will always be so. Just as God says, so it is—in creation, in Providence, in Grace—and as He has said to you, so shall it be in your spiritual experience.

8. *And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulcher; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid.* There was no reason in Christ’s Resurrection for anything but delight, yet these dear women were overwhelmed, silenced, struck dumb by that which made the angels sing!

9. *Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils.* It has been a general tradition in the Church of Christ that Mary Magdalene was a great sinner. I do not feel sure that she was, but still, she is the *type* of a great sinner. The seven devils that were in her do not represent actual guilt on her part, but they depict or symbolize the subjection of her nature to the power of Satan. It is very beautiful to notice that those people for whom Christ does most, He seems to love best. Yet this is also according to human nature, for if there is a child in the family that the mother loves most, it is the one that was the hardest to bring up and who has cost her most of care and most of labor! The casting out of seven devils endears the Magdalene to Christ and, first of all, He appears to her. Besides, she loved much, doubtless, and she was quick of sight, so she saw Him first. O my Soul, if you have been a great sinner, do not

take any place but that of first in love and first in fellowship with Christ! Be content to be nothing, but be anxious to make Him your All in All.

10. *And she went and told them that had been with Him, as they mourned and wept.* It is a curious “interior” that Mark here sketches, or rather stipples, with just a few touches. There are most of Christ’s disciples who had been with Him—sitting, mourning and weeping over His death! And in comes Mary and says that she has seen Him alive.

11. *And they, when they had heard that He was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.* This was both cruel to the Magdalene and forgetful of their Master’s Words, but unbelief is a very cruel thing. It is not only grievous to ourselves, but it acts in a shameful manner to Christian Brothers and Sisters and, worst of all, is its treatment of our Divine Master, Himself. It says that He is dead when truly He is alive. Unbelief has no good in it—it is altogether evil, only evil, and that continually. The Lord deliver us from it!

12-13. *After that He appeared in another form to two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it to the residue: neither believed they them.* It is very hard to kill unbelief. It has more lives than a cat is supposed to possess. There is no end to it and if men sit down and indulge in it, and look upon it as an infirmity, or as a painful trial—instead of regarding it as an abominable sin against the Lord—they are likely to sink deeper and deeper into this horrible mire!

14. *Afterward He appeared to the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart—*Christ is full of love to them, yet He must upbraid them. He loves them, but He loves not their unbelief! No, He is more vexed with unbelief in them than in other people.

14, 15. *Because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen. And He said to them, Go you into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.* That commission of our Lord makes me smile, for it seems such a curious cure for unbelief, yet I have proved the usefulness of it many a time! There have I been, sitting down, fretting and worrying, and my Master, instead of giving me some gracious promise, that I might sit there by myself and enjoy its sweetness, has said, “Up with you! Go into the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.” Those who preach most, if they preach with all their hearts, will believe most, and they will grow strong enough to tread their doubts beneath their feet. So ought it to be. In the lives of those who have brought many to Christ, I do not, as a rule, read long chapters about their doubts and fears. No, but God encourages them by the signs and seals which He gives them. They see His hand with them, they mark how the Lord works with them and by them, and they forget their unbelief. Does not this passage seem to run so? “He upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen. And He said to them, Go you into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.”

16. *He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.* This is a weighty message for us to carry—and we have need to carry it with due solemnity, with our hearts on fire with love.

17, 18. *And these signs shall follow them that believe, In My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues, they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.* The Apostles and the early Christians had these miraculous signs. There is no need that they should be given again. The seal was set upon the Gospel at the first. A man buys a house and on the first day when he takes possession, he gets the signature of the seller and the legal seal upon the conveyance. That matter is done. If he ever doubts his right to the property, he can always look back to that seal. He does not need a fresh lot of sealing wax every five minutes! Neither do we need continual miracles. The Church of Christ, at first, was like a ship going to sea—the tug takes her out of the harbor, but when she is fairly out at sea, she does not need the tug any longer—she is dependent, then, upon the wind from Heaven and so she speeds on her way! Or, the Church is like a young tree newly planted in the orchard—it has a stake stuck in the ground by the side of it, to which it is tied. But when it grows into a strong tree, where is the stake? The tree does not require it, for it stands fast by other means! It is just so with us and the miracles which were needed at the first.

19. *So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into Heaven, and sat at the right hand of God.* The disciples were not at once received up into Heaven, though they might have been if God had so willed it. There was work for them to do here below, so Christ, alone, “was received up into Heaven, and sat at the right hand of God.” And as for His followers—

20. *And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word through accompanying signs. Amen.* These last verses of Mark’s Gospel have, as some of you know, been questioned as to their Inspiration and authenticity, but they are so like Mark that you cannot read them without feeling that they are part and parcel of what the Evangelist wrote. Set any critic you please to work and if he knows the idiom and style of Mark’s writing, he will be bound to say that this is part of the Gospel according to Mark. And God the Holy Spirit, blessing these words to our hearts, as I trust He will, will set His seal to what we believe and know to be His Inspired Word.

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